

Christmas Bird Counts in the Delaware Valley area - Summary Results for 2007-08

Compiled by Frank Windfelder and Debbie Beer for DVOC

This report features CBC's for which we have received summary highlights from the compiler or participants of that count - listed by date, by state. We know that many additional counts occurred in the Delaware Valley area. Please email us if you have information about a CBC not listed here. Additions and corrections also welcome.

Saturday, December 15, 2007

Glenolden CBC (PA)

Compiler: Nick Pulcinella

Species: 98

Highlights:

Northern Shrike in Wawa; Wood Duck; Merlin for 4th consecutive year at Chester Park; Wild Turkey; Eastern Phoebe at Springton Res.; 30 Common Redpolls in Trainer and 2 White-winged Crossbills at Ridley Creek S.P. We also had count week reports of an imm. Northern Goshawk in Wawa; Rough-legged Hawk at Tinicum; N. Saw-whet Owl at Tinicum; Northern Parula at Tinicum and two Blue-headed Vireos at Ridley Creek S.P.. New high totals included - Hooded Merganser (80); Wild Turkey (8); Bald Eagle (7); Cooper's Hawk (22); Pileated Woodpecker (13); Hermit Thrush 29, as well as Larks and other field birds. We had 63 participants including 18 from DVOC.

Pennypack Valley (PA)

Compiler: Brian Schulz

Species: 79

Highlights:

Short-eared Owl (1), Snow Bunting (1), Lesser Black-backed Gull (1), Rough-winged Swallow (93), Pileated Woodpecker (1), Red-breasted Nuthatch (13), Black-capped Chickadee (12)

Southern Bucks County CBC (PA)

Compiler: Bob Mercer

Species: 103

Participants: 53 in 23 parties, with 1 feeder watcher

Party Hours: 146.75 party hours

Highlights:

Cackling Goose (2), Eurasian Wigeon (1), Redhead (1), Iceland Gull (4), Glaucous Gull(1), Northern Saw-whet Owl (1), Orange-crowned Warbler (1), Purple Finch (21), Common Redpoll (75).
High Counts of 153 Lesser Scaup, 21 Great Cormorants, and 18 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers

Wyncote CBC (PA)

Compiler: Andy Fayer

Species: 67

Participants: 34 in 12 parties (total 216 party hours)

Highlights:

Sandhill Crane

Gloucester County CBC (NJ)

Compiler: Ron Kegel

Species: 101 (new count high, first time breaking 100); approx 45,000 – 50,000 birds

Highlights:

We had 50 participants, with 2 at feeders. Highlights include: Ash-throated Flycatchers, Great-crested Flycatcher, Canvasback (150), Hooded Merganser (40+), Common Merganser (40+), Northern Goshawk seen by Brian Hayes and Maria Musciano-Keefe, Yellow-Bellied Sapsuckers (8-10), Nuthatches (higher numbers than average), Eastern Bluebirds (numbers increasing with over 175 seen), Horned Lark (over 150 seen by 4 areas), Eastern Meadowlark (10), Purple Finch (9), Wild Turkey (numbers increasing with over 500 seen).

"Lesser-lights" include: less numbers of Snow Geese, only 3 Woodcock, just 1 Catbird, just 1 Brown Thrasher, just 5 Cedar Waxwings.

None seen: Grebes, Barn Owl, Saw-whet Owl, Long-eared Owl, Ring-necked Pheasant, Eastern Phoebe, Pine Siskin, Evening Grosbeak .

Oceanville (Brigantine) CBC (NJ)

Compiler: Brian Moscatello & Ed Bristow

Species: 133

Highlights:

1 Osprey (2nd count record); 7 Short-eared Owls and 5 Rough-legged Hawks at Mott's Creek; 1 Long-eared Owl, 2 Va. Rails, 2 Marsh Wrens, 1 Rusty Blackbird, 13 American Pipits, plus a White-winged Crossbill, a new species for the count; 16 spp. of shorebirds including 250 Am. Oystercatchers, 53 Willets, 8 Marbled Godwits, 2 Semipalmated Plovers, Snipe and Woodcock; 10 Common Eider off Atlantic City; 5,350+ American Robins; Horned Larks and Snow Buntings; and a probable new high of Eastern Bluebirds of around 141.

Sandy Hook CBC (NJ)

Compiler: Scott Barnes

Species: 114 species + 4 count week

Highlights:

2 Great Egrets, 2 Red-shouldered Hawks, Short-eared Owl, Western Kingbird. Northern Shrike, Townsend's Solitaire - first SHCBC record (and 2nd NJ CBC record), Lincoln's Sparrow- probably a count first, Baltimore Oriole, Rusty Blackbird

Sunday, December 16, 2007

Upper Bucks County CBC (PA)

Compiler: Bill Etter

Species: 89 + 9 count week, including Long-billed Murrelet.

Participants: 35

Party Hours: 110 party hours

Report - Incl. Conditions, Highlights & Lowlights:

The weather was miserable: temperatures just below freezing, with rain, ice, sleet, snow, power outages, and downed trees.

Highlights: Cackling Goose, Lapland Longspur (NEW), 95 Purple Finches

New High Counts were set for two species: Lesser Black-backed Gull (172), and American Pipit (14). Lesser increases almost annually on this CBC, and pipit has only been recorded 9 times in 40 years. Notable tallies were reported for Hooded Merganser (72), Northern Harrier (15), Herring Gull (113), Horned Lark (296), Cedar Waxwing (580), and Purple Finch (95).

Cape May CBC (NJ)

Compiler: Louise Zemaitis

Species: 163 species + 5 count week

Participants: TBD

Report - Incl. Conditions, Highlights & Lowlights:

The Cape May CBC on Sunday, Dec 16, had a surprisingly good morning (between the overnight heavy rain and afternoon strong winds) and recorded approximately 163 species (plus 5 count-period birds). The best rarities included THREE Ash-throated Flycatchers (the long-staying bird at Cape Island Creek near West Cape May, plus new birds at Higbee Beach (3rd field) and at the Cape May NWR property near Green Creek), the continuing Barnacle Goose (seen in fields along Batt's Lane--first sighting in a week), a Dovekie that stayed for hours near the jetties at the mouth of Cape May harbor, and a Prairie Warbler near Dias Creek.

Other highlights included 4 King Eiders, 10+ Common Eiders, Osprey, 4 Goshawks, Willet, Laughing Gull, 2 Iceland and 1 Glaucous Gulls, Sedge Wren, 4 House Wrens, Nashville and 2 Orange-crowned Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chat, high counts of 13 Saltmarsh and 7 Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows, 3 Baltimore Orioles, Red Crossbill, 6+ Common Redpolls, and Lapland Longspur. Count-week highlights included PACIFIC LOON (fly-by at Avalon).

Seawatch on 12/14), 2 CAVE Swallows (2 on 12/13 at C. M. Point), White-winged Crossbill (12/14 at C. M. Pt.), and several Razorbills.

Saturday, December 22, 2007

Audubon (Valley Forge) CBC (PA)

Compiler: Edie Parnum

Species: 78

Highlights:

The highlights include Northern Shoveler (first for Count), Wilson's Snipe (second for Count), Ring-necked Pheasant (scarce in recent years), Wild Turkey, American Coot, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Goldeneye and Rusty Blackbird. During Count Week, three additional species were observed: Bald Eagle, Baltimore Oriole, and Pine Siskin. No Common Redpoll, Eastern Phoebe, White-crowned Sparrow, or Fox Sparrow was reported.

Sunday, December 23, 2007

Moorestown CBC (NJ)

Compiler: Mark Pensiero

Species: 115 (count record)

Highlights:

Moorestown enjoyed a new count record, despite terrible weather for most of the day. Northern Shrike, Cackling Goose and Black & White Warbler were all count firsts. Also rare were Red-Throated Loon (2nd count record) and Tundra Swan (3rd count record). Record high numbers were reported for: Lesser Scaup, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, E. Bluebird, and Pine Warbler. Wood Duck was also in high numbers but not a record.

Other goodies included 2 Great Egret, 3 Long-eared & 1 Saw-whet Owl, 1 BC Chickadee, 1 Marsh Wren, 39 Am. Pipit, 1 Orange-crowned Warbler, 3 Common Yellowthroat, 8 Chipping Sparrow, 2 Snow Bunting, and 4 Red Crossbill.

Bombay Hook CBC (DE)

Compiler: Andy Ednie

Species: 131 (above the ten-year average of 126)

Highlights:

This year was an excellent effort. We had 48 participants, from aged 11 to 86, the second highest number in count history. [The first official record of the count is 1939, although I've been told that it started unofficially two years earlier. The count has one of the highest total species average for any count not actually touching the ocean. Highest number of species was 143 in 1982]. Despite the terrible weather this year, hours in the field were high. Birders were out early owling, 13.5 hours of night birding was recorded. The last bird of the day was a Barn Owl in the maintenance shed at the Fisher Tract.

This year's results include 4 rarely seen species: Common Moorhen at Finis Pool, Snowy Egret at Shearneck Pool, Green Heron & Semipalmated Plover at Port Mahon Road. Despite poor weather, the rain held off until after dark and the birds were active trying to get food before the storm. One species adversely affected was Hermit Thrush. I had dozens earlier in the week, but on count day they could not be found. Also, it seems the Snow Buntings and Lapland Longspurs at Cartanza Road have blown the coop. Not even a Horned Lark could be found.

Missed species included loons, cormorants, several species of waterfowl, Bobwhite, Long-eared Owl, Lapland Longspur, and Pine Siskin. The problem was the thick fog on the Delaware Bay. Johnny Miller said that you couldn't identify the shadows. This was the first year the count has missed Canvasback in 50 years

Here is what was reported:

Ross' Goose - 1 at Bear Swamp, 1 at Rt 8 west of Little Creek

Cackling Goose - 1 at Bear Swamp, 1 at Little Creek

Wood Duck - 4 east of Dover

Redhead - 3 at Kitts Hummock

Surf Scoter - 1 injured bird at Port Mahon

Great Egret - Port Mahon

Snowy Egret - Shearneck Pool
Green Heron - Port Mahon
Black-crowned Night Heron - Bear Swamp
Red-shoulder Hawk - multiple sightings this year
Bald Eagle – 24 birds, a new count record
Merlin - Shearneck Pool
Clapper Rail - Leipsic
Virginia Rail - Finis Pool
Semipalmated Plover - 10 at the boat launch at Port Mahon
Short-Billed Dowitcher
American Avocet - 7 in Shearneck Pool
Least Sandpiper - Port Mahon
Western Sandpiper
Lesser Black-backed Gull - Kitts Hummock
Barred Owl - Fisher Tract at Bombay Hook
Short-eared Owl - Pickering Beach
Sapsucker, Phoebe, Marsh Wren, and Yellowthroat - Boardwalk Trail at BH
House Wren - Steamboat Landing
Sedge Wren - 7 at Pickering Beach
Ruby-Crowned Kinglets in extraordinary numbers
Chipping Sparrow - Old Landing at BH
White-crowned Sparrow - Hedgerow off Sipple Rd east of Leipsic
Seaside Sparrow - Leipsic Bridge
Brewer's Blackbird - in a blackbird flock behind Finis Pool
Purple Finch

Friday, December 28, 2007

Seaford-Nanticoke CBC (DE)

Compiler: Glen Lovelace

Species: 100

Highlights:

Saturday, December 29, 2007

Long Branch CBC (NJ)

Compiler: George Wenzelburger

Species: 122

Highlights:

Cackling Goose (2), White-Fronted Goose, Great Egret (1), Little Gull (1), Black-headed Gull (1), Western Kingbird (1), Pine Warbler (1), Common Redpoll (2)

Rehoboth CBC (DE)

Compiler: Jeff Gordon

Species: 141

Weather: rainy

Highlights: Ash-throated Flycatcher, Empidonax sp.

Sunday, December 30, 2007

Barnegat CBC (NJ)

Compiler: Tom Bailey

Species: 136 (just short of the record of 140)

Highlights:

(1) Dovekie, (1) Razorbill, (55) Com. Eider, (33) Harlequin Duck, and (6,000+) Black Scoter at Barnegat Light. The Dovekie was actually in the inlet around 10 am and floated back out into the ocean with the outgoing tide. The Razorbill was a fly-by in a flock of scoter.

A female King Eider and (38) Snow Buntings at Holgate. The eider was in the inlet at the tip. Also at Holgate were an Am. Bittern, (2) Am. Oystercatcher, and (1,300) Long-tailed Duck.

A couple of Lesser Black-backed Gulls were found, one I believe on the beach at Harvey Cedars and the other I think on the beach somewhere north of Holgate.

Manahawkin F&WMA produced a White-eyed Vireo (2nd count record) and a Prairie Warbler (1st count record). Several Short-eared Owls were here as well as at Cedar Run Dock Rd. Of the 4 Sedge Wrens detected the most accessible was at Manahawkin F&WMA. As you are driving out Stafford Ave, when you enter the marsh drive about halfway to the burned out bridge until you see a path on your right. Park here, walk the path until you reach the big impoundment. It was heard and easily seen in the brush along the impoundment right there. Rough-legged Hawks were at Manahawkin also (2 dark birds).

Other misc sightings included (5) Long-eared Owls, (29) Purple Finch, (9) Com. Redpoll (all in the Manahawkin F&WMA area), (2) Black-capped Chickadee, (5) Barred Owl, (7) Chipping Sparrow, several Virginia Rail, (1) Little Blue Heron, and (125+) Tree Swallows at Barnegat Light, Holgate, and in several areas along the mainland marshes. Also Prairie Warbler and White-Eyed Vireo.

Cumberland County CBC (NJ)

Compiler: Mike Fritz

Species: 203 (including high numbers for over 20 species + 2 new species to the count)

Highlights: 54 observers in 20 parties!

Thanks everyone for making this years count such a great success. This year we managed to set or tie high counts for over 20 species and 2 more were new to the count bringing the cumulative total up to 203 species! Our totals were especially surprising since afternoon rains shortened the day for a lot of parties. Special thanks goes to Michael Obrien's group for sticking it out in the rain to count the "blackbirds" going to roost at dusk and to the many groups that took advantage of the good owl conditions in the early morning hours to help us post some great owl numbers.

The Dunne/Freiday group had a count day to envy this year at Turkey Point. They turned up 2 species new to the count with *White-eyed Vireo* and *Northern Shrike*, as well as the second count record of *Yellow-headed Blackbird*! They also added the only *Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows* and *Am. Bittern* and 6 *Great Egrets* to this years count.

While we didn't post huge numbers of Northern finches this year, we did get a hint that this was an invasion year. We had a record number of *Purple Finches* and most parties recorded at least a few. We also had a record number of *Red-breasted Nuthatches* with 122 following last years near record low of just 4. There were good numbers of Am. Goldfinches and 7 *Pine Siskins* as well as 3 *Red Crossbills* seen by Clay Sutton's party and a flyby *Common Redpoll* seen by the Guris party to round out the finches. There were no Evening Grosbeaks even this year, so I am taking it off the checklist in the hopes that they will maybe show up after giving up on them.

Waterfowl numbers were unremarkable this year, though we missed N. Shoveler and Scoters. Open water meant pretty good numbers and diversity, but Snow Geese were down a bit for a change. Raptors were well reported this year with record numbers of *Peregrine Falcons* and *Red-shouldered Hawks* which is encouraging. Kestrel numbers remain low, but better than last year and we missed N. Goshawk and Golden Eagle this year. My party found a light morph *Rough-legged Hawk* (a first for our area) out on the "silica barrens", but oddly none were seen along the bayshore.

We managed to sweep the expected Wrens this year, and we had *Pine Warbler*, *Palm*, and *Common Yellowthroat*, but no Orange-crowned. Woodpecker numbers were very good this year for some reason, and we set record highs for 4 species. Other songbirds *setting record highs were Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Am. Robin, E. Towhee, Field Sparrow, Seaside Sparrow, Cardinal, and Rusty Blackbird*. Not bad for just one years count.

Great owling conditions in the morning and lots of effort produced another sweep of the expected owls (second straight year!). We had a record 6 *Barn Owls* and over 109 *Great Horned Owls*, but our 148 *E. Screech Owls* will likely be the high count for N. America. We continue to show that the Delaware Bayshore is a real Owl hotspot with *Barred, Long-Eared, Short-Eared* and *Saw-whet Owls*, in addition to above.

Other highlights this year were 2 *Lesser Black-backed Gulls* found by Bob Diebold's party and the Guris party again counted the *Sandhill Cranes* coming in to roost at Husted Landing with a record of 16 this year, so the flock continues to grow. Interestingly one bird this year looked to be a pure Common Crane, and the rest looked like Sandhills. This is the first time in years that a "Common Crane" was seen among the flock and it may be a real vagrant. I put them down on the list as Crane sp. this year until we work out exactly what they are.

Several participants enjoyed the spectacle of a pair of Bald Eagles taking turns picking at a dead Great Blue Heron.

I saved the misses for last this year, since there weren't that many. Surprisingly we missed E. Phoebe this year as well as Baltimore Oriole. Not surprisingly we missed N. Bobwhite, which has declined in our area and may soon be extirpated. I think sadly that Ruffed Grouse has been extirpated from Southern NJ and I am taking it off our checklist, I hope someone can prove me wrong.

Thanks to everyone for a great effort and your continued support of this count, some of you for many years. I hope everyone can join us again next year. The date will be Sunday December 28 next year. I welcome your comments and suggestions.

Cape Henlopen CBC (DE)

Compiler: Frank Rohrbacher

Species: 160 + 3 count week (a new count record, featuring 84,821 individual birds – mostly Snow Geese)

Highlights:

This year marked the 100th year for Christmas Bird Counts in Delaware; the first count of the state happened in 1907. The weather for night birding was outstanding and virtually all of the owls and rails were recorded in record numbers. The morning was great for birding and the boat trip went out as scheduled, but the rains came at 2:00 PM and by 4:00 PM all of the groups had to quit.

Essentially we got all of the likely half hardies, most of the possible birds and a slew of birds that were off the radar including: Rough-Legged Hawk, Iceland Gull, Black-headed Gull, Red-headed Woodpecker, Brown-Headed Nuthatch, Brown Pelican, Semipalmated Plover, Western Sandpiper, Sora, Common Moorhen, Vesper Sparrow, Le Conte's Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Prairie Warbler, Common Redpoll, Red Crossbill and Snow Bunting. A first time sweep of seven owls, most of the rails and four winter finches helped. A flock of 32 Common Eider was the highlight of the boat trip.

The most remarkable effort of the count was made by Bruce Peterjohn, Derek Stoner, Judy Montgomery and Bill Steward who worked Prime Hook Beach to Fowler's Beach. They reported an astounding 120 species, including many of the notable species above.

Count week birds included Ring-necked Pheasant and Northern Waterthrush. The previous high for this and all Delaware counts was 149 species.

Friday, January 4, 2008

Hudson Shelf Valley Pelagic CBC (NJ)

Compiler: Paul Guris

Highlights:

The annual Hudson Shelf Valley pelagic CBC was run again this year on the last Friday of the count period, January 4, 2008. This is a great introduction to pelagic birding for people as it is only 8 hours long, rather than our normal 12. Conditions as we started were calm, though a forecast of a westerly meant that it would be rougher as we went farther offshore.

Early in the day, we had all of the expected coastal species waterfowl and seabirds including Long-tailed Duck, all 3 scoters, and both loons. As we headed a bit farther offshore, we ran into large flocks of feeding Gannets and gulls, including large numbers of Bonaparte's Gulls. A flyby Common Black-headed Gull and several Razorbills made an appearance. As we tried to get farther offshore, we found that the winds were blowing a full 10 knots above what the marine forecast told us to expect, so we angled closer to shore.

Late in the day, we birded the coast near Sandy Hook. Although this was outside of the count circle and thus didn't count on the CBC, we found several good birds including another Common Black-headed Gull that gave everybody fantastic looks. It would settle on the water, we'd get everybody on it, and work our way up to the bird. This scenario played out a half dozen times, to the delight of everybody aboard. The last good bird of the day was a Razorbill sitting on flat seas that allowed us to approach within 10 yards.