

**MEDICINE HAT
INTERPRETIVE PROGRAM**
Managed by Grasslands Naturalists



**30th Annual
Christmas Bird Count (2011)**

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

Dear Birder:

Many thanks to the 38 participants who surveyed territories during this year's Christmas Bird Count (CBC) held on Sunday, December 18. In 2011, the Interpretive Program continued its plan that began in 2010 to recruit new and to retain current feeder watchers. As a result, there were 20 ongoing and 10 new feeder watchers who contributed to this year's count. Thanks to these folks as well.

Count day temperatures were very mild compared to last year's ($-1^{\circ}/3^{\circ}\text{C}$ and $-15^{\circ}/-11^{\circ}\text{C}$, respectively) as were snow conditions; no one reported any difficulty accessing survey locations in 2011. This year, 3 of the 23 territories in our count circle went unassigned and were not surveyed.

A total of 59 species was observed with 19,105 individual birds counted, which was up 13% from the 16,860 individuals reported last year and was 65% above the long-term 30-year average of 11,816. Total species was similar to the past 9 years, which ranged between 50 (2009) and 61 (2002 - high), and represented the second highest species total in count history. Three species, American Kestrel, Brown Creeper, and Harris's Sparrow, were seen exclusively by feeder watchers. One species, Northern Saw-whet Owl, was seen during count week but not count day and was not included in the final species total.

There were record high counts for 8 species and 4 species tied their record highs; no record low counts were noted (see table below). There did not appear to be any particular pattern to the high counts as the species represented a wide variety of bird "types". Two (Ring-necked Duck and Common Merganser) were waterfowl, 3 (Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, and Prairie Falcon) were raptors, and 4 (Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, and Hoary Redpoll) would be considered "feeder" birds. It is interesting to note that none of the Hoary Redpolls counted were observed at a bird feeder. The remaining 3 species (American Crow, American Robin, and European Starling) did not fit well into any of these groups but may be loosely

affiliated with the other feeder birds. Some like the Red-tailed Hawk, Prairie Falcon, and American Robin may have been more numerous because of the mild fall weather conditions.

Two species, Common Redpoll and Pine Grosbeak, approached their all-time highs in 2011. Common Redpolls and Hoary Redpolls are known to flock together in winter and the record number of Hoary Redpolls observed may have been aided by this behavior. Hoary Redpolls have not been observed on the Count since 1993 although there were years between then and now when Common Redpolls were numerous. It seems likely that Hoary Redpolls were present during those years but were unaccounted for because it is difficult to discriminate them from Common Redpolls especially when they commingle in large flocks. The Hoary Redpolls counted in 2011 were observed in small flocks (<50) that remained static long enough for the observers to clearly separate them from the Common Redpolls. As for the 66 Pine Grosbeaks counted, 2011 may represent an irruptive year for this species as only a total of 2 birds were observed on the past 4 Christmas Counts as compared to the 61 observed in 2006.

Regarding the Top Ten Species, Canada Goose placed first at 9,378 individuals, Mallard second at 2,985, and European Starling third at 1,476 (see enclosed list below). Two species, Common Redpoll (545) and Bohemian Waxwing (346), were not in the Top Ten in 2010. Common Redpolls may be experiencing an irruptive year as they averaged about 64 individuals on the past 9 CBC's after the last large tally of 344 in 2001. Bohemian Waxwings doubled from their total in 2010 (171) and continued their upward trend from low counts in of 3 in 2009 and 1 in 2008. Black-billed Magpies decreased slightly in 2011 from 2010 but remained well above their record low count in 2008 (446, 470, and 171, respectively). Tallies from 2009-2011 were similar to the 2007 – 2006 counts but were about 12% below historic numbers.

The Eurasian Collared-dove population (first reported in the City in 2003) may have reached a second plateau as they decreased about 29% to 80 from the previous high of 112 last year. The population appeared to plateau from 2008 to 2009 after doubling during each of the first 5 years after their initial appearance; however, they doubled again in 2010 jumping to 112 from 61 in 2009.

Species generally seen on our CBC that were seen in 2011 but not in 2010 included the following: Red-tailed Hawk (4), American Kestrel (1), Gyrfalcon (1), Common Raven (1), Cedar Waxwing (10), Pine Grosbeak (66), Harris's Sparrow (1), Hoary Redpoll (24), and American Goldfinch (20). Notable species absent from this year's count were Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Redhead, Canvasback, Greater Scaup, Snowy Owl, Short-eared Owl, Pileated Woodpecker, Horned Lark, Purple Finch, Red Crossbill, and Evening Grosbeak.

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://birds.audubon.org/historical-results>. Your comments are welcomed, and should be forwarded to the Nature Line at (403) 529-6225.

Good Birding!

Bob Frew and Marty Drut, Compilers

List of Species with Record Highs and Lows in 2011.

Species	2011 Total	Previous High	Year of Prev. High
Ring-necked Duck	2	2	2005
Common Merganser	32	30	2007
Red-tailed Hawk	4	4	2003
Rough-legged Hawk	14	7	2003
Prairie Falcon	7	4	2006, 2001
Hairy Woodpecker	9	9	2010, 2008
Northern Flicker	108	108	2010
Blue Jay	71	53	2007
American Crow	34	29	2010
American Robin	25	16	2000
European Starling	1,476	940	2007
Hoary Redpoll	24	2	1993
No Record Lows			

Top 10 Species:

- Canada Goose – 9,378
- Mallard – 2,985
- European Starling – 1,476
- Rock Dove – 954
- House Sparrow – 923
- House Finch – 609
- Common Redpoll – 545
- Black-billed Magpie – 446
- Bohemian Waxwing - 346
- Black-capped Chickadee – 275



Species seen in previous years that were not seen in 2010 but were seen in 2011:

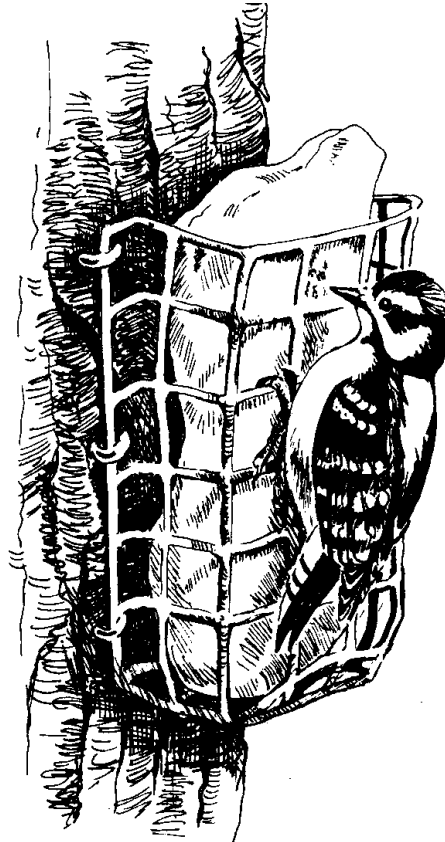
Species	Number Seen	Year Last Seen
Red-tailed Hawk	4	2007
American Kestrel	1	2006
Gyr Falcon	1	2000
Raven	1	2009
Cedar Waxwing	10	2009
Harris's Sparrow	1	2007
Pine Grosbeak	66	2008
Hoary Redpoll	24	1993
American Goldfinch	20	2009

Species seen in most years that were not seen in 2011:

Species	Year Last Seen
Northern Pintail	2010
Green-winged Teal	2010
Redhead	2010
Canvasback	2008
Greater Scaup	2009
Snowy Owl	2008
Short-eared owl	2010
Pileated Woodpecker	2008
Horned Lark	2010
Purple Finch	2009
Red Crossbill	2008
Evening Grosbeak	2007

FIELD PARTICIPANTS:

Judy Anderson
Barry Anderson
Lauren Hider
Marty Drut
Sue Higgins
Donna Steele
Colton Prins
Mackenzie Fai
Stephan Peck
Kevin Winchester
Bob Frew
Corlaine Gardner
Rob Gardner
Fay Felesky
Val Felesky
Dale Holmes
David Latimer
Roxanne Latimer
Joel Latimer
Jon Latimer
Cameron Lockerbie
Jim Knelson
Lorine Marshall
Jim Marshall
Michael O'Shea
David Parberry
Julie Tingley
Mark Schiebelbein
Frank Weber
John Slater
Milt Spitzer
Marie Stein
Paul Thibault
Ben Velner
Mike Velner
Rick Carrier



FEEDER WATCHERS:

Regulars

George Lukasiewich
Bernice Morrison
Judy Simmonds
Jack Simmonds
Donna Stein

Second Year

Joan Armour
Marj Brent
Norm Carlson
Nelson Hogg
Bob Kawaza
Carol Moen
Phil Monteith
Linda Perchase
Melvin Roth
Stan Runions
Jean Shannon
Craig Shannon
Randy Stotz
Ed Sturm
Sandra Wilson

New

Dale Branter
Roger Colbe
Brian Daudlin
Wayne Holbrook
Donna MacLean
Jennifer Nygaard
Frances Satherlie
Hanna Smail
Brian Smail
Rick Smith

SPECIES	Dec 18 *2011*	Dec 19 2010	Dec 20 2009	Dec 21 2008
Canada Goose	9,378	7,538	7,048	3,389
Green-winged Teal	-	5	3	2
American Wigeon	2	1	1	-
Mallard	2,985	4,203	9,461	2,300
Northern Pintail	-	4	-	-
Gadwall	5	1	-	-
Canvasback	-	-	-	2
Redhead	-	3	-	1
Greater Scaup	-	-	1	CW ¹
Lesser Scaup	5	2	-	-
Ring-necked Duck	2	1	-	-
Common Goldeneye	155	102	120	98
Bufflehead	3	8	17	1
Common Merganser	32	4	4	2
Bald Eagle	13	8	21	10
Cooper's Hawk	1	1	-	-
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	3	1	CW ¹
Northern Goshawk	1	1	-	-
Red-tailed Hawk	4	-	CW ¹	-
Rough-legged Hawk	14	3	2	2
Golden Eagle	2	3	1	-
Merlin	2	3	2	3
Prairie Falcon	7	2	3	2
Gyr Falcon	1	-	-	-
American Kestrel	1	-	-	-
Gray Partridge	77	57	25	28
Ring-necked Pheasant	73	71	120	79
Sharp-tailed Grouse	27	65	49	28
Chukar	-	-	-	CW ¹
American Coot	2	5	-	-
Great Horned Owl	6	6	6	4
Snowy Owl	-	-	-	1
Short-eared Owl	-	1	-	2
Northern Saw-whet Owl	CW ¹	-	-	-
Rock Dove (Pigeon)	954	641	1,971	570
Eurasian Collared-dove	80	112	61	58
Mourning Dove	5	6	2	4
Belted Kingfisher	2	1	-	-
Downy Woodpecker	43	56	33	25
Hairy Woodpecker	9	9	2	9
Pileated Woodpecker	-	-	CW ¹	1
Northern Flicker	108	108	104	47
Northern Shrike	1	2	1	1
Horned Lark	-	1	67	78
Blue Jay	71	38	45	21

SPECIES	Dec 18 *2011*	Dec 19 2010	Dec 20 2009	Dec 21 2008
Black-billed Magpie	446	377	470	171
American Crow	34	10	29	15
Common Raven	1	-	2	1
Black-capped Chickadee	275	232	204	154
Red-breasted Nuthatch	87	152	96	25
White-breasted Nuthatch	4	5	3	4
Brown Creeper	2	2	1	-
Golden-crowned Kinglet	4	13	-	-
Townsend's Solitaire	4	3	1	1
American Robin	25	11	14	11
European Starling	1,476	471	739	176
Bohemian Waxwing	346	138	3	1
Cedar Waxwing	10	-	20	27
American Tree Sparrow	11	25	36	4
Harris's Sparrow	1	-	CW ¹	-
White-crowned Sparrow	-	-	1	-
White-throated Sparrow	-	-	2	1
Fox Sparrow	-	-	CW ¹	-
Dark-eyed Junco	108	95	44	44
Snow Bunting	4	646	400	1,550
Western Meadowlark	-	-	CW ¹	-
Rusty Blackbird	1	6	-	-
Red-winged Blackbird	-	-	-	CW ¹
Common Grackle	-	-	CW ¹	-
Pine Grosbeak	66	CW ¹	-	2
American Goldfinch	20	-	2	7
Purple Finch	-	-	1	6
Red Crossbill	-	-	-	2
White-winged Crossbill	-	-	CW ¹	-
House Finch	609	660	456	312
Common Redpoll	545	44	76	131
Hoary Redpoll	24	-	-	-
Pine Siskin	7	35	22	58
House Sparrow	923	748	738	695

¹CW indicates species seen during count week

Count Statistics					
	Dec 18 *2011*	Dec 19 2010	Dec 20 2009	Dec 21 2008	30 Year Average
TOTAL SPECIES	59	55	50	51	44
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	19,105	16,860	22,419	10,166	11,563
Participants	38	37	32	40	36
Walking hours	49.0	60.5	50.5	45.0	44.0
Walking km	105.5	106.0	91.5	84.0	81.0
Driving hours	25.5	33.0	38.25	31.5	26.0
Driving km	403.0	538.3	525.5	484.0	417.0
Feeder hours	94.0	100.0	20.75	16.0	21.0
Temp °C min/max	-1/3	-15/-11	-9/-6	-36/-28	-13/-4
Snow cover	0-5cm	2-15cm	2-10cm	5-60cm	5-12
Weather - Sky	Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	N/A

