

# 2018 Edmonds Christmas Bird Count

**December 15, 2018**

The Edmonds / South Snohomish County Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was held December 15, 2018. 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 circle covers South Everett, Mukilteo, Mill Creek, Lynnwood, Edmonds, Mountlake Terrace, Lake Forest Park, Brier, Kenmore, Maltby, Bothell, and a portion of Woodinville, Snohomish, and Shoreline. This was the 35<sup>th</sup> consecutive year that the Pilchuck Audubon Society has sponsored this CBC circle since 1984.

A record 131 species were recorded on count day versus a ten-year average of 123 and a previous record high of 129. Five additional species: Long-tailed Duck, Ancient Murrelet, Heermann's Gull, and Iceland (Thayer's) Gull, were recorded during count week. A total of 36,725 individual birds were observed versus a ten-year average of 43,400, and a high count of 61,848. There were a record high 97 field participants in 39 field parties and 75 home feeder counters at 60 locations. Two new species were added to the count this year: Surfbird and Pine Grosbeak.

A full report of species seen, counts, and effort data for the 2018 Edmonds CBC is available at [2018 count by area](#), along with historical counts for comparison and a [description of the areas](#).

The count day was cloudy, calm and dry with above average temperatures ranging from 42f to 49f. There was no snow and all the small ponds and marshes were ice free. There was a high wind storm the night before the count. Many feeder counters noted far fewer birds at the feeders than normal. The marine waters boat team was able to get out and survey all the areas under good weather and wave conditions. With below average rainfall and above average temperatures the lakes, ponds, and wetlands had lower than normal water levels.

## Highlights

A count first Surfbird was on the Edmonds breakwater. A Swamp Sparrow was found at North Creek Park in Mill Creek, and another by Brackett's Landing in Edmonds, A Harris's Sparrow was photographed at the Edmonds Marsh. The boat party photographed both a Yellow-billed Loon and a Clark's Grebe on the sound. A count first Pine Grosbeak was found at a feeder near Mill Creek. Two Harlan's Red-tailed Hawks were found in the Snohomish River valley.

## High Counts

There were 10 new record high counts:

- Harlequin Duck – 52 vs. 48 in 2013
- Pelagic Cormorant – 56 vs. 55 in 2014
- Virginia Rail – 17 vs. 16 in 2015
- Greater Yellowlegs – 5 vs. 3 in 1997
- Eurasian Collared-Dove – 57 vs. 46 in 2016
- Red-breasted Nuthatch – 139 vs. 105 in 2017
- Brown Creeper – 50 vs. 44 in 2015
- Marsh Wren – 45 vs. 35 in 2000
- Swamp Sparrow – 2 vs. 1 in different years
- American Goldfinch -- 340 vs. 171 in 2016

## Misses

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

- Greater Scaup – found in 91% of the counts (also missed in 2017)
- Eared Grebe – found in 51% of the counts (also missed in 2017)

## **Low Counts**

Two species set record low counts;

- Lesser Scaup – 13 vs. 19 in 1994
- America Coot – 51 vs. 183 in 2103

## **Feeder Counts**

There has been increased emphasis on recruiting feeder counters for the last six years. As suburbs are the primary habitat in our circle, it is thought that feeder counters are critical in our mission to survey the birds in the circle. This year 75 people counted birds at feeders at 60 locations. The feeder counters detected 2,601 birds belonging to 57 species. One feeder counter detected our count first Pine Grosbeak! The feeder counters found 62% of the Band-tailed Pigeons, 54% of the Anna Hummingbirds, 52% of the Bushtits, and 50% of the Townsend's Warblers. 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 40 species and 1,680 total birds. The boat team photographed a Yellow-billed Loon and a Clark's Grebe.

## **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 fifth consecutive year we used a crow counting protocol developed by Dr. Douglas W. Wacker, of the UW Bothell. Dr. Wacker and his four teams of students and citizen scientists detected 14,890 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. This year the number of Snow Geese was down to 1,990 from 5,250 last year. Roughly half of the Snow Goose habitat in the circle has been converted from sod and row crops to berries. Trumpeter Swan (932) numbers were higher than normal. With warmer and drier weather than normal, waterfowl numbers were much lower than last year – 9,231 in 2018 vs. 25,231 in 2017. Diving duck numbers were mixed compared to average. Harlequin Duck (52), Common Goldeneye (174), Hooded Merganser (71) and Common Merganser (213) numbers were up statistically. Lesser Scaup (13) and Ruddy Duck (7) were down statistically. Greater Scaup was missed this year and last. They have been found 32 of the 35 years of this CBC. Both Scaup species show a decline over the last decade.

## **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, Pied-billed Grebe (56) was greater than one standard deviation above average. Brandt's Cormorant (17) and a record 56 Pelagic Cormorant were greater than one standard deviation above the mean. While Double-crested Cormorant (246) was slightly above the mean.

## **Raptor and Owl Trends**

Bald Eagle (58) was greater than one standard deviation above the mean. Harlan's Red-Tailed Hawk (2) set a record and have only been found one other time in this CBC circle. Owl numbers were in-line with averages.

## **Shorebird, Alcid, and Gull Trends**

A Surfbird was found on the Edmonds breakwater for the first time in this count's history. Greater Yellowlegs (5) is a new high-count. Two Spotted Sandpipers were again detected on Possession Point, Whidbey Island. Pigeon Guillemot (31) and Marbled Murrelet (15) exceeded one standard deviation greater than the average. Every gull species, except Glaucous-winged x Western hybrid (142), was detected in lower than average numbers; but none were statistically notable.

## **Passerine Trends**

Eurasian Collared Dove (57), Hairy Woodpecker (42), Red-breasted Nuthatch (139), Brown Creeper (50), Marsh Wren (45), and American Goldfinch (340) set record high counts. We counted a total of 244

Anna's Hummingbirds, slightly below last year's record of 249. Anna's Hummingbird was not recorded in the circle before 1998. The large number of feeder counters contributed to higher numbers of common suburban birds being reported. However, even when normalized by party hour, following common woodland species were over one standard deviation above the mean: Anna's Hummingbird (244), Red-breasted Sapsucker (139), Downy Woodpecker (58), Hairy Woodpecker (42), Northern Flicker (228), Pileated Woodpecker (32), Red-breasted Nuthatch (139), Brown Creeper (50), Bewick's Wren (127), Spotted Towhee (322), and American Goldfinch (340). Varied Thrush (21) and House Sparrow (50) counts were low when normalized by party hour.

### **Support the CBC**

The Christmas Bird Count relies 100% on donations to manage the historic database, and to fund the technology to make historic data available to researchers. Please consider donating to ensure the future of this very important citizen science program:

Online donation form:

<https://action.audubon.org/onlineactions/WPECgr6TXk64lvphaQSG-Q2>

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. Next year's Edmonds / South Snohomish County CBC will be held on **December 14, 2019**.

Rick

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