

Meagan Grabowski, MSc  
1208 Pine Street  
Whitehorse, YT Y1A 4G1

Yukon Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Trust  
Box 31022  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Y1A 5P7

Re: Final Report - Meagan Grabowski, Yukon Parks Internship

13 January, 2016

Dear Yukon Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Trust Manager Dennis Zimmerman,

Please find following the Final Report for my Yukon Parks Internship **Sharing results and improving monitoring of rapid vegetation change, and its implications to wildlife and park management on Herschel Island-Qikiqtaruk.**

### 1) **Project Activities**

#### Project background

The *Herschel Island-Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park Management Plan* prioritizes monitoring of representative vegetation communities and plant species on Herschel Island. Long-term permanent vegetation transects, were established on Herschel Island to track plant phenology (timing of life history stages) and growth for three indicator species (Arctic Willow - *Salix arctica*, Mountain Avens - *Dryas integrifolia*, and Cottongrass - *Eriophorum vaginatum*). The methodology follows the International Tundra Experiment (ITEX) protocol; numerous phenology and growth parameters are monitored for each species through the season by park rangers.

#### Project objectives

The primary objectives of this project were to conduct an evaluation, analysis, and report on the vegetation phenology monitoring at Herschel Island-Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park. The project involved a field component at Qikiqtaruk for 10 days in July/August; and an analysis component to include evaluation, analysis, and reporting.

**Field component:** I worked directly with the four park rangers at Qikiqtaruk on the phenology monitoring. Preparation for field work involved logistics planning, reviewing the protocols and comparing to protocols from other sites, and assembling both a list of goals for the field work and a short results highlights report and folder for the Rangers. The goal of this results report was to highlight their successes in creating a long-term dataset which demonstrates tundra plant

phonological change, and to begin discussions on their experiences with the monitoring protocol. In the field, I first assessed the field sampling design. I visited the sites with both shifts of rangers, with Yukon Parks biologist Cameron Eckert, and University of Edinburgh researcher Dr. Isla Myers-Smith (who has been working with the Rangers on the protocols annually). Secondly, I assessed the Rangers' implementation of the monitoring protocol. This included when visiting the plots, assessing their understanding of the protocols and the feasibility of implementation, as well as during discussions throughout the field work component on their experiences. Assessing the implementation was also done via assistance from the University of Edinburgh Tundra Ecology Lab (Team Shrub), who has entered and done preliminary analysis of the data. There were some gaps in the data largely due to the sampling design of certain species. Understanding why these gaps were present and creating/implementing changes to address them was an achieved goal of this project.

***Analysis component:*** I conducted analysis and reporting on the long term database; as well as an evaluation of the statistical power of the sampling design and monitoring protocol both for Qikiqtaruk, and for its contribution to landscape-level monitoring on the North Slope. The report presents options for potential adjustments to survey design and protocol implementation to improve statistical power and trend detection. The report is still underway (due by late January – this deadline was shifted due to my time completing my MSc thesis in November/December 2015) includes a plain-language summary, and a comprehensive technical report. Presentations on the project via Cameron Eckert have included the North Slope Conference, and the WMAC-NS meeting in Vancouver, BC in December 2015. An additional presentation on the project was done at the ArcticNet Annual Scientific Meeting in December 2015, which included both Cameron Eckert, Meagan Grabowski, and rangers Edward McLeod and Paden Lennie. The Poster is below in Communications.

### Contributions of Results

The results of this project that contribute to the protection and enhancement of wildlife or habitat are two-fold: 1) direct options for Yukon Parks to improve the quality of the tundra plant monitoring protocol, and 2) further communication and collaboration between Yukon Parks, university researchers, and especially the inclusion of the Rangers ideas into the ecological monitoring beyond data collection. As the Park Management plan comes up for renewal, demonstrating the importance of the plant phenology transects to not just informing vegetation change on the island and the relative influence of climate in driving this change, but also the contribution of this program to the international scientific community, is key.

## **2) Communications**

The report will be shared with Yukon Parks, as well as affiliated organizations with vested interest in tundra vegetation monitoring protocols and initiatives such as WMAC-NS and Environment Yukon. Beyond that, the plain language summary will be available for distribution

as Yukon Parks Biologist Cameron Eckert sees fit. I am also happy to provide a copy of both reports to YFWET when it is completed in January 2016.

The poster from ArcticNet has been made available to Edward McLeod, and he is putting it up in the Aklavik HTC office for reading. He also has print offs of the poster which he is distributing to the other Qikiqtaruk Park Rangers and other members of his community. Come Spring the poster will be put up in the Community Building on Qikiqtaruk, so that when Rangers show visitors to the island around they can talk about the work they do conducting scientific research on tundra plants. The YFWET logo is on the poster.



## Advancing phenology of tundra plants at Herschel Island-Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park Yukon Territory, Canada

Meagan M. Grabowski<sup>1</sup>, Cameron D. Eckert<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Isla H. Myers-Smith<sup>3</sup>, Santeri S. Lehtonen<sup>3</sup>, Jakob Assmann<sup>3</sup>, Paden Lennie<sup>2</sup>, Edward McLeod<sup>2</sup>, Samuel McLeod<sup>2</sup>, Ricky Joe<sup>2</sup>, and Richard R. Gordon<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Zoology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC; <sup>2</sup>Yukon Parks, Yukon Department of Environment, Whitehorse, YT; <sup>3</sup>University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK



### Our Island

**Qikiqtaruk**, a Yukon Territorial Park and Canada's westernmost Arctic Island, features a unique combination of natural and cultural heritage.

The distinctly **Arctic ecosystem** is influenced by a cold, dry climate and the surrounding waters and ice of the Beaufort Sea. A thin active soil layer underlain by permafrost supports a mosaic of tundra vegetation and a rich diversity of birds and wildlife.

Qikiqtaruk is integral to **Inuvialuit culture**. Families travel to the island throughout the year to hunt, fish, and pass on ancient traditions to the next generation.

The Herschel Island **Ecological Monitoring Program** tracks the integrity of the park ecosystem through the dedicated involvement of the Park Rangers, who are themselves Inuvialuit – thus strengthening the connection to community concerns about the rapidly changing Arctic environment.

### Vegetation Monitoring

Climate change is **rapidly altering Arctic ecosystems** with profound changes in vegetation communities (variety of species) and phenology (timing of life history stages). **Long-term monitoring** on Herschel Island tracks phenology in three indicator species – Arctic Willow *Salix arctica*, Mountain Avens *Dryas integrifolia*, and Cottongrass *Eriophorum vaginatum*.

### What we measured

For three indicator species, **phenology measures** (e.g. dates of first leaf, flowering, senescence) are recorded by Park Rangers every 2-3 days from snow-off date to senescence. We established one transect per species, with 10 plots per transect.



### What we found

**2001 to 2015 – phenology advanced** for all three species – spring is coming earlier on Qikiqtaruk. For willow and avens this change is significant, 15 days and 8 days earlier, respectively. For cottongrass it is earlier (5 days) but not significantly.








**Photos (clockwise from left):** Cottongrass, Arctic Willow, and Mountain Avens. Upper right: Park Ranger Samuel McLeod measures Arctic Willow phenology plots with Meagan Grabowski and Isla Myers-Smith.

**Acknowledgements:** Vegetation monitoring on Qikiqtaruk has benefitted from the input and expertise of Dorothy Cooley, Jill Johnstone, Catherine Kennedy, Val Loewen, University of Edinburgh's Team Shrub, and the Herschel Island-Qikiqtaruk Park Rangers over many years.

Photos (top to bottom): Historic whaling settlement on Simpson Point; Map of Herschel Island-Qikiqtaruk; a young Arctic Fox on Collinson Head; the late Elizabeth Mackenzie Head shares her traditional skills with young Jonas Brower; senior park ranger Richard Gordon has a rich knowledge of the island ecosystem and is a respected mentor to the younger park rangers.



The Washington Star, Friday, August 21, 2003

OPINION 19

## Protection, research are ongoing at Herschel Island

By ELAINI TAYLOR and  
MADE ISCHENKO

As ministers for the Departments of Environment and Heritage Canada, we are fortunate to visit Herschel Island and observe the excellent work taking place in this remote island (Kukwaka Territorial Park).

### COMMENT

The island is Yukon's most northerly point, approximately five kilometres off the northwest coast, and is home to more than 100 species of birds, along with caribou and muskoxen.

In addition to its fascinating flora and fauna, the park is of great historical importance to our territory.

The land has been used for centuries for hunting, shelter and as a meeting place by the Inuvialuit.

In the 1960s, when oilfield activity was booming at Prudhoe, Canada due to its deep, sub-sea location, it was listed in 1965 as a result of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement.

Its purpose is to conserve and protect wildlife land habitat, protect historic resources, and allow for ongoing traditional use by the Inuvialuit.

During our recent visit, we were able to see how the government's park rangers, who were also the first land manager on the park, managed and bear directly from staff and visitors about their experience.

It was valuable to see the excellent collaboration of our two departments, with Environment Canada administering and managing the park, and Tourism and Cultural Heritage Canada the heritage resources found there for the benefit of Yukon residents and visitors.

A team of park rangers from the department of Environment monitors natural and historical resources, conducts patrols and surveys, and provides interpretive services to visitors.

The park rangers also manage Parks Canada and the Canadian Coast Guard watch tower and rescue, and are now administering the park.

They collect data such as weather conditions, ice conditions, land degradation, and the condition and abundance of wildlife. They also conduct sampling areas, which is turn the Yukon government shares with the federal government world.

Staff from Tourism and

Culture work at the park to restore, conserve and document the history and historical structures that remain on the island, which include 12 remaining buildings (dating from 1893 to 1930), several outposts, ice houses and many other structures.

Given that the strategic location of the Arctic has risen three to four degrees over the past 50 years, changes to the permanent and ground support are carefully monitored.

Our department work collaboratively to manage Herschel Island's precious heri-

tagy resources and monitor any effects that are caused by the changing climate.

The park also allows Yukon to provide information for the permitted scientists at an international level.

During our visit, we met with researchers from the Alfred

Wegener Institute of Germany. They are doing field research on the island by examining the rates of ground warming and permafrost degradation. Researchers from McGill University in Montreal have also worked on projects at Herschel Island.

Our government includes collaboration between the Western Institute and the University of Edinburgh, with logistical support from Yukon government, to maintain long-term vegetation plots to help understand growth trends.

The Department of Environment, Ecological and Landscape Classification Program is also undertaking a full mapping project this year on the island, in co-operation with the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope), to inform future wildlife management decisions.

One aspect of the strength and value of Herschel Island's contribution is that data have been collected continuously for more than 20 years. This longevity and continuity in scientific data collection can be rare in only a few areas of the circumpolar north, and it is part of what makes Herschel island such an important conservation site.

Each year, more than 400 people visit the park, which is accessible by land and aircraft in the summer.

This year, two cruise ship visits are expected, in addition to conventional guided and private visits.

Site visits are strictly controlled — with staff monitoring the effects visitors are having on the environment and artifacts.

In addition to the park normally include cruise ship passengers, Inuvialuit, researchers, tourists, Yukon government employees, sailboat travelers and Coast Guard staff.

This year, we were privileged to be among those visiting. Our trip to Herschel Island was a fascinating experience and we were very lucky.

We are proud that the Government of Yukon supports the important historical preservation and scientific research work taking place at this unique and remarkable place.

The authors are the minister of Tourism and Culture and the minister of Environment respectively.

**TREASURED HERITAGE** — Some of the historical structures on Herschel Island are shown here.

**VISITING A VALUED SITE** — Tourism and Culture Minister Elaine Taylor and Environment Minister Made Ischenko (center, holding flag) are seen with other members of the group which visited Herschel Island earlier this month. Also shown are Edward MacLeod (left), an Environment Yukon park ranger; Barbara Hogan, the Department of Tourism and Culture's manager of historic sites; Joe MacOvittory (center), Environment Yukon's deputy minister; Barry Tenk, the park's branch operations manager (South Yukon); and park ranger Patsie Lemme (far right).



Here are photos by Cameron Eckert of the field work:

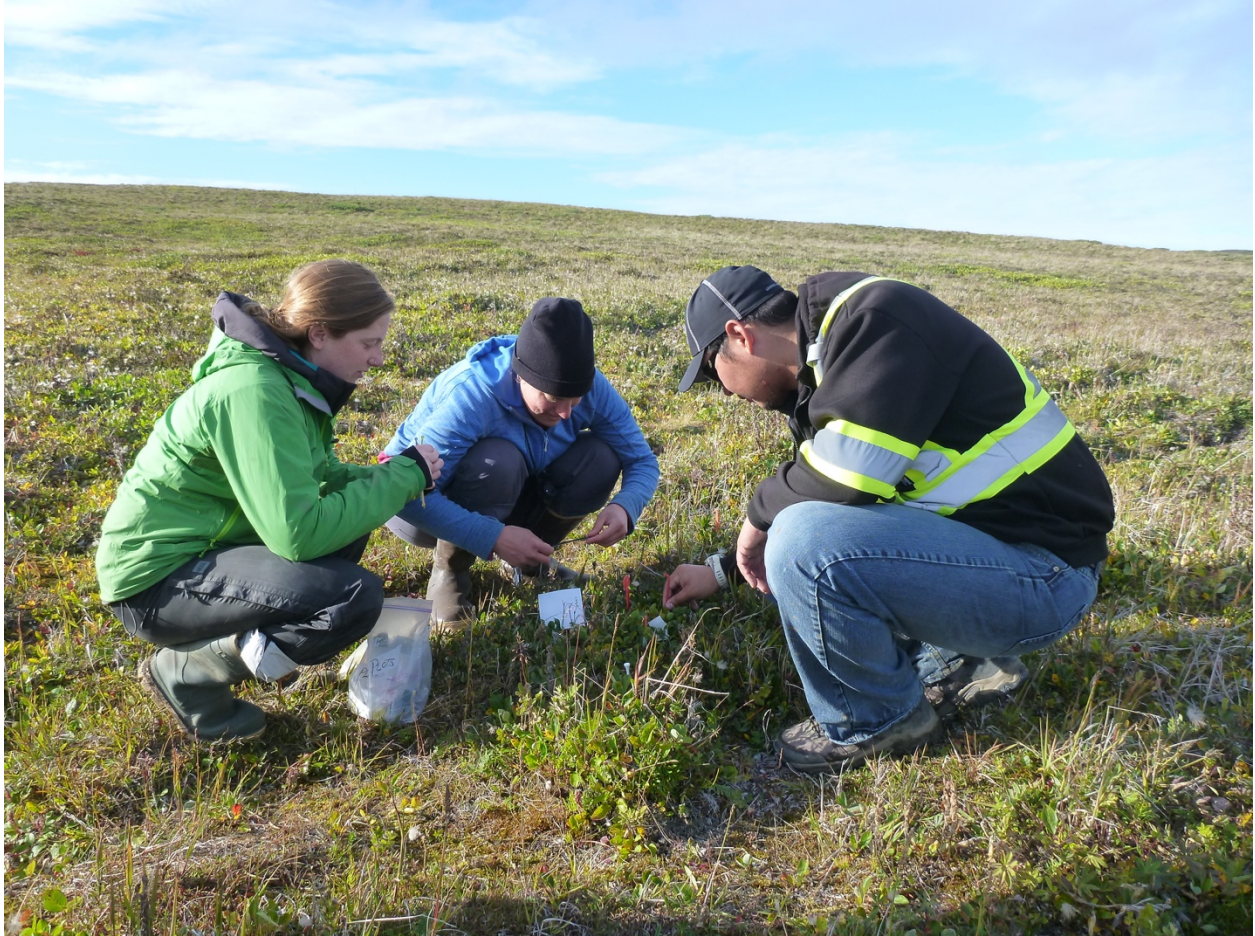


**Photo 1.** Ricky Joe, Meagan Grabowski, Isla Myers-Smith and Sam McLeod near the Artic Willow transect.



**Photo 2.** Meagan Grabowski, Isla Myers-Smith, and Sam McLeod resizing the Mountain Avens quadrats.





**Photo 3.** Meagan Grabowski, Isla Myers-Smith, and Sam McLeod resizing the Mountain Avens quadrats.





**Photo 4.** Isla Myers-Smith, Ricky Joe and Meagan Grabowski resizing the Mountain Avens quadrats.

### 3) Financial Statements

#### Qikiqtaruk Final Budget Report 2015:

<b>Expenditure Categories</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Proj. Cost</b>	<b>Actual Cost</b>	<b>YFWET</b>	<b>Yukon College</b>
1. Rental expenditures					
2. Wages/Contract	Project prep (25hrs @ \$37.50/hr)	7,000	943	300	643
	Field wages (10 days @ \$37.50/8-hr day)		3,000	3,000	
	Analysis / Report (15 days @ \$37.50/8-hr day)		4,500	1,500	3,000
3. Office and admin					
4. Travel expenses	Whitehorse to Inuvik flight	2,100	400	400	
	Field per diem (10 days @ 103.20/day)		1032		1032
5. Materials/supplies		400	0		
6. Facility expenses					
7. Other – Yukon Parks money admin fee	Yukon College admin fee (15% of \$5,500 from Yukon Parks)		825		825
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>10,700</b>	<b>5,200</b>	<b>5,500</b>



Meagan Grabowski, MSc  
1208 Pine Street  
Whitehorse, YT Y1A 4G1

INVOICE

Yukon Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Trust

18 December, 2015

Re: YFWET Project Final Report, contract hours for Meagan Grabowski

Type	Amount	Comments
Project Prep	\$300	25hrs* (\$643 paid by Yukon Research Centre/Yukon Parks)
Field Wages	\$3,000	10 days
Analysis/Report Writing	\$1,500	15 days (\$3,000 paid by Yukon Research Centre/Yukon Parks)
Whitehorse to Inuvik flight	\$400	Attached receipts from Air North plus luggage fee receipt (\$90.72)

\*all wages calculated for \$37.50/hr

Amount budgeted from YFWET: \$5,200.00

**Total amount due on this invoice: remaining 20% of \$5,200.00**

From: confirmation@flyairnorth.com  
Subject: Air North, Yukon's Airline-Confirmation 00994847  
Date: July 2, 2015 at 10:22 AM  
To: MEAGANGRABOWSKI@GMAIL.COM



## Your Air North, Yukon's Airline Itinerary

Thank you for booking with us!

Your itinerary number is 00994847.

**Passenger ID Number:** HUAYG1ZZ  
**Address:** 1208 PINE ST WHTIEHORSE, YT Y1A 4G1 CAN  
**Booked:** July 02, 2015  
**Booked By:** HUAYG1ZZ

### WEDNESDAY JULY 29, 2015 › FLIGHT 307 - Whitehorse to Inuvik

DEPARTS 07:00 › ARRIVES 12:15 › STOPS 2 › Hawker Siddeley 748

MEAGAN M GRABOWSKI

Confirmed

### Purchase Summary

Total Fare	174.75
Canada Goods and Service Tax #850279555	8.74
<b>Itinerary Total</b>	<b>CDN 183.49</b>
Payment	AIRPASS:HUAYG1ZZ

### Questions, comments or concerns?

Please do not reply to this email as it was issued by an automated message system. If you're received this message in error, please call Air North, Yukon's Airline at one of the numbers below.

#### How to contact us

- Toll-free (in North America): 1.800.661.0407 ext. 1
- (867) 668.2228 ext. 1
- Via our website at [flyairnorth.com](http://flyairnorth.com)

### Rules and Conditions

UPDATED AUGUST 1, 2012

#### Identification & Check-in Information

- **For Domestic Flights** — Check-in a minimum of 90 minutes prior to scheduled departure. Although we will do our best to assist, passengers arriving less than 20 minutes prior to the scheduled departure boarding may be denied. Valid government-issued identification featuring clear and identifiable photo of passenger and including name, date of birth and gender is required for all passengers.
- **For Trans-Border Flights** — Check -in a minimum of 90 minutes prior to scheduled departure.

From: confirmation@flyairnorth.com  
Subject: Air North, Yukon's Airline-Confirmation 00994852  
Date: July 2, 2015 at 10:25 AM  
To: meagangrabowski@gmail.com



## Your Air North, Yukon's Airline Itinerary

Thank you for booking with us!

Your itinerary number is 00994852.

**Passenger ID Number:** 96GG000Q  
**Address:** 1208 PINE STREET WHITEHORSE, YT Y1A 4G1 CAN  
**Booked:** July 02, 2015  
**Booked By:** 96GG000Q

### TUESDAY AUGUST 18, 2015 › FLIGHT 308 - Inuvik to Whitehorse

DEPARTS 12:45 › ARRIVES 14:45 › STOPS 1 › Hawker Siddeley 748

MEAGAN GRABOWSKI

Confirmed

### Purchase Summary

Total Fare	159.80
Canada Goods and Service Tax #850279555	7.99
<b>Itinerary Total</b>	<b>CDN 167.79</b>
Payment	AIRPASS:96GG000Q

### Questions, comments or concerns?

Please do not reply to this email as it was issued by an automated message system. If you've received this message in error, please call Air North, Yukon's Airline at one of the numbers below.

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- **For Trans-Border Flights** — Check -in a minimum of 90 minutes prior to scheduled departure.



## BOARDING PASS

PASSENGER **GRABOWSKI/MEAGAN**

ITINERARY NUMBER **00994847**

TRAVEL ITINERARY:

BOARDING GATE

AT **06:30AM**

FROM **Whitehorse**

TO **Inuvik**

FLIGHT SEAT DATE  
**307K - 29Jul15**

DEPARTURE TIME CLASS SEQ  
**07:00AM Economy 010**

AIRCRAFT TYPE  
**Hawker HS7**

BAGGAGE SPECIAL REMARKS  
**2/98.0 0/0.0 -**



## BOARDING PASS

PASSENGER **GRABOWSKI/MEAGAN**

ITINERARY NUMBER **00994852**

TRAVEL ITINERARY:

BOARDING GATE

AT **12:15PM**

FROM **Inuvik**

TO **Whitehorse**

FLIGHT SEAT DATE  
**308N - 18Aug15**

DEPARTURE TIME CLASS SEQ  
**12:45PM Economy 028**

AIRCRAFT TYPE  
**Hawker HS7**

BAGGAGE SPECIAL REMARKS  
**2/0.0 0/0.0 -**



## BAGGAGE RECEIPT

PASSENGER

**GRABOWSKI/MEAGAN**

FROM **Whitehorse**

ITINERARY NUMBER

**00994847**

TO **Inuvik**

FLIGHT SEAT DATE  
**307K Wed Jul 29**

DEPARTURE TIME  
**07:00AM**

CLASS  
**Economy**

BAGGAGE **2/98.0P**

SPECIAL **0/0.0**

TOTAL BAGS **2.00**  
TOTAL CHARGES **CAD 88.40**  
TAX **CAD 4.32**  
TOTAL **CAD 92.72**

PAID BY  
**CREDIT:VISA**

AGENT  
**BOUTELLIES**