



# 2020 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT



The 69<sup>th</sup> annual Sussex circle Christmas Count was held on Sunday, December 20<sup>th</sup>. Thank you to the observers who counted in field teams or by feeder watching; some folks did both this year. Covid 19 restrictions meant that Audubon had to amend the rules. Participants could not carpool or feeder watch together unless they lived in the same household, and everyone was told to wear masks and maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from each other while birding together at a location. Sadly, due to other Covid 19 restrictions, we could not have our annual soup potluck, but we are thankful that we could still hold the count and hopeful that next year we can again gather for a wrap-up party.

Temperatures were below freezing for most of the morning and remained near freezing all afternoon. The sky was cloudy to mostly overcast with little to no wind and brief periods of snow flurries. Most of the bodies of water were frozen. A total of 80 species (the most since 2017) and 18,213 individual birds were seen, which is above the count circle average of 73 species and 16,497 individuals.

Other highlights of this year's count:

- Some of the species that were well over their count average included:
  - ✓ Hooded Merganser – 65 vs 33 average
  - ✓ Turkey Vulture – 146 vs 54 average
  - ✓ Cooper's Hawk – 17 (new count record) vs 6 average
  - ✓ Red-shouldered Hawk – 13 (new count record) vs 2 average
  - ✓ Ring-billed Gull – 3,562 vs 1,843 average
  - ✓ Red-bellied Woodpecker – 52 vs 29 average
  - ✓ Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 26 (new count record) vs 6 average
  - ✓ Pileated Woodpecker – 28 (new count record) vs 7 average
  - ✓ Carolina Wren – 92 (new count record) vs 22 average
  - ✓ Dark-eyed Junco – 2,746 (new count record) vs 699 average
  - ✓ White-throated Sparrow – 893 (new count record) vs 179 average
  - ✓ Song Sparrow – 221 vs 78 average
- Snow Goose was missed for the 3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive year. Barb Sendelbach had a small flock of 15 birds fly over her yard the day before the count. Two Cackling Geese were seen; this species has been almost annual since 2012.
- Only 182 Mallards were seen, making this the 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive year in which the species was below the count circle average (358). This is also the 9<sup>th</sup> consecutive year that the count of American Black Duck (35) was below the count circle average (90).
- Three Red-breasted Mergansers (a new high for the species) were seen on Culvers Lake, but numbers for Ring-necked Duck and some of the other divers were below average
- Only 7 Bald Eagles were seen, which ends the previous above-count-average annual trend for this species. Five adult and two immature eagles were noted.
- Great Horned Owl returned to count day after a 2-year absence; 5 were counted this year. Eastern Screech-Owl, a nearly annual bird, was missed for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time since 2016.
- Belted Kingfisher was at its lowest number (5) since 2009. One miss was at Winding Brook Farm; heavy traffic and snow-covered road shoulders meant no way to view for more than the few seconds it took to pass the farm where this species is normally seen every year.

- All woodpecker numbers (except for Red-headed) were at or well above count circle averages. All the Corvids were again at below-average numbers for count day.
- American Kestrel returned to the count list after a 2-year absence; the 5 birds tallied were the highest count since 2012, when we also had 5 birds. Merlin was seen again, making this the 5<sup>th</sup> year since 2013 that the species was noted; there have been only 6 years in which the species was seen on count day (first time was in 2001).
- A flock of 22 Horned Larks was seen near Skylands Stadium and a single bird was seen in a field off Decker Rd in Lafayette.
- A House Wren was seen for the first time in the history of the count circle. Bob McDonnell spotted the bird in the Warbasse Junction area; Giselle Smisko confirmed the sighting.
- Golden-crowned Kinglet and Yellow-rumped Warbler were both missed for the second time in the last 3 years. In fact, this is the first time since 1987 that no warblers of any kind were seen.
- American Tree Sparrows were a bit more numerous than last year (56 vs 11) but were still well below the count circle average (398) for the species. This is the 18<sup>th</sup> consecutive year in which the tally was below-average and the 7<sup>th</sup> time in the last 11 years in which the numbers were below 100. Other sparrow numbers were a mixed bag this year. Jessica Brewer photographed a Chipping Sparrow while feeder watching in her yard. Field and Fox Sparrows were seen again but continue to be at below average numbers. White-throated and Song Sparrow numbers were well above average, but the count day proved to be the “Day of the Junco”: we counted 2,746 Dark-eyed Juncos, a new count circle record that more than makes up for the below-average numbers of the last 2 years.
- A flock of 28 Common Redpolls was seen in Hardyston. The species was last seen on count day in 2012. But House Finch numbers were below average and Purple Finch was missed for the 2<sup>nd</sup> consecutive year.
- Other species that were well under their count average included:
  - ✓ Wild Turkey - 40 vs 110 average
  - ✓ Herring Gull - 328 vs 690 average
  - ✓ Great Black-backed Gull - 7 vs 67 average
  - ✓ American Robin - 44 vs 334 average (lowest count since 2014)
  - ✓ Northern Mockingbird - 33 vs 54 average
  - ✓ Cedar Waxwing - 21 vs 92 average
  - ✓ Red-winged Blackbird - 22 vs 232 average
  - ✓ Common Grackle - 59 vs 774 average
  - ✓ Brown-headed Cowbird - 96 vs 314 average
  - ✓ House Finch - 79 vs. 271 average
  - ✓ House Sparrow - 461 vs. 891 average

Next year’s count will be held on Sunday, December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021 (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 Merle & Roger Tanis, who hosted our annual soup potluck for over 20 years. They recently moved to PA but plan on continuing to join us in the annual Christmas Count. And they will be able to relax as guests, not serve as busy hosts, at future soup potlucks for once!

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

69<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL COUNT TOTALS

12/20/2020

Snow Goose	CW	Ring-billed Gull	3562	Northern Mockingbird	33
Cackling Goose	2	Herring Gull	328	European Starling	2221
Canada Goose	3438	Iceland Gull		American Pipit	
Mute Swan	65	Lesser Black-backed Gull	CW	Cedar Waxwing	21
Wood Duck		Great Black-backed Gull	7	Snow Bunting	
Gadwall	3	Rock Pigeon	545	Yellow-rumped Warbler	
American Wigeon		Mourning Dove	325	American Tree Sparrow	56
American Black Duck	35	Eastern Screech Owl		Chipping Sparrow	1
Mallard	182	Great Horned Owl	5	Field Sparrow	3
Northern Pintail		Barred Owl		Fox Sparrow	2
Green-winged Teal		Northern Saw-whet Owl		Dark-eyed Junco	2746
Canvasback		Belted Kingfisher	5	White-crowned Sparrow	11
Ring-necked Duck	33	Red-bellied Woodpecker	52	White-throated Sparrow	893
Greater Scaup		Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	26	Song Sparrow	221
Lesser Scaup	1	Downy Woodpecker	107	Swamp Sparrow	26
Long-tailed Duck		Hairy Woodpecker	16	Eastern Towhee	
Bufflehead	21	Northern Flicker	16	Northern Cardinal	163
Common Goldeneye	35	Pileated Woodpecker	28	Red-winged Blackbird	22
Hooded Merganser	65	American Kestrel	5	Rusty Blackbird	2
Common Merganser	200	Merlin	1	Common Grackle	59
Red-breasted Merganser	3	Eastern Phoebe		Brown-headed Cowbird	96
Ruddy Duck	45	Blue Jay	131	House Finch	79
Ring-necked Pheasant	1	American Crow	453	Purple Finch	
Wild Turkey	40	Fish Crow	18	Common Redpoll	28
Common Loon	2	Common Raven	13	Pine Siskin	
Pied-billed Grebe	2	Horned Lark	23	American Goldfinch	132
Great Blue Heron	8	Black-capped Chickadee	201	House Sparrow	461
Black Vulture	138	Tufted Titmouse	121		
Turkey Vulture	146	Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	<b>Total Species:</b>	<b>80</b>
Northern Harrier	2	White-breasted Nuthatch	103	<b>Total Individuals</b>	<b>18213</b>
Sharp-shinned Hawk	4	Brown Creeper	3	Count Week species	2
Cooper's Hawk	17	House Wren	1		
Northern Goshawk		Winter Wren	7	# of Teams	(Covid)
Bald Eagle	7	Carolina Wren	92	# of Participants on Teams	30
Red-shouldered Hawk	13	Golden-crowned Kinglet		# of Feeder Watchers	12
Red-tailed Hawk	81	Ruby-crowned Kinglet			
Virginia Rail		Eastern Bluebird	97	Low Temp (F)	22
Sora		Hermit Thrush	11	High Temp (F)	34
American Coot		American Robin	44	Skies, A.M.	Cloudy
Killdeer		Gray Catbird	1	Skies, P.M.	M Cldy
Wilson's Snipe		Brown Thrasher		Winds (MPH)	0-5

## PARTICIPANTS BY ZONE – SUSSEX CBC 12/20/2020

- Zone 1** Karyn Cichocki
- Zone 2** Fred Weber, Jack Padalino  
Feeder Watchers – Lee & Terry McQuillin, Don & Donna Traylor
- Zone 3** Marianne Ofenloch
- Zone 4** Sharon Wander, Wade Wander
- Zone 5** Sue Predl, Dave Pasake
- Zone 6 & 7** Marge Barrett, Joe Burgiel, Barb Sendelbach  
Feeder Watcher – Barb Sendelbach
- Zone 8 & 9** Beverly Robertson, William Test
- Zone 10 & 11** Alan Boyd, Dennis Briede
- Zone 12** Tom Halliwell, Hank Burk  
Feeder Watchers – Jessica Brewer, Martin Ventura
- Zone 13 & 14** Maria Loukeris, Katie Besbris, Bob McDonnell, Giselle & William Smisko
- Zone 15** Ken Witkowski, Matt Skalla  
Feeder Watcher – Matt Skalla
- Zone 16** Merle Tanis, Roger Tanis  
Feeder Watchers – Claudia & Peter Lupfer
- Zone 17** Bill & Connie Warren  
Feeder Watchers – Bill & Connie Warren
- Zone 18** Lori Krieger, Mike Livesey

### SUSSEX COUNTY CBC 69<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL ZONE TOTALS *(high count among zones in red)* 12/20/2020

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															
Cackling Goose			2												2
Canada Goose	181	900	162	20	160	172	322	124	90	770	134	316	77	10	3438
Mute Swan		5						5	6	3	5	2	37	2	65
Wood Duck															
Gadwall										3					3
Am. Wigeon															
Am. Black Duck			1		20	6				2		6			35
Mallard	19	10	21		4	36	29	24		28		9		2	182
Ring-neckd Duck		6										27			33
Greater Scaup															
Lesser Scaup		1													1
Bufflehead		20										1			21
Com. Goldeneye		35													35
Hood. Mergansr		30									28	7			65
Com. Mergansr		200													200

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6,7	8,9	10,11	12	13,14	15	16	17	18	TOTAL
Red-br. Mergnsr		3													3
Ruddy Duck		40										5			45
Rng-nckd Pheas.							1								1
Wild Turkey		5			35										40
Common Loon		2													2
P-billed Grebe		2													2
Gr. Blue Heron			2				1	1	1		1	2			8
Black Vulture			2		8	6	35	2	1	77	2	5			138
Turkey Vulture			13		16	13	15	1	3	69	4	10	2		146
Northern Harrier								1		1					2
Shrp-shnd Hawk					1		1		1					1	4
Cooper's Hawk	2	2	1		3	2	2	1				2	1	1	17
Bald Eagle	1	1	2	1					1	1					7
Red-shldrd Hawk		1			3		1	7				1			13
Red-tailed Hawk	3	8	5	17	12	5	8	7	3	8	2	2		1	81
American Coot															
Killdeer															
Wilson's Snipe															
Ring-billed Gull	9	2000	48	2	2	1	39	2	1000	44	2	2	405	6	3562
Herring Gull		4		2					300			1	21		328
Iceland Gull															
Less.Blk-bkd Gull															
Gr Blk-bckd Gull													7		7
Rock Pigeon	26	4	74	203	38	8	105	70	3	10		2	2		545
Mourning Dove	15	38	60	39	59	40	10	3	6	4	22	16	12	1	325
East Screech Owl															
Gr Horned Owl		2	2		1										5
Barred Owl															
Belted Kingfisher					1		1	1			2				5
Rd-bell'd Wood.	7	5	2	2	7	5	3	2	3	3	4	6	2	1	52
Yel-bel Sapsuckr		3	1	1	4	2	1	8		2		1	3		26
Downy Wdpeckr	7	5	7	11	17	7	5	6	9	4	8	11	8	2	107
Hairy Wdpeckr				1		4		2	2		2	1	2	2	16
Northern Flicker	4	1	1	3				1		2	1	2	1		16
Pileated Wdpckr	2	4		4	2	1	2	3	1		2	4	1	2	28
Amer. Kestrel	1	1		1	1		1								5
Merlin								1							1
Eastern Phoebe															
Blue Jay	13	15	13	10	20	19	7	13	4	3	2	10	2		131
American Crow	11	6	59	9	34	89	32	30	50	60	10	10	49	4	453
Fish Crow		5	1						12						18
Common Raven	1	4			1	1	1				1	4			13
Horned Lark			22						1						23
Blk-cap Chkadee	10	22	9	12	28	12	23	16	13	8	23	11	2	12	201

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6,7	8,9	10,11	12	13,14	15	16	17	18	TOTAL
Tufted Titmouse	7	12	5	10	11	11	5	2	9	1	14	18	8	8	121
Red-br Nuthatch		1													1
White-br Nuthatch	9	14	5	4	17	3	4	5	6	8	10	11	6	1	103
Brown Creeper					1							1	1		3
House Wren										1					1
Winter Wren								3	1	1	1		1		7
Carolina Wren	10	8	5		18	6	10	14	2	6	4	5	3	1	92
Goldn-cr Kinglet															
Ruby-cr Kinglet															
Eastern Bluebird	22	9	4		8	6		11	4	14	10	9			97
Hermit Thrush					7			2	1			1			11
American Robin	10	1		1	3		6	4	16		2	1			44
Gray Catbird									1						1
Brown Thrasher															
Nor. Mckingbird	4		4	2	3	3	5	6	2	4					33
Euro. Starling	146	522	175	230	231	285	279	167	61	12	79	34			2221
American Pipit															
Cedar Waxwing			4				6					11			21
Snow Bunting															
Yel-rmpd Warblr															
Am. Tree Sparr	7	4	18	2	2			4	1	8	3	6	1		56
Chipping Sparr									1						1
Field Sparrow				1						1	1				3
Fox Sparrow					1			1							2
Dark-eyed Junco	159	389	436	101	253	297	132	137	240	250	52	222	64	14	2746
Wh-crn Sparrow			1		6		2		2						11
Wh-thrt Sparr	43	82	142	32	99	49	53	55	168	82	2	67	19		893
Song Sparrow	26	15	81	16	21	16		9	4	5	8	13	6	1	221
Swamp Sparrow		2		1	1		10	3	9						26
Eastern Towhee															
North. Cardinal	17	14	20	7	31	11	12	11	16	6	6	6	4	2	163
Red-wngd Blkbird		2	8			2		4	3	2			1		22
Rusty Blackbird									2						2
Comm. Grackle			37			19			3						59
Brwn-hd Cowbrd		20	44		3	8		20		1					96
House Finch	2	13			3	22		2	27		7	2		1	79
Purple Finch															
Comm. Redpoll							28								28
Amer. Goldfinch	16	28	5	2	5	13	3	15	4	5	21	9	2	4	132
House Sparrow	22	28	147	5	73	27	46	39	44		8	12	10		461
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>812</b>	<b>4554</b>	<b>1651</b>	<b>752</b>	<b>1274</b>	<b>1207</b>	<b>1246</b>	<b>845</b>	<b>2137</b>	<b>1509</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>893</b>	<b>760</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>18213</b>
<b>Total # Species</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>80</b>
Bald eagle ages	1a	1a	1a, 1i	1a					1a	1i					5a, 2i

Suss CBC Species History: # of years seen (out of 69 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	44	12	3	Gyrfalcon	0	0	0	Chip Sparrow	16	6	1
Sn Goose	24	8110	607	Shrp-shn Hwk	50	16	5	Monk Pkeet	1	1	1	Field Sparr	44	33	5
Brant	3	3	2	Coop Hawk	46	17	6	Nnday Pket	1	1	1	Lark Sparr	2	1	1
Cck Goose	7	2	2	No Goshawk	11	1	1	E Phoebe	13	2	1	Fox Spar	42	51	7
Can Goose	51	8420	2726	Bald Eagle	28	18	5	No Shrike	20	6	2	DE Junco	69	2746	699
Mute Swan	64	236	57	Rd-shld Hawk	27	13	2	Logg Shrike	6	2	1	WC Sparrow	33	69	11
Tund Swan	4	8	3	Rd-tail Hawk	69	138	55	Blue Jay	69	593	247	WT Sparrow	69	893	179
Wood Dck	39	20	4	Rough Hawk	27	7	2	Am Crow	69	1802	543	Vesp Sparr	5	8	3
Gadwall	22	44	15	King Rail	0	0	0	Fish Crow	16	70	21	Savan Sparr	7	4	2
Eur Wign	1	2	2	Virginia Rail	30	6	2	Com Raven	19	15	6	Song Sparr	69	230	78
Am Wign	19	57	10	Sora	3	2	1	Horned Lark	44	991	175	Linc Sparr	1	1	1
Am Bk Dck	68	314	90	Cm Gallinule	2	1	1	Bkcp Chick	69	716	295	Swmp Spar	66	69	14
Mallard	67	888	358	Am Coot	39	228	39	Breal Chick	2	5	4	E Towhee	25	4	1
Blwg Teal	5	6	3	Killdeer	45	21	4	Tuft Tmse	69	333	132	N Cardinal	68	250	136
N Shovlr	5	2	1	Spot Sndpipr	1	1	1	Rdbr Nthch	46	103	9	BkHd Grsbk	0	0	0
N Pintail	15	6	2	Sol Sndpipr	1	1	1	Whbr Nthch	69	179	74	Dickcissel	2	3	2
GnwnG Teal	23	19	4	Wils Snipe	52	30	7	Brn Creepr	59	21	6	Rdwng Bkbd	65	3006	232
Cnvsbck	20	38	4	Am Woodck	13	2	1	House Wren	1	1	1	E Mdwlark	37	160	43
Redhead	15	18	4	Rng-bill Gull	51	7526	1843	Wntr Wren	39	10	3	Rusty Bkbird	45	372	22
Rngneck	49	285	55	Herring Gull	62	3315	690	Marsh Wren	9	2	1	Brew Bkbrd	1	1	1
Gr Scaup	3	8	4	Iceland Gull	14	3	1	Sedge Wren	1	1	1	Com Grckle	55	15039	774
LsScaup	30	36	6	Kumls Gull	1	1	1	Carol Wren	50	92	23	BH Cowbird	65	2482	315
BkScoter	0	0	0	Ls Bkbk Gull	18	4	2	G-cr Kinglet	62	143	22	Balt Oriole	8	2	1
Lngtl Dck	2	1	1	Glauc Gull	3	2	1	R-cr Kinglet	44	19	4	Pine Grosbk	5	127	35
Buffle	36	76	16	Gr Blkbk Gull	37	316	67	E Bluebird	50	307	89	House Finch	56	1036	271
CmGldneye	50	200	47	Rock Pigeon	38	1101	553	Grchk Thrsh	1	1	1	Purp Finch	61	438	25
Hood Merg	49	154	33	Mourn Dove	68	1145	393	Swns Thrush	1	1	1	Rd Crossbill	4	16	9
Com Merg	57	4193	316	Barn Owl	13	2	1	HermThrush	39	23	6	WW Crssbill	2	1	1
Rdbr Merg	8	3	2	E Scrch Owl	60	20	5	Am Robin	64	5824	334	CmRedpoll	23	443	43
Ruddy	34	391	57	GrHorn Owl	55	36	8	Gray Catbird	24	4	1	Pine Siskin	34	281	30
NBobwhite	5	12	3	Snowy Owl	2	1	1	Br Thrash	6	2	1	Am Gldfinch	69	410	141
Rgnk Pheas	58	61	8	Barred Owl	28	5	2	N Mock	63	159	54	Eve Grosbk	35	485	76
RfGrouse	43	9	3	Lng-ear Owl	20	7	2	Eur Starling	68	23183	4294	House Sparr	69	3028	891
Wild Turkey	33	360	111	Shrt-ear Owl	1	2	2	Am Pipit	7	80	23				
Rdthr Loon	2	1	1	N SwwhT Owl	3	1	1	Cedar Wax	54	545	93				
Com Loon	14	3	2	Belt Kngfshr	67	28	9	McC Lngspr	1	1	1				
Pbill Grebe	38	25	5	Rd-hd Wdpckr	27	9	2	Lplnd Lgspr	8	8	2				
Hrn Grebe	12	13	4	Rd-bel Wdpckr	57	104	29	Snow Bunt	12	120	42				
Rdnk Grebe	2	1	1	Ylbel Sapsckr	36	26	6	N Wtrthrush	1	1	1				
DbldrCorm	7	2	1	Downy Wdpckr	69	162	78	Nash Wrblr	1	1	1				
Am Bittern	3	1	1	Hairy Wdpckr	69	35	18	Com Ylwthrt	2	1	1				
G Bl Heron	56	30	9	No Flicker	64	74	18	CM Warbler	3	1	1				
Grt Egret	0	0	0	Pil Wdpckr	56	28	7	Pine Wrblr	1	1	1				
Bk Vulture	28	370	74	Am Kestrel	63	67	16	Ylmp Wrblr	43	235	24				
Trk Vulture	34	156	54	Merlin	6	2	1	Yelbr Chat	0	0	0				
Gold Eagle	0	0	0	Peregrine	1	1	1	Am Tr Spar	69	1445	398				

Species with zeroes in all columns have only been seen during count week(s).