

Kingston, N. S. - Christmas Bird Count Report –2014

Wayne Neily

Our 47th annual Xmas Bird Count (XBC) in 2014 was a very interesting one, with the total number of birds down by about 3000 from last year with its many record highs, but the 70 species was our second-highest total ever. We had about the same number of observers, but more time spent in the field, and so slightly more coverage than last year.

Numbers of birds at feeders were down everywhere because of the same mild, snow-free conditions that favoured the field observers. The same weather probably increased the numbers of waterfowl and stragglers, producing or tying some record highs and adding four new species for the 47-year history of the count (Northern Pintail, Hooded Merganser, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Western Tanager), bringing our all-time list to 124 species. Another new species (American Wigeon) was seen about 50 metres outside the circle, but the observer could not be sure that it was with the ducks that circled back into the count area, so it will remain off our list for now.

The variety in the Bay zones was remarkable, with the Margaretsville team (Stern, Blackert & 7 feeder observers) getting what is probably a zone record of 40 species, and the Kings Co. one (L. Neily, Rajnys, & 6 feeder observers) had 35. The inland zones had predictably less variety, but ranged from 18 to 30 species each, the lower number being the average in some years. The observer (RS) of most of the large alcids thought that they were likely Razorbills, but could not be sure, and had an odd gull that may have been a hybrid. Getting alcids this far up the Bay of Fundy seems to be more common in recent years, perhaps a reflection of changes in their food supply. The number of Dovekies was quite surprising.

The variety of raptors (8) was also higher than usual, two well-documented Northern Harriers being most surprising, and reflecting the climate change. The number of eagles may be too high, as it is impossible to know which may have moved between zones, but it certainly represented a record high.

Winter finches were almost absent but have since returned in fair numbers (Jan.). They seem to arrive this far southwest in the province later each year - perhaps a result of climate change?

See the items with asterisks below for new records. There are new highs for a few half-hardy species that are benefiting from the climate change and adapting to the presence of open fresh water.

Kingston, N. S., 44°59'N, 64°57'W (all points within a 24-km diameter, centre intersection of Bridge and Main Streets in Kingston, as described in 1969, to include Margaretsville, Dempsey Corners, Aylesford, Nicholsville, South Tremont, Nictaux Falls, and Middleton).

Conditions: – 27 December 2014, 06:30-17:30, 20:30-20:45. Temperature 4° to 6° C. Wind SW, 15-25 km / h. Snow 0-10 cm deep. Still water open, moving water open. A.M. & p.m. Partly cloudy.

Observer effort: 107 observers, 23 in field in 10-11 parties (daytime), and 84 at 58 feeders. Time and distance: 261.0 hours at feeding stations, 1.2 hours and 9.6 km owling; total field party-hours 91.4 (day), and party-km 861.6 (day) (27.7 hr. And 33.2 km on foot, and 63.7 hr. And 828.4 km by car).

Birds observed: Canada Goose 7, American Black Duck **250***, Mallard **781***, **Northern Pintail 10** (1st record, PK), Common Eider 56, Surf Scoter 1, White-winged Scoter 1, Black Scoter 5, *Melanitta sp.* 5, Long-tailed Duck 2, Bufflehead 1, **Hooded Merganser 2** (1st record, DC, KC, KM), Red-breasted Merganser 5, *Mergus sp.* 3, Ring-necked Pheasant 38, Ruffed Grouse 7, Red-throated Loon 2, Common Loon 9, Horned Grebe 3, Red-necked Grebe 1, Bald Eagle **26*** (18a, 8i), Northern Harrier **2***, Sharp-shinned Hawk 1, Northern Goshawk 1, Red-tailed Hawk 20, Rough-legged Hawk 2, Black-legged Kittiwake 1, Ring-billed Gull 1, (3rd record, RS, RB), Herring Gull 236, Iceland Gull **6*** (3rd record, RS, RB), Great Black-backed Gull 8, **Dovekie 17*** (3rd record, 2 parties), large alcid (sp.) **39**, Rock Pigeon 317, Mourning Dove 307, Barred Owl 1, Red-bellied Woodpecker **3***, Downy Woodpecker 56, Hairy Woodpecker 42, Northern (Y-s) Flicker 1, Pileated Woodpecker 6, Merlin 1, Falco sp. (small) 1, Blue Jay 229, American Crow 7789, Common Raven 294, Black-capped Chickadee 693, Red-breasted Nuthatch 23, White-breasted Nuthatch 40, Brown Creeper 2, Golden-crowned Kinglet 16, American Robin 2, European Starling 3045, **Orange-crowned Warbler 1** (1st record, LN, LR), **Yellow-throated Warbler 1** (2nd record, D&RK, CD), **Western Tanager 1** (1st record, CH), American Tree Sparrow 8, Chipping Sparrow 3, Song Sparrow 23, White-throated Sparrow 13, Dark-eyed (S.-c.) Junco 277, Snow Bunting 45, Northern Cardinal

14, Red-winged Blackbird 5, Common Grackle 1, Brown-headed Cowbird 79, Pine Grosbeak 6, Purple Finch 1 (L), Common Redpoll 34, Pine Siskin 67, American Goldfinch 694, Evening Grosbeak 10, House Sparrow 63.

Total species 70, total individuals **15763**.

Observed during **count week** but not on count day: .none!

H = high count; * = record high total for the 47 years of this count; L = low count.

Observers (field): Ron Blackert, James Churchill, Lana Churchill, David Colville, Keegan Colville, Claire Diggins, Dan Diggins, Jonathan Diggins, Michael & Christine Gemmell, **Sheila Hulford**, Patrick Kelly, Lyndon Kornelsen, Kristin McCurdy, Larry Neily, **Wayne Neily (compiler – 562 Messenger Rd., Tremont, R. R. # 6, Kingston, N. S. B0P 1R0 Neilyvornis@hotmail.com)**, Daniel Penner, Kenley Penner, Louis Rajnys, Twila Robar-DeCoste, Richard Stern, Ron & Heather Wilson;

(feeder stations): Spike & Carole Allen, John Antoniuk, Lauren Avery, Sharon Baker, Claire Campbell, Bob & Karen Campbell, Kathy Chapman, Tony Chaulk, John Collins, Cathy Crook, Kenneth Crowell, Ella & Howard Dalton, Valerie & Paul Despres, John DeCoste, David Diggins, Harold & Donna Elliott, Shirley Fahie, Barbara & Patrick Giffin, Lloyd & Mary-Lou Graham, Carol Gregory, Sheila Gubernt, Mark Hamilton, Charles Harvey, Donna & Ron Hill, Patricia House, Marilyn & John Hudgins, Sibella Hulford, Kelly Hutton, Sharon Hutton, Michael Inkpen, Mary Jones, Bob Kajdas, Ted Kajdas, Don & Ruth Kelly, Cathou Larocque, Lois Leadley, Andrea & Garry Leeson, Dave & Tonya Ludlow, Velma MacDearnid, Judy & Malcolm MacKenzie, Myrna Maye, Ethel McLane, Greg Miller, Jonathan & Jacquie Muers, Ruth Myers, Homer Noble, Wanda Ogilvie, Gerry & Lillian Pellerin, Darlene Prest, Debbie Proctor-Scoville, Noreen Reagh, Ron Rogerson, Kay & Sherley Sanford, Tony Scoville, Helen Sharp, Ralph & Marylyn Swinamer, Carman & Carolyn Townsend, Charles & Doris Tye, Judy & Malcolm Uhlman, Jake Waldner, Margaret Waldner, Margot Walker, Audrey Wellwood, Jane White. [Feeder Observer Co-ordinators bold-faced].

Habitat analysis has not been requested by Audubon since the 1970s, but we have long wanted an updated one, and ours has been revised in 2012 by David Colville of the Applied Geomatics Research Group to: (Acadian) Forest 55%, arable land, shrubs and early regeneration areas, 27%, towns ('urban') and roads 10%, wetlands 4%, sand and gravel ('bare') 1%, salt water 2.5%, fresh water 0.5%. A more detailed version of this re-analysis, including map as done by David Colville and a comparison to the 1971 analysis, will be provided to field observers and others on request.