

2017 Christmas Bird Count (CBC)

I hope by the time you are reading this we will have enjoyed some rain. This season, up to count day, Saturday, December 16 we have had virtually no rain and the natural landscape was very dry, however our parks were green. Otherwise, weather was good, making perfect conditions to count birds. This year, we saw more birds and bird species than we have the last three years. 47 counters covered 48 locations, netting 134 species and 15,198 individuals. Our 20 year average is 128 species and 15,412 individuals.

Applying the rules of National Audubon, we added just 2 additional species during count week, observed by our counters or by eBird reports of others who did not participate in the count, bringing our total for the week to 136. Count week includes the three days before and after count day.

The primary objective of the Christmas Bird Count is to assess the health of the bird population by comparing the total number of individuals of all species seen in a count circle with earlier counts. However, diversity is also an important factor, comparing the total number of species seen with past years. This is National Audubon's 118th count and much to our credit, our 61st successive CBC, which started in 1957.

We counted most of the large parks and natural areas in the circle, plus the three well known and well birded areas including Sepulveda Basin, Chatsworth Nature Preserve and Hansen Dam.

There were some highlights, including two new species never before recorded in the count circle. This is exceptional, considering we've been at it so long. A **Dusky-Capped Flycatcher** was spotted at Runnymede Park by Dick Norton and a Sage Thrasher was seen by Jim Moore and Debbie Drews in the upper slope of Wilbur Tampa Park, A **Hammond's Flycatcher** seen for the first time last year was seen again at Valley Plaza Park by Dick Barth.

Other uncommon bird sightings include:

- A **Greater White-fronted Goose** seen at Reseda Park.
- A **Northern Pintail** seen at Sepulveda Basin. Last seen on count day in 2009
- A **White-faced Ibis** seen at Sepulveda Basin. Only the third time in count history.
- An **Iceland (Thayer's) Gull**, seen at Sepulveda Basin. Only the third time in count history.
- A **Williamson's Sapsucker** seen at Veterans Park, marking only the fifth time in count history.
- Two **Gray Flycatchers** seen at Woodley Park and Bee Canyon Park. Only the 11th time in count history and the first time two birds were seen.
- Two **Vermillion Flycatchers**, seen at Woodley Park and Bull Creek. This is the 8th time and also the first time two birds were seen.
- Two **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were seen at El Cariso Park. This is an irruptive species, seen one year then missing for perhaps several years. This marks the 11th sighting in count history.
- A **Brown Creeper** also seen at El Cariso Park. Only the 6th time it has been seen in count history.
- A **Golden-crowned Kinglet** seen at Hansen Dam. Seen with a large group of Ruby Crowned Kinglets. This is only the 4th time it's been seen in count history. 111 Ruby-crowned Kinglets were counted at Hansen Dam.
- A **Hooded Oriole** was seen in Sepulveda Basin, marking only the 5th time it has been seen during the count.

Where have the ducks, raptors and shorebirds gone. Habitat hasn't changed that much, but many have gone missing, some for some time now.

- **Cackling Goose**, seen almost every year since the species was split from Canada Goose has virtually left the territory. We counted 26 in 2010 and 25 in 2011..
- **Wood Duck**, seen on 37 previous counts, hasn't been seen for two years.
- **Gadwall**, seen on 45 counts was not seen on count day.
- **Cinnamon Teal**, seen on 35 counts hasn't been seen since 2011.
- **Canvasback**, seen on 51 counts hasn't been seen since 2013
- **Hooded Merganser**, seen on 37 previous counts was missed this year.
- **Common Merganser**, seen on 27 previous counts, but virtually out of sight since the early 90's.
- **Eared Grebe**, seen on 52 of the 61 counts was missed for the first time since 2008.
- **Western and Clark's Grebes** were missed. Western has been missed only once since 1999.
- **White-tailed Kite**, seen on 39 previous counts, but not since 2013
- **Northern Harrier**, wow! Seen in all but 6 counts, but seen only once since 2013.
- **Greater Yellowlegs**. Missed this year, but seen on 40 previous counts.
- **Least Sandpipers**. A big miss. We counted 40 last year and they've been seen on 55 counts.
- **Western Sandpiper**, seen on 40 previous counts, but not since 2013.
- **Long-billed Dowitcher**, seen on 30 previous counts, but only once since 2005.
- **Wilson's Snipe**, seen on 47 previous counts. These birds are real good at hiding, but we haven't seen as many in the past few years. In 1993, 48 were counted.

Also missing are:

- **Spotted Dove**, seen on 43 previous counts, but not since 2002. Blame Cooper's Hawks and Eurasian Collared-Doves for their disappearance. But they're not natives.
- **Greater Roadrunner**. These birds are usually encountered with luck, but we've seen them 45 times, but only once since 2013.
- **Horned Lark**. Used to be here, seen 28 times, but only in small numbers since the early 80's.
- **Mountain Chickadee**, seen 32 times, but only off and on the last few years. We recorded 41 back in 1987.
- **Marsh Wren**, recorded 36 times, but not much and only in low numbers recently.

Loggerhead Shrike numbers remain low. Three were seen this count, a continuing downward trend. 70 were counted in 2000 and they have been recorded in the 10's before then.

The same can be said for Horned Larks. They have not been recorded since 1997, but seen on 28 earlier counts including 570 individuals in 1970. These are not birds in trouble. Thousands can be seen in the Antelope Valley during winter, but the San Fernando Valley no longer represents suitable habitat.

This year's winner for the highest count was American Coot with 1480 individuals. Honorable mention goes to Canada Geese (811), American Wigeon (579), Rock Pigeon (534), Mourning Dove (501), White-throated Swift (549), Yellow-rumped Warbler (1249), White-crowned Sparrows (947), Western Meadowlarks (559) and House finch (505).

Most White-throated Swifts were seen flying over the Pacoima Spreading Grounds. The total marks the highest ever number of individuals in the history of the count. Forty Yellow-chevroned Parakeets were seen at the Sepulveda Basin, also the highest count for this species.

We didn't lose any of the 34 species that have been recorded on all 61 counts. These include Canada Goose, American Wigeon, Mallard, Pied-billed Grebe, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, American Coot, Killdeer, Ring-billed Gull, Mourning Dove, Anna's Hummingbird, Northern Flicker, American Kestrel, Black Phoebe, Say's Phoebe, California Scrub-Jay, American Crow, Oak Titmouse, Bushtit, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Northern Mockingbird, American Pipit, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Spotted Towhee, California Towhee, Lark Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Western Meadowlark, Brewer's Blackbird, House Finch, Lesser Goldfinch and House Sparrow.

Sepulveda Basin won the award for the most species and most individuals. Kris Ohlenkamp, who has led this sector continuously since 1982, reported 86 species with 2713 individuals, with 12 unique species not seen in any other sector. Kimball Garrett counted 82 species with 1784 individuals, including three unique species at Hansen Dam. And, once again this year we were granted access by the Department of Water & Power to count the Chatsworth Nature Preserve. This area, led by Art Langton and Mark Osokow yielded 48 species with 1905 individuals.

The importance of covering all birding areas in the circle is confirmed by the number of locations where sighting a unique bird not seen elsewhere in the territory. This year was exceptional with nine such locations

Unique Birds Seen	Location	Sector leader
Greater White-fronted Goose	Reseda Park	Pat Bates
Snow Goose	Sepulveda Basin	eBird report on count day
Ross's Goose	Sepulveda Basin	Kris Ohlenkamp
Mute Swan	Sepulveda Basin	Kris Ohlenkamp
Eurasian Wigeon	Paicoma Spreading Grounds	eBird report on count day
Northern Pintail	Sepulveda Basin	Kris Ohlenkamp
Green-winged Teal	Sepulveda Basin	Kris Ohlenkamp
Redhead	Hansen Dam	Kimball Garrett
White-faced Ibis	Sepulveda Basin	Kris Ohlenkamp
Osprey	Sepulveda Basin	Kris Ohlenkamp
Spotted Sandpiper	El Cariso Golf Course	Brian Biefelt
Iceland (Thayer's) Gull	Sepulveda Basin	Kris Ohlenkamp
Glaucous-winged Gull	Sepulveda Basin	Kris Ohlenkamp
Belted Kingfisher	Sepulveda Basin	Kris Ohlenkamp
Williamson's Sapsucker	Veteran's Park	Scott Logan
Red-naped Sapsucker	O'Melvany Park	Tracy Drake
Yellow-chevoned Parakeet	Sepulveda Basin	Kris Ohlenkamp
Hammond's Flycatcher	Valley Plaza Park	Dick Barth
Dusky-capped Flycatcher	Runnymede Park	Dick Norton
Tree Swallow	Sepulveda Basin	eBird report on count day
Red-breasted Nuthatch	El Cariso Park	Brian Biefelt
Brown Creeper	El Cariso Park	Brian Biefelt
Golden-crowned Kinglet	Hansen Dam	Kimball Garrett
Sage Thrasher	Wilbur Tampa Park	Jim Moore
Myrtle's Warbler (Yellow-rumped)	Hansen Dam	Kimball Garrett
Townsend's Warbler	Sepulveda Basin	Kris Ohlenkamp

Wilson's Warbler	Hansen Dam	Kimball Garrett
Slate-colored Junco (Dark-eyed)	Hansen Dam	Kimball Garrett
Tri-colored Blackbird	Hansen Dam	Kimball Garrett
Hooded Oriole	Sepulveda Basin	Kris Ohlenkamp
Purple Finch	Veteran's Park	Scott Logan
Pine Siskin	Hansen Dam	Kimball Garrett

For bird nerds who would like to see more detail, excel spreadsheets of this year's count and our historical count are on the chapter's website.

Thanks to the sector leaders and counters who gave several hours of their holiday season to participate.

2016 Christmas Bird Count Summary

1	Greater White-fronted Goose	501	Mourning Dove	75	Western Bluebird
1	Snow Goose	5	Great Horned Owl	36	Hermit Thrush
2	Ross' Goose	549	White Throated Swift	100	American Robin
811	Canada Goose	110	Anna's Hummingbird	16	California Thrasher
2	Mute Swan	40	Allen's Hummingbird	1	Sage Thrasher
6	Egyptian Goose	9	Hummingbird species	72	Northern Mockingbird
cw	Gadwall	1	Belted Kingfisher	353	European Starling
1	Eurasian Wigeon	46	Acorn Woodpecker	20	American Pipit
579	American Wigeon	1	Williamson's Sapsucker	58	Cedar Waxwing
440	Mallard	2	Red-naped Sapsucker	3	Phainopepla
7	Northern Shoveler	11	Red-breasted Sapsucker	9	Orange-crowned Warbler
1	Northern Pintail	28	Nuttall's Woodpecker	20	Common Yellowthroat
3	Green-winged Teal	7	Downey Woodpecker	1249	Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audbn)
3	Redhead	37	Northern Flicker (red-shafted)	3	Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle)
67	Ring-necked Duck	8	American Kestrel	2	Black-throated Gray Warbler
51	Lesser Scaup	3	Merlin	1	Townsend's Warbler
38	Bufflehead	3	Peregrine Falcon	45	Spotted Towhee
72	Ruddy Duck	40	Yellow-chevron Parakeet	9	Rufous-crowned Sparrow
75	California Quail	2	Gray Flycatcher	150	California Towhee
23	Pied-billed Grebe	1	Hammond's Flycatcher	108	Chipping Sparrow
62	Double-crested Cormorant	168	Black Phoebe	13	Vesper Sparrow
47	American White Pelican	58	Say's Phoebe	273	Lark Sparrow
15	Great Blue Heron	2	Vermillion Flycatcher	347	Savannah Sparrow
18	Great Egret	1	Dusky-capped Flycatcher	17	Fox Sparrow
27	Snowy Egret	59	Cassin's Kingbird	85	Song Sparrow
2	Green Heron	3	Loggerhead Shrike	42	Lincoln's Sparrow
27	Black-crowned Night-Heron	5	Hutton's Vireo	947	White-crowned Sparrow
74	Turkey Vulture	199	California Scrub-Jay	32	Golden-crowned Sparrow
1	Osprey	296	American Crow	400	Dark-eyed Junco (Oregon)
1	Sharp-shinned Hawk	196	Common Raven	1	Dark-eyed Junco (Slate-colored)
10	Cooper's Hawk	cw	Northern Rough-wing Swallow	7	Sparrow species
6	Red-shouldered Hawk	2	Tree Swallow	53	Red-winged Blackbird
40	Red-tailed Hawk	12	Oak Titmouse	2	Tricolored Blackbird
1480	American Coot	524	Bushtit	559	Western Meadowlark
26	Killdeer	2	Red-breasted Nuthatch	476	Brewer's Blackbird
1	Spotted Sandpiper	26	White-breasted Nuthatch	48	Great-tailed Grackle
68	Ring-billed Gull	1	Brown Creeper	48	Brown-headed Cowbird
455	Western Gull	13	Rock Wren	505	House Finch
54	California Gull	4	Canyon Wren	16	Purple Finch
1	Iceland (Thayer's) Gull	4	House Wren	183	Lesser Goldfinch
1	Glaucous-winged Gull	43	Bewick's Wren	53	American Goldfinch
208	Gull species	15	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	110	House Sparrows
534	Rock Pigeon	1	Golden-crowned Kinglet		
23	Band-tailed Pigeon	163	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	136	Total Species
57	Eurasian Collared-Dove	23	Wrentit	15198	Individuals

Thanks to all 2016 count participants

Becky Arntzen	Nicole Durtschi	Judy Matsuoka (I)
Dick Avery	Polly Ehler	Becky McDonald
Pat Avery	Randy Ehler	Dan McDonald
Dick Barth (I)	Cliff Fenneman	Heather Medvitz (I)
David Barton	Lynda Fenneman (I)	Jim Moore (I) (c)
Kathy Barton	Kimball Garrett (I)	Justine Morgan
Pat Bates (I)	Wendy Gladstone	Wendy Morgan
Debbie Beckett	Barbara Heideman	Dick Norton (I)
Brian Bielfelt	Allan Kotin	Kris Ohlenkamp (I)
Carla Bollinger	Muriel Kotin (I)	Carolyn Oppenheimer
Yvonne Burch-Hartley	Mei Kwan	Mark Osokow (I)
Teri Carnesciali	Art Langton (I)	Wendy Panikker
Alexander deBarros	Brett LeVine	Ted Schwartz
Bob Doxsee	Rebecca LeVine	Donna Timlin
Ruth Doxsee	John Lobel (I)	Helene White (I)
Tracy Drake (I)	Scott Logan (I)	Olivia White (I)
Debbie Drews		

(I) = Sector leader

(c) = Compiler

Epilogue

At our Birds and Beer Wrap-up we learned that Pat Bates, while counting in Reseda Park, happened upon two duck thieves. I expect, considering their behavior and equipment that this is a continuing operation that has occurred before in other parks and wildlife areas.

Pat observed a man with tarp, feeding bread to ducks. Once a few gathered on the tarp, he folded it up and ran to a nearby pick-up truck where his henchman was waiting, together they stuffed several American Wigeons into cages and drove off. Pat was bold enough and alert enough to chase after the kidnapper and got a picture of the henchman and his truck with the caged ducks. He was clever enough to wear sun glasses and had the gate down in the pick-up so his license was not visible.

Authorities have been alerted. Let's hope they're nabbed.