

56th Kingston Christmas Bird Count

The Kingston, NS Christmas Bird Count was held on December 21, 2023. The weather was dominated by cold, very strong winds, making for miserable conditions for both birders and birds. The day was cloudy with a few sunny breaks. Temperature from -1 to -3. Bitterly cold N winds of 39 km/hr., gusting to 70 km/hr. in the morning; easing off in late afternoon to 30 km/hr. Congratulations to all the field parties were able to cover their areas despite the less-than-ideal conditions.

Thanks again this year to both Sheila Hulford (who continues to organize and collect results from feeder operators) and Lyall Bouchard (who once again organized our field parties). Great work again this year! Several longtime participants were unavailable this year, including leaders for Zones 2 and 10. Lyall was able to get Sarah Foote to captain Zone 10 with help from Richard Stern, while I filled in (with Joe Johnson) in Zone 2. All told, he fielded 25 birders in 13 parties. Sheila was able to organize 55 feeder watchers at 38 feeders, collect the results and get them to me in a timely fashion. Thanks to Lyall and Sheila, my job as compiler is much easier. Altogether, 77 people participated on Count Day, 3 in dual roles, field and feeders. As well, we had one innocent eBirder, George Forsyth, who observed two Count Week species, making a 78th participant.

We continued to use the Audubon and eBird method for reporting distance. It was a bit difficult last year to find documentation as to the method to be used. I did find a better reference this year. The National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count Compiler's Manual, found at the following web address: (<https://nationalaudubon.app.box.com/s/h5h73acc0ix86vap55hf8miici88bniw>) says "If a route is an out-and-back trail or roadway, only the one-way distance is taken, but the entire time spent should be reported." That is definitive and should end any resistance to change. It is also the methodology used by eBird, which is, unfortunately, not followed by all eBirders either.

There is a continuing effort to encourage field parties to use eBird Trip Reports. We had 7 (up one) parties do it this year, while 5 parties (down one) still used paper reports. Below is a list of the Trip Reports and checklists and links to them, if anyone wishes to look at them. We have a few bugs to iron out, like the conflict between individual and group numbers, but it looks like we are going to continue using this tool. A temporary online compiling tool to allow participants to follow the totals as they are submitted was developed by Lyall Bouchard in Google Docs and used again this year. You may access this file at: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1LYGzIkF0Q5BoBmKbnwbc-jllkn63IKSAyE7k39keQ/edit#gid=720327460>.

Field Party Reports

Zone 1	Bouchard - https://ebird.org/tripreport/184004
Zone 2	Neily - https://ebird.org/tripreport/183999
Zone 3	Robar-DeCoste - paper form
Zone 4	Diggins -paper form Chute - https://ebird.org/tripreport/183916
Zone 5	Colville - paper form
Zone 6	Ogletree - https://ebird.org/tripreport/184449
Zone 7	Kelly - paper form
Zone 8	Hulford - paper form
Zone 9	Bates - https://ebird.org/canada/tripreport/184107
Zone 10	Foote - https://ebird.org/tripreport/184370 Stern - https://ebird.org/tripreport/184135



White-winged Crossbills, southwest of Morden, in Zone 2. Photo taken by Larry Neily.

We had 55 species on count day, almost 7 species below the latest ten-year average. With 7 additional Count Week species the Total Species was 62, nearly 5 below the 10-year average. To illustrate the paucity of birds this CBC, last year's totals were 70 and 78. The number of individuals was 7,303, more than 5,400 below the ten-year average, and more than 3,400 below last year. Most abundant species were European Starling (2735), American Crow (739), American Goldfinch (535), Black-capped Chickadee (486), Mallard (469), Canada Goose (438), and Blue Jay (343), in that order, with Mallard and Canada Goose becoming more abundant as our winters become milder, with more open water. Of the 40 species seen on 90% or more of the last 10 counts, all were seen except for Pileated Woodpecker, Cedar Waxwing and Snow Bunting. Among the less common species missed, Black Scoter, Hooded Merganser, Horned Grebe, Northern Harrier, Northern Goshawk, Barred Owl, Pine Grosbeak, Purple Finch, Common Redpoll, Chipping Sparrow, Common Grackle and Pine Warbler were ones that we have had 50% or more of the time in the past decade. Seven species, including 3 of the misses mentioned above, were seen in the count week but not on count day: Bufflehead, Northern Goshawk, Black-backed Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Northern Mockingbird and Chipping Sparrow.

We had no new Count Day species leaving our cumulative Count Day total at 132. There was 1 new Count Week species, the Black-backed Woodpecker found by George Forsyth on Fire Road 90 in Zone 8. So, our cumulative total including Count Week species is now 140. We had our 2nd Orange-crowned Warbler, another hardy warbler trying to take advantage of the milder winters; our 2nd Black Guillemot (though it was had during the two previous counts in the count week); and our 2nd Cooper's Hawk, a resident species getting more common in our area. There were no new record highs, but 2 species were tied for existing highs. Cooper's Hawk and Orange-crowned Warbler matched previous highs of 1. Other high counts, though not records, were from Green-winged Teal (16), Bald Eagle (23), Golden-crowned Kinglet (68), White-throated Sparrow (46), and Northern Cardinal (74). Low counts were recorded for American Black Duck (18), Ring-necked Pheasant (1), and House Sparrow (17).



Orange-crowned Warbler found count day near the DND radar dome on Stronach Mountain Road, north of Melvern Square. Photos by Lyall Bouchard taken Dec. 23, 2023.

Some highlights of uncommon species found were Black Guillemot, Cooper's Hawk, 3 Great Horned Owls, Savannah Sparrow, and Orange-crowned Warbler. Anyone who enjoys data tables can get their fill at [Kingston CBC Results 1968 to 2023](#). There you will find the field/feeder/total compilation table from December's count, and you can also find a complete table of the count's results from its inception in 1968 to the present.

A total of 7303 individuals of 55 species were seen on count day. Canada Goose 438, Mallard 469, American Black Duck 18 (low), Green-winged Teal 16 (high), Common Eider 8, Surf Scoter 1, White-winged Scoter 2, Long-tailed Duck 1, Red-breasted Merganser 17, duck sp. 2, Ruffed Grouse 5, Ring-necked Pheasant 1 (low), Red-necked Grebe 5, Rock Pigeon 212, Mourning Dove 256, Razorbill 1, Black Guillemot 1 (2nd record), Herring Gull 123, Iceland Gull 1, Great Black-backed Gull 3, gull sp. 2, Red-throated Loon 1, Common Loon 2, Sharp-shinned Hawk 4, Cooper's Hawk 1 (2nd record), Bald Eagle 23 (high), Red-tailed Hawk 22, Rough-legged Hawk 1, buteo sp. 1, hawk sp. 4, Great Horned Owl 3, Downy Woodpecker 55, Hairy Woodpecker 32, Northern Flicker 3, woodpecker sp. 1, Merlin 1, Blue Jay 343, American Crow 739, Common Raven 79, Black-capped Chickadee 486, Golden-crowned Kinglet 68 (high), Red-breasted Nuthatch 11, White-breasted Nuthatch 44, Brown Creeper 3, European Starling 2,735, American Robin 11, House Sparrow 17 (low), Evening Grosbeak 29, White-winged Crossbill 5, Pine Siskin 12, American Goldfinch 535, finch sp. 4, American Tree Sparrow 2, Dark-eyed Junco 285, White-throated Sparrow 46 (high), Savannah Sparrow 1, Song Sparrow 22, sparrow sp. 2, Red-winged Blackbird 1, Brown-headed Cowbird 12, Orange-crowned Warbler 1, Northern Cardinal 74 (high).

Field Party Participants: Andrew Bates, Lyall Bouchard, Jake Chute, David Colville, Keegan Colville, Joanne Cook, Claire Diggins, David Diggins, Kim Foote, Sarah Foote, Marlin Gould, Sheila Hulford, Joseph Johnson, Patrick Kelly, Ken MacIntosh, Richard McKay, Kevin Moore, Adele Mullie, Larry Neily (compiler), John Ogletree, Emma Pinfold, Twila Robar-DeCoste, Dave Shutler, Deirdre Spearns and Richard Stern.

Feeder Watchers: John Antoniuk, Sandy Antoniuk, Leona Baker, Brenda Berabe, Karen Campbell, Robert Campbell, Tony Chaulk, Kathy Cormier, Cathy Crook, John DeCoste, Linda Derry, Paul Despres, Valerie Despres, Sherry-Anne Deveau, Claire Diggins, David Diggins, Donna Elliott, Harold Elliott, Barbara Giffin, Patrick Giffin, Richard Giles, Shirley Giles, Doris Glavine, Leo Glavine, Carol Gregory, Len Gregory, Janet Hatt, Donna Hill, Kathryn Hindmarsh, John Hudgins, Marilyn Hudgins, Sheila Hulford, Sibella Hulford, Kelly Hutton, Mike Inkpen, Ted Kajdas, Cathou Larocque, Andrea Leeson, Vivian Morris, Wayne Neily, Susan Paull, Lorrie Penny, Carolee Pollock, Noreen Reagh, Wayne Reiger, Carissa Robison, Lydia Robison, Wendy Rodda, Elizabeth Sawler, Howard Selig, Jake Waldner, Margaret Waldner, Mel Waldner, Margaret Weeks and Ann Young.

Field Observer Count Week Only: George Forsyth

Larry Neily, Compiler, Lawrencetown, NS January 2024