

White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*)



Interesting Facts

- The number of white-crowns observed during spring migration often varies greatly between years; they can sometimes be one of the most common species banded and in other years are nearly non-existent.
- There are 5 subspecies of in North America, the subspecies in the Yukon is called Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow and is primarily identified by the white space between the eye and base of the beak.

Identification

White-crowns have a clean gray breast/belly and the back is primarily brown with white and black mottling. The beak is orange in color and being a ground dwelling species, the legs are relatively large and robust. Adults have a distinctive black and white crown and juveniles have a brown and white crown.



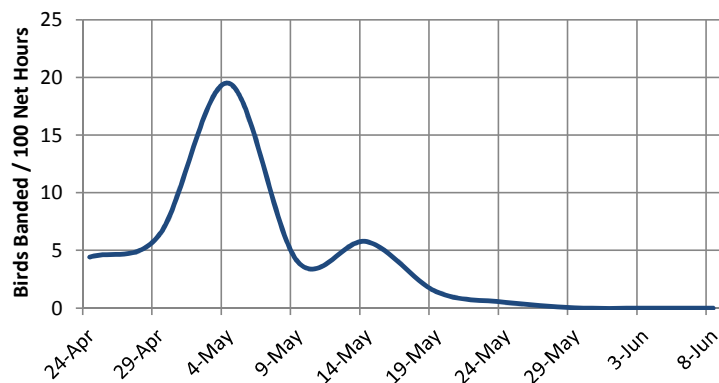
Breeding & Winter Range

During the summer breeding season, this species can be found from Alaska to Atlantic Canada and also in western North America. In the Yukon, they breed throughout the territory where suitable habitat is present. This species spends the winter months in throughout much of the United States and also the northern portion of Mexico.

One individual banded at the Teslin Lake Bird Observatory was recovered near Whitehorse during spring migration.

When To See Them at the Yukon Bird Observatories

White-crowns are one of the most common sparrows banded at the observatories; they are captured in much higher numbers during the spring season. The first individuals are typically observed during the last few days of April or the first days of May dependant on the timing of spring melt. Migration builds quickly with the highest numbers observed during the first and second weeks of May. During the fall, low numbers are typically observed at the stations throughout August and September.



White-crowned Sparrow spring migration timing at the Albert Creek Bird Observatory

Habitat

This species nest in a variety of open and semi-open habitats ranging from open forests, open grassy/tundra areas and particularly areas with patches of shrubs. It is most common at higher elevations in forested areas and also on the coastal plain in the north.

During migration, large numbers can be found in a variety of shrubby areas including wetlands and often backyard bird feeders.

Diet

This species primarily feeds on seeds which are picked from the ground. During the breeding season, they feed on a higher proportion of insects, particularly when feeding nestlings.