

2015 Edmonds Christmas Bird Count

December 19, 2015

The Edmonds Christmas Bird Count was held December 19, 2015. The CBC is conducted in a 15-mile diameter circle centered just west of Martha Lake in Lynnwood (Latitude/Longitude: 47.85238/-122.24885). It is located mainly in south Snohomish County, but also includes a 2.5-mile section of north King County and a small area on the SE corner of Whidbey Island. This was the 32nd Edmonds CBC since 1984. A record 129 species were recorded on count day and three additional species (Western Gull, American Pipit, and American Dipper) were recorded during count week. A total of 49,566 individual birds were observed by 80 field participants in 32 field parties and 48 home feeder counters at 37 locations. The combination of feeder counters and field participants at 128 was one higher than our record participation set last year and well above the average. With mild weather we also set a new record for party hours at 189. One new species, Common Yellowthroat was added to the all-time Edmonds CBC list this year.

A full report of species seen, counts, and effort data for the 2015 Edmonds CBC will be posted on the Pilchuck Audubon website along with historical counts for comparison and a description of the areas.

The count day was mostly cloudy with temperatures ranging from 38°F to 45°F with a trace of precipitation in the form of drizzle in the late afternoon. There was no snow and all of the small ponds and marshes were ice free. Winds were calm for most of the day with a high of a South wind at 9mph on the sound. The marine waters boat trip was able to get out and survey all of the areas. However, the water was fairly choppy which limited visibility of birds on the water. In addition, the team in Area 10, Whidbey Island Possession Point, faced a stiff freeze which also limited their ability to detect water birds. December 2015 was the wettest December on record. All of the lakes and ponds were full and lots of seasonal wetlands were present. The extra water and mild temperatures had the effect of dispersing the waterfowl across the area.

Highlights

One new species, Common Yellowthroat, was added at Lowell Riverfront Trail. Two Black Turnstones were on the Edmonds breakwater. An American Dipper was present in Wallace Swamp Creek Park during count week. A single Common Redpoll was found in Meadowvale County Park.

High Counts

There were 15 new record high counts:

- Cinnamon Teal – 10 vs. 3 in 1999
- Brandt's Cormorant – 27 vs. 23 in 2013

- Sharp-shinned Hawk -- 10 vs. 8 in 2001
- Bald Eagle – 67 vs. 41 in 2012
- Virginia Rail -- 16 vs. 9 in 2003
- Black Turnstone – 2
- Anna's Hummingbird – 167 vs. 134 in 2014
- Red-breasted Sapsucker – 12 vs. 9 in 2013
- Downy Woodpecker – 65 vs. 51 in 2013
- Northern Flicker (Red-shafted) – 228 vs. 168 in 2013
- Pileated Woodpecker – 27 vs. 24 in 2014
- Chestnut-backed Chickadee – 454 vs. 414 in 2014
- Brown Creeper – 44 vs. 34 in 2014
- Pacific Wren – 150 vs. 126 in 2013
- Bewick's Wren – 128 vs. 119 in 2013

When normalized by party hours, the following 12 species are greater than one standard deviation above the 32-year average:

- Wood Duck
- Cinnamon Teal
- Brandt's Cormorant
- Virginia Rail
- Black Turnstone
- Anna's Hummingbird
- Red-breasted Sapsucker
- Downy Woodpecker
- Hairy Woodpecker
- Pileated Woodpecker
- Chestnut-backed Chickadee
- Brown Creeper

Low Counts

Four species were missed this year that should have been detected:

- Eared Grebe – found in 53% of the counts
- Western Gull (count week) – found in 59% of counts
- Rough-legged Hawk – found in 47% of the counts
- Northern Shrike – found in 41% of the counts

American Coot is normally an abundant winter species in the count circle. However, this year they were detected in record low numbers – 183 vs. an average of 1,194 and a maximum of 5,524 in 1992

When normalized by party hours, the following species were greater than one standard deviation below the 32-year average:

- Common Goldeneye
- Double-crested Cormorant
- Great Blue Heron

- Red-tailed Hawk
- Rock Pigeon
- House Sparrow

Waterfowl Trends

Snow Goose was found only sporadically and in single digits until 2009. Since then they have been found annually in the thousands with 2,191 detected this year. Wood Duck (98) numbers continued their upward trend. Cinnamon Teal (10) set a record and have now been seen every year for the last five years while only being detected twice prior to 2011. Other dabbling ducks were seen in average numbers. Diving duck numbers were generally down compared to average, with Common Goldeneye (39) being greater than one standard deviation below the average when normalized by party hours. As mentioned above, American Coot (183), set an all-time low record.

Grebe, Loon, and Cormorant Trends

It is difficult to see trends with loons and grebes as they tend to have big swings in abundance from year to year. Red-throated Loon (3) and Common Loon (7) numbers were average; while Pacific Loon (26) was well above average. Western Grebe (205) was half of average (411); but, exhibit a great deal of year to year variation as show by the standard deviation of 611. Brandt's Cormorant (27) set an all-time high; while Double-crested Cormorant (195) was low when normalized by party hour.

Raptors and Owls

Sharp-shinned Hawk (10) and Bald Eagle (67) set new high count records; but, were not statistically high when adjusted for effort. Cooper's hawk (10) was twice the average. When adjusted for effort, Red-tailed Hawk numbers were down. American Kestrel (5) tied the all-time record. Other raptors were detected in near average numbers. Barn Owl (5), Great Horned Owl (4), and Barred Owl (4) were all well above average; but, this may have more to do with increased owling effort than population increases.

Shorebirds, Alcids, and Gulls

Black Turnstone (2) were detected on the Edmonds marina breakwater for just the second time in 32 years. Although Surfbirds were present at the Edmonds breakwater both before and after the count, they were not detected during the count or count week. Pigeon Guillemot (20) and Marbled Murrelet (9) both exceeded one standard deviation greater than the average. Rhinoceros Auklet (1) was low; but, not statistically significant. Every gull species was detected in lower than average numbers; but, none were statistically notable.

American Crow

There is an impressive number of American Crows that pass through the count circle each morning and evening as they move to and from their roost site. This natural spectacle is best described as a "river of crows". For the second year we used a crow counting protocol developed by Dr. Douglas W. Wacker, of the UW Bothell. The largest

evening diurnal movement was seen moving south along the Bothell-Everett Highway (SR 527). Long term, American Crow (9,199) detections are increasing; but, given the inconsistent approach to counting crows in earlier years, it is difficult to say what is happening to the population.

Passerines

This year we had a record number of feeder watchers. This contributed to higher numbers of common feeder birds being reported. Anna's Hummingbird (167) continue their impressive expansion. They were not recorded in the circle before 1998. Woodpecker detections were up across all species with new 32-year records set for Red-breasted sapsucker (12), Downy Woodpecker (65), Northern Flicker (228) and Pileated Woodpecker (27). Hairy Woodpecker (25) was well above its 32-year average of 7 and greater than one standard deviation above the mean when normalized by party hour. Chestnut-backed Chickadee (454), Brown Creeper (44), Pacific Wren (150), and Bewick's Wren (128) are record high counts. The Common Yellowthroat at Lowell Riverfront Park was a count first. The Common Redpoll found in a large flock of Pine Siskin in Meadowdale Park represented the fourth year in which this species was detected. When normalized by party hour, House Sparrow (111) was significantly lower than average.

Thanks to our team leaders, the field participants, and the feeder counters. Special thanks to Linda Phillips for hosting our post-count tally and her homemade bread and hot soups.

Rick & Bob

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