

2017 Edmonds Christmas Bird Count

December 16, 2017

The Edmonds / South Snohomish County Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was held December 16, 2017. 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 34th consecutive year that the Pilchuck Audubon Society has sponsored this CBC circle since 1984. 121 species were recorded on count day versus a ten-year average of 119 and a record high of 129. Three additional species (Greater White-fronted Goose, Ancient Murrelet, and Red Crossbill) were recorded during count week. A total of 54,755 individual birds were observed versus a ten-year average of 42,715, and a high count of 61,848. There were 87 field participants in 36 field parties and a record 96 home feeder counters at 74 locations. No new species were added to the all-time Edmonds CBC list this year; however, we did find our first ever "Myrtle" Yellow-rumped Warbler.

A full report of species seen, counts, and effort data for the 2017 Edmonds CBC is available at [2017 count by area](#), along with historical counts for comparison and a [description of the areas](#).

The count day was cloudy with temperatures ranging from 36f to 43f with a trace of precipitation in the form of drizzle in the morning. There was no snow and most the small ponds and marshes were ice free. Winds were calm for most of the day. The marine waters boat team was able to get out and survey all the areas under good weather and wave conditions. All the lakes and ponds were full as well as the seasonal wetlands. The extra water and mild temperatures had the effect of dispersing the waterfowl across the area.

Highlights

Eight Black Turnstones were on the Edmonds breakwater. A Swamp Sparrow was found at North Creek Park. Common Redpolls were found in Mukilteo and in Centennial Park in Bothell.

High Counts

There were 17 new record high counts:

- Snow Goose – 5,250 vs. 4,913 in 2012
- Cackling Goose – 205 vs. 158 in 2011
- Red-throated Loon – 24 vs. 13 in 2012
- Common Loon – 26 vs. 23 in 2002
- Horned Grebe – 249 vs. 231 in 1996
- Cooper's Hawk – 17 vs. 13 in 2012
- Black Turnstone – 8 vs. 2 in 2015
- Marbled Murrelet – 25 vs. 12 in 1989
- Great Horned Owl – 9 vs. 8 in 2002
- Anna's Hummingbird – 249 vs. 167 in 2015 *WOW*
- Downy Woodpecker – 74 vs. 65 in 2015
- Hairy Woodpecker – 37 vs. 32 in 2016
- Northern Flicker (Red-shafted) – 256 vs. 228 in 2015
- Pileated Woodpecker – 51 vs. 32 in 2016
- Peregrine Falcon – 4 vs. 3 in 2015
- Common Raven – 5 vs. 4 in 2008
- Red-breasted Nuthatch -- 105 vs. 84 in 2013

Low Counts

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

- Greater Scaup – found in 94% of the counts

- Eared Grebe – found in 53% of the counts
- Dunlin – found in 65% of counts
- Herring Gull – found in 76% of the counts
- Iceland Gull (Thayer's) – found in 85% of the counts

Feeder Counts

We placed increased emphasis on recruiting feeder counters for the last four years. As suburbs are the primary habitat in our circle, we think that feeder counters are critical in our mission to survey the birds in the circle. This year we had a record 96 people counting birds at feeders vs. 74 in 2016 at a record 74 locations vs. 59 in 2016. The feeder counters detected 3,672 birds belonging to 48 species. They detected three species that were not seen by any field team: Townsend's Warbler, White-throated Sparrow, and Evening Grosbeak. The feeder counters found 70% of the Band-tailed Pigeons, 67% of the Anna Hummingbirds, 52% of the Chestnut-backed Chickadees, 62% of the Bushtits, and 68% of the Red-breasted Nuthatches. Overall, the feeder counters had a significant positive impact on the success of the count.

Boat Party

Each year, Duane Karna leads a boat party that cruises the marine waters in the count circle. This year the weather and water conditions were good making for a pleasant day on the water, and providing excellent viewing conditions. The boat party detected 43 species and 1,913 total birds. This sharp-eyed team even found three Anna's Hummingbirds from the boat!

Crow Counting

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 on the UW Bothell campus. This natural spectacle is best described as a "river of crows" as they follow drainages to the roost. For the fourth consecutive year we used a crow counting protocol developed by Dr. Douglas W. Wacker, of the UW Bothell. Dr. Wacker and his five teams of students and citizen scientists detected 15,064 crows as they flew towards the roost site.

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 a record 5,250 detected this year. It will be interesting to see if the upward trend continues as a significant percentage of its habitat in the circle has been converted from sod and row crops to berries. Cackling Goose (205) set a 34-year record high. Canada Goose and Trumpeter Swan numbers were higher than normal. With the relatively warm weather, dabbling duck numbers were high when compared to past years when all the ponds and marshes were frozen. Mallard, Wood Duck, and Cinnamon Teal were higher than normal. Diving duck numbers were mixed compared to average, with Scaup and Ruddy Duck numbers down while Harlequin Duck, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, and Merganser numbers up statistically.

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. However, Red-throated Loon (24) and Common Loon (26) set record highs; while Pacific Loon (43) was greater than one standard deviation above average. Western Grebe (369) number were average. Pelagic Cormorant (55) numbers were up. In spite of the recent breeding colony issues and population control actions taken, Double-crested Cormorant (207) numbers were only slightly below the ten-year average of 244.

Raptor and Owl Trends

Cooper's Hawk (10) and Peregrine Falcon (4) all set new high-count records. While Red-tailed Hawk numbers were greater than one standard deviation above the average, other raptors were detected in near average numbers. Great Horned Owl (9) was a new high-count record for the circle, and Barred Owl (10) was well above average despite lower than normal owling party hours (5.75).

Shorebird, Alcid, and Gull Trends

Black Turnstone (8) were detected on the Edmonds marina breakwater for just the fourth time in 34 years. Two Spotted Sandpiper were detected on Possession Point, Whidbey Island. Marbled Murrelet set a new count record of 25 – more than doubling the previous high count of 12 set in 1989. Pigeon Guillemot (22) exceeded one standard deviation greater than the average. Every gull species, except Mew Gull, was detected in lower than average numbers; but, none were statistically notable.

Passerine Trends

This year the record number of feeder counters contributed to higher numbers of common feeder birds being reported. We counted a total of 249 Anna's Hummingbird far exceeding the previous high count of 167. Anna's Hummingbird was not recorded in the circle before 1998. Woodpecker detections were up across all species with new 34-year records set for Downy Woodpecker (74), Hairy Woodpecker (37), Northern Flicker (256) and Pileated Woodpecker (51). Red-breasted Sapsucker (11) was greater than one standard deviation above the mean. The upward trend for woodpeckers held when normalized by party hour. Red-breasted Nuthatch set a new high count of 105 vs. a previous high of 87 set in 1984. Nearly all the common suburban species were greater than one standard deviation above the 34-year mean. American Robin and House Sparrow counts were low when normalized by party hour.

Thank you to our team leaders, the field participants, boat party, crow counters, and the feeder counters. Special thanks to Linda Phillips for hosting our post-count tally and her excellent homemade bread and hot soups. Bob Schmid just moved into his new home on in Kitsap county. So, this is his last year as co-compiler. Thank you, Bob, for all your hard work over the last three years. Next year's Edmonds / South Snohomish County CBC will be held on **December 15, 2018**.

Rick & Bob

Rick Taylor and Bob Schmidt
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