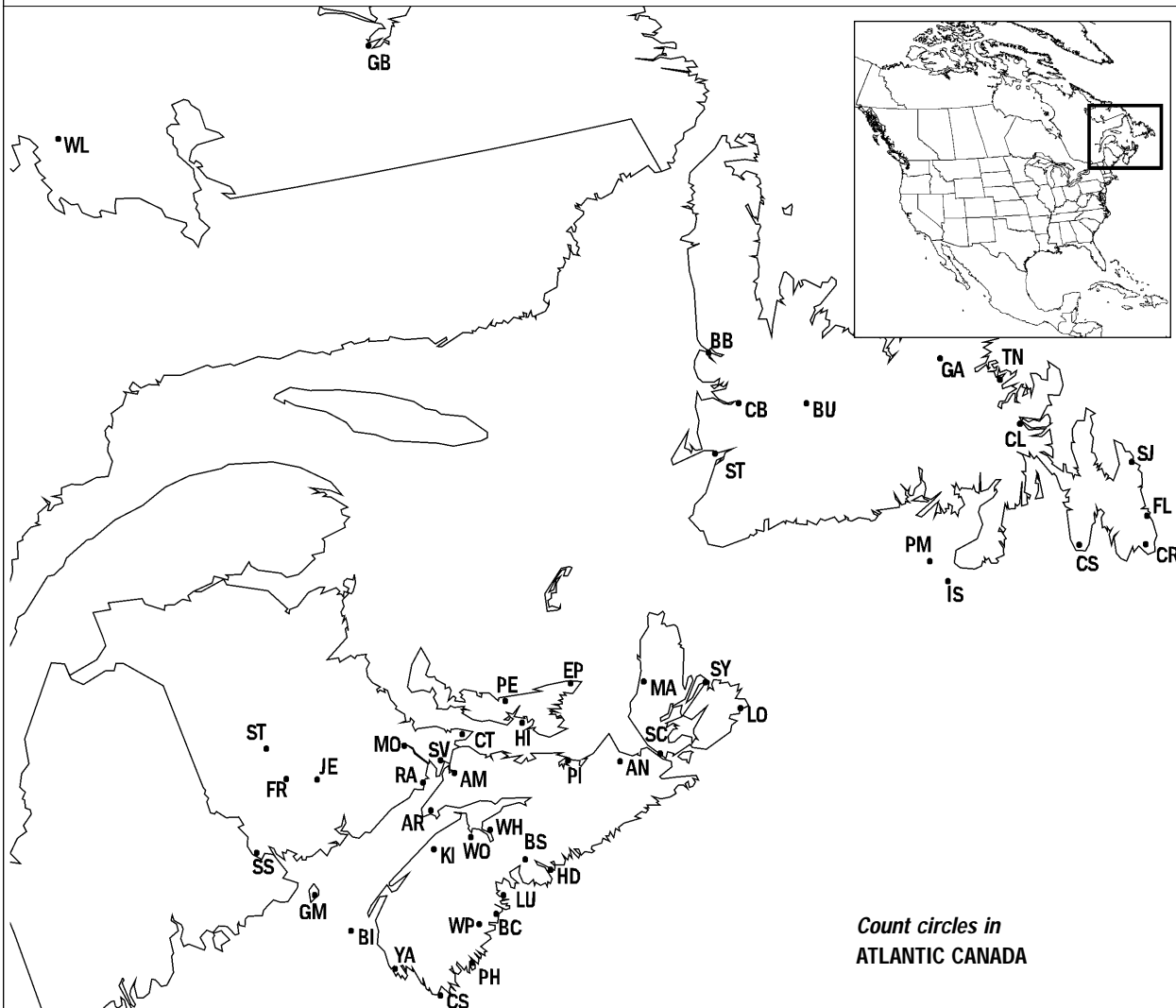


## Regional Summaries of the 103rd Christmas Bird Count



Count circles in  
ATLANTIC CANADA

### ATLANTIC CANADA

New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia,  
Prince Edward Island, Saint-Pierre et Miquelon

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There were more counts, observers, parties, hours, and distances covered this year in Atlantic Canada than ever before. These produced 372,347 individual birds and tied the record number of species (179), plus five in count week, although if we compensate for the six new counts and for a couple of possibly dubious species (coded "no details"), most indices of effort and achievement become a little less impressive than last year's. Sharp cold in early December and

mediocre weather on count days (average rank 11th among the past 16 years by my rough index) did not help. As usual, teams from Nova Scotia made more effort in all measures and, with moderate coastal climates, produced most species (168) and individuals (220,278) than all other provinces plus Saint-Pierre et Miquelon combined. All sub-regions were, however, able to claim some unique finds and high counts. Editing the new or recently established counts posed some problems. The rule of less than once in ten years for unusual species cannot be invoked, so I eliminated some such designations by compilers unless truly unusual in a wider context. And, of course, high counts take some years to establish. Some "new" counts, though, had long been run outside the

Audubon tradition and published locally, and it is good to see them join the larger scheme.

Most waterbirds and shorebirds seemed relatively unaffected by weather. Red-throated and Common loons were more common (also per party hour) than ever, but Horned Grebe numbers were about average and Red-necked Grebes remained depressed after a sharp drop last year. A count-week **Eared Grebe** at Île Saint-Pierre was a regional first. Exceptional numbers of **Greater Shearwaters** remained off Brier Island, NS, through December, giving another new species for the region. Numbers of offshore alcids were not unusual, taking into account the return after absence last year of the Grand Manan, NB, count. Two shallow-water fishers, Great Blue Herons and Belted

Kingfishers, hung back in record numbers, at subsequent risk. A **Black-crowned Night-Heron**, not a first for Cape Sable Island, did not last much longer. A slight reduction from last year in the ratio of Mallards to Am. Black Ducks might be furthered by current campaigns to discourage urban duck feeding. More heartening was a sharp increase in numbers of Harlequin Ducks. A **Blue-winged Teal** lingering on Île Saint-Pierre and a virtual absence of Ring-necked Ducks except in St. John's, NF, were equally unusual. As usual, Cape Sable Island, NS, produced the most shorebirds, including the largest-ever counts of Black-bellied Plover, Sanderling, and Dunlin. A small flock of **Semipalmated Sandpipers** has been repeatedly identified among them (despite skeptics) during the past three winters, although not critically close by on this year's count day. More startling was a first regional CBC **Ruff** that frequented an urban park in Dartmouth, NS, from late November. Among the gulls, party-hour-corrected numbers of Herring and Great Black-backed remained well below their mid-1990s levels; Bonaparte's, Iceland, and Glaucous stayed within their long-term ranges; and Ring-billed continued to increase. Among the usual "Europeans" in St. John's, NF, a count-week **Yellow-legged Gull** was exciting, but not a CBC first for that count. Three **Forster's Terns** in NS were also not unprecedented.

It was, predictably, an "off" year for most northern eruptives, including Snowy Owls, N. Shrikes, and Bohemian Waxwings and, less extremely, Red-breasted Nuthatches. Pine Grosbeaks, Pine Siskins, Common Redpolls, and, markedly, the two crossbills, were also less evident, but Am. Goldfinches were everywhere, and Evening Grosbeaks were in largest numbers since the mid-1990s. The "beachhead" populations of N. Cardinals in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick may have stabilized, and a huge increase in the total numbers of House Finches was largely due to the return of the Moncton, NB, count. Potential range expansions of Red-bellied

Woodpecker and Carolina Wren seem to have stalled a little.

More half-hardy landbirds seem to attempt to winter in Atlantic Canada than in many coastal regions farther south, a situation referred to as "Scotian shadow" by an earlier generation of New England birders. Hard pre-count weather this year took its toll of numbers of regularly lingering warblers and Baltimore Orioles. Unexpected, although not new for the region, were a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** near Kingston, NS, a count-week **Eastern Phoebe** near Wolfville, NS, and six **Tree Swallows** in coastal Halifax-Dartmouth, NS. As always, rare vagrants produced the most excitement, and included a count-week **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** for Yarmouth, NS, and a count-week **Northern Wheatear** for Fredericton, NB. Truly unusual were first regional count-day records of **Say's Phoebe** near Jemseg, NB, and **Mountain Bluebird** near Yarmouth, NS.

## QUEBEC

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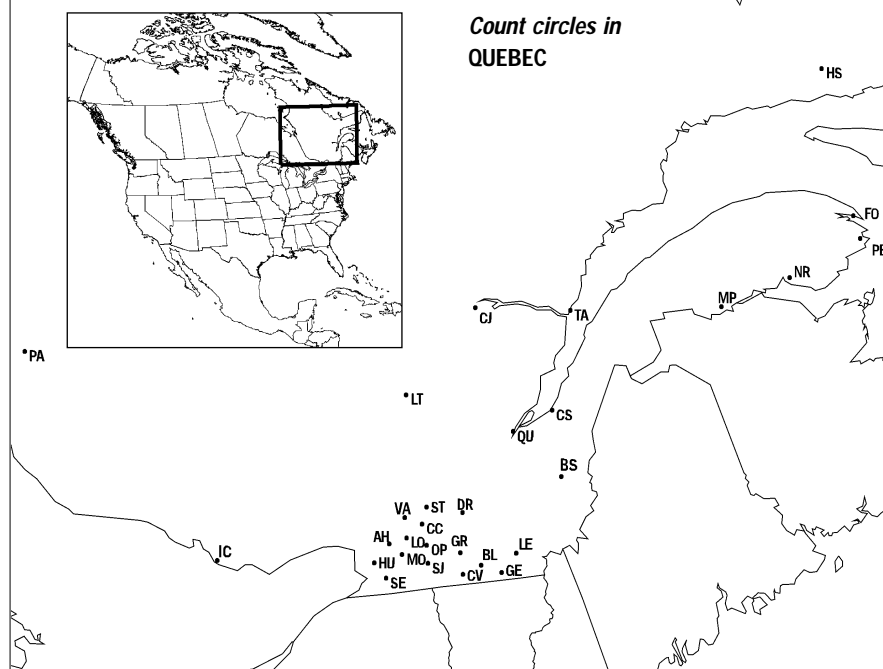
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The 103rd Christmas Bird Count was not a great one compared to the

very good 102nd season in Quebec. Nevertheless, a total of 124 species was observed on count day. Strangely, the mild weather in Quebec from September to the end of December did not result in interesting records of neotropical migrants on the counts. Conversely, most lakes and streams were not frozen, allowing aquatic birds to stay in numbers.

Twenty-nine counts were done in Quebec this year, plus the Ottawa-Hull count that is done half in Quebec and half in Ontario (assigned to Ontario region). Compared to the 26 counts done last year, this is a 12 percent increase. There were three new counts: Beauce-Sud, Île-du-Grand Calumet, and Vacluse. The Grenville count, which had been active from 1977 to 1981 and in 2001, was not done in 2002, whereas the St.-Timothée count, which was active from 1992 to 2000, became active again this year. From a national point of view, Quebec still has a low *per capita* performance of one count per 240,000 inhabitants, compared with the Canadian average of one count per 90,000 inhabitants.

The 30 counts were spread between 15 December and 30 December. The most popular census period was the weekend of 14-15 December (12 and 5 counts, respectively). All counts reported good weather conditions on count day.



Quebec City and Ottawa-Hull each had the highest number of field observers (105 each), but Ottawa-Hull had the highest total of observers because it added 11 feeder-watchers compared to four in Quebec City.

As to the birds, the 124 species totaled 236,848 individuals. Ottawa-Hull had the highest number of birds (40,404) and shared the highest number of species (73) with Quebec City. Montreal, with 72 species, was very close. One species, the European Starling, was reported in all counts.

The total number of individuals (Quebec region, excluding Ottawa-Hull) was more than 10,000 in eight species: American Crow (43,321, of which 30,000 in St-Jean), European Starling (33,590), Rock Dove (17,726), House Sparrow (12,011), and Mallard (10,894). Contrary to last year (when two irruptive species, the Common Redpoll and Bohemian Waxwing, were in noticeable numbers, with 9983 and 3545 individuals respectively), there was no irruptive species with more than 500 individuals this season.

If we look at threatened species, the total of 134 Barrow's Goldeneyes is below last year's count (177) and far below the mark of 423 birds established two years ago. Two Harlequin Ducks, one in Montréal and one in Ottawa-Hull, were notable. Seventeen Bald Eagles, 31 Cooper's Hawks, and 11 Peregrine Falcons are encouraging numbers.

I should point out the two Red-throated Loons in Percé, one Common Loon in Brome-Missisquoi and two in Georgeville, three Pied-billed Grebes and two Red-necked Grebes in Longueuil, and 91 Great Cormorants in Forillon and 61 in Percé. Among the ducks, the presence of one Gadwall in Contrecoeur and 115 in Montréal is a sign that this species is now wintering more commonly in Quebec. Similarly, Lesser Black-backed Gulls were seen in Lennoxville and Ottawa-Hull. Wilson's Snipe, a local specialty of the Quebec City count, was seen in Quebec City this year, after having been missed last

year. Another snipe was seen in Percé. Three Purple Sandpipers were found in Tadoussac.

Twenty-nine Wild Turkeys in St.-Timothée, two Ring-necked Pheasants in Matapédia, and one Ringed Turtle-Dove in Sorel-Tracy were notable. The Northern Flicker has become fairly common on Quebec's Christmas Bird Counts, with seven individuals in Laval-Ahuntsic, two in Chicoutimi-Jonquière, one in Hudson, and one in Montréal. Similarly, 12 Carolina Wrens, of which 6 were in Quebec City, is a high number. If I had to identify the best sightings of the 103rd count, I would suggest the Varied Thrush in Tadoussac and the Orange-crowned Warbler in Montréal, followed by the Eastern Towhee in Chicoutimi-Jonquière.

Despite the fact that few Quebec observers go owling on the CBCs, the number of owl reports was impressive this year. Longueuil totaled 17 individuals belonging to six species: one Snowy Owl, two Barred Owls, two Long-eared Owls, six Short-eared Owls, six Great Horned Owls, and one Northern Saw-whet Owl. Twelve Eastern Screech-Owls were observed: six in Montréal and two in Laval-Ahuntsic, Otterburn Park, and St.-Timothée.

A species that is apparently increasing in the Quebec Christmas bird counts is the Chipping Sparrow, with 20 individuals distributed in five localities. One count had 11 individuals. I recommend that all sightings of Chipping Sparrow should be verified, because this species can easily be confused with the American Tree Sparrow.

The Purple Finch and the House Finch are also often considered to be similar species. Still, however, the numbers reported seem more likely to raise questions about what is going on in Quebec birds instead of questioning birders' abilities. With reported numbers of 1834 Houses Finches compared to only 102 Purple Finches, one could easily conclude that some forest birds are declining whereas open-habitat species are increasing.



Eastern Screech-Owl (*Otus asio*) roosting in nest box, Ottawa-Hull, Ontario.  
Photo/Bruce DiLabio

## ONTARIO

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The 103rd Christmas counts were held in Ontario among discussions and debates about the impact of West Nile virus on the avifaunal population after another hot and dry summer season, followed by a fall that was much cooler than the past two years. There were fewer lingering migrants in the south, very few species of shorebirds, and waterfowl at levels closer to the norm. The counts of winter finches were back to the normal levels in more northern regions, with a good seed crop reported, while few were spotted in the southern counts this year. Niagara Falls, a.k.a. "the gull mecca of Ontario," produced the first Black-headed Gull record for the region.

A total of 103 counts reported this year, one more than last year—despite the fact that four counts that participated in the previous year did not report (Ear Falls, Halton Hills, Red Lake, and South Huron). It is certainly hoped that these counts will rejoin the ranks again next year. Four new counts were conducted—Belleville, Collingwood, Hilliardton, and Machkinonje-North

Monetville—and North Shore again reported, accounting for the total. Most counts reported some snow this year, particularly counts in lee of Lake Huron and Georgian Bay. With less open water available, waterfowl numbers were lower in most areas compared to last year, with significant concentrations noted in areas with open water, especially along the southern Great Lakes. Northern owls were few and far between this year, with no Great Gray Owls reported—the first time since 1994.

This season, a total of 2828 people participated in the field, up approximately 10 percent over last year. An additional 1721 people spent 3101 hours watching feeders; though fewer in number than last year, they spent more time watching their feeders. Not surprising with the increased field participation, the total party hours and kilometers were greater than the previous year, with a total of 8077.42 party hours and 71,342.89 party kilometers—3938.45 hours and 5863.92 km were on foot, 4099.97 hours and 65,131.37 km by car. An additional 34 hours and 87.6 km were logged by other means of transportation, including skis and boat, both motorized and non-motorized. All regions but the Northwest had active owling in pre-count hours—a total of 336.85 hours and 3184.92 km were spent in the pursuit of these nocturnal creatures. All the participants' additional efforts did not go unrewarded this year—a total of 1,375,908 individual birds were recorded (170 birds per party hour), with a total of 172 different species, down 17 from last year.

There has been discussion about using CBC data to reveal the impact of West Nile virus on our native bird populations. Data collected over the long term will help us document potential changes, but it may be too early for us to note the impact on corvid species most susceptible to the virus. The count for American Crow is down this year (170,000), but it does, in fact, follow the natural fluctuations that we have seen in crow

populations in Ontario over the past ten years. The Blue Jay count this year was, in fact, higher than last year, with 21,518 individuals recorded. Other species garnering attention during this past CBC season were chickadees and titmice. The number of Black-capped Chickadees recorded was down from the high recorded last year, though a large migration of chickadees was not noted this year. The number of Tufted Titmice recorded in Ontario this year (92) was approximately half of last year's total (194), and falls well within the norm for the past decade. The numbers should be scrutinized closely in future seasons to look for any developing trends.

Kingston led the field this year with a total of 109 species, followed by Blenheim and Niagara Falls (with their best count ever) at 99 species, and Hamilton with 96 species. Ontario counts recorded the highest number of Trumpeter Swans this year—fewer were reported as tagged or banded, showing the increase in the wild population. Other evidence of successful reintroduction programs is the record number of Wild Turkeys recorded in the region this year (2486), well over the previous high set last year (1741). We are now finding Wild Turkeys in areas in which they were never recorded historically. Some 15 counts recorded Ruby-crowned Kinglets this year—while the number (20 individuals) is not the all-time high, this is the most circles to have recorded the species. Pine Warblers were found on four different counts this year, tying the second highest record for the Ontario region. The total number of Chipping Sparrows reported for the region was 44, the third highest count (see editorial comments for Sutton on the CBC web site). This species was found with more frequency in areas outside the South than ever before.

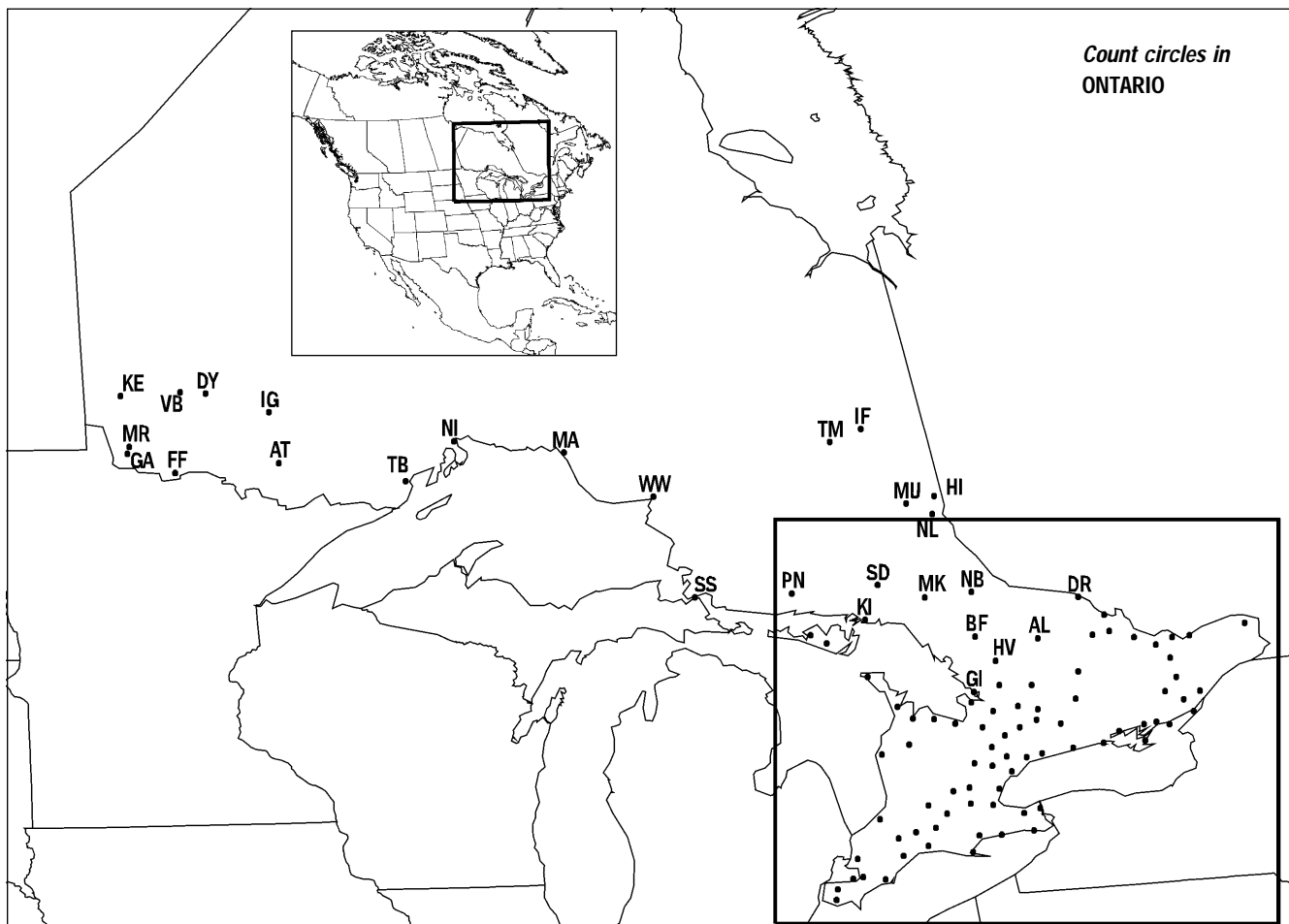
Rarities noted during the 103rd CBC period include the previously mentioned **Black-headed Gull** at Niagara Falls, which also reported the fourth Ontario CBC record for **California Gull**, a count week (CW) **Greater**

**Yellowlegs** in Burk's Falls, **White-eyed Vireo** at Prince Edward Point (first for that count and sixth Ontario CBC record), the fifth Ontario CBC record for **Spotted Towhee** in Cambridge, **Northern Gannet** in Fisherville, **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** in Bradford-West Gwillimbury, a CW **Ivory Gull** in Deep River, and a count week **Yellow-breasted Chat** in Hamilton.

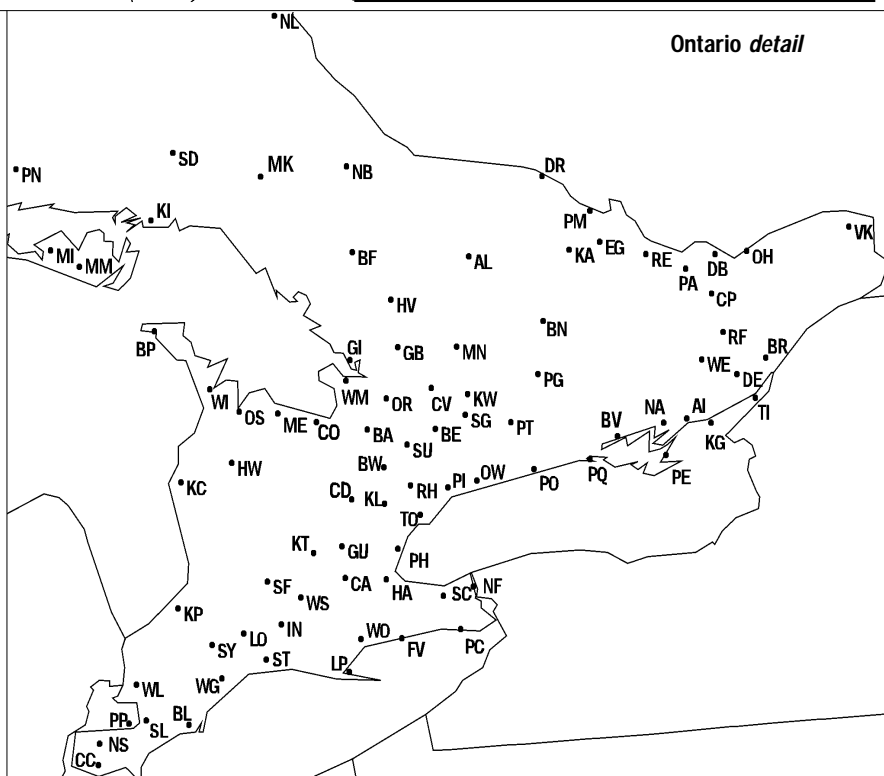
In the Northwest, 14 counts reported, down one from last year. The area produced 40,799 individuals and 80 different species. Vankleek Hill led the area with 47 species, followed by Thunder Bay with 43 and Sturgeon Lake with 41 species, respectively. Temperatures for counts in the area ranged from a high of 0 degrees C at Ignace and Vermillion Bay to a low of -14 degrees C in Morson; 155 participants recorded a total of 388 party hours—170 on foot and 220.6 by car. They clocked 285 km on foot and 3113 by car for a total of 3398 km for the area. No time was spent owling this year. Feeder watchers were active; 177 participants logged in 500 hours, surpassing that of the participants in the field by 112 hours.

Waterfowl counts were much lower than last year, as was the diversity of waterfowl species—accounted for by the fact that a majority of counts had at least some frozen water. Significant sightings included: **Double-crested Cormorant** (1, no details [ND]) at Deep River, **Green-winged Teal** (1, good details [GD]) at Thunder Bay, **Hooded Merganser** (1, GD), **Ivory Gull** (CW, adequate details [AQ]) at Deep River, **Long-eared Owl** (1, GD, ID by voice [IV]) at Sturgeon Lake, **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** (1, GD) at Thunder Bay, **Black-billed Magpie** (1, GD) at Atikokan, **Harris's Sparrow** (CW, AQ) at Vermillion Bay, and **meadowlark sp.** at Ignace and Thunder Bay.

In the Northeast, six counts reported, the same as last year. The area recorded 16,784 individuals, 70 birds per party hour. A total of 77 species was reported in this area. Sault Saint Marie led the



Ontario detail



area this year with 54 species, followed by Sudbury with 32 and Iroquois Falls and Marathon with 30 species each. The temperatures on the count days ranged from a high of 0 degrees C at Sudbury to a low of -18 degrees C in Marathon. A total of 134 participants were in the field during the count period, logging a total of 238.2 party hours (109 on foot, 128.2 by car, and 1 by motorized boat) and a total of 2900 km. Owling was conducted on the Sault Saint Marie count with a total of 0.25 hours and 0.2 km recorded. The number of feeder watchers was lower this year with 70 (92) individuals, but they spent considerably more time watching their favorite feeding station, logging 301 (121) hours.

With the majority of counts reporting frozen still water and partially open moving water, waterfowl numbers were lower than the previous year. Concentrations of waterfowl were found in Sudbury and Sault Saint Marie, with six Common Loons noted in the latter. Significant sightings for the area included:

**Trumpeter Swan** (10, ND) at Sudbury, **Gadwall** (1, GD) at Sault Saint Marie, **American Wigeon** (1, ND) at Sudbury, **Long-tailed Duck** (1, GD) and **Ruddy**

**Duck** (2, GD) at Sault Saint Marie, **Sharp-shinned Hawk** (1, GD) and **Golden Eagle** (1, GD) at Sault Saint Marie, **Wilson's Snipe** (2, GD) at

Marathon, **Northern Saw-whet Owl** (1, IV) at Sault Saint Marie, **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** (3, GD) at Sault Saint Marie, **Gray Catbird** (1, GD, photo [PH]), **Northern Mockingbird** (1, excellent details [ED], PH), and **Brown Thrasher** (1, ED, PH) at Marathon.

The Central West area had 20 counts reporting, with Halton Hills absent this year. A total of 225,662 individuals was recorded by 495 participants, down from 540 last year, reporting birds at a rate of 157 individuals per party hour. The participants clocked 1435 party hours (734.3 by car, 699.8 by foot, and 1 by motorized boat and canoe) and 15,283 km (14,065 by car, 1216.4 on foot, and 1.6 by other means). Owling was conducted by 11 counts in the area with 60.8 hours spent and 660 km traveled in pursuit; 120 people watched their feeders for 219 hours.

Counts in the area produced a total of 119 species. Peel-Halton led the field this year with 70 species, followed by Cambridge with 65, Owen Sound with 62, and Woodstock with 61. Temperatures in the area ranged from a high of 0 degrees C in Georgian Bay Islands, Hanover-Walkerton, Wye Marsh, and Woodstock and a low of -5 degrees C in Bruce Peninsula and Bradford-West Gwillimbury. The majority of counts reported minimal snow depths, with maximums varying greatly from 2 to 20 cm, the latter reported from Owen Sound and Wiarton.

At least half the counts reported frozen still water, and all counts had some moving water open, allowing for some waterfowl species to be noted, but not at the same levels as last year. Significant sightings included: **Greater White-fronted Goose** (CW, GD) in Kleinburg, **Snow Goose** (1, GD) at Mindenmoya, **Northern Pintail** (1, GD) at Kleinburg, **Canvasback** (1, GD) at Peel-Halton, **Lesser Black-backed Gull** (1, GD) at Kitchener, **Red-headed Woodpecker** (1, GD) at Kincardine and Richmond Hill (1, experienced observer [EO]), **Common Raven** (1, EO) in Guelph, **Eastern Bluebird** (1, GD) in Peel-Halton, **Hermit Thrush** in Kleinburg and Woodstock, **Spotted Towhee** (1, PH) in

Cambridge, and **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** (1, PH) in Bradford-West Gwillimbury.

The Central East area had 42 counts report this year, with new counts in Belleville, Collingwood, Hilliardton, and Machkinonje-North Monetville. A total of 340,312 individuals were reported this year by 1027 participants in the field and 1253 feeder watchers—North Bay providing the largest work force with 775 feeder watchers. Temperatures ranged from 5 degrees C in Dryden to a low of -20 degrees C in Huntsville. Kingston led the counts this year with 109 species reported, followed by Ottawa-Hull and Presqu'ile, both with 73 species counted. The area produced 144 species, logging 102 individuals per party hour. A total of 3323 hours were spent traveling 29 575.09 km during the various counts, 1349 hours on foot and 1942 hrs by car; 32 hours and 83.6 km were spent on skis and by canoe and motorized boat, adding to the totals. The feeder watchers added an additional 1870 hours to the effort, while those owling logged 100.85 hours and traveled 900.6 km.

More than half the counts reported frozen still water, while all but four had at least some open moving water. The numbers of waterfowl were down significantly from last year, and concentrations, with the exception of Mallards, Common Goldeneye, and Red-breasted Mergansers, were higher on the western part of Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. Significant sightings included: **Double-crested Cormorant** (1, marginal details [MD]) at Napanee and (1, MD) at Sutton, **Ring-necked Duck** (1, GD) at Huntsville, **Greater Scaup** (1, GD) at Minden, **Long-tailed Duck** (1, GD) at Barrie and (1, MD) at Napanee, **Sharp-shinned Hawk** (1, GD) at Algonquin, **Gyr Falcon** (1, MD) at Sutton, **Golden Eagle** (1, AQ) at Minden, (1, GD) at Pakenham-Arnprior, (1, EO) at Petroglyphs, **Virginia Rail** (1, GD) at Kingston, **Lesser Black-backed Gull** (1, EO) at Napanee, **Greater Yellowlegs** (CW, MD) at Burk's Falls, **Short-eared Owl** (1, EO) at Pakenham-Arnprior, **Boreal Owl** (1, MD) at North Bay, **Northern Saw-whet**

**Owl** (1, GD) at Algonquin, **White-eyed Vireo** (1, ED) at Prince Edward Point, **Tufted Titmouse** (1, ED) at Westport, **Carolina Wren** (1, ED) at Westport, **House Wren** (1, GD) at Kingston, **Winter Wren** (1, GD) at Huntsville and (1, ED) at Petroglyphs, **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** (1, ED) at Presqu'ile, **Hermit Thrush** (1, ED) Presqu'ile, **Yellow-rumped Warbler** (1, GD) at Minden, **Chipping Sparrow** (1, GD) and (20, questionable number) at Sutton, Presqu'ile, and **Savannah Sparrow** (1, GD) at Kingston.

In the South, 23 counts reported, with North Shore again participating. A total of 759,990 individuals was tallied during the counts, 282 per party hour, down from the 374 recorded last year. Temperatures were much colder this count period, with temperatures ranging from a high of 7 degrees C in Pickering to a low of -7 degrees C in Wallaceburg, one of the last counts conducted in the area. Most counts had minimum snow depths of 0-5 cm, with a maximum of 20 cm recorded at St. Clair National Wildlife Area. A total of 1017 observers participated in counts in the South, up from the 782 recorded last year, despite less desirable weather conditions. They logged a total of 2693.3 party hours and 20,005 party km. They spent 1610.9 hours and 2693.3 km on foot, 1075 hours and 17,708 km in cars during 103rd CBC period. Feeders were also observed in the South—101 people spent 211 hours watching theirs in the South. A total 130.8 hours and 1459.5 km were spent owling.

Blenheim and Niagara Falls garnered top honors, each producing 99 species this year, followed by Hamilton with 96 and Long Point with 87 species. The South was one of the only areas with concentrations of waterfowl this year. In fact, the high counts for Mute Swan (625), Tundra Swan (1500), Greater Scaup (13,131), Lesser Scaup (8270), Long-tailed Duck (17,369), Common Merganser (2977), and Ruddy Duck (383) for the entire country were reported from this area. It was a much better year

than last for passerines, though not at the levels seen in the past five years. Highlights in the South included: **American Bittern** (1, GD) at Long Point; **Turkey Vulture** (2, GD) at Cedar Creek and (1, GD) at Kettle Point; **Northern Gannet** (1, ED) at Fisherville; **Greater White-fronted Goose** (1, AQ) at St. Thomas; **Golden Eagle** (1, GD) at Kettle Point; **Dunlin** (1, ND) at Oshawa; **Black-headed Gull** (present for some time [PS]) and **California Gull** (PS) at Niagara Falls; **Lesser Black-backed Gull** (1, ED) at Cedar Creek and (1, GD) at London; **Red-headed Woodpecker** (1, GD, PS) at Kettle Point; **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** (1, GD) at London, (1, GD) at Point Pelee, (1, EO) at St. Catharines and (1, EO) at Wallaceburg; **Pine Warbler** (1, GD) at Cedar Creek, (1, GD, PS) at Long Point, and (1, GD) at Niagara Falls; **Ovenbird** (1, GD) at Toronto; **Yellow-breasted Chat** (CW, PH, PS) at Hamilton—a first for that count, **Chipping Sparrow** at Cedar Creek, Fisherville, Kettle Point, London, Point Pelee—all with good details; **Vesper Sparrow** (1, AQ) at Point Pelee and (1, GD) at West Elgin, and **Oregon Junco** (1, ED) at Port Colborne.

Thanks to all for your efforts. I greatly appreciated your help during the process of writing this summary—you know who you are! And “Good Birding” to you all!

#### PRAIRIE PROVINCES AND NORTHERN CANADA

Alberta, Northwest Territories, Nunavut

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The number of counts reporting from the Canadian prairies and northern terri-

tories rose dramatically this year—from 70 to 79—with 38 from Alberta, 19 from Saskatchewan, 18 from Manitoba, 3 from the Northwest Territories, and 1 from Nunavut. Most of the gains came from an increase of seven counts in Saskatchewan where, thanks to the efforts of Nature Saskatchewan, a number of important counts were sent in after a long hiatus of non-reporting. In Manitoba, a count was initiated at Morden and the Minnedosa count returned after a one-year absence, but the Austin-MacGregor count was not held, resulting in an increase of one. The total species count was 137—10 more than last year. Alberta counts accounted for 121 species, with 88 in Saskatchewan, 81 in Manitoba, 27 in the Northwest Territories, and 1 in Nunavut. Not included in the Alberta totals are two species that would have been new to the Alberta CBC list—Chestnut-backed Chickadee and Chipping Sparrow—but didn't have convincing details.

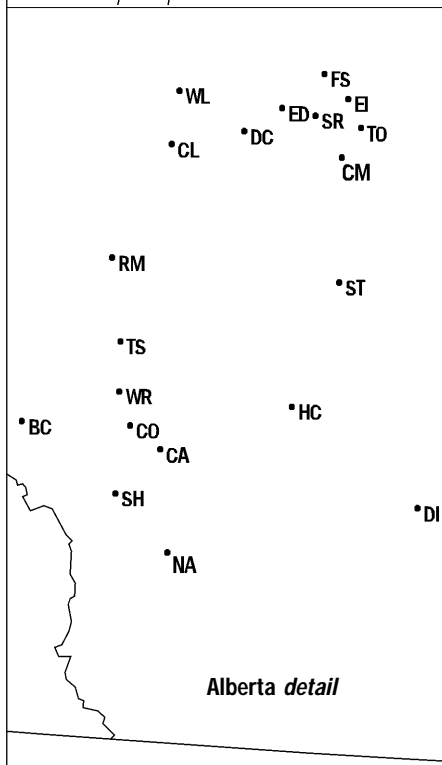
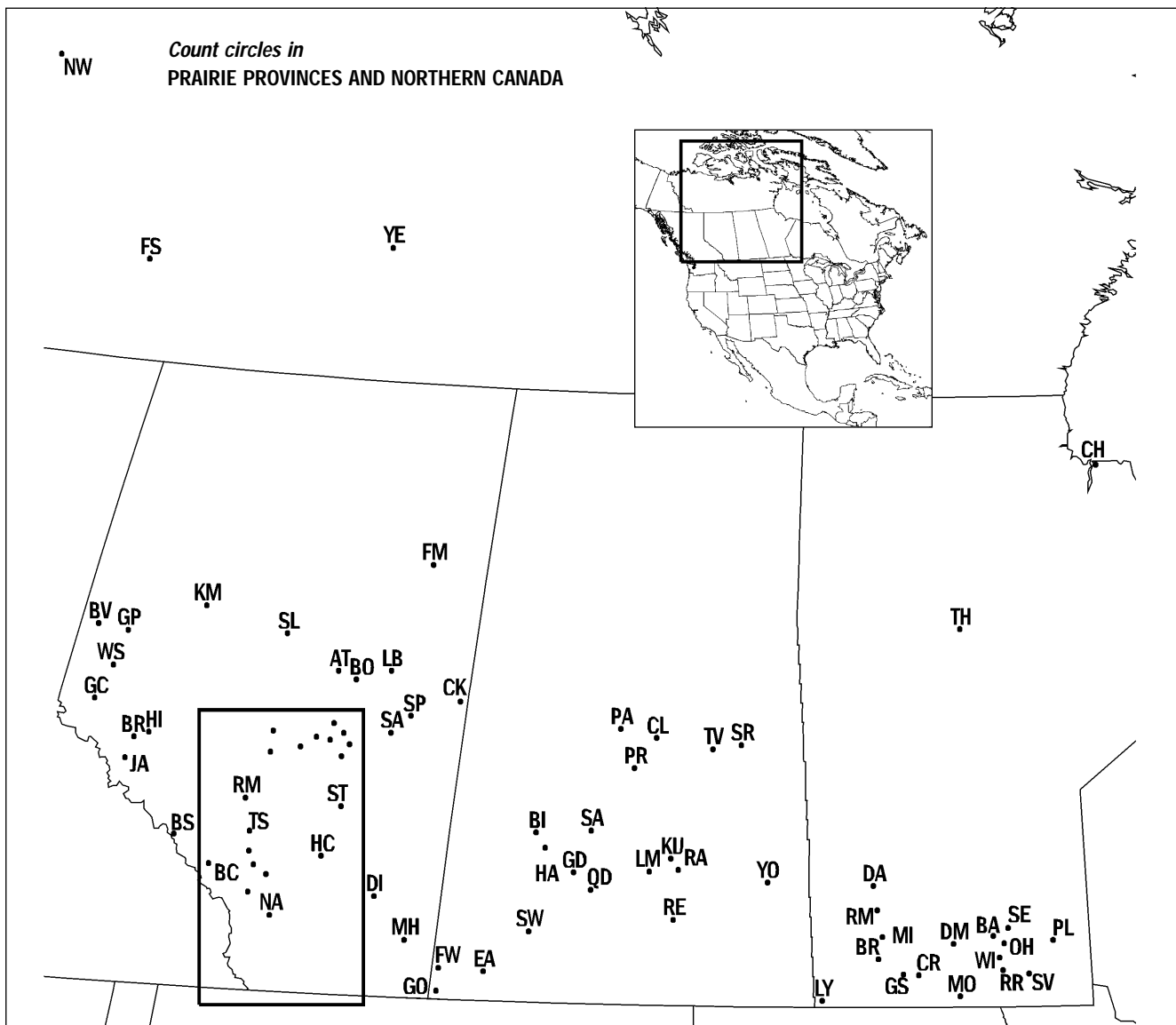
Calgary topped Alberta counts with 64 species, barely surpassing Edmonton's 63.

Saskatoon led the way in Saskatchewan with a record 46 species, closely followed by an impressive 42 at Regina. In Manitoba, Winnipeg was on top with a respectable 42 species, but Cypress River-Spruce Woods was close behind at 38. Fort Simpson tallied 18 species, the highest total in the Northwest Territories, while the single Nunavut count at Rankin Inlet reported only one species—Common Raven.

December on the Canadian Prairies was generally warmer than usual with less snow, although some areas, such as the northern parts of Saskatchewan, had more snow. A cold snap in the fall froze most water bodies in Manitoba, but farther west freeze-up was delayed, resulting in high counts for many water birds. Wabamun Lake reported the only Pied-billed Grebe, Western Grebe, and Great Blue Heron. Medicine Hat reported a Snow Goose and count week American White Pelican and Tundra Swan, unfortunately all with no details. Lac La Biche had a Ross's Goose.

Canada Geese were seen in record numbers. Most of the 19,042 reported at Calgary were lured by the combination of nearby unharvested grain fields and open water roosts along the Bow River; Saskatoon and Regina had 6194 and 6400, respectively. Two Greater White-fronted Geese at Calgary made for the first Alberta CBC record, while a single at Biggar was the fourth CBC record for Saskatchewan. Numerous counts had waterfowl that were the first local CBC records: American Wigeon at Biggar and Saskatoon, Northern Pintail and Northern Shoveler at the Qu'Appelle Valley Dam, Redhead at Minnedosa, Ring-necked Duck at Pinawa, Long-tailed Duck at Gardiner Dam, and Hooded Merganser at Brandon. The Hudson Bay population of Common Eider is essentially non-migratory, wintering on leads of open water and rarely reported on CBCs. Thus, the six on the Churchill CBC were a welcome find. Cold Lake reported the only White-winged Scoter and had a count-week Surf Scoter.

Accipiter totals were lower than last year, perhaps echoing the smaller number of “feeder birds.” Bald Eagle was widespread and relatively abundant, often near waterfowl concentrations. Single Red-tailed Hawks at Norman Wells and Swift Current were unusual. Gyrfalcons were reported quite widely, with six in Alberta and two in Saskatchewan. Observers failed to locate Greater Sage-Grouse on the Govenlock count, one of the last remaining populations in Canada. In spite of coyote predation on nesting birds, Wild Turkeys continue to survive at Fort Walsh. A single American Coot was found by Regina observers. Gulls were found in record numbers in Alberta, many of them at Cold Lake. Alberta highs were set for California (23), Herring (87), and Glaucous Gull (6 at two CBCs, a new Alberta CBC species), while Ring-billed Gull (21) tied last year's record. Both Herring and Glaucous Gulls were present at Gardiner Dam, the only gull site in Saskatchewan.



Saskatoon had the dubious distinction of setting a Saskatchewan record with 3585 Rock Doves; this species was also abundant in Alberta, where a new record provincial total of 15,150 was reached. Two Mourning Doves at Squaw Rapids were new to the local CBC list, but Eurasian Collared-Doves at Eastend (1) and Swift Current (4) added a new CBC species for Canada, as this species continues to expand its populations in the southern part of the Saskatchewan. Persistence by owlers set two new Alberta records among the nine species reported—Northern Pygmy-Owl (15) and Boreal Owl (21). Cochrane Wildlife Refuge had eight Boreals alone, a new North American record. On the other hand, only a few Snowy Owls were counted and Northern Hawk Owl went completely

unreported across the region for the first time in many years. Woodpeckers were generally common across the region, and two Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers at Edmonton were remarkable.

Corvids and chickadees were close to record numbers in Alberta and Saskatchewan in this probable final year before West Nile virus is detected. Black-billed Magpie numbers were up in Saskatchewan, with Saskatoon's 1210 establishing another record. New Black-capped Chickadees high counts came from Biggar and Saskatoon, with 920 at the latter. Yellowknife reported 1951 Common Ravens, a new Canadian record for this archetypal northern bird. White-breasted Nuthatch was considered uncommon in Alberta 40 years ago, this year a record 1143 were reported from

that province. A Mountain Bluebird at Saskatoon was only the second CBC record there. Bohemian Waxwing numbers were down from last year, although there were 7438 at Prince Albert alone.

Sparrows are normally scarce across the prairies in winter; this year many lingered. This is part of a trend, particularly for *Zonotrichia* species, and many compilers have stopped boldfacing them, though this may be premature for most counts. American Tree Sparrows were especially widespread, with record numbers in Alberta and Saskatchewan and even a single bird at Fort Simpson. Single Chipping Sparrows were reported at three sites in Manitoba (Cypress River, Pinawa, and a count-week report from Balmoral), while a report from Alberta was discounted due to lack of details. Several Harris's Sparrows were reported, including three at Eastend. White-crowned Sparrows were scattered across the region, including one at Fort Simpson. White-throated Sparrows were also more widespread than usual; the most impressive count was the unprecedented total of 22 White-throated Sparrows on the Winnipeg count, most of them at the same downtown feeder!

Juncos were also widespread; this species has significantly increased in numbers on Manitoba CBCs over the years. The Winnipeg CBC, for example, has frequently had triple digit totals in recent years, but 20 years ago, single digit totals were the norm. Whether to attribute these increases by sparrow species to more feeders, more planting of shrubbery for cover, the oft-mentioned global warming, combinations of any of the above, or as yet undiscovered causes makes for enjoyable speculation. A Fox Sparrow at Winnipeg and a Song Sparrow at St. Adolphe were both very rare, but the most remarkable sparrow report was of two Smith's Longspurs at Nanton. Details were marginal, but seemed to eliminate other possibilities—this is a new CBC species for Canada. Snow Bunting numbers were noticeably down, no doubt due to the general lack of snow cover. A Western Meadowlark

was somewhat surprising at Gardiner Dam. Brown-headed Cowbirds were noted at Saskatoon for an amazing fourth straight year.

If sparrows were plentiful, finches were not. Several compilers commented on the scarcity of Evening Grosbeaks, and numbers of other forest finches were also unremarkable. A Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch at Yorkton was east of the normal winter range of this mountain species. Common Redpolls crashed across the region from last year's boom levels. For example, five of the top seven circles across North America for redpolls last year were in Alberta, combining for 12,061 birds. In this CBC season those same five counts totaled just 100 Common Redpolls, all at Edmonton. On the other hand, American Goldfinches were seen in record numbers, and House Finches continued their explosive growth. In fact, with appearances on 13 CBCs (three counts, including the new Morden CBC, had them for the first time), the House Finch can now lay claim to being the most widespread finch on Manitoba counts.

In closing we'd like to say most compilers did a fine job, and we thank them for prompt and thorough documentation of rarities. Sadly, at the other extreme, a few counts reported questionable identifications with no documentation. For example, compilers should be aware that any blackbirds other than Red-winged, Rusty, and Common Grackle are not expected in the region in winter, and a meticulous description is necessary. Any reports lacking this will be deleted or reduced to blackbird sp., as happened with one count this year.

#### **BRITISH COLUMBIA AND YUKON TERRITORY**

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Five new counts came in from British Columbia this year—D'Arcy-Birken, Lake Country, Lasqueti Island, Pemberton, and Nanoose Bay—and the

Harrison River count was revived after a long hibernation. All these counts produced interesting results and brought the BC count total to an even 70. All five of the usual Yukon counts reported this year.

The weather was generally mild, especially in the central and southern Interior where many normally frozen water bodies were open. Temperatures in the Yukon were near normal, with lows dipping below 0 degrees F. Storms caused havoc on some coastal counts, and the Naden Harbour and Langara Island counts were not done for the second year in a row because of sea conditions. Also on Haida Gwaii, the Rose Spit count had to be rescheduled as storm-force winds forced observers to abandon the unprotected spit for their own safety.

Despite the mild weather, species counts were well down from last year, with a total of 218 in BC (231 last year) and 21 in the Yukon (36 last year). Ladner led the way again this year with 136 species, but the truly remarkable result was the 112 species at Oliver-Osoyoos. That total easily broke the old Interior record of 109 species (held by Vernon), and was made even more surprising by the five count-week species reported there—120 is possible! In the Yukon, three counts—Haines Junction, Marsh Lake-Yukon River, and Whitehorse—all tallied 18 species for the tops in the territory.

Yellow-billed Loons were more widespread than usual, with 16 reported on seven counts. Not unexpectedly, most of them were on the Queen Charlottes, with seven at Masset and three at Rose Spit. Also on the Charlottes, storm-petrels were the highlight at Skidegate Inlet, where a Fork-tailed was a first for Canadian Christmas counts and a count-week Leach's was very unusual as well.

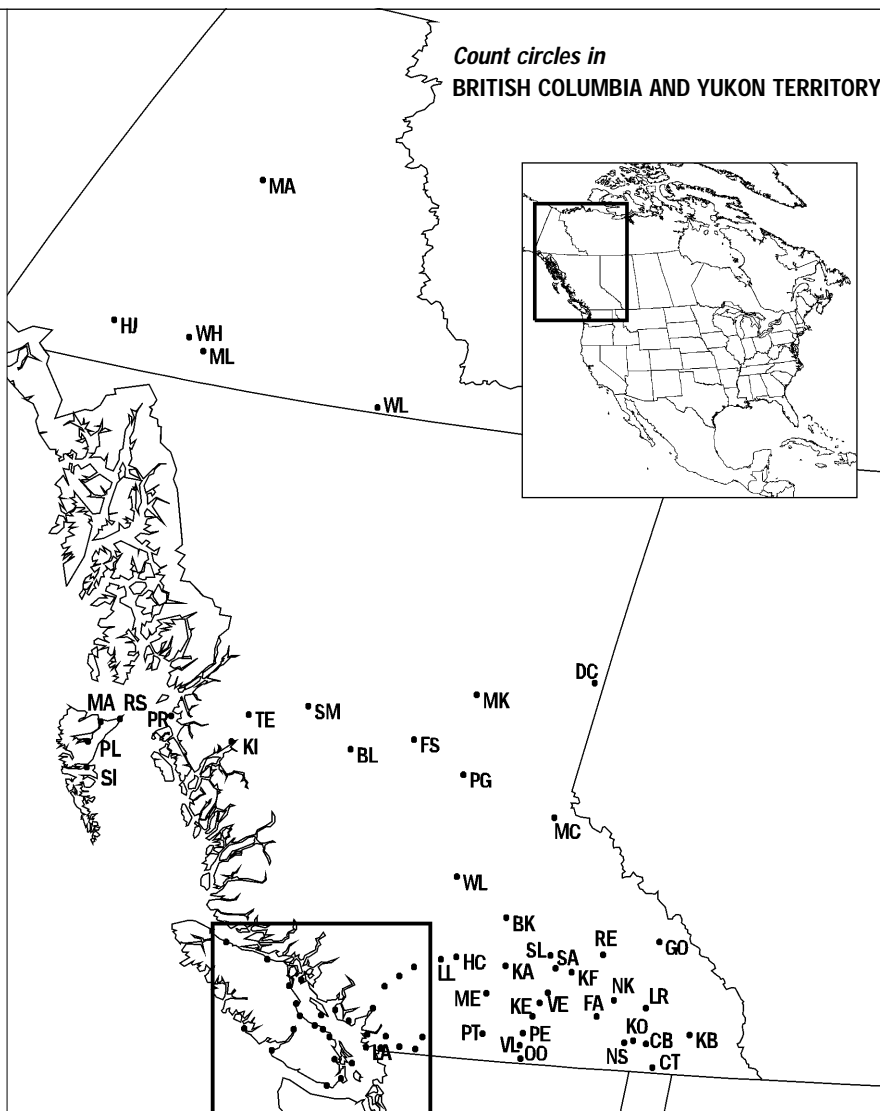
The six Trumpeter Swans at Marsh Lake, Yukon, were indicative of the mild fall and early winter in the region. Ladner set a new Canadian record of 797 Brant, while Chilliwack set another Canadian record with 629 Wood Duck. Blue-winged and Cinnamon teal were reported on four counts in the Lower Mainland.

Two Cinnamon Teal at Ladner and a Cinnamon/Blue-winged at Vancouver are not unexpected, but four Blue-wingeds at Harrison River and eight just to the north in Pemberton are amazing and were unfortunately reported with minimal details.

For the first time ever, Squamish relinquished its title of Bald Eagle capital as the revived Harrison River count squeaked by with 741 eagles to Squamish's 740. Rough-legged Hawk numbers fell for the second year in a row, with only 71 reported across the region, less than half the numbers reported two years ago. On a positive note, Ladner birders counted a record 21 Peregrine Falcons, probably feasting on all those Dunlin. Salmon Arm reported a surprising total of eight Spruce Grouse—this species is very hard to find in winter when the birds sit quietly in trees most of the day. Marsh Lake birders found five Spruce Grouse, while Watson Lake tallied the only ptarmigan in the region—four Willow. Two Soras on the Nanaimo count continued the trend of small numbers of this species attempting to winter in British Columbia. Similarly, five Sandhill Cranes at Ladner were expected, but one at Kitimat was simply extraordinary.

There were a number of interesting shorebirds reported, including single Marbled Godwits at Ladner, Skidegate Inlet, and Victoria. Deep Bay reported six Semipalmated Plovers and a Lesser Yellowlegs, both species extremely unusual in winter. In most winters, Killdeer and Wilson's Snipe are often the only shorebird species Interior counts can hope for, and in this mild winter both were certainly more widespread than usual. The most remarkable total was the five Killdeer seen at Prince George. Ruddy Turnstones showed up on three counts and Spotted Sandpipers on six, with a good tally of three at Nanaimo. The big shorebird show at Nanaimo was a total of 510 Surfbirds, a new Canadian record. Another record was set at Ladner, with 84,773 Dunlin amassed on the mudflats of the Fraser delta.

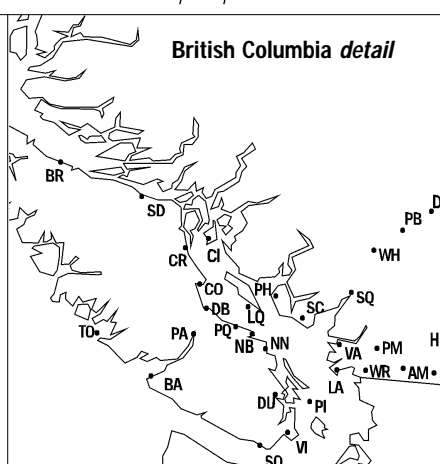
The big story on the British Columbia coast was the phenomenal number of Red Phalaropes present. This species is



rarely reported from inshore waters even during normal migration times, so a total of 580 (560 of them from Sooke!) is completely unprecedented. The previous Canadian record was eight seen at Victoria almost 25 years ago.

California Gulls wintered in unprecedented numbers, especially on the east coast of Vancouver Island, where a Canadian record 1007 at Parksville-Qualicum Beach made up one-third of the regional total of 3057. Out-of-range gulls included an Iceland at Ladner and a Lesser Black-backed at Vernon.

Sooke had some good alcid numbers, including 5533 Common Murres and 669 Ancient Murrelets, but the latter number was easily eclipsed at Pender Harbour, which reported 2028 Ancient Murrelets. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at White Rock was well documented. Five



Rock Wrens were reported from Okanagan counts: two at Oliver-Osoyoos, two at Vaseux Lake, and one at Vernon.

Lillooet Christmas counters put in a special effort to count American Dippers this year, and were amply rewarded for their efforts with a new world record of 149. Wintering Western Bluebird numbers

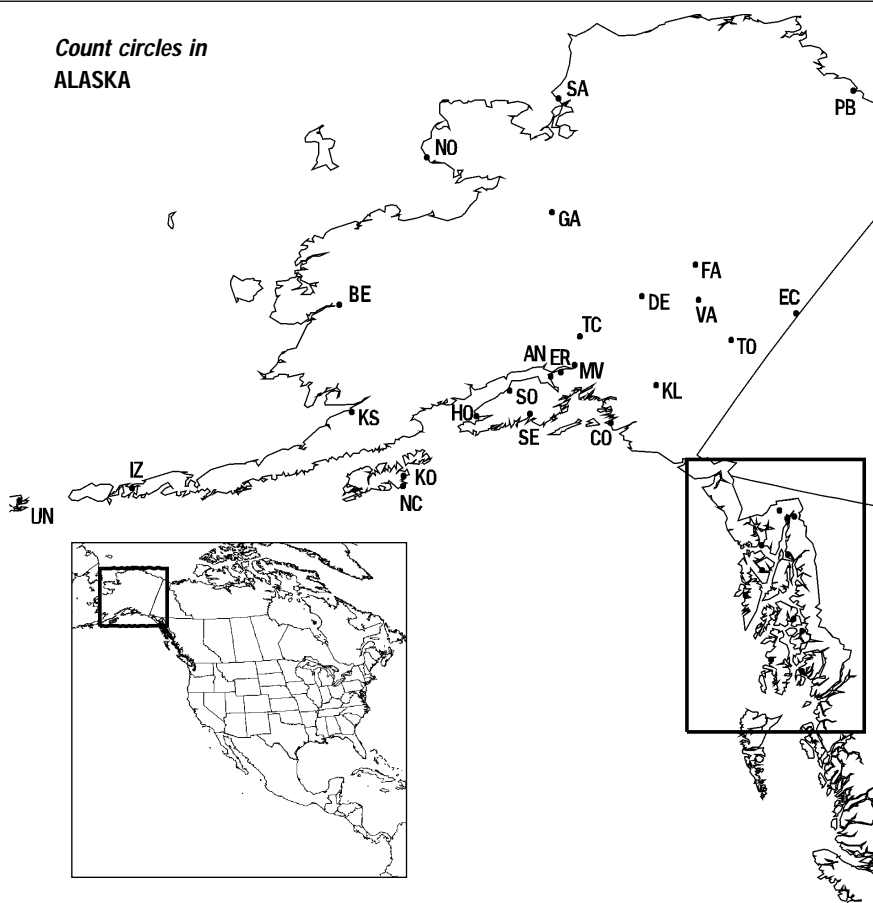
continue to climb in the Okanagan Valley, perhaps the result of more grapes left on the vines to make icewine. A total of 248 were seen in the valley, including a new Canadian record of 97 at Penticton. A single Mountain Bluebird, very rare in winter in British Columbia, was seen at Oliver-Osoyoos. Townsend's Solitaire numbers were down from last year's highs, although Hat Creek reported 59, only three off the Canadian record. American Robin numbers dropped to normal levels in the Okanagan Valley after two years of extremely high numbers, with the exception of 1441 at Oliver-Osoyoos. Perhaps most of them went to Vancouver Island, where Victoria's tally of 10,339 robins was more than a third of the provincial total.

On a sad note, the last two Crested Mynas in Vancouver were counted, but it will be the last time—both were killed in traffic accidents in the weeks following the count. Bohemian Waxwing numbers reached rock-bottom lows, with only 6780 seen throughout the region, normally a total seen on one good count. The mild winter allowed Yellow-rumped Warblers to linger in the Interior, where singles showed up at Creston, Golden, Merritt, and Williams Lake. The big news in warblers were two very rare finds—a MacGillivray's at Terrace and a Hooded at Duncan.

Sparrow numbers were generally down from last year's amazing totals. Swamp Sparrows were more widespread than normal, with 15 seen on six counts, including five at Port Alberni. An American Tree Sparrow at Haines Junction was very unusual that far north, and one seen count week at nearby Whitehorse suggested a trend. Also exciting was an errant Western Meadowlark at Mackenzie. Rusty Blackbirds showed up on five counts, while Oliver-Osoyoos had the only Yellow-headed. Kelowna's Great-tailed Grackle was counted once again in its wintering habitat at the local big mall.

What a difference a year makes, and much of that difference in North American bird distribution is due to the

Count circles in ALASKA



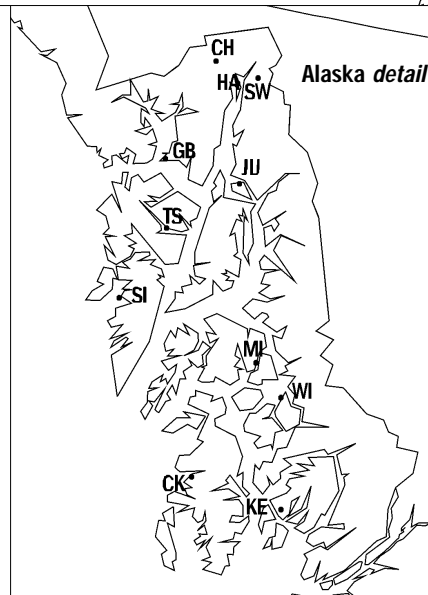
forest finches. Pine Grosbeak numbers were only a quarter of last year's, and the high numbers (if you can call them that) were in central-northern BC and the Yukon—141 at Smithers and 121 at Haines Junction. Red Crossbills were centred in the Okanagan Valley this winter, where the new Lake Country count had the high total of 294—a Canadian high this year as well. Common Redpolls hardly showed up this year, with numbers less than one-tenth of last year's—983 on 20 counts versus 14,319 on 54 counts last year. Three Yukon counts tallied a total of 11 Hoary Redpolls, but none showed up on British Columbia counts at all. Pine Siskin numbers declined sharply from last year, especially on the coast, where totals were about half what they were a year ago.

#### ALASKA

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Many times we have fantasized "what could have been" had winter's arrival

Alaska detail



just waited until after the Christmas Bird Counts. This year those "what-ifs" were realized in Alaska, where much of the state experienced unseasonably warm and dry weather leading up to the count season. While no single count established a new state high for total species or individuals, the combined counts produced 144 species (plus 4 during the count weeks) involving

139,771 individuals, both new state records. Furthermore, the weather certainly factored in the 76 Ring-necked Ducks at Glacier Bay and 19 Killdeer at Juneau, far surpassing the previous state high counts for those species of 19 and 12, respectively; single **Yellow-rumped Warblers** on four counts (Anchorage, Ketchikan, Kodiak [count week] and Matanuska Valley); and a **Swainson's Thrush** at Anchorage (where!!), a new species on the Alaska CBC list.

Statewide, a record 895 participants conducted 34 counts this past season; including two new circles at Eagle (along the Yukon River) and at Skagway. New state high counts were established for 14 species, including 9967 Bohemian Waxwings at Anchorage; 135 Gray Jays at Fairbanks; 73 Lesser Scaup, 125 Sanderlings, and 2380 White-winged Crossbills at Glacier Bay; 264 American Wigeon, 19 Killdeer, and 2 Hermit Thrushes at Juneau; 192 Double-crested Cormorants, 638 Pelagic Cormorants, and 441 Black Oystercatchers at Kodiak; and 462 Varied Thrushes at Narrow Cape (Kodiak Island), as well as the aforementioned Ring-necked Ducks.

The southcoastal region produced the greatest diversity, 113 species (79 at Kodiak, state high), and 63,306 individuals (16,430 at Anchorage and 15,077 at Kodiak, state highs) from ten counts. New regional high counts were set for Great Blue Heron (22, Cordova), Tundra Swan (14, Narrow Cape), Green-winged Teal (131, Cordova), Redhead (4, Homer), Harlequin Duck (880, Homer), Dunlin (86, Cordova), and Belted Kingfisher (17, Kodiak). Additionally, a count week hummingbird (sp) at Cordova was the first for that family in the region during a CBC. Also noteworthy were American Pipits at Homer and Narrow Cape, single Yellow-rumped Warblers at Anchorage, Kodiak (count week), and Matanuska Valley, and a Savannah Sparrow and Brambling at Homer.

A total of 105 species (74 at Glacier) and 46,297 individuals (9523 at Juneau and 9337 at Glacier Bay) were recorded

on the 11 southeast region counts. New regional high counts were set for Red-breasted Merganser (310, Glacier Bay), Northern Harrier (2, Glacier Bay), and Savannah Sparrow (6, Juneau). Also noteworthy were American Coots at Glacier Bay and Juneau, a *Western*-type gull at Glacier Bay, an **Anna's Hummingbird** at Juneau, an Orange-crowned Warbler (third CBC record) and two **Swamp Sparrows** at Ketchikan, a Harris's Sparrow at Glacier Bay, and a **Spotted Towhee** at Juneau.

Three counts in the southwest region tallied 56 species (44 at Unalaska) and 15,440 individuals (12,351 at Unalaska). New regional high counts were set for Bald Eagle (878, Unalaska), Common Murre (4067, Unalaska), Short-eared Owl (5, Izembak N.W.R.) and Common Raven (830, Unalaska). Additionally, the Unalaska count recorded a Slaty-backed Gull, new in this region on a CBC; a Tufted Duck; and three Whiskered Auklets.

In the central region, 35 species (24 at Fairbanks) and 13,398 individuals (8603 at Fairbanks) were recorded on seven counts. A new regional high count was set for Red-breasted Nuthatch (33, Trapper Creek-Talkeetna). A large gull (sp) at Tok was new to this region on a CBC. Also noteworthy were single White-crowned Sparrows at Eagle Community and Tok, and a Golden-crowned Sparrow at Fairbanks.

To the west and north, three counts recorded 11 species (8 at Nome) and 1201 individuals (794 at Bethel, including 533 Common Raven). At Nome, a Pacific Loon, King Eider, Lapland Longspur (count week), and **Eurasian Bullfinch** (count week), new to the state CBC list, were all noteworthy for the western region. And 129 Common Ravens (the only species) at Prudhoe Bay set a new high count for the northern region.

Finally, I anticipate the day when Audubon gives the public access to all the data from each CBC, including complete weather and effort, as well as the editorial comments! Here is to hoping we will soon have access to all the data.



**Northern Hawk Owl (*Surnia ulula*),  
Sandwich, New Hampshire.  
Photo/Mark Suomala**

#### NEW ENGLAND

Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts,  
New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont

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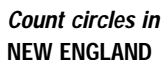
Despite some difficult birding conditions on several of the prime census days, the 103rd New England CBC was not a disappointment, least of all for the 3258 participants whose collective effort logged a total of 210 species regionwide. To locate and tally these species birders put in a total of 9162.65 party-hours and traveled 43,799.28 party-miles. While slightly below last year's statistics in all categories, inclement weather on several count days was likely a contributing factor.

Because weather is often attributed as the equalizer in determining the success, or lack of success, of the CBC effort, some mention must be made of conditions leading up to the count period. In southern New England, November was generally cold, cloudy, snowy, and wet. Boston's precipitation was over an inch above normal, including 3.6 inches of snow, more than 2 inches above the

Obviously, weather conditions during a specific count day can also affect the success of the CBC effort. Indeed, less than optimal weather hampered more than one count during the period this year. I suspect the sentiments of the Ferrisburg compiler may have been shared by more than one New England

Weather notwithstanding, records were broken, trends were maintained, new species were added, and overall the CBC was anything but lackluster. For example: the 71-year-old Cape Cod CBC added four new species to its roster; Double-crested Cormorant was recorded in triple figures on Vermont's Burlington CBC; 48 Black Vultures were recorded in Rhode Island and Connecticut; Greater White-fronted Goose and Tufted Duck maintained their virtual annual CBC appearance in

Regardless of weather conditions, whether long-term or proximate, regional CBC standings need to be mentioned. This year's accolades for tallying the greatest number of species in each state go to Cape Cod (136) in Massachusetts, Old Lyme (122) in Connecticut, South Kingstown (122) in Rhode Island, a tie between Greater Portland (90) and Bath-Phippsburg-Georgetown (90) in Maine, Coastal New Hampshire (88) in New Hampshire, and Burlington (76) in Vermont. Besides



highlighting regional list totals for the 103rd CBC, one other milestone deserves to be mentioned. Edith Andrews, the “Grande Dame” of Nantucket birding circles, is stepping down after 55 years as compiler of the venerable Nantucket CBC. Edith’s vast knowledge of Nantucket bird life, her ever-cheerful outlook, and her enthusiastic support of birders of lesser experience have for half a century made her a central figure in ornithological circles, not only on “The Rock,” but throughout New England. Thanks, Edith, for all that you have done for the birds and for all you have given to the birders of the region!

No matter what the weather, there always seems to be a liberal sprinkling of remarkable early winter records during the CBC period. Species deserving special mention this year are **White-rumped Sandpiper** at Cape Cod (perhaps only the second-ever in New England and one of few winter records for North America), **Rufous Hummingbird** at Old Lyme (a second regional CBC record), **Yellow Warbler** at Buzzards Bay (remarkably late), and **Black-throated Gray Warbler** at Stratford-Milford (present for days before the count). In addition to the extreme rarities already listed, other notable occurrences include no fewer than five carefully identified **Pacific Loons** at Greater Portland, Buzzards Bay, Cape Cod, Stellwagen Bank, and Truro; **three Great Egrets** at Napatree and one at Cape Cod; single **Ospreys** at Orono-Old Town and Quabbin; and a **Black-and-white Warbler** at Cape Cod. Three notable count week species that unfortunately failed to make the “A-Team” were **Sedge Wren** at Nantucket, **Black-throated Blue Warbler** at Augusta, and **Brewer’s Blackbird** at Newport County-Westport.

A number of the trends highlighted in recent past summaries were continued or maintained during the 103rd New England CBC. Rather than enumerate once again all of these trends in detail, suffice to say that among the species whose continued regional increase seems unequivocal are Snow Goose, Hooded Merganser, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture,

Cooper’s Hawk, Wild Turkey, possibly Razorbill, Monk Parakeet, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Common Raven, Eastern Bluebird, and American Robin. Although there are other species that justifiably belong in this category, the regional numbers of those listed particularly stand out this season. In the “Column for Special Concern,” outstanding examples include American Kestrel, Northern Bobwhite, possibly American Coot, Hairy Woodpecker, and Evening Grosbeak. While the explanation for these trends includes many possibilities, their reality exists. Regional birders are encouraged to give careful thought to these examples, and those individuals that are charged with their conservation should perhaps take special notice.

Before describing other highlights from the 112 New England CBCs this winter, generic comments can be offered about several key groups of birds. First it was abundantly obvious that many winter irruptive species essentially stayed home this season, clearly underscoring the reality that the severity of the local weather has little to do with the presence or absence of northern visitors. For example, note the regional totals for the following species: Snowy Owl (6), Short-eared Owl (19), Bohemian Waxwing (67), Northern Shrike (66), Pine Grosbeak (46), Red Crossbill (19), White-winged Crossbill (78), Common Redpoll (110), Pine Siskin (187), and Evening Grosbeak (132). Only Rough-legged Hawk (117) and Northern Goshawk (38) made any kind of statement regionwide, and in northern New Hampshire, totals of Boreal Chickadees at Pittsburg (68), Errol (19), and Sandwich (19) were deemed notably higher than usual.

A thoughtful examination of all the regional CBCs invariably produces some outstanding nuggets from the routine slurry of data comprising the whole. What follows are some of this year’s treasures. Seabirds made an especially outstanding showing, partly due to weather conditions on some of the count days, but also because of exceptional baitfish concentrations inshore during the late fall.



“Ipswich” Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis princeps*), Middlebury, Vermont. Photo/Rodney Olsen

Particularly notable were nine Northern Fulmars and two **dark-backed shearwaters** (species?) at Mid-Cape Cod, an unidentified **storm-petrel** (possibly a Wilson’s!) at New London, unprecedented numbers of Pomarine Jaegers (e.g., Mid-Cape Cod [24], Cape Cod [8], Stellwagen Bank [7]), and an awesome regionwide total of 12,864 Razorbills. The Razorbill figure is especially notable when one considers that the Razorbill is one of the rarest breeding auks in North America and that the eastern North American breeding population is estimated to only comprise 38,000 pairs (see “Status and population trends of the Razorbill in eastern North America” by G. Chapdelaine et al., in *Occasional Paper* No. 105, Canadian Wildlife Service, 2001). Other outstanding alcid counts pertained to Dovekie (Cape Cod [113] and Stellwagen Bank [44]), Common Murre (Cape Cod [36] and Cape Ann [21], and six Thick-billed Murres at New London.

Highlights among the waterfowl included two Tundra Swans at Ferrisburg; Greater White-fronted Goose at Hartford; “Eurasian” Green-winged Teal at Cape Cod, Marshfield, and Plymouth; **Blue-winged Teal** at Newport County-Westport, Buzzards Bay (2), and New London, (2); Northern Shoveler at Middlebury; Redhead at Saxton’s River



Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*), Woodbury-Roxbury, Connecticut. Photo/Dave Tripp

and Coastal New Hampshire; **Tufted Duck** at Worcester and Martha's Vineyard; Common Eider at New London (2); King Eider at Greenwich-Stamford and Old Lyme, and 72 Barrow's Goldeneyes at Orono-Old Town. Totals deserving special attention are 49,000 Common Eiders at Martha's Vineyard, 140 Harlequin Ducks at Cape Ann, 42,600 Black Scoters at Martha's Vineyard (undoubtedly a new regional high CBC total), and a staggering 525,505 Long-tailed Ducks at Nantucket. The Long-tailed Duck total is especially significant in light of a pending proposal to develop a massive offshore wind farm on Horseshoe Shoals in Nantucket Sound.

The six-state total of 403 Bald Eagles set a new modern high count, while Sharp-shinned Hawk (489) and Cooper's Hawk (351) continue to amaze, particularly in the light of what seems to be happening to New England's wintering American Kestrel population. The region's only Golden Eagle appeared at Middlebury, and a Gyrfalcon at Greater Boston was a returning individual banded in Boston in 1998.

The always-elusive Spruce Grouse was missed entirely this winter, and with a regional grand total of only 33 Northern Bobwhites, it seems likely that soon this

species could be equally hard to locate! The combination of vegetation succession, development, and an increase of mammalian predators in southern New England is apparently having disastrous effects on this once common, perky little game bird. Among the 13 species of shorebirds recorded during the count period, the most outstanding were three American Oystercatchers at Martha's Vineyard and another at New Haven, a Greater Yellowlegs at Northern Berkshire, and three Western Sandpipers at Cape Cod. Unusual gulls featured a lingering Laughing Gull at Greater Boston, Little Gulls at Nantucket (4) and Cape Cod (2), and a regional total of 30 Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Almost as noteworthy was the paltry regional total of four Glaucous Gulls. The apparent decrease in numbers of this winter visitor may largely be due to the increased closure of regional landfills. Always a rarity in New England in the winter, a Forster's Tern at South Kingstown was a welcome surprise on that Ocean State CBC.

A grand total of 104 Northern Saw-whet Owls was possibly the greatest reward for the 589.27 hours of owling effort put in by New England birders this winter, since the only other luminary owl was an obliging diurnal **Northern Hawk Owl** at Sandwich. Four Red-headed Woodpeckers in Connecticut and another at South Kingstown were somewhat unusual, as were northern New England appearances of Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at Unity, Nashua-Hollis, and Peterborough-Hancock. Other species "pushing the envelope" were Eastern Phoebe at Saxton's River, Fish Crow at Truro, Common Raven at Concord, MA, and Storrs (3), Tree Swallow at Buzzards Bay (23) and Martha's Vineyard (5), Carolina Wren at Machias Bay, House Wren at Ferrisburg and Andover, and Hermit Thrush at Waterville (2) and Pemaquid-Damariscotta. Lest any readers are still under the delusion that American Robins are only worm-eating harbingers of spring, note the totals of 18,876 at South Kingstown, 8729 at Marshfield, and 5323 at Concord, MA!

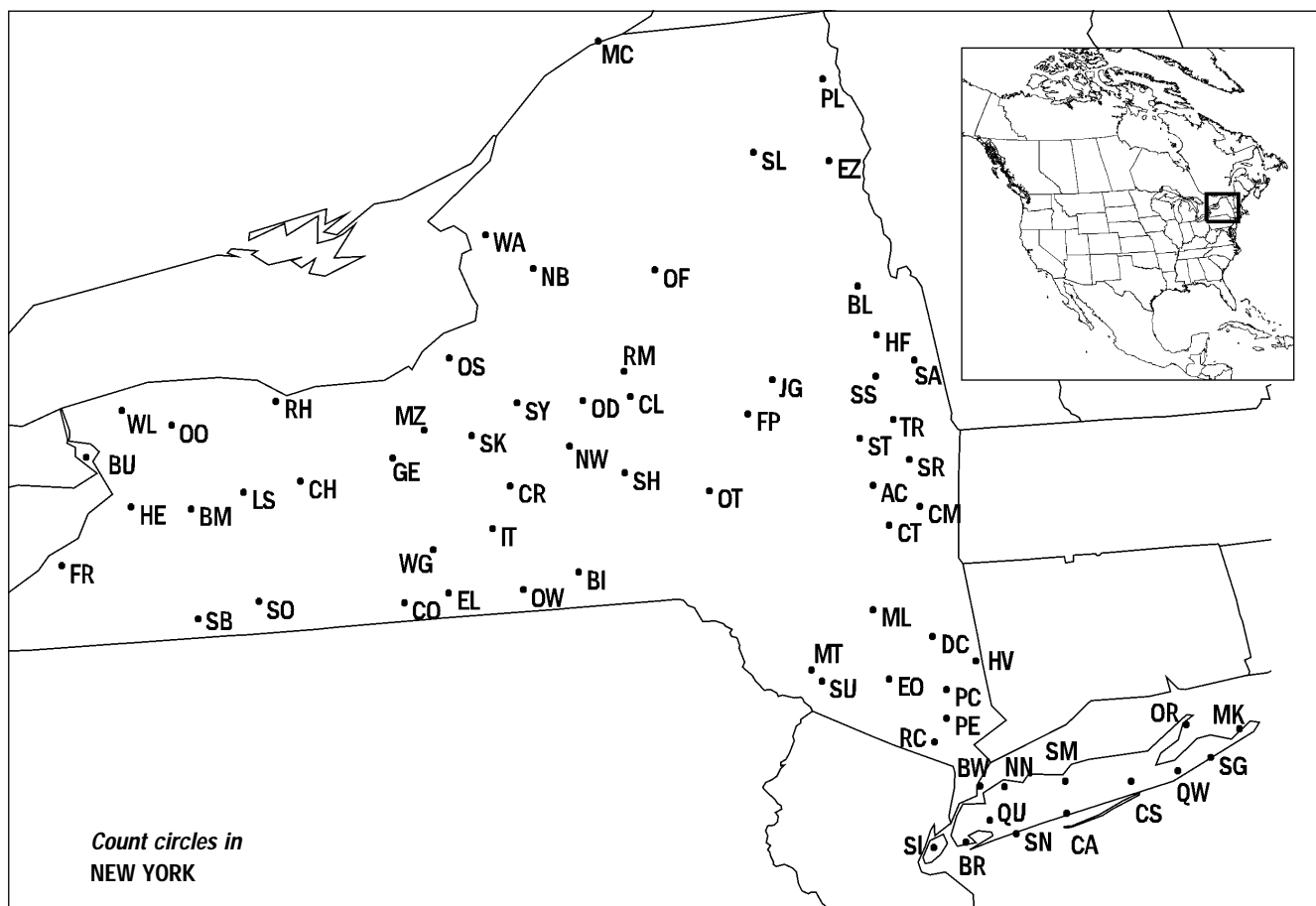
Among the already mentioned unusual or out of season warblers should be added Nashville Warbler at Napatree, South Kingstown, and Westport; Pine Warbler at Middlebury; and Yellow-breasted Chat at Greater Portland, along with a remarkable total of 29 individuals in Massachusetts. One has to wonder about the survivorship of chats following a winter such as 2002-2003! Sparrows making the hit parade one way or another this season included Chipping Sparrow at Brattleboro (16!) and Waterville; Clay-colored Sparrow at Buzzards Bay, Newburyport, and Greenwich-Stamford; Vesper Sparrow at Middlebury and Groton; Lark Sparrow at Napatree; a well-photographed "Ipswich" Savannah Sparrow inland at Middlebury; and Lincoln's Sparrow at Concord, MA.

In closing I wish to express my continuing gratitude to all the compilers who so faithfully pull together their data each year, who demand details of unusual species from usually tired and bleary-eyed counters, and who dutifully provide needed information when called for by the regional editor. In addition I tip my hat to all who annually go out, practically regardless of weather and holiday distractions, and count birds at Christmas. Thanks everyone.

#### NEW YORK

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New York had 70 counts this year, reporting a total of 207 species for the 103rd CBC. Sagaponack led with 134 species, with Southern Nassau and Montauk just behind at 133. Tops upstate were Buffalo at 94 species and Rochester with 87. A strong winter storm hit the area around the middle of the period, and several counts reported having fewer than normal birds because of bad weather conditions. Despite the cold, open water on most counts produced good numbers of ducks upstate. The "half-hardy" passerines also were well represented.



A number of Long Island counts had record-high counts of loons, especially Red-throated. The Montauk count not only had high counts of Red-throated (2935, highest in the nation) and Common (1560, second highest in country) loons, but also tallied a Pacific Loon. An Eared Grebe seen count week in Dunkirk-Fredonia was the only report of this species. A Black-crowned Night-Heron in Hamburg-East Aurora was a bit far away from the rest of its species, which were concentrated on Long Island. The one Snowy Egret and two Tricolored Herons on the Southern Nassau count were a bit unusual.

Turkey Vultures were concentrated in the southern Hudson Valley, with singles seen on two Long Island counts, and two birds appearing in Geneva. A moribund Turkey Vulture seen close to Geneva in January (specimen to the Cornell University Museum of Vertebrates) indicated that not all of these lingering birds make the southern flight to more hospitable climates when the weather turns bad. Nearly all of the

125 Black Vultures seen in the state were on the Southern Orange County count, with only Putnam (4) and Rockland (2) reporting them, too.

Trumpeter Swans were reported at Dunkirk (1) and Rochester (2). This species is to be expected more and more, as reintroduction programs in other areas produce more wandering individuals. I urge people to report Trumpeter Swans whenever they are encountered so that we can get a good picture of its invasion/recovery in the East. Lingering Tundra Swans nearly matched last year's all-time high, with 902. Once again, most of those were at Montezuma (560), with significant numbers also at Buffalo (159), Conesus-Hemlock-Honeoye Lakes (114), and Watertown (42). Greater White-fronted Geese turned up in small numbers across the eastern part of the state, with four on the Sagaponack count, two on Staten Island, one at Montauk, and one in Dutchess County. Few Snow Geese lingered in New York this year, in marked contrast to last year. They were found in very small numbers

on 22 counts throughout the state. Only the Queens count had any significant concentration, with 824. Next highest was Chatham with 53.

Good numbers of the less common dabbling ducks were reported upstate. Eurasian Wigeon was found on six counts downstate, for a total of nine individuals. It was noted as unusual in most counts, but this was the 11th occurrence on the Bronx-Westchester count and the 17th for the Brooklyn count. The Sagaponack count led this year with four individuals. Green-winged Teal were unusually common upstate, albeit in small numbers, seen on eight northern counts. Downstate, the teal of note was the Eurasian form of Green-winged, seen at Brooklyn, Southern Nassau, and Sagaponack. The Orient count managed to take the state leadership in Long-tailed Ducks back to Long Island with 1898, but Rochester came in a strong second at 1062. Only a very few were seen outside the normal wintering areas. The 59 Mallard X American Black Duck hybrids reported

in the state were expected, but the seven Mallard X American Wigeon hybrids and the single Ring-necked X Scaup reported from the Northern Nassau count were unusual. Unfortunately, no details were provided.

Raptor numbers were generally high. An Osprey at Chatham and one count week in Queens were the only reports. Bald Eagle numbers remain strong. They were reported on 30 counts, with two more seeing them count week. The total of 141 broke last year's all-time high of 108, good news for their continuing recovery. Northern Goshawk was reported on 17 counts, with a high of three at New Woodstock. Twelve counts reported all three species of *Accipiter*. A Broad-winged Hawk reported at Bolton Landing was intriguing, but the details were marginal. A Golden Eagle was seen on the New Woodstock count. Merlins are becoming regular across much of the state, and not just on Long Island. Six upstate counts reported them, with another three having them count week. A total of 21 counts combined for a total of 45. Peregrine Falcon numbers remained strong, with 31 reported from 12 counts.

Wild Turkey numbers were up in many places, including on Long Island. Nearly every count in the state reported turkeys (62 out of 70 counts), with the high being 432 at Cortland. Northern

Bobwhite continued its decline on Long Island with only 39 individuals reported from four counts. A Common Moorhen was reported at Rochester without comment or details.

Buffalo had the only upstate Killdeer. Other unexpected shorebirds included a Semipalmated Plover on the Captree count, a Lesser Yellowlegs, a Long-billed Dowitcher, and a Willet (likely a Western) on the Southern Nassau count, and a Red Knot on the Montauk count. Two Red Phalaropes in Lake Ontario at Oswego-Fulton were seen for several weeks.

A **Great Skua** at Montauk was the most outstanding bird in the state this year. It also came with a commendable six rare bird reports! A number of observers got good looks at a bird on the beach, and a probable second bird was seen the day before the count. Razorbills were abundant around Long Island, with 1140 on nine counts. Montauk naturally had high numbers (891), but the 116 on the Bronx-Westchester count were amazing. Montauk added Dovekie and Black Guillemot for three alcids. A Thick-billed Murre reported on the Brooklyn count had no details, and must be considered suspect with all the Razorbills around.

Only three coastal counts had Barn Owls, and only three widely scattered counts reported Snowy Owls. Numbers of Eastern Screech-Owl and Great Horned seemed robust. No unusual hummingbirds were reported this year. Several western hummingbirds in the New York City area disappeared with the onset of cold weather before the count period, in contrast to the previous warm winter. A number of counts in central New York reported record numbers of most of the common resident woodpecker species. Could this increase be a result of the beech blight sweeping the state? A fair number of flickers were found upstate, despite the cold weather.

Eastern Phoebe was reported on seven counts, with only St. Bonaventure being away from the coast or the lower Hudson. No exciting flycatchers were found on Long Island this year.

Continuing the expansion of both Common Ravens and Fish Crows, eight counts had three *Corvus* species; most from along the lower Hudson. Saranac Lake had to reach the four-corvid mark the old-fashioned way, with Blue Jay, Gray Jay, American Crow, and Common Raven. West Nile virus undoubtedly played a role in bird populations this year, but the effects were difficult to discern (see related stories in this issue, beginning on page 12). A few counts even reported record high counts of Blue Jay and American Crow. Still, the total of 48 American Crows reported from Staten Island was sobering and perhaps reflective of the continuing loss of these susceptible birds in areas that experience repeated outbreaks of the disease.

Carolina Wrens were found all over, with lots of record-high counts. We'll have to wait to see if they managed to survive the harsh winter. Winter Wrens were in good numbers upstate. Only four House Wrens were found downstate. Ruby-crowned Kinglet appeared on a dozen counts upstate. A single Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was found on the Sagaponack count. Eastern Bluebirds were in good, and sometimes record, numbers upstate, with good representation downstate as well. Hermit Thrush appeared on more upstate counts than normal, and often with multiple sightings. Gray Catbirds were seen at scattered localities upstate, with three at Syracuse. Only one report was made of Bohemian Waxwing: a single bird well described from Honeoye Lake.

Warblers were mostly absent or in low numbers upstate, but seemed nearly abundant downstate. Nashville Warbler was found on three counts, Orange-crowned Warbler on eight, Pine Warblers on four, and Yellow-breasted Chat on five. Single Common Yellowthroats were seen on the Bronx-Westchester count and upstate at Montezuma. Ovenbird was seen and photographed at feeders in Peekskill and Schenectady.

American Tree Sparrows turned up in record numbers at a few counts in the middle of the state, with 1302 in Ithaca.



Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapillus*), video playback image, Peekskill, New York. Photo/Jackie Jones

Although regular on downstate counts, Chipping Sparrow is uncommon to rare upstate in winter. This year eight upstate counts reported Chipping Sparrow, and most included good descriptions of the winter plumage with a brown (not red) cap. Field Sparrows turned up at six upstate counts. A single Clay-colored Sparrow at Queens and Grasshopper Sparrows at Montauk and Sagaponack were well described. A female Rose-breasted Grosbeak was photographed at a feeder in Queens. Three Baltimore Orioles were reported, one each at Putnam County, Bronx-Westchester, and Sagaponack.

It was a very off year for winter finches. Evening Grosbeak was nearly absent, with only five reports. A report of 41 on the Fort Plain count was the only one of note. Saranac Lake managed only three individuals. One report of Pine Grosbeak came from Conesus-Hemlock-Honeoye Lakes with no comment. The only cross-bills reported were one White-winged from Elizabethtown and another at Massena-Cornwall. Common Redpolls were reported on five counts, with small flocks of 10 and 11 at Rome and Hudson Falls, respectively. Pine Siskin was reported on seven counts, with a high of 12 at Saranac Lake, flocks of ten at Hamburg-East Aurora and Hudson Falls, and scattered individuals across the state.

## NEW JERSEY/PENNSYLVANIA

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A chilly fall and early winter led to somewhat lower counts than tallied in most of the past decade. Even though the count period itself was warmer than the early part of the season, the weather was generally poor, with much wind and rain on many count days. Perhaps reflecting the maturity of the counts, as well as declining habitat, no count in either state produced a new high, but there were a number of outstanding rarities, including first state CBC records.

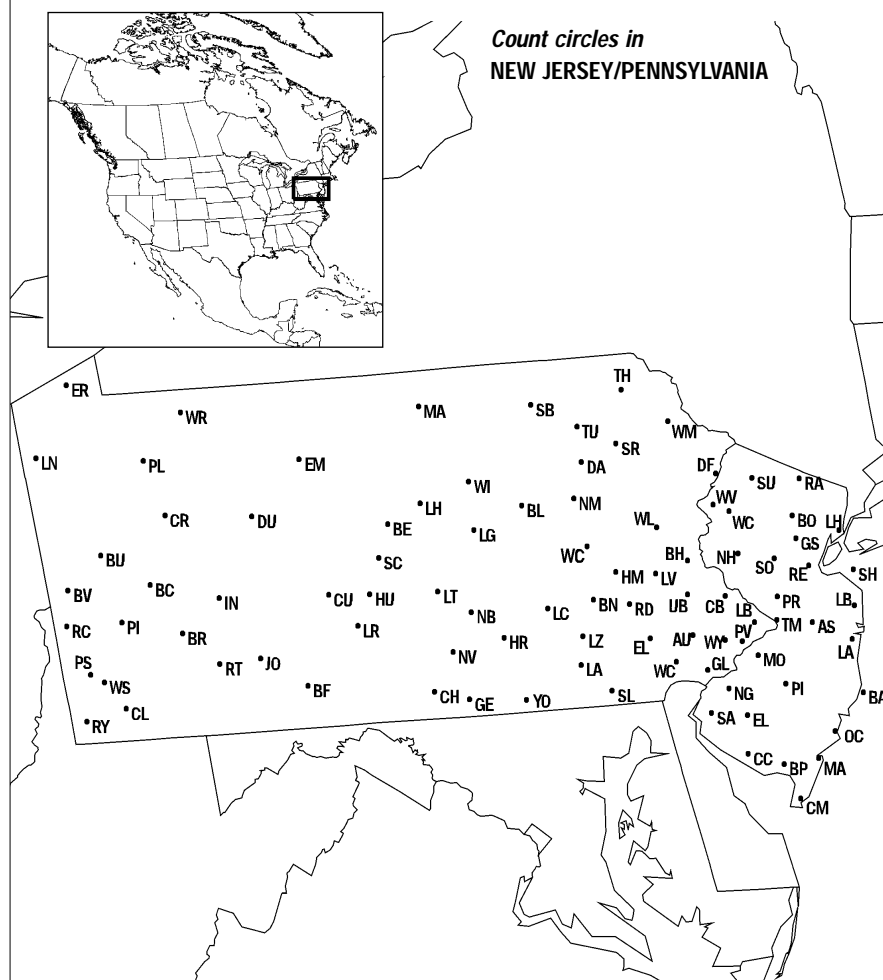
New Jersey's 27 counts reached a cumulative total of 204 species, some-

what above average, but the mean of 97 species per count was down three from last year. Cape May led the way, as usual, with an excellent 160 species, including two state firsts among a long list of rarities. Cumberland County moved into second place with 129 species, and the still hours of the predawn facilitated some outstanding totals of owls. Oceanville had the third highest count with 126, followed by Barnegat and Belleplain, each with 125 species.

Loon numbers were down 30 to 40 percent from last year, perhaps reflecting the colder weather, and only three counts produced single Red-necked Grebes, giving no hint of the massive invasion that occurred in February. Waterfowl numbers were above average, and the 37 species tallied included single Ross's Goose (Belleplain), Blue-winged Teal, and Barrow's Goldeneye (Sandy Hook), as well as two Greater White-fronted Geese, three Eurasian Wigeon, and three King Eiders.

A record-tying four Ospreys were found on three counts, while the outstanding total of 120 Bald Eagles topped the previous high by 20 individuals. Amazingly, 21 of the 27 counts produced Bald Eagles. One of the outstanding rarities of the season was a **Broad-winged Hawk** located on the Cape May CBC by a veteran raptor enthusiast. Cumberland County provided the only Golden Eagle, but 16 counts yielded a record total of 28 Merlins. Winter reports of Merlin were greeted with great skepticism only 20 years ago, but significant numbers of this aggressive little raptor have apparently changed their habits. The total of three Ruffed Grouse was the second lowest ever.

Nine Sandhill Cranes on the Cumberland count were part of a group of pure and mixed (Common X Sandhill) cranes that have taken up residence in the county in the past few years. An impressive total of 21 species of shorebirds recorded included New Jersey's first CBC **Long-billed Curlew**,



on the Cape May CBC. This long-staying individual (still present in March 2003) is only the third state record in more than 100 years, and the first to linger. The only other shorebirds of note were the three Marbled Godwits at Oceanville. Gulls were again well-represented, with only Black-headed missing from the list of 11 species. Only a single Forster's Tern was found (at Barnegat), but the Long Branch CBC had three species of alcids, including a Dovekie, 36 Razorbills, and the first New Jersey CBC **Black Guillemot**. Barnegat added another 13 Razorbills, and Oceanville 1.

A single Snowy Owl at Sandy Hook was one of the few seen in the state all winter. Totals of 41 Short-eared and 20 Northern Saw-whet owls were indicative of a good flight year for both species. New Jersey's first CBC **Ruby-throated Hummingbird**, a male coming to a Cape May feeder, was a surprise. Although this is the state's only breeding hummingbird, it is not a species expected in winter, when four other species have occurred. Red-headed Woodpeckers dropped from an outstanding 51 in last year's invasion to a mere eight this season, only two counts reporting the species.

Twenty-four Eastern Phoebees were found on eight counts, and a Western Kingbird present in Cape May for some time was the first CBC sighting in a dozen years. Only two Northern Shrikes were detected, but a Loggerhead Shrike at Princeton was an outstanding find. It was not an invasion year for Red-breasted Nuthatch, with only 27 individuals on 15 counts, down from 375 last year. Four House Wrens and four Sedge Wrens were about average for recent years. A cooperative Varied Thrush at Walnut Valley was the first ever for a New Jersey CBC.

Only seven species of warblers were detected, but included an excellent 17 Orange-crowned Warblers and an impressive seven Yellow-breasted Chats. A lingering **Western Tanager** at Cape May was the first in 11 years, but the only sparrow of note was a Lincoln's Sparrow at Moorestown. Winter finches

were essentially non-existent, with only 53 Purple Finches and six Pine Siskins.

Sixty-five counts were submitted from Pennsylvania, with Curtin dropping out from last year. The total number of species sighted, 147, was a drastic drop from last year's 167, and the lowest total in more than 20 years. For a change, no count stood out as a leader, as three CBCs (Southern Bucks County, Upper Bucks County, and Southern Lancaster County) recorded 91 species. This was the lowest state-leading total since 1966, when Glenolden recorded a mere 90 species, and only the second time since then that no count registered 100 or more.

A total of only nine Common Loons compares with last year's 780, and there were no Red-throated Loons or Red-necked Grebes. Twenty-nine species of waterfowl included a single Greater White-fronted Goose at Central Bucks County. Bald Eagle numbers continue to rise, with a record 155 noted on 29 counts, well above last year's record of 124. Single Golden Eagles were at Southern Lancaster County and at Wild Creek-Little Gap, but the continuing surge in wintering Merlins hit a new record of 25 individuals on 18 counts. While not all of these were satisfactorily documented, anyone who has spent a lot of time in the field in winter over the past two decades cannot have failed to notice the genuine increase in the presence of this species.

A Common Moorhen at Glenolden and a **Purple Sandpiper** at Erie were two of the season's highlights. In addition to the Purple Sandpiper, only the expected Killdeer, Wilson's Snipe, and a couple of American Woodcock represented the shorebird clan, but the eight species of gull included an excellent tally of four Thayer's Gulls at Southern Bucks County, along with an excellent total of 178 Lesser Black-backed Gulls, down only slightly from last year's record.

The total of five Northern Shrikes was down a bit compared to eight in 2001, but Loggerhead Shrike was missed for only the third time in the past 20 years—not a good sign for this declining species. An Orange-crowned Warbler was located

on the Southern Bucks County CBC, as was a well-photographed **Black-throated Green Warbler**, one of the best birds of the season. Three counts reported single Lincoln's Sparrows, each of them supported by convincing details, while the premier rarity of the season was an immature male **Black-headed Grosbeak**, well-photographed on the Southern Lancaster County CBC.

A single Brewer's Blackbird was at Bethlehem-Easton and the season's only Common Redpoll was found in Upper Bucks County. Bloomsburg produced the only three Evening Grosbeaks, as this species' disappearance from the region continues unabated.

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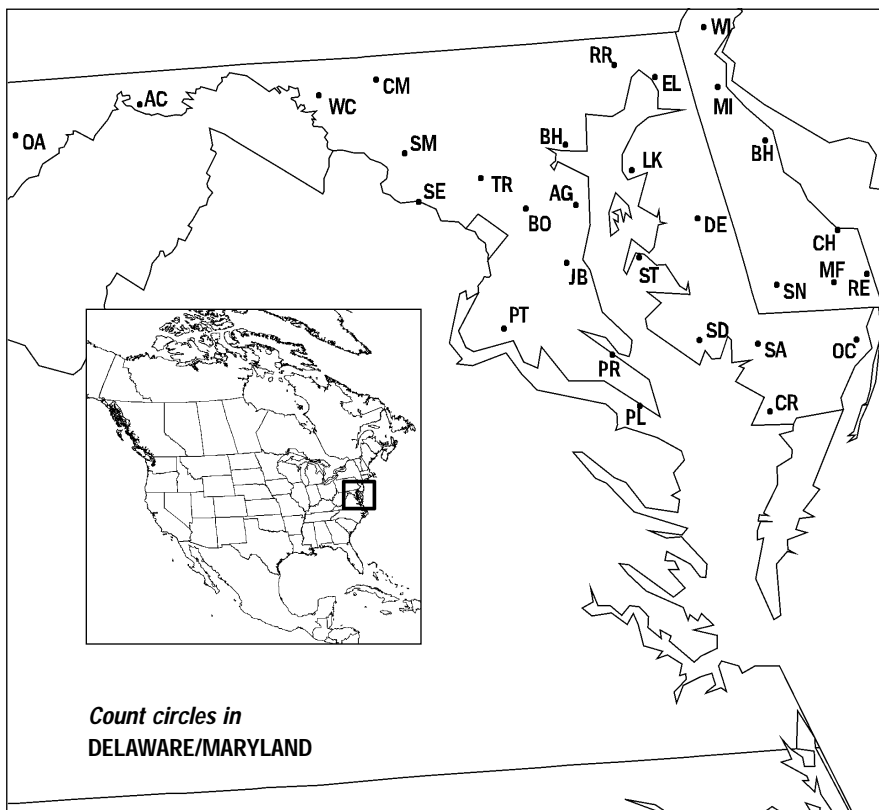
#### DELAWARE/MARYLAND

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I will move from west to east through Maryland and Delaware's major physiographic regions in an attempt to give a feel for notable sightings by area. Before that, I want to mention the passing late last year of Rick Blom. One of Maryland's best-known birders and educators, Rick will be missed by all of us who knew him from his teaching, his writings, and his field work.

Weather patterns (medium- and short-term), food availability, human interference, and many other factors have impacts on bird movements and abundance during CBC season. The Delaware/Maryland region was once again locked in the grip of a continuing drought that led to severe water shortages over much of the area. Extended warm weather seemed to put off the annual appearance of rarities from early November until well into December and early January. Warbler, sparrow, and winter finch species that were relatively abundant during the 102nd Christmas Bird Count season were present only in low numbers this year. Perhaps they knew better than human weather forecasters of the rigorous winter still to come? American Crows were in



noticeably low numbers this year, well below average in many of the counts and in all of the count areas. Is this an early indicator of some of the dire West Nile virus predictions?

The Allegheny Mountains, the western-most area in Maryland, is host to only a single count, the Oakland CBC. Six doughty counters braved the snow and cold this year to pin down 46 species. Notable were a pair of well-described Wilson's Snipe and a tally of 5666 American Crows, third-highest count for this species in the past 19 years and against the trend noted above.

Moving eastward to the Ridge and Valley section of Maryland (Allegany County, Catoclin Mountain, and Washington County), unusual or high count species this year included Long-tailed Duck and Lincoln's Sparrow in Allegany County, Tufted Titmouse and Carolina Wren in Washington County, and Snow Goose, Wild Turkey, and Cedar Waxwing in the Catoclin Mountain circle.

The Piedmont Plateau (Elkton, Rock Run, Sugarloaf Mountain, Triadelphia Reservoir, and Seneca) had high counts for many waterfowl and raptor species. New birds were seen in the area this

year—Brown Pelican in Elkton, Merlin and Yellow-headed Blackbird in Rock Run, an Osprey in Triadelphia, and Wilson's Warbler in Seneca.

The Western Shore of the Maryland Coastal Plain has Christmas Bird Counts in: Annapolis-Gibson Island, Baltimore Harbor, Bowie, Jug Bay, Point Lookout, Patuxent River, and Port Tobacco. The Patuxent River count, in its seventh year, set new highs for 42 species. Annapolis tallied 38 Great Cormorants, Baltimore Harbor had a Nashville Warbler, Bowie added Brant to its cumulative species list, and Jug Bay added Brown Pelican, Great Cormorant, and Lapland Longspur. Point Lookout added Blue-winged Teal, and Port Tobacco reported Wild Turkey and Rufous Hummingbird.

The lower Eastern Shore (Crisfield, Denton, Lower Kent County, Ocean City, St. Michaels, Salisbury, and Southern Dorchester) also reported higher than average counts of many waterfowl species. Unusual species included Painted Bunting at St. Michaels, Orange-crowned Warbler and Grasshopper Sparrow in Lower Kent, Baltimore Oriole in Ocean City, Lincoln's Sparrow in

Salisbury, and a high count of 39 Long-billed Dowitchers in Southern Dorchester.

The upper Eastern Shore (Bombay Hook, Cape Henlopen-Prime Hook, Middletown, Milford, Rehobeth, Seaford-Nanticoke, and Wilmington), as with the lower shore, had good counts of waterfowl, with some good new birds added to cumulative lists. Bombay Hook hosted an American White Pelican, and Cape Henlopen both Long-eared and Northern Saw-Whet owls. Middletown reported its first Harlequin Duck, while Rehobeth added Barn and Long-eared owls, and Seaford had a Blue-headed Vireo.

## WASHINGTON, DC/VIRGINIA

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Thirty-nine counts from the Virginia-Washington, DC, area were submitted for the 103rd CBC, two fewer than last year's total. It is regretful that the long-standing counts of Charlottesville, Warren, and Big Flat Mountain are missing. They have been on the roster for many years. Rained out in 2001, Dismal Swamp was back in the lineup.

The premier count of 2002 was Washington, DC. What an incredible count it had! In an otherwise lackluster year, birders in the nation's capital found three species new to that count—Rufous Hummingbird, Nashville Warbler, and Indigo Bunting—an astounding feat considering that the count is 66 years old. Additionally, observers also recorded the only Yellow-breasted Chat in the state, chalked up record highs of eight species, and added a couple Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, an Orange-crowned Warbler, and a Black-and-white Warbler just for good measure. No other count in the region could match its stellar performance this year.

The most significant aspect of many counts in this region was the low numbers of individual birds, especially on Coastal Plain counts. For the first time since 1990, the total number of birds found on all counts in the region

An average of 46,000 Snow Geese have been counted throughout the state over the past six years. The total of 8550 snows in the 103rd Count represents a 71 percent decrease. Ruffed Grouse numbers have been quietly dropping for a number of years with a dismal statewide total of only 12 birds this season. Northern Bobwhite numbers continue to plummet, in spite of Herculean efforts to expand and improve its habitat. Loggerhead Shrikes continue to struggle along. Only 12 were found on five CBCs, all in the Mountains and Valleys region, except for 1 at Lake Anna.

Over the past 30 years, the average number of Sedge Wrens was around 35-40 per year; numbers have dropped substantially in the past three years with only 12 recorded this year, 34 last year, and 10 in 2000. A Vesper Sparrow at Cape Charles was the only one found, a far cry from the halcyon days of the 1970s and '80s when often 50 or more would be recorded from all around the state. There was no invasion of those coveted Northern invaders this year. Only 33 Red-breasted Nuthatches, 89 Purple Finches, and 50 Pine Siskins appeared, mostly in the western part of the region.

time high of 1553 individuals, a whopping 418 percent increase of the previous high of 371 set in 2000. Double-crested Cormorants saw an increase of 158 percent. Besides a good showing on the Coastal Plain, Black-crowned Night-Herons popped up in some other unusual places—Waynesboro, Shenandoah-Luray, and Manassas Bull Run. Black Scoter numbers showed a 500 percent increase over the past 10-year average of 900. Red-breasted Merganser was another species that occurred in the highest numbers since 1991.

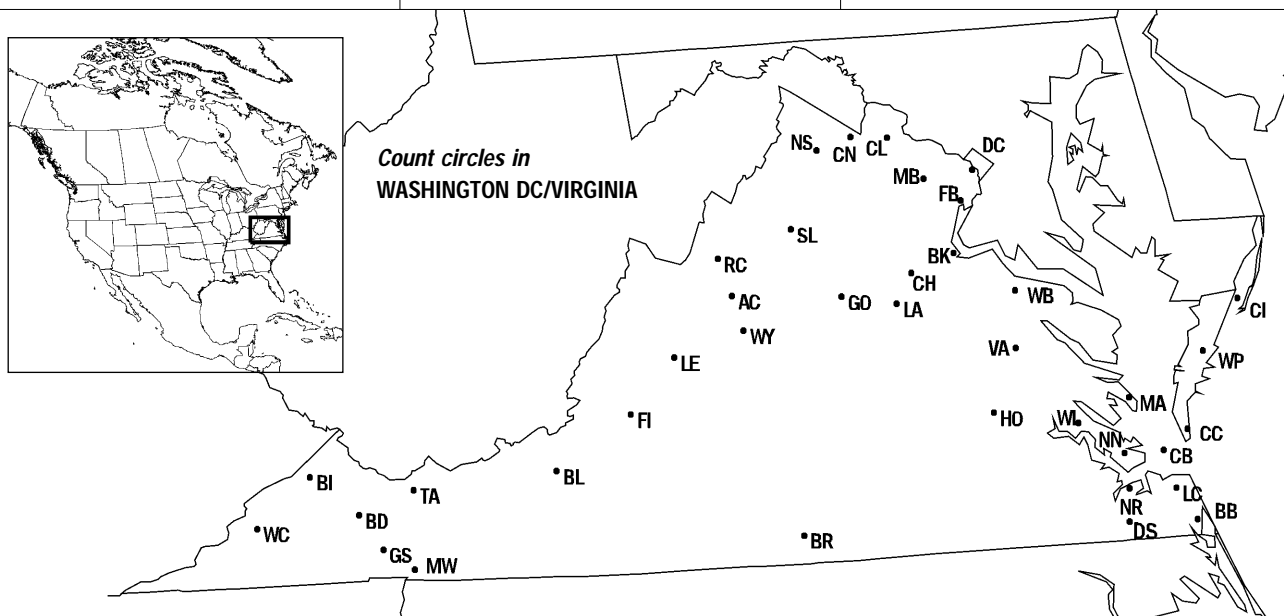
Bald Eagle numbers reached record highs again—no surprise there, but the eye-popping total of 81 Red-shouldered Hawks at The Plains boosted the state total for that species to an all-time high of 489 birds. Merlins are becoming more widespread in the state, with individuals found in four Northern Virginia count circles, along with those discovered at Augusta County, Shenandoah-Luray, and Blackford.

Short-billed Dowitcher numbers more than doubled from counts in past years to a record of 761, with 631 found at Chincoteague alone. Ring-billed Gull numbers soared to almost 125,000 birds, the most ever, with all the coastal counts reporting record or near-record tallies. Lesser Black-backed Gull counts also rose to record highs with a total of 121 recorded on 11 CBCs.

**Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), Shenandoah N.P.-Luray, Virginia. Photo/Neal Lewis**

Newport News, Walkerton, Central Loudoun, The Plains, Northern Shenandoah Valley, Rockingham County, Waynesboro, and Lexington. Although American Robins seemed to be everywhere this winter, only a few CBCs listed record highs, and the overall total was not significant. On the other hand, Gray Catbirds showed up in high numbers, most notably the first in 19 years at Wise County.

The Ipswich race of the Savannah Sparrow took a nice jump, with 35 individuals found on five of the counts on Eastern Shore and Southside Virginia. Fox Sparrows enjoyed a surge in numbers, with 670 recorded around the state, the second highest total. This represents a 300 percent increase over the previous





**Northern Rough-winged Swallow**  
(*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*), Fort Belvoir,  
Virginia. Photo/Ben Jesup

30-year average of 220 birds. Twelve Lapland Longspurs at Hopewell helped boost the total of that species to 17 overall, the most since 1993. Two Painted Buntings appeared at Little Creek (for the fourth CBC record). At Back Bay, an astounding 34 Brewer's Blackbirds appeared in a feedlot and were impeccably documented by two experienced birders who carefully noted field marks on each one. This is the highest state total ever.

Despite low numbers, there were some really "good" birds found. Photographs and video of the Clark's Grebe at Little

Creek were obtained and have been evaluated by the state's record committee. Another record with excellent photographs was of two Northern Rough-winged Swallows on the Fort Belvoir count, the first state winter record for that species. The only truly unusual gull to show up was a Mew Gull at Little Creek, a sighting that will require review by the state records committee for acceptance. Whether or not a Monk Parakeet is considered a "good" bird, one showed up at Nansmond River, the first on a Virginia count in nine years.

Some surprising misses were: American White Pelican; Red-necked Grebe (first miss in six years, and in a winter when they were surprisingly plentiful); American Avocet (seen the last four years); Whimbrel; Little Gull (first miss since 1996); and Black-tailed Gull (even though this species is the rarest of rare, it was still a thrill to chalk it up on a count three out of the past four years). Not found were neither an Iceland nor a Glaucous gull (at least one or the other, or both, have put in an appearance over the past decade); Dovekie (almost never seen on a Virginia CBC, but with the significant influx of this species along the mid-Atlantic coast this winter, one would have thought one or two might have had the good grace to turn up on a count day); Prairie Warbler

(found 9 of the past 12 years); Lark Sparrow; Dickcissel (seen all of the past nine years); Common Redpoll; and Evening Grosbeak (first miss since 1964!).

## NORTH CAROLINA

**Ricky Davis**

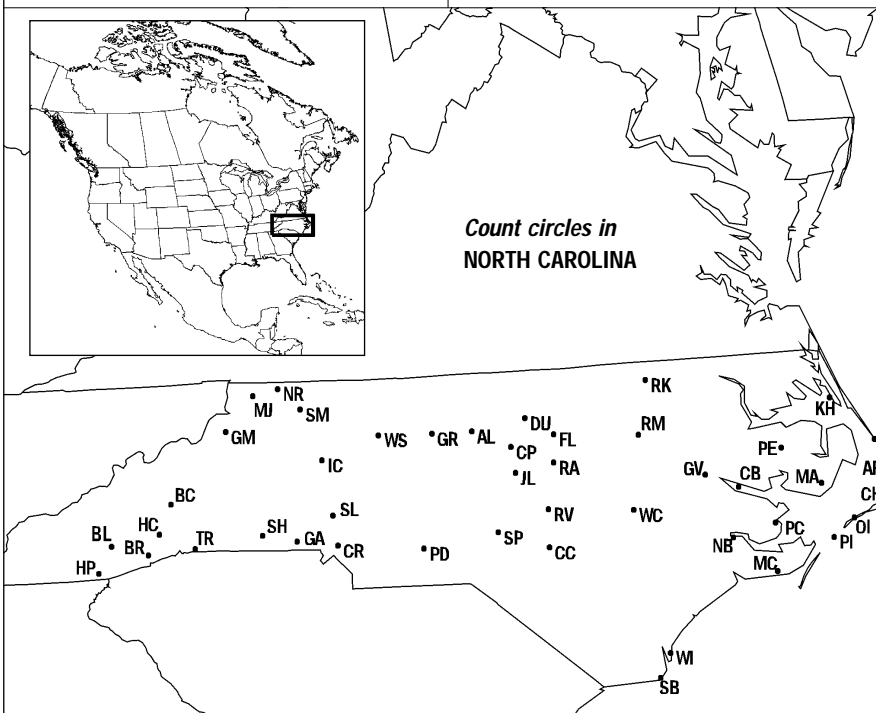
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The 103rd CBC in North Carolina consisted of 45 counts, another record number for the state. The new count, Balsam, came from Jackson and Haywood counties in the mountains, providing more needed coverage in that part of the state. Weather conditions were amazingly good for the entire count period. Only one count (Mount Jefferson with light snow/rain on December 14) had precipitation! Wind, which is usually the most detrimental weather condition to counting birds, was not a problem. Fog was reported only once, that being in the A.M. at Mattamuskeet. Temperatures were generally average across the state, with no real extremes noted. Thus all this good weather made for some good conditions on the counts. This season, 230 species were found, including three forms and one hybrid. A total of 1,513,091 individuals were tallied, with several large blackbird flocks boosting the numbers. Perennial leader Southport had an impressive 171 species, followed by Morehead City (164) and Wilmington (159). Leading tidewater counts were Mattamuskeet (143), Alligator River (115), and New Bern (115). Wayne County once again had a good count for the inner coastal plain with a total of 111. Piedmont leaders included Raleigh (97), Chapel Hill (94), Southern Lake Norman (94), Jordan Lake (90), and Pee Dee (89). Mountains counts with the best totals were Henderson County (83), Brevard (77), Buncombe County (69), Balsam (69), and Tryon (64).

Several very rare birds were found on the counts this year. A **Pacific Loon** was at Wrightsville Beach on the Wilmington count. A **Long-billed Murrelet** was seen briefly but well in the surf at Fort Macon



on the Morehead City count. Not only was this a first for the state's cumulative CBC list, but it was only the second report for North Carolina. The first was at Jordan Lake in December 1994. **Cave Swallows** were found at Wilmington (2) and Southport (1). These birds were obviously part of the major influx that occurred along the eastern seaboard during the late fall and early winter. A female **Western Tanager** at Cape Hatteras provided one of the very few reports for a CBC in the state. A female **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was a good find on the Pee Dee count, another species that has been found on very few CBCs in this state.

An impressive total for North Carolina was the 24 American White Pelicans at Mattamuskeet. Winter Anhingas were at the usual locations (Greenville, New Bern, Wilmington, Southport) while lingering long-legged waders included a Great Egret at Raleigh, a Cattle Egret at Cape Hatteras, and Glossy Ibis at Bodie-Pea Islands and Cape Hatteras. Green Herons were found much more than normal, with seven coastal and one piedmont (Jordan Lake) count reporting this species! Waterfowl highlights were one Ross's Goose (Pettigrew), three small Canada Geese at Winston-Salem identified as the "Richardson's" form, and five Common Eiders at Southport. A Rough-legged Hawk was found at Alligator River, the most reliable location for this species in the state. Inland Merlins were at Brevard, New River, Southern Lake Norman, Iredell County, and Falls Lake. Northern Bobwhites continued their decline with only 14 counts reporting them, although Alligator River's total of 174 was not only encouraging but quite impressive.

Sandhill Cranes were found again at Morehead City (3) for the second year in a row. Shorebird highlights included excellent Piping Plover counts at Portsmouth (26) and Morehead City (18), 6 Avocets and 2 Marbled Godwits at Mattamuskeet, 20 Lesser Yellowlegs inland at Wayne County, and 2 Least Sandpipers inland at Chapel Hill. There were only four counts reporting Spotted Sandpipers with two being inland at Wayne County. The only

rare gull was one Thayer's at Cape Hatteras, although the four Black-legged Kittiwakes from the beach at Hatteras were quite noteworthy, too. Barn Owls were found more frequently than usual, with six counts reporting them, including a family of four at Mattamuskeet. After several years' absence, Northern Saw-whet Owls were found; this time two were at Cape Hatteras. Hummingbirds continued to impress; highlights this season were a Calliope on the Charlotte count, six counts reporting Rufous, and two Black-chinneds (Brevard, Wilmington) with the one at Wilmington being an adult male! A Western Kingbird was found at the fly-catcher hot spot of Alligator River. Encouraging was the high total of 32 Loggerhead Shrikes on the Raven Rock count. This species has been in very low numbers for many years. Quite unusual far inland in winter were Gray Catbirds at Balsam, Charlotte, and Pee Dee. In the warbler department, Morehead City had a Nashville Warbler, a Northern Waterthrush, and a Yellow-breasted Chat. Northern Parulas, one of the rarest early winter warblers in the state, were found on three counts, with two at Mattamuskeet and singles at Cape Hatteras and Southport. The Mattamuskeet causeway also harbored a Cape May, a Black-throated Blue, and three Yellow-breasted Chats! Yellow-throated Warblers also made a good showing, being found on four counts (Cape Hatteras, Kitty Hawk, Southport, and Wilmington). Also quite rare in winter inland were the Orange-crowned at Charlotte and the Common Yellowthroat at Balsam. A single Bachman's Sparrow at Southern Pines and a Clay-colored at Morehead City were the only of these species found this season. Lark Sparrows were at Cape Hatteras (1) and Wayne County (2), with the Wayne County birds being returnees from last winter. Only three Vesper Sparrows were found (Mount Jefferson, Rocky Mount, and Wilmington). The rare Grasshopper Sparrow was found on three counts with singles at Cape Hatteras, Pee Dee, and Tryon. Only one Henslow's Sparrow was found (Pettigrew), continuing the decline

in reports over the past several years. Two counts (Balsam and Southport) reported Lincoln's Sparrows, with the Balsam bird being most unexpected in the mountains. Lapland Longspur was found once, that being two birds on the Chapel Hill count. Painted Buntings were found on four counts this year with one away from the immediate coast at Mattamuskeet. Baltimore Orioles made an excellent showing with high counts at Mattamuskeet (16), New Bern (12), and Rocky Mount (11), plus one rather far inland at Charlotte. Winter finches were hard to find once again, with only 14 counts reporting Purple Finches, 6 reporting Pine Siskins, and 1 reporting Evening Grosbeak. Were the 12 reported on the Jordan Lake count for real?

In closing, I would like to say that in general, compilers are doing a great job in getting the results into the online database. This has been very trying for many of those who are electronically challenged! But as for submission of details, we are still lacking somewhat. I urge all compilers, who are responsible for getting all details on their count, to be very diligent and make sure that details get written and turned in as close to the date of the count as possible. No one wants to be contacted by the editor and told that missing details could cause a good bird on their count to be deleted. And if a compiler is unsure of what birds need details, a quick call to the editor is always appreciated.

## SOUTH CAROLINA

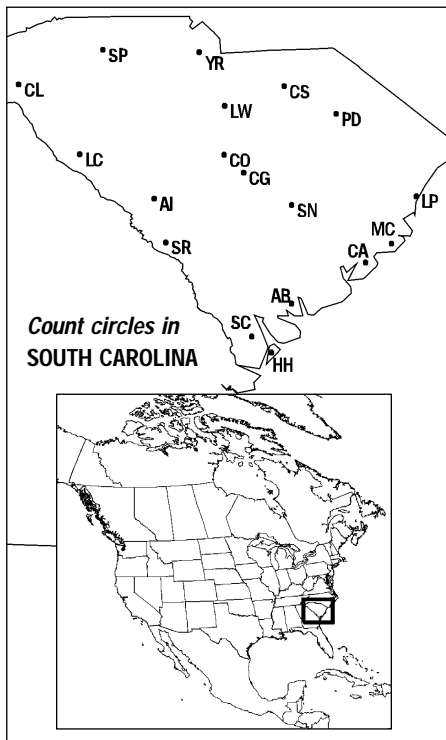
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The 103rd CBC in South Carolina was very similar to the 102nd Count in terms of the number of count circles (the same 18 circles) and also in terms of the number of party-hours (1237.5 party-hours versus 1254.55 party-hours for the 102nd). The weather this year was much better. No count had significant rain or snow, and the coldest temperature reported was 27 degrees F. A few counts (for example Hilton Head Island) reported high winds, but, in general, things were very nice.



All in all we had a typical count season in South Carolina, if any CBC can be said to be typical.

The ACE Basin count recorded satisfying numbers of water birds, including 119 American White Pelicans, 640 Little Blue herons, 278 Wilson's Snipe, and a record high 309 Tundra Swans. Other goodies included a record count of 50 Sedge Wrens and a Western Tanager.

The Aiken counters turned up a Bufflehead and two Spotted Sandpipers, both new to the count, as well as their first ever Eurasian Collared-Doves.

Charleston counters found a few goodies, such as a Western Kingbird and six Brant, both difficult species to find in South Carolina at any season. Good numbers of certain shorebirds were reported, including 605 Semipalmated Plovers, 918 American Oystercatchers, and 5142 Western Sandpipers.

Congaree Swamp counters found a Painted Bunting and four Eurasian Collared-Doves in the town of Saint Matthews.

Clemson counters reported 43 American Woodcocks, five Eurasian Collared-Doves, an Orange-crowned Warbler, 19 Palm Warblers, and 29 Brewer's Blackbirds.

Columbia had a typical count. The best species was a Ross's Goose (new to the count).

Carolina Sandhills reported 16 Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (record high).

Hilton Head Island had a very good count this year. Counters found 11 American White Pelicans (record count), as well as a Lesser Black-backed Gull (new to the count) and a Painted Bunting. I wonder about some of the other goodies, however. Four American Tree Sparrows were reported (with marginal details), but no Field Sparrows were seen. American Tree Sparrow is a true rarity anywhere in the state, but would most likely be seen in the Piedmont (such as on the Spartanburg count) rather than on the coast.

The Long Cane count featured 21 American Woodcocks, a Barn Owl, two Lincoln's Sparrows (new to the count), and two well-described Indigo Buntings (also new to the count).

As usual the Litchfield-Pawleys Island counters came up with several good birds, including a Long-tailed Duck, a Common Goldeneye, a Caprimulgus sp., two Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, three Rufous Hummingbirds, and a Painted Bunting (new to the count). A Cave Swallow, part of the big fall invasion of this species, was found during the count week.

Lake Wateree is probably the best place in South Carolina for wintering Bonaparte's Gulls. Counters found a record 2930 Bonaparte's Gulls and 1257 Double-crested Cormorants.

McClellanville had a good count this year, but notably without many rarities. Two Long-billed Curlews were to be expected on this count, and 8906 Tree Swallows are a lot for so far north on the Atlantic Coast.

The best birds on the Pee Dee Area count were two Mississippi Kites, reported without details. This species is very rare in winter in South Carolina.

The Sun City-Okatie count continues to report fantastic numbers of Anhingas (239) and Green Herons (6). This area must be one of the best for these species wintering north of Florida. Other rarities here included an Eastern Kingbird (good details), a Ruby-throated Hummingbird, a Baltimore Oriole, and a Le Conte's Sparrow. An incredible 27 Purple Finches were reported, as well

as 5 Evening Grosbeaks. It would be nice to have details on such rarities, especially for the Purple Finches, which are so easily confused with House Finches.

Santee National Wildlife refuge continues its tradition of being a great inland count. No rare geese were reported this year, but a flock of 16 Sandhill Cranes partially made up for this. Other rarities at Santee included a Common Goldeneye, a Merlin, two Le Conte's Sparrows, and swallows—three Trees and two Barns (new to the count).

Spartanburg counters found many rarities, including a count week American Bittern, a Yellow Warbler, two American Tree Sparrows, a Clay-colored Sparrow, and a Lark Sparrow.

At the Savannah River Site folks reported a Red-necked Grebe (no details), eight Black-and-white Warblers, two Grasshopper Sparrows, and four Henslow's Sparrows.

## GEORGIA

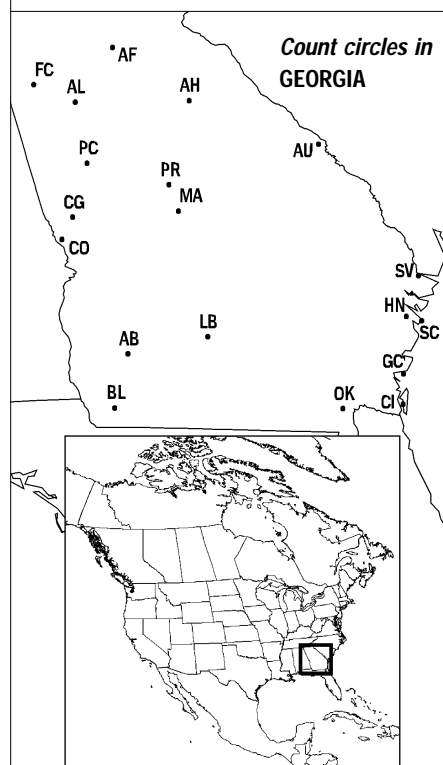
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Georgia observers completed 20 CBCs during the 103rd count, down from 21 last year. The Chattahoochee National



Forest and Dalton counts were unreported, while a former count at Amicalola Falls was run again, setting new high counts for species and numbers for that count. The count of accepted species for the state was 211, which does not include reports of Thayer's Gull, Yellow-throated Vireo, and American Redstart that had unconvincing details.

A good count of nine Eared Grebes was made on the Piedmont-Rum Creek count, and a Tundra Swan was found at Lake Blackshear and at Macon. One Golden Eagle was seen and photographed at Okefenokee, and one Purple Gallinule was found on the Savannah count. Forty Piping Plovers were counted from three different counts, and both black-backed gulls were found on three counts, with totals of 6 Lesser and 16 Great.

Hummingbirds included two of the now-expected Rufous (Athens and Atlanta) and also two Black-chinned (Athens and Savannah). Additionally, there was one "Archilochus sp." and one "hummingbird sp." A Vermilion Flycatcher was found on the Albany count, and a first-ever Georgia CBC Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was found on the Atlanta count.

Even more rare were the **Cave Swallows** found on two different counts! Macon had two on December 14 and Savannah had two more on January 4. Cave Swallows on the 14th were also seen at a couple other non-CBC locations in the state, and collectively provided the first Georgia records ever for this species. Three more Petrochelidon swallows were seen flying away from the observer on the Cumberland count also on the 14th and were likely to be Caves as well. Other rare swallows included a Northern Rough-winged at Macon (only the second Georgia CBC record) and a Barn at Okefenokee (seventh Georgia CBC record).

In a very non-irruptive year, the only Red-breasted Nuthatches were two on the Amicalola Falls CBC. Possibly related to the warm early winter, Tennessee Warblers were found on the Atlanta and Sapelo Island counts (second and third

Georgia CBC records) and a Nashville Warbler was found on the Cumberland count (second Georgia CBC record). Other good warblers included two Northern Parulas, two Ovenbirds, a Northern Waterthrush, and a Yellow-breasted Chat, and all were on or near the coast.

A Lark Sparrow was a good find on the Bainbridge count, and nine Henslow's were found (eight on the St. Catherines count and one on Sapelo) for the only ones in Georgia this year. A total of 85 Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows was found on four counts along the coast, besting the previous state CBC high of 59 on the 101st count. This species has only been counted separately since 1998. Three Lincoln's Sparrows were found, two on the Floyd County count and one at Harris Neck N.W.R., which ties the state CBC high count.

Rusty Blackbirds were found on nine counts, and with a state total of 1221 individuals. This is the highest CBC count for this declining species in Georgia since the 93rd count. Finally, eight Baltimore Orioles were found (seven in Savannah) for the highest CBC total since the 90th count. This species was once found in large numbers on our CBCs, but the numbers have dropped in recent years.

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## FLORIDA

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This season, 62 CBCs were conducted in Florida, the same number as during 2001–2002. (Last season's Biscayne Bay CBC was conducted by National Park Service staff but could not be entered into the online database because of a lawsuit brought against the government!) A new CBC was established south of Miami in the Kendall Area, and the Biscayne Bay CBC data were submitted this year. On the other hand, the Royal Palm-Homestead CBC apparently was not run, and the results and documentation forms

for the Zellwood-Mount Dora count were not received by early April, when this summary was written. These 61 submitted CBCs accounted for more than 7700 accepted observations representing 321 taxonomic forms and more than 1.62 million individuals. The taxonomic forms are broken down into 277 countable native species, 2 non-countable native species (Trumpeter Swan and Whooping Crane), 11 countable exotics, 25 non-countable exotics, and 6 subspecies, morphs, or hybrids.

Six Florida CBCs reached 150 or more species: Jacksonville (170), West Pasco (166), Merritt Island N.W.R. (159), Cocoa (154), Arippeka-Bayport (150), and South Brevard County (150). Top inland honors went to Gainesville (149) and Lake Placid (147). Four CBCs tallied more than 50,000 individuals: Merritt Island N.W.R. (101,818), Lake Placid (96,824), Cocoa (83,450), and Lakeland (73,792). Twelve species were seen on all 61 submitted counts: Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Turkey Vulture, American Kestrel, Killdeer, Mourning Dove, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Mockingbird, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Palm Warbler. In contrast, 32 other native species were seen on only one CBC each. In order of abundance, the five most numerous species—each exceeding 80,000 individuals statewide—were Tree Swallow, American Robin, Ring-billed Gull, Laughing Gull, and Yellow-rumped Warbler.

*Rarities mentioned in this summary refer solely to those properly documented.* Choctawhatchee Bay reported a Pacific Loon, an amazing 1815 Common Loons (its previous high was 889), and the state's sole Eared Grebe. Another Pacific Loon was discovered at West Pasco. A Brown Booby was excellently detailed at Stuart, while a total of 4943 Northern Gannets was seen on 25 counts. There were 7325 American White Pelicans recorded on 40 counts, and 21,473 Brown Pelicans on 44 counts, including birds inland at Lakeland (49) and Lake Wales (1). Possibly the same Great Cormorant as

last season was seen at Jacksonville. Lakeland's 19 American Bitterns greatly exceeded its previous high of 3. Among the 125,647 wading birds seen statewide were 137 "Great White Herons," 252 Reddish Egrets, 48,526 White Ibises, 793 Roseate Spoonbills, and 5333 Wood Storks. The Greater Flamingo flock at Coot Bay-Everglades N.P. totaled 29 on count day, while presumed escapees were noted at Alafia Banks and Tampa.

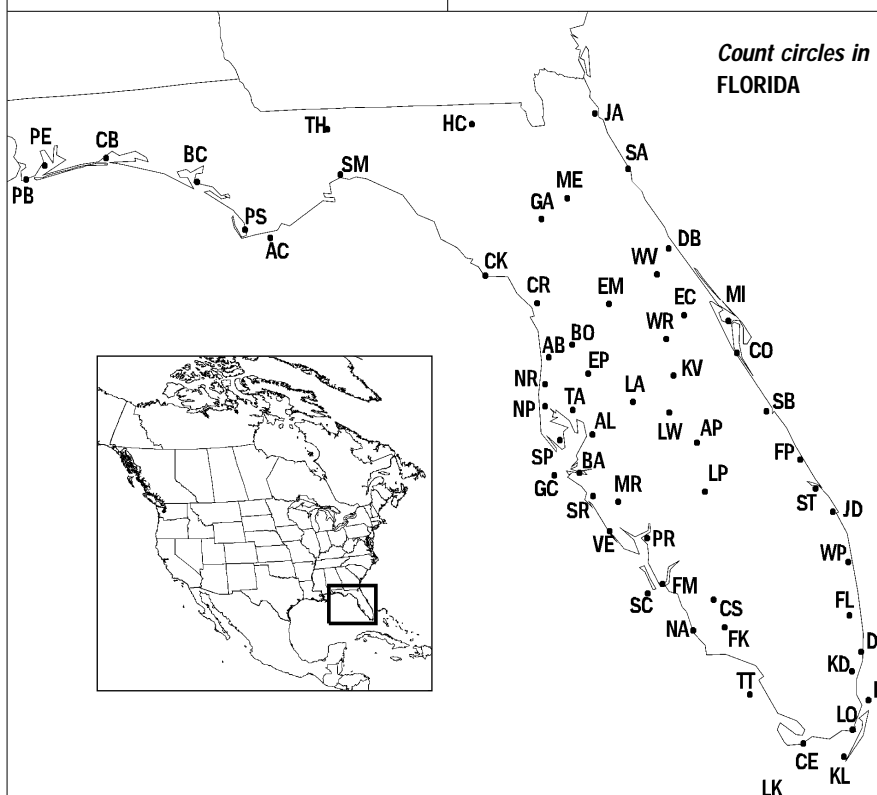
Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks totaled over 1100 individuals on nine counts, including a staggering **705** at Sarasota. On the other hand, only two CBCs accounted for six Fulvous Whistling-Ducks. Two **Richardson's Canada Geese** photographed at South Brevard County established only the second verifiable Florida record of this subspecies. In the "waterfowl of uncertain provenance" category were Crystal River's two Mute Swans and Choctawhatchee Bay's four **Trumpeter Swans**—the latter a first for Florida. Five thousand Blue-winged Teal were at Merritt Island N.W.R., while an amazing 10,035 Redheads were estimated at St. Marks. Other rare waterfowl included a Common Eider at Cocoa and three Long-tailed Ducks photographed at South Brevard County. A total of 3648 Ospreys was found on all counts but one, while exactly 1000 Bald Eagles were tallied on 55 counts. Lake Placid accounted for the state's only White-tailed Kite, while Kissimmee Valley brought in the largest Snail Kite total, with seven. *Accipiter* totals were 195 Sharp-shinned Hawks on 54 counts, and 217 Cooper's Hawks on 52. Extralimital Broad-winged Hawks were singles at Jacksonville and West Volusia, and two at South Brevard County. Thirty-one Short-tailed Hawks were found on seven counts, with nine at Kendall Area and eight at Coot Bay-Everglades N.P.; two dark morphs were north to Lake Wales. Crested Caracaras numbered 26 on five CBCs, with 10 of these at Lake Placid. Falcon totals consisted of 2255 American Kestrels, 66 Merlins, and 47 Peregrine Falcons statewide.

Aripeka-Bayport tallied the only Black Rails (2), Jacksonville had 160 Clapper Rails, and Gainesville produced 59 Soras. Of the 147 Purple Gallinules found, 39 were at Lakeland and 37 at West Palm Beach. Nearly 8500 Sandhill Cranes were tallied, with Melrose leading the state with 2000. Fifteen Whooping Cranes were at Lake Wales, with another at Brooksville. An **American Golden-Plover** was photographed during count week at Merritt Island N.W.R. There were 82 Snowy Plovers on eight counts, and 136 Piping Plovers on 13. Cedar Key accounted for over half of the state's 1072 American Oystercatchers, while a Solitary Sandpiper at Lakeland was the only observation. St. Petersburg led the state with 1685 Willets. Four Long-billed Curlews were at Alafia Banks, and two others at Cedar Key. Good details were furnished for two **Semipalmated Sandpipers** at Coot Bay-Everglades N.P. A **Black-headed Gull**, casual in Florida, was a great find at Kendall Area.

Over 10,000 Eurasian Collared-Doves were found on 57 counts, the same totals as last season. Speaking of exotics, 22 species of psittacids were found statewide, with **18** of these at Fort Lauderdale! The

three countable species were Budgerigar (114 individuals on 2 counts), Monk Parakeet (2881 on 21), and White-winged Parakeet (238 on 3). Leading the non-countable exotics were the 434 Black-hooded Parakeets on seven counts, with most of these at St. Petersburg. Discovered in July 2001 and making its debut on a Florida CBC this season was the **Red-breasted Parakeet** (*Psittacula alexandri*) at Fort Lauderdale. The only Mangrove Cuckoo was found at Long Pine Key, while Smooth-billed Anis were down to two CBCs: seven at Fort Lauderdale and three at Kendall Area. Six Lesser Nighthawks were at Coot Bay-Everglades N.P., two were at West Palm Beach, and one was surprisingly far northwest at Perdido Bay. Overall, hummingbirds were divided into 94 Ruby-throated, 10 Rufous, 6 Black-chinned, and 15 not identified specifically. Gainesville's 330 Red-bellied Woodpeckers were nearly three times higher than any other count in the state.

Based upon its written description, an Empidonax at Merritt Island N.W.R. was not a Least Flycatcher, the only species documented in the state during winter—the identification and verification of this



individual should have been pursued. Four Vermilion Flycatchers were found, with half of these at Gainesville. One Ash-throated Flycatcher was sketched at Gainesville and another was wonderfully photographed at Tallahassee. The **Tropical Kingbird** at St. Marks presumably was the same individual as was seen last winter, while good details were provided for an **Eastern Kingbird** at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. Unprecedented on a Florida CBC was the mixed-sex flock of **30 Purple Martins** viewed briefly but documented satisfactorily at Cocoa. Seventy-five Cave Swallows were found, with 67 at Kendall Area, 5 at Fort Lauderdale, 2 at Cocoa, and 1 at St. Marks. The state's sole Red-breasted Nuthatch was at Port St. Joe, while 542 Brown-headed Nuthatches were seen on 23 counts. The new Kendall Area CBC should result in some much-needed monitoring of Florida's Red-whiskered Bulbul population; this season, 13 were tallied.

Several landbirds were reported in larger-than-normal numbers this year, due apparently to bitter cold temperatures farther north. Golden-crowned Kinglets numbered 211 individuals this year (in contrast to 28 during 2001–2002), including 72 at Tallahassee, 42 at Choctawhatchee Bay, and 34 at Pensacola. Eastern Bluebirds were also noteworthy, with 460 at Choctawhatchee Bay and first-ever appearances—or at least the first in the past 25 years—at Jonathan Dickinson S.P. (10), St. Petersburg (14), and South Brevard County (12). Another thrush story centered around the female **Mountain Bluebird** found on the Long Pine Key CBC in Everglades National Park. The bird, which furnished the first for Florida, lingered for one week and was beautifully photographed.

Twenty-four species of warblers were acceptably documented this season. The rarest among these were a **Blue-winged Warbler** at Jonathan Dickinson S.P., a Louisiana Waterthrush at Coot Bay-Everglades N.P., and a male **Hooded Warbler** at West Pasco. As always, the two most numerous species were Yellow-rumped and Palm warblers, with totals of

88,653 and 16,257 individuals, respectively. Eighteen Summer Tanagers were seen on a total of 13 counts, with birds north to Apalachicola Bay-St. Vincent N.W.R., Gainesville (2), and Port St. Joe (2). Thirteen CBCs accounted for 121 Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows, while 15 Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows were reported on five counts. One of five reported overall, a Lincoln's Sparrow was south to West Pasco, and an immature male **Harris's Sparrow** at Econlockhatchee was enjoyed by dozens of birders over the next several weeks. Single Blue Grosbeaks were detailed at Gainesville, Sarasota, and West Palm Beach. Twenty-seven CBCs accounted for 258 Painted Buntings, with 43 at Cocoa, 40 at West Palm Beach, and 29 at Fort Pierce. Four Yellow-headed Blackbirds enlivened Kissimmee Valley, and one Bronzed Cowbird was at Choctawhatchee Bay. Pensacola accounted for the state's only **Bullock's Oriole** and Purple Finch. House Finches numbered 838 individuals on 19 counts, including "firsts" at Cedar Key (3), Crystal River (3), Lakeland (1), Ponce Inlet (3), Sarasota (15), and West Pasco (4). More than 8100 American Goldfinches were found statewide, in contrast to less than 3300 during 2001–2002. The 112 goldfinches at Jonathan Dickinson S.P. provided the first report for that count.

Several compilers provided details for all species rare in their count circles, and they have my deepest appreciation for their efforts. Most notably, Barbara Muschlitz submitted **24** documentation forms for Gainesville rarities. Statewide, about 200 documentation forms were received, and more than 80 percent of these supplied good or excellent details. Another 80 observations that lacked documentation were appended with "Details Desired" comments. And, regrettably, 50 other reports were rejected because no or insufficient details were provided. Reports were deleted from 26 CBCs, with three counts losing three species each. Most of the species deleted were those mentioned in a 10-page letter that I emailed to all compilers about a month before CBCs began. The letter explained

the reasons for documenting several species (e.g., extreme rarity or confusion with other, more likely species). While the letter seemed to help prevent some potentially troublesome observations—no Least Terns were reported, for instance—it is clear that additional effort is needed to ensure that fewer species are deleted in the future.

The following species or groups were rejected due to the lack of unambiguous documentation, along with the number of counts for each: unidentified shearwaters (2); American Black Duck (1); Broad-winged Hawks (5); Short-tailed Hawks (3); Swainson's Hawk (1); Semipalmated Sandpipers (2); inland Sanderlings (2); inland Red Knots (1); Sabine's Gull (1); Common Terns (5); inland Royal Tern (1); Ringed Turtle-Dove (1); nighthawk species (1); Ash-throated Flycatchers (1); Eastern Kingbirds (3); Yellow-throated Vireos (3); Purple Martins (1); Bank Swallows (2); Veery (1); Yellow Warblers (5); Black-throated Blue Warbler (1); "Audubon's" Yellow-rumped Warblers (1); Blackburnian Warbler (1); Kentucky Warbler (1); Hooded Warbler (1); Indigo Bunting (1); Brewer's Blackbird (1); and Pine Siskin (1). I look forward to working with compilers to further improve the accuracy of Florida's CBC data.

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#### OHIO/WEST VIRGINIA/KENTUCKY

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Inclement weather, or the lack of it, generally plays a significant role in the flavor of each CBC season. This year in Ohio it was generally mild during count week, and only the Bucyrus count reported all water totally frozen. Of Ohio's 54 Christmas Counts, only six reported high temperatures on count day below freezing, and none were significantly lower. Thirty-four counts had some degree of snow cover and temperatures in Cincinnati reached the low 50s. One of the unique aspects of this count season was the absence of winter finches. There were no records of Evening

Grosbeaks in Kentucky or West Virginia, and Ohio, with many more counts and observers, recorded only one individual on the Cuyahoga Falls CBC and two on the Mohican State Forest count. Likewise, there were no reports of crossbills in the other states in this region, and the only observation for Ohio was that of a single White-winged Crossbill at Wellington. Pine Siskins were also hard to come by—only nine Ohio counts reported this species, with a high count of nine at Wilmot.

Interesting observations during this count season included well-documented American Bitterns in Plymouth and Wilmot. Black-crowned Night-Herons were again found in Toledo, and also in Columbus. Turkey Vultures were reported from ten Ohio counts, but surprisingly Black Vultures were found on eight Ohio CBCs. Our recently introduced Trumpeter Swans were limited to 11 birds at Ottawa N.W.R. Twenty-nine species of waterfowl were observed this season, highlighted by reports of a Harlequin Duck at Grand Rapids-Waterville, Surf Scoter at Lakewood and Hamilton-Fairfield, three White-winged Scoters also in Lakewood, and Black Scoter in Cleveland, Elyria-Lorain, and Lake Erie Islands. The state's only report of Long-tailed Duck was noted also on the Lake Erie Islands CBC.

Bald Eagles continue their significant increases being reported from over half (28) of the Ohio counts. This reflected a total of 173 individuals, including 94 adults. This compares to the results of the 1981 Ohio CBC season when only eight birds were found in the entire state. A Northern Goshawk was reported from Bucyrus, and only one undocumented observation of Broad-winged Hawk was submitted this season. Rough-legged Hawks were recorded in good numbers, with 93 individuals reported from 19 locations.

The reports of common species often derive more interest than the report of rarities. Ohio had 18 species that were recorded on only one CBC, but of more interest (given the large number of counts

in the state) was the fact that 14 species were located on every Ohio CBC. American Kestrel was missed in Lakewood, but a Merlin was seen there. Merlins were also found on three other counts, and Peregrines were scattered around the state in six count areas. Ruffed Grouse were observed on only six counts, while Wild Turkey was recorded on 34. This compared to no Wild Turkey in Ohio during the 1970-1971 season, and 12 individuals during the 1980-1981 season. Northern Bobwhite was found on five counts this year. Virginia Rails were again tallied in Millersburg, and a remarkable Common Moorhen was reported from Columbus.

The only significant observation of shorebirds came from Lake Erie Islands with two Purple Sandpipers. Two Little Gulls were observed at Mentor, and five Iceland Gulls were recorded at Grand Rapids-Waterville with another at Cleveland. A Kumlien's form was documented on the Lake Erie Islands count. Lesser Black-backed Gull was located on six Ohio counts, and Glaucous Gulls at four Lake Erie locations.

Seven Barn Owls were reported from Millersburg, and eight were found at Ragersville. The only Snowy Owl this season was found during count week in Greenville. Long-eared and Short-eared owls were found on a surprising five Ohio CBCs. Northern Saw-whet Owls were reported from Dayton and Killdeer Plains. One of the most interesting observations of this period included the report of Rufous Hummingbirds from Cincinnati during count week and a well-documented individual on count day in Wooster. Of additional interest was the report of an additional Rufous Hummingbird from neighboring Danville, Kentucky. Loggerhead Shrike was again absent from the state, though three Northern Shrikes were noted in Northern Ohio.

Marsh Wren was reported from northern Ohio at Elyria-Lorain and Toledo. A Swainson's Thrush was reported from Lakewood and is a species that is so often misidentified. This individual was well documented by experienced observers,

compared with the more likely Hermit Thrush, and is therefore included herein. A Pine Warbler was found in Columbus, a Common Yellowthroat in Millersburg, and Lincoln's Sparrows in Cincinnati and Lake Erie Islands. Lapland Longspurs were found with ease in a dozen locations, primarily in northern Ohio. Brewer's Blackbirds were found in Kingston and also at Oxford. The only remaining remarkable record for this season was that of a lingering Baltimore Oriole that was seen by many observers at Firelands.

Ohio observers on 54 Counts recorded 148 species, with Cuyahoga Falls including nearly as many participants (137: 92 in the field and 45 at feeders). Cincinnati's 87 species led the state, but Millersburg, Lake Erie Islands, Toledo, and Cuyahoga Falls all tallied 80 or more. Toledo led the state with more than 49,000 individuals, including approximately 35,000 European Starlings.

This Christmas Bird Count season in West Virginia was fairly uneventful. Weather cooperated, with all but one CBC reporting temperatures above freezing. All counts also reported some open water, and about half of the counts had no snow cover to deal with. Although observations of interest were reported, the state reported only 111 species, with 5 of these only seen during count week. Nineteen species were recorded from every West Virginia location, and 20 species were reported from only one locality. The most interesting part of this season in West Virginia was what was missing. There were no reports of winter finches—no Evening Grosbeaks, Pine Siskins, crossbills, redpolls, or Snow Buntings. Purple Finches were recorded on about one-third of the count areas, with a high count of six individuals located by observers at Inwood. Other species notably absent included Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Canvasback, Redhead, Lesser Scaup, and Tundra Swan.

Observations during this season included the state's only Horned Grebe report from the Elkins Area CBC. Double-crested Cormorants were found on 3 of the state's 16 counts. Black-

crowned Night-Herons were located during count week at Parkersburg, and Mute Swans were found in Ona and Wheeling. The only state reports of American Wigeon and Greater Scaup came from Charles Town and Ona, respectively, and a well-documented Long-tailed Duck was observed during count week at Morgantown. Bald Eagles were reported from seven count areas, with seven adults and four immature birds being noted. A high count of four Rough-legged Hawks was tallied at Pipestem, and an additional individual was noted during count week at Canaan.

McDowell County reported an immature Golden Eagle on count day, and although no Merlins were noted this season, a Peregrine Falcon was found on the Parkersburg CBC. Wild Turkey was noted on 12 of the 16 West Virginia counts, and Northern Bobwhite was located on three. A pair of Ring-necked Pheasants from Charles Town represented the only observation of this introduced species this season. Bonaparte's and Herring gulls and Long-eared Owl were represented by observations of single individuals at Ona. Charles Town's unique location in this

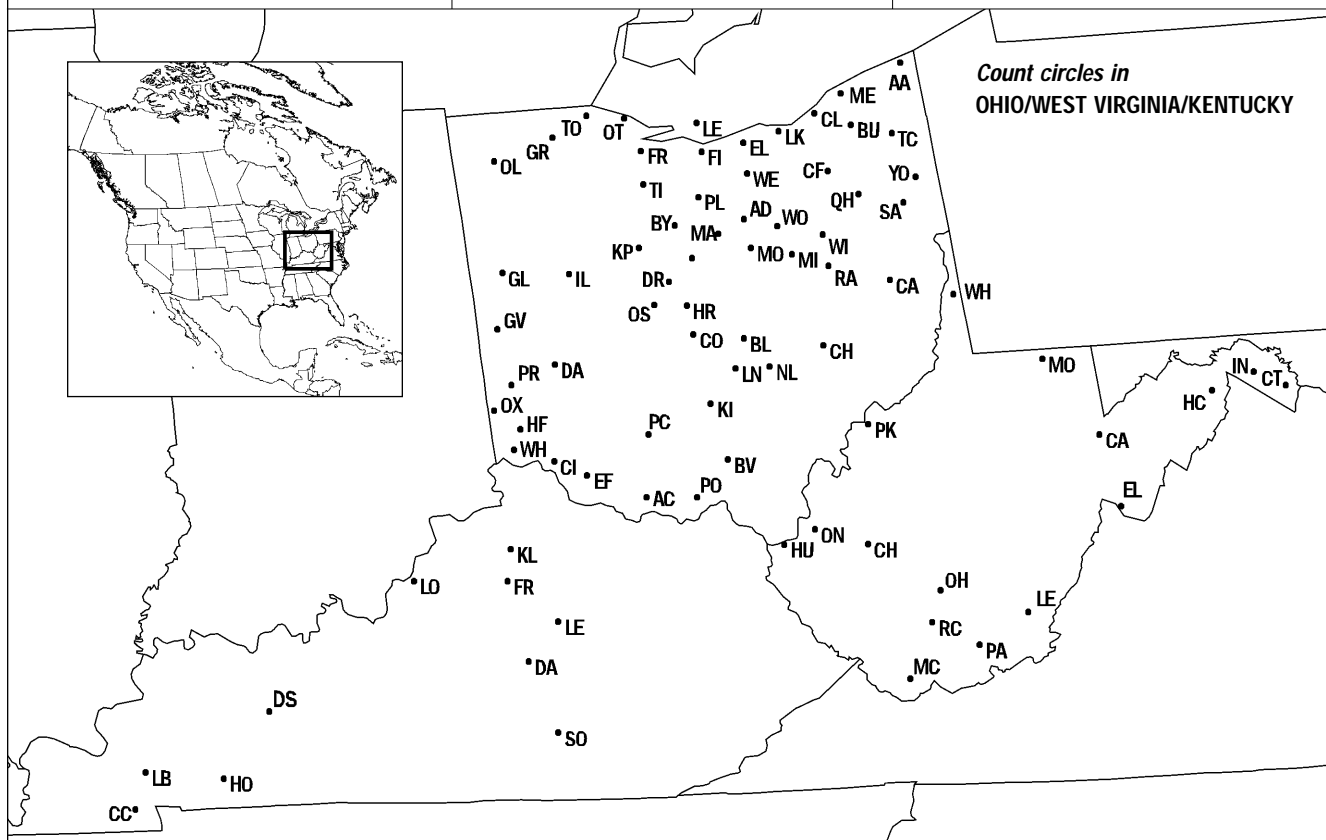
region again resulted in the inclusion of the observation of Fish Crow. Common Ravens were noted on ten West Virginia Christmas Counts.

Interesting passerine observations included Marsh Wrens at Lewisburg and Ona. Four Lincoln's Sparrows were noted in McDowell County for the state's only report, and Lapland Longspurs were reported from Charles Town during count week. Parkersburg fielded the largest contingent of observers in the state with 40 field observers and an additional 23 at local feeders. Three of West Virginia's counts tallied a species list in excess of 70 species, with Ona reporting 78 species, Charles Town 74, and Inwood 70. Charleston recorded almost 15,000 individuals, the result of a large roost of American Crows numbering almost 10,000 birds. Canaan on the other hand was the only West Virginia CBC that had below freezing temperatures the entire day and also yielded only 200 individual birds.

Kentucky observers enjoyed a mild count week with temperatures above freezing and open water in every count area. These conditions allowed many unusual observations, but also provided

conditions that found many species missing. Many winter birds remained farther north this season. There were no Kentucky observations of Evening Grosbeak, crossbills, or redpolls. There was only a single observation of an individual Pine Siskin, on the Louisville count, and Purple Finch was found in low numbers. Also missing from this season's observations were sightings of unusual owls: Long-eared, Short-eared, Snowy, and Northern Saw-whet. Other species not noted this season included Tundra Swan, Forster's Tern, Pine Warbler, and Lincoln's and Vesper sparrows. In spite of the absence of these birds, a healthy total of 120 species was located by Kentucky observers. Of this total, 27 species were reported from every count area, while 22 species were found on only one Kentucky CBC.

Unusual reports from this count period included the report of a Red-necked Grebe and nine American White Pelicans on the Land Between the Lakes count. Snow Geese were reported from Calloway County and Lexington. Several Mute Swans were located in Louisville and an exotic Muscovy Duck



was found at Danville. The mild weather and open water provided for the observation of 23 species of waterfowl, with the notable observations of 3 Greater Scaup in the Land Between the Lakes area. Black Vulture was reported from seven of Kentucky's ten CBCs, while Turkey Vultures were found statewide except for Daviess County South. Bald Eagles were found on both the Land Between the Lakes and Calloway County CBCs. Between these two counts a total of 22 individuals was noted; 16 adults and 6 immatures.

Notable birds of prey included a Merlin observed in Calloway County and the expected Peregrines in Louisville. Of more interest was report of a "Krider's" subspecies of Red-tailed Hawk at Hopkinsville. Northern Bobwhite was observed on four Kentucky counts, while Wild Turkey were observed in six count areas. Sandhill Cranes were again noted during count week at Frankfort and on count day in Louisville. Least Sandpiper and Dunlin were again reported from both Land Between the Lakes and Calloway County. Land Between the Lakes also provided the state's only observations of American Woodcock and Lesser Black-backed Gull.

We have watched over the past several decades the change in status in House Finch, Double-crested Cormorant, Wild Turkey, Bald Eagle, Osprey, and many other species. This season finally documents the initial winter CBC reports from Kentucky with Eurasian Collared-Doves, in Calloway County and Hopkinsville. Kentucky's only Barn Owl observation of the season came from Calloway County. Kentucky has had a history of interesting winter hummingbird observations, and this season was no exception. A Rufous Hummingbird was located in Danville. This individual was present for an extended period, seen by many, and was banded and determined to be a hatching year male. This individual, along with two reports of Rufus Hummingbird from neighboring Ohio, made this a notable winter for this species.

Other observations this season included the report of eight Loggerhead Shrikes from five separate counts in the state. This is even more notable when it is compared to no Loggerheads being found on Ohio counts over the past several years. Two Lapland Longspurs were found in Louisville and provided the state's only report this year. Brewer's Blackbird was noted at the Land Between the Lakes area and provided only one of two records for the entire regional area.

The Land Between the Lakes CBC provided Kentucky's largest number of species this season with 93 being reported. Calloway County followed closely with 89. While Somerset recorded only 73 species, it did have the distinction of having the largest concentrations of birds in the state, with more than 65,000 individuals noted. This occurred because of large concentrations of Common Grackles (33,000), blackbird species (12,000), and European Starlings (14,000). Lexington's 37 hardy observers provided the largest organization in the state on count day. Other species, including Common Loon, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Wilson's Snipe, Red-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Gray Catbird, and American Pipit, were all found this season in small numbers but without comment.

#### TENNESSEE/MISSISSIPPI/ALABAMA

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A record **54** counts were conducted and submitted regionally during the 103rd CBC, and in each of the region's states a record-tying number of counts took place as follows: Tennessee (25), Mississippi (17), and Alabama (12). The counts conducted in Tennessee and Alabama were the same ones conducted last year. In Mississippi, all 15 counts conducted last year were again conducted; in addition, Pearl River (MS-LA) is welcomed as a new count, while Natchez (MS) returns following a three-year absence.



**Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*),  
Hickory-Priest, Tennessee.  
Photo/Chris Sloan**

About 233 species were tabulated on regional counts, a slightly higher number than those accumulated in recent years. Among state totals, Alabama (207 species) led, followed by Mississippi (187) and Tennessee (150).

Weather conditions were generally benign during the CBC period, with rain being the major factor depressing numbers on some counts. Perhaps weather conditions account, at least in part, for the slightly higher than normal species numbers encountered regionally and in each of the region's states.

In each state, outstanding rarities were reported. Tennessee's **Long-billed Murrelet** was undoubtedly the season's rara avis, but other notables included Western Grebe, Long-tailed Duck, Rough-legged Hawk, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Black-and-white Warbler, Smith's Longspur, and Western Meadowlark. In Mississippi, Least Bittern, Black-necked Stilt, Solitary Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Vermilion Flycatcher, Barn Swallow, Magnolia Warbler, and Summer Tanager added luster to that state's CBC list. In Alabama, Red-throated and Pacific loons, Black Scoter, Broad-winged Hawk, a white-winged gull, Ash-throated Flycatcher, **Bell's Vireo**, Bank and **Cave swallows**, Clay-colored and Lark sparrows, Blue Grosbeak, and Shiny Cowbird were notable additions to that state's impressive list of species. Boreal

irruptive species were not much in evidence on regional counts. Except in the eastern mountains of Tennessee, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Purple Finches, Pine Siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks were either absent or quite thinly distributed.

In **Tennessee**, Bristol (83 species) listed Eared Grebe, Merlin, and Rufous Hummingbird, the latter a banded bird. Buffalo River (76) tabulated 16 Loggerhead Shrikes, second-most on state counts for this species of conservation concern. Cades Cove Great Smoky Mountains N.P. (59) included **130** Red Crossbills in its results, a remarkable number, not matched elsewhere regionally this year or in most previous years. Chattanooga (97) listed five Virginia Rails and two Sedge Wrens, both indicative of marshy habitat, as well as warmish weather. Clarksville (71) tallied the state's only Black-and-white Warbler, providing good details. Columbia (87) reported one of four Barn Owls statewide. Cookeville (79) also listed Barn Owl, as well as two

Brown-headed Nuthatches and a Common Yellowthroat, the latter one of four found statewide. Clay County (82) listed 97 Horned Grebes, second-most statewide, as well as the state's only Spotted Sandpiper. Cross Creeks N.W.R. (65) included a Tundra Swan, one of two found statewide, but without details; given the increasing likelihood of Trumpeter Swan in Tennessee and the region, all future sightings of Tundra Swan regionally should be documented.

Elizabethton (66) was one of 12 state CBCs to record House Wren this year, additional indication of the warmish conditions prevailing. Fayette County (65) included a Barn Owl and two Vesper Sparrows in its list, being one of six counts—more than usual—to record the latter species. Great Smoky Mountains National Park (54) tallied a few Red Crossbills, but nothing like the hordes noted at Cades Cove, just to the southwest. Hiwassee (98) registered Eurasian Collared-Dove and Lincoln's Sparrow, the

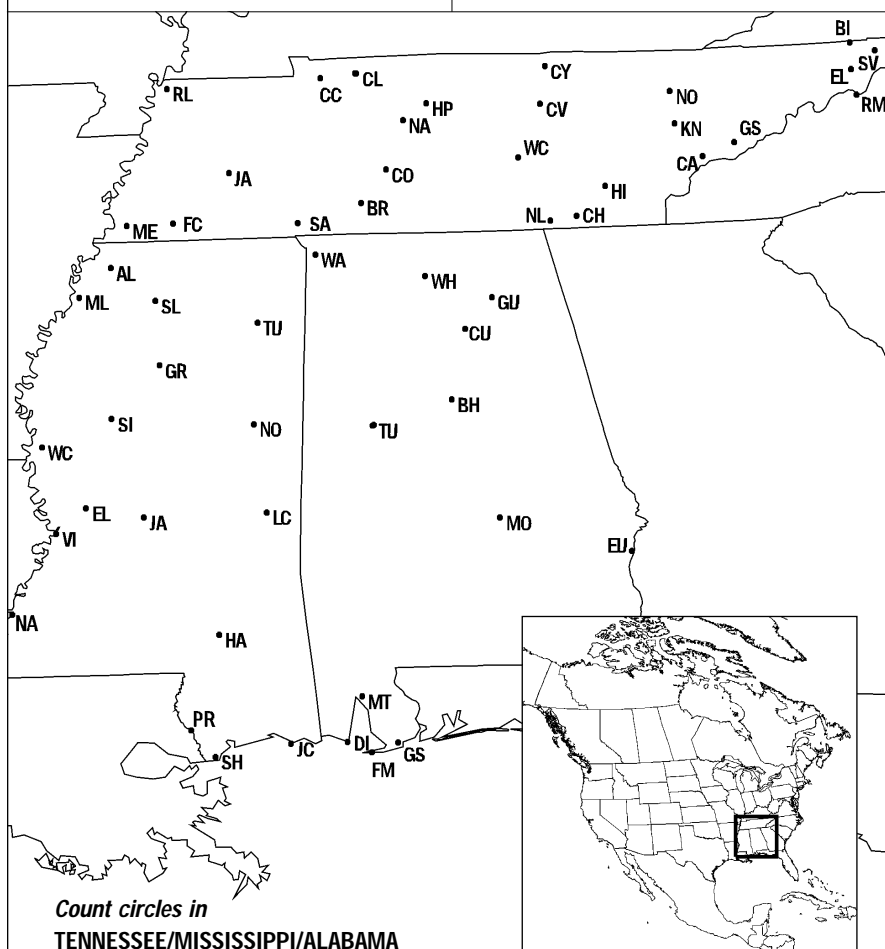
latter with good details; only two other state counts noted the latter species despite conditions conducive to its presence.

Hickory-Priest (87) notched Eared Grebe, one of two noted statewide; produced statewide high counts of 103 Horned Grebes and 6 Sedge Wrens; registered the count's first Marsh Wren—perhaps long overdue; and submitted two Le Conte's Sparrows (alas, without details). Jackson (82) listed two species of longspurs, not an easy feat, including a nicely described Smith's found in *Aristida* grass. Knoxville (94) enjoyed numerous high species totals, including a state high count of 12 Cooper's Hawks, and listed two Brown-headed Nuthatches among several rarities, which also included one of two Tundra Swans found statewide. Memphis (99) was one of four counts listing Le Conte's Sparrow, with all except Hickory-Priest being located in west Tennessee; Memphis also tallied 78 Eurasian Collared-Doves, the state high total.

Nashville (82), the westernmost count in Tennessee to record Red-breasted Nuthatch, also tabulated a state high count of 279 Carolina Wrens, thanks largely to its large observer corps. Nickajack Lake (98) easily led the state with 94 Greater Scaup, though details about these birds were absent; it also contributed the state's only Western Grebe and Prairie Warbler. Norris (82) provided one of three Rufous Hummingbirds noted statewide; an Audubon's form of Yellow-rumped Warbler and a Merlin (sans details) were among its other notable finds.

**Reelfoot Lake (116—state high)**, with only 12 observers, once again led the state in species total, and by a considerable margin; a **Long-billed Murrelet** was certainly its most spectacular bird, but Reelfoot also provided the only state reports of Long-tailed Duck, Common Merganser, White-eyed Vireo, American Tree Sparrow, and Western Meadowlark, testifying to the well-deserved reputation this count has accrued.

Roan Mountain (46) included a Red Crossbill and a state high count of 12 Common Ravens in its list of mainly





White-crowned Sparrow immatures (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*), Southern Hancock County, Mississippi. Photo/Colinda Green

high elevation species. *Savannah* (104—second highest) listed a Lesser Black-backed Gull; perhaps unsurprisingly, it also provided a state high count of 950 Savannah Sparrows. Shady Valley (58) reported the easternmost Sandhill Crane. Warren County (69) registered its first Greater White-fronted Goose, also the easternmost reported.

In **Mississippi**, Arkabutla Lake (93 species) featured 150 White-crowned Sparrows, second-most statewide. Eagle Lake (104) recorded Tricolored Heron and more than 4800 Northern Shovelers, the state high count. Grenada (105) reported the only Surf Scoter and Prairie Warbler in the state, as well as one of four American Bitterns statewide. Hattiesburg (91) accounted for a state high total of seven Rufous Hummingbirds, as well as the only



Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*), Grenada, Mississippi. Photo/Jeff R. Wilson

Calliope Hummingbird, a count week bird. Jackson (106) included two King Rails, farther inland than any others reported.

**Jackson County (153—state high)** attained the state's high species total, listed the state's only Solitary Sandpiper and Magnolia Warbler, and tabulated a respectable 25 Le Conte's Sparrows.

Lauderdale County (91) was one of only four counts in Mississippi to record Red-breasted Nuthatch, tallying a state high six during a winter without an irruption event. Moon Lake (87) led the state with 159 White-crowned Sparrows. Noxubee N.W.R. (105) listed seven Red-cockaded and 114 Red-headed woodpeckers, state high counts, as well as count week Eurasian Collared-Dove. Pearl River (53) listed a state high count of 350 Rusty Blackbirds during its inaugural CBC. *Southern Hancock County (151—second highest)*, barely below the state's top spot, registered the state's southernmost Red-breasted Nuthatches, the state high count for Brown-headed Nuthatch, and the state's only Summer Tanager.

Sidon (104) featured 292 Ross's Geese, by far the state's high count. Sardis Lake (101) listed a Lincoln's Sparrow with good details, being one of three counts to register this skulker. Tupelo (70) included 258 Brewer's Blackbirds, the state high count. Vicksburg (99) listed 43 Loggerhead Shrikes, the state high count, and a Barn Swallow, the state's only one. Washington County South (106) accounted for the only Least Bittern on the state's counts.

In **Alabama**, Birmingham (84 species) was highlighted by a state high count of five Rufous Hummingbirds, as well as by the state's only Indigo Bunting. Cullman (71) registered one of two Calliope Hummingbirds noted statewide. *Dauphin Island (141—second highest)* was extremely productive, providing the only state reports of Great Black-backed Gull, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and Painted Bunting; this count also registered one of two Red-throated Loons found statewide, as well as **14** Western Kingbirds, by far the state high count. Eufaula N.W.R. (122) had a good species total and was one of

four state counts to register Ross's Goose. Fort Morgan (93) tallied the state's only Lark and Henslow's sparrows, as well as six Western Kingbirds.

**Gulf Shores (163—state high)**, besides taking high species total honors, featured many species not found on any other counts—Pacific Loon, **Bell's Vireo**, Bank and **Cave swallows**, and Blue Grosbeak—and registered a state high count of 81 Loggerhead Shrikes, a number, however, well below those attained on many previous counts.

Guntersville (95) provided one of two Baltimore Orioles found statewide, as well as the state high counts for Great Blue Heron and Canvasback. Montgomery (101), besides accounting for the other Baltimore Oriole, was also one of four counts reporting Peregrine Falcon. Mobile-Tensaw Delta (123) featured Broad-winged Hawk, Calliope Hummingbird, and the state's only Shiny Cowbird, the latter an admittedly dubious honor. Tuscaloosa (71) had a count week Purple Finch, the southernmost of four counts reporting Purples. Waterloo (104) produced a Red-throated Loon and the state's only Clay-colored Sparrows. Wheeler N.W.R. (121) reported the state's only Tundra Swan in a fine list for so northerly a count.

Many thanks go to all regional CBC compilers and to the many regional CBC participants.

## MICHIGAN

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There were 54 counts conducted in the state this season, one more than last year. A total of 150 species was counted during count day, six less than last season's record total. Four additional species were recorded during the count week. There were 566,224 individuals tallied, well below last year's 1,008,607 individuals. The difference was primarily due to last season's large blackbird numbers in Monroe County. Participation was slightly lower this season, with 1091 observers and 286 feeder counters compared to last year's 1099 observers

and 309 feeder counters. Participants logged 2973.7 party-hours and 20,860.7 party-miles, both higher than last season's 2780.77 party-hours and 20,070.5 party-miles. An additional 172.75 nocturnal hours and 675.75 feeder hours were tallied as compared to last year's 175.43 nocturnal hours and 686 feeder hours. The highest species total was Rockwood with 78, followed by Detroit River with 76, New Buffalo with 75, Anchor Bay with 73, and Monroe with 71.

Thirty-one of the 54 counts were conducted on the first weekend of the season, and only four were held in January. Snow was not a problem on most counts. A maximum of 12 inches was reported on any count while most had trace amounts, and nine had no snow. Temperatures were mild with only 13 counts having temperatures below freezing during the entire day. The lowest recorded temperature on any count was only 18 degrees F and the highest a balmy 41 degrees F. Most counts had cloudy to partly cloudy skies. Nineteen counts reported light precipitation, and one reported fog. Wind was a factor on a number of counts, with 49 reporting winds over 10 mph for at least part of the day, and several had winds of over 20 mph.

Still water was frozen on 25 counts and partly frozen on the rest, while 20 counts reported moving water as being open.

There were three new species added to the cumulative species list since 1970: three **swallows** identified as trees on the Rockwood count; a **Spotted Towhee** on the Tuscola County count, potentially a first state record; and finally a **Western Tanager** on the Berrien Springs count. All three are pending Michigan Bird Records Committee review. Another possible new species to both the CBC and state was a Western Gull reported on the Bay City count. The documentation, although very well written, was not deemed conclusive and requires further review by the records committee. Other notable finds included an Eared Grebe on the New Buffalo count, single Greater White-fronted Geese on the Gobles and Albion counts, a Loggerhead Shrike on the Rogers City count, a Townsend's Solitaire on the Alpena count, and a Savannah Sparrow on the Hudsonville count. There are many other noteworthy species listed in Table 1.

The following discussion of abundance is based on average totals since the 1970-1971 CBC season. Numbers were

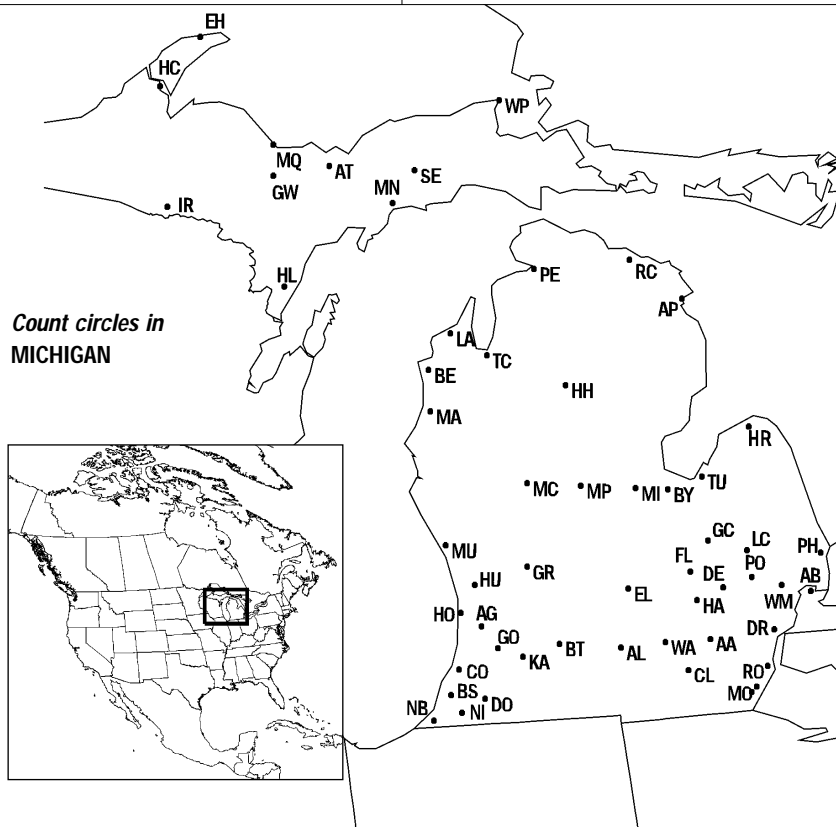
**Table 1. Species with less than 50 individuals since the 71st CBC season.**

Species	103rd CBC Total	71st-102nd CBC Total
Red-throated Loon	3	40
Eared Grebe	1	6
Turkey Vulture	15	26
Greater White-fronted Goose	2	10
Harlequin Duck	8	25
Peregrine Falcon	7	40
Sharp-tailed Grouse	5	25
Purple Sandpiper	2	17
Thayer's Gull	1	42
Lesser Black-backed Gull	6	39
Northern Saw-whet Owl	2	45
Black-backed Woodpecker	1	13
Eastern Phoebe	3	13
Loggerhead Shrike	1	22
Swallow species	3	new record
Varied Thrush	count week	7
Townsend's Solitaire	1	5
Western Tanager	1	new record
Spotted Towhee	1	new state record
Savannah Sparrow	1	20

obtained from the Christmas Bird Count site at [www.audubon.org/bird/cbc](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc).

Double-crested Cormorant was found in record numbers this season. Great Blue Heron numbers were about double their average. Turkey Vultures were found in record numbers; all were in one location on the Clinton CBC. Waterfowl found in above-average numbers included Canada Goose, Mute and Trumpeter swans, Gadwall, Mallard, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, scaup species, Long-tailed Duck, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, and Ruddy Duck. In that group Mute Swan and Long-tailed Duck were found in record numbers (Table 2). In addition a record eight Harlequin Ducks were tallied, six of which were found on the Holland count. No waterfowl species were found in significantly lower numbers than normal.

Raptor totals were mixed this season. Bald Eagles continue to increase in numbers and a new record was established with 236, nearly 100 above the previous high of 149. Other hawks found in increased numbers were Sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawk, Merlin, and Peregrine Falcon. Of this group the Peregrine was found in record numbers.



**Table 2. Record high totals since the 71st CBC.**

Species	103rd Total	Previous High (CBC)
Double-crested Cormorant	107	79 (96th)
Turkey Vulture	15	4 (102nd)
Mute Swan	2744	2531 (101st)
Harlequin Duck	8	4 (100th)
Long-tailed Duck	3307	2109 (100th)
Bald Eagle	236	149 (101st)
Peregrine Falcon	7	4 (97th)
Lesser Black-backed Gull	6	6 (100th)
Red-bellied Woodpecker	1607	1427 (102nd)
Northern Flicker (all forms)	812	521 (98th)
Pileated Woodpecker	123	96 (100th)
Common Raven	617	607 (100th)
Carolina Wren	135	88 (99th)
Golden-crowned Kinglet	866	858 (83rd)
Eastern Bluebird	3150	2121 (100th)
Yellow-rumped Warbler	269	211 (98th)
Chipping Sparrow	7	3 (90th)
White-throated Sparrow	389	369 (84th)

**Table 3. Record low totals since the 71st CBC.**

Species	103rd Total	Previous Low (CBC)
Northern Bobwhite	0	4 (94th)
Evening Grosbeaks	10	89 (101st)

Corrigenda: The Common Loon entry on Table 2 from the 102nd CBC article should read "previous high (CBC) of 37 (95th);" not "88 (36th)." Table 4 should read "previous low (CBC)," not "previous high (CBC)."

Conversely, Northern Harrier numbers were noticeably lower.

Wild Turkey numbers were well above average, while Ruffed Grouse and Ring-necked Pheasant numbers were below average. Sharp-tailed Grouse were seen for the first time in many years at Seney N.W.R. Northern Bobwhite went unrecorded for the first time in the past 32 years.

Killdeer continue to be scarce, with only six seen this season, while Wilson's Snipe was also scarcer than normal. Gull numbers were about average with the exception of Bonaparte's and Great Black-backed gulls, which were decidedly scarce.

Both Mourning Dove and Rock Dove numbers were up this season. Owl numbers were unexceptional, with an average number of most species reported. There were no remarkable influxes of arctic owls, although a single Northern Hawk Owl reported on the Iron River CBC was exceptional.

Woodpecker numbers on the whole were above average with exception of Red-headed, which continues to decline. Red-bellied Woodpeckers have shown an opposite trend and were found in record numbers for the second consecutive year. Also setting new records were Pileated Woodpecker and Northern Flicker, the latter eclipsing the old record by over 50 percent.

Northern Shrikes were found in average numbers, as were Blue Jays. The latter finding was most interesting as there was some concern that this species may show declines due to its susceptibility to West Nile virus. American Crow, another bird susceptible to West Nile, had an impressive showing with about triple the average total, at the third highest numbers since 1970. Likewise, Common Ravens were far more abundant this year, posting a new record total. Black-capped Chickadee numbers were about average and Tufted Titmouse were found in above-average numbers. Both Brown Creeper and Winter Wren were also present in slightly above-average numbers, while Carolina Wrens set a new record by an impressive 35 percent.

Golden-crowned Kinglets were also found in record numbers. Most impressive was the number of Eastern Bluebirds; a total of 3150 individuals was reported statewide, over 1000 individuals above the previous high total. American Robins were also abundant and widespread, with the second high-



**Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*), Huron County, Michigan. Photo/Myles Willard**

est total since the 1970, 71 season. Hermit Thrush numbers were also up, about twice the average, while mimids on the whole remain scarce with just a scattering of catbirds, mockingbirds, and thrashers seen.

European Starling numbers were down this season, about half the average number. Both Bohemian and Cedar waxwings were scarce this season with about one-fourth the average numbers reported. Warbler species were under-represented with only Yellow-rumped being reported, this found in record numbers primarily with the incredible 152 reported on the Rockwood count—over half the total for the state.

Sparrows seen in lower than average numbers included Eastern Towhee, and American Tree, Song, and White-crowned sparrows. Record high totals were tallied for Chipping, Field, and White-throated sparrows, and above average numbers of Fox Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco were tallied. Northern Cardinal showed slightly above-average numbers, while both Lapland Longspur and Snow Buntings were seen in average numbers. Blackbirds were seen in lower than average numbers with exception of the Brown-headed Cowbird, which had a slightly above average total.

Winter finches were scarce, and all species were found in lower than average numbers. Evening Grosbeaks hit a new record low (10), eclipsing the previous low of 89 in 2000-2001.



**Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*), Detroit River, Michigan. Photo/Jim Fowler**



Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*),  
Berrien Springs, Michigan.  
Photo/Tim Baerwald

American Goldfinches were seen in slightly higher numbers this season, particularly in the Upper Peninsula.

On a whole, documentation was still not good this season resulting in two species, Lincoln's Sparrow and Brewer's Blackbird, being removed from the final counts because of unconvincing details or the lack of documentation.

## INDIANA

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In most respects, the 103rd CBC in Indiana was quite average. There were few record high counts and even fewer unusual species. However, average results should be considered good news. Pessimistic predictions of decimated bird populations by the West Nile virus, at first glance, failed to materialize.

Indiana's 38 count circles consisted of 669 participants and 83 feeder watchers. Birders spent 1810 party-hours (186 hours at feeders) counting 435,174 birds of 35 different species with four additional forms. Lake Monroe's dedicated team provided 21 of the state's 74.5 owling hours, and once again had the highest species total with 90. Most counts enjoyed temperatures slightly above freezing some time during their count day. But cold temperatures leading up to the count period limited the amount of open water.

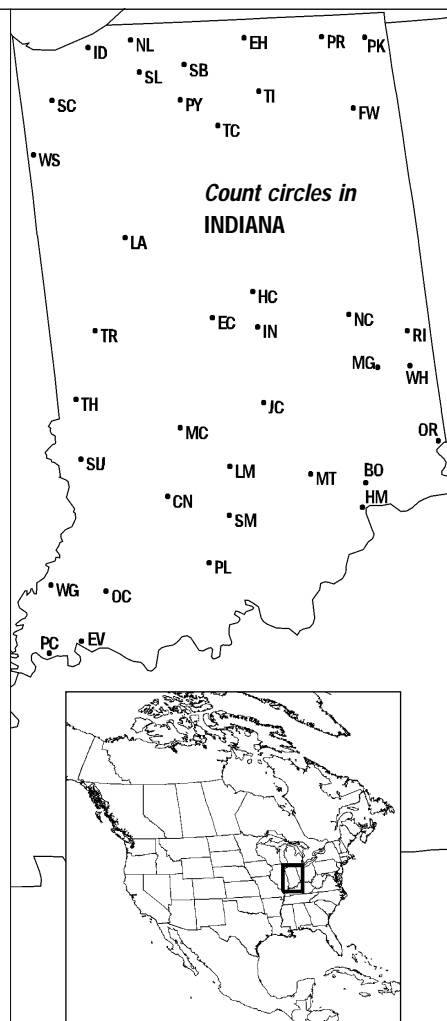
Rarities, though hard to come by, included Indiana's first CBC record of a Townsend's Solitaire on the Lafayette count, a "Harlan's" Red-tailed Hawk from Willow Slough, and a tardy Indigo Bunting on the Spring Mill count.

A Red-throated Loon was a first for Patoka Lake birders, while Sullivan's 135 Horned Grebes was a new count high. Two circles recorded lingering Great Egrets, second count records for both the Lafayette and Ohio River counts. Turkey Vultures are expected farther south, but 13 on the Fort Wayne count were noteworthy.

It was a year of mixed results for waterfowl; goose numbers continue to be high, but many counts had low duck numbers due to a lack of open water. Snow Geese were tallied on ten count circles, with Eagle Creek's remarkable total of 2681, nearly doubling the previous CBC high total for the entire state. The state's Wood Duck total of 33 was the lowest in 12 years. Lingering Blue-winged Teal included 11 in Terre Haute, two in Evansville, and a single for Lafayette. The state total of five Redheads was the lowest in 13 years.

The only sea ducks were found away from Lake Michigan. Terre Haute and Western Gibson County each reported Surf Scoters, first CBC records for both counts. White Water State Park's first ever Long-tailed Duck was around for several days.

Bald Eagles were recorded on an impressive 19 counts, with a total of 124 establishing a state CBC high. Though always rare in Indiana, Golden Eagle was not recorded for the first time in 12 years. Willow Slough's "Harlan's" Hawk was a first count record, and only the fifth CBC record for the state. The McCormick's Creek and Willow Slough counts each had a Merlin. A new CBC high total of six Peregrine Falcons across the state demonstrates how successful the reintroduction program has been. A remarkable 25 Sharp-shinned Hawks were tallied on the Turkey Run count. Despite early rumors of an "invasion" year, the only Northern Goshawk was an immature from Southern Lake County.



Four counties tallied Ruffed Grouse for a modest total of seven birds. Tape-toting Indiana Dunes birders once again got an answer from a Virginia Rail, a species that is undoubtedly being overlooked throughout the state in winter. Fort Wayne's 38 Sandhill Cranes provided a third count record. The only Dunlin this year was a count week bird from White Water State Park.

The closing of the area's only landfill has devastated gull numbers along Lake Michigan. Despite the setbacks, count day in the Dunes provided an adult Lesser Black-backed, an adult Glaucous, and six Great Black-backed Gulls. Discovery of an adult Iceland Gull, one of the few seen along the lakefront all season, continued the streak of seven straight years for this rare species. On the negative side, Thayer's Gull was missed for the first time in eight years. The single Lesser Black-backed Gull is

quite a drop from last year's seven, and the lowest total in six years.

Eurasian Collared-Doves are apparently establishing themselves on the Sullivan count, with 11 on this year's count to add to last year's 12. A single collared-dove was a count first for Oakland City. Long-eared Owls continue to be elusive, and were missed for the second time in three years. Lake Monroe tallied six Northern Saw-whets, while McCormick's Creek added a single.

It was a good year for Eastern Phoebe, which was recorded on eight counts. The only shrike this year was a Loggerhead found on the Sullivan count. Red-breasted Nuthatch numbers were low even for a nonflight year, with only eight circles recording a modest 14 birds. It was a great year for Winter Wrens; 39 birds counted across 16 circles is the second best total ever.

"Bird of the Year" honor has to go to Lafayette's Townsend's Solitaire. The Indiana Bird Records Committee will evaluate the documentation for this review list species. Lafayette and Tri-county birders provided the only Gray Catbird records. Indianapolis birders established their new high count of 985 American Robins.

A CBC record 97 American Pipits were tallied across the state. However, the bulk of these birds came from Lake Monroe's count record total of 61. Besides the typical number of Yellow-rumpeds, the only lingering warbler was a Common Yellowthroat found in the Dunes for a third count record.

An impressive 12 species of sparrows were found. Posey County recorded a count record 44 Field Sparrows. Vesper Sparrows were recorded on the Turkey Run (a count first) and Lafayette counts. Sullivan County birders enjoyed a new high total of 14 Savannah Sparrows. Le Conte's Sparrow records consisted of three from Hanover-Madison and one from Western Gibson County. The Lafayette count provided the only Lincoln's Sparrow.

The Indigo Bunting from Spring Mill was a count first, and the seventh CBC

record for Indiana. A Brewer's Blackbird was a third count record for Lake Monroe.

Documentations or details were provided for most of the unusual species included with this year's count. A Broad-winged Hawk and two Barn Swallows had to be removed from the Mary Gray count total due to a lack of documentation. The same was true for the seven Common Redpolls from the Tippecanoe count.

Many thanks to all the compilers and participants for making Indiana's 103rd Christmas Bird Count another success.

## WISCONSIN

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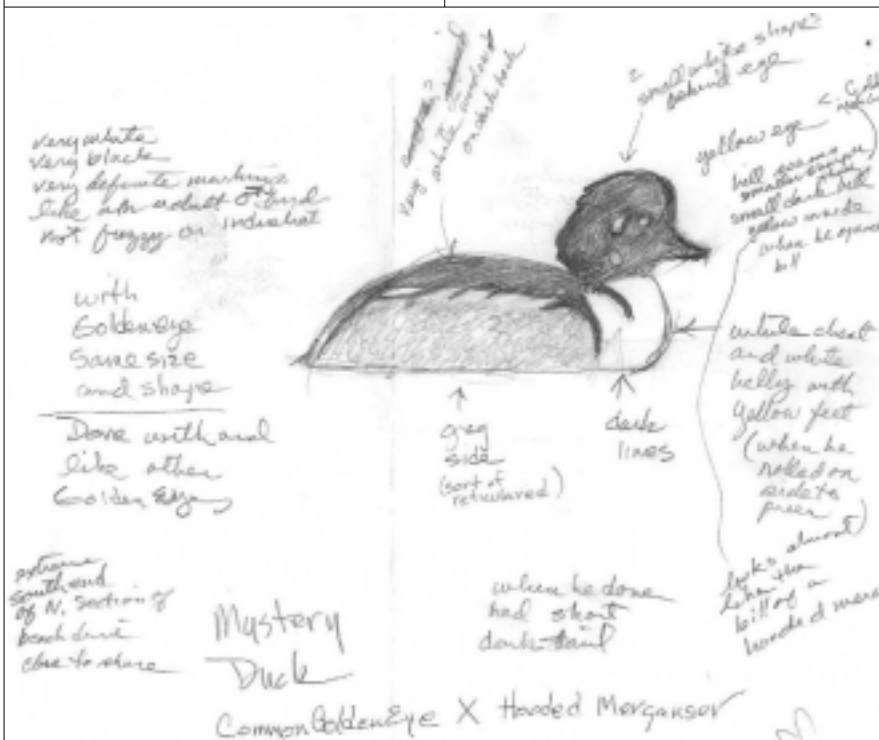
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For the second year in a row, there were mild temperatures and very little snow present for the 2002-'03 Count period. Nearly 60 percent of the compilers (24 of 41) reported no snow cover at all, and even in the northern part of the state most of the counts had three inches or less. High temperatures on many counts were in the 40s, and two counts reached a high of 50

degrees F. Only five counts had temperatures that didn't reach 32 degrees F, and even these had highs in the mid- to upper-20s. The coldest temperature reported was the low of 15 degrees F at Medford.

If one were attempting to predict the 103rd Count results based solely on these mild and largely snowless weather conditions, the expectation might have been a multitude of late-lingering migrants. In this case, however, the CBC weather statistics would be a very misleading indicator, due to a colder-than-normal late fall period, which extended from mid-October to early December. These cold temperatures resulted in the freezing of most of the state's lakes and ponds and many of the rivers prior to the count period.

The rarest bird recorded on the 103rd Count was the first Wisconsin CBC record of a **Brant**, which was present in the area from November 11 to January 8 and was recorded on the Green Bay count. The Ross's Goose in La Crosse was only the second count record. An American White Pelican at Green Bay and a Purple Sandpiper at Sheboygan were both fourth CBC records, as was a count week American Pipit from Racine.



Hybrid, thought to be Common Goldeneye X Hooded Merganser, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Drawing/Judith Huf

Other notable CBC birds included a Red-throated Loon at Racine (only the second in the past 25 years), a Turkey Vulture at Blanchardville (tenth CBC record), Greater White-fronted Geese from Lake Koshkonong and Green Bay, four Harlequin Ducks (on three counts), all three scoter species, two Sandhill Cranes (Bridgeport), King Rail (fifth CBC record) and Virginia Rail at Poynette, and a Killdeer at La Crosse. Among passerines, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet at Madison, a Townsend's Solitaire at Hartford (fifth record), a Varied Thrush at Sheboygan, a Northern Mockingbird at Monroe (11th record), a Harris's Sparrow at Madison (ninth record), and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak at Racine (ninth record) were also unusual.

Waterfowl totals were generally about average, and certainly well below the record totals of last year—as might be expected from reduced amounts of open water. Exceptions to this trend were the totals among the swans and geese. The reintroduced Trumpeter Swan was pres-

ent in good numbers, with a total of ten statewide. The 892 Tundra Swans was a nice total, although nearly all of these were reported on the Madison count. The eight Greater White-fronted Geese reported from Lake Koshkonong and Green Bay was a record total, and only the fifth CBC occurrence ever. An interesting hybrid, thought to be a Common Goldeneye X Hooded Merganser, was reported from Milwaukee.

Among gulls, the only rare species reported this year were the Lesser Black-backed at Madison, and the Iceland at Kewaunee. Also found were four Thayer's Gulls on three counts (tenth count record), nine Glaucous Gulls on two counts, and ten Great Black-backed on two counts. Ring-billed Gulls were present in normal numbers, but Herrings had their second highest total ever (12,693) and their highest since the 56th count.

Overall, sparrows appeared to be lingering in above-average numbers. The most surprising figure was the statewide total of 86 White-crowns, which is

more than triple the previous high, and 80 of these birds were found on the Milwaukee count alone! Also above normal were the statewide totals of five Chipping, three Field, 71 Swamp, and 215 White-throated. Below normal were the totals of 124 Lapland Longspur, and 965 Snow Buntings.

Within the irruptive species, winter finches were present in very low numbers—one of the worst years ever—with just 14 Pine Grosbeaks (on two counts), 11 Red Crossbills (all on the Clam Lake count), and a grand total of just two Common Redpolls reported. Even the total of 197 Evening Grosbeaks (on four counts) was well below normal. Only 447 Purple Finches were found, with almost half of these from the Clam Lake count, which also had 146 out of the 153 total White-winged Crossbills. Bohemian Waxwings were similarly low, with only 37 reported statewide.

Altogether, 144 species and 369,741 individuals were recorded during the 103rd Count. Once again, Madison topped the list with a total of 85 species, Milwaukee was a distant second with 70, Lake Geneva had 65, Poynette had 63, Kewaunee had 61, and Bridgeport finished with 60.

Finally, I would like to extend congratulations to Chippewa Falls on the occasion of their 50th CBC. Perhaps even more impressive is the fact that the compiler, Dr. Charles Kemper, has participated in every one of these 50 counts—a remarkable personal achievement!

## ILLINOIS

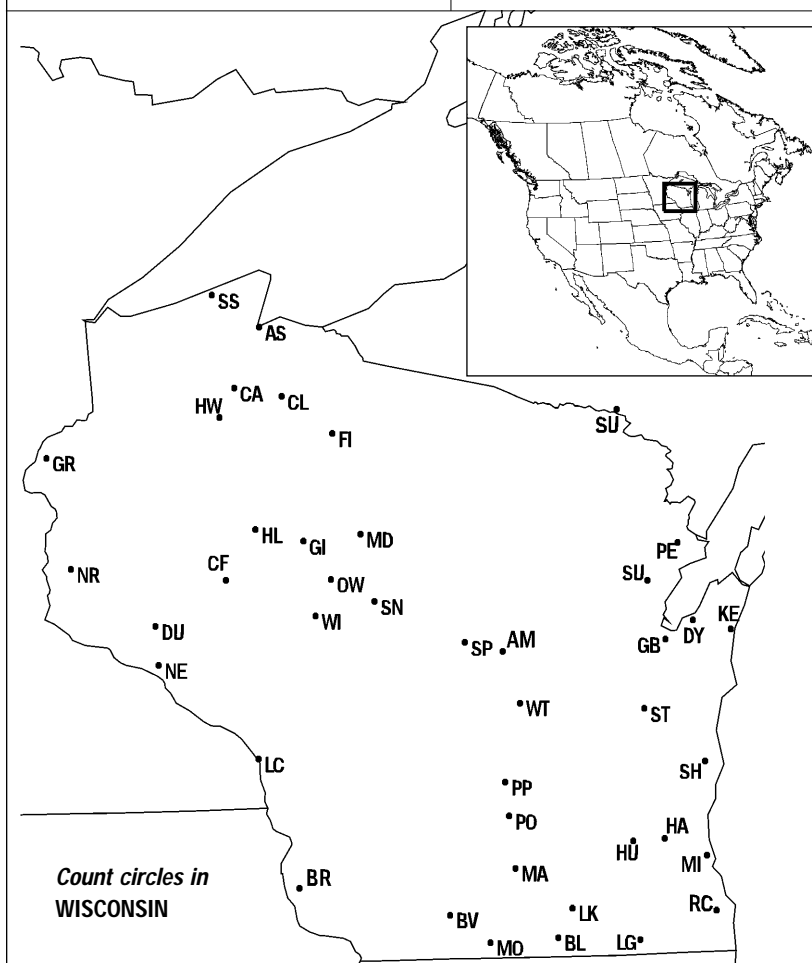
**David B. Johnson**

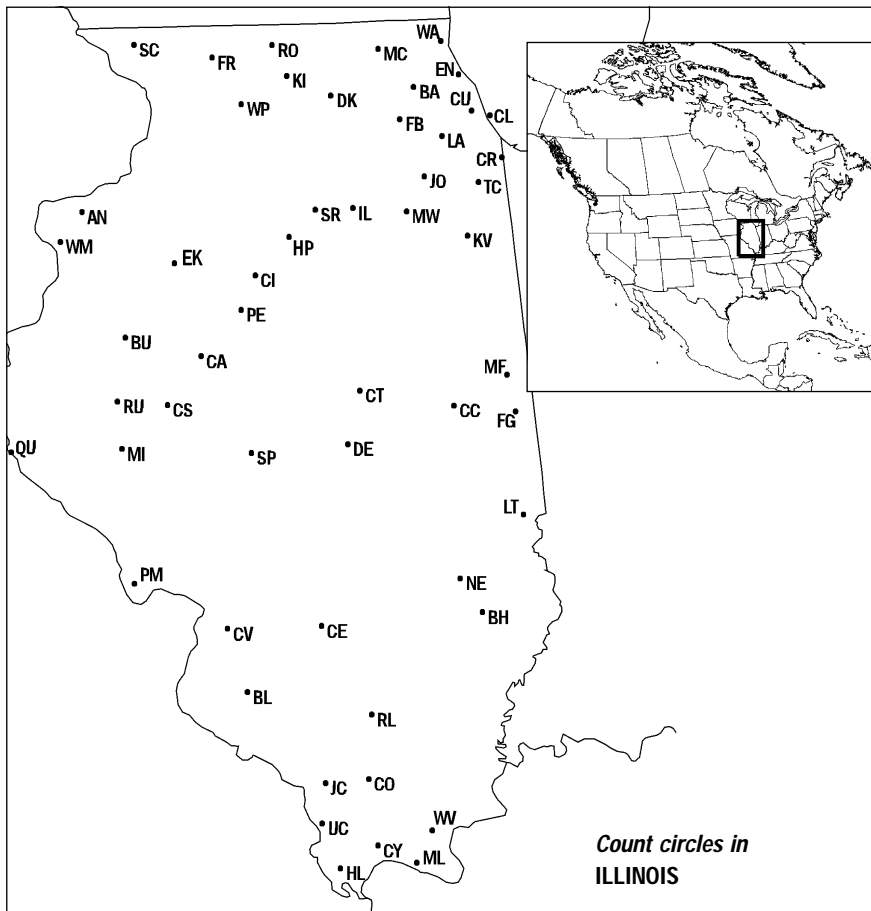
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The cold came early this CBC season—almost three weeks prior to the count period. As a result, waterbird numbers and other species counts were down. Compilers that held their counts early had no distinct advantage. Yet, in spite of the early cold, there were some great surprises and good tallies of several species. Most noteworthy and mentioned by





many compilers and observers were high counts of: Great Blue Heron, Gadwall, Bufflehead, Hooded and Red-breasted mergansers, Ruddy Duck, Cooper's Hawk, Wild Turkey, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, Carolina and Winter wrens, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned kinglets, Eastern Bluebird, Hermit Thrush, White-throated Sparrow, and Northern Cardinal. To a lesser degree there were noteworthy small numerical spikes in other species: Lesser Black-backed Gull, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Northern Mockingbird, and Le Conte's, Fox, Harris's, and White-crowned sparrows. Low numbers were often mentioned for American Coot, Killdeer, Ring-necked Pheasant, Loggerhead Shrike, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Purple Finch. The mega-rarities were the Lisle Arboretum's **Hermit Warbler** and Collinsville's **Great-tailed Grackle**—both state CBC firsts and extremely rare wintering records. Then, there was the focus to check (by looking at CBC data) if West Nile virus would be to blame for

decreased bird numbers in certain species. Blue Jay, American Crow, and Black-capped Chickadee numbers were lower this season. Whether or not this decrease was attributable directly to the West Nile virus is debatable.

Results from 55 counts included 161 species and one unrecognized form. One count surpassed the magic 100 species mark—Cypress Creek (105, a record high for the circle). Fermilab-Batavia was just shy of its "century club" participant status by recording the highest number of field observers—96. Waukegan had the highest number of feeder observers—78!

Eight all-time state high counts were set or tied for an individual species total recorded within a count circle. Carlyle Lake recorded **28,546** Ring-billed Gulls. Cypress Creek tallied a record **39** Barred Owls, **61** Winter Wrens, **241** Golden-crowned Kinglets, **1447** Song Sparrows, and **985** Swamp Sparrows. Fermilab-Batavia tied its high of last year's with **18** Cooper's Hawks. Calumet City-Sand Ridge tallied a record **6** Lesser Black-backed Gulls.

The top ten total numbers of individuals (in order of abundance) were: Common Grackle (1,187,835), Mallard (268,328), Red-winged Blackbird (249,469), European Starling (224,396), Canada Goose (160,040), Snow Goose (124,134), American Crow (110,616), Ring-billed Gull (63,886), House Sparrow (38,468), and Brown-headed Cowbird (25,793).

While not quite as abundant, there were other good high counts mentioned by compilers and observers. Great Blue Herons (1390 in 48 circles) were almost everywhere. Gadwall (5504 in 36 circles), Bufflehead (469 in 26 circles), Hooded Merganser (1278 in 35 circles), Red-breasted Mergansers (1019 in 15 circles), and Ruddy Duck (624 in 15 circles) were waterfowl noted as in "good numbers," particularly inland. Cooper's Hawk (203 in 50 circles) confirms the widespread status of that species. Wild Turkeys (1575 in 36 circles) are now a reintroduction success. Belted Kingfisher (395 in 52 circles) was noted by almost all count circles. Red-bellied Woodpeckers (3868 in 54 circles—missed only by Chicago Lakefront!) have become a dominant woodpecker. Brown Creeper (1049 in 51 circles), Carolina Wren (1427 in 47 circles), Winter Wren (247 in 38 circles), Golden-crowned Kinglet (1510 in 49 circles), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (73 in 19 circles), Eastern Bluebird (1661 in 42 circles), Hermit Thrush (102 in 32 circles), White-throated Sparrow (6554 in 53



Hermit Warbler (*Dendroica occidentalis*), Lisle Arboretum, Illinois. Photo/Jeff McCoy

circles), and Northern Cardinal (15,348 in 55 circles) were all species in good to increasing numbers. Lesser Black-backed Gull (14 in 9 circles) certainly elevates this species status to a regular winter visitor. Eurasian Collared-Doves (102 in 6 circles) are on the move. On your next CBC look around small-town grain elevators! Northern Mockingbird (392 in 27 circles) seems to be expanding northward a bit. Dark-eyed Juncos were widespread (27,063 in 55 circles), plus three "Oregons" were noted. The next most widespread sparrow was the American Tree Sparrow (13,041 in 54 circles). Fox Sparrow (180 in 33 circles) and White-crowned Sparrow (1501 in 46 circles) were noted as being more widespread than usual.

The aforementioned **Hermit Warbler** and Great-tailed Grackle certainly topped the list of rarities. Other unusual lingering birds or rarities included a **Pacific Loon** at Rend Lake. Pere Marquette (1) and Peoria (1) noted the only Great Egrets. Twenty-seven Ross's Geese (in eight circles) were noteworthy (though, perhaps, less unusual than in the past). All three scoters were recorded: a Surf at Newton, a White-winged at Mermet Lake and three at Waukegan, and three Blacks at Rend Lake. Evanston tallied the only Long-tailed Ducks (22). Carlyle Lake tallied the only Golden Eagle. Chicago Urban's pair of Merlins in a cemetery was noteworthy; another Merlin was noted at Rockford. Eleven Peregrine Falcons (in six circles) notes this species' reintroduction success. Newton had the only Greater Prairie-Chickens (22), where they are local and expected. The only Virginia Rail was noted at Cypress Creek. Thirty-four Sandhill Cranes (in three circles) were tallied; the singleton at Carlyle Lake was noteworthy. Two Greater Yellowlegs and ten Least Sandpipers were at Pere Marquette, and a single Least Sandpiper was noted at Horseshoe Lake. The only Dunlin was at Carlyle Lake. Three singleton American Woodcock were noted at Crab Orchard N.W.R., Cypress Creek, and Mermet Lake. The Glaucous Gull at Carlyle Lake was noteworthy, while

Calumet City-Sandridge recorded four. Great Black-backed Gulls were recorded at Calumet City-Sandridge (3) and Waukegan (1). The rarest gull was the immature **Black-legged Kittiwake** recorded at Carlyle Lake. A Barn Owl was noteworthy at Rockford and another was at Cypress Creek at a known location. Chicago Urban and Middle Fork tallied the only two Northern Saw-whet Owls. Ten Eastern Phoebe were tallied in eight circles; Barrington, Chicago Urban, and Lisle Arboretum had the northernmost birds. Loggerhead Shrikes were a bit down with 44 being tallied (in 14 circles). Only ten Northern Shrikes were noted (in 7 circles), and only 38 Red-breasted Nuthatches (in 20 circles). Pere Marquette recorded two House Wrens; another was at Union County. Five Marsh Wrens were tallied, with the northernmost birds being at Bushnell and Lisle Arboretum. Four Gray Catbirds were reported at Baldwin Lake (1), Joliet (1), Kishwaukee (1), and Thorn Creek (1). Ten American Pipits (in four circles) were all in southern Illinois: Baldwin Lake (2), Cypress Creek (5), Rend Lake (1), and Warbluff Valley (2)—where they have become more regular in winter (or at least more searched for).

Five unusual warbler species were noted: Warbluff Valley had the only Nashville Warbler; Lisle Arboretum dutifully recorded the aforementioned ultra-rare **Hermit Warbler**; Springfield tallied its first Pine Warbler and Warbluff Valley noted two; Bloomington had the only Palm Warbler, and solitary Common Yellowthroats were at Cypress Creek, Meredosia, and Mermet Lake. A well-described Chipping Sparrow was at Meredosia. Vesper Sparrows were at Horseshoe Lake and Meredosia. Thirty-one Le Conte's Sparrows (in six circles) were noted this year, with Cypress Creek having the highest tally of 25. Solitary Harris's Sparrows were noted at Bushnell, Middle Fork, and Western Mercer. Always unusual were the single Indigo Buntings at Horseshoe and Rend Lake. Starved Rock tallied the only Yellow-headed Blackbird along the Illinois River. The only Brewer's Blackbird noted was at Horseshoe Lake.

Conspicuous by their absence were the winter finches: no crossbills, no redpolls, and no grosbeaks! A paltry 41 Pine Siskins (in six circles) were about it. Even the Purple Finch numbers (68 in 15 circles) were extremely low.

Other low counts were noted for American Coot (2237 in 31 circles); clearly the early cold fronts pushed most of these birds out of the state. Killdeer, too, were on the move with only 159 (in 24 circles) statewide. Ring-necked Pheasant (278 in 32 circles) denotes this species' somewhat thin population status.

As for focusing on birds possibly affected by West Nile virus and looking at the CBC data, American Crow numbers (110,616 this year vs. 173,428 last year) showed a 57 percent decline. Blue Jay numbers (7235 this year vs. 9803 last year) showed a 35 percent decline. Black-capped Chickadee numbers (6573 this year vs. 8738 last year) showed a 33 percent decline. There are other variables that may have caused these lower numbers, such as observer effort and some migration by jays and crows; caution must be made not to suggest that West Nile virus was the overall cause for these lower data aggregates.

Finally, we must acknowledge and herald Kelly McKay's achievement of participating on 20 Christmas Bird Counts—a new record. (See "Diary of a Mad Counter" on page 36) He missed only three days of the period, December 24, December 30, and January 2! Not only is Kelly McKay a compiler, he is a fanatic Christmas Bird Counter, too! Imagine!? Kudos, Kelly McKay!

**Corrigenda:** The high individual count for the eighth-ranked Brown-headed Cowbird in the Illinois 102nd CBC should be 25,008 (not 87,472 individuals), which would rank the species tenth.

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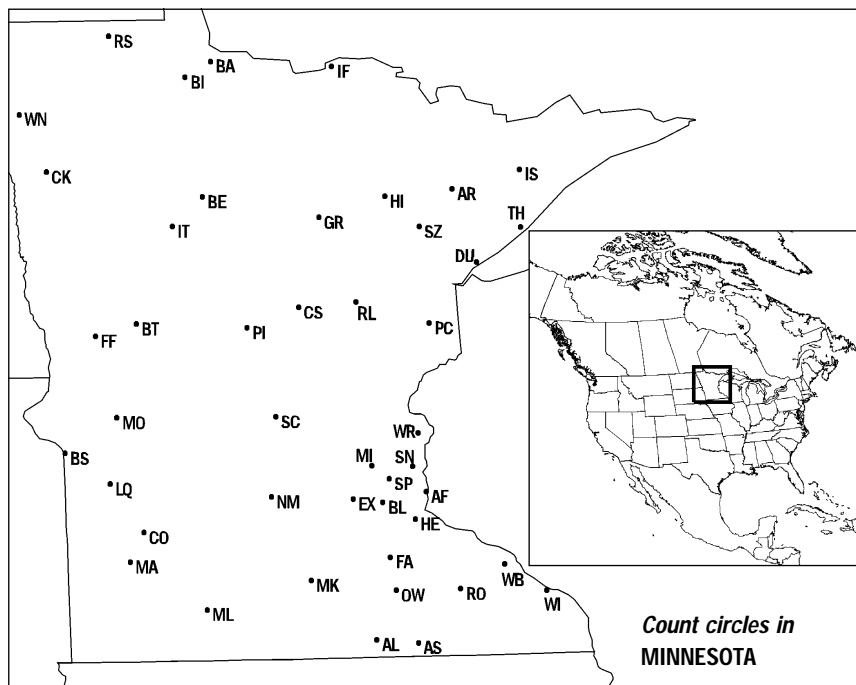
## MINNESOTA

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What a season! (Revisited)

Last season's 132 count-day species tallying 328,865 individuals (including



two species new to the composite list) was nearly repeated this season. The species record was just threatened, but not equaled, due to three uncooperative count-week birds that did not want to be counted on count day. Thus, Minnesota's 45 reporting census areas had to settle for 129 count-day full species. However, Minnesota set a **census record** by tallying **426,800** birds, and again added two new species to the Minnesota composite species list!

Late fall and early winter weather seemed to be reversed this year. Though the month of October was very cold, December seemed intent to make up for October's unusual briskness. In the St. Cloud area of central Minnesota, the average December temperature of 23.2

degrees F was more than 8 1/2 degrees above normal. These statistics made December 2002 the 14th warmest December in the 122 years of St. Cloud temperature records, and this seemed to typify most of Minnesota, as December mean temperatures generally ranged from 6 to 10 degrees above normal.

Even with warmer-than-average December temperatures, nearly all of Minnesota's smaller and shallower lakes were covered with ice by CBC time, and most larger lakes had sizeable areas of ice cover. High winds over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend opened some lakes in western and southern Minnesota, but frigid temperatures led to a quick refreeze. Despite the warmer December, frozen conditions most likely led to

lower waterfowl diversity (24 species) as compared to last year's 28 waterfowl species during that season's uncharacteristically warm fall and winter.

Lack of snow cover was another unusual weather factor. As in November, December precipitation was quite light across nearly all of Minnesota. The only significant precipitation was a December 18 ice storm in central, north central, and northeastern Minnesota. By the end of the count period, very few areas were snow-covered. A handful of communities in far northern counties reported snow depths greater than four inches. Elsewhere, snow cover was less than two inches or completely absent; early January snow depths were some of the lowest on record. Lack of snow cover most likely led to difficulty in locating large numbers of "road birds" such as Ring-necked Pheasant (362) Gray Partridge (14), Lapland Longspur (346), Snow Bunting (1623), and Horned Lark (222). These totals in parentheses are well below CBC average. Numbers for both Snow Bunting and Gray Partridge represent the second lowest in the past 30 years, and the fifth lowest for Ring-necked Pheasant.

Two of the highlights on this year's count occurred in the Hastings-Etter census area. **Minnesota's first Band-tailed Pigeon** and **first Franklin's Gull** bumped Minnesota's CBC composite list up to 199 species! The Band-tailed Pigeon had been coming to a rural Hastings feeder since November, and was gracious enough to reside through much of winter. Franklin's Gull is a surprise in its own right as this species is usually absent from Minnesota by the end of November.

Other firsts during this year include species seen for the first time in one of Minnesota's nine geographic areas (as defined in Robert Janssen's *"Birds of Minnesota"*). Starting in the northwest, an Eastern Towhee was observed on the Crookston CBC. According to compiler Tom Fiero, this was the first he had seen in that area in his 25 years in Crookston. Wild Turkey was the only other species new to a northern geographic area, show-

**Table 1. Highest Minnesota census numbers as compared to Lac qui Parle CBC Canada Goose census numbers. (An asterisk [\*] indicates that the Minnesota census that year was the highest on record.)**

Rank	Count year	Lac qui Parle	Total census	Census rank	No. CBCs
1	103	243,772	426,800*	1	45
2	87	139,647	274,606	6	38
3	99	139,366	311,266*	4	42
4	100	135,654	329,584*	2	43
5	90	123,189	286,945*	5	38
6	102	118,469	329,358	3	49
7	98	110,765	247,403	8	41
8	91	108,332	238,163	11	38
9	96	95,471	246,296	9	40
10	95	90,496	239,136	10	38



**Band-tailed Pigeon (*Columba fasciata*),  
Hastings-Etter, Minnesota.  
Photo/David Cahlander**

ing up in the north-central census area of Pillager. Several new species were seen in the west-central region including Eurasian Collared-Dove (under review) at Lac qui Parle, while both Lincoln's Sparrow, (count week) and Yellow-rumped Warbler were recorded at Fergus Falls. In central Minnesota, Ruby-crowned Kinglet (documentation requested) was observed on the St. Cloud-Collegeville Count, one of only 11 Minnesota CBC records. Aside from the Band-tailed Pigeon and Franklin's Gull, Great Egret was new to the east-central region; one individual was reported at both Excelsior and Bloomington (count week). American Black Duck appeared on a southwestern CBC (Marshall), and Townsend's Solitaire was observed on the south-central count of Faribault.

Several additional significant observations include Long-tailed Duck at both Duluth and Hastings-Etter, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at Rochester, Marsh Wren on the Bloomington count for the second year in a row, Winter Wren on both the Crosby and Bloomington counts, and Gray Catbird at Minneapolis (North).

Canada Goose comprised 57 percent (243,772) of the total individuals counted this season; nearly half of which were observed at Lac qui Parle. As seen in Table 1, since the inception of the Lac qui Parle CBC in the 80th CBC, high Canada Goose numbers from that location account for the majority of Minnesota's highest census numbers.

A total of 19 species were seen in record numbers. Most noteworthy were new high totals for Great Blue Heron (39), Cooper's Hawk (29), Merlin (13), Belted Kingfisher (50), Red-breasted Nuthatch (1202), Eastern Bluebird (40), Dark-eyed Junco (8199), and White-throated Sparrow (103).

Count week observations added three species to the year's complete census totals. Barrow's Goldeneye was observed on the Afton count in the Wisconsin portion, Iceland Gull was observed at Bloomington, and Lincoln's Sparrow was observed at Fergus Falls.

Bloomington's 69 species was one of only two CBCs topping 60 species, with Excelsior's 62 species close behind. Both counts were well above their 20-year average species total. More than half of the census locations reported species totals above their 20-average. (Median and average species totals are very similar for 20-year data.) In addition, seven census areas reported species totals that equaled or increased their previous high mark, including the Pillager CBC, which bettered its high mark by three.

Big Stone N.W.R. led the way with the greatest increase in number of birds by topping the previous high census by 15,509 birds. Hastings-Etter improved its census total by 10,530 birds, while Lac qui Parle and Austin counts also had significant increases, of 6171 and 3585 birds, respectively.

Bob Russell resurrected a CBC of old at the Rice Lake N.W.R. using the same count circle with superb results: 36 species tallying 1971 birds. That count had only been conducted twice previously, in count years 53 (20 species, 180 birds) and 58 (16 species, 248 birds).

In closing, I would like to express my most sincere thanks to all participants who volunteer their important time to accumulate this data. Approximately 778 participants and compilers helped the effort this year. I would like to further acknowledge the additional efforts and assistance offered by compilers of counts with territory in two states, as well as to Karl Bardon for his review of

documentation accompanying the more unusual sightings. Thank you all for another successful year!

## IOWA

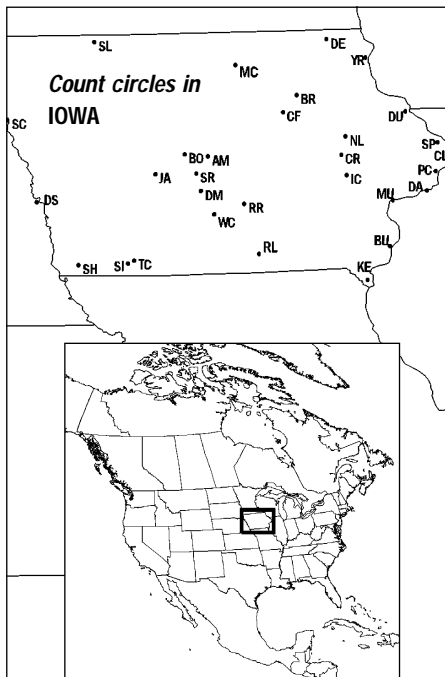
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The 2002-2003 CBC included 30 counts from Iowa, up from last year's total of 27. The high species count was 80 at Keokuk, followed by Saylorville, Davenport, and Burlington, each with 73 species.

For the second consecutive year, the weather was unseasonably warm during the count period. No count recorded snow, and most had high temperatures in the 40s and 50s. However, a week of cold weather prior to the count period left many of the state's ponds and lakes frozen.

Several good birds were found this year, including a male Barrow's Goldeneye at Sioux City (third Iowa CBC record), a House Wren at Davenport (second CBC record; bird was in Illinois), an Ovenbird at Iowa City (second CBC record), a Common Yellowthroat at Shenandoah (fifth CBC record), and an American Pipit at Clinton (seventh CBC record).

Waterbird numbers were a mixed bag this year. One Common Loon, four Pied-billed Grebes, eight American White Pelicans, and 32 Double-crested Cormorants were all below average totals. However, Great Blue Herons were common, with a high count of 81 at Burlington. A Turkey Vulture at Iowa City was a good find. Canada, Snow, Ross's, and Greater White-fronted geese were all found in above-average numbers. Two impressive counts were 43,300 Snow Geese at De Soto N.W.R., and 20,390 Canada Geese at Spirit Lake. All three swan species were reported. Two Mute Swans, found on eastern Iowa counts, may or may not have been wild birds. Dabbling duck numbers were generally down this year. The only noteworthy concentrations were 116 American Black Ducks at Clinton and 25,281 Mallards at Shenandoah. A flock of 15,000



Canvasback at Keokuk represented 99 percent of the total count. After an impressive fall scoter invasion involving all three species, only a single White-winged Scoter was found. Two Long-tailed Ducks at Des Moines were the only other "sea ducks" reported. Common Merganser flocks of 10,000 at Rathbun and 8300 at Red Rock contributed to a high total of 23,845. Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, and American Kestrel were all numerous this year. Single Peregrine Falcons were found at Cedar Rapids and Davenport.

For the second consecutive year, no snow cover made gallinaceous birds difficult to find. Ring-necked Pheasant and Northern Bobwhite were scarce, and Gray Partridge set a new record low. Two Ruffed Grouse were found in northeast Iowa. Killdeer and Wilson's Snipe counts were below normal. Ring-billed Gulls were abundant and widespread, including a concentration of 18,000 at Red Rock. Herring Gulls were scarce, while four Thayer's and two Glaucous were typical counts. After being missed last year, six Eurasian Collared-Doves were found at Spirit Lake. Long-eared Owls were numerous and set a new record high count of 59.

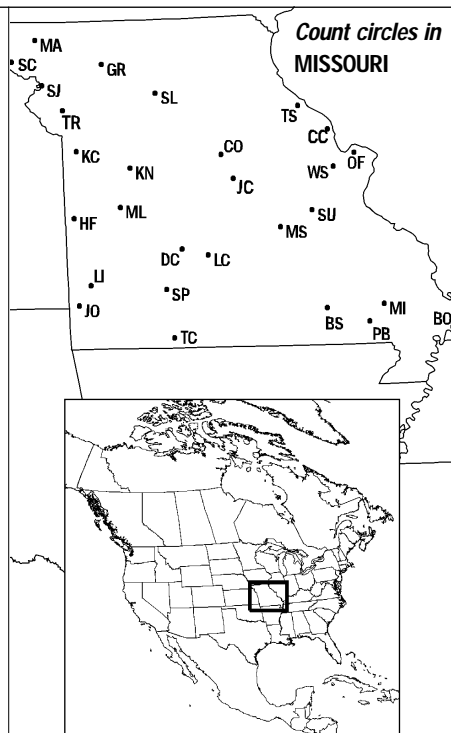
Northern Shrikes were found across northern Iowa, while a total of three Loggerheads continued a string of poor winters for that species. Horned Lark, meadowlarks, Snow Bunting, and Lapland

Longspur numbers were extremely low without snow cover to aid in locating them. Red-breasted Nuthatches were scarce after last year's invasion. Winter and Carolina wrens set new record high counts. Both species were most common in their winter strongholds along the Mississippi River, although Winter Wrens were found throughout the state. Two Marsh Wrens were found at Shenandoah and a count-week bird was at Keokuk. Frugivore numbers were mixed; American Robins were uncommon, Eastern Bluebirds were found in average numbers, and Cedar Waxwings and Yellow-rumped Warblers were numerous. Nine Hermit Thrushes was a good total, but the surprise of the season had to be the new record count of five Gray Catbirds. A Varied Thrush was present at Sioux City. Counts of four Spotted Towhees, 178 Swamp Sparrows, 37 Fox Sparrows, and 687 White-throated Sparrows were all above average. Uncommon wintering sparrows included four Lincoln's, two Field, and one Chipping. Icterids had a great year with Brown-headed Cowbird, Common Grackle, and Red-winged, Rusty, and Brewer's blackbirds all occurring in above-average numbers. Purple Finches were uncommon and Pine Siskins were scarce. A single Common Redpoll was reported from Burlington. Eurasian Tree Sparrows were found on three Mississippi River counts, including 221 at Burlington.

## MISSOURI

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Missouri hosted 27 CBCs in the 103rd season. A new count this year included the Clarence Cannon N.W.R. Except for one count with high sustained winds, counts were not adversely affected by poor weather or snow. However, compilers of several counts in the western part of the state noted that the serious summer and fall drought was responsible for low water levels, poor food supplies, and, consequently, low numbers of certain bird species.



The most unusual species reported were Black-crowned Night-Heron (2, Columbia), Surf Scoter (1, Squaw Creek NWR), Virginia Rail (6, Columbia), Sora (1, Columbia), Least Sandpiper (1, Horton-Four Rivers), Pectoral Sandpiper (1, St. Joseph), American Woodcock (1, Columbia), Say's Phoebe (1, Horton-Four Rivers), House Wren (1, Liberal), American Pipit (70, Horton-Four Rivers; 4, Trimble), Orange-crowned Warbler (1, Taney County), and Palm Warbler (1, Mingo). (All these reports represent documented sightings not yet evaluated by the Missouri Bird Records Committee.)

Except for part of the west, conditions were good for water birds. Common Loons were reported from four counts, Pied-billed Grebes from ten, and Horned Grebes from three. Great Blue Herons were observed on all counts but one. Twenty-seven species of waterfowl were reported (discounting Mute and reintroduced Trumpeter Swans). Goose numbers were high. Greater White-fronted Geese occurred on seven counts. Sixteen counts observed Snow Geese for a total of almost 400,000 birds. Fifty Ross's Geese (32 at Trimble) were tallied.

Bald Eagles occurred on all but two counts for a total of 743 birds. Party-hour normalized numbers of Sharp-shinned

and Cooper's hawks continue to rise, with the highest numbers in more than 40 years this past season. For the fourth year in a row, Merlin numbers were good, with six reports on five counts, plus a count-week report from a sixth count. Numbers of Red-tailed Hawks were normal, but for the third year in a row, American Kestrel numbers were down from the rising trend of the previous 40 years. Loggerhead Shrike numbers (101 birds total) were the highest since the 1995-96 season and equivalent to some years in the 1960s.

Blue Jays and American Crows, which were hit hard by West Nile virus in some metropolitan areas during the summer, were both at 78 percent of their respective means for the previous decade, but well within the usual year-to-year scatter. Great Horned Owls were near their highest numbers ever; one party on the Taney County count found 33. Only 11 Red-breasted Nuthatches were found. Eastern Bluebirds graced all counts, with 236 in Taney County.

Other high species counts included more than 20,000 Mallards (Big Oak Tree, Clarence Cannon, Horton-Four Rivers, and Squaw Creek), 53 Northern Harriers (Liberal), 171 American Turkeys (Squaw Creek), 458 Red-headed Woodpeckers (Mingo), 2820 (only) American Robins (Weldon Spring), 946 American Tree Sparrows (Grand River), and 619 Eurasian Tree Sparrows (Orchard Farm). Range-expanding Eurasian Collared-Doves appeared on four counts, and Great-tailed Grackles on six counts.

Missouri CBC observers found 140 species of birds, plus one additional count-week species. Mingo had the highest species total (96), with Columbia (92) and Horton-Four Rivers (86) coming in second and third, respectively.

## ARKANSAS

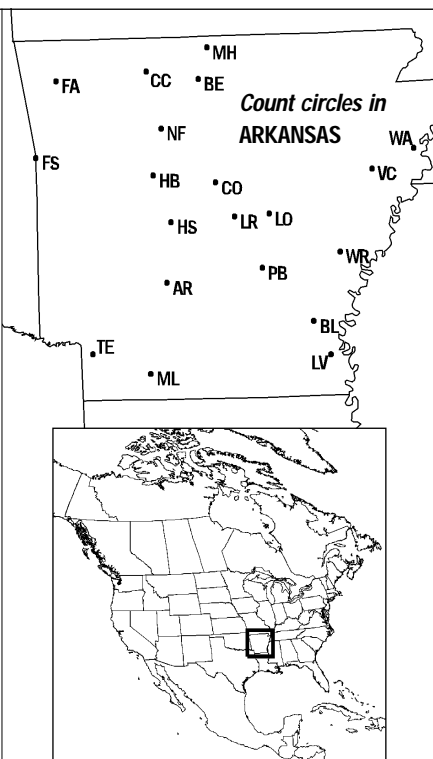
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The 103rd CBC season was a relatively good one, as the numbers go. After a fairly mild but dry fall, most of the 20 counts



for which we have data experienced gentle weather on count day. On several count days, we thought numbers were down, but actually, numbers were higher than the previous season for many species.

Counters at Texarkana were able to find five Anhingas, which was the only notable occurrence among the waterbirds; a Cinnamon Teal at Lonoke was also unexpected. As for raptors, out of 68 Bald Eagles, 20 were immature. A Peregrine Falcon was found at Pine Bluff, but no Merlin was reported in the state. Unusual were the Ospreys that were observed on three counts. All expected species of owls were found, and in relatively good numbers as compared to the previous year. However, only three Short-eared Owls were located.

Numbers for Wild Turkey and Northern Bobwhite were both fairly stable. Interestingly, Greater Roadrunners were reported at the identical number as last year (four), but all were tallied in the Conway circle, where as last year's birds were scattered among four different circles.

Doves were well represented; Eurasian Collared-Doves were reported on nine counts; at Lonoke, where 270 were found, there were also 711 Mourning Doves. In the Magnolia-Lake Columbia circle,

where a thriving population of Inca Doves exists, 32 were seen. Magnolia-Lake Columbia also reported one exotic species, Monk Parakeet. Although only one was reported, photos showing several birds and multiple nests were submitted.

A few stragglers were tallied: Gray Catbirds on two counts, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers on two counts, and Common Yellowthroat on just one count. It was definitely not a year of irruptives; Red-breasted Nuthatches, Purple Finches, and Pine Siskins were all hard to find, as were American Tree Sparrows. All the woodpeckers were found in good numbers, as were the wrens, except for the Bewick's Wren.

As for some of our favorites, Belted Kingfisher numbers were up, and they were found on each of the 20 counts; Brown Thrasher numbers were up just slightly, and Loggerhead Shrikes were down by nearly 14 percent over the previous year. A Selasphorus hummingbird that defied capture before count day was finally netted and banded in January, and it proved to be the state's third **Broad-tailed Hummingbird!**

As always, the many observers and compilers who make the Christmas Bird Counts successful should be commended for their efforts. And it should be noted that this state has lost a long-time compiler, Charles Gardner, who passed away in January at the age of 92. He was probably the founder of the Texarkana counts in both Arkansas and Texas, and he continued to compile those counts until his health forced him to give them up about ten years ago. Mr. Gardner was a true gentleman, a strong role model for generations of Boy Scouts, and a mentor to many fine birders.

## LOUISIANA

**David P. Muth**

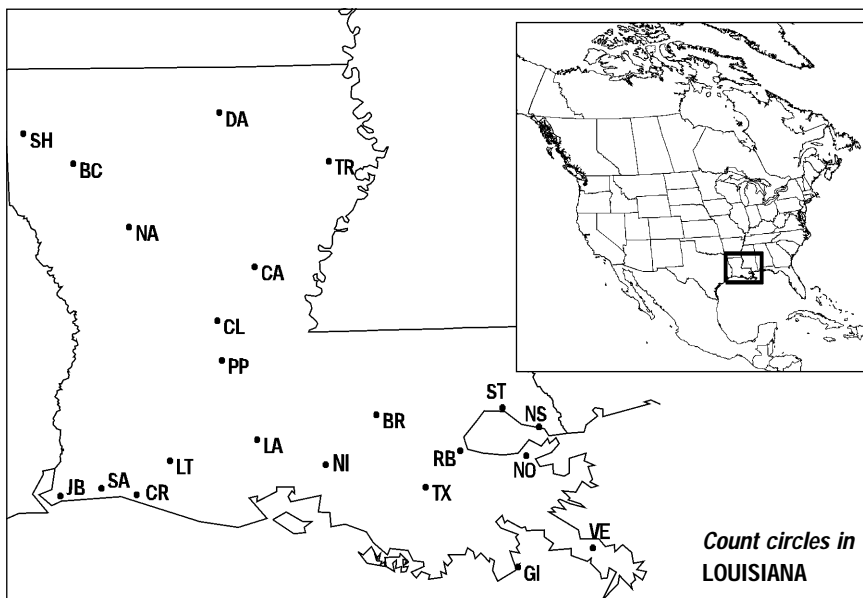
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Louisiana observers conducted 22 counts, logging 1725 party hours and recording 254 species (an average number), plus



Yellow-headed Blackbird during count week at Cheneyville. The total included one new circle, New Iberia, but missed Crowley, which chose not to report. Johnson Bayou, usually conducted by birders from around the state as part of the Cameron Parish early count period sweep, lost its compiler and was almost missed, but was barely saved by three Texans who slipped across the border. Appropriate, perhaps; this southwestern-most Louisiana count was founded by Texans.

Weather was near ideal, with cool temperatures statewide. Only Grand Isle experienced light precipitation in the afternoon. Five counts broke 150, with honors once again going to Sabine, at 174, a respectable total given the minimal turnout. Lacassine won the non-tidewater competition at 157, but Baton Rouge, with no coastal marsh at all, won the inland category at 150. Bossier outdid all other north and central counts at 127.

Perhaps the story of the period was the number of high counts. At least 125 species were reported in high numbers on at least one count. There were too many to enumerate, but a few possible patterns are worth noting. Counters found high numbers of Common Loons on three of the four Lake Pontchartrain counts and Horned Grebes on two. White Pelican numbers set records on the lake and in the northwest corner of the state. Green Herons were widespread, and 17 at Sabine set a state record. Eleven Ospreys at Baton

Rouge set a record for that long-running count, as did 19 Bald Eagles at Reserve.

High counts of both insectivores and seedeaters were studded around the state. Seven counts recorded high numbers of Eastern Bluebird, nine of Hermit Thrush, seven of Northern Mockingbird, five of Chipping Sparrow, four of Savannah Sparrow, and five of White-crowned Sparrow. Eight counts, spread across the state, recorded high numbers of Northern Cardinal. What is one to make of all this?

If the anecdotal evidence of the disproportionate effects of West Nile virus on raptors and corvids reflects something real, then one might expect some evidence to begin showing up on CBCs. While no stock should be put in a single season's reports from one state, it is interesting to see the number of high counts statewide in these groups. Five counts had high counts of Cooper's Hawks, and three of Red-shouldered. There were three high counts of Great Horned Owl, and one of Barred Owl.

Great Horned Owl statewide numbered 129, or 0.075 birds per party hour (b/ph), a record and well above the previous ten-year average of 0.049 birds b/ph. On the other hand, Red-tailed Hawk, another apparently frequent victim of West Nile virus, had no high counts, and totaled 1149 statewide. This represents 0.67 b/ph, lower than the prior ten year average (0.81), but not a record low (0.57 in 1999). American Crows, the species

most often mentioned, had one high count, and totaled 8218 statewide, 4.76 birds b/ph, below the prior ten year average of 6.20 b/ph, and a record low.

The best bird reported was undoubtedly the **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** found in the wrack line on Rutherford Beach during the Creole CBC. This is the first for a CBC, and perhaps the latest record for North America. It appeared to be in good health, since it was able to fly past the astonished observers, out of sight to the east. They obtained a single, blurry flight photo.

Other outstanding rarities included a staked-out **Rock Wren** at New Iberia; an unexpectedly late inshore **Magnificent Frigatebird** at Venice; **Hooded Warbler** at Creole; a staked-out **Anna's Hummingbird** in Baton Rouge; a **Whip-poor-will** at Lacassine (and one count week at Creole); *four* **Common Nighthawks** at Shreveport, and another at Baton Rouge; a **Swainson's Hawk** at Lafayette; two **Golden Eagles** at Lacassine; *four* **Caracara** at Lacassine, and one very unexpected at New Iberia; **Bell's Vireo** at Baton Rouge; **Western Tanagers** at both Baton Rouge and New Orleans; **Clay-colored Sparrow** at Creole; and a **Bullock's Oriole** at Venice.

#### NORTH DAKOTA/SOUTH DAKOTA/ NEBRASKA/KANSAS/OKLAHOMA

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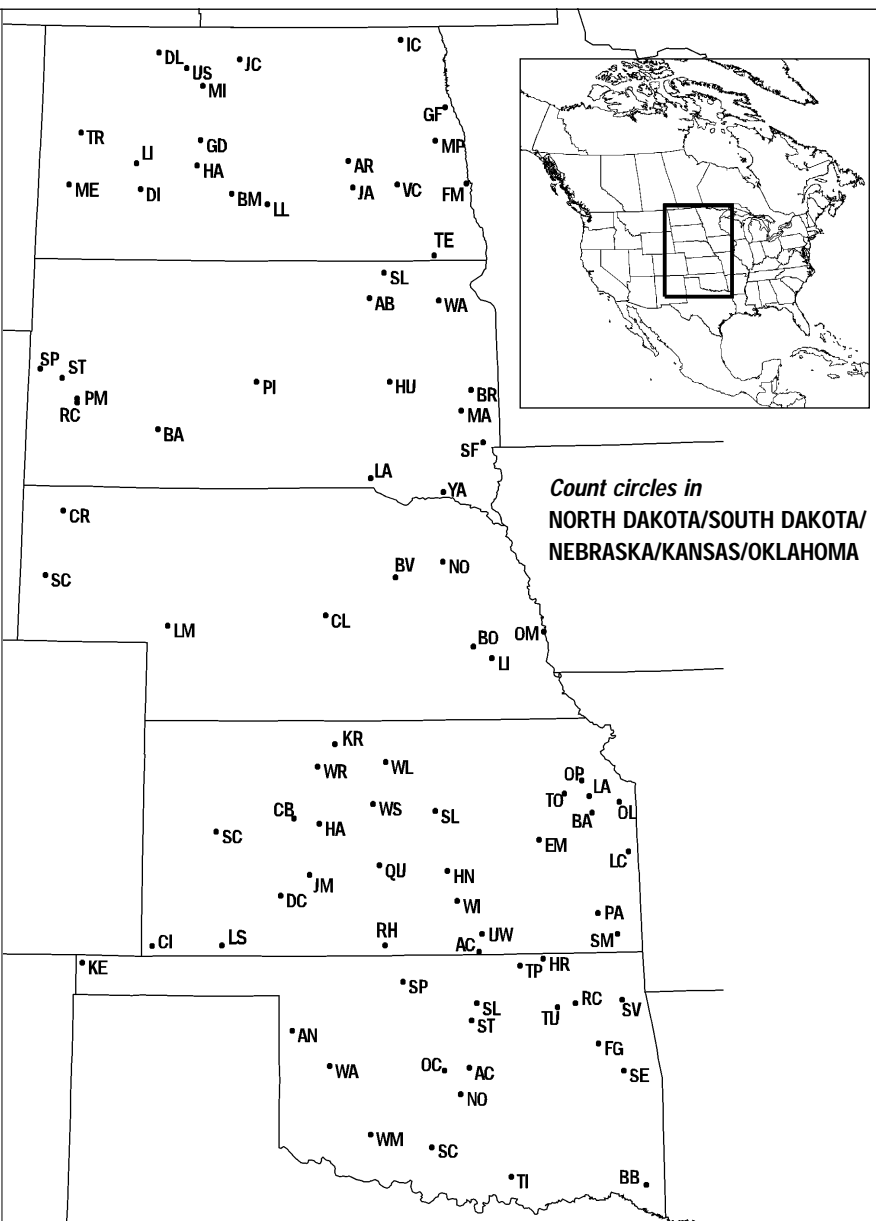
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This year's winter was extraordinarily mild in the nation's heartland. Count participants were treated to temperatures in the 40s and 50s in the northern reaches of the central plains, and the 60s and 70s in the southern portions of the region. These milder temperatures were responsible for some species lingering farther north than usual. Also, there was hardly any snow during the count period. This lack of precipitation allowed unlimited access to all count areas, but did exacerbate drought conditions that had been present for some time. On a more somber note, most compilers commented that access to "sensitive" areas such as wastewater

treatment plants and nuclear plant reservoirs was eased this year, allowing counters to visit these important spots.

North Dakota participants submitted 20 counts this year. Garrison Dam tallied the greatest number of species with 56; Fargo-Moorhead and Grand Forks-East Grand Forks tied for second place with 46 species each. This was a reasonably good year for Snowy Owls. Birds were reported from Arrowwood N.W.R. (count week), Des Lacs N.W.R., Fargo (count week), Grand Forks, Jamestown, Lake Ilo (count week), Long Lake N.W.R., and Upper Souris N.W.R. Snow Buntings were widely present this season and were recorded on 11 of the North Dakota counts. On the other hand, this was not an especially good year for redpolls or northern finches; Common Redpolls were reported from only six of the 20 counts, and Hoaries went unrecorded this season. Bohemian Waxwings were noted at Des Lacs, Fargo, Garrison Dam, Icelandic S.P., Jamestown, Theodore Roosevelt N.P., and Upper Souris. Other interesting finds were Carolina Wren at Bismarck, a Gyrfalcon at Dickinson, Ring-necked Duck and Red-bellied Woodpecker at Garrison Dam (both new to the count), Varied Thrush (count week) from Fargo, Saw-whet Owl at Medora, and Lesser Scaup and Common Goldeneye from Minot (both new to the count). Finally, Eurasian Collared-Doves were at Grand Forks and Mayville-Portland.

South Dakota birders participated in 15 counts this year, and Yankton observers recorded 67 species; Pierre came in a close second with 66. A few good birds were sprinkled around the state: Lake Andes had a count week Long-tailed Duck; Madison, an unidentified *Pheucticus* grosbeak; Piedmont had a nice assortment of corvids, including Gray, Blue, and Pinyon jays and Clark's Nutcracker; and Pierre had Gyrfalcon (count week), Northern Saw-whet Owl (count week) and 26 Franklin's Gulls. Elsewhere, Rapid City reported Bohemian Waxwing; Sturgis also reported Bohemians, and also had a count week Gyrfalcon, and Waubay N.W.R. sub-



mitted good documentation for a Red-shouldered Hawk. The only Snowy Owls were noted from Sand Lake N.W.R. (count week) and at Yankton. Yankton also had a wide variety of lingering water birds that helped that count take first place for the most number of species.

Nebraska observers participated in nine CBCs this season. As has been the case for the past several years, the Lake McConaughy count outpaced the competition and took first place with a whopping 108 species; Scottsbluff reported 80 species. To reach 108 species, Lake McConaughy had to have some "goodies:" two loon species, four grebes, two scoters, both scaup, both goldeneye, all three mergansers, and nine gull



Clark's Nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*), Oskaloosa-Perry Lake, Kansas. Photo/Bunnie Watkins

species, including count week Mew and count week Glaucous. Add to that Tufted Duck (count week), Pinyon Jay (count week), Mountain Chickadee, Gray Catbird, and Cassin's Finch, and it's easy to see how these birders broke the century mark with ease! Across the state, other interesting finds were Gray Catbird at Branched Oak, the Palm Warbler at Calamus-Loup, Pinyon Jay at Crawford, Omaha's Trumpeter Swan and Eurasian Collared-Dove, and the Pygmy Nuthatch and Yellow-headed Blackbird noted at Scottsbluff.

This year, Kansans participated in and submitted 27 CBCs. Quivira N.W.R.'s 95 species topped the list, but was closely followed by the 94 species seen on Wichita's count. Oskaloosa-Perry Lake and Udall-Winfield followed closely thereafter with 91 species each. Many rare birds were reported from the state this year, including a wayward Smith's Longspur at Cedar Bluff, and Western Scrub-Jays and Common Redpoll at Cimarron National Grassland. Cimarron birders also recorded such "southwestern" species as Lesser Prairie-Chicken, Scaled Quail, Curve-billed Thrasher, Lark Bunting, and Gray-headed Junco. The Mountain Bluebirds at Halsted-Newton were very far east, and the Steller's Jay at Liberal was a remnant of a fall invasion of the species. There were also Northern Goshawks at Linn County, Red Hills, and Webster Reservoir. Remarkable were the Clark's Nutcracker at Oskaloosa-Perry Lake and



Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*), Salina, Kansas. Photo/Harold V. Lear



Lewis's Woodpecker (*Melanerpes lewis*), Scott Lake, Kansas. Photo/Marie Osterbuhr

the Lewis's Woodpecker at Scott Lake. Salina was treated to a count week Rufous Hummingbird, while Topeka had a Trumpeter Swan, and Wilson Reservoir observers found a Pacific Loon and a Snow Bunting.

Twenty counts were conducted this season in Oklahoma. Two counts tied for the highest species total this year: Oklahoma City and Tishomingo N.W.R. each recorded 122 species, a remarkable number. Several other counts also broke the century mark: Norman had 101 species, Fort Gibson recorded 106, Tulsa had 108, and Wichita Mountains reported 100. Interesting reports from around the state included the Northern Goshawk and the (apparently) established Inca Doves at Broken Bow; the Red-throated Loons at Fort Gibson, Sequoyah, and Tulsa; the Baird's Sandpiper at Hula Reservoir; and 22 Steller's Jays at Kenton. Also of note, reported from Oklahoma City were Long-tailed Duck, Lesser Black-backed Gull (count week), Mew Gull (count week), White-winged Dove, and Sedge Wren. Another Sedge Wren was reported from Arcadia. Found at Sooner Lake was an unidentified yellow-bellied kingbird. Seven wader species were found at Spavinaw, including Dunlin (count week), Long-billed Dowitcher, and Red Phalarope. Last, but certainly not least, Red Crossbills were noted at Washita N.W.R.

Finally, I must note that most compilers have again done an excellent job of

editing their individual counts. This has made my job of regional editor easy. My thanks go to each of you.

## TEXAS

**Keith A. Arnold**

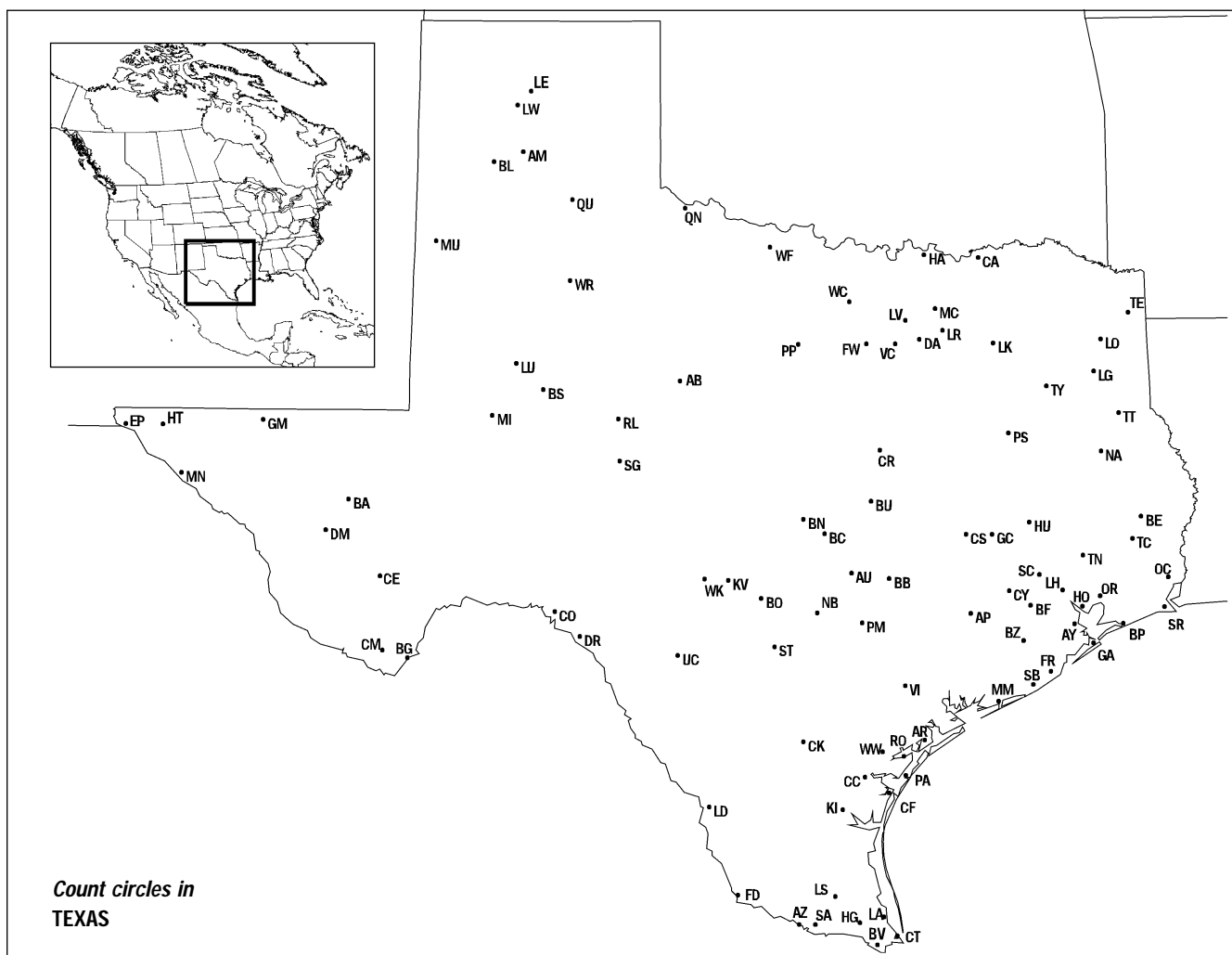
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The 98 Texas counts in the 103rd Christmas Bird Count collectively reported 388 species on count day, along with a couple of exotic species. Once again, Mad Island Marsh (now Matagorda County-Mad Island Marsh) led the state with 243 species, although the Freeport count came in with a healthy 231 and the Corpus Christi count tallied 223 species; the San Bernard count missed the magic 200 species mark by ONE! Two other counts tallied 175 or more species. Note that all these counts are along the Gulf Coast. At the other end of the spectrum, Lake Meredith (East) reported the low number of species at 57; with one exception, all counts with less than 65 species reported came from the western half of the state. Overall, many counts reported "missing" species of waterbirds or lower numbers of the species present; this reflects the long drought conditions that existed prior to the CBC season throughout much of Texas. At the same time, a few counts reported many highs for waterbirds. This simply reflects the size of the state and how climatic conditions can change dramatically in a two-week period!

No new species appeared for Texas counts. However, several species missing or present in low numbers in recent years made something of a comeback. These included Fulvous Whistling-Duck, Rusty Blackbird, and Purple Finch; only the first species appeared on any counts in significant numbers. Most other irruptive winter species remained absent from Texas. Pine Siskin proved one exception: It was found on numerous counts, and Abilene reported 227 individuals. No count tallied a single grosbeak or crossbill (though El Paso had a Red Crossbill during count week).



The counts showed no great number of lingering neotropical migrants, although there was an unusual warbler or two, including both Townsend's and Hermit warblers at Choke Canyon. A well-photographed "Western" Flycatcher and a Couch's Kingbird reported from Nacogdoches deserve special mention. Green-tailed Towhees showed up east of their usual winter range in Texas, and a Varied Thrush appeared at El Paso. Along with wintering Cave Swallows in the southern third of Texas, Tree Swallows were tallied from Lubbock in the north to Harlingen in the south to Orange in the east, with an amazing 604 birds found on the latter count.

We expect unusual gulls to appear along the Gulf Coast, and this year saw Glaucous, California, and both Lesser and Great Black-backed gulls. A Lesser Black-back at Lake Ray Hubbard was unusual, as was the well-documented Barrow's Goldeneye at Tenaha-Timpson. Although

Franklin's Gulls appear from time-to-time on Texas counts, the 250 reported from Lake Houston seems incredible.

Raptors always remain a concern. However, the numerous reports and high numbers of Osprey, Bald Eagles, Merlins, and Prairie and Peregrine falcons encourages me. Several counts reported four of these five species, and often in good numbers. Similarly, Brown Pelican continues to show improvement, both in numbers and in distribution along the coast. Aplomado Falcons seem to have responded to the reintroduction program. Expected on the Laguna Atascosa count, one also appeared on the Rockport CBC. Both Swainson's and Broad-winged hawks have now been documented in winter from the Lower Rio Grande Valley and the Central Gulf Coast, and it seems as though a small number of both species, especially Swainson's, actually do winter in those areas. However, birds from outside those areas remain suspect without extremely good details, so I



**Greater Pewee (*Contopus pertinax*), Anzalduas-Bentsen, Texas.  
Photo/Brad McKinney**

remain skeptical of such reports. Zone-tailed Hawk appeared at Kerrville and San Angelo, both somewhat out of range.

White-winged Doves and Eurasian Collared-Doves continue to expand in

number and range. Many counts report these species as new this year or in record numbers. So far, we have no evidence that the expansion of either species has harmed other columbids.

I would like to call attention to the participation of a number of young persons from Valentine, Texas, on the Davis Mountains CBC. I offer congratulations to the adults who fostered these youngsters in this effort. Finally, I would be remiss not to mention the passing of Charles Gardner, long-time compiler of both the Texas and Arkansas Texarkana CBCs.

## MONTANA

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Unusually dry, warm weather preceded the count period this year. Few of the 31 counts reported any precipitation or snow cover, and most had open water. Franklin's Gull (Bigfork) was the only new species (No. 206) to the cumulative state CBC list among the 140 species reported on this year's counts. Bigfork (83) and Stevensville (81) had the highest species counts.

A count-first Long-tailed Duck at Bigfork and a **White-winged Scoter** at Great Falls were the rarest waterfowl reported. **Snow Geese** were reported on three counts, with five at Stevensville.

**Greater Scaup** at Bigfork (296) and Ninepipe N.W.R. (14) outnumbered the 128 Lessers reported on eight counts.

**Harlan's Hawks** comprised 5 percent of the 214 Red-taileds west of the continental divide; none were reported among 64 Red-taileds on eastern Montana counts. Single **Gyrfalcons** were at Ninepipe and Warm Springs. Merlins (30) would have outnumbered Kestrels (42) statewide, but for 20 of the latter at Ninepipe, where more than 300 raptors were counted.

The Bitterroot Valley feral **California Quail** population is apparently growing; Stevensville had 83 and Hamilton 17. **Wilson's Snipe** on nine counts was in fitting with the mild fall; Hamilton recorded 12 and Missoula 13. Bigfork's **Sandhill Crane** (their third and a fifth state CBC record) went on to over-winter.

An unprecedented 1552 gulls were reported on ten counts; Bigfork (636) and Helena (761) reported record numbers. **Mew Gulls** (2) were at Bigfork for the third time, but the real surprise there was the first Montana CBC **Franklin's Gull**. Neither Thayer's nor Glaucous Gull was found at Fort Peck, where they have been regular in recent years.

It was probably inevitable; this year a hybrid **Steller's X Blue Jay** was photographed on the Hamilton count. And for the second time in four years, an apparent **Black-capped X Mountain Chickadee** was reported at Kalispell. The

seven **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** reported at Missoula was a new count high. The only warbler reported was a Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) at Bowdoin N.W.R.

Bohemian Waxwings and winter finches were notable in their near absence, particularly compared to recent years. Only nine counts had more than 100 of the former, and Cedars made up a much higher than usual 22 percent of the 4501 waxwings reported. Among the extremely few (just 10!) Common Redpolls, two **Hoaries** were also found, at Bowdoin. Evening Grosbeaks were found on just nine counts. For the first time in many years, statewide House Finch numbers actually decreased (by more than 5 percent) compared to the previous year, but still 8029 were seen, on 25 counts. A rare west-side **Purple Finch** was reported from Kalispell; two were at Bowdoin, where they are regular.

A well-described count-week **Brewer's Sparrow** in Yellowstone National Park would have been a state CBC first; a **Green-tailed Towhee** there (in the Wyoming portion of the circle) was another fine CBC find. There were the usual scattered individual reports of Fox (2 at Hamilton), Lincoln's (Upper Swan Valley), and White-throated Sparrows (Ennis, Missoula), as well as Spotted Towhees (Missoula, Hamilton). Unfortunately, observers continue to report both Fox and Lincoln's Sparrows without substantiating details. Our knowledge of the winter status of these species could certainly be improved! Only a few species that were reported without adequate documentation were deleted. Kudos to those observers and compilers who do put an emphasis on supporting details for rarer species, and on sending special aspects and long-term summaries of their counts.

## IDAHO

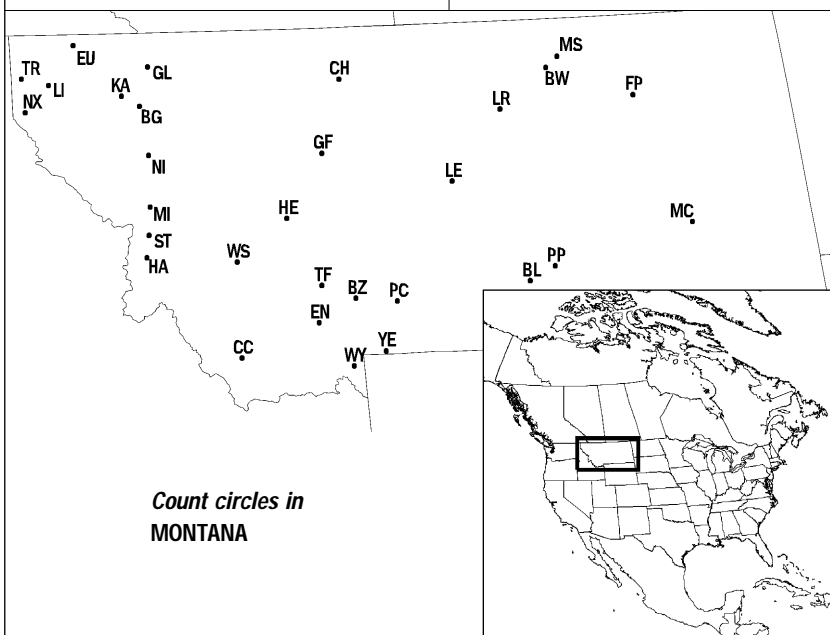
**David Trochlell**

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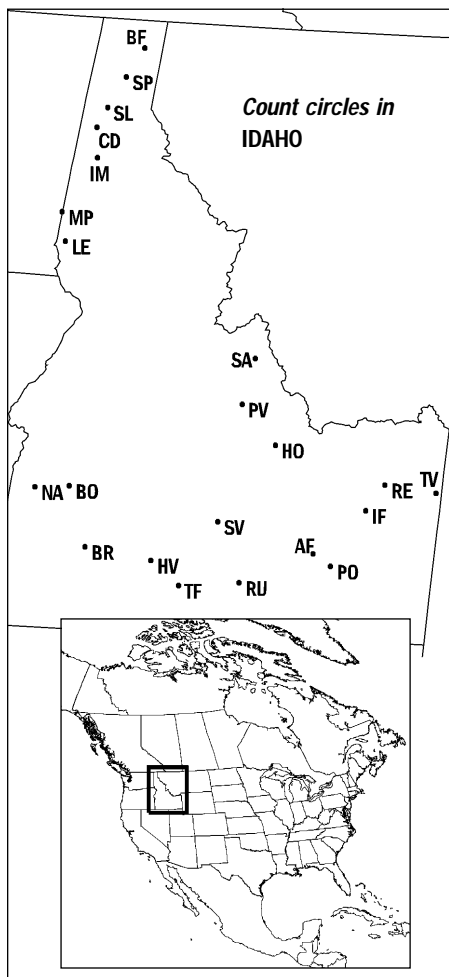
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This season's 22 Idaho CBCs listed a commendable 334,375 birds of 165 species. Mild weather predominated



Count circles in  
MONTANA



throughout the season, but many counts were adversely affected by rainy or windy conditions. Lewiston-Clarkston tallied the most species (91), and Nampa turned in the largest count total with 65,806 individuals.

A rare Pacific Loon at Lewiston-Clarkston was a highlight of the season. Unusually high statewide totals of 13 Common Loons and 247 grebes were attributed to ice-free surface waters. Two Great Egrets were unprecedented at Nampa, but the most unusual wader was a lingering **Plegadis species** (almost certainly a White-faced Ibis) at Hagerman Valley, a winter first for Idaho.

Idaho's total waterfowl count of 162,276 individuals fell 33 percent from last year. Record Trumpeter Swan tallies were made at each of four CBCs for a grand total of 741. Most waterfowl (75 percent) consisted of Canada Geese and Mallards, but a good array of species (29) were listed. Most notable were three Mute Swans at Hagerman, a Greater

White-fronted Goose at Bruneau, Snow and Ross's geese at Hagerman and Rupert, two Cinnamon Teal at Nampa, Eurasian Wigeon at Boise and Lewiston-Clarkston, two Long-tailed Ducks at Lewiston-Clarkston, and a Red-breasted Merganser (CW) at Lewiston-Clarkston.

An Osprey in Boise was surprising, though not unprecedented there. Only 320 Red-tailed Hawks were counted, the first total below the 500 mark in the past five years. A total of 300 Rough-legged Hawks was tallied, down 16 percent from last year.

The gull list included the state's first winter-period **Franklin's Gull** at Hagerman Valley, a Mew Gull in Boise, two Thayer's Gulls at Pocatello, a **Western Gull** (Idaho's fifth record) at Lewiston-Clarkston, and a Glaucous-winged Gull at Lewiston-Clarkston. In the shorebird department, two **Short-billed Dowitchers** at Bruneau were Idaho winter firsts, and two Long-billed Dowitchers also there provided Idaho's second winter record. Also unexpected were five lingering Dunlin at Lewiston-Clarkston. The Wilson's (formerly Common) Snipe count was the second highest in the past 10 years.

The seven panhandle counts posted a record tally of 1100 Mourning Doves. Eight owl species were listed statewide, but numbers of each species were relatively low. Two Western Bluebirds at Boise were unusual, but not unprecedented there. Both American Robin and Cedar Waxwing numbers were less than a third of last year's record totals. Over 90 percent of the Bohemian Waxwings tallied were from Teton Valley's record count of 2591. An Orange-crowned Warbler represented an interesting first for Bruneau.

Single very rare Swamp Sparrows were discovered at Boise and Teton Valley; there have been only three other Idaho CBC precedents in the past 30 years. Five Harris's Sparrows were at American Falls and a White-throated Sparrow was at Bruneau; both are rare, but expected in winter.

My special thanks go out to the compilers who provided extra count details and many good bird reports.

**Corrigenda:** Last year's Surf Scoter should have been listed for Coeur d'Alene, and the Rough-winged Swallow was actually tallied at Hagerman Valley.

#### WYOMING/UTAH

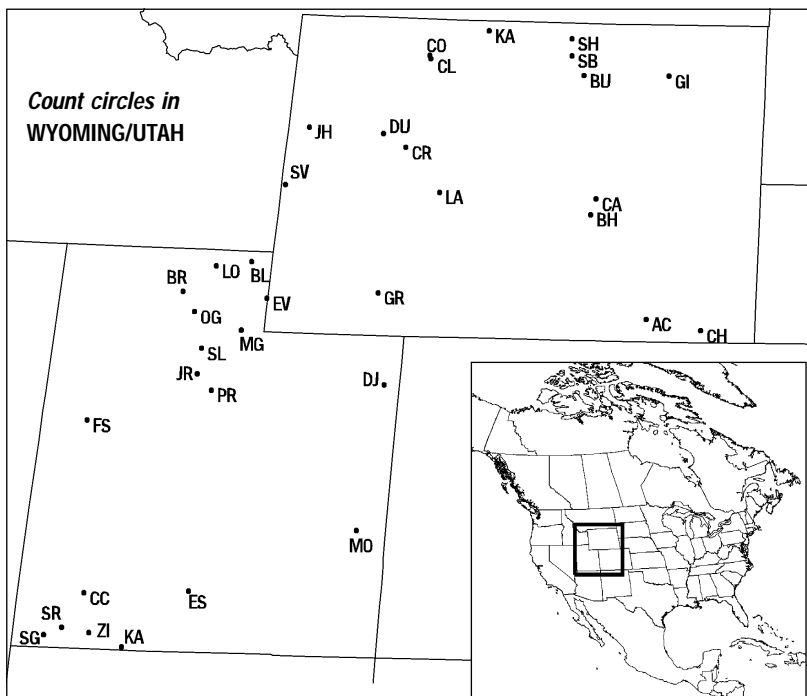
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Dedicated birders in Wyoming and Utah counted birds on 35 CBC circles for the 103rd count year. More than 363,000 individual birds were recorded for an average of 10,375 birds per circle. Looking back, 247,000 birds were recorded for the 102nd count, and 226,000 during the 101st count. Similar to the last two counts, most comments referred to the mild dry weather in the area. Lakes, ponds, and streams were rarely frozen this year.

In Wyoming, 65,961 birds were recorded on 18 CBC circles. Species counts ranged from 26 to 54, with an average of 43 species per count. Wyoming swan highlights were 18 Tundra Swans at Casper (WYCA) and 200 Trumpeter Swans recorded on three count circles. Raptor highlights included 210 Bald Eagles on 15 counts, 126 Golden Eagles on 17 counts, six Ferruginous Hawks on four counts, six Northern Goshawks on six counts, and nine Merlins on six counts. With many species, it is difficult to determine if snow cover or population numbers are the most important factor in concentrating individuals for the counts. This year, 284 Greater



Harlequin Duck (*Histrionicus histrionicus*), right, Green River, Wyoming.  
Photo/Janis Steenberg



at Green River (WYGR). One Lewis's Woodpecker was seen at Buffalo (WYBU), and five Hooded Mergansers were observed at Jackson Hole (WYJH). The only Mountain Bluebirds recorded in Wyoming were the 23 recorded on the Kane County (WYKA) count. Story-Bighorn (WYSB) had the honor of recording the most Wild Turkeys in Wyoming with a count of 131. Star Valley (WYSV) had a record 492 American Robins with a note stating there was literally a sea of robins in the area this year and the count should be in the thousands instead of the hundreds.

In Utah, 297,153 birds were recorded on 17 CBC circles. Species counts ranged from 46 to 99, with an average of 68 bird species per count. The biggest news in Utah was the arrival of the Eurasian Collared-Dove. Considering the rate this bird has spread from Florida, Utah birders have been expecting populations to become established for several years. There have been miscellaneous reports of Eurasian Collared-Dove for several years, but none on CBC circles. That all changed with the 103rd CBC when 25 Collared-Doves were recorded on five count circles. These observations were distributed throughout the state with one at Cedar City (UTCC), one at Dinosaur N.M.-Jensen (UTDJ), one at Morgan (UTMG), ten at Provo (UTPR), and 12 at St. George (UTSG).

Raptor observations were about as expected. Highlights included 280 Bald Eagle on 15 counts, three Northern Goshawks on two counts, 76 Golden Eagle on 14 counts, 23 Ferruginous Hawk on five counts, 141 Rough-legged Hawk on 11 counts, five Peregrine Falcons on three counts (Salt Lake City with a high count of three), 28 Merlin on nine counts, and one Red-shouldered Hawk at Zion National Park (UTZI). This was a mild winter compared with the 101st CBC when 189 Rough-legged Hawks were recorded on 14 counts, however, 84 Rough-legs were recorded at Logan this year for a record high for their count. When I first began birding Utah in the early 1980s, I was told "our"

Sage-Grouse were counted on five circles. The Bates Hole count recorded 317 Greater Sage-Grouse on their 101st count, but only 85 this year. Other gallinaceous bird highlights include 332 Wild Turkeys on six counts and 27 Sharp-tailed Grouse on four counts. Only six Ruffed Grouse were counted (all at Jackson Hole) and three Blue Grouse at Casper (WYCA).

Blue Jays continue to be present in Wyoming, 35 on six counts, but were not recorded in Utah. On the other hand, the Eurasian Collared-Dove is rapidly expanding its range into both

states. Four were recorded on the Buffalo (WYBU) count and three on the Cheyenne (WYCH) count in Wyoming, and 25 were counted on five circles in Utah. For nuthatches, the Red-breasted Nuthatch continues to dominate with 152 counted on 12 circles, while White-breasted was recorded 76 times on 12 circles and Pygmy Nuthatch 32 times on two circles. Mountain Chickadees were recorded on all except the Clark and Gillette counts (495 individuals on 16 counts). There were 962 Bohemian Waxwings recorded on eight circles in Wyoming, but none in Utah. Red-winged Blackbirds remained in Wyoming in good numbers, 304 on eight counts, probably due to the mild winter.

Following are a few interesting observations from individual count circles. Bates Hole (WYBH) recorded the only Northern Saw-whet Owl and Brown-headed Cowbird for Wyoming. Bates Hole and Casper (WYCA) recorded the only Northern Mockingbirds, with one apiece. Casper recorded the only Blue Grouse and California Gull on count day for Wyoming. Crowheart (WYCR) again recorded the only Turkey Vulture for the state. Short-eared Owls were only observed on the Evanston (WYEV) count. A Harlequin Duck was observed



Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*), Dinosaur N.M.-Jensen, Utah.  
Photo/Dona Hilkey

common winter gull was the Ring-billed and the most abundant summer gull was the California. I have no records, but feel more Ring-billed Gulls are nesting in Utah and more California Gulls are wintering in the state than 20 years ago. During the 103rd CBC, 7615 Ring-billed Gulls were recorded on ten counts, and 1947 California Gulls were recorded on six counts. It was a good count year for Lesser Goldfinch, with 458 counted on ten circles.

Following are a few interesting individual count observations of Utah. Bear Lake recorded the only Trumpeter Swans (12) in the state, while Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge (UTBR) recorded 11,956 Tundra Swans. The UTBR count also included 24 species of waterfowl and shorebirds, an indication of mild weather and open water. Several of these species, like Marbled Godwit and Long-billed Dowitcher, were not seen elsewhere in Utah. Dinosaur N.M.-Jensen (UTDJ) observed 105 Sandhill Cranes (only observation in Utah). The isolation of the Fish Springs National Wildlife Refuge (UTFS) was illustrated with no records of Rock Dove or House Sparrow and only one European Starling. Logan (UTLO) had a record 68 participants with a record high number of birds (85,055) and bird species (99). Provo (UTPR) had a high count of 100 American Avocets (only 103rd CBC record in Utah). I believe the mild weather also contributed to Provo's Yellow-headed Blackbird and Great-tailed Grackle counts. Silver Reef (UTSR) recorded the only Common Loon, Horned Grebe, Red-necked Grebe, and Double-crested Cormorant for the state. One Anna's Hummingbird was recorded at Silver Reef (UTSR), and one Yellow-throated Warbler was recorded at Zion National Park (UTZI). St. George (UTSG) recorded 58 Abert's Towhees and was the only count in the state with this species. The only White-throated Sparrow for the state was on the Ogden (UTOG) count and was the bird seen at my feeder since Thanksgiving. This sparrow is the "tan-striped" race of

White-throated Sparrow and was still in the area on March 31, 2003, as I wrote this summary.

## COLORADO

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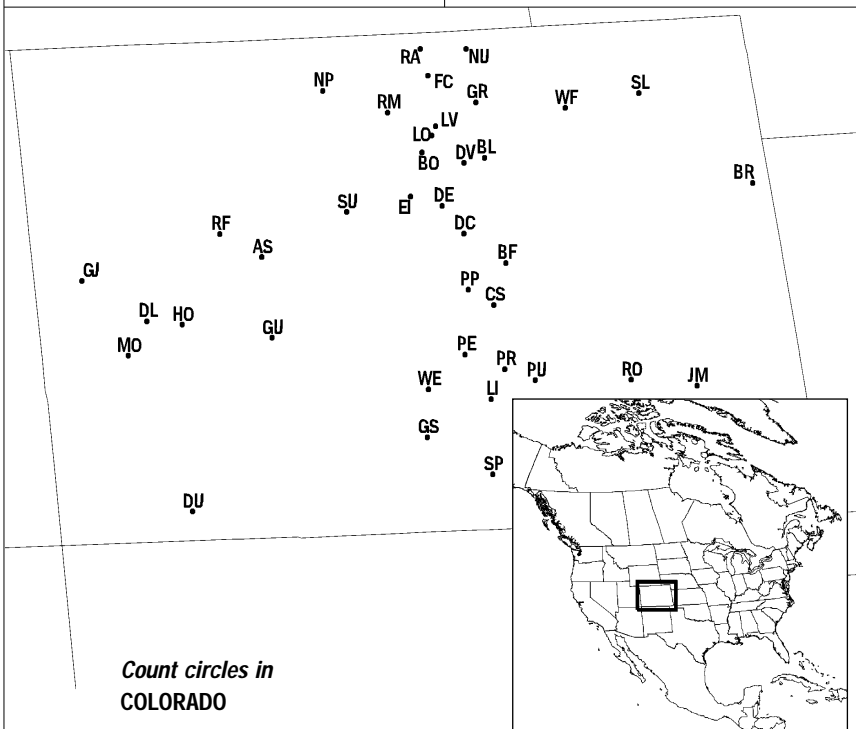
Warm weather and minimal precipitation characterized most of Colorado's 35 CBCs of the 103rd season. Add in low-wind speeds on most counts, and observers enjoyed some of the best CBC conditions in recent memory. But the real story of the 103rd CBC season in Colorado was not the weather during the count period, but the weather conditions over the past two years: drought. Most of the state is experiencing the driest two-year period on record, and many observers and compilers attributed the low number of individuals of many species to reduced food supplies caused by the extremely dry conditions.

A remarkable total of 192 species were recorded in Colorado on this year's CBCs. John Martin Reservoir captured the title of Colorado's top count this year with 111 species. Other counts at or breaking the century mark were Pueblo Reservoir (109), Boulder (100), Grand

Junction (100), and Rocky Ford (100). It seems that no one in Colorado will dethrone Bill Kaempfer in ability to attract participants to the CBC; this year Boulder once again led the state with 111 participants and 29 feeder watchers.

Species totals were above average on most counts. This is probably partly the result of increasingly knowledgeable birders participating and a more concerted effort to locate uncommon and rare species on counts. This year it also reflected the presence of many lingerers: American White Pelican (15 on five counts; 11 on John Martin Reservoir), Black-crowned Night-Heron (21/5), Winter Wren (8/7), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (83/17), Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (10/3), Hermit Thrush (3/3), Gray Catbird (6/5) Northern Mockingbird (8/7), Brown Thrasher (3/3), Common Yellowthroat (2/2), Green-tailed Towhee (3/3), Rusty Blackbird (7/4), and Brown-headed Cowbird (30/5).

While species totals were high, counts of individuals were low. "Where are the birds?" was a question I heard throughout the season. Waterbirds, in general, were found in low numbers. Only 22 Western Grebes were seen. Totals of 4252 Snow Geese and 90 Ross's Geese are almost unbelievably low with CBCs in Rocky



Ford and John Martin Reservoir—areas that encompass much of the wintering area in Colorado for these species. Sparrow numbers seemed particularly depressed. Dark-eyed Juncos were present in lower numbers, particularly Pink-sided Juncos. Several compilers commented on the dearth of White-crowned Sparrows. While the mean count for White-crowned Sparrows was over 75, the median count was only six. Barr Lake even recorded a new high count for White-crowned Sparrows (501), while Grand Junction's total of 765 was about par for the past decade. On these and other CBCs with higher counts, sparrows were found on the edges of irrigated fields, tree farms, and other areas that were less affected by the dry conditions than natural areas. It behooves us to recall that CBCs are not random samples; CBCs are nearly always preferentially located in areas with high species diversity and often better habitat.

Each year a few great birds are found in Colorado, and this was certainly no exception. A **Common Poorwill** was flushed from along a roadside in the early morning on Penrose; while this species is suspected of hibernating in Colorado during the winter months, this is only the second documented winter record and the first Colorado CBC record. A **Pectoral Sandpiper** (with a Dunlin) at Rocky Ford was the state's second winter record and the first for a CBC. A **Clay-colored Sparrow** on the same count was another Colorado CBC first, and only the state's third winter record. Nine Band-tailed Pigeons (Hotchkiss) represented only the fourth time this species was reported on a Colorado CBC. An **Eastern Towhee** at John Martin Reservoir was probably the rarest bird on any count (second Colorado CBC record); this species is very rare at any season in any part of Colorado and should always be thoroughly documented. Eight Le Conte's Sparrows on the same count was a remarkable total for this Colorado rarity. Other goodies included: Red-necked Grebe (Pueblo), Trumpeter Swan (Boulder), Tundra Swan (Pueblo Reservoir), Eurasian Wigeon (Pueblo), Surf Scoter (Rocky Ford, 2), White-

winged Scoter (Denver), Mew Gull (Longmont), Glaucous Gull (Bonny Reservoir, Rocky Ford, Sterling), Tree Swallow (Weldona-Fort Morgan), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (Pueblo Reservoir, Spanish Peaks), House Wren (Boulder), Palm Warbler (Longmont, 2), Wilson's Warbler (John Martin Reservoir), Savannah Sparrow (Rocky Ford), and Snow Bunting (Bonny Reservoir).

Noteworthy individual counts included: 21 Barrow's Goldeneye (Summit County), 52 Red-breasted Mergansers (Boulder), 4426 and 4000 Ring-billed Gulls (respectively Pueblo Reservoir, John Martin Reservoir), 1000 Herring Gulls (John Martin Reservoir), five Lesser Black-backed Gulls (John Martin Reservoir), 40 Virginia Rails (John Martin Reservoir), seven Greater Yellowlegs (John Martin Reservoir), six Spotted Sandpipers (Grand Junction), 22 Long-eared Owls (Bonny Reservoir), 24 Eastern Screech-Owls (Bonny Reservoir), 14 Swamp Sparrows (John Martin Reservoir), 15 Harris's Sparrows (Weldona-Fort Morgan), and 2352 Brewer's Blackbirds (John Martin Reservoir).

Eurasian Collared-Doves continue their rampage across Colorado with 515 reported. Pueblo recorded 310 individuals and Rocky Ford, where this species was first recorded in the state, had 104. This species was reported on 12 counts. Unfortunately, documentation was poor or lacking on several counts where this species has not yet been documented, so it is impossible to know how many of these reports may have pertained to Ringed Turtle-Doves or hybrids between these two species.

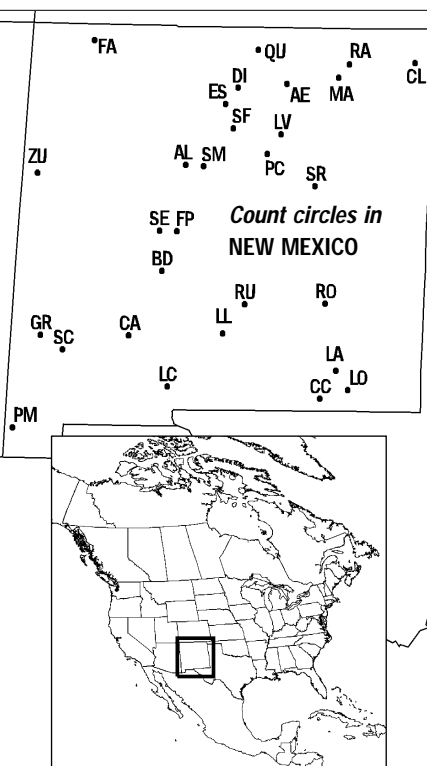
Finally, I must add a few words about assumptions that are made on CBCs. Some assumptions make sense. For instance, it is generally safe to assume that juncos in Colorado are all Dark-eyed, since there are no records of Yellow-eyed Juncos in Colorado. Ravens in the mountains and on the West Slope can also probably be safely assumed to be Common Ravens. But in southeastern Colorado, the presence of both Common and Chihuahuan ravens presents a real challenge. Distant and brief

views of ravens in this area would best be treated as Chihuahuan/Common Raven (or raven species unknown). But perhaps the largest erroneous assumption made on Colorado CBCs is that flickers are Red-shafted unless proven otherwise. This, quite simply, is not reflective of reality. Intergrades make up a significant percentage of wintering flickers in the state, particularly when compared to pure Yellow-shafted Flickers. Heard-only flickers and those that are not seen well should be called "Northern Flickers." In future years, let's all try to only identify Northern Flickers to red-shafted, yellow-shafted, or intergrade when we have good enough views to be certain.

## NEW MEXICO

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Our hard-working counters covered all 29 of last year's circles again this year. In our fifth straight mild winter, they found one of the highest species totals in years, 235 (not counting one exotic species, Roswell's carefully described Ringed Turtle-Dove).



Six circles reported more than 100 species. Caballo led with 127, with Bosque del Apache reporting 125, 117 for Las Cruces, 112 in Albuquerque, 108 in Roswell, and 101 for the Lakes Avalon-Brantley circle.

Three new species appear on the all-time New Mexico CBC checklist this year: Ruddy Ground-Dove in the Gila River circle, Carolina Wren in Roswell, and Prothonotary Warbler for the Bosque, for a new total of 322.

The statewide total of individuals was over 315,000, continuing a five-year declining trend. Bosque had the most individuals with 75,915, followed by Roswell with 46,017, Las Cruces with 32,016, and Albuquerque with 23,746.

Again, a lack of significant cold weather may have contributed to a number of lingerers. Las Cruces and Roswell recorded Turkey Vultures, and an Osprey was described from Las Vegas. Waterfowl species numbers were up generally in the north of the state. Lakes Avalon-Brantley had three hummingbirds: Black-chinned, Broad-tailed, and Rufous. Observers in Las Cruces found Tree and Barn swallows. It was a good year for rare parulids, with a male Yellow Warbler chipping at the Bosque, a popular Pine Warbler and an American Redstart in Albuquerque, plus Bosque's Prothonotary Warbler.

Rare winter visitors included Mew Gull in Santa Rosa, California Gull in Farmington, a Lewis's Woodpecker photographed in the Avalon-Brantley circle, a Red-bellied Woodpecker in Santa Rosa, a Gray Catbird in the Carlsbad Caverns circle, and a cluster of well-described sparrows in the Five Points circle, including Lark Bunting and Grasshopper, Baird's, and (Slate-colored) Fox sparrows.

Among species that seem to be spreading, Eurasian Collared-Dove continued its steamroller advance with first CBC records for Gila River, Silver City, Avalon-Brantley, Maxwell, and Santa Fe, with high numbers in several more circles. White-winged Dove made its first appearance in the Five Points and Santa Rosa circles. American Crow seems to be invading the Lower Pecos,

with 338 birds counted in the Avalon-Brantley circle.

The clearest pattern of irruption this year was the statewide appearance of Steller's Jay in the lowlands, even the warmer spots such as Las Cruces and Roswell.

## NEVADA/ARIZONA

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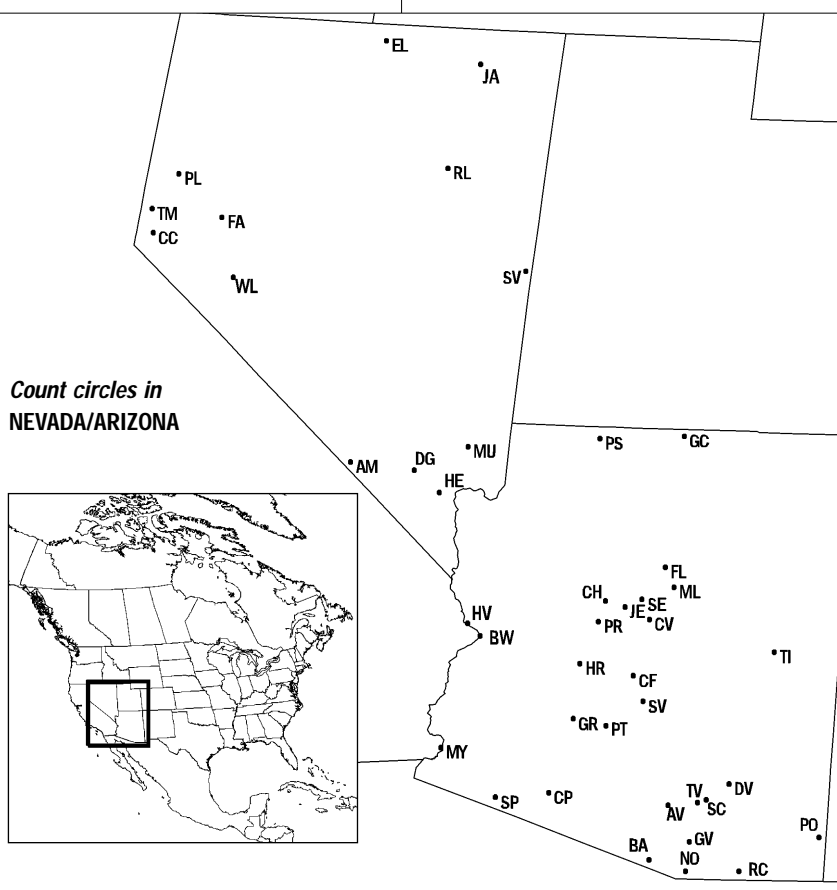
For the 103rd Christmas Bird Count season, 13 counts were held in Nevada, two more than last year. This year's counts included the resurrection of the Jarbidge count. Jarbidge is in extreme northern Nevada, near the Idaho border.

This year's weather was good overall with six counts having high temperatures of over 50 degrees F. Truckee Meadows actually came in with the high temperature of 63 degrees F, but paid the price with high winds as well. It started out at 20-25 mph and grew to 65-70 mph with a gust of 82 mph! The wind no doubt cost the counters a few species; although they were still able to record 93 species, that

total was down from the 110 of last year, and it knocked them out of the top spot in the state. There were some cold temperatures as well—Elko, Ruby Lake, and Carson City had highs only in the 30s. Carson City had frozen ponds so it lost some waterfowl species, and illness put a dent in the participant total.

The Henderson count led the state with 100 species, followed by Truckee Meadows at 93 and Fallon with 89. The Desert Game Refuge had 81 and Walker Lake had 80, but observers in the latter area weren't able to get a boat out on the lake this year. Fallon had the highest number of birds with 41,162, and Truckee had the most participants with 27. Every count had at least one species that wasn't found on any other count.

It was mild enough for swallows to linger. Fallon had a Tree Swallow, Henderson had Barn and Violet-green swallows, and Ash Meadows had Northern Rough-winged Swallows. A very good bird was the Yellow-billed Loon found on Pyramid Lake. The only American Bittern and Snowy Egret were found on the Fallon count. The only



White-faced Ibis and Green Heron were found on the Henderson count. The only swans, both Tundra and Trumpeter, were tallied at Ruby Lake. Truckee had a returning Eurasian Wigeon for the third year in a row, and Walker Lake provided the only Osprey and Long-tailed Duck. Jarbidge had the only Greater Sage-Grouse, and Snake Valley had two Northern Saw-whet Owls, a Harris's Sparrow, and a House Wren that forgot to go south.

There were many other interesting birds, all well-documented except one. That was a Pectoral Sandpiper that was submitted without documentation or even checked as an unusual species, to become Nevada's only deleted species this season. A big "thank you" goes out to all the participants and compilers who put in their time this year and who keep coming back year after year.

For the 103rd Christmas Bird Count season, 31 counts entered their data for Arizona. That is the same number as last year. The Southwest continued into the fifth winter of drought conditions with the promise of a mild El Niño to kick in and give us some much needed rain. Overall, the temperatures were mild for most of the counts. Fourteen of the counts had high temperatures of at least 60 degrees F.

Compilers felt that the seed crop was poor and the total number of individuals was down. Phoenix-Tres Rios reported the most birds with 45,379, followed by Tucson Valley with 41,805. Tucson Valley also had the highest number of participants with 62, followed by Portal and Carefree with 58, the Salt-Verde Rivers at 56, and Gila River with 50. With a couple of exceptions, there was very little indication of irruptive species in the state this season. Mountain birds stayed in the mountains and berry-eaters like waxwings and robins were not found in big numbers. One exception was the large number of Lawrence's Goldfinch in the state—13 counts recorded "Larry's" Goldfinches, and I am at a loss to explain what triggers their irruptions.

Nogales led the state this year with 153 species; I am sure it didn't hurt to have

Patagonia Lake in its count circle. Nogales was followed by Ramsey Canyon (151), Salt-Verde Rivers (146), Green Valley-Madera Canyon (144), Portal (144), and Phoenix-Tres Rios (140). Tucson Valley (139), Gila River (138), and Dudleyville (131) were right behind. There were many special birds found this year, several that are rarely found anywhere in the United States. Tucson Valley had a long-present Least Grebe, and although Neotropical Cormorants seem to be expanding rapidly westward, only one was recorded away from Patagonia Lake (at Gila River). The Phoenix-Tres Rios count had the only American Bitterns, Tricolored Heron, Cattle Egrets, and Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks found this year.

Big news was the four Trumpeter Swans found on the Camp Verde count. Trumpeter Swans have been found in the state only once or twice before, and there is always a question of origin with the captive breeding programs going on to the north. One of the birds was banded in Idaho, and the record is pending acceptance by the Arizona Bird Committee. Elfida reported 19 Ross's Geese, a lot for Arizona. Eurasian Collared-Doves were only found on four counts, and Ruddy Ground-Doves were found on six. That will do doubt change quickly.

Hummingbirds continue to amaze us, and this year a Berylline Hummingbird at Ramsey Canyon was recorded on a CBC for only the second time. Also found there were Broad-tailed and Rufous Hummingbird. Two Clark's Nutcrackers were far from home on the Bill Williams count, and swallows were widespread with a rare in winter Cliff Swallow at Yuma. For only the second time, a Black-capped Gnatcatcher was recorded on a CBC, and many birders have made the trip to see the pair at Patagonia Lake recorded on the Nogales count. Warbler numbers seemed down, and the expected finds were two Northern Parula, five Black-and-whites, one American Redstart, one Louisiana Waterthrush, and two Yellow Warblers. Sparrow numbers were down but there were some great finds this year. Arizona's

second Eastern Towhee was found at an unexpected location of Flagstaff-Mt. Eldon. This was a female bird, while our previous CBC record (found at Patagonia), was a male. American Tree Sparrows were found on the Glen Canyon and Sedona counts, a Harris's Sparrow was counted at Dudleyville, and a Clay-colored Sparrow was well documented on Tucson Valley. Fox Sparrows were widespread, recorded on 14 counts. Slate-colored, Sooty, and Red were noted, with the Sooty being the rarest. A Common Grackle was found on the Portal count, and a Bullock's Oriole was well documented on the Prescott count.

I am looking forward to the 104th count season, December 14, 2003, to January 5, 2004.

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#### WASHINGTON/OREGON

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**Mike Patterson**

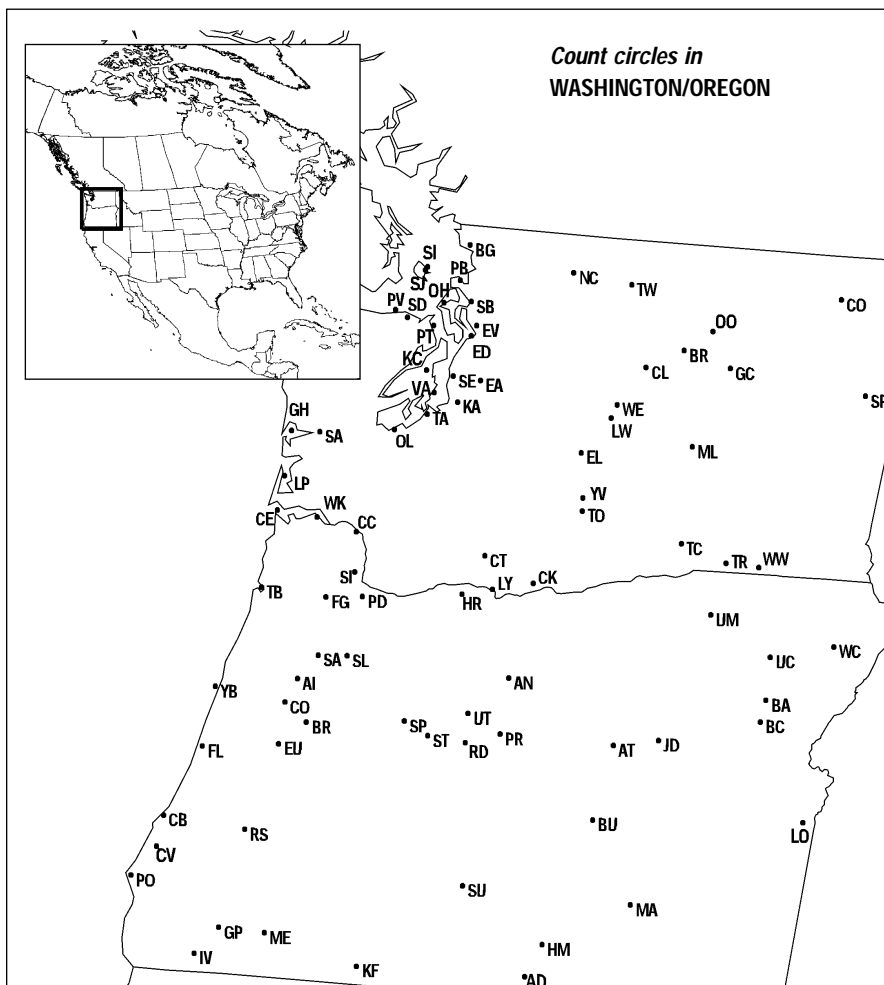
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The region's 103rd count season was characterized by unusually dry conditions and temperatures four to five degrees warmer than average. Coastal counts in particular benefited from the temperate weather, many of them turning in record or near-record species lists. A severe storm with winds gusting to 50 mph blew through on the first Saturday of the count period, making things difficult for the coastal counts on that day, but counts in the days immediately following the storm on Sunday and Monday were almost certainly helped. High seabird numbers in particular were probably an artifact of the storm.

The most interesting bird of the season was the Bean Goose at Grays Harbor, WA, from December 7-17. The bird was seen by many observers and was well photographed (see [www.wos.org/WN/Comp83.htm#Bean Goose](http://www.wos.org/WN/Comp83.htm#Bean%20Goose)). It was generally agreed that the individual was of the *middendorffi* subspecies, though one outside reviewer suggested the bird was *serrirostris*. In fact, subspecific determination of the group of Canada Geese it chose for company generated more discussion. These were originally reported as



Vancouver Canada Geese (*fulva*), though according to one goose expert, genuine Vancouver Geese should not be migrating. Dusky Canada Goose (*occidentalis*) is the likely alternative and may be more likely if the Beaner adopted the flock in Alaska. At any rate, it seems likely the Bean Goose was not an escapee, though the final determination still remains with the records committee.

Record counts for Brown Pelican, Northern Fulmar, and dark-bellied shearwaters were posted especially from those coastal counts done the first weekend. A Brown Pelican was even seen in the Willamette Valley at Corvallis, OR. Three Pomarine and four Parasitic jaegers were seen at Coos Bay, OR. Heermann's Gulls were recorded on several coastal counts. A Forster's Tern was seen briefly on the Tillamook Bay, OR, count. The description suggests an adult winter individual. A Thick-billed Murre was reported from Sequim-Dungeness, WA, though the description was incomplete.

Two Ruffs regularly seen before and after the Eugene, OR, count managed to elude observers on count day. At least one of these birds continued at least into early April. Another Ruff, seen at Satsop, WA, remained for sometime. A large shorebird seen at Sequim-Dungeness, WA, may also have been a Ruff. Lesser Yellowlegs were seen in higher-than-usual numbers on several coastal counts. Thousands of Red Phalarope were seen throughout the western parts of the region, including several inland locations.

It was once again a year for migrant holdovers. Great Egrets remained in the Willamette Valley in phenomenal numbers. A well-photographed, hatch-year male Selasphorus hummingbird, probably a Rufous Hummingbird, wintered in Seattle, WA. A Tropical Kingbird, presumably one of two first seen in early November, remained at Columbia Estuary, OR, through to count day. Tree and Barn swallows were reported from many locations. There was considerable

discussion about the age class for lingering Barn Swallows, most of which appeared to be hatch-year birds. Nashville Warblers were reported from Grants Pass, OR, and Columbia Estuary. A Yellow Warbler was reported from Sequim-Dungeness, WA, and Common Yellowthroats were seen on several counts. A Western Tanager was seen in Seattle, and a well-observed Baltimore Oriole wintered in Florence, OR.

The range expansion of Tricolored Blackbirds continued with a remarkable 1500 reported from Redmond, OR, and smaller numbers reported from many counts east of the Cascades. A Common Grackle wintered at Tri-Cities, WA. Yellow-headed Blackbird reports were also a bit more frequent than average.

The practice of chumming for sparrows by seeding appropriate habitats in the weeks before a count continues to prove very effective. An American Tree Sparrow, extremely rare on a coastal count, was among the many sparrow species frequenting a chumming site at Coquille, OR. Clay-colored Sparrows were found on several counts. Count period White-throated Sparrow counts were not quite as impressive as last year, though still quite high. Harris's Sparrows, particularly east of the Cascades, were above average in number.

The region's high species total this year went once again to Coos Bay, OR, with 156 species. Sequim-Dungeness, WA, tallied 146 species, and Coquille, OR, was close behind at 144. East of the Cascades, Lyle, WA, counted 105 species, and



Bean Goose (*Anser fabalis*), left, Grays Harbor, Washington. Photo/Ruth and Patrick Sullivan

Klamath Falls recorded 101 species. New counts to the region included Omak-Okangogan in north-central Washington with a species count of 64, and Vale, in extreme eastern Oregon, which somehow managed not to make it into the database.

Most compilers provided adequate documentation of rare species. Photos were provided for the Bean Goose, the Blue Jay seen at Twisp, WA, and the Baltimore Oriole at Florence, OR, among others. I changed several reports of Common Snipe to Wilson's Snipe under the assumption that compilers were not aware of the recent name change. I changed an Arctic Loon reported without sufficient details to loon sp. and a poorly documented eastern Washington flock of Purple Finches to *Carpodacus sp.*, but for the most part left poorly documented species in place with appropriate editorial notes. Thanks to all for their continued cooperation in documenting unusual species.

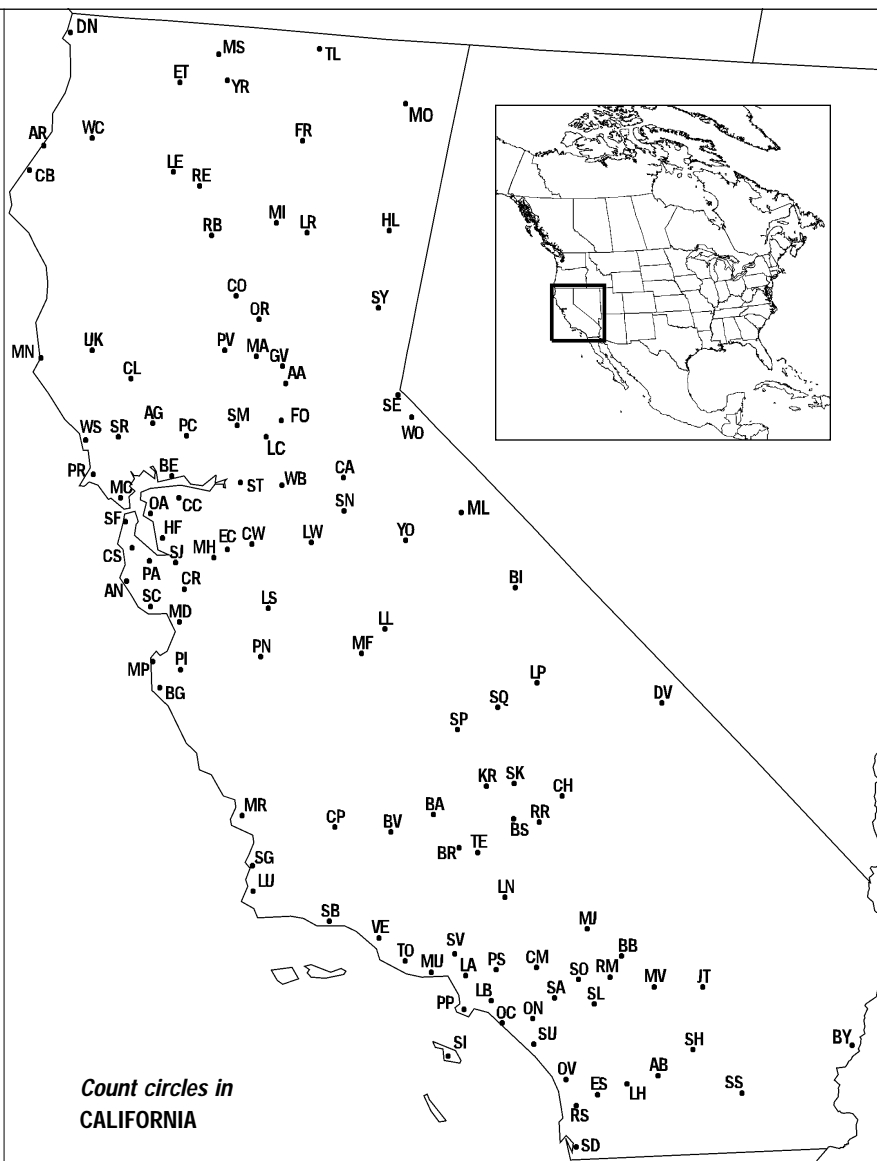
## CALIFORNIA

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During the 103rd Christmas Bird Count period, birders participated in 118 California CBCs, three more than last year. A special welcome to three new counts: Blyth, Lincoln, and Santa Clara. For the third year in a row, Santa Barbara had the highest number of species, 210. Orange County (Coastal) had 206, while Moss Landing tallied 200. Los Baños had the highest number of individuals, with 229,221. Sacramento had the second-highest individuals count with 156,073, while the Centerville Beach to King Salmon CBC had 116,673 total birds. Santa Barbara also led the counts with 176 participants.

In general, CBCs north of the 36th parallel that were conducted during the first weekend of count period (14-15 December) were greatly affected by weather. To say that there was wind and rain would be a gross understatement as northern and central California was hit by one of the most significant series of



winter storm systems in years. Nearly every compiler from coastal northern and central California wrote that the weather on the 14th and 15th negatively impacted both the number of species and total individuals. No doubt compounding that was the diminished turnout of counters, as many birders stayed home during the brunt of the storms.

To understand what it must have been like to bird in hurricane force winds, here are excerpts from the account given by David Wimpfheimer and Susan Colletta, co-compilers of the Point Reyes Peninsula CBC.

*"Typhoon generated winds, torrential rains, and falling trees...were not just hazardous to people's lives, but made counting birds a daunting task.*

*For many years we have organized three boats to census the multitude of water-*

*birds in Tomales Bay, a considerable project even under ideal weather conditions. Due to rough seas, the boats remained docked. Instead, we positioned our team of eight counters strategically around the bay. Seeing birds through wet scopes became impossible. In fact one counter was literally blown into the cold waves. At the height of the storm the group took refuge in the abandoned buildings of Hamlet. They perched on buckled pilings while the water rushed up from underneath them. Shockingly strong wind gusts started shaking the large timbers and blowing away bits of the buildings all around them. Even though we were armored with layers of thermal underwear, Gortex foul weather gear, and rubber knee boots, we eventually became wet and cold.*

*Birds, however, don't have such layers of protection from the elements. The main way they cope with adverse conditions is by seeking shelter. Many of our common landbirds, such as sparrows, kinglets, and warblers simply were not found. Some of these birds were seen in protected hollows in the lee of the wind, but our count of most species was dramatically impacted by the adverse conditions.*

*Near the mudflats at Inverness, PRBO biologist Dave Shuford had an astounding observation. In the strong winds a small group of Dunlin were forced to make a crash landing onto the backs of the much larger Marbled Godwits. "A highway of Northern Fulmars" was seen by Peter Pyle, biologist, from his viewing spot above McClure's Beach. In four hours of being pelted by rain and sand, he had seen over 3,000 of these relatives of the albatross streaming over the ocean swells. Undoubtedly these birds were blown closer to shore from their typical pelagic habitat.*

*Dave DeSante has been observing and studying birds here for over 30 years. Counting birds near Drake's Beach in winds that were clocked at 78 mph nearby was an "extraordinary experience." At one point the wind physically picked him and his team off the ground...Normally thousands of waterbirds would be in the lower part of Drake's Estero, but they didn't see a single bird. Later at Johnson's oyster farm he saw about 9,000 sandpipers in a mass that had undoubtedly been blown there from other areas."*

Arcata compiler Ron LeValley reported that an offshore waterspout fortunately dissipated before reaching shore as a tornado (although he was sure you wouldn't be able to convince his count participants that they weren't already trying to bird in a tornado). Even though the weather generally improved over the rest of the count period (how could it not?), many subsequent northern California CBCs were hurt by diminished access to important birding areas due to flooding and debris.

While there were no "mega-rarities" (not counting undocumented could-have-beens) seen during this past CBC period,

many counts had some nice surprises. Here are some highlights.

A Red-throated Loon, inland at Redding, was a nice find. Two Pacific Loons on the Calero-Morgan Hill count were away from the immediate coast. A Red-necked Grebe was inland on the San Jacinto Lake CBC. A Nazca Booby (recently split from Masked) was found on the Palos Verdes Peninsula. This bird is currently under review by the California Bird Records Committee (CBRC). Reddish Egrets were found on the Thousand Oaks and Salton Sea (South) CBCs in addition to the two found on the San Diego count where they are seen nearly annually. A Wood Stork was recorded on the Escondido CBC for the 15th straight year.

For the first time since 1986, California Condors were "counted," with four seen on the Big Sur CBC. Many count compilers noted greater than average waterfowl numbers this past count period, perhaps due to the plentiful rains (particularly in northern California) in late November and early December. An Emperor Goose was found on the Moss Landing CBC. A "Bewick's" Swan was photographed on the Marysville count. A Falcated Duck at Honey Lake is currently under review by the CBRC. Eurasian Wigeon were found either on count days or during count week on 35 CBCs. A Eurasian Green-winged Teal was on the Orange County (coastal) CBC. Crystal Springs had a Tufted Duck, Marin County had two, and Santa Cruz recorded one during count week. Inland Surf Scoters were on the Bishop and Ukiah CBCs. Five Harlequin Ducks on four counts and 12 Long-tailed Ducks on eight counts were slightly more than are encountered during the average CBC season.

Single Northern Goshawks on the Bishop, China Lake, Moss Landing, and Willow Creek CBCs were all away from areas of normal occurrence. Swainson's Hawks were described on five counts this CBC period, two more counts than last year. Four Zone-tailed Hawks were seen on as many counts, and well-

described Harlan's Hawks were found on the Del Norte and San Jose CBCs.

Eight Pacific Golden Plovers were seen during five CBCs. A lone Rock Sandpiper in Arcata was the only one found during the past CBC period. Ruffs were in Arcata, Sacramento, and another, during count week, was in San Diego. Numbers of Red-necked Phalaropes have been rather sparse in California during the past two decades, so 15 on the Salton Sea (south) CBC was notable. Red Phalaropes were more numerous this year with 19 compilers reporting them either count day or count week. A Laughing Gull was at Orange County (coastal) while two were on the Salton Sea (north) CBC. Two Glaucous Gulls on the Del Norte and one in Santa Cruz County were the only ones reported during the CBC period. Elegant Terns were present for the Moss Landing and Santa Barbara CBCs and during count week on Palos Verdes Peninsula.

Single Ruddy Ground-Doves were on the Salton Sea (south) and San Jacinto Lake CBCs and will be reviewed by the CBRC. An excellently described Common Poorwill was on the Springville CBC. Vaux's Swifts are only occasionally found on California CBCs, so three in Los Angeles, 60 in San Diego, and one on the northern California Moss Landing CBC were nice finds. A well-described Black-chinned Hummingbird on the Palos Verdes Peninsula CBC is one of only a



**Least Flycatcher (*Empidonax minimus*), Santa Barbara, California. Photo/Peter Gaede**

handful ever recorded in California in winter. A Costa's Hummingbird on the Centerville to King Salmon count was well north of where this species is normally encountered in winter. Well-described Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were in Arcata, Año Nuevo, and on the Centerville to King Salmon, San Diego, and Santa Barbara CBCs. A White-headed Woodpecker wandered into the Orange County (northeastern) CBC, and extralimital Pileated Woodpeckers were on the Palo Alto and Moss Landing counts.

Tyrant flycatchers were once again well represented during this past CBC period. A Least Flycatcher was found on the San Jacinto Lake CBC, two were on the Santa Barbara count, and one during count week was in Santa Cruz County. Hammond's Flycatchers were on the Orange County (coastal) and San Juan Capistrano CBCs and during Palos Verdes Peninsula's count week. Two Dusky Flycatchers were on the coastal Orange County count. Seven Gray Flycatchers were found on four CBCs and three Western Flycatchers were on the Orange County (coastal) CBC, with single birds at Año Nuevo and Santa Cruz County. Additionally, two *Empidonax* flycatchers were left unidentified on the Lost Lake-Fresno and San Diego counts. Individual Eastern Phoebes were seen at Bishop, Palos Verdes Peninsula, Point Reyes Peninsula, and San Jacinto Lake, and a Dusky-capped Flycatcher was in coastal Orange County. Tropical Kingbirds were in San Francisco, Santa Cruz, and Santa



**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*), Santa Barbara, California.**  
Photo/Peter Gaede

Barbara, and two Cassin's Kingbirds on the Bakersfield CBC were away from normal areas of occurrence.

"Solitary" Vireos were represented by ten Plumbeous on as many counts, five Cassin's on five counts, as well as one unidentified to species on the Springville CBC. Thirteen American Crows on Santa Catalina Island was a remarkable record, as there are but just a few records for that species on southern California's offshore islands. Northern Rough-winged Swallows were detected on four counts this year, and Cliff Swallows, a species rarely found in winter in California, were in Long Beach and San Francisco. An American Dipper was seen on the Moss Landing CBC, and a Brown Thrasher was present for some time in Pasadena. Three Sprague's Pipits, extremely rare in California, particularly in winter, were on the Salton Sea (south) CBC.

Only 17 species of wood warblers were found on California CBCs this past season, perhaps the fewest in over a decade. Highlights included a Tennessee Warbler on the Crystal Springs count. There were 21 Nashville Warblers on ten counts plus two during count weeks. A Magnolia Warbler was found on the Los Angeles CBC. A Black-throated Green Warbler was seen on the Orange County (northeastern) count. A Prairie Warbler was

photographed on the San Diego CBC. Twenty Palm Warblers were on eight counts plus four count week, with ten of those being at Centerville Beach to King Salmon alone. Seven Black-and-white Warblers on as many counts plus two count week sightings were far fewer than are normally seen during a CBC period. Five American Redstarts on four counts was also a low tally. A Hooded Warbler was in San Diego while 64 Wilson's Warblers were on 24 counts. Rounding out the warbler rarities was a Canada photographed on the San Francisco Christmas Bird Count.

Ten Summer Tanagers on eight counts and 38 Western Tanagers on 14 counts were close to the average numbers usually seen on CBCs. Eleven Green-tailed Towhees on nine counts were more than are usually encountered during the CBC season. Single Lark Buntings were at Bishop, Peace Valley, and Stockton. Six Grasshopper Sparrows on five counts were slightly less than normally seen. A Le Conte's Sparrow, found on the Salton Sea (south) CBC, was excellently described and sketched. With the increasing interest in differentiating races of Fox Sparrow come reports of individuals of the "Red" and "Sooty" groups on six counts each, and "Slate-colored" on four counts. Twenty-four Swamp Sparrows were on 18 counts in addition to two count week sightings, and six Harris's Sparrows were found on as many CBCs. A McCown's Longspur was seen on the Salton Sea (south) count. Single Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were found on the Santa Cruz County and Western Sonoma County CBCs as well as during Moss Landing's count week. A Black-headed Grosbeak was on the Thousand Oaks count and during count week in Grass Valley. An Indigo Bunting, rarely encountered on California CBCs, was seen during count week at the Salton Sea (south).

Rusty Blackbirds were on the China Lake and Santa Barbara counts. An Orchard Oriole on the Orange County (northeastern) CBC was the only one reported, while Hooded Orioles were on the La Purisima, Los Angeles, Marysville,



**Rusty Blackbird (*Euphagus carolinus*), Santa Barbara, California.**  
Photo/Peter Gaede

and Pasadena CBCs. Baltimore Orioles were found on the Monterey Peninsula count and on both the coastal and northeastern Orange County CBCs. Of the 25 Bullock's Orioles found on nine counts, Orange County (northeastern) tallied ten of them.

The above-mentioned highlights were submitted by compilers with at least a minimal amount of documentation. The vast majority of detail submitted by counters and compilers, be it written, photographic, or sketched, was good to excellent. I thank you for that as it makes our editing jobs much easier. One can look at the individual records to see what level of detail was provided for a given record. If a reader notes that a particular bird seen on his or her CBC was not here in print, it is most likely because the editors received no details. One may still find the bird listed with the individual count data with only a couple of exceptions. I removed a Solitary Sandpiper, submitted with no details, from a southern California CBC's database. While not unprecedented, this would be a great record as this species has been recorded only 12 times on California CBCs, but not once in the past 20 years. This is a

report that requires a high level of documentation. For the second year in a row, I removed from a northern California CBC an Olive-sided Flycatcher. While documentation was submitted (the observers claimed familiarity with the species, but did not know of its significance in winter), it was not sufficient to substantiate a near unprecedented record for California. While not removed from the database, I'm fairly sure a report of more than 1000 Greater White-fronted Geese from a northern California CBC is in error. No other nearby CBC tallied so many Greater White-fronted Geese, and while this is not a surefire benchmark, one is suspicious since these were identified by voice and this particular CBC recorded no Canada Geese.

As a compiler, I am continually impressed (and often humbled) at the great deal of time and organization that obviously goes into some of the CBCs. Many of the best-organized CBCs are the larger ones, counts that have more than 100 participants and approach or exceed 200 species. Compilers of those counts leave those of us with more modest counts with very little excuse to not do our best job. Examples of some of the

best-run and best-compiled counts (large and small) would include (but are not limited to) Año Nuevo, Bishop, Crystal Springs, Fall River Mills, Marysville, Morro Bay, Moss Landing, Oakland, Orange County (both coastal and northeastern), Palo Alto, Palos Verdes Peninsula, Point Reyes Peninsula, Red Rock Canyon, San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz. I thank all participants and compilers for another excellent year.

Special thanks go out to Alison Sheehy for putting together some data points for me to use. Thank you also to Karen Gilbert, who once again edited the southern California CBCs. I greatly appreciate your help.

#### HAWAII/PACIFIC ISLANDS

Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands and Guam

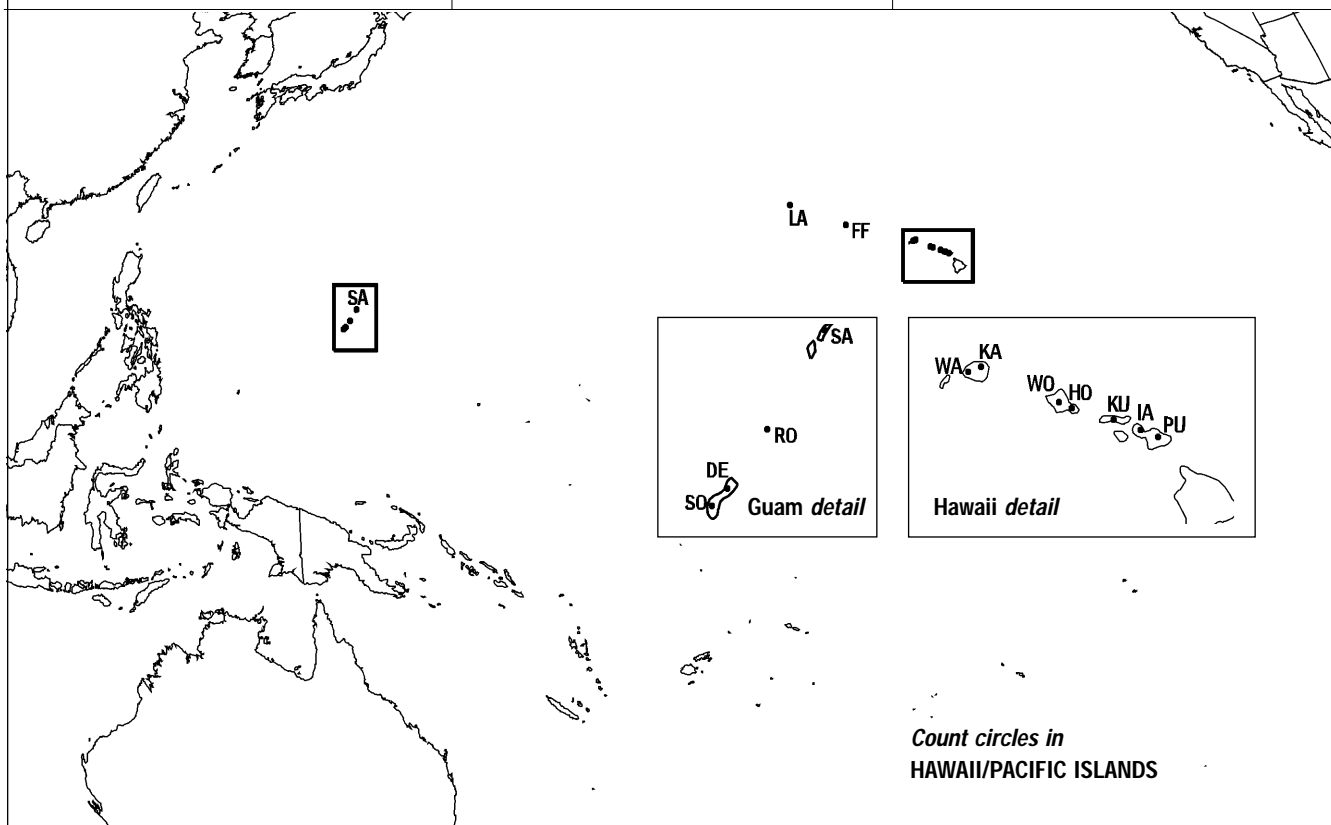
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The 103rd Christmas Bird Count for Hawai'i and the Mariana Islands suffered both from a decrease in number of



participants and from two circles not counted. Midway Island Circle, a Fish and Wildlife Service refuge that is nesting grounds for millions of seabirds and an interesting migrant trap as well, was cancelled because too few personnel were on the island at the time. Volcano Circle lost its most attractive destination when Kani Correctional Facility, unique on the circle for endangered forest birds, shut its doors in response to the looming war with Iraq. Less surprisingly, two remote and less regularly counted circles, Johnston and Palmyra atolls, were also missed for lack of participants. Apart from that, there were two counts each for the islands of Kaua'i, O'ahu, and Maui, and one each for Laysan Island, French Frigate Shoals, and Hawai'i Island (North Kona). All five circles were counted in the Marianas.

Seabirds in Hawai'i appeared in expected numbers, although 3741 Laysan Albatross and 84 Brown Boobies on French Frigate Shoals and ten Tristram's Storm-Petrels on Laysan were high counts for breeding seabirds. Vagrant Caspian Terns showed up again this year: one at Kaneohe Marine Corps Airbase, O'ahu, and another on the I'ao Valley Circle, Maui, during the count week. Two Laughing Gulls at the Kaloko Sewage Treatment Plant (KSTP), North Kona, were the only vagrant gulls reported this season.

The waterfowl migration to Hawai'i recovered somewhat after last year's disappointing season. Good numbers of two regular species, Northern Shoveler (281 birds for the state) and scaup (46, but mainly Lesser), were once again reported, although Northern Pintail gave a poor turnout with 168 birds, and only three American Wigeon were tallied. High counts were reported for Green-winged Teal (33, all American when noted) and particularly Bufflehead (11), a species that has not been seen in such numbers in years. Stragglers included a Tufted Duck and Canvasback at KSTP. High counts of native waterbirds were: Hawaiian Coots, 126 birds on Moloka'i and 166 on Waipi'o, Oahu, and 211

Hawaiian Stilts on Moloka'i. Both species of heron were unusually abundant on Maui, with 1678 Cattle Egrets and 192 Black-crowned Night-Herons. Two extreme rarities seen before and after the counts were the Baikal Teal on Kaua'i and Marsh Sandpiper on O'ahu.

The Pacific Golden-Plover, Hawaii's ubiquitous and most beloved migrant, must have had an outstanding breeding season and safe passage this year, for the species showed up in force on the counts, with exceptional numbers on Laysan Island, Honolulu circle, Moloka'i, and I'ao circle on Maui. Other high counts were ten Long-billed Dowitchers on the Waipi'o circle, O'ahu, and 33 Sanderlings on Moloka'i.

As for native Hawaiian forest birds, four Short-eared Owls on Kaua'i was a good count of this uncommon species. Excellent coverage in the rainforest in K'ke'e and the Alaka'i Swamp, Kaua'i Island, yielded five critically endangered Puaiohi, as well as five of the declining 'Akikiki and 43 'Akeke'e, a species on a post-hurricane rebound. Notable for O'ahu Island was a high count of 56 O'ahu 'Amakihi for the Waipi'o circle, which also yielded an 'I'iwi, a species nearly extinct on that island.

Hawaii's ever-growing non-native avifauna produced unusual species for the region's CBC. Mourning Doves appeared on Maui first in the mid-1990s, and since then their population has exploded, unlike the presumably parent population on the Big Island, where the species is hard to find. Two were counted this year for the first time, at Waikap', Maui. The small flock of cockatoos residing at the back of Honolulu's high-walled valleys finally showed up to be counted: two Sulfur-crested and one Salmon-crested cockatoos. Although potentially very destructive to growers of citrus and other crops, these white birds pose a lovely sight against the dark green forest. Thirty-seven Rose-ringed Parakeets were a high count for Honolulu, and a flock of Red-masked Parakeets also was noticed there again this year. A Skylark "skylarking" over Kaneohe Marine Corps Airbase, O'ahu, was an

unusual find as the species more typically occurs on the dry leeward side of the island. A count of 55 Red-whiskered Bulbuls for the Waipi'o, O'ahu, circle marks the species' slow advance across the island. More high counts on the Honolulu circle included 2270 Red-vented Bulbuls and 192 Red-billed Leiothrix, which oddly once declined nearly to the point of extinction, but has since bounced back.

Counts were rather low this year on most of the Marianas Islands. Unusual migrants included a Grey Heron, a Black-winged Stilt, a Black-headed Gull, and a Eurasian Coot on Guam, and a White-winged Tern on Saipan. Consistent reporting of native species was an encouraging sign of species' status. Rarities included two Guam Rails from the introduced population on Rota, seven Mariana Crows on Rota (but sadly not on Guam), and 12 Rota Bridled White-eyes. As for non-native birds, a lone Budgerigar was a first record for Saipan, where again the newly established Orange-cheeked Waxbill was found, a total of three birds.

## MEXICO/BELIZE

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During the 103rd season, 16 CBCs were completed in the region: two from Belize and 14 from Mexico. Unfortunately, two of the circles with the highest bird diversity in the region were missed, Belmopan and Belize City (Belize). Some other regular circles were also missed in Mexico. However, the Rancho Las Carreras, Tamaulipas, CBC was re-started.

Regionally, 193 birders participated on the counts. The highest numbers were in Punta Gorda, Belize, (25) and Oaxaca de Juarez, Mexico, (22). Most of the circles registered more than 100 bird species (average of 134 species). The circles with highest species totals were Punta Gorda, Belize (255 species); Ensenada, Baja California, Mexico (195); and Gallon Jug, Belize (190).

The number of birds recorded this winter was high (a total of 120,148), although lower than the previous year. Again this year, Ensenada had the highest number of birds registered, a total of 47,777, followed by Puerto Peñasco, Sonora (24,216 birds), and Ejido San Pedro, Chihuahua (10,131 birds).

Species found in large numbers within Mexico were: Western Gull (9085, Ensenada), California Gull (8351, Puerto Peñasco), European Starling (4317, Ensenada), Western Grebe (2764, Ensenada), White-crowned Sparrow (2370, Ensenada), Marbled Godwit (2337, Ensenada), Ring-billed Gull (2173, Puerto Peñasco), Willet (2079, Ensenada), and Heermann's Gull (1673, Puerto Peñasco).

The main species seen in high numbers within Belize were: Gray Catbird (162, Punta Gorda), White-collared Seedeater (142, Punta Gorda), Great-tailed Grackle (131, Punta Gorda), Ocellated Turkey (129, Gallon Jug), Blue-black Grassquit (126, Punta Gorda), and Northern Rough-winged Swallow (118, Gallon Jug).

Interestingly, there were high numbers of land bird migrants this winter, such as Cedar Waxwing (762 in Oaxaca, and 203

in Mexico City, a first record for that CBC), Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler (703, Oaxaca), Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler (694, Oaxaca), Violet-green Swallow (500, Oaxaca), Western Bluebird (94, Mexico City), and Black-and-white Warbler (67, Mexico City).

There were also many interesting new and unusual species for the region. Puerto Peñasco registered Hooded Merganser, although it was only a count week bird, seen the day prior to the count. It would have been new for the count. Other unusual birds reported in Puerto Peñasco were Greater Scaup, Lesser Black-backed, Glaucous, and Mew gulls, Long-tailed Duck, Townsend's Solitaire, and Palm Warbler, among others. Very nice pictures were taken of these birds.

Ensenada tallied a number of unusual species, among them: Black Scoter (nice sketch and description provided), Hooded Merganser (excellent photos were taken of three individuals), White-breasted Nuthatch (video photo provided), Golden-crowned Kinglet (video photo), and Summer Tanager (video photo).

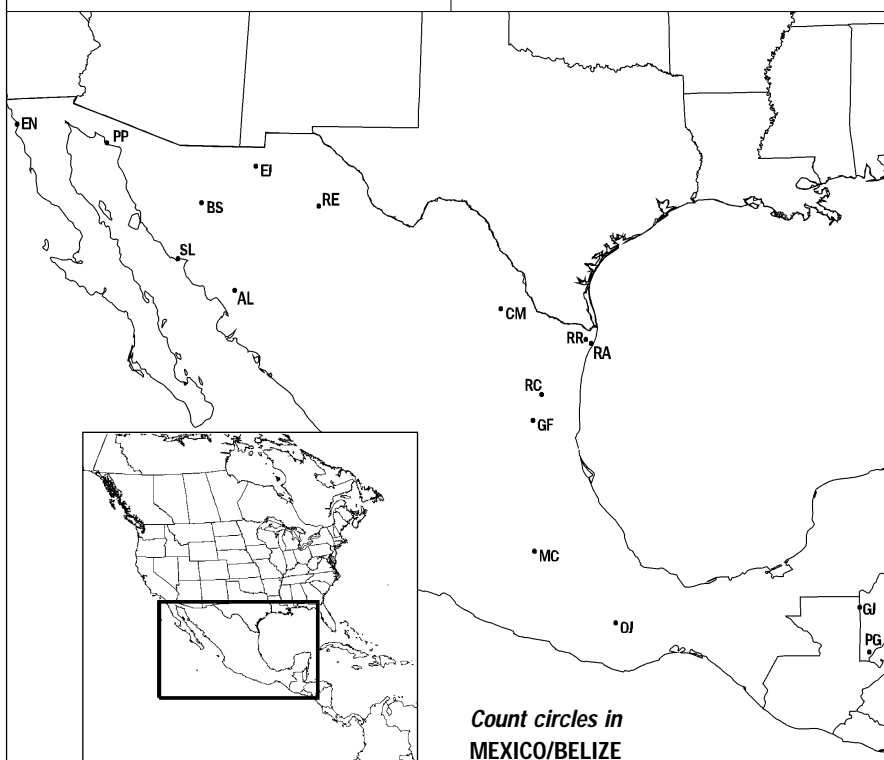
San Pedro counters found unusual species such as Dusky Flycatcher, Mexican Chickadee, Gray Catbird

(photo provided), and Lawrence's Goldfinch. Oaxaca de Juárez registered Neotropic Cormorant, Ring-necked Duck, Ruddy Crake, Common Moorhen, White-eye Vireo, and Tennessee Warbler. Baviacora tallied Bell's Vireo and Gray Vireo. In Punta Gorda, Belize, unusual records were Ringed-necked Duck, White-winged Dove, Yellow-headed Parrot, Eastern Pewee, and Gray-breasted Martin.

Thank you very much to all birders who sent documentation, descriptions, sketches, and wonderful photos of new and unusual species in their circles. Many thanks also go to those compilers who devoted some time to include comments and interesting information on the "Special Aspects" form on-line. This is very valuable information to better understand what is going on every year in the region and with bird populations. Birders and compilers, please keep sending detailed documentation on unusual species, as well as information on special aspects of your CBC season! Without your hard work, the regional editor's job would be impossible.

Most of the circles for the region have been traditionally attended by birders from the United States, whose invaluable commitment have made possible the continuation of the CBCs in the region. However, it is also very important to encourage greater participation by local birders from Mexico and Belize. Beneficial results will be to increase the coverage of CBCs in the region, to start new CBCs to help monitor Important Bird Areas (IBAs), and additionally, to increase the value of the long-term data from existing circles.

Happily, more and more local birders are getting involved in the already existing circles (for instance, Mexico City increased its participant numbers from 5 last year to 18 this year, most of them local birders). Furthermore, in the 2002-'03 winter, several Mexican birders showed a great commitment in establishing new circles. Five trial counts were done in Mexico, and hopefully all will become official circles and begin formal



counts in the 104th season. This is very promising, since these potential new circles will cover interesting and highly diverse regions in the country, such as Veracruz, Chiapas, and the Yucatan Peninsula. The potential new circles are Tinajitas-Palmas de Abajo, Veracruz; Cañon del Sumidero, Chiapas; and Celestún, Ría Lagartos, and El Cuyo on the Yucatan Peninsula. So, we anticipate good participation by local birders and, of course, even more bird species to be recorded in future CBCs in the region.

Welcome to all of them! We wish you a wonderful and successful Christmas Bird Count next winter.

### CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA

Brazil, Chile/Drake Passage, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, Trinidad

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This vast region held 24 counts during the 2002-2003 CBC season. Top honors for species goes to a new and well-planned count—Rain Forest Aerial Tram, Costa Rica, with 400 species, an all-time CBC species high tally. This count embraces a broad range of habitats and elevation (90-1430 m) on the rich Caribbean slope of Costa Rica. Bisected by the San Jose-Limón highway and including part of Braulio Carrillo National Park, the count benefits not only from having great species richness within its boundaries but also from good road and trail access throughout. Included is a novel birding venue for Christmas Counts—an aerial tram. Most important, the success of this count is credited to the four-month-long planning and organizing effort by Daniel Torres.

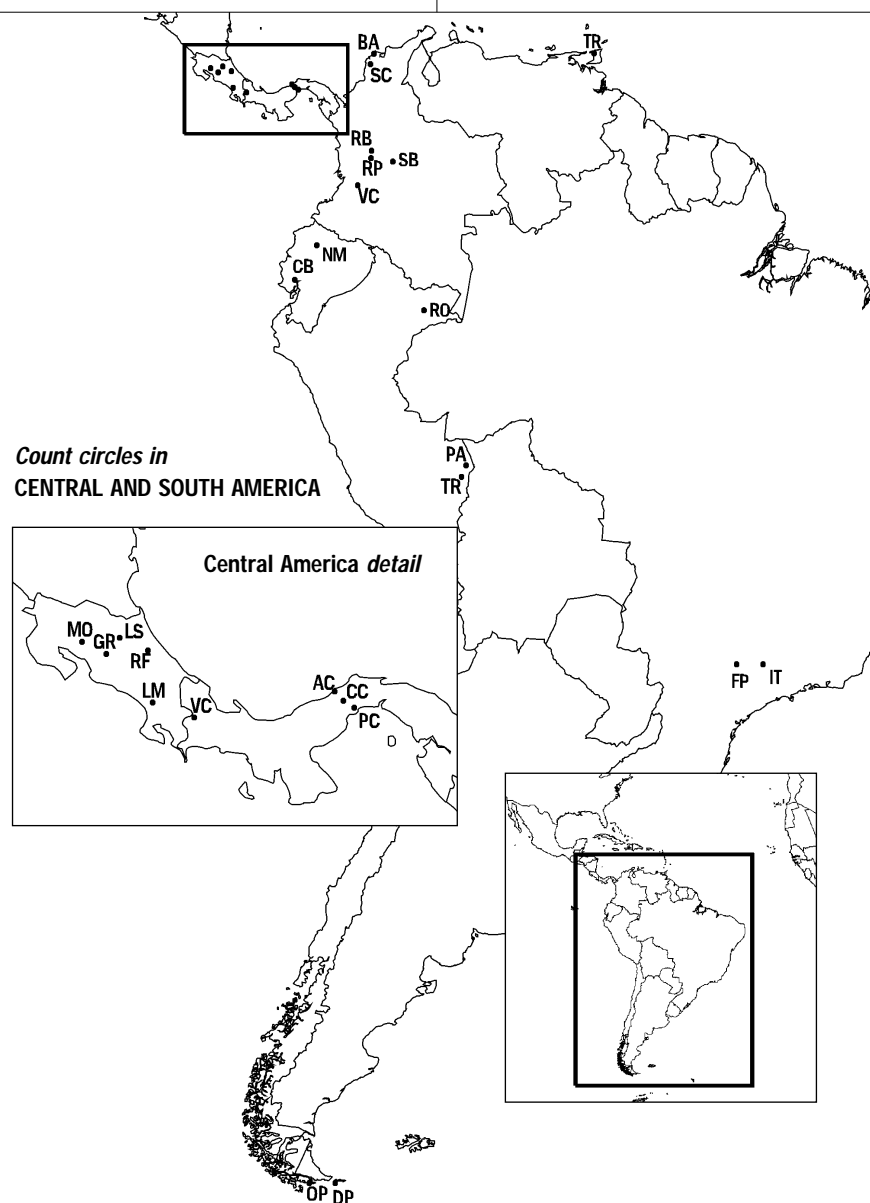
Although there were some surprising misses in the circle—Rufous-collared Sparrow, Olivaceous Woodcreeper, Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch, and Philadelphia Vireo—there were also numerous less commonly encountered species for Costa Rica, such as Tiny Hawk, Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle,

Slaty-backed Forest-Falcon, Purplish-backed Quail-Dove, Red-fronted Parrotlet, Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner, Long-tailed Woodcreeper, Strong-billed Woodcreeper, Black-headed Antthrush, Rufous-breasted Antthrush, Black-crowned Antpitta, Gray-headed Piprites, Black-and-white Becard, Bare-necked Umbrellabird, Sharpbill, Ashy-throated Bush-Tanager, and Rufous-winged Tanager.

Monteverde, Costa Rica, mustered the second-highest total in Central America with 379 species. Good success there was attributed to extraordinarily good weather this year; it was abnormally sunny, hot, and windless. Some species were recorded at higher elevations than usually known. Elsewhere in

Central America, Atlantic Canal, Panama, with 295 species, included an injured Manx Shearwater picked up at Punta Galeta. Photographs documented this most unusual find. Fewer experienced birders participated in the Panama counts this year, lowering the species totals on these counts.

In South America, the Instituto Humboldt is now the organizational partner for the CBC in Colombia, and four new counts were started there this season. On one of these new counts, Reserva de Planalto, observers reported Parker's Antbird (*Cercomacra parkeri*), a species described by Gary Graves in 1997. This is a higher elevation taxon similar to Dusky Antbird (*Cercomacra tyrannina*), with only females separable



by plumage coloration. The long-standing Sabana de Bogotá count had a new species, surprising only in that it is one so common and widespread—Ruddy Ground-Dove. This species is very common below 1600 m in Colombia, with reports up to 2400 m in the Eastern Andes and, in the months prior to the count, in the Sabana de Bogotá area.

The Cerro Blanco count, just west of Guayaquil, Ecuador, again enlisted help from members of the Puerto Hondo Youth Ecological Club as well as Bosque Protector Cerro Blanco park guards, who found the rare Great Green Macaw. Participants on the Mindo-Tandayapa, Ecuador, count, which registered 389 species, were again reveling their new field guide, *The Birds of Ecuador*, by Robert Ridgely and Paul Greenfield. Several usually lower elevation species were seen in the highlands this year, e.g., Blue-fronted Parrotlet, Ringed Kingfisher, Scarlet-backed Woodpecker, Rufous-winged Antwren, and Masked Water Tyrant (this species colonized Mindo three years ago, but was counted for the first time only this year), while many

other birds seemed to move upward as well, e.g., Violet-eared Hummingbird, White-thighed Swallow, and Rusty Flower-piercer, among others. Lastly, the famous Tambopata Research Center in Peru recorded 206 species. Dry weather, an almost complete bamboo die-off, with consequently few bamboo specialists recorded, and high water inhibited the species total for this species-rich area.

#### WEST INDIES/BERMUDA

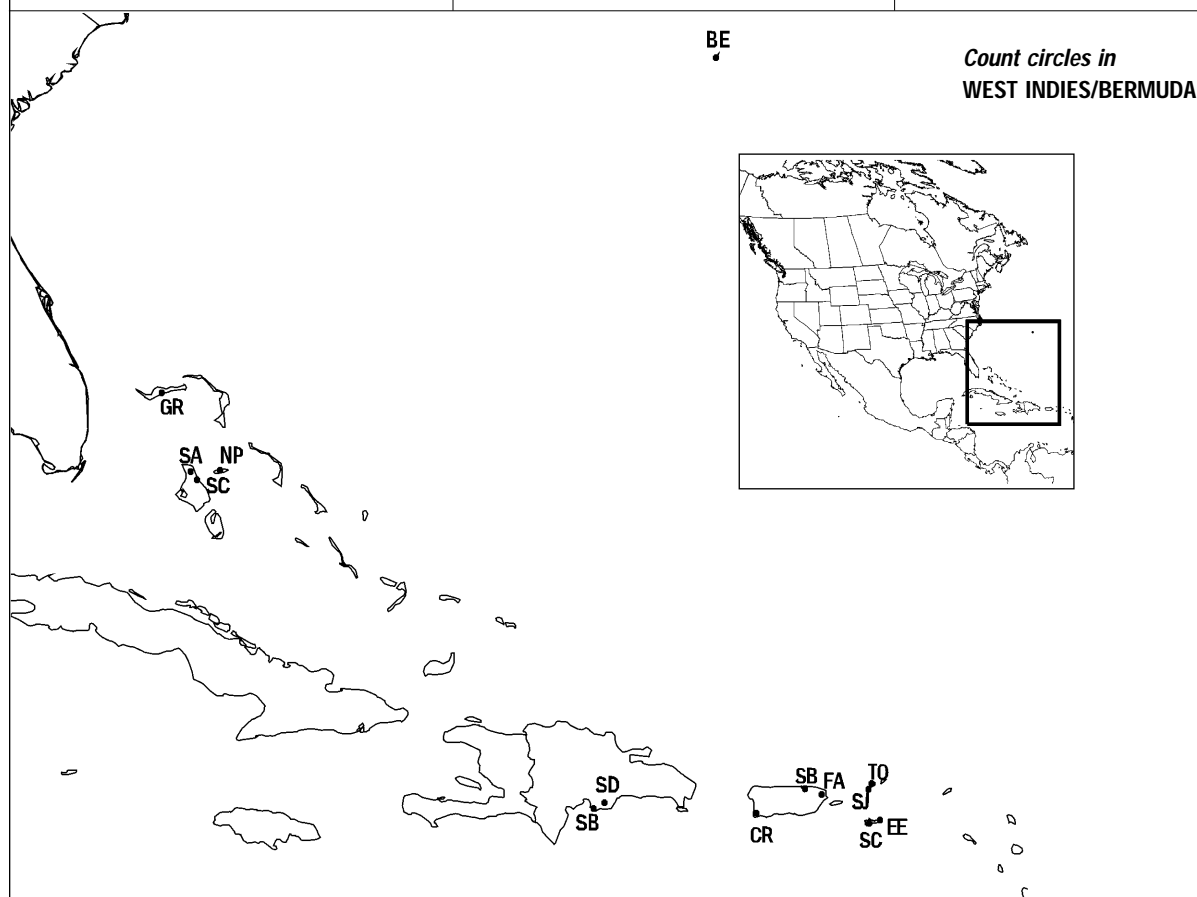
Bahamas, Bermuda, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands

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Thirteen insular counts this year marked the highest participation in many years. These counts covered the Bahamas (Grand Bahama, Andros, and New Providence) and northern Greater Antilles (Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, and Virgin Islands). The multiple count islands included Bahamas (4), Hispaniola (2), Puerto Rico (3), and the U.S. and British Virgin Islands (4). The benefit

of multiple counts is that each island group has a transect of species diversity and relative abundance. The value of this is a longitudinal context for measuring change in bird populations. While analysis provided here over the years has highlighted five groups of neotropical migrants (anatids, charadriids, scolopacids, larids, and parulids), it is hoped that compilers examine their own records for trends among their resident avifauna.

Insular habitats are changing or disappearing, annual rainfall amounts and patterns are shifting, and rising sea level threatens low lying breeding and feeding areas. Coupled with these long-term climatic events are the effects of biotic invasions, of both human-assisted and natural occurrence. The Eurasian exotics invasion, for example, has dual impact on insular species diversity. This invasion ranges from familiar bird species such as Little Egret, Rock Dove, Eurasian Collared-Dove, European Starling, and House Sparrow, to infectious agents such as the unfamiliar and recently detected West Nile virus. All of these tend to have



an effect on New World species. Examine, for example, the growing list and numbers of exotics and compare them to native species using the same habitats. The untapped resource of annual counts may offer insight into population trends affected by both natural and human-caused events. The online CBC database is creating an opportunity for a long look back to evaluate past years' data on resident species and perhaps a signal for help.

As a reminder, species seen during count week do not tally in the count total, and thus some species totals entered by compilers may be inaccurate. However, the average number of species reported was an encouraging 78.5 species. The New Providence, Bahamas, circle had the highest insular count followed closely by Fajardo, Puerto Rico, and Grand Bahama. The three Puerto Rico counts averaged slightly more species (99.7) than the four Bahamas counts (99.3). In the five categories of migrants, the species total was 57, an improvement this season due to better coverage. There were nine species of anatids (665 individuals) equivalent to the ten-year average, with Lesser Scaup making a big showing in the Bahamas and recorded as far east and south as San Juan. Two Red-breasted Mergansers and Mallard were noted in the Bahamas. Among the three species of charadriids (541 individuals) reported, also equal to the ten-year average, endangered Piping Plovers were noted on two Bahamas counts and at Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico. Sixteen species of scolopacids (1902 birds) were reported, down two species

from the ten-year average and well off the average number of 4230 individuals. Among the highlights were Red Knot (8) seen at San Juan, and Dunlin (2) reported from Grand Bahama. More Least Sandpipers (127) were reported than Westerns (12). Among the five species of larids (123 birds), Lesser (4) and Great (1) Black-backed gulls are nearly regular in the Bahamas. Ring-billed Gulls (87) were noted on four counts, bringing the annual count well above the ten-year average. Six Common Terns were noted at San Juan. The parulids numbered 24, slightly above the average, and 3013 individuals. Even without the massive showing of Yellow-rumped Warblers (1223 individuals or 41 percent), which were particularly ubiquitous in the Bahamas, it was an above-average warbler winter in the Antilles by any other standard. Some of the highlights were singleton Connecticut, Blackburnian, Blackpoll Tennessee, Kentucky, and Orange-crowned warblers, and two Yellow-breasted Chats.

On Bermuda's count, anatids numbered 14 (79 individuals), with two Common Mergansers an outstanding find. Charadriids numbered two, with a Northern Lapwing among the 101 birds. Scolopacids numbered eight species with 158 birds, and larids numbered five (132 birds) during count day, with a total of 27 Lesser and Great Black-backed gulls! Parulids numbered 20 species (485 birds). An American White Pelican provided a first-ever CBC record, as did a Reddish Egret during count week.

Other outstanding finds in the region were Black-capped Petrel from the Dominican Republic; Black-billed Cuckoo from Fajardo, Puerto Rico; Least Bittern at San Juan; American Bittern at Tortola; and American Pipit at New Providence. The number of exotics on the Bermuda count stands at eight and represents about 66 percent of the total individuals, with Rock Dove, Great Kiskadee, European Starling, and House Sparrow making the major contribution. In all 14 counts, there were 30 species of exotics recorded.

Looking over the region's cumulative counts, I exhort birders in Jamaica, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Antigua, and other "Down-islanders" to take up the CBC challenge and begin to record your island's bird heritage for conservation and planning purposes. For those who have been faithful to this annual event, my hat is off to you. Thank you, and keep up the great work.



Reddish Egret (*Egretta rufescens*), Bermuda. Photo/Andrew Dobson



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