



2019 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The 68th annual Sussex circle Christmas Count was held on Sunday, December 15th. Thank you to the 38 observers who counted in field teams and the 7 feeder watchers who contributed data. This was the third consecutive year in which we had feeder watchers, so hopefully this is now an established, permanent part of future counts. Special thanks go to Merle and Roger Tanis for once again opening their home for the wrap-up and soup potluck; we all enjoyed the warmth and hospitality that they extend each year!

Temperatures were above freezing all day, but the sky was mostly overcast with moderate winds, occasional stronger gusts, and brief periods of sleet and rain. Most of the bodies of water were either ice-free or not fully frozen. A total of 76 species and 19,372 individual birds were seen, which is above the count circle average of 73 species and 16,471 individuals.

Other highlights of this year's count:

- Some of the species that were well over their count average included:
 - ✓ Canada Goose – 4,208 vs 2,711 average (10th consecutive year above average)
 - ✓ Ring-necked Duck – 134 vs 55 average
 - ✓ Bufflehead – 74 vs 16 average
 - ✓ Hooded Merganser – 70 vs 33 average
 - ✓ Black Vulture – 370 (new count record) vs 71 average
 - ✓ Ring-billed Gull – 4,309 vs 1,809 average
 - ✓ Red-bellied Woodpecker – 67 vs 28 average
 - ✓ Gray Catbird – 4 (new count record) vs. 1 average
 - ✓ Common Grackle – 1,182 vs 787 average
- A Greater White-fronted Goose was seen by Susan Predl and I on a farm pond in Frankford Twp. along the border of zone 3 and zone 1. This bird is presumably the same bird that I photographed at the Sussex County Homestead pond on 11/9/19; it was seen there intermittently between that date and the CBC, but it's clear that birds/flocks travel from day-to-day within the county and surrounding areas. This is the 2nd time the species has been seen in the Sussex Circle on the count day; the first record was in 2008.
- Only 209 Mallards were seen, once again below the count circle average (360) for the species.
- Northern Harrier was missed for the first time since 2006.
- 18 Bald Eagles were seen (new count record), continuing the above-count-average annual trend for this species. Ten adult & eight immature eagles were noted.
- An Iceland Gull was found at Hyper Humus (14th count record for the species) and two Lesser Black-backed Gulls were counted at Culvers Lake (18th record for the species).
- A count-circle record low of 199 Rock Pigeons was observed.
- Barred Owl (last counted in 2014) and Merlin (last counted in 2015) were both noted this year.
- American Kestrel was missed for the third time since 2015.
- Some of everyone's favorite yard birds were hard to find this year. There were 99 Black-capped Chickadees (second lowest count since 1956's tally of 58; the lowest tally was last year's count of 92), 103 Tufted Titmice (lowest count since 2003), and 84 Northern Cardinals (lowest tally since 1986). Even one of our least-favorite yard birds, the House Sparrow, wasn't as

ubiquitous; only 100 were counted, which is the lowest count in 19 years and far below the count circle average of 898 for the species.

- Hermit Thrush was missed for the first time since 1988.
- A record-low 11 American Tree Sparrows were counted, far below the circle average (409) for the species and less than half of last year's former record low count of 27. This is the 17th consecutive year in which the tally was below-average and the 6th time in the last 10 years in which the numbers were below 100. Sadly, the trend for this species seems to be one of decline, at least locally.
- While it's unusual to find an Eastern Towhee on count day, this year 2 were counted. The last time we had more than one was in 1970, when 4 were counted.
- With the exception of White-throated Sparrow and Eastern Towhee, all sparrow numbers were below average. Field and Fox Sparrows were each missed for the third time over the last decade. There were 428 Dark-eyed Juncos, only 46 more than last year's count of 382, which was the lowest number since the year 2000 (average is 669).
- Some of the other species that were well under their count average included:
 - ✓ American Black Duck - 38 vs 90 average
 - ✓ Wild Turkey - 12 vs 113 average - lowest count since 1990
 - ✓ Great Black-backed Gull - 11 vs 69 average
 - ✓ Rock Pigeon - 199 vs 553 average; a new record low count
 - ✓ Mourning Dove - 112 vs 394 average - below average every year since 2005
 - ✓ Blue Jay - 111 vs 249 average - lowest count since 1997
 - ✓ Eastern Bluebird - 49 vs 89 average - lowest count since 2003
 - ✓ American Robin - 142 vs 339 average
 - ✓ Northern Mockingbird - 17 vs 55 average - lowest count since 2003
 - ✓ Cedar Waxwing - 28 vs 94 average
 - ✓ Brown-headed Cowbird - 7 vs 318 average
 - ✓ House Finch - 152 vs. 275 average
 - ✓ House Sparrow - 100 vs. 898 average - lowest count since 2000's tally of 82 birds
- Great Horned Owl, a nearly annual count day bird, was missed for the second consecutive year.
- No count week birds were reported this year.

Next year's count will be held on Sunday, December 20th, 2020 (barring ice storms, blizzards, or other acts of God or man), so please mark your calendars. Everyone, including returning players and new participants, particularly feeder watchers, are welcome and encouraged to join us!

I'd like to give special recognition to George Johnson, who was unable to participate in the count this year. While the records of the Sussex Count Circle history are incomplete, he is listed as one of the participants in 1956, and as far as I know, he was a participant every year thereafter until 2018 - i.e., he Xmas-counted for 63 years! Thanks to George for his steadfast dedication to the annual CBC; I hope he can join us again in the future for the count, the potluck, or both.

Good birding to you all in the new year, and thanks again to everyone who participated in this year's count!

Marianne Ofenloch, Sussex CBC Compiler

SUSSEX COUNTY CBC

68TH ANNUAL COUNT TOTALS

12/15/19

Gr White-fronted Goose	1	Wilson's Snipe		Brown Thrasher	
Snow Goose		Ring-billed Gull	4,309	Northern Mockingbird	17
Canada Goose	4,208	Herring Gull	587	European Starling	3,971
Mute Swan	56	Iceland Gull	1	American Pipit	
Wood Duck	1	Lesser Black-backed Gull	2	Cedar Waxwing	28
Gadwall	2	Great Black-backed Gull	11	Snow Bunting	
American Wigeon	4	Rock Pigeon	199	Yellow-rumped Warbler	3
American Black Duck	38	Mourning Dove	112	Common Yellowthroat	
Mallard	209	Eastern Screech Owl	3	American Tree Sparrow	11
Northern Pintail		Great Horned Owl		Field Sparrow	
Green-winged Teal		Barred Owl	1	Fox Sparrow	
Canvasback		Northern Saw-whet Owl		Dark-eyed Junco	428
Ring-necked Duck	134	Belted Kingfisher	8	White-crowned Sparrow	3
Greater Scaup		Red-bellied Woodpecker	67	White-throated Sparrow	293
Lesser Scaup	4	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	11	Song Sparrow	69
Long-tailed Duck		Downy Woodpecker	75	Swamp Sparrow	9
Bufflehead	74	Hairy Woodpecker	14	Eastern Towhee	2
Common Goldeneye	40	Northern Flicker	19	Northern Cardinal	84
Hooded Merganser	70	Pileated Woodpecker	8	Red-winged Blackbird	301
Common Merganser	282	American Kestrel		Common Grackle	1,182
Red-breasted Merganser		Merlin	1	Brown-headed Cowbird	7
Ruddy Duck	92	Eastern Phoebe		House Finch	152
Ring-necked Pheasant	2	Blue Jay	120	Purple Finch	
Wild Turkey	12	American Crow	652	Pine Siskin	
Common Loon	1	Fish Crow	6	American Goldfinch	103
Pied-billed Grebe		Common Raven	12	House Sparrow	100
Great Blue Heron	10	Horned Lark			
Black Vulture	370	Black-capped Chickadee	99	Total Species:	76
Turkey Vulture	96	Tufted Titmouse	103	Total Individuals	19372
Northern Harrier		Red-breasted Nuthatch		Count Week species	
Sharp-shinned Hawk	7	White-breasted Nuthatch	63		
Cooper's Hawk	10	Brown Creeper	5	# of Teams	16
Northern Goshawk		Winter Wren	5	# of Participants on Teams	38
Bald Eagle	18	Carolina Wren	46	# of Feeder Watchers	7
Red-shouldered Hawk	4	Golden-crowned Kinglet	37		
Red-tailed Hawk	78	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	15	Low Temp (F)	38
Virginia Rail		Eastern Bluebird	49	High Temp (F)	44
Sora		Hermit Thrush		Skies, A.M.	Cloudy
American Coot		American Robin	142	Skies, P.M.	M Cldy
Killdeer		Gray Catbird	4	Winds (MPH)	7-24

PARTICIPANTS BY ZONE – SUSSEX CBC 12/15/2019

- Zone 1** Karyn Cichocki, Sandy McPhail
- Zone 2** Fred Weber, Jack Padalino
Feeder Watchers – Lee McQuillin, Terry McQuillin
- Zone 3** Marianne Ofenloch, Sue Predl
- Zone 4** Don Traylor, Donna Traylor
- Zone 5** Sharon Wander, Wade Wander
- Zone 6 & 7** Marge Barrett, Bob Barth, Roberta Bramhall, Joe Burgiel
Feeder Watcher – Barb Sendelbach
- Zone 8 & 9** Beverly Robertson, William Test, Joe Zurovchak
- Zone 10 & 11** Alan Boyd, Dennis Briede
- Zone 12** Tom Halliwell, Hank Burk, George Nixon, Mike Vivion
Feeder Watchers – Jessica Brewer, Martin Ventura
- Zone 13 & 14** Maria Loukeris, Christine Koehler, Giselle Smisko, Bob McDonnell
- Zone 15** Ken Witkowski, Matt Skalla, Kathy Wilson, Robert Wilson
- Zone 16** Merle Tanis, Roger Tanis, Bill Warren
Feeder Watcher – Jeff Crawn
- Zone 17** Bill Warren, Mike Gannon
- Zone 18** Lori Krieger, Mike Livesey, Steve Fitzsimmons
Feeder Watcher – Connie Warren

SUSSEX COUNTY CBC 68TH ANNUAL ZONE TOTALS *(high count among zones in red)* 12/15/19

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6,7	8,9	10,11	12	13,14	15	16	17	18	TOTAL
Snow Goose															
Gr Wh-frt Goose	1*														1
Cackling Goose															
Canada Goose	511	50	1420	165	220	98	76	821	90	555	40	121	18	23	4208
Mute Swan	10	6					2		5	2		1	30		56
Wood Duck								1							1
Gadwall										2					2
Am. Wigeon		2						2							4
Am. Black Duck	13		6				10	1	8						38
Mallard	9	37	12	26	12	3	15	19	21	20		18	12	5	209
Ring-neckd Duck	2	130										2			134
Greater Scaup															
Lesser Scaup		4													4
Bufflehead	2	50										2	20		74
Com. Goldeneye		40													40
Hood. Mergansr	17	20					18	5		5	1	2	2		70
Com. Mergansr		150					8		30		19		75		282
Ruddy Duck		10								1			81		92

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6,7	8,9	10,11	12	13,14	15	16	17	18	TOTAL
Rng-nckd Pheas.							1						1		2
Wild Turkey					4						8				12
Common Loon		1													1
P-billed Grebe															
Gr. Blue Heron	2	1	1			1	1	3	1						10
Black Vulture	9	45	18	4	14	26	112	11	62	29	25	10	5		370
Turkey Vulture			3	6	8	5	7	2	15	35	8	3	2	2	96
Northern Harrier															
Shrp-shnd Hawk			2*	1			1		1		1	1			7
Cooper's Hawk		1	1			1		3		3	1				10
Bald Eagle	2	3				1		1	3	2	2	1	3		18
Red-shldrd Hawk								1			1	1		1	4
Red-tailed Hawk	4	6	7	10	4	5	2	8	6	10	6	4	3	3	78
American Coot															
Killdeer															
Wilson's Snipe															
Ring-billed Gull	25	3000	40		13	2	123	9	700	368	3		26		4309
Herring Gull		25					256	4	300			2			587
Iceland Gull									1						1
Less.Blk-bkd Gull		2													2
Gr Blk-bckd Gull									2	9					11
Rock Pigeon	8	12	13	20		90	14	22	8	12					199
Mourning Dove	8	7	2	6	14	11	26	5	1	4	6	10	11	1	112
East Screech Owl	1							1				1			3
Gr Horned Owl															
Barred Owl									1						1
Belted Kingfisher	1		1*				1	4		1					8
Rd-belld Wood.	5	2	3	1	6	15	5	3	2	4	6	10	3	2	67
Yel-bel Sapsuckr	3				1			1		2	4				11
Downy Wdpeckr	6	5	3	3	2	6	2	5	9	10	3	16	2	3	75
Hairy Wdpeckr		1			2	1		1		3		3	2	1	14
Northern Flicker	5		4	1			6	2	1						19
Pileated Wdpckr	1					1		3				1	1	1	8
American Kestrel															
Merlin						1									1
Eastern Phoebe															
Blue Jay	11	5	10	10	13	9	7	14	7	2	14	9	2	7	120
American Crow	108	17	68	38	55	11	65	43	75	125	6	6	2	33	652
Fish Crow								1	5						6
Common Raven		1		1				1	2	3	2		2		12
Horned Lark															
Blk-cap Chkadee	5	8	5	3	4	8	8	8	14	5	11	14		6	99
Tufted Titmouse	6	10	1	2	2	13	2	5	7	5	17	23	4	6	103
Red-br Nuthatch															

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6,7	8,9	10,11	12	13,14	15	16	17	18	TOTAL
Wh-br Nuthatch	1	7	4	3	1	4	3	4	2	5	12	14	2	1	63
Brown Creeper			2					1		1		1			5
Winter Wren					3				2						5
Carolina Wren	2	3		1		2	4	12	7	5	2	5	2	1	46
Goldn-cr Kinglet			2		1	1		6	3	3		21			37
Ruby-cr Kinglet								3	1			11			15
Eastern Bluebird	6	2	3	4	3	6		11	3	11					49
Hermit Thrush															
American Robin			2	11	18	15	25	7	60	4					142
Gray Catbird	1		1					2							4
Brown Thrasher															
Nor. Mckingbird	1		2	3	6		3	1	1						17
Euro. Starling	278	800	985	88	575	465	252	450	11	66	1				3971
American Pipit															
Cedar Waxwing		1						27							28
Snow Bunting															
Yel-rmpd Warblr			2				1								3
Am. Tree Sparr			1	1			5	3				1			11
Field Sparrow															
Fox Sparrow															
Dark-eyed Junco	79	25	21	21	5	31	44	47	17	17	35	66	11	9	428
Wh-crn Sparrow				3											3
Wh-thrt Sparrow	26	12	12	17	5	16	13	86	13	43	1	39	10		293
Song Sparrow	4	1	4	7	3	3	5	15	13	3	4	7			69
Swamp Sparrow		2					2	4	1						9
Eastern Towhee						1		1							2
North. Cardinal	6	6	7	4	6	3	5	15	13	1	4	5	4	5	84
Red-wngd Blkbird	4		22				6	50	200	17	2				301
Rusty Blackbird															
Comm. Grackle			130			2			1000	50					1182
Brwn-hd Cowbrd	3	1							3						7
House Finch	10	6	2	21	6	41	14	13	10	4	8	5	10	2	152
Purple Finch															
Amer. Goldfinch	9	2	2	2	6	1	19	11	10	2	9	17	13		103
House Sparrow	13	1	1	10		48	5	4	12			6			100
TOTALS	39	44	39	31	28	34	41	53	47	40	31	36	29	19	19372
Total # Species	76														
Bald eagle ages	2a	2a,1i				1i		1a	1a, 2i	2i	1a, 1i	1a	2a, 1i		

* Denotes species found by members of field teams other than those covering the assigned zone, specifically the zone 1 GWFG, the zone 3 BEKI, & one of the two zone 3 SSHA's.

Suss CBC Species History: # of years seen (out of 68 possible years), high count, & average # seen per year

SPECIES	yrs	high ct	ave	SPECIES	yrs	high ct	ave	SPECIES	yrs	high ct	ave	SPECIES	yrs	high ct	ave
GWF Goose	2	1	1	No Harrier	43	12	3	Gyrfalcon	0	0	0	Field Sparr	43	33	5
Sn Goose	24	8110	607	Shrp-shn Hwk	49	16	5	Monk Pkeet	1	1	1	Lark Sparr	2	1	1
Brant	3	3	2	Coop Hawk	45	16	6	Nnday Pket	1	1	1	Fox Spar	41	51	7
Cck Goose	6	2	2	No Goshawk	11	1	1	E Phoebe	13	2	1	DE Junco	68	1422	669
Can Goose	50	8420	2711	Bald Eagle	27	18	5	No Shrike	20	6	2	WC Sparrow	32	69	11
Mute Swan	63	236	57	Rd-shld Hawk	26	9	2	Logg Shrike	6	2	1	WT Sparrow	68	761	169
Tund Swan	4	8	3	Rd-tail Hawk	68	138	55	Blue Jay	68	593	249	Vesp Sparr	5	8	3
Wood Dck	39	20	4	Rough Hawk	27	7	2	Am Crow	68	1802	543	Savan Sparr	7	4	2
Gadwall	21	44	16	King Rail	0	0	0	Fish Crow	15	70	21	Song Sparr	68	230	76
Eur Wign	1	2	2	Virginia Rail	30	6	2	Com Raven	18	15	5	Linc Sparr	1	1	1
Am Wign	19	57	10	Sora	3	2	1	Horned Lark	43	991	178	Swmp Spar	65	69	14
Am Bk Dck	67	314	90	Cm Gallinule	2	1	1	Bkcp Chick	68	716	296	E Towhee	25	4	1
Mallard	66	888	360	Am Coot	39	228	39	Breal Chick	2	5	4	N Cardinal	67	250	136
Blwg Teal	5	6	3	Killdeer	45	21	4	Tuft Tmse	68	333	132	BkHd Grsbk	0	0	0
N Shovlr	5	2	1	Spot Sndpipr	1	1	1	Rdbr Nthch	45	103	9	Dickcissel	2	3	2
N Pintail	15	6	2	Sol Sndpipr	1	1	1	Whbr Nthch	68	179	74	Rdwng Bkbd	64	3006	235
Gnwnng Teal	23	19	4	Wils Snipe	52	30	7	Brn Creepr	58	21	7	E Mdwlark	37	160	43
Cnvsbck	20	38	4	Am Woodck	13	2	1	Wntr Wren	38	10	3	Rusty Bkbird	44	372	22
Redhead	15	18	4	Rng-bill Gull	50	7526	1809	Marsh Wren	9	2	1	Brew Blkbrd	1	1	1
Rngneck	48	285	56	Herring Gull	61	3315	696	Sedge Wren	1	1	1	Com Grckle	54	15039	787
Gr Scaup	3	8	4	Iceland Gull	14	3	1	Carol Wren	49	84	21	BH Cowbird	64	2482	318
LsScaup	29	36	6	Kumls Gull	1	1	1	G-cr Kinglet	62	143	22	Balt Oriole	8	2	1
BkScoter	0	0	0	Ls Bkbk Gull	18	4	2	R-cr Kinglet	44	19	4	Pine Grosbk	5	127	35
Lngtl Dck	2	1	1	Glauc Gull	3	2	1	E Bluebird	49	307	89	House Finch	55	1036	275
Buffle	35	90	16	Gr Bkbk Gull	36	316	69	Grchk Thrsh	1	1	1	Purp Finch	61	438	25
CmGldneye	49	200	48	Rock Pigeon	37	1101	553	Swns Thrush	1	1	1	Rd Crossbill	4	16	9
Hood Merg	48	154	33	Mourn Dove	67	1145	394	HermThrush	38	23	6	WW Crssbill	2	1	1
Com Merg	56	4193	318	Barn Owl	13	2	1	Am Robin	63	5824	339	CmRedpoll	22	443	43
Rdbr Merg	7	2	1	E Scrch Owl	60	20	5	Gray Catbird	23	4	1	Pine Siskin	34	281	30
Ruddy	33	391	57	GrHorn Owl	54	36	8	Br Thrash	6	2	1	Am Gldfinch	68	410	141
NBobwhite	5	12	3	Snowy Owl	2	1	1	N Mock	62	159	55	Eve Grosbk	35	485	76
Rgnk Pheas	57	61	8	Barred Owl	28	5	2	Eur Starling	67	23183	4325	House Sparr	68	3028	898
RfGrouse	43	9	3	Lng-ear Owl	20	7	2	Am Pipit	7	80	23				
Wild Turkey	32	360	113	Shrt-ear Owl	1	2	2	Cedar Wax	53	545	94				
Rdthr Loon	2	1	1	N Swwht Owl	3	1	1	McC Lngspr	1	1	1	Species with zeroes in all columns have only been seen during count week(s).			
Com Loon	13	3	1	Belt Kngfshr	66	28	9	Lplnd Lgspr	8	8	2				
Pbill Grebe	37	25	5	Rd-hd Wdpckr	27	9	2	Snow Bunt	12	120	42				
Hrn Grebe	12	13	4	Rd-bel Wdpckr	56	104	28	N Wtrthrush	1	1	1				
Rdnk Grebe	2	1	1	Ylbel Sapsckr	35	21	5	Nash Wrblr	1	1	1				
DblcrCorm	7	2	1	Downy Wdpckr	68	162	77	Com Ylwthrt	2	1	1				
Am Bittern	3	1	1	Hairy Wdpckr	68	35	18	CM Warbler	3	1	1				
G BI Heron	55	30	9	No Flicker	63	74	18	Pine Wrblr	1	1	1				
Grt Egret	0	0	0	Pil Wdpckr	55	23	6	Ylmp Wrblr	43	235	24				
Blk Vulture	27	370	71	Am Kestrel	62	67	16	Yelbr Chat	0	0	0				
Trk Vulture	33	156	51	Merlin	5	2	1	Am Tr Spar	68	1445	403				
Gold Eagle	0	0	0	Peregrine	1	1	1	Chip Sparrow	15	6	1				