

Kingston, N. S. - Christmas Bird Count Report –2015

Wayne Neily

Our 48th annual Xmas Bird Count (XBC) in 2015 continued the downward trend for some winter species, with the total number of birds down by about 3000 from last year with its many record highs, and only 61 species, down from the past two years. 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 a few record highs and adding one new species for the 48-year history of the count (Northern Shoveler), bringing our all-time list for count days to 126 species. Another species (Dickcissel) was seen on count day for the first time, but one had been observed in 1972 on count week.

The variety in the Bay zones was good, with the Margaretsville team (L. Neily, R. Blackert & 7 feeder observers) getting 37 species, and the Kings Co. one (D. Penner, K. Penner, L. Kornelson, P. Kelly & 7 feeder observers) had 26. The inland zones averaged predictably less variety, but ranged from 21 to 31 species each, the lower number being above the average in many years.

Winter finches were almost absent and have remained so this winter. The main beneficiaries of the milder weather seem to have been Northern Cardinals, which have now become widespread and doubled their previous record number, and American Goldfinches, which have become one of the commonest feeder species.

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, Nicholville, South Tremont, Nictaux Falls, and Middleton).

Conditions: – 21 December 2015, 06:30-17:30, 20:30-20:45. Temperature -3° to 10° C. Wind SW, 15-25 km / h. Snow 0-10 cm deep. Still water open, moving water open. A.M & p.m. : cloudy.

Observer effort: 105 observers, 23 in field in 11-13* parties (daytime), and 78 at 45 feeders. Time and distance: 214.0 hours at feeding stations, 1.0 hours and 1.0 km owling; total field party-hours 95.0 (day), and party-km 879.0 (day) (16.5 hr. and 40.0 km* on foot, and 78.5 hr.* and 839.0 km by car).

Birds observed: Canada Goose 14, American Black Duck **223 (H)**, Mallard **567 (H)**, Northern Shoveler **1** (1st record, WN, FL), Common Eider 38, Surf Scoter 22, White-winged Scoter 14, Black Scoter 1, Long-tailed Duck 9, Red-breasted Merganser 4, Ring-necked Pheasant 31, Ruffed Grouse 9, Red-throated Loon **3***, Common Loon 12, Horned Grebe 1, Red-necked Grebe 6, **Great Blue Heron 1**, Bald Eagle 14, (13a, 1i), Sharp-shinned Hawk 3, Northern Goshawk 1, Red-tailed Hawk **36***, Buteo (sp.) 1, Razorbill 1 (8th record), Herring Gull 133, Great Black-backed Gull 6, Rock Pigeon 388, Mourning Dove 301, Barred Owl 1, Downy Woodpecker **74 (H)**, Hairy Woodpecker 51, Northern (Y-s) Flicker 6, Pileated Woodpecker 9, Merlin **2***, Canada (Grey) Jay 3, Blue Jay 488, American Crow 6820, Common Raven 240, Black-capped Chickadee 1040, Red-breasted Nuthatch 47, White-breasted Nuthatch 64, Brown Creeper 3, Golden-crowned Kinglet 19, American Robin 60, European Starling **5614***, Cedar Waxwing **270***, Snow Bunting 15, American Tree Sparrow 3, Dark-eyed (S.-c.) Junco 214, White-throated Sparrow 15, Song Sparrow 22, Northern Cardinal **37***, **Dickcissel 1*** (1st for count day – LN), Red-winged Blackbird 52, Brown-headed Cowbird 302, Pine Grosbeak 1, Purple Finch 45, White-winged Crossbill 5, Common Redpoll 47, Pine Siskin 4, American Goldfinch **1429 (H)**, Evening Grosbeak 8, House Sparrow 121.

Total species 61, total individuals 15763.

Observed during **count week** but not on count day: Northern Harrier, Peregrine Falcon.

H = high count; * = record high total for the 48 years of this count; L = low count.

Observers (field): Brian Barkman, Ron Blackert, James Churchill, Lana Churchill, David Colville, Keegan Colville, John DeCoste, Claire Diggins, Dan Diggins, Michael Gemmell, Pat & Barbara Giffin, **Sheila Hulford**, Patrick Kelly, Kevin Kornelson, Lyndon Kornelsen, Frances Lourie, 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, Gary Reimer, Twila Robar-DeCoste, Ron Wilson and Sean Zufovic;

(feeder stations): Spike & Carole Allen, John & Sandy Antoniuk, Ron & Sharon Baker, Robert & Karen Campbell, Kathy Chapman, Chesley Chaulk, Tony Chaulk, John Collins, Cathy Crook, Ella & Howard Dalton, Valerie & Paul Despres, David Diggins, Harold & Donna Elliott, Shirley Fahie, Eli Franey, Lauren & Luke Franey, Mia Franey, Theo Franey, Lloyd & Mary-Lou Graham, Carol & Len Gregory, Karla Gregory, Audrey Griner, Mark Hamilton, **Shirley Harris**, Frank Hawkins, Donna Hill, Kelly Hutton, Sharon Hutton, Michael Inkpen, Ted Kajdas, Jack & Karen Keddy, Cathou Larocque, Lois Leadley, Andrea Leeson, Holly Lightfoot, Dave & Tonya Ludlow, Judy MacKenzie, Myrna Maye, Jason McInnis, Ethel McLane, Jonathan & Jacquie Muers, Ruth Myers, Darlene & Jeff Prest, Ann & Reginald Quinn, Noreen Reagh, Dawn Robar, Mable Robar, Wendy Rodda, Ron Rogerson, Kay & Sherley Sanford, Howard Selig, Rye & Trudy Stoelting, Ralph & Marylyn Swinamer, Charles & Doris Tye, Judy & Malcolm Uhlman, Jake Waldner, Margaret Waldner, 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.

Dedicated to two long-time participants who passed on in 2015: Gary Myers and Ron Hill.