



32nd Annual Christmas Bird Count (2013)

Co-sponsored by the Medicine Hat Interpretive Program and The Society of Grasslands Naturalists

Dear Birder:

Many thanks to the 31 participants who surveyed territories during this year's Christmas Bird Count (CBC) held on Sunday, December 22. In 2013, the Interpretive Program continued its efforts to recruit new and to retain current feeder watchers. As a result, there were 14 regular and 3 new feeder watchers who contributed to this year's count. Thanks to these folks as well.

Count day temperatures were well below seasonal for the first time since 2010 (Low = -21°/High = -16°C) and snow levels were also greater than the past 2 years. However, no one reported any difficulty accessing survey locations in 2013. All 24 territories were assigned before count day, but 2 territories went uncounted because of participant illness.

A total of 48 species was observed with 13,636 individual birds counted, which was down 31% from the 19,706 individuals reported last year but was still 13% above the long-term 32-year average of 12,120. The 48 species observed in 2013 was much reduced from the record 62 observed last year (23% decrease) and the lowest since the 46 observed in 2001. Looking at historical data, one finds, not surprisingly, there is a strong relationship between temperature and species/individuals seen and counted on our CBCs. Generally when temperatures are "cold" (< -15°C) we see fewer species and count fewer birds than when temperatures are "mild" (near or above 0°C).

One species, Cooper's Hawk, was seen exclusively by feeder watchers. Two species (not included in 48 total), Gyrfalcon and Long-eared Owl, were seen during count week but not on count day.

Despite the decrease in numbers and species, there were record high counts for 4 species and 1 species tied their record high; 1 species had a record low count (see table below).

The highs were represented by 2 non-native species (Ring-necked Pheasant and Eurasian Collared-dove) and 2 native Corvids (Blue Jay and American Crow). Cedar Waxwings tied their previous high and were more numerous than Bohemian Waxwings (27 and 5, respectively), which is unusual because Bohemian Waxwings have been much more common than Cedars on our CBCs historically. House Sparrow (another non-native species) had the all-time low.

Regarding the Top Ten Species, Canada Goose placed first at 6,647 individuals, Mallard second at 2,641, and European Starling third at 1,305 (see enclosed list below).

The biggest change to the top ten was the loss of Common Redpoll and Snow Bunting, as neither species was observed in 2013. For Redpolls, this was a dramatic drop from the record number of 1,259 seen in 2012. This is not unusual for Redpolls to exhibit these types of fluctuations, as they can be quite irruptive. Historically, this was the second time Redpolls went uncounted and there have been 7 other years where fewer than 20 were recorded. Snow Buntings have also had many years when they were not observed or had low counts. These 2 species were replaced in the top ten by Ringed-necked Pheasant and Eurasian Collared-dove.

Species in the Corvid family, which includes American Crow, Black-billed Magpie, and Blue Jay, appear to have rebounded fully from relatively low numbers in 2008. As noted earlier, Crows and Jays had record highs this year. Magpies were down slightly from last year (-11%, 523 in 2012 and 466 in 2013) and were just below the long-term average (-8%, 506) as compared to the 171 record low counted in 2008.

Eurasian Collared-dove numbers increased every year from their first observation in 2003 to 2010, reaching a high count of 112 that year. Observations dropped to 80 individuals in 2011, but increased the last 2 years reaching their new high of 147 this year.

Species generally seen on our CBC that were seen in 2013 but not in 2012 included the following: American Coot (1), Cooper's Hawk (1), Sharp-shinned Hawk (1), Pileated Woodpecker (1), White-throated Sparrow (1), and White-crowned Sparrow (1).

Notable species absent from this year's count were Northern Pintail, Redhead, Canvasback, Lesser Scaup, Greater Scaup, Ring-necked Duck, Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Goshawk, Snowy Owl, Short-eared Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Horned Lark, Golden Crowned Kinglet, Townsend's Solitaire, Pine Siskin, Snow Bunting, Common Redpoll, Purple Finch, Red Crossbill, and Evening Grosbeak.

Of these species, perhaps the one that stands out is the Horned Lark. This marks the 4th consecutive year of few to no observations (1 in 2010, 0 the past 3 years). Historically, Horned Larks averaged 287 individuals from 1982 – 1991 (range 1 to 1,151) and 54 from 1992 – 2013 (range 0 to 480).

A complete species list, along with data from the previous 3 years is enclosed below. Birders interested in the results of this and/or other Christmas bird counts can find them at

<http://web4.audubon.org/bird/cbc/hr/index.html>. Your comments are welcomed, and should be forwarded to the Nature Line at (403) 529-6225 or marty.drut@natureline.info.

Good Birding!

Bob Frew and Marty Drut, Compilers

List of Species with Record Highs and Lows in 2013.

Species	2013 Total	Previous High	Year of Prev. High
HIGHS:			
Ring-necked Pheasant	165	120	2009
Eurasian Collared-dove	147	112	2010
Blue Jay	83	71	2011
American Crow	37	34	2011
Cedar Waxwing	27	27	2008
LOWS:	2013 Total	Previous Low	Year of Prev. Low
House Sparrow	493	587	2006

Top 10 Species:

Canada Goose -	6,647
Mallard -	2,641
European Starling -	1,305
Rock Dove (Pigeon) -	500
House Sparrow -	493
Black-billed Magpie -	466
House Finch -	330
Black-capped Chickadee -	191
Ringed-necked Pheasant -	165
Eurasian Collared-dove -	147



Species seen in previous years that were not seen in 2012 but were seen in 2013:

Species	Number Seen	Year Last Seen
American Coot	1	2011
Cooper's Hawk	1	2011
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	2011
Pileated Woodpecker	1	2008
White-throated Sparrow	1	2009
White-crowned Sparrow	1	2009

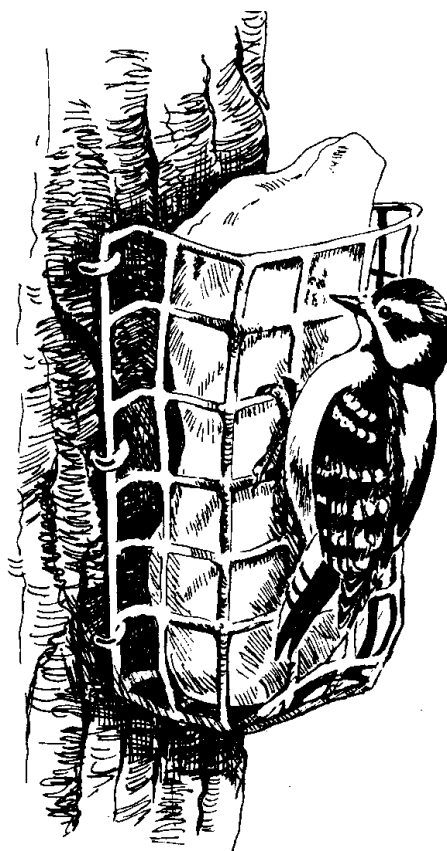
Species seen in most years that were not seen in 2013:

Species	Year Last Seen
Northern Pintail	2010
Redhead	2012
Canvasback	2008
Lesser Scaup	2012
Greater Scaup	2009
Ring-necked Duck	2012
Red-tailed Hawk	2012
Northern Goshawk	2012
Snowy Owl	2012
Short-eared owl	2010
Belted Kingfisher	2012
Horned Lark	2010
Golden-crowned Kinglet	2012
Townsend's Solitaire	2012
Pine Siskin	2012
Snow Bunting	2012
Common Redpoll	2012

Purple Finch	2009
Red Crossbill	2008
Evening Grosbeak	2007

FIELD PARTICIPANTS:

Mark Schiebelbein
 Corlaine Gardner
 Rob Gardner
 Ben Velner
 Michael Velner
 Dave McKenzie
 Bob Frew
 Gary Martin
 McKenzie Fai
 Trish Fai
 Colton Prins
 Cam Lockerbie
 Jim Knelson
 Donna Steele
 Sue Higgins
 Martha Munz Gue
 Marty Drut
 Jim Marshall
 Jo-Anne Reynolds
 Jerry Herzig
 Mike O'Shea
 Dale Homes
 John Slater
 John Grierson
 Val Martins
 Marie Stein
 Anneke Baker
 Darlene Black
 Jim Black
 Val Felesky
 Charmaine Trottier



FEEDER WATCHERS:

Regulars

Barry Anderson
 Judy Anderson
 Norm Carlson
 John Dobbin
 Lisa Holmes
 Keith Gerrard
 Gordon Meyers
 Jennifer Nygaard
 Stan Runions
 Jack Simmonds
 Judy Simmonds
 Paul Thibault
 Carol Moen
 Bert Tymensen

New

Janet Neubauer
 Rob Wapple
 Lorrie Sielski

SPECIES	Dec 22 *2013*	Dec 16 2012	Dec 18 2011	Dec 19 2010
Canada Goose	6,647	10,475	9,378	7,538
Cackling Goose	-	1 <i>NEW</i>		
White-fronted Goose	-	3 <i>NEW</i>		
Mallard	2,641	2,419	2,985	4,203
American Wigeon	-	2	2	1
Green-winged Teal	2	2	-	5
Northern Shoveler	2	2	-	-
Gadwall	-	3	5	1
Northern Pintail	-	-	-	4
Common Goldeneye	80	67	155	102
Bufflehead	2	2	3	8
Lesser Scaup	-	2	5	2
Redhead	-	1	-	3
Ring-necked Duck	-	-	2	1
Common Merganser	10	5	32	4
Hooded Merganser	-	CW ¹	-	-
American Coot	1	-	2	5
Bald Eagle	5	9	13	8
Golden Eagle	1	1	2	3
Merlin	2	7	2	3
American Kestrel	-	CW ¹	1	-
Prairie Falcon	1	2	7	2
Red-tailed Hawk	-	1	4	-
Rough-legged Hawk	4	1	14	3
Northern Goshawk	-	2	1	1
Cooper's Hawk	1	-	1	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	-	1	3
Gyr Falcon	CW ¹	-	1	-
Gray Partridge	55	21	77	57
Ring-necked Pheasant	165	41	73	71
Sharp-tailed Grouse	103	6	27	65
Rock Dove (Pigeon)	500	666	954	641
Eurasian Collared-dove	147	98	80	112
Mourning Dove	8	9	5	6
Great Horned Owl	5	2	6	6
Snowy Owl	-	4	-	-
Short-eared Owl	-	-	-	1
Northern Saw-whet Owl	-	-	CW ¹	-
Long-eared Owl	CW ¹	-	-	-
Belted Kingfisher	-	2	2	1
Downy Woodpecker	31	50	43	56
Hairy Woodpecker	7	4	9	9
Northern Flicker	88	109	108	108
Pileated Woodpecker	1	-	-	-

SPECIES	Dec 22 *2013*	Dec 16 2012	Dec 18 2011	Dec 19 2010
Horned Lark	-	-	-	1
Blue Jay	83	56	71	38
Black-billed Magpie	466	534	446	377
American Crow	37	15	34	10
Common Raven	1	2	1	-
Black-capped Chickadee	191	304	275	232
Red-breasted Nuthatch	31	113	87	152
White-breasted Nuthatch	7	6	4	5
Brown Creeper	4	2	2	2
Golden-crowned Kinglet	-	25	4	13
Townsend's Solitaire	-	2	4	3
American Robin	63	79	25	11
Varied Thrush	-	CW ¹	-	-
Bohemian Waxwing	5	203	346	138
Cedar Waxwing	27	14	10	-
European Starling	1,305	1,277	1,476	471
Northern Shrike	1	1	1	2
American Tree Sparrow	25	42	11	25
Harris's Sparrow	2	2	1	-
White-crowned Sparrow	1	-	-	-
White-throated Sparrow	1	-	-	-
Dark-eyed Junco	33	64	108	95
Pine Siskin	-	2	7	35
Snow Bunting	-	477	4	646
Common Grackle	-	1	-	-
Red-winged Blackbird	1	2	-	-
Rusty Blackbird	-	20	1	6
Common Redpoll	-	1,259	545	44
Hoary Redpoll	-	8	24	-
Pine Grosbeak	20	33	66	CW ¹
House Finch	330	389	609	660
White-winged Crossbill	-	7	-	-
American Goldfinch	-	3	20	-
House Sparrow	493	745	923	748

¹CW indicates species seen during count week

Count Statistics					
	Dec 22 *2013*	Dec 16 2012	Dec 18 2011	Dec 19 2010	32 Year Average
TOTAL SPECIES	48	62	59	55	45
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	13,636	19,706	19,105	16,860	12,120
Participants	31	35	38	37	36
Walking hours	45.5	52.0	49.0	60.5	44.0
Walking km	80.5	90.0	105.5	106.0	83.0
Driving hours	88.0	40.0	25.5	33.0	28.0
Driving km	531.5	636.5	403.0	538.3	427.0
Feeder hours	36.5	72.5	94.0	100.0	25.0
Temp °C min/max	-21/-16	-8/0	-1/3	-15/-11	-12/-4
Snow cover	5-15cm	0-5cm	0-5cm	2-15cm	5-12cm
Weather - Sky	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Sunny	Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	N/A