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Key migratory bird terrestrial habitat sites in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut

Third edition

**Occasional Paper
Number 114
Canadian Wildlife Service**



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Cover:

Cliffs at Nirjutiqavvik (Coburg Island) National Wildlife Area. They provide habitat for seabirds (site number 10 in Nunavut). Photo by Grant Gilchrist.

Ramparts River Wetlands (Tu'eyeta). These boreal wetlands comprise key habitat for migratory birds (site number 13 in the Northwest Territories). Photo by Donna Mulders.

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Abstract

This report identifies 83 key terrestrial habitat sites for migratory birds in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. These sites support at least 1% of the Canadian population of at least one migratory bird species (or, in some cases, subspecies). Sites also include marine and freshwater habitats where the value of the terrestrial habitat is intimately linked to the presence of aquatic habitats. Data for the identification of sites were drawn from existing published and unpublished reports and personal communications.

In this updating of key terrestrial habitat sites in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, eight new sites have been added and two have been removed. Four sites listed in the previous edition have been combined under a single location. Many of the sites recognized in earlier listings have been revised, some quite substantially. Eighteen of the key terrestrial habitat sites overlap with existing Migratory Bird Sanctuaries, and two sites overlap with National Wildlife Areas.

This report describes key terrestrial habitat areas that are essential to the welfare of various migratory bird species in Canada. It serves as a statement of the interest of Environment Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service in lands where special wildlife conservation measures may be required, and it is offered as a guide to the conservation efforts of other agencies having interests in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

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1.0 Introduction

The Northwest Territories and Nunavut comprise 34% of the landmass of Canada. This vast area stretches 3000 km from the Mackenzie Delta to eastern Baffin Island and 2500 km from the 60th parallel to the northern tip of Ellesmere Island. It consists of six ecozones: Taiga Plains, Taiga Shield, Taiga Cordillera, Southern Arctic, Northern Arctic, and Arctic Cordillera. These ecozones feature a wide range of landforms and vegetation, from the extensive coniferous forests and wetlands of the Taiga Plains centred about the Mackenzie River to the stunted forests clinging to immense expanses of exposed ancient bedrock and innumerable lakes and rivers of the Taiga Shield. Rugged mountains, fast-flowing rivers, and windswept uplands dominate the Taiga Cordillera, while extensive shrublands, wet sedge meadows, and cold, clear lakes characterize the Southern Arctic. In the far north, barren plains interspersed with well-vegetated wetlands and rocky outcrops and cliffs typify the Northern Arctic, while precipitous peaks, permanent ice caps, and glaciers comprise much of the Arctic Cordillera. Such diversity means a wide range of wildlife habitat supporting a broad range of Nearctic flora and fauna. Approximately 220 species of migratory birds breed regularly in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut (CWS 2005).

The preservation of adequate habitat (both in quantity and in quality) is fundamental to the conservation of all wildlife species. Accordingly, and consistent with its enabling legislation — *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994* (Sanctuary Regulations), *Canada Wildlife Act* (Wildlife Area Regulations), the Federal Policy on Land Use (Government of Canada 1981), the Northern Mineral Policy (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada 1986), and the Minerals and Metals Policy of the Government of Canada (Natural Resources Canada 1996) — Environment Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) protects and manages terrestrial habitats of particular ecological value to wildlife. Key terrestrial habitat sites in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut have been previously documented and described by CWS (McCormick et al. 1984; Alexander et al. 1991), as have the known key marine sites in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut (Mallory and Fontaine 2004). Since the key terrestrial habitat sites were last catalogued by Alexander et al. (1991), however, continued research and monitoring of migratory birds in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut by CWS and other agencies have uncovered a number of additional terrestrial sites and updated information for the previously known sites.

Since 1991, northern Canada has witnessed change of an unprecedented scale and speed, both political and economic. Exploration and development associated with the extraction of minerals and hydrocarbons as well as forestry have accelerated greatly in various regions of the Northwest Territories, and mineral exploration in Nunavut shows every indication of following suit. The territory of Nunavut was created through the Nunavut Final Agreement (1993), and a number of Aboriginal land claims have been settled, such as the Gwich'in (1991), the Sahtu (1993), and the Tāichō (2003). Each of these final agreements gives Aboriginal people and government resource officials an equal voice in the management of wildlife and its habitat. Such change makes it incumbent on both wildlife managers and those with interest in the land and its resources, both renewable and non-renewable, to have the most up-to-date information on which to base land use decisions.

This report updates the catalogue of key terrestrial habitat sites (Alexander et al. 1991) within the Northwest Territories (see Figure 1 on page 12) and Nunavut (see Figure 2 on page 40) that are essential to the welfare of a large number of migratory bird species in Canada, using new information where it exists. For many sites, no new information has been collected over the intervening 14 years — an indication of the inadequate resources available to agencies such as CWS for managing these important areas. Based on a precautionary approach to management, these sites have been retained on the premise that this information is the best available. This report also describes a number of new key terrestrial habitat sites that have come to light as a result of information obtained since 1991. It does not, however, represent the last word, and more sites could be added in the future as our information improves. Furthermore, areas not included in this report should not be automatically interpreted as being unimportant to migratory birds.

This report serves as a statement of CWS interest in lands where special wildlife conservation measures may be required, and it is offered as a guide to the conservation efforts of federal and territorial governments, wildlife co-management boards established pursuant to land claim final agreements, Aboriginal and non-governmental organizations, and industry. The utility of the earlier cataloguing of key terrestrial habitat sites as a quick and accurate reference for CWS in its assessment of proposed mineral exploration leases, mine developments, and tourism activities in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut has been demonstrated repeatedly.

2.0 Protection of key terrestrial habitat sites

2.1 CWS mandate

In the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, several agencies have the legislative tools with which to protect terrestrial wildlife habitat; CWS is one of those agencies. CWS administers the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994*, which gives it responsibility for the management and conservation of migratory bird populations in Canada. Pursuant to this Act, CWS administers the Sanctuary Regulations, which provide for the establishment and management of Migratory Bird Sanctuaries. CWS also administers the *Canada Wildlife Act*, through which CWS may take measures to protect wildlife species in danger of extinction and acquire lands for wildlife research, conservation, and interpretation. The acquisition and management of such lands, known as National Wildlife Areas, are carried out in accordance with the Wildlife Area Regulations. CWS is the lead federal agency in the implementation of the *Species at Risk Act*. This Act serves to prevent Canadian wildlife species from becoming extinct, to recover those that are in danger of becoming extinct, and to ensure that common wildlife species remain common. Under this Act, CWS can invoke measures immediately to protect the critical habitat of a species at risk.

2.2 Other legislated protection for migratory bird habitat

The Governments of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, through their respective Parks Acts, can establish Territorial Parks that provide protection to land containing important migratory bird habitat. Some migratory bird habitats are protected from human land uses because they lie within National Parks or National Park Reserves established and managed by Parks Canada Agency. Regulations under the *Canada National Parks Act* do not deal with migratory bird habitats per se, but excellent protection is provided to them because of general prohibitions on many land use activities and types of development.

2.3 Recognition of important migratory bird habitat

CWS represents Canada on international and continental conventions and agreements related to wildlife habitat conservation. In 1981, Canada became a signatory to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance,

especially as Waterfowl Habitat (also known as the Ramsar Convention). Under this Convention, Canada has obligations to identify wetlands of international importance and to ensure that they are adequately protected. CWS, with the cooperation of provincial and territorial governments, carries out the obligations of the Convention on behalf of Canada. Canada participated in the International Biological Programme (IBP) between 1964 and 1974, and 120 IBP Sites under the “Conservation of Terrestrial Communities” category were identified in the Northwest Territories, which included the present-day Nunavut. Many of those sites were selected on the basis of their importance to migratory bird populations. There are no special regulatory controls in place for protecting IBP Sites, but the designation serves to highlight the ecological importance of particular areas.

2.4 Land management and protection of migratory bird habitat

Land use activities on federal Crown lands in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut are regulated under the *Territorial Lands Act* and the Territorial Land Use Regulations. These are administered by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, which is responsible for the control, management, and administration of northern lands and the disposition of land and resource rights. Wildlife habitat may be “withdrawn from disposition” under the Act and is effectively protected because development-related activities are not allowed. In addition, through the various land claim agreements in the Northwest Territories and the Nunavut Final Agreement, land use planning boards have been established that formally identify important wildlife habitat and recognize the need for its protection through land use plans. Land and water boards, also established through these final agreements, have the authority to place conditions in permits for developmental activities that afford considerable protection to migratory bird habitat. The Northwest Territories Protected Areas Strategy (1999) is a cooperative agreement between the federal and territorial governments; more broadly, it promotes a partnership approach between all interested parties to identify and establish legally protected areas in the Northwest Territories, especially areas of importance to northern Aboriginal communities. These areas are often either key terrestrial habitat or large, representative areas of northern ecozones.

3.0 Methodology and rationale

Like the establishment of hunting seasons and bag limits, the protection of key habitat sites is a population management tool. Such sites are so important that their degradation or destruction could have a significant negative impact upon a particular population. Since the severity of an impact is manifested in terms of a numerical decline in a population, the importance of a particular site is a function of the proportion of a population that the site supports for any part of the year.

The effectiveness of site protection as a management tool is dependent upon the biology of the species using the site. The following general statements can be made:

- Populations that are geographically widespread or widely dispersed throughout a variety of habitats are less vulnerable to site-specific threats, as only a small portion would be affected. For these species, it would be impractical to control and manage enough habitat to support a significant proportion of the population.
- Populations that are concentrated for any part of the year are more vulnerable to site-specific threats, because a significant proportion of the population could be affected. Such habitat sites include staging areas, moulting areas, nesting colonies, and the foraging areas of some species.
- Populations that occupy geographically restricted habitats are vulnerable if their habitat is threatened. Certain rare, threatened, or endangered species are prime examples.

Species occurring in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut that are considered within the context of the above statements are listed in Table 1. Population data are presented for all relevant subspecies, wherever possible. For Canada Geese, however, winter indices are reported in the literature by population management unit rather than subspecies. Each unit may contain more than one subspecies, and, conversely, each species may be represented in more than one management unit (see Table 1).

Sites that are believed to support at least 1% of a Canadian population are considered to be key terrestrial habitat sites. This criterion has been used extensively in Europe and in the selection of sites of international importance designated under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Atkinson-Willes 1976; Prater 1976; Fuller 1980). It represents a compromise between recognizing a biologically significant portion of a population and the need to avoid identifying the entire geographic range of a

population as key habitat. It also meets the criteria established by the CWS Executive Committee in 2001 for the selection of terrestrial habitats of interest.

We have relied on the best available estimates of Canadian and regional bird populations and the numbers present at each site. This approach, however, has limitations. For example, in some cases, the only available information is outdated or limited to a single observation. Although such data are hardly ideal, they do provide an initial identification of sites and an indication of where surveys are needed.

Several sites do not expressly meet the 1% criterion for any one species. However, they are sites of exceptional species diversity, both avian and mammalian, typically surrounded by relatively barren areas. Their inclusion here recognizes the specialness of these sites.

For many sites that were also described in the Alexander et al. (1991), there is considerable discrepancy in the respective surface areas of the key site. In some cases this is because of actual changes to the boundaries of the key site. For those sites where there was no boundary change, the discrepancy likely reflects the more reliable geographic information system-based technique for determining surface area used for the present edition.

The recognition of key terrestrial habitat sites is a dynamic and iterative process. The importance of individual sites changes over time in response to population fluctuations and changes in habitat conditions. As a result, mapped delineations of biologically important areas do not always coincide with existing management boundaries. This report represents our present understanding of the habitat needs of selected migratory bird populations. As further information becomes available, site importance will be reevaluated.

Table 1
Canadian and territorial population estimates^a for certain bird species in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut

Species ^b	Subspecies or management unit breeding in NT or NU	Population estimates		Source
		Canada	NT and NU	
Greater White-fronted Goose <i>Anser albifrons</i>				
Mid-continent Population	<i>frontalis</i>	625 900 ^{c,d}	625 900 ^{c,d}	CWS Waterfowl Committee 2003
Snow Goose <i>Chen caerulescens</i>				
Greater	<i>atlantica</i>	678 000 ^{c,e}	678 000 ^{c,e}	CWS Waterfowl Committee 2003
Lesser	<i>caerulescens</i>	4 500 000 ^c	4 500 000 ^c	CWS Waterfowl Committee 2003
Ross's Goose <i>Chen rossii</i>		>800 000 ^c	>800 000 ^c	CWS 2004
Brant <i>Branta bernicla</i>				
Atlantic	<i>hrota</i>	164 500 ^{c,d}	164 500 ^{c,d}	CWS Waterfowl Committee 2003
Pacific	<i>nigricans</i>	30 000	30 000	Subcommittee on Pacific Brant 1996; J.E. Hines, unpubl. data
Western High Arctic or Grey-bellied	Western High Arctic or Grey-bellied Population ^f	6 200 ^{c,d}	6 200 ^{c,d}	CWS Waterfowl Committee 2003
Cackling Goose <i>Branta hutchinsii</i>				
Short-grass Prairie Population ^g		78 350 ^{c,d}	78 350 ^{c,d}	CWS Waterfowl Committee 2003
Tall-grass Prairie Population		200 000 ^{c,d}	200 000 ^{c,d}	CWS Waterfowl Committee 2003
Canada Goose <i>Branta canadensis</i>				
Short-grass Prairie Population ^g	<i>parvipes</i>	78 350 ^{c,d}	78 350 ^{c,d}	CWS Waterfowl Committee 2003
Southern James Bay Population	<i>interior</i>	106 500 ^c	17 300 ^c	CWS Waterfowl Committee 2003
Eastern Prairie Population	<i>interior</i>	229 200	229 200	CWS Waterfowl Committee 2003
Tundra Swan <i>Cygnus columbianus</i>				
Eastern Population		108 200 ^c	108 200 ^c	CWS Waterfowl Committee 2003
Trumpeter Swan <i>Cygnus buccinator</i>				
Rocky Mountain Population		3 279 ^c	294 ^c	Hawkings et al. 2002
American Wigeon <i>Anas americana</i>		2 500 000 ^c		CWS Waterfowl Committee 2003
American Black Duck <i>Anas rubripes</i>		528 000 ^c	unknown	CWS Waterfowl Committee 2003
Canvasback <i>Aythya valisineria</i>		560 000 ^c		CWS Waterfowl Committee 2003
Lesser Scaup <i>Aythya affinis</i> and Greater Scaup <i>Aythya marila</i>		3 700 000 ^c		CWS Waterfowl Committee 2003
King Eider <i>Somateria spectabilis</i>		315 000	315 000	Suydam 2000
Common Eider <i>Somateria mollissima</i>				
Hudson Bay	<i>sedentaria</i>	50 000	50 000	H.G. Gilchrist, unpubl. data
Pacific	<i>v-nigra</i>	35 000	35 000	Dickson and Gilchrist 2001
Northern	<i>borealis</i>	300 000	300 000	A. Mosbech, unpubl. data
Long-tailed Duck <i>Clangula hyemalis</i>		2 500 000	2 500 000	Hyslop 1996
Surf Scoter <i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>		<500 000 ^h	<300 000 ^h	Bellrose 1980; CWS Waterfowl Committee 2003
Black Scoter <i>Melanitta nigra</i>		185 000 ^c	90 000 ^c	Bordage and Savard 1995
White-winged Scoter <i>Melanitta fusca</i>		<500 000 ^h	<300 000 ^h	Bellrose 1980; CWS Waterfowl Committee 2003
Northern Fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	<i>minor</i>	201 000	200 000	Gaston et al. 2006
Whooping Crane <i>Grus americana</i> (S)		183 ^c	183 ^c	B. Johns, pers. commun.
Eskimo Curlew <i>Numenius borealis</i> (S)		23 ^{c,i}	23 ^{c,i}	Gollop et al. 1986
Glaucous Gull <i>Larus hyperboreus</i>		34 600	33 500	Gilchrist 2001
Sabine's Gull <i>Xema sabini</i>		72 000	72 000 ⁱ	Alexander et al. 1991; Day et al. 2001; V.H. Johnston, unpubl. data
Black-legged Kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	<i>tridactyla</i>	200 000	95 000	Nettleship 1980
Ross's Gull <i>Rhodostethia rosea</i> (S)		?	10	Macey 1981; Béchet et al. 2000
Ivory Gull <i>Pagophila eburnea</i> (S)		500	500	Gilchrist and Mallory 2005
Caspian Tern <i>Sterna caspia</i> (R)		7 890–8 390	287	Cairns et al. 1986; McCormick and Sirois 1988; Sirois et al. 1989, 1995; Sirois and Seddon 1990; H. Blokpoel, S. Brechtel, W. Campbell, G. Chapdelaine, S. Houston, B. Koonz, A.R. Lock, R.I.G. Morrison, K. Roney, and A.R. Smith, pers. commun.
Dovekie <i>Alle alle</i>		7 000 000	<100	Renaud et al. 1982
Thick-billed Murre <i>Uria lomvia</i>	<i>lomvia</i>	1 448 000	1 446 000	Gaston and Hipfner 2000
	<i>arra</i>	400–600	400–600	Ward 1979; Charlwood 2002
Razorbill <i>Alca torda</i>		38 000	56	Chapdelaine et al. 2001

Table 1
Canadian and territorial population estimates^a for certain bird species in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut

Species ^b	Subspecies or management unit breeding in NT or NU	Population estimates		Source
		Canada	NT and NU	
Black Guillemot <i>Cephus grylle</i>		50 000–100 000	60 000	Nettleship and Evans 1985; Butler and Buckley 2002
Atlantic Puffin <i>Fratercula arctica</i>	<i>ultimus</i>	365 000	30	Nettleship and Evans 1985; Robards et al. 2000
Shorebirds ^f				Morrison et al. 2001

^a Estimates are of breeding pairs unless otherwise indicated.

^b S = species at risk; R = rare species.

^c Individual adult birds in 2005.

^d Fall migration, midwinter counts.

^e Spring migration counts.

^f Taxonomic status of the Western High Arctic or Grey-bellied Brant Population is undetermined, but evidence points to this being a distinct subspecies (Shields 1990).

^g Short-grass Prairie Population consists of two species, according to the 2005 American Ornithologists' Union classification; it is assumed that 50% of the population is *B. c. parvipes* and 50% is *B. hutchinsii*.

^h Surf and White-winged scoter population sizes are best-guess estimates only.

ⁱ Estimation. For the Sabine's Gull, much of its range in the western Arctic is not well surveyed. From studies that are available for the entire Arctic (some of which are outdated), we estimated a summer population of at least 36 000 birds and then doubled it to account for unsurveyed areas.

^j Population estimates for shorebirds contained in Morrison et al. (2001).

4.0 Site summaries

4.1 Text legend

Key terrestrial habitat site information is summarized according to the following format:

Site number: A number that references each site on the accompanying geographic index maps of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut (Figs. 1 and 2).

Name: A prominent topographical feature of the terrestrial area.

Location: The latitude and longitude of the approximate geographic centre of each site.

Size: The approximate area, in square kilometres, of each site. For most seabird colonies, this descriptor is not applicable. The indicated boundaries represent the limits of biologically important sites.

Description: A brief description of the site, indicating its location relative to prominent topographical or human-made features, prominent topographical features, and vegetation types.












Biological value: Relevant species summaries, including numbers present and seasonal occupation and activities (nesting, staging, moulting, foraging, etc.). Supplementary information, such as the presence of other wildlife and features of the plant communities that would increase our understanding of the site, is also included. Scientific names of bird species are listed in Appendix B.

Sensitivities: Types of activities that could destroy or degrade the biological value of the site. Some habitats or species may be particularly susceptible to various factors, even if there are no known immediate threats to the key terrestrial habitat site.

Potential conflicts: Present or proposed activities or biological factors that could have a negative impact on the site.

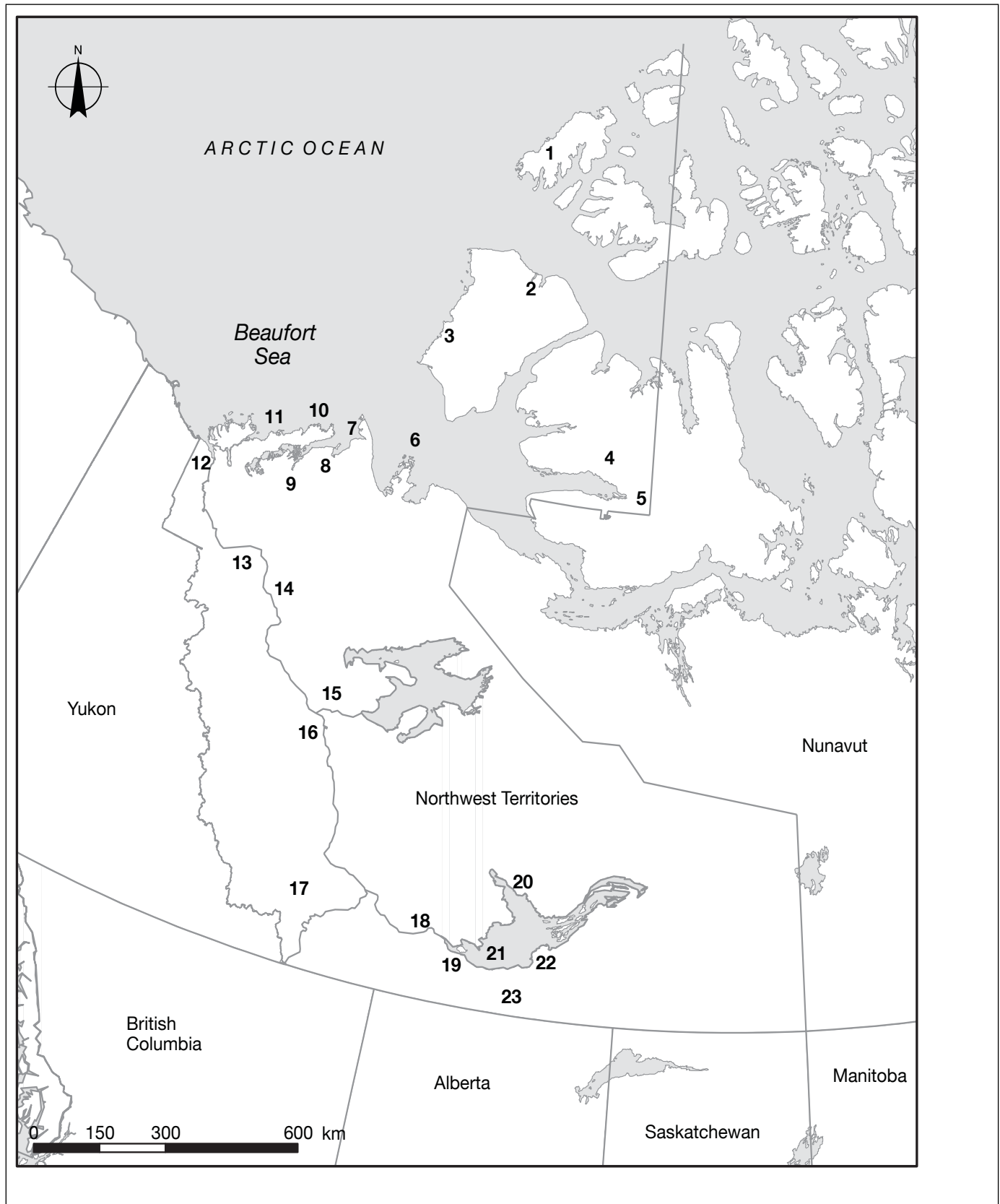
Status: Any “conservation area” designations that overlap with the terrestrial key habitat site.

4.2 Map legend

-  Previous colony
-  Community
-  Key habitat site
-  National Wildlife Area/Migratory Bird Sanctuary
-  National Park
-  Political boundary
-  River
-  Lake
-  Small lake
-  Glacier
-  Area of nesting concentration

5.0 Key migratory bird terrestrial habitat sites in the Northwest Territories

Figure 1
Map of site locations in the Northwest Territories



Map legend: Site locations in the Northwest Territories

- NT Site 1 – Prince Patrick Island
- NT Site 2 – Thomsen River
- NT Site 3 – Banks Island Migratory Bird Sanctuary No. 1
- NT Site 4 – Tahiryuak Lake
- NT Site 5 – Kagloryuak River Valley
- NT Site 6 – Cape Parry
- NT Site 7 – Harrowby Bay
- NT Site 8 – Lower Anderson River (and Mason River)
- NT Site 9 – Kugaluk River
- NT Site 10 – McKinley Bay – Phillips Island
- NT Site 11 – Kukjuktuk and Hutchison Bays
- NT Site 12 – Mackenzie River Delta
- NT Site 13 – Ramparts River Wetlands (Tu'eyeta)
- NT Site 14 – Lower Mackenzie River Islands
- NT Site 15 – Brackett (Willow) Lake
- NT Site 16 – Middle Mackenzie River Islands
- NT Site 17 – Southeastern Mackenzie Mountains
- NT Site 18 – Mills Lake
- NT Site 19 – Beaver Lake
- NT Site 20 – North Arm, Great Slave Lake
- NT Site 21 – Northwest Point
- NT Site 22 – Slave River Delta
- NT Site 23 – Sass and Nyarling Rivers

Location: 61°40'N, 123°30'W

Size: 5515 km²

Description: This area contains wetland complexes associated with the Liard River, South Nahanni River, Ram River, Carlson Creek, Root River, Tetcela River, and Fishtrap Creek. The latter two areas feature the most extensive wetlands in all the southeastern Mackenzie Mountains. There are also well-developed wetlands around Yohin Lake, Carlson Lake, and Mid Lake. All wetlands are characterized by extensive emergent vegetation. Typical species include cattail, bogrush, horsetail, and waterlily. In addition, the floodplains that occur between the Nahanni and Camsell ranges along the east edge of the Mackenzie Mountains provide considerable wetland habitat. Coniferous forests are the predominant vegetation; alpine tundra is common at the higher altitudes.

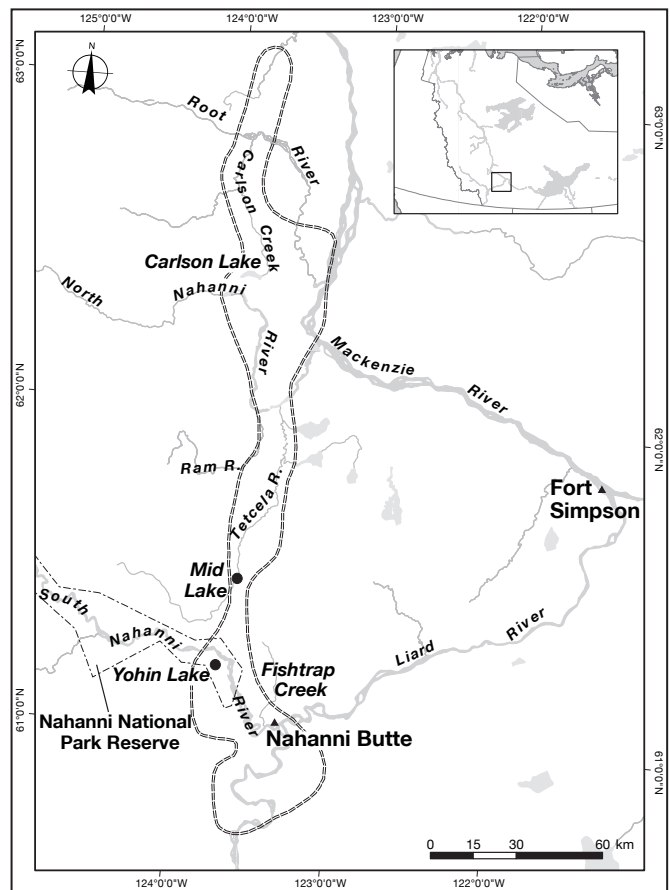
Biological value: Approximately 8% of the Canadian breeding population of Trumpeter Swans nests in the wetlands adjacent to the rivers, creeks, and lakes of this area. The number of adults steadily increased in the 1980s and early 1990s. More recent surveys indicated a continuation of this trend, with the number of adults increasing between 1995 (161) and 2000 (196) (Caithamer 1996, 2001; Hawkings et al. 2002) and 2005 (400) (Beyersbergen 2006). The Trumpeter Swan was formerly listed as endangered by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) but was delisted around 1995 because of the increasing populations across North America. However, this species is still of management concern to wildlife agencies in Canada and the United States.

Dall's sheep are found in some of the alpine tundra areas. Woodland caribou frequent both alpine and forested areas, while moose are found along river valleys. Grizzly and black bears also inhabit the area (Cairns et al. 1978).

Sensitivities: Breeding swans are vulnerable to disturbance, and their lowland habitat is sensitive to terrain disturbance.

Potential conflicts: Mineral exploration and extraction in the area could be a source of disturbance and terrain degradation. Seismic exploration has occurred in nearby areas, and the area has moderate to high oil and gas potential.

Status: Some of this site receives a high level of protection due to its occurrence within the Nahanni National Park Reserve.



7.0 Discussion

Alexander et al. (1991) described 80 key terrestrial habitat sites in the Northwest Territories, which included the present-day Nunavut. In this updated description, we have added eight new sites (Northwest Territories: Tahiryuak Lake, Kagloryuak River Valley, McKinley Bay–Phillips Island, Kukjuktuk and Hutchison Bays, and Ramparts River Wetlands (Tu’eyeta); Nunavut: Western Cumberland Sound Archipelago, Southwestern Victoria Island, and Markham Bay) and deleted two sites (Cape Dorset, Awry Island). Sites were added where recent survey data indicated that the feature species numbers there exceeded 1% of the Canadian population. Sites were deleted where more recent survey data indicated that the numbers of the feature species there had declined below 1% of the Canadian population. In one case, the archipelagoes in Ungava Bay important to Common Eiders were combined into one site (Ungava Bay Archipelagoes), because recent estimates of the breeding population of that species indicated that no one archipelago met the 1% criterion. Also of note in the present report is the better quantification of shorebird numbers at some sites (Rasmussen Lowlands, Creswell Bay, Foxe Basin Islands). In the Northwest Territories, the 23 sites represent a range of habitat types, including boreal wetlands (30%), riverine and lake shallows (39%), low- and mid-Arctic wetlands (13%), marine coastal (13%), and one bird cliff. In Nunavut, on the other hand, bird cliffs comprise the majority of sites (37%), followed by low-, mid-, and high-Arctic wetlands (28%), marine coastal (22%), river and lake shallows (6%), and glaciers/uplands (6%).

7.1 The database

There continues to be considerable variability in the quality and quantity of data across all 83 key terrestrial habitat sites described in this report. Many of the initial data on key terrestrial sites in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut resulted from large survey efforts associated with proposed industrial development in the 1970s and 1980s (Mallory and Fontaine 2004). In the face of limited resources available for such routine inventory since then, data acquisition from many of these sites has been sporadic at best. Since Alexander et al. (1991), 60% of the 78 sites (72% in the Northwest Territories; 58% in Nunavut) from that report have had additional data collected on the feature species at each site (i.e., meet the 1% criterion). Virtually all

major goose colonies have been surveyed since Alexander et al. (1991). The majority of bird cliffs (60%) in Nunavut have had data updated, as has the one bird cliff in the Northwest Territories (Cape Parry). Some of these sites have seen routine updating during the intervening 12 years (i.e., some goose and seabird colonies), while others have had just one resurvey. Also of note since 1991 has been the increasing focus on other taxonomic groups of migratory birds — namely, shorebirds and waterbirds — and the need to better understand breeding populations in light of heightened conservation concern for these groups. As a result, extensive ground-based surveys were conducted at a number of sites in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The results from these have led to the addition of new sites in the present report or a better understanding of the importance of previously included sites.

In the Northwest Territories, the 28% of sites not having had additional data collected since 1991 are primarily river and lake shallows along the Mackenzie Valley. In Nunavut, the 42% of sites not having had additional data collected since 1991 include the river shallows in the central barrens (e.g., Thelon River, Lower Back River) and the marine coastal habitat in James Bay (e.g., Boatswain Bay, Hannah Bay). Considering that the data for many of these sites are now 20 years old, updating in the next 5–10 years is recommended; otherwise, the next key terrestrial habitat site report for the Northwest Territories and Nunavut will need to seriously consider the deletion of many of these sites.

For some sites where data have been updated (e.g., Snow Goose colonies at Banks Island Migratory Bird Sanctuary No. 1, Great Plain of the Koukdjuak), there is a need to obtain more precise data on other components of the breeding bird community, in particular shorebirds. For some of these sites, there is evidence that the breeding population of some species exceeds 1% of the Canadian population, and this has been noted in the text. However, additional evidence will need to be gathered in order to substantiate these suppositions.

7.2 Protection

The importance of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut to both Canadian and continental populations of migratory birds cannot be overstated. The 83 sites described here account for almost the entire breeding area for the

continental populations of a number of species of geese (Lesser Snow Goose, Greater Snow Goose, Ross's Goose, Pacific Brant, Atlantic Brant), ducks (Common Eider, King Eider), seabirds (Thick-billed Murre, Northern Fulmar, Black-legged Kittiwake, Black Guillemot), and waterbirds (Ivory Gull, Ross's Gull) (Bellrose 1980; CWS Waterfowl Committee 2003). In addition, 15 of the 47 species of shorebird known to occur in Canada breed in the Arctic (Skagen et al. 2003). Furthermore, the sites described here include all the known important areas where shorebirds concentrate for breeding (e.g., Rasmussen Lowlands, Foxe Basin Islands, Creswell Bay).

All the major goose colonies in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut have been protected by Migratory Bird Sanctuaries for at least the last 20 years. Since Alexander et al. (1991), two Migratory Bird Sanctuaries and two National Wildlife Areas have been established; however, the large majority of seabird cliffs and wetlands have seen no legal protection. There are currently a small number of seabird cliffs (e.g., Cape Searle, Akpait) and surrounding waters being considered for protection as National Wildlife Areas. In the Northwest Territories, it is possible that in response to heightened industrial activity (e.g., natural resource extraction), the pace of protected areas establishment will increase due to political pressure from Aboriginal communities, and the existence of a Protected Areas Strategy sanctioned by various levels of government. In Nunavut, although there is also the distinct possibility of increased industrial activity, primarily from the mining sector, community support for the establishment of new protected areas is more variable, and there is a lack of a formal plan or strategy to provide a framework for protected areas establishment there. Furthermore, while every effort will be made to include key terrestrial habitat sites wherever possible in both the Northwest Territories and Nunavut (e.g., Mills Lake within Edézhíe), this will not always be possible, since other criteria can come into effect when proposing candidate protected areas. The net effect in Nunavut and, to a lesser extent, the Northwest Territories is that the large majority of the 64 sites currently not found within a legally designated protected area will very likely remain unprotected by protected areas legislation.

CWS and territorial wildlife managers will need to rely on other mechanisms for the continued protection of these sites. First and foremost, there is a need to ensure that these sites are part of the environmental assessment process associated with proposals for industrial activity in their vicinity and that these sites remain off limits to such activity or that the appropriate operating conditions are applied to mitigate the effects of the activity on these sites. It is in environmental assessment that the utility of earlier cataloguing of these sites in the north (McCormick et al. 1984; Alexander et al. 1991) has become apparent. CWS and territorial habitat managers as well as environmental assessment agencies in both the Northwest Territories and Nunavut refer to these documents on a routine basis in their consideration of proposals related to mineral prospecting and exploration, tourism, and forestry. As developmental pressures continue to increase, conservation of the large majority of the key terrestrial habitat sites in the Northwest

Territories and Nunavut will need to rely on their becoming an integral component of sound land use planning in the two territories.

7.3 The future

This most recent updating and cataloguing of key migratory bird terrestrial habitat sites in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut have resulted in the addition of some new sites, resulting mainly from CWS's habitat monitoring efforts over the last decade. It is quite likely that the present listing is approaching the complete picture of key terrestrial habitat sites in the two territories, at least for waterfowl, waterbirds, and seabirds. For other groups, more surveys and monitoring are required, and, in the case of shorebirds, international effort is under way (e.g., Program for Regional and International Shorebird Monitoring). As indicated earlier, however, it is apparent that many of these sites are in serious need of updated information from which to obtain a better understanding of their present status. Next steps required to meet this, as well as to secure the long-term protection of these sites, are as follows:

1. Continue to work with the communities and other interested agencies, both government and non-government, to ensure that as many as possible of the sites that are not already legally protected are incorporated into new protected areas initiatives.
 - Communities may have traditional use areas that they wish to see protected, and they should be encouraged to prioritize, as much as possible, these areas according to the known key migratory bird terrestrial habitat in or adjacent to them.
 - Community knowledge should be used as much as possible to identify candidate sites for assessment as key terrestrial habitat sites.
2. Continue to ensure that environmental assessment in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut and the agencies responsible take into account the sites identified in this report as routine procedure in the assessment of individual development proposals, regardless of size.
 - Maintain close liaison with the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board, Nunavut Impact Review Board, and other land use-related boards.
 - Continue to take a proactive role in advising proponents on the sensitivities of the sites listed in this report and making clear recommendations concerning their operations and minimizing impacts (e.g., tourism, including cruise ships).
3. There should be regular population and habitat monitoring programs established at a number of sites, particularly seabird breeding cliffs and goose and seaduck colonies. Population trends can be tracked as well as impacts on habitat related to climate change, overpopulation of certain species, and other suspected stressors (e.g., contaminants).
4. Key terrestrial sites in serious need of updating on the feature species as well as additional species that may meet the 1% criterion need to be given priority in terms

of monitoring effort and the required resources.

- Systematic surveys using standard protocols are required to allow reliable comparisons among sites and to better assess temporal trends in populations of the feature species at each site.

As developmental pressures increase in both the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, it is apparent that protection of key terrestrial habitat for migratory birds will depend on community support coupled with outright protection through either appropriate legislation or closely regulated land use practices, supported by up-to-date monitoring. It is only through this approach that these sites will continue to play such a pivotal role in the international conservation of migratory birds.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Key sites for breeding and staging migratory birds in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut^a

Site number	Site name
Geese^b	
<i>Northwest Territories</i>	
NT Site 1	Prince Patrick Island
NT Site 2	Thomsen River
NT Site 3	Banks Island Migratory Bird Sanctuary No. 1
NT Site 4	Tahiryuak Lake
NT Site 5	Kagloryuak River Valley
NT Site 7	Harrowby Bay
NT Site 8	Lower Anderson River (and Mason River)
NT Site 9	Kugaluk River
NT Site 12	Mackenzie River Delta
NT Site 14	Lower Mackenzie River Islands
NT Site 15	Brackett (Willow) Lake
NT Site 16	Middle Mackenzie River Islands
NT Site 18	Mills Lake
NT Site 20	North Arm, Great Slave Lake
NT Site 22	Slave River Delta
<i>Nunavut</i>	
NU Site 20	Berlinguet Inlet
NU Site 22	South Bylot Island
NU Site 30	Great Plain of the Koukdjuak
NU Site 31	Foxe Basin Islands
NU Site 32	North Spicer Island
NU Site 34	Rasmussen Lowlands
NU Site 35	Jenny Lind Island
NU Site 36	Southwestern Victoria Island
NU Site 37	Queen Maud Gulf
NU Site 38	Middle Back River
NU Site 39	Lower Back River
NU Site 40	Thelon River
NU Site 41	Middle Quoich River
NU Site 42	McConnell River
NU Site 43	Boas River
NU Site 44	East Bay
NU Site 56	Twin Islands
NU Site 57	Northeast James Bay
NU Site 58	Akimiski Island
NU Site 59	Boatswain Bay
NU Site 60	Hannah Bay

Appendix A (cont'd)Key sites for breeding and staging migratory birds in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut^e

Site number	Site name
Swans^f	
<i>Northwest Territories</i>	
NT Site 12	Mackenzie River Delta
NT Site 14	Lower Mackenzie River Islands
NT Site 17	Southeastern Mackenzie Mountains
NT Site 18	Mills Lake
NT Site 19	Beaver Lake
NT Site 20	North Arm, Great Slave Lake
NT Site 22	Slave River Delta
<i>Nunavut</i>	
NU Site 34	Rasmussen Lowlands
NU Site 36	Southwestern Victoria Island
NU Site 37	Queen Maud Gulf
Seaducks^d	
<i>Northwest Territories</i>	
NT Site 3	Banks Island Migratory Bird Sanctuary No. 1
NT Site 4	Tahiryuak Lake
NT Site 5	Kagloryuak River Valley
NT Site 10	McKinley Bay – Phillips Island
NT Site 11	Kukjuktuk and Hutchison Bays
NT Site 12	Mackenzie River Delta
NT Site 13	Ramparts River Wetlands (Tu'eyeta)
<i>Nunavut</i>	
NU Site 29	Western Cumberland Sound Archipelago
NU Site 33	Turton Island
NU Site 34	Rasmussen Lowlands
NU Site 37	Queen Maud Gulf
NU Site 44	East Bay
NU Site 46	Fraser Island
NU Site 48	Markham Bay
NU Site 51	Ungava Bay Archipelagoes
NU Site 52	Koktac River Archipelago
NU Site 53	Sleeper Islands
NU Site 54	North Belcher Islands
NU Site 55	Salikuit Islands
Shorebirds^e	
<i>Northwest Territories</i>	
NT Site 3	Banks Island Migratory Bird Sanctuary No. 1
NT Site 12	Mackenzie River Delta
<i>Nunavut</i>	
NU Site 6	Polar Bear Pass
NU Site 17	Creswell Bay
NU Site 31	Foxe Basin Islands
NU Site 34	Rasmussen Lowlands
NU Site 44	East Bay
Seabirds^f	
<i>Northwest Territories</i>	
NT Site 6	Cape Parry
<i>Nunavut</i>	
NU Site 1	Inglefield Mountains
NU Site 2	Sydkap Ice Field
NU Site 3	North Kent Island
NU Site 4	Seymour Island
NU Site 5	Cheyne Islands
NU Site 7	Baillie-Hamilton Island
NU Site 8	Cape Vera
NU Site 9	Skruis Point

Appendix A (cont'd)Key sites for breeding and staging migratory birds in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut^a

Site number	Site name
NU Site 10	Nirjutiqavvik (Coburg Island)
NU Site 11	Eastern Devon Island
NU Site 12	Hobhouse Inlet
NU Site 13	Cape Liddon
NU Site 14	Browne Island
NU Site 15	Prince Leopold Island
NU Site 16	Batty Bay
NU Site 18	Northwestern Brodeur Peninsula
NU Site 19	Baillarge Bay
NU Site 21	Cape Hay
NU Site 23	Cape Graham Moore
NU Site 24	Buchan Gulf
NU Site 25	Scott Inlet
NU Site 27	Qaqulluit (Cape Searle)
NU Site 28	Akpait (Reid Bay)
NU Site 45	Coats Island
NU Site 47	Digges Sound
NU Site 49	Hantzsch Island
NU Site 50	Akapatok Island

^a See text for details on numbers of each species at each site.

^b Lesser Snow Goose, Greater Snow Goose, Ross's Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose, Pacific Brant (including Grey-bellied), Atlantic Brant.

^c Trumpeter Swan, Tundra Swan.

^d Common Eider, King Eider, scaup spp., scoter spp., Long-tailed Duck.

^e Various species.

^f Includes Northern Fulmar, gulls, Black-legged Kittiwake, terns, Thick-billed Murre, Razorbill, Dovekie, Atlantic Puffin.

Appendix B

Common and scientific names of all bird species and subspecies mentioned in the text

Common name	Scientific name	Common name	Scientific name
Greater White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>	Hudsonian Godwit	<i>Limosa haemastica</i>
Lesser Snow Goose	<i>Chen caerulescens caerulescens</i>	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
Greater Snow Goose	<i>Chen caerulescens atlantica</i>	Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>
Ross's Goose	<i>Chen rossii</i>	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>
Atlantic Brant	<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>	Semipalmated Sandpiper	<i>Calidris pusilla</i>
Pacific Brant	<i>Branta bernicla nigricans</i>	Least Sandpiper	<i>Calidris minutilla</i>
Cackling Goose	<i>Branta hutchinsii</i>	White-rumped Sandpiper	<i>Calidris fuscicollis</i>
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	Baird's Sandpiper	<i>Calidris bairdii</i>
Trumpeter Swan	<i>Cygnus buccinator</i>	Pectoral Sandpiper	<i>Calidris melanotos</i>
Tundra Swan	<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>	Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>
American Wigeon	<i>Anas americana</i>	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
American Black Duck	<i>Anas rubripes</i>	Stilt Sandpiper	<i>Calidris himantopus</i>
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Buff-breasted Sandpiper	<i>Tryngites subruficollis</i>
Blue-winged Teal	<i>Anas discors</i>	Long-billed Dowitcher	<i>Limnodromus scolopaceus</i>
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>
Canvasback	<i>Aythya valisineria</i>	Red Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>
Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>	Pomarine Jaeger	<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>
Lesser Scaup	<i>Aythya affinis</i>	Parasitic Jaeger	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>
King Eider	<i>Somateria spectabilis</i>	Long-tailed Jaeger	<i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>
Common Eider (Pacific)	<i>Somateria mollissima v-nigra</i>	Bonaparte's Gull	<i>Larus philadelphia</i>
Common Eider (Northern)	<i>Somateria mollissima borealis</i>	Mew Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>
Common Eider (Hudson Bay)	<i>Somateria mollissima sedentaria</i>	Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>
Surf Scoter	<i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>	California Gull	<i>Larus californicus</i>
White-winged Scoter	<i>Melanitta fusca</i>	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>
Black Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>	Thayer's Gull	<i>Larus thayeri</i>
Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	Iceland Gull	<i>Larus glaucoides</i>
Bufflehead	<i>Bucephala albeola</i>	Glaucous Gull	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>
Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	Sabine's Gull	<i>Xema sabini</i>
Common Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	Ross's Gull	<i>Rhodostethia rosea</i>
Red-throated Loon	<i>Gavia stellata</i>	Ivory Gull	<i>Pagophila eburnea</i>
Pacific Loon	<i>Gavia pacifica</i>	Caspian Tern	<i>Sterna caspia</i>
Common Loon	<i>Gavia immer</i>	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
Yellow-billed Loon	<i>Gavia adamsii</i>	Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>
Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>
Rough-legged Hawk	<i>Buteo lagopus</i>	Dovekie	<i>Alle alle</i>
Gyrfalcon	<i>Falco rusticolus</i>	Thick-billed Murre	<i>Uria lomvia</i>
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>
American Coot	<i>Fulica americana</i>	Black Guillemot	<i>Cephus grylle</i>
Sandhill Crane	<i>Grus canadensis</i>	Atlantic Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>
Whooping Crane	<i>Grus americana</i>	Snowy Owl	<i>Bubo scandiacus</i>
Black-bellied Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	Horned Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>
American Golden-Plover	<i>Pluvialis dominica</i>	American Pipit	<i>Anthus rubescens</i>
Semipalmated Plover	<i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>	American Tree Sparrow	<i>Spizella arborea</i>
Lesser Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>	Savannah Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>
Eskimo Curlew	<i>Numenius borealis</i>	White-crowned Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>		

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