

A RAINY MORNING JUST CAN'T STOP US!

ANOTHER GREAT EVERETT-MARYSVILLE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT HELD— DECEMBER 30, 2017

At last it happened: after many count-days over the last decade with surprisingly decent weather, our 23rd Everett-Marysville CBC ran in the rain. The night before the count, things were looking a little dire: other than rain, and a high wind warning caused cancellation of our kayaking effort, and several other last-minute changes and cancellations struck. I wondered about Duane's boat: would we have our offshore waters and islands covered?

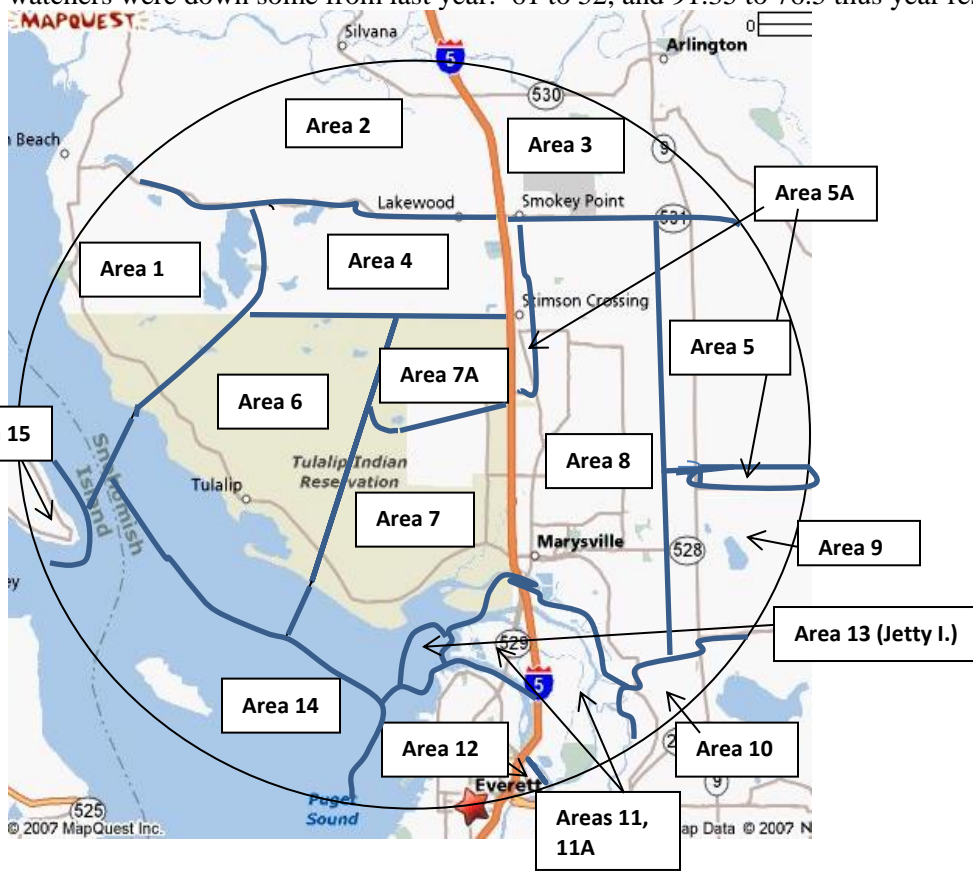
The day began with light rain in most places, turning to moderate or heavy rain mid-morning. But the pre-dawn owling hours were blessed with partly cloudy skies much of the time, allowing for visibility of a nearly full moon and stars—and plenty of owls were around. The wind threat had subsided, and the count day was nearly windless in most places. By mid-day, most of the rain had passed, and the afternoon was just cloudy.

After running through the list at the tally potluck dinner, graciously hosted by **Jeanette Moore**, we seemed to be at around 130 species. Yet, as happens every year, as other participants sent in their counts in the ensuing days and weeks, the species list climbed—to **138 species, just two short of our best-ever 140--and ten more than last year**. This will be among the best the top counts in the state; in fact, I believe only 'ol Bob Boekelheide's CBC, **Sequim-Dungeness**, had more, with 143.

Although total individuals fell from 41,193 to 37,994, we still managed to find record-high counts of 12 species, tying the record on another, while having low counts for five—a similar correlation to the last few years. The record-highs were in many cases those which have had increased numbers already in recent years (e.g., **Eurasian Collared-Dove, Anna's Hummingbird**).

Our Boeing biking-birder **Tom Sultze** was absent, but the **Zweig-Holman** team did well walking just one segment of the trail. And though the kayak teams could not go, Duane Karna's boat once again delivered (a) critical coverage of offshore waters; and (b) on-foot coverage of both Jetty and Hat islands. Both feeder-watching hours and number of feeder-watchers were down some from last year: 61 to 52, and 91.35 to 76.5 thus year respectively.

EFFORT. The surprising results mean **kudos go to you all—the key to this year was another great effort, including 121 participants**, just shy of the last two years' records of 125 and 123 people respectively. The biggest surprise for participation was a major increase in miles walked—from 75 last year to nearly 102 this year! Walking hours also were up to 120, from 107 last year. Given worse weather this year, one would have expected the reverse. **Where possible and especially where birds are expected, walking almost always generates more birds than staying inside a vehicle.**



AREA 1 (Extreme West--northwest part of Tulalip Reservation: Spee-bi-Dah, McKee's Beach, Kayak Pt., inland to lakes Goodwin and Shoecraft) was covered very well once again by **Art Wait's team (Wilma Bayes, Virginia Clark, and Sherrill Miller)**, and separately by **Becky Berry**, covering her beat off 140th (Fire Trail Road). This year we again benefitted by having **Trish Whitworth** watching her feeder at the northeast corner of Lake Goodwin; **Clint Hall** had another horde of birds coming to his feeders. 61 bird species were found, two more than last year.

The Wait team had the highest counts of all parties for big-lake types, such as **Com. Merganser**, **Pied-billed Grebe** and **Am. Coot**, and, combined with Becky's effort, led also for **Varied Thrush**, per tradition, and **Am. Robin**. This team also led all counters for **Western Grebe**, with 17—more than our last few CBC's totals combined. For my owling route I spent 1.5 hours in Area 1, resulting in detection of five owls of three species, thanks to perfect owling conditions.

AREA 2 (*north of 172nd, west of I-5 up to Island Crossing, west to Frank Waters Rd*)—Reg Reisenbacher, Maureen Corlas and Kim Kendall comprised the core field team, aided by feeder/property watchers Barb MacGillivray, the Kawaihaes (second year), and Mike Martz (first year on the CBC). Reg's core field team led all counters for three species, including **Ring-billed Gull** (18). Species count was down from 52 to 45 species this year, partly as a result of the Stevens clan being unable to join this year.

AREA 3 (*Island Crossing east of I-5, to s.w. Arlington, Portage Creek, Arlington Airport, south to 172nd*). If last year's 54 species seemed incredible, Dave Poortinga and Kendall Van Zanten, ably supported by several feeder-teams in town, put together an astonishing list of **64 species**. *This marks not only the best-ever for Area 3, but is the best-ever total for any inland party over the many years of the CBC!!* 8 **Greater Yellowlegs** and 15 **Tundra Swans** marked our first two CBC solos on the list, and a single (Am.) **Herring Gull** was a near-solo, one of only two for the whole CBC. Area 3 also had the highest totals for **Cackling Goose**, **Trumpeter Swan**, **Eurasian Collared-Dove** (nearly half of the CBC's all-time record **74** total), **Golden-crowned Kinglet** (!), and **House Finch**. Feeder coverage added several species to the core Poortinga-Van Zanten field coverage: in particular, Ed and Barb Oleson found five **Red Crossbills**, a near-solo on the CBC, and an **Evening Grosbeak**; Ed also photographed a **Sharp-shinned Hawk**, one of just four total for the CBC. Area 3 also had the lion's share of the CBC's **Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Juncos**, with four.

AREA 4: (*west of I-5, north of 140th, south of Lakewood Rd, Gissburg Lakes, Lake Loma, Lakewood HS*) veterans Jonathan Blubaugh, Douglas Resnick and Terry & Sue Nightingale returned to Area 4; Lisa Weber was new to the team. This year's 54 species matched last year's total. But this year there were **two solos**—singles of **Cedar Waxwing** and **Brown-headed Cowbird**. Area 4 also led the field on **Hooded Merganser** with a dozen. An odd-colored **American Kestrel** (one of just three Kestrels for the whole CBC) was also found.

Area 5 (*south of 172nd in Arlington and north of 108th in Marysville, going all the way to I-5 and to the northeast edge of the circle in Sysco Heights*) was covered this year by Art Campbell and Michele Dewey as the core field team, and backed by some very good feeder-watchers: the Thurmans, the Janine Johnson-Al Agular team, and Glenda Smith. A solid 51 bird species was the result, with the unexpected highlight being the Thurman's CBC solo **Purple Finch**, thus we barely avoided a first-time ever CBC miss of the species. Just as odd, no one in all of Area 5 found a single **House Finch**. As the saying goes, every year is different...

Other highlights in Area 5 included a tie for the highest **Pileated Woodpecker** count (4), the highest count for **Canada Goose** of all territories, and Janine Johnson ticked off one of our few **Townsend's Warblers** at her very busy suet feeder.

Area 5A (*select sites in extreme northwest Marysville/Stimson, west of 51st and east of I-5, and extreme south of Sysco Heights+*). Caty Norton returned for Area 5A, this year going it alone. Feeder and private-property observers were returners Sammy Catiis and Tom Gore, and (new to the CBC) Earl Haas. Altogether 35 species were detected, two of them CBC solos: **Am. Bittern 1** (Caty) and **Hermit Thrush 1** (Earl). Area 5A also had the best count for **Mourning Doves** and **Evening Grosbeaks** (way to go, Sammy!).

Maxine Reid and Mike Bacon were back at **Area 6** (*Tulalip including Tulalip Bay and Hermosa Pt.*) this year. 59 species were detected, with a good mix of species represented. As many years, shorebirds and alcids were the most notable. Maxine had the high count for **Wilson's Snipe**, and had a near-solo with her always-eagerly-awaited **Black Turnstones** (15); other near-solos were **Pigeon Guillemot** and **Marbled Murrelet**. Maxine also led for **Belted Kingfisher** (5). We were down for total species in Area 6 this year, in part because of loss of the **Constantine** feeder coverage along Turk Rd.

Area 7 (*southeast Tulalip Reservation including Priest Pt.*) was witness to a rare change in coverage this year: traditional lead Dan Olson was absent on travel, but Ann Marie-Wood stepped in to lead a very successful day of counting, aided by Carolyn Roeber; the Hatleys added a few more birds from their feeder. The Ann Marie-Roeber team detected 58 species, a huge jump from last year's 47. This compiler was thrilled to see 12 **White-winged Scoters** (a near solo with only one other report of 3); I had been lamenting becoming the only "one-scooter Puget Sound CBC" at the tally dinner. These were the first CBC birds in several years...Ann-Marine and Carolyn also had a near-solo with one of the only two **Spotted Sandpipers**, a traditional in Area 7, and they led all counters on **Snow Goose** and **Surf Scoters**. Well done!

Area 7A (*northeastern-most Tulalip Reservation; Ross Lake; varied accesses into the Tulalip Reservation*). **Graham Hutchinson** (with **Frank Caruso** and **Jim Beneteau**) led a very good CBC coverage of Area 7A. Like 5A, 7A is a break-out from a few years ago, given expanding participation and better understanding of geography and access. 7A coverage has improved each year: this year 49 species were found, four more than last year. The Hutchinson team found the CBC's only two **Wood Ducks**. After several years of having our inland fresh-water ponds and small lakes frozen CBC day, and thus driving out Woodies, it was good to have them back. Area 7A also had half our **Barred Owl** count this year, with 2.

Susie Schaefer, who ran the original Everett CBC long ago, has always been a key figure in our successful CBCs, and this year was no exception. She choreographed another thorough coverage of **AREA 8** (*Marysville City*). Because I was in dire straits last day with some roster losses, I approached her to rob a couple observers. She wisely stood her ground, not willing to disassemble a detailed plan (and I juggled successfully at my end too).



Mountain Chickadee, Area 8 (Marysville). Photo courtesy of Gary Lindlof.

Although origin is unknown, **Gary Siko** had a **Ring-necked Pheasant** near his place, close to 67th and 100th Ave NE; this was another Area 8 CBC solo. Although down by 11 species at 63 when compared to 2016, Area 8 managed to capture the high counts of all territories for a whole number of birds, including:

Gr. Scaup, Mew Gull, N. Flicker, Bushtit, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Yellow-rumped Warbler. But none were more impressive than 73 (!) **Anna's Hummingbirds**, the largest contribution toward the CBC's new all-time high of **307**. And before anyone wonders about double-counts, note that **Seattle had 755 on its CBC the same day** (with just over 300 participants), and we fit the regional trend: *Anna's Hummingbirds are exploding in numbers, in every way aided by we Homo sapiens that keep putting out feeders!!*

Marysville's much-discussed **Calif. Scrub-Jays**, increasingly reported this year, came through as well, with two found at a feeder-station.

AREA 9 (*northwest Lake Stevens, Centennial Trail, Corson Wildlife Area, east to 123rd Street NE, west to Highway 9, including Lake Cassidy*). **Mara Price** teamed up with **Joanie Pryor** for the main field coverage, joined by **Al Eliot** (who also contributed feeder birds as noted for Area 8) at Corson Wildlife Management Area. And for the second year in a row, we lucked out and had **Sierra Zweig** and **Mike Holman** along the stretch of Centennial Trail from 84th Street NE to Lake Cassidy. And a solid group of feeder-watchers included **Kathy Rasmussen, Kevin Gusman & Linda Johnson, and Sue Babich**; newcomers **Lynette Hjort** and **Bruce Peak** covered their respective sites south of 84th. Overall species count here fell to 38 species, but the area had its highlights: **Kathy Rasmussen** once again came through with the CBC's solo **California Quail**, which visit her place daily. In addition, Area 9 lead the field in a range of feeder-species: **Steller's Jay, both chickadees, Spotted Towhee and Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco** were more numerous here than anywhere else.

Area 10 (*south end of Sunnyside Boulevard, southwestern-most Lake Stevens—south of Soper Hill Rd and Hwy 92*) was again very ably counted by **Mary Vosteen**, whose team included **Peggy Heineck, Betsey Mullen and Aleta Mueller**. Feeder-watchers were **Donna Carter** and **Philip Dickenson** (who was mainly active in Area 12). A new record-high **56 species**

Her team included 10 observers; in support, there were no less than 14 feeder-watchers covering their individual sites in the city. The big news this year was that newcomer **Gary Lindlof** had two **Mountain Chickadees** coming to his feeder off Grove Street. Although we were uncertain that he had seen them count day, later he confirmed that he had—and also furnished the photo you see here. Then **Al Eliot**, veteran feeder-watcher near Quilceda Creek south of 88th (almost across from the Starbucks!) turned in his numbers—including two more **Mountain Chickadees!** Studying the situation geographically, I decided we had four total birds—given a 2.2-mile distance between Gary's and Al's birds!

It has been a long time since we had this species on the count, and it qualifies as our first true rarity. Interestingly, the Seattle CBC also had Mountain Chickadees at two different feeder stations—the same day.

included a wide mix of birds, including CBC solos **Barn Swallow (6)** and **Hutton's Vireo (2)**. Peggy's **Barn Swallows** had been roosting there for over a month. This is our third CBC in the last four that **Barn Swallows** have been found—I can't even call it a "US" (unusual species) anymore!

Area 10 had many other notables. **All three regular winter warbler species** were found at or near Mary's place; the territory also led for **Downy Woodpecker (10)** and had two of the CBC's four **Barn Owls**.

AREA 11 (**the low ground from the Everett Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) north to Biringer Farm, both east and west of I-5, Pacific Topsoils**) had 83 species present—the highest of any of the 17 territories this year. My team included **Diana Antunes** and first-timer **Diana Tillman**; the **Steve Giles** team included **Cynthia Easterson** and **Julia Bent**, as last year. **Libbie** and **Lee Soden** covered a mop-up route, but **Carol Winter** was ill this year (we lost quite a number this year to illness).

Owing to continuing revision of the bottomlands on the edges of the Everett Sewage Treatment Plant, **Steve Giles'** team assumed coverage of the former 112th St SE bottomlands up to Steamboat Slough/edges of the tree farm, while I spent more time at Spencer Island (west). As in most years, highlights are almost too many to list; Area 11 led for high counts on 26 species, with especially dominant showings on **ducks, raptors, rails, and sparrows**. Steve had by far the most of 1300+ **N. Shovelers**, a new CBC record-high; and 1504 **Lesser Scaup** were most of a new CBC-record high: 1942 individuals.

I always look forward to the sparrow action the very most in Area 11, especially at the former Biringer Farm area. Imagine 401 sparrows of 7 species in Area 11—including two **Swamp Sparrows**. And yet this isn't the whole story—Diana and I had a perfect (**Rocky Mountain**) **Fox Sparrow**—having a pure gray head contrasting with bright rust wings, tail and breast spots; and an obvious white eye ring. I did not obtain a photo, but details have been submitted.



Rusty Blackbird, Area 11 (Pacific Topsoils) on the CBC. Note pale iris, sharp-tipped bill, pale flecks in tertials area of wing, short clubby tail

A male **Rusty Blackbird** (CBC solo, only 2nd for CBC) was at Pacific Topsoils (private property). I did not mention the bird at the tally because I wanted to check the photos. This bird was loosely associated with **Eur. Starlings**; it roosted on the edge of the flock roosting in cottonwoods and scrub, then dropping to the shore of the lake to feed in the marshy growth.

At Biringer, a likely **Harris' Sparrow** was in the "one-that-got-away" category near Mike Biringer's house. Too bad we are on borrowed time here: reports are still that the Biringer site is to be flooded by dike breach...

Also in Area 11 were 65 **Common Redpolls**, a CBC solo and our highest count ever. 60 of these were at Langus Waterfront Park. In addition, one bird had entirely pale underparts and a pale face (photographed), but the upperparts were not observed. In addition to many **Virginia Rails**, a **Sora** answered a recording north of the Spencer I. bridge.



Semipalmated Plover, one of five at Area 12 on the CBC. Really rare on Puget Sound CBCs—except on ours, where now yearly. Photo: **Rick Taylor**.

Area 12 (**Everett City**) had three CBC solo species and several more near-solos, like Area 11. 81 total species this CBC is the same species count as last year. **Rick** and **Tina Taylor** did their usual outstanding job, joined by **Phil & Mary Dickinson**; a third field party was **Linda Howard** and **Charles Dubois**. Feeder-watchers were returners **Mary-Ann Sudkamp**, **M. Rairdin**, and **Connie Veldink**.

As at Area 11, the highlights are nearly too many to list. Taylor CBC solos were the now-regular **Semipalmated Plover (5)**, and four each of **Western Gull** and **Am. Pipit**. Phillip had a near-solo **Spotted Sandpiper**.

The **pipits** were a great addition. Formerly regular on the CBC at Biringer Farm, they no longer show up since the farm is no longer being tilled.

Area 12 led all territories in counts of 9 species. The most important was near-solo **California Scrub-Jay**: *thanks to two groups comprising at least 8 birds, and adding the two in Area 8, we reached double-figures (10) for the first time.*

Area 13 (Jetty Island). Owing to **Kathy Houghton**'s absence, **Jon Houghton** was joined by newcomers **Leah** and **John Grupp-Williams**. This was the best year of the three years of on-foot coverage, and it was especially critical this year because veteran kayaker **Patty Bardon** was absent. The highlights of 34 species (in 2016: 29 species) included the CBC's only **Sanderlings** (15), and near-solos **Eurasian Wigeon** (4) and a **Short-eared Owl**; 158 (**Black**) **Brant**, 500 **Am. Wigeon**, 99 **Red-breasted Mergansers**, 2 **California Gulls**, 125 **Black-bellied Plovers**, 1800 **Dunlin** and a whopping 60 **Least Sandpipers** (another near-solo!) were the highest counts from any territory. Along with our new Hat Island on-foot coverage, this is the most exciting addition to our CBC in recent years...

Area 14 (boat party: drop-off Jetty I., offshore waters, Hat Island)—other than the crucial deep-water coverage over open salt water in the count circle's S-SSW quadrant, this year **Duane Karna** again made it possible to have on-foot coverage of **Hat Island**. Returners **Steve Pink** and **Douglas Cooper** were aboard as well. Island residents, as last year, provided not only key access, but also joined in record numbers. This year we had **John** and **Tammy Mason**, **Lori Christopher**, and **Anne** and **Ed Frantilla**. Area 14's CBC solo this year is a bird you would only expect once in a while from the boat party: a **Long-tailed Duck (Oldsquaw)**. Then the boat also led all counters for **all three loons** (tied for lead on **Common**), **Horned Grebe**, **Marbled Murrelet** (near-solo), and **Bonaparte's Gull**; the most noteworthy, however, were **176 Brandt's Cormorants**, by far the most of an all-time record high CBC count of **200** birds. But now we also have the party's forest coverage to consider, and the Doug-fir forest out there must be good, because Area 14 also posted the highest individual counts of all territories for **Red-breasted Sapsucker** (4, a high number for this year), **Pacific Wren** and **Brown Creeper**. Three **Common Ravens** were the highest of any party here also. Up ahead—we'll find out about the owl population!

Last but not least, **Area 15 (southernmost Camano Island)** was covered by newcomers **Anthony Gliozzo** and **Karin Kersteter**, both from north of the count territory. While their time was also spent on another CBC, amongst the 27 species were three **Band-tailed Pigeons**—the CBC's only ones. Thanks Anthony and Karin for joining us!

III. Misses. **Ruffed Grouse** is reportedly still present in the inner Tulalip Reservation; alas, we have been unable to find them for some years now. **Cinnamon Teal** was regular until the last 2-3 CBCs in Area 11, but seems to have disappeared now. (**Harlan's**) **Red-tailed Hawk** and **Rough-legged Hawk** were missed; the former is likely displaced from Area 11 owing to the removal of both traditional roosting sites and hunting areas north of the Everett STP. **Western Sandpiper** was discussed at the tally dinner; while never in large numbers on our CBC, we formerly would get a few to into double-digits in with huge **Dunlin** flocks; other nearby CBCs get a few. **Rhinoceros Auklet** and **Common Murre** seem to be getting harder offshore. Among the passerines, the three "good" sparrows were also discussed at the tally—**Harris'**, **White-throated** and **Am. Tree**. Rick noted that feeders have produced the **White-throats** on his CBC (Edmonds), and others noted that there is so much roadside thicket habitat to cover. Most likely, the rare single birds are being overlooked in the *Zono* flocks.

I want to thank all of you for attending the CBC this year. Please mark down **Saturday, December 29th**—that is our next one!

--SA