

EVERETT-MARYSVILLE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT December 28, 2019:

Favorable Weather and 152 Participants Win the Day

✓Well folks—I want to first of all thank every single person who participated in CBC Dec. 28th. There was much data to collect and collate, especially when you consider that we reached an all-time high in participation: **exactly 152 people participated**—shattering the records hit in 2017 and 2018, when we were in the 120s for people. But it wasn't the quantity—it was the **quality of our people**. 22 new people joined us as a result of cold-recruiting, and 16 more newcomers learned of us through *Everett Herald* and *Marysville Globe* articles.

1. Favorable conditions + great turnout=solid results. In sharp contrast to last year, this year we had broken, partly-sunny skies in the morning, overcast afterward, and no rain. Almost no wind was detectable, and temperature range was 37-48 F. Mild, above-average temperatures prevailed in the period leading up to the count. All parties were upbeat and the results showed it—**we had 139 species and 39,357 individual birds counted—compared to 124 species and 35,317 birds last year.** **Although not all CBCs are yet showing in the National Audobon website, about 75% are in for Washington State.** *Of 30+ CBCs entered so far, as many years, we finished second only to perennial leader Sequim-Dungeness, which had just one species more than we—140.* **This year our CBC had five rarities, 15 record-high counts, and only three record low-count entries.** *Please consult the separate Excel sheet (second attached, “Everett CBC 2019 by Territory”) for detailed numbers.*

2. Highlights--waterfowl. Waterfowl, especially at the Snohomish River Delta flats between Marysville and Everett, had perhaps the best overall showing ever. Over 4,500 **geese** were seen, including 3,421 **Snow Geese**; 97 **Gr. White-fronted Geese** were the highest count ever for us by far. All five **goose** species and both species of **swans** showed. Not to be outdone, ducks showed remarkable quantity and diversity, including highest-ever counts—since our count began back in 1974—of **Ring-necked Duck**, **N. Shoveler**, and **Common Merganser**. And on the rare side, 4 **Redheads** and a hen **Cinnamon Teal** returned in my area, and a **Harlequin Duck** was found in Area 1, just our second entry in the last 5 CBCs. **Canvasback** continue what seems to be a gradual recovery from hitting very low numbers not long ago; we had **117** this year, the highest number since the 2005 CBC. **Wood Ducks** returned after being missed our last few CBCs, 26 total.

3. Highlights—waders. Among the interesting new birders this year was **Keith Warrick**, a highly-talented wildlife artist and former hunter. Keith turned up an **egret** at the southernmost end of Jennings Park near 4th Street. Despite my case that the bird had to be a **Great Egret** (we all remember the two that stayed at Jennings Park in 2016-17), Keith revealed experience with all three of our American egrets, including **Cattle Egret**. In the back-and-forth that followed, we compromised on **egret**, sp. And if this weren't enough, Keith also turned up an **American Bittern** the day after the CBC for count-week, and also feeder list from a family residence nearby!

5. Shorebird highlights. Our CBC, with the expansive n. Everett mudflats, Jetty Island, & the Snohomish River mouth, is terrific for shorebirds. This CBC was no exception—**12 species were found** (nearly all CBCs nearby are single-digit).



Ruddy Turnstone, Tulalip Bay, December 28, 2019; photo courtesy of Maxine Reid

Maxine Reid again turned in a big day at Tulalip Bay in Area 6—relocating the **Ruddy Turnstone** (at left) there that had been there with **Black Turnstones** for some time. She and Mike Bacon's 65 species also included the CBC's only **six Cedar Waxwings**, a species we don't get every year. They also had the highest counts of all parties for **Surf Scoter**, **Horned Grebe**, and **Mourning Dove**.

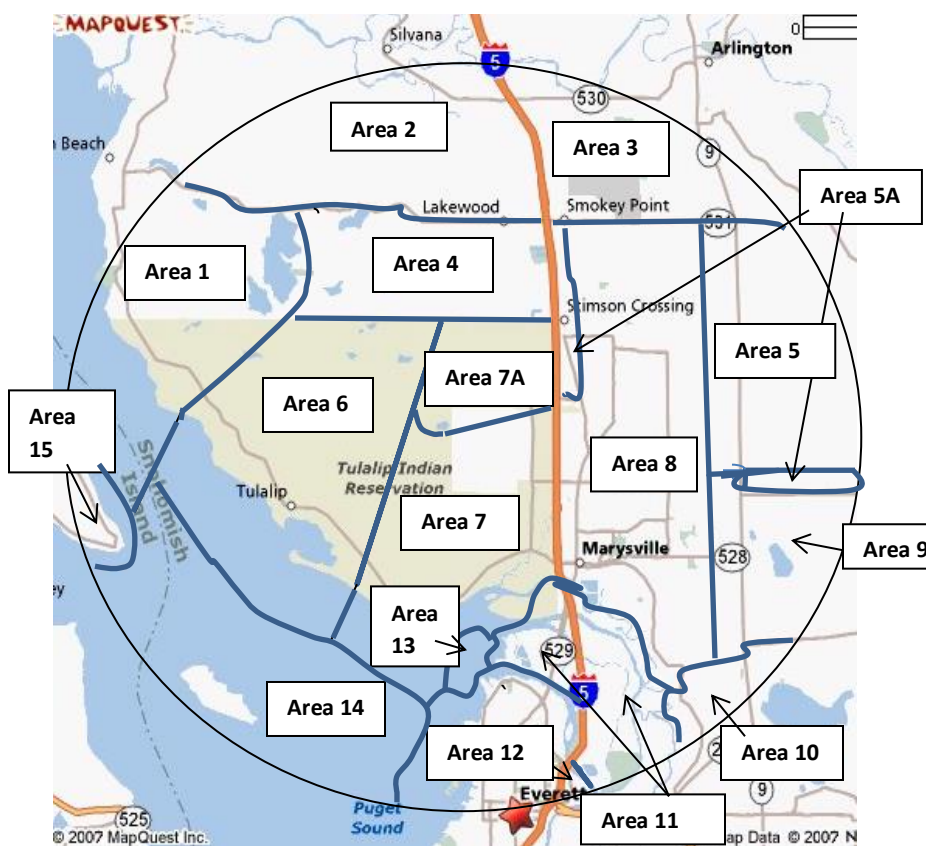
And on the shorebirds theme, the **Houghtons'** Jetty Island list (Area 13) was a real good one—including the count's only **Semipalmated Plovers** and **Sanderlings**—2 each—and a near-solo 28 **Least Sandpipers**!! They also had the lion's share of the **Snow Geese** and (**Black**) **Brant**, as well as **Ring-billed Gulls** and **Dunlin** (an impressive 1,480). After last fall's shorebird thrills, you get the feeling Jetty Island just gets better and better...Kudos to Jon and Kathy for another on-foot contribution of an island that, not long ago—we hardly knew.

The shorebird report would not be complete without note that **Dan Olson** in Area 7 (*southeast Tulalip Reservation*) came through, as he has so many times, with a single **Spotted Sandpiper** at Priest Point again this year. **Dan** was joined this year by **Karin Kersteter**, an experienced observer just joining us for the second time. Their 45 species (over double last year's number) also included the only **White-winged Scoters** this year on the CBC. Newcomers to Area 7 were the **Triezenberg** and **Kunkle** families, who provided the CBC with some exciting new coverage in remote private-property zones inland.

4. Raptor News—Osprey, Bald Eagle record. The mild conditions leading up to count day made an impression on many birds. Raptors were no exception. **Pattie Barton**, our longtime veteran kayaker-birder, kept territory **11A** special (this carve-out is kayak-only accessible parts of the Snohomish River Delta). She submitted an exciting **Osprey** report, only our second in CBC history, the first from the 1997 count. While common and obvious from about late March to October, **Osprey** only rarely linger into early winter in Puget Sound country. **Pattie** reported the salient details like the distinctive long-winged silhouette, shaggy “crest” on the back of the head, and all-brown above, all-white below look. This perched bird was at the point near Cedar Grove, close in to where **Ospreys** nest on old pilings increasingly in the last couple decades. Almost like a bird seeking to get an early start on the competition!

The CBC also registered a new record-high of 143 **Bald Eagles**. While some might have been double-counted, the number is consistent with trends—the Padilla Bay CBC, up in Skagit County, hit a record 402 this year. Moreover, there was a double-digit concentration of birds seen together in Area 11 near Cedar Grove.

5. Owl-prowls. Though there was no moon to be seen, a still night allowed for some decent owling. Most of the count's 26 owls were heard before dawn. Although this is not a great number for 14 hours' plus of looking and listening, we managed to find 7 different owl species—which ties the most we've ever had for any one CBC. I lucked out and heard singles of both **N. Pygmy** and **W. Screech** along Frank Waters Road (Area 2), and later in the day watched and photographed the CBC's only **Short-eared Owl** flying about the fast-fading Biringer Farm. **Maxine** and **Rick Taylor** added single **N. Saw-whet Owls** from their respective territories, a relief because I missed the Firetrail bird or two I usually get.



Everett-Marysville Christmas Count circle, blue lines are territory boundaries. While the count has been in existence since 1974, the circle was moved slightly southward in 1995 to accommodate the Skagit Flats CBC to the north. Approximate map only.

6. Woodpecker Highlights. Although we did not reach record numbers on Pileated as we thought, we did for **Northern Flicker** with 231. Feeder-watchers were overwhelming here with suet-related reports—newcomer **Layle Haro** at a private residence in Marysville reported 16 birds at a single suet station! What a sight that must have been... Only two **Red-breasted Sapsuckers** were found—**Trish Whitworth** had one at her place (northwest Lake Goodwin area), and **Dave Poortinga** (with **Kendall Van Zanten**, Area 3) had the other. Poortinga led another incredible effort up in the Island Crossing-Arlington area: 63 species—including CBC solos **Brown-headed Cowbirds** and **Hutton's Vireos**—and one of the CBC's only two **Swamp Sparrows**—were here. Best counts of **Brewer's Blackbird** and **Killdeer**, and other species, were here too. A very intense feeder-watcher effort undergirded the Area 3 effort, combining veterans like the **Olesons** (Barb & Ed) with newcomers like **Anne Breneman**, the **Kendalls**, **Bill Sherman**, **Laura Thornton** and **Holly Sayle**. Area 3 feeder-watchers were the main reason Area 3 led all territories for counts of **Dark-eyed Junco**, **Spotted Towhee** and **Anna's Hummingbird**. **Anna's** hit another all-time high this year, with 352. As whopping a number as this seems, Seattle's CBC had 885.

7. BUSH TIT RECORD IN MARYSVILLE. **Marysville City** (Area

8) had an astonishing 37 observers this year—led by **Philip Dickinson** for the field teams. **Susie Schaefer** (who ran this CBC in its very earliest years!) was coming off hip surgery. Bottom line: **Marysville tied Everett City (Area 12) with 75 species total** for the first time I can recall. Highlights included the **egret, sp.** noted above, and **Ron Hoppe**, on private property in

extreme northwest Marysville—turned in the CBC’s only five **Band-tailed Pigeons** this year, apparently regular there. Marysville had over 1,000 **Ring-necked Ducks**, and over 200 **Bushtits**, mega-counts that spelled CBC all-time record high counts in the end. **Bushtits** continue their increase regionally, with astonishingly-high suet use helping, no doubt.

8. CALIFORNIA SCRUB-JAY SETS NEW RECORD, OTHER SONGBIRD HIGHLIGHTS.



California Scrub-Jay, Tulalip, December 28, 2019. Photo courtesy of Maxine Reid.

Marysville’s famous family of five **Calif. Scrub-Jays** were picked up by **Tom Takano** near Jennings Park (**Pamela Myers’** residence) as expected. But scattered birds were also found further north in town as well; and **Maxine** had one in her area in Tulalip; in n. Everett, **10 more birds were found**. In sum, 19 birds—a new record—were counted on the CBC, eclipsing the 10 on the 2017 CBC. Yet apparently other birds might have been around. Yours truly had a bird in Glen Eagle (Arlington) in early December (also reported by a feeder-watcher there), and even larger double-figure counts were reported in November around Rainier Ave. in n. Everett (**Rob Simmonds**, back to help us in n. Everett). In any case, the showy jay parallels Anna’s Hummingbird in being increasingly visible here, naturalized from California.

North Everett (Area 12) wasn’t just the spot for the jay. **Rick Taylor** led another great effort (75 species), especially noteworthy given his duties as compiler of the Edmonds CBC (the south Snohomish Count). The CBC’s only **Western Gull** was here, and Rick reported a **White-throated Sparrow** from a feeder report, our only one this year. In all, Area 12 led all territories for highest counts of both **goldeneyes**, two of three **cormorants**, two **shorebirds**, the celebrated **Calif. Scrub-Jays**, **Am. Robin**, **Orange-crowned Warbler** & **White-crowned Sparrow**.

OTHER TERRITORY-BY-TERRITORY HIGHLIGHTS—**Area 1** includes the outer west Tulalip shoreline (**Spee-bi-Dah**, **McKee’s Beach**, **Kayak Pt.** and more) and goes inland to **Port Susan Campground**, as well as including **lakes Goodwin and Shoecraft**. **Sherrill Miller** led the main coverage, and **Becky Berry** was also back covering her area off 140th (Fire Trail Road). Good ‘ol **Clint** was counting at his place on Tulare Beach Rd., and newcomers **Randy** and **Shoaleh Colombi** turned in great feeder numbers up near Firetrail. This year Area 1 improved to 53 species total, with Sherrill’s team finding solos of **Harlequin Duck** and **Rhinoceros Auklet** at the salt water; the auklet was our first since the 2014 CBC, one of **four** solos from Area 1. Sherrill and team also counted a stunning 389 **Com. Mergansers**—an all-time CBC high—mostly on Lake Goodwin, and Area 1 also led for both **chickadees** (chickadee champions—the **Halls**), **Pied-billed Grebe**, and **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**.

AREA 2 (west of Island Crossing, north of 172nd, northernmost CBC area). **Maureen Corlas** led again, joined by **David Drummond**—who had long ago been a regular on our CBC but lives well north of us now. On the feeder side, the **Lees** were back, and major new recruits were the **Borucks**, who also allowed us some walking access to their tremendous spread. The **Borucks** had four **Barn Owls**, half of this year’s total. The **Martz** family also chipped in from Sill Rd. This year’s effort snared an increased species count by two to 51, including the CBC’s only **Western Meadowlarks** (8) and **Corlas-Drummond** led all counters for a couple other expected species.

AREA 4 (west of I-5, north of 140th but south of Lakewood Rd, Gissburg Lakes, Lake Loma, Lakewood HS)--**Jonathan Blubaugh**, our veteran Boeing birder and another longtime CBC veteran, led the main field effort, with **Terry & Sue Nightingale**, **Doug Remnick**, **Lisa Weber**, and **Judy Hall**. Meanwhile, feeder teams of **Jan Eide**, **Rich** and **Geraldine Roberts**, new recruits **Roger** and **Mary Wentz**, and **Sally Cornish** provided numbers from their respective sites. **Bottom line**: this year species count improved sharply to 54.

Area 5-5A (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). **Ken Wild** covered Area 5 once again, joined by new recruit **Hannah Vincelette**. **Bruce** and **Kathy Thompson** not only covered uplands like last year, they also picked up Area 5A coverage historically covered by **Caty Norton** (who led the Area 10 beat this year, please see below). And three different feeder-watchers were also counting, led by **Janine Karsen** and **Al Agular**. Bruce was near-solo in Area 5A with 23 **Wood Ducks**, finally back with us in a mild year with open fresh water. As in Area 4, this was a better year in Area 5-5A overall—species count jumped into the 50s at 54, five more than the last CBC. Highlights included the CBC’s best count on **Am. Kestrel** (4), the count that did the most

to put the whole CBC count to a record-high of 9; and the best count on **Com. Raven**. Area 5 also had one of each of **Peregrine** and **Barred Owl**, of which we had just a few overall.



Townsend's Warbler at suet feeder. Feeder-watchers should keep their eyes peeled for this gem, usually coming in with Chestnut-backed Chickadees. We are at the very north end of their winter range—and had **10 birds** this year (Arlington-3, Marysville-6, one at the Everett STP!), one of few times we've been in double-figures, with suet being key. Photo courtesy of Northwestbirding.com

Graham Hutchison led again in **Area 7A** (*Northeast Tulalip*), with his team including **Frank Caruso** and **Jim Beneteau**. **Linda Orrino** chipped in with feeder birds. Species count was down this year by 11—with both field and feeder reporting less birds. Still, Graham and team had a near-solo with a **Harlan's (Red-tailed) Hawk**, and—always hard to find on the CBC—one of our three **Hermit Thrush** this year.

Area 9 (*northwest Lake Stevens, Centennial Trail, Corson Wildlife Area, east to 123rd Street NE, west to Highway 9, including Lake Cassidy*) had **Sierra Zweig** and **Michael Holman** back to Centennial Trail, while veteran **Mara Price**, with **Joanie Pryor** and **Al Eliot** (Al also contributed feeder birds from his place in Marysville City) were covering eastern sections chiefly. **Susan Babich**, the **Thurmans**, and **Kay** and **Knut R.** covered their respective private sites at home. **Eric** and **Valerie Miller** also joined us for the first time, providing terrific feeder-bird photos, too. 49 species were found in Area 9 this year. **Mara** defied the odds (as she has done several times over the years) and found us our only **Tundra Swans**, no doubt near the 108th x 67th Ave farm-flats. Area 9 was also the place for **Pileated Woodpecker**, with a CBC-leading 4 total.

In **Area 10** (*Sunnyside Boulevard south, n. end of Ebey Island, southwest Lake Stevens south of Soper Hill Rd. and Hwy 92*), **Caty Norton** (from 5A), **Aleta Mueller**, **Michele Martin** and **Betsey Mullen** were the core field party, although newcomer **Sally Jo Sebring** also walked substantially east of Highway 9; **Donna Carter**, **Lynette Hjort** (with newcomer friends), and newcomer **Lynn Johnson** were mainly covering the feeders. Species count was down by one from last year at 44; but Peggy Heineck's barn produced half of the CBC's **8 Barn Owls**, and Area 10 led all counters for **Hairy Woodpecker** with 8. Alas, Peggy is selling the long-standing family farm, but she has graciously provided the name of her buyers, who are reportedly birders too.

Area 11 (*Everett Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) and the Snohomish River north to Biring Farm, both east and west of I-5, including Spencer Island, and Pacific Topsoils on Smith Island*) Here is the heartland of our CBC circle. Both in total individuals--12,320 (about 30% of the total CBC count) and total species count—80—were tops for the whole CBC. *Total species jumped by ten in Area 11 from last year.*

Steve Giles was joined again by **Julia Bent**, but new recruit **Laura Hartman** joined them in the core Everett STP area and Spencer Island. Meanwhile my wife and I covered surrounding areas; **Libbie** and **Lee Soden** also did mop-up coverage, looking for species that might have been missed by the two core teams. It was a day of superlatives: **Area 11 had highest-of-all territories' counts for no less than 28 bird species**, tying for highest on several more.

Steve's solos were **Canvasback**, **Long-billed Dowitcher**, and (nearly) **Greater Yellowlegs**; our side had one **Eared Grebe**, four **Redhead**, a hen **Cinnamon Teal**, a **Short-eared Owl** and a **swallow, sp.** The latter was seen only by myself, however, and as it was in flight, I was unable to obtain photos. It flew through my field-of-view as I was studying a **Red-tailed Hawk** at the horse barn opposite Dagmar's Landing along I-5. I lost the bird over I-5, but I did observe the characteristic acrobatic swallow flight, white belly and squared-off tail; I'm convinced the bird was either a **Tree** or **Violet-green Swallow**, uncertain because I never saw the upperparts. As unlikely as this seems, we do have a prior CBC record of 6 **Tree Swallows** on a CBC within the decade, as well as a 1977 CBC record of two **N Rough-winged**, though those bird could well have been imm. **Tree**, the much more-likely species. I also had an apparent **Mallard X Gadwall** drake, and a partially leucistic **Fox Sparrow**, the latter photographed. **Sparrows** area always a main attraction in Area 11. They were a bit down overall this CBC however, with 327 total birds of 7 species found. **Lincoln's** were off and **Savannah** was missed outright for the second year in a row; a **Swamp Sparrow** was at Biring Farm.

Area 12 (*Everett City*) was discussed above, but it is worth adding species count went up by 8 this year. Rick's wife **Tina**, **Mick & Mary Rairdin**, and **Linda & Chris Dubois** were also all part of the field-teams coverage. **Rob Simmonds**, **Mary Ann Sudkamp** and **Connie Veldink** were great to have back.

AREA 14 (*open salt water from n. Everett west across open salt water to Hat Island, and Hat Island itself*). **Duane Karna** (skipper), **Steve Pink**, **Douglas Cooper** and **Andy Smith** had the day we all dream of—calm seas, no wind, easy tie-ups. They split up into two on-foot teams on **Hat Island** itself—combining for *six walking miles!* Data burgeoned further with a Hat Island Ferry trip thrown in; I also included data from a crabbing party (west and north sides of the island) that reported on EBird. 43 species was more than last year here, and included the only CBC **Pacific Loons** (3) and **Pigeon Guillemot** (1); and per tradition the team led in individual-counts of varied marine divers offshore, including **Red-breasted Merganser**, **Common Loon**, **Red-necked Grebe** and **Brandt's Cormorant**. Surveys show Hat, like Jetty Island, has a great future ahead for what might turn up.

Area 15 (*southernmost Camano Island*) combined **Anthony Glio** and **Jo Waldron**. Nothing unusual was detected, but our most outlying territory saw a significant improvement in coverage, with 33 species detected, up from 26 last year. **Anthony** was very careful in map-plotting and other planning as new Area lead, and he lives close by, too.

THE MISSES AND LOWS. Despite a very successful count overall, it is worth noting the list of misses (each seen at least 2 CBCs out of the last 5):

Ruffed Grouse	Rough-legged Hawk	Marbled Murrelet	Savannah Sparrow
Sora	Bonaparte's Gull (first miss since 1997)	Am. Pipit	Red Crossbill

We had **Ruffed Grouse** on the 2015 and 2018 CBCs; and a hunter took a bird on the Tulalip Reservation in November 2019. **Sora** we had found 4 of the last 5 years, and was a puzzling miss, given a very good showing by **Virginia Rails**; Sequim-Dungeness had a similar high count and had one **Sora** on their CBC December 16th. **Red Crossbill** was within a quarter-mile of the northern edge of our circle count day (EBird), and I've had birds since November at our residence, a half-mile east of the CBC circle's edge. It is highly likely this bird was in fact inside our count area but was missed. **Marbled Murrelet** and **Savannah Sparrow** were missed for the second CBC in a row.

Three low counts also were noteworthy. Like at Sequim-Dungeness, **Western Gull** was very low: in our case, just 1 bird. **Western Grebe**, which we missed altogether just a year ago, was also represented by just a single bird. A single **Pigeon Guillemot** was low also, but we struggle on alcids generally.

FINAL NOTES—TWO FEEDER-BIRDS WAY UP THIS YEAR. We hit records on **Red-breasted Nuthatch** and **Spotted Towhee**, the latter count (479) being about 25% above our previous best! This fit several other nearby CBCs, like Edmonds and Sequim-Dungeness.

SO—THAT'S ALL FOLKS! **Please put down the date for the next one—January 2, 2021 (Saturday).**

YOU ARE ALL INVITED!! And have yourself a great year in 2020.

Scott R. Atkinson, Compiler, Everett-Marysville CBC