

Kingston, N. S. - Christmas Bird Count Report –2016

Wayne Neily

Our 49th annual Xmas Bird Count (XBC) in 2016 continued the downward trend for some winter species, with the total number of birds down drastically from last year, mainly because we did not get good counts for the corvid roosts, but the 60 species was almost the same as last year. We had about the same number of field observers, but dropped from 78 to 67 at feeders, and so had somewhat less coverage and dropped below 100 total observers for the first time in many years.

The relatively mild weather probably kept the numbers of waterfowl and stragglers fairly high, producing a few rarities, but no species new for our all-time list, that stands at 128 species (although two are identified only to genus). Two species – Green-winged Teal and Hooded Merganser – were second occurrences in our count's history, and both appeared with the usual ducks at the beaver pond behind the Gubernets' feeding station in Kingston. The only new record highs were the 20 Ruffed Grouse, of which 14 were found in the two North Mountain zones, and the three Merlins, in three different zones. The two Northern Harriers in the Middleton area tied the record for that species – more half-hardy species straggling this far north with the warming climate.

The variety in the Bay zones was good, with the Margaretsville team (L. Neily, L. Rajnys & 9 feeder observers) getting 30 species, and the Kings Co. one (D. Penner, K. Penner, R. Stern & 4 feeder observers) had 29. The inland zones averaged predictably less variety, but ranged from 20 to 28 species each.

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 maintained high numbers, and American Goldfinches, which have become one of the commonest feeder species. It was good to have Boreal Chickadee again for the first time in several years, and the most surprising miss was the Great Black-backed Gull - absent for the second time in 49 years.

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: – 23 December 2016, 06:30-17:30, 20:30-20:45. Temperature 0° to 2° C. Wind SW, 0-15 km / h. Snow 10 cm deep. Still water partly frozen, moving water open. A.M : cloudy; p.m. Partly clear.

Observer effort: 92 observers, 25 in field in 10-12 parties (daytime), and 67 at 38 feeders. Time and distance: 207.0 hours at feeding stations, 4.0 hours and 1.0 km owling; total field party-hours 93.6 (day), and party-km 1050.0 (day) (21.8 hr. and 36.5 km on foot, and 71.8 hr. and 1013.5 km by car).

Birds observed: Canada Goose 45, American Black Duck 176, Mallard 97, **Green-winged Teal 1** (2nd record, SG), Common Eider 9, Surf Scoter 31, White-winged Scoter 1, Black Scoter 3, scoter (sp.), 5, Long-tailed Duck 8, **Hooded Merganser 1** (2nd record SG), Red-breasted Merganser 1, Ring-necked Pheasant 50, Ruffed Grouse **20***, Red-throated Loon 2, Common Loon 4, Red-necked Grebe 2, Northern Harrier 2, Bald Eagle 11, (8a, 3i), Sharp-shinned Hawk 4, Northern Goshawk 1, Red-tailed Hawk 32, Razorbill 2, Herring Gull 112, Rock Pigeon 495, Mourning Dove 555, Downy Woodpecker **63**, Hairy Woodpecker 53, Northern (Y-s) Flicker 2, Pileated Woodpecker 10, Merlin **3***, Blue Jay 712, American Crow 2431, Common Raven 96, Horned Lark 25, Black-capped Chickadee 921, Boreal Chickadee 2, Red-breasted Nuthatch 22, White-breasted Nuthatch **72 (H)**, Brown Creeper 9, Golden-crowned Kinglet 42, American Robin 5, European Starling 3322, Bohemian Waxwing 46, Cedar Waxwing **219**, Snow Bunting 97, American Tree Sparrow 6, Chipping Sparrow 3, Dark-eyed (S.-c.) Junco 283, White-throated Sparrow 2, Song Sparrow 16, sparrow (sp.) 6, Northern Cardinal **25**, Red-winged Blackbird 2, Common Grackle 2, Brown-headed Cowbird 88, Purple Finch 1, Common Redpoll 12, Pine Siskin 2, American Goldfinch **856**, Evening Grosbeak 77, House Sparrow 144.

Total species 60, total individuals 11347.

Observed during **count week** but not on count day: Harlequin Duck, Horned Grebe, Purple Sandpiper, Ring-billed Gull, Barred Owl, Baltimore Oriole.

H = high count; * = record high total for the 49 years of this count; L = low count.

Observers (field): Brian Barkman, Ron Blackert, Victor Braun, James Churchill, David Colville, Keegan & Kristin Colville, John DeCoste, Claire Diggins, Pat & Barbara Giffin, **Sheila Hulford**, Joseph Johnson, Patrick Kelly, Frances Lourie, Larry Neily, **Wayne Neily (compiler – 562 Messenger Rd., Tremont, R. R. # 6, Kingston, N. S. B0P 1R0 Neilyornis@hotmail.com)**, Daniel Penner, Kenley Penner, Louis Rajnys, Twila Robar-DeCoste, Britt Roscoe, Richard Stern, Heather and Ron Wilson;

(feeder stations): Spike & Carole Allen, John & Sandy Antoniuk, Ron & Sharon Baker, Dave & Sandy Bentley, Kathy Chapman, Tony Chaulk, John Collins, Cathy Crook, Kenneth Crowell, Ella & Howard Dalton, Valerie & Paul Despres, David Diggins, Harold Elliott, Shirley Fahie, Lloyd & Mary-Lou Graham, Alice Gubernt, Sheila Gubernt, Mark Hamilton, Pat House, Sibella Hulford, Kelly Hutton, Michael Inkpen, Bob Kajdas, Ted Kajdas, Jack & Karen Keddy, Don & Ruth Kelly, Andrea Leeson, Dave & Tonya Ludlow, Velma MacDearmid, Jason McInnis, Ethel McLane, Dylan Moore, Jonathan Muers, Ruth Myers, Homer Noble, Darlene & Jeff Prest, Ann & Reginald Quinn, Noreen Reagh, Ivan & Janet Reid, Dawn Robar, Mable Robar, Alan & McCall Robinson, Wendy Rodda, Kay & Sherley Sanford, Howard Selig, Gillian Sim, Charles & Doris Tye, Jake Waldner, Margaret Waldner, Jane White, Ann Young. [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 was 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%.