

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



June 28, 2011

**2011 SPRING BIRD AND FLOWER COUNT**

Fellow Birders and Flower Watchers:

2011 was another great year as one new species was seen on the count – yellow rail. However, there were only 7 species with recorded high counts down from 17 in 2010 and 7 species experienced all time lows in 2011 (see Table 1 below). The number of participants decreased slightly from 2010 with a corresponding decrease in distances driven and covered on foot (see Data Summary Table below). Many thanks to all those who volunteered their time this year!

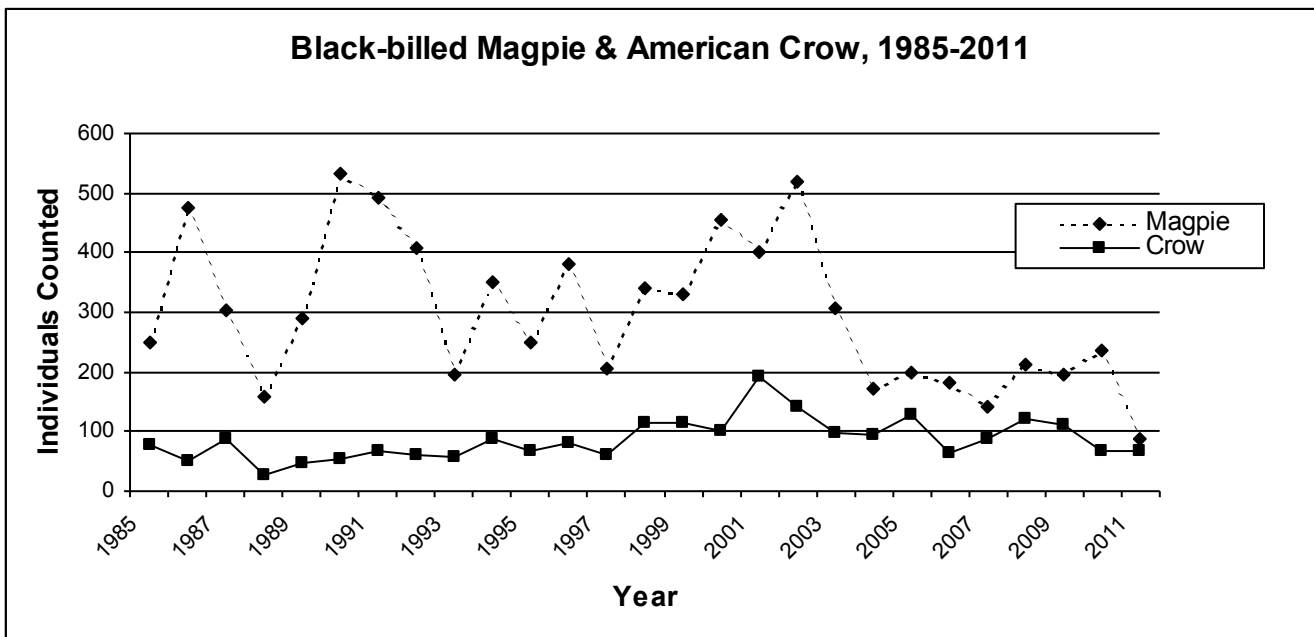
**New Species Observed in 2011:** Yellow rail - 1

Table 1. 2011 Spring Bird Count All Time High and Low Observations.

<b>2011 Spring Bird Count – Highs and Lows</b>			
<b>Species</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Previous High</b>	<b>Year</b>
Cinnamon Teal	10	9	2010
Eurasian-collared Dove	13	11	2010
Downy Woodpecker	30	24	2009
Least Flycatcher	139	123	2002
Black-capped Chickadee	72	71	2010
Black-headed Grosbeak	1	1	Last observed in 1987
Purple Finch	5	2	2002 & 1999
<b>Species</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Previous Low</b>	<b>Year</b>
Double-crested Cormorant	0	2	2 or more observed in all previous count years
Common Merganser	4	9	2009 and 1995
Killdeer	26	26	2009
Willet	4	4	2006
Spotted Sandpiper	5	7	1987
Black-billed Magpie	89	171	2004

All of the species with observed highs in 2011 were native species except Eurasian-collared dove. Three species, cinnamon teal, Eurasian-collared dove, and black-capped chickadee experienced highs for the second year in a row and 1 species, Downy woodpecker, had its previous high in 2009. A black-headed grosbeak was only observed during one other count, 1987, the second year the count was conducted.

Interestingly, 5 of the species with low counts in 2011 were water or shorebirds. This is somewhat surprising considering the amount of water present in our area this spring – the low counts may indicate water birds such as double-crested cormorant were distributed over a wider area in lower densities and shorebirds were unable to find suitable habitat because of high water. As for black-billed magpies, their numbers seem to have dropped off since 2003 whereas American crow numbers have seemingly remained stable or exhibited a much smaller change (see graph below).



Less frequently seen species observed in 2011 included pied-billed grebe (1), sharp-shinned hawk (2), ferruginous hawk (1), Virginia rail (1), solitary sandpiper (4), Caspian tern (1), short-eared owl (1), ruby-crowned kinglet (1), ovenbird (3), American-tree sparrow (1), and white-throated sparrow (1).

The top five for 2011 were: European starling (1,048), American robin (732), Canada goose (543), yellow warbler (417), and red-winged blackbird (378). Two gull species, Franklin’s and ring-billed, that were in the top five last year dropped considerably in 2011 and contributed to the decline in total individuals observed this year; Franklin’s gull went from 1,006 to 9 and ring-billed gull went from 862 to 88 (note - there was a large colony of Franklin’s gulls observed at Pakowki Lake this spring).

No species was seen exclusively during count week.

As for flowers in bloom, there were 46 species observed, which is above average for the spring count. Likely, the unusually wet spring translated into more wildflowers observed.

Yours truly,

*Marty Drut*

Marty Drut  
Count Compiler

DATA SUMMARY - 2011					
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total Individuals	6,682	11,170	10,297	13,123	7,801
Total Bird Species	118	142	127	139	126
Total Flower Species	36	33	32	53	46
Participants	19	30	25	35	32
Total Km Walked	45.75	95	76	86	71
Total Km Driven	181	293	236	294.5	215
Hours of Observation	47.25	95.25	86.25	86	62.75
on foot:	32.25	60.25	50.5	52.5	39.25
by car:	15	35.0	35.75	33.5	23.5
feeder:		2	2	4	6

### **Wildflowers in bloom: 46 species**

Prairie Onion ( <i>Allium textile</i> )	Early Yellow Locoweed ( <i>Oxytropis sericea</i> )
Star-flowered Solomon's Seal ( <i>Smilacina stellata</i> )	Golden Bean ( <i>Thermopsis rhombifolia</i> )
Willow Species ( <i>Salix sp.</i> )	Wild Vetch ( <i>Vicia Americana</i> )
Pale Comandra (Bastard Toadflax) ( <i>Comandra umbellata</i> )	Wild Blue Flax ( <i>Linum lewisii</i> )
Field Chickweed ( <i>Cerastium arvense</i> )	Leafy Spurge ( <i>Euphorbia esula</i> )
Mouse-eared Chickweed ( <i>Cerastium vulgatum</i> )	Early Blue Violet ( <i>Viola adunca</i> )
Western Wallflower (Prairie Rocket) ( <i>Erysimum asperum</i> )	Yellow (Nuttall's) Prairie Violet ( <i>Viola nuttallii</i> )
Dame's Rocket ( <i>Hesperis matronalis</i> )	Red-osier Dogwood ( <i>Cornus stolonifera</i> )
Golden Currant ( <i>Ribes aureum</i> )	Moss Phlox ( <i>Phlox hoodii</i> )
Saskatoon ( <i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i> )	Narrow-leaved Puccoon ( <i>Lithospermum incisum</i> )
Three-flowered Avens ( <i>Geum triflorum</i> )	Smooth Blue Beard-tongue ( <i>Penstemon nitidus</i> )
Silverweed ( <i>Potentilla anserine</i> )	Tartarian Honeysuckle ( <i>Lonicera tatarica</i> )
Chokecherry ( <i>Prunus virginiana</i> )	Common Lilac ( <i>Syringa vulgaris</i> )
Two-grooved Milk Vetch ( <i>Astragalus bisulcatus</i> )	Common Yarrow ( <i>Achillea millefolium</i> )
Purple Milk Vetch ( <i>Astragalus dasyglottis</i> )	Low Everlasting (Pussy-toes) ( <i>Antennaria aprica</i> )
Cushion Milk Vetch ( <i>Astragalus gilviflorus</i> )	Colorado Rubberplant ( <i>Hymenoxys richardsonii</i> )
Narrow-leaved Milk Vetch ( <i>Astragalus pectinatus</i> )	Common Dandelion ( <i>Taraxacum officinale</i> )
Common Caragana ( <i>Caragana arborescens</i> )	Yellow Goat's-beard ( <i>Tragopogon dubius</i> )

**Wildflowers continued:**

Others observed  
(not in taxonomic order):

Tufted Vetch (*Vicia cracca*)  
Tansy Mustard (*Descurainia sophia*)  
Penny Cress (*Thlaspi arvense*)  
Wild Mustard (*Brassica kaber*)  
Skunk-bush (*Rhus trilobata*)  
Shepherd's Purse  
(*Capsella bursa-pastoris*)  
Hoary Pucoon (*Lithospermum canescens*)  
Ground Plum (*Astragalus crassicaarpus*)  
Stoneseed (*Lithospermum ruderales*)  
Black Medic (*Medicago lupulina*)

**PARTICIPANTS**

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**Participants continued:**

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Species	May 27 2007	May 25 2008	May 24 2009	May 30 2010	May 28 2011
Pied-billed Grebe	-	-	-	1	1
Horned Grebe	-	2	-	5	2
Eared Grebe	5	19	15	6	46
Western Grebe	-	1	3	2	-
White Pelican	51	159 <i>high</i>	144	110	79
Double-crested Cormorant	4	40 <i>high</i>	16	12	-
American Bittern	-	-	-	-	-
Great Blue Heron	114	50	143	108	22
Black-crowned Night Heron	1	-	-	-	-
White-faced Ibis	-	1	-	-	-
Snow Goose	-	-	1	-	-
Canada Goose	606	549	596	930 <i>high</i>	543
Wood Duck	5	7	3	2	2
Green-winged Teal	-	2	-	11 <i>high</i>	8
Mallard	135	226	205	457 <i>high</i>	238
Northern Pintail	26	27	22	93	49
Blue-winged Teal	48	96	81	148	62
Cinnamon Teal	1	-	6	9 <i>high</i>	10 <i>high</i>
Northern Shoveler	57	109	78	154	144
Gadwall	45	88	176 <i>high</i>	97	35
Eurasian Wigeon	-	-	6 <i>high</i>	1	-
American Wigeon	29	26	16	54 <i>high</i>	26
Canvasback	31	25	20	26	26
Redhead	11	38 <i>high</i>	18	11	13
Ring-necked Duck	-	1	-	-	4
Lesser Scaup	6	14	19	68	9
Greater Scaup	5	8 <i>high</i>	2	5	-
Common Goldeneye	11	25	16	20	2
Bufflehead	-	1	-	5	-
Hooded Merganser	1	-	-	-	-
Red-breasted Merganser	-	2	-	-	-
Common Merganser	50	22	9	24	4 <i>low</i>
Ruddy Duck	2	1	11	1	5
Turkey Vulture	8	23 <i>high</i>	22	23 <i>high</i>	5
Osprey	1	5 <i>high</i>	3	-	-
Northern Harrier	1	18	12	3	6
Bald Eagle	3	2	7 <i>high</i>	5	5
Sharp-shinned Hawk	-	-	-	1	2
Cooper's Hawk	2	1	1	2	2
Broad-winged Hawk	CW	1	1	1	-
Swainson's Hawk	13	24	20	27	13
Red-tailed Hawk	10	17	19 <i>high</i>	8	7
Ferruginous Hawk	-	1	-	-	1
Rough-legged Hawk	-	2 <i>high</i>	1	-	-

Species	May 27 2007	May 25 2008	May 24 2009	May 30 2010	May 28 2011
American Kestrel	12	16	14	13	11
Merlin	3	10	7	10	5
Prairie Falcon	5	4	4	<b>6 high</b>	1
Peregrine Falcon	-	<b>1 NEW!</b>	-	-	-
Gray Partridge	14	13	12	8	2
Ring-necked Pheasant	29	<b>92 high</b>	87	62	35
Sharp-tailed Grouse	-	3	-	-	3
Yellow Rail	-	-	-	-	<b>1 NEW!</b>
Virginia Rail	-	-	-	-	1
Sora	5	13	6	5	4
American Coot	16	<b>66 high</b>	54	20	34
Killdeer	41	46	<b>26 low</b>	27	<b>26 low</b>
Black-necked Stilt	1	-	-	1	-
American Avocet	7	6	2	24	5
Greater Yellowlegs	-	-	1	-	-
Lesser Yellowlegs	1	-	3	-	-
Solitary Sandpiper	-	1	-	1	4
Willet	7	22	11	11	<b>4 low</b>
Spotted Sandpiper	14	15	31	35	<b>5 low</b>
Upland Sandpiper	-	-	3	-	-
Whimbrel	-	<b>5 high</b>	-	-	-
Long-billed Curlew	18	9	8	16	3
Marbled Godwit	13	32	18	<b>68 high</b>	16
Baird's Sandpiper	-	-	-	<b>1 NEW!</b>	-
"Peeps" Species	-	-	-	-	15
Common Snipe	20	27	15	10	17
Wilson's Phalarope	23	40	28	35	8
Red-necked Phalarope	-	-	-	<b>2 NEW!</b>	-
Franklin's Gull	23	127	213	1,006 <b>high</b>	9
Ring-billed Gull	122	598	350	862	88
California Gull	58	29	64	158	15
"White-headed Gulls"	20	14	-	16	3
Common Tern	7	4	16	3	-
Caspian Tern	1	6	-	-	1
Forster's Tern	-	1	-	-	-
Black Tern	4	5	-	2	-
Rock Pigeon	272	446	383	488	233
Mourning Dove	195	313	299	156	97
Eurasian-collared Dove	4	5	7	<b>11 high</b>	<b>13 high</b>
Black-billed Cuckoo	-	-	-	CW	-
Great Horned Owl	7	13	10	4	3
Short-eared Owl	-	-	-	-	1
Common Nighthawk	-	-	-	1	-
Belted Kingfisher	3	7	6	4	1

Species	May 27 2007	May 25 2008	May 24 2009	May 30 2010	May 28 2011
Pileated Woodpecker	1	2 <i>high</i>	-	2 <i>high</i>	1
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	-	1	-	-	-
Red-naped Sapsucker	CW	-	-	-	-
Sapsucker Species	-	-	-	1	-
Downy Woodpecker	8	19	24 <i>high</i>	16	30 <i>high</i>
Hairy Woodpecker	1	1	1	4	3
Northern Flicker	30	76	48	82	47
Western Wood Pewee	9	1	7	3	-
Olive-sided Flycatcher	CW	-	-	-	-
“Trail’s Flycatcher” = (Alder & Willow Flycatcher)	CW	2	-	-	-
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	-	CW	-	2	-
Willow Flycatcher	-	CW	1	-	-
Least Flycatcher	36	41	57	89	139 <i>high</i>
Empidonax Species	-	-	-	18	1
Eastern Phoebe	-	-	1	1	-
Say’s Phoebe	1	2	2	2	-
Western Kingbird	97	38	98	75	11
Eastern Kingbird	47	31	92	125	28
Horned Lark	11	45	16	44	26
Tree Swallow	97	204	305 <i>high</i>	173	82
Violet-green Swallow	26	4	36	61 <i>high</i>	13
N. Roughed-winged Swallow	17	12	9	6	8
Bank Swallow	8	122	46	57	46
Cliff Swallow	35	91	68	215	105
Barn Swallow	41	39	35	39	94
Purple Martin	CW	-	-	-	-
Blue Jay	8	9	18 <i>high</i>	11	7
Black-billed Magpie	143	213	196	236	89 <i>low</i>
American Crow	89	123	110	69	68
Common Raven	-	-	-	9 <i>high</i>	-
Black-capped Chickadee	25	60	56	71 <i>high</i>	72 <i>high</i>
Red-breasted Nuthatch	10	13	22	22	14
White-breasted Nuthatch	-	-	3	3	-
Rock Wren	6	-	2	31 <i>high</i>	9
House Wren	148	215	256	136	195
Marsh Wren	-	7 <i>high</i>	1	2	2
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	-	1	-	-	1
Mountain Bluebird	1	-	-	-	-
Veery	-	2	-	2	3
Swainson’s Thrush	3	24	23	19	18
Hermit Thrush	-	-	-	11	-
American Robin	443	819	894	918 <i>high</i>	732

Species	May 27 2007	May 25 2008	May 24 2009	May 30 2010	May 28 2011
Gray Catbird	24	69	54	81	49
Northern Mockingbird	-	1	-	-	-
Brown Thrasher	20	67	62	29	19
Sprague's Pipit	7	10	10	10	7
Cedar Waxwing	2	56	-	26	4
Loggerhead Shrike	1	1	-	1	-
Northern Shrike	-	<b>2 NEW!</b>	2	-	-
European Starling	845	779	878	1,171	1,048
Blue-headed Vireo (Solitary)	-	CW	-	-	-
Warbling Vireo	21	9	21	9	7
Red-eyed Vireo	2	5	-	<b>8 high</b>	2
Orange-crowned Warbler	-	10	2	6	7
Tennessee Warbler	-	11	3	7	11
Yellow Warbler	204	290	377	270	417
Yellow-rumped Warbler	-	7	6	1	2
Blackpoll Warbler	-	4	17	1	7
Ovenbird	-	CW	-	-	3
Northern Waterthrush	-	1	-	-	-
Black-and-white Warbler	-	-	1	-	-
American Redstart	1	1	1	5	-
Common Yellowthroat	21	12	19	13	9
Wilson's Warbler	-	CW	2	1	-
Yellow-breasted Chat	3	CW	1	2	3
Warbler Species	-	-	-	-	4
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	-	1	1	3	2
Black-headed Grosbeak	-	-	-	-	<b>1 high</b>
Lazuli Bunting	CW	6	1	5	1
Spotted Towhee	24	47	61	32	15
American Tree Sparrow	-	1	-	-	1
Chipping Sparrow	30	<b>309 high</b>	82	151	149
Clay-coloured Sparrow	57	145	<b>168 high</b>	83	107
Brewer's Sparrow	-	-	-	3	-
Vesper Sparrow	49	<b>137 high</b>	117	58	22
Lark Sparrow	54	52	80	35	15
Lark Bunting	2	16	1	-	-
Savannah Sparrow	33	55	40	24	53
Baird's Sparrow	5	3	3	2	1
Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow	-	<b>5 NEW!</b>	-	-	-
Grasshopper Sparrow	2	-	3	-	-
Song Sparrow	5	7	15	9	2
White-throated Sparrow	-	-	-	1	1
White-crowned Sparrow	-	6	-	1	7
Lincoln's Sparrow	-	2	1	-	-



Species	May 27 2007	May 25 2008	May 24 2009	May 30 2010	May 28 2011
Harris's Sparrow	-	3	-	-	-
Dark-eyed Junco	-	2	2	-	-
Chestnut-collared Longspur	4	-	-	3	2
Bobolink	-	-	-	1	-
Red-winged Blackbird	295	878	634	648	378
Western Meadowlark	235	425	368	219	217
Yellow-headed Blackbird	115	357 <i>high</i>	123	160	111
Brewer's Blackbird	146	480	268	409	252
Common Grackle	377	330	323	337	344
Brown-headed Cowbird	74	190	178	146	128
Baltimore Oriole	22	45	25	61	35
White-winged Crossbill	5	-	-	-	-
Pine Siskin	7	-	-	10	-
American Goldfinch	64	31	46	83	98
House Finch	80	52	22	91	61
Purple Finch	-	1	-	-	5 <i>high</i>
House Sparrow	267	410	482	856	312
<b>TOTAL INDIVIDUALS</b>	6,682	11,170	10,297	13,123	7,801
<b>TOTAL SPECIES</b>	118	142	127	139	126