

Kingston, N. S. - Christmas Bird Count Report –2018

Wayne Neily, compiler

Our 51st annual Xmas Bird Count (XBC) in 2018 continued the downward trend for many winter species, both for the total number of birds (9868), and the 57 species plus 5 "count week but not on count day" ones. We had a good number of field parties (11), but dropped from 57 to 40 at feeders. This reduction in feeder observers is likely part of the reason for the lower numbers. Our lack of feeder observer coordinators (FOC) and zone captains, together with my poor health, led to this reduction. Although all observers, feeder or field, are supposed to contact the compiler or FOC to let him or her know well before the count to allow the planning of the coverage, few actually do, rather many wait to be contacted.

The relatively mild weather probably kept the numbers of waterfowl and stragglers fairly high, producing a few rarities, but only one species new for our all-time list, that stands at 129 species (although two are identified only to genus). The new one was a Gadwall, found by Larry Neily and Louis Rajnys, hanging out with other ducks at the Middleton sewage lagoons. The other excitement of new species were a Northern Shoveler found at the same place the day after the count (!) by LN and the Eurasian Collared Dove in Melvern Square; it was seen the day before and the day after but not on count day despite watching by the Ross family who first saw it, and by at least three field parties, including a longer watch by the SWAT team. Three Green-winged Teal appeared with the usual ducks at the beaver pond behind the Gubernts' feeding station in Kingston for its fourth record. One species, the Herring Gull, set a record high with an amazing 908 (in 8 of 10 zones) - old record was 380! Other surprises were our 2nd-ever Common Murre and 6th record of Harlequin Ducks seen by the Richard Stern party at Margaretsville, our 4th-ever Turkey Vulture in Wilmot by the Colville party, and a Belted Kingfisher in the Aylesford zone by the Robar-DeCoste party.

Winter finches were almost absent again, but a few Pine and many Evening Grosbeaks showed up. The main beneficiaries of the milder weather seem to have been waterfowl and American Goldfinches, which became the commonest feeder species. The most surprising misses were the Long-tailed Duck and White-winged Scoter, which have both been observed on 86% of our previous counts. Wind, fog,, and wave conditions may have been factors here. The variety in the Bay zones was good, with the Margaretsville team (R. Stern, Lyall Bouchard & 2 feeder observers) getting 32 species, and the Kings Co. one (Daniel Penner, family & 2 feeder observers) had 24. The inland zones averaged predictably less variety, but ranged from 17 to 32 (in Millville) species each.

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: – 22 December 2018, 06:30-17:30. Temperature +16° to +10° C. Windy. Still water partly frozen, moving water open. A.M : overcast with showers; p.m. Cloudy.

Observer effort: 68 observers, 28* in field in 11* parties (daytime), and 40 at 24 feeders. Time and distance: 106.0 hours at feeding stations; total field party-hours 88.0 (day), and party-km 750 (day) (21.3 hr. and 28 km on foot, and 66.7 hr. and 722 km by car).

Birds observed: Canada Goose 28, Gadwall 1 (1st record, LN, LR), American Black Duck 71, Mallard 182, Green-winged Teal 3 (4th record, SG), Common Eider 16, Harlequin Duck 2 (RS, LB), Red-breasted Merganser 1, duck (sp.) 14, Ring-necked Pheasant 22, Ruffed Grouse 3 (L), Common Loon 1, Horned Grebe 2, Great Cormorant 2, Turkey Vulture 1 (4th record, DC, KC), Bald Eagle 15 (8a, 4i, 3u), Sharp-shinned Hawk 2, Red-tailed Hawk 14, Purple Sandpiper 2, Common Murre 1 (2nd record, RS, LB), Razorbill 4, Herring Gull 908*, Great Black-backed Gull 3, Rock Pigeon 363, Mourning Dove 379, Barred Owl 1, Belted Kingfisher 1 (TR, JD), Downy Woodpecker 40, Hairy Woodpecker 28, Northern (Y-s) Flicker 2, Pileated Woodpecker 6, American Kestrel 1, Blue Jay 233, American Crow 1549, Common Raven 206, Black-capped Chickadee 712, Red-breasted Nuthatch 31, White-breasted Nuthatch 53, Brown Creeper 11, Golden-crowned Kinglet 40, European Starling 3646, Cedar Waxwing 1, Pine Warbler 1 (RB) American Tree Sparrow 14, Chipping Sparrow 2, Dark-eyed (S.-c.) Junco 254, White-throated Sparrow 16, Song Sparrow 12, Snow Bunting 1, Northern Cardinal 22, Red-winged Blackbird 5, Common Grackle 4, Brown-headed Cowbird 33, Pine Grosbeak 12, Pine Siskin 9, Evening Grosbeak 264, American Goldfinch 618, House Sparrow 5 (L).

Total species 57, total individuals 9868.

Observed during count week but not on count day: Northern Shoveler, Black Scoter, Eurasian Collared-Dove, American Robin, Bohemian Waxwing.

H = high count; * = record high total for the 50 years of this count; L = low count.

Observers (field): Brian Barkman, Brianna Barkman, Lyall Bouchard, Victor Braun, James Churchill, Lana Churchill, David Colville, Keegan & Kristin Colville, Ruth Colville, John DeCoste, Michael & Christine Gemmell, Dominic Gemmell, Marlon Gould, Sheila Hulford, Joe Johnson, Patrick Kelly, Larry Neily, Wayne Neily (compiler)

– 562 Messenger Rd., Tremont, R. R. # 6, Kingston, N. S. B0P 1R0 Neilyornis@hotmail.com), John Ogletree, Daniel Penner, Dylan Penner, Kenley Penner, Marlon Penner, Louis Rajnys, Twila Robar-DeCoste, Richard Stern;

(feeders): John & Sandra Antoniuk, Ron Blackert, Karen & Robert Campbell, Kathy Chapman, Tony Chaulk, Cathy Cook, Paul & Valerie Despres, Claire & David Diggins, Harold Elliott, Barbara & Pat Giffin, Carol & Leonard Gregory, Sheila Gubernt, Mark Hamilton, Kelly House, Pat House, Sibella Hulford, Michael Inkpen, Ted Kajdas, Cathou Larocque, Andrea & Garry Leeson, Dave & Tonya Ludlow, Myrna Maye, Ruth Myers, Claire Pelley, Noreen Reagh, Allan Robinson, Emily Robinson, Ron Rogerson, Charles & Doris Tye, 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 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%.