

25th Annual
 PHILADELPHIA MID-WINTER BIRD CENSUS
 January 8, 2011

Canada Goose	3571	Northern Flicker	12
Mute Swan	2	Pileated Woodpecker	3
Gadwall	20	Eastern Phoebe	1
American Black Duck	21	Blue Jay	55
Mallard	690	American Crow	31
Northern Shoveler	161	Fish Crow	19
Northern Pintail	1	Crow sp.	3
Canvasback	6	Horned Lark	5
Greater Scaup	39	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	30
Lesser Scaup	29	Carolina Chickadee	230
Bufflehead	52	Black-capped Chickadee	35
Common Goldeneye	1	Chickadee sp.	30
Hooded Merganser	23	Tufted Titmouse	59
Common Merganser	190	Red-breasted Nuthatch	1
Red-breasted Merganser	1	White-breasted Nuthatch	62
Ruddy Duck	38	Brown Creeper	25
Wild Turkey	6	Carolina Wren	103
Common Loon	3	Winter Wren	18
Pied-billed Grebe	4	Golden-crowned Kinglet	23
Double-crested Cormorant	1	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	1
Great Cormorant	32	Eastern Bluebird	8
Great Blue Heron	10	Hermit Thrush	3
Black Vulture	33	American Robin	637
Bald Eagle	3	Northern Mockingbird	61
Northern Harrier	1	European Starling	3569
Sharp-shinned Hawk	9	Yellow-rumped Warbler	2
Cooper's Hawk	9	Palm Warbler (Yellow subspecies)	2
Red-shouldered Hawk	1	Eastern Towhee	1
Red-tailed Hawk	28	American Tree Sparrow	26
American Kestrel	6	Field Sparrow	36
Merlin	1	Savannah Sparrow	3
Peregrine Falcon	2	Fox Sparrow	9
American Coot	21	Song Sparrow	409
Killdeer	1	Swamp Sparrow	11
Ring-billed Gull	3448	White-throated Sparrow	836
American Herring Gull	403	White-crowned Sparrow	10
Lesser Black-backed Gull	3	Dark-eyed Junco	795
Great Black-backed Gull	229	Northern Cardinal	382
Rock Pigeon	1225	Red-winged Blackbird	123
Mourning Dove	265	Rusty Blackbird	9
Eastern Screech-Owl	45	Brown-headed Cowbird	2
Great Horned Owl	4	House Finch	114
Northern Saw-whet Owl	2	American Goldfinch	148
Belted Kingfisher	6	House Sparrow	561
Red-bellied Woodpecker	61		
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	12		
Downy Woodpecker	105	Total Species	90
Hairy Woodpecker	24	Total Individuals	19,351

OBSERVERS**AREAS COVERED**

Matt Sharp	Benjamin Rush State Park, Delaware River (various locations from Poquessing Creek to Betsy Ross Bridge)
Frank Windfelder, Paul Driver	Delaware River (various locations from Poquessing Creek to Pulaski Park.), Pennypack Creek (Krewstown and Pine Rds., Holme Ave. to Rte. 1), Northeast Water Pollution Control Plant, west Southampton Rd., 9200 block of Convent Ave.
Nick Zahn, Vince DeAntonis	Delaware River (various locations from Poquessing Creek to Pulaski Park), Northeast Water Pollution Control Plant
Peter Kurtz	Delaware River (various locations from Poquessing Creek to Pulaski Park), Pennypack Creek (Krewstown Rd. to Verree Rd., Fox Chase Farm)
Brian Schultz, Tim McFadden	Pennypack Creek (Pennypack Environmental Education Center)
Roland Williams	Pennypack Creek (Upper Rhawn St. Bridge to Frankford Ave.)
Cindy Ahern, Scott Ahern, Eric Ahern	Northeast Philadelphia (various locations including Northeast Philadelphia Airport, Burholme Park, Friends Hospital, Jewish Community Center, various shopping centers)
Richard Horwitz, Keith Russell, Jeanne Schock, Shawn Towey	Philadelphia Naval Business Center, F. D. Roosevelt Park, TRC Trash Transfer Station, Delaware River (Tasker St. to Betsy Ross Bridge), Wissahickon Creek (various locations), Roxborough (Port Royal Ave.)
David Wiedner	Delaware River (Penn's Landing to Snyder Ave.) and nearby Center City parks, graveyard and gardens
Maria Walker	South Philadelphia (200 block of Morris St.)
Chris Walters, Art McMorris, Edwin Shafer	Fort Mifflin, Army Corps of Engineers compound and vicinity, Penrose Ave. west of Schuylkill River, Southwest Water Pollution Control Plant and vicinity
Doris McGovern, Marty Dellwo, Alice Severeid, Debbie Beer	John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge (2 field parties)
Jan Gordon, Denis Brennan, Gregg Gorton, Jonathan Schau, Bob Wallis	Bartram's Garden, Woodland Cemetery, Cobbs Creek (Whitby Ave., Race St., Callowhill St.)
Erica Brendel, John Goschke	West Park (various locations including Philadelphia Zoo, West River Dr.)
Steve Kerr	East Park (East Park Reservoir and vicinity, Philadelphia Museum of Art)
Winston Moody, Phil Himeline	East Falls and lower Germantown (various locations including Queen Ln. Reservoir, Schuylkill River at the Falls Bridge, Wissahickon Creek)
Michael Darcy	Roxborough (Schuylkill River and other locations including the Roxborough Reservoir and Port Royal Ave.)
Sandy Abrams, Leigh Ashbrook, C.A. Barlow, Anne & Jacob Bower, Debbie Carr & Doug Wechsler, Steve Dupont, Kathleen Geist, Chuck Hetzel, Ken Januski, Shirley Landis, Jeanette McVeigh, Elizabeth Porter, Gin Ranly, Judy Seiffert, Kris Soffa, Wendy Willard, Ellie Woodruff	Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education (5 field parties)

OBSERVERS (concluded)**AREAS COVERED (concluded)**

Judy Stepenaskie

Roxborough-Manyunk (various locations including 7800 block of Nixon Street, River Rd., Umbria St.)

Cliff and Nancy Henc

Cresheim Creek (various locations), 100 block of east Roumfort Rd.

Al and Nancy Bilheimer

Wissahickon Creek (east bank - Springfield Ave. to Chestnut Hill Ave.)

Celeste Hardester, Jane Bodine

Wissahickon Creek (west bank - Saul Agricultural High School area)

David Belford, Jeff Belford

Wissahickon Creek (west bank - Bell's Mill Rd. to Cathedral Rd.)

Andrew Albright

Wissahickon Creek (east bank - Northwestern Ave. to Thomas Mill Rd.)

Edie Parnum, Joe Hudson,
Michael Rosengarten, Donna Wilhelm

Wissahickon Creek (west bank - Bell's Mill Rd. to Northwestern Ave.)

Jim Best, Rich Conroy, Andy Fayer,
Bob Gutowski, Marlene Morano

Morris Arboretum

William Reaume

Awbury Arboretum

CONDITIONS

Temperature (through 4 pm): low 23°F at 2:17 am, high 30°F at 3:59 pm.

Sky: Completely overcast throughout the day.

Precipitation: Snow fell continuously from just before sunrise through late morning and then again during the late afternoon. Snow fell most heavily from sunrise through mid-morning. Total accumulation was less than 1 inch but icy conditions were created.

Ground: Covered with 4" of snow from a previous snowfall. Less than one inch of additional snow fell on January 8th.

Water: Most still waters 100% frozen. Rivers and streams open except ice covering a few slow moving portions of the Schuylkill River and many portions of smaller streams.

Wind: Absolutely calm before sunrise becoming light and variable during the late afternoon.

2011 CENSUS SUMMARY

The 25th annual Philadelphia Mid-Winter Bird Census was held on Saturday January 8, 2011. This year 75 participants found 90 species and 19,351 individuals. Both of these totals are below the long-term (25-year) averages of 92 species and 26,000 individuals.

2011 marked not only the 25th anniversary of the census, but the first time that the census had been held during an active snowstorm (a storm whose severity had not been predicted by weather forecasts even 24 hours earlier). The snow, which fell heavily throughout the morning hours, clogged and fogged binocular lenses, reduced visibility, made walking laborious, and made both walking and driving treacherous due to ice. It also caused many birds to become quieter and less active. Given the difficulties that this year's unexpected snowstorm presented for everyone I would like to express my sincere thanks to each of this year's 75 participants for showing up and for persevering. Despite the snow, this year's species total of 90 was higher than the totals for most of the Christmas Bird Counts held in Pennsylvania this winter.

Winter weather in the Philadelphia region has been characterized this year by below average temperatures and above average amounts of snow. These conditions, combined with the snowstorm on the day of the census helped to reduce the number of species and individuals recorded this year. But as always, some unusual observations were still made.

Two Northern Saw-whet Owls were found at the John Heinz NWR by Doris McGovern, Marty Dellwo and Alice Severeid. This marked the 4th time that this species had been recorded but the first time that more than one individual had been found. A Red-breasted Merganser observed on the lower Delaware River by Chris Walters, Art McMorris and Wyn Shafer, marked the 5th time (as well as the second year in a row) that this species had been recorded. Five Horned Larks were also observed at Pennypack on the Delaware by Matt Sharp, providing the 8th record of this species.

And for the 7th year in a row Northern Rough-winged Swallows were found wintering at the Northeast Water Pollution Control (i.e. sewage treatment) Plant, well north of their normal winter range. While more individuals were probably present at this unique wintering spot (apparently the only major wintering location for the species known north of Texas) only 30 could be found on census day due to the fact that the birds were foraging within several large twelve-foot deep subterranean channels where they were difficult to see. Also observed going in and out of these channels were two Yellow-rumped Warblers, two (Yellow) Palm Warblers and an Eastern Phoebe. This amazing location continues to attract a variety of unusual insectivorous species during the winter because of the large numbers of midges that emerge throughout the winter from waters being discharged from the plant through these channels. Although neither of Philadelphia's other two sewage treatment plants appears to have winter midges or wintering swallows, a set of similar channels at the city's southwest plant did contain an unexpected group of 45 Northern Shovelers this year.

As always, some species were recorded in record high numbers while some were recorded in record low numbers. Record highs were recorded for Greater Scaup (this year's Lesser Scaup total was also the highest since 1991), Common Loon (this year's total tied the previous high recorded in 1995 and marked the first record of the species since 2004), Black Vulture (all were counted in the vicinity of a Black/Turkey vulture roost in upper Roxborough), and Black-capped Chickadee. Record lows were recorded for Double-crested Cormorant, Northern Flicker, Eastern Towhee, and House Finch.

While explanations for these highs and lows are not always apparent, the cormorant (a species that went unrecorded during the first few years of the census and only become a numerous wintering species after the mid-1990s) may have fled this winter's ice (some waters where large numbers were found last year were completely frozen this year). Other record lows this year were probably due in part to the snowstorm, which made most species more difficult to find.

Another species whose detectability on census day may have been reduced by the stormy weather is the Turkey Vulture. This species was missed entirely even though many were observed in the city right before and after the census. One would expect soaring birds like vultures to be reluctant to fly during snowy, overcast conditions but flying Black Vultures were observed on census day by several parties. While the invisibility of Turkey Vultures remains somewhat of a mystery one fact is clear. The Black Vulture, which was virtually unknown in Philadelphia prior to the 1990s and unrecorded on the census prior to 1995, has now become well established here, and it may still be on the increase.

2011 marked the first time that Turkey Vulture had been missed since 1990 and only the 4th time that it had been missed overall. Other frequently recorded species that were missed this year included Snow Goose (11th miss), American Wigeon (9th miss), Ring-necked Duck (5th miss), Gray Catbird (4th miss), Cedar Waxwing (4th miss – this species was recorded annually through 2004 but it has only been recorded subsequently in even years), Chipping Sparrow (the 3rd miss since 2003), Common Grackle (4th miss and first time it has been missed two years in a row), and Purple Finch (11th miss). Some species missed on census day that were observed within the city during other parts of January (either before or after the census) include American Wigeon, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Orange-crowned Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, and Purple Finch.

This year's list of species that were only reported by a single party includes: Northern Pintail, Merlin, Double-crested Cormorant (Driver, Windfelder); Mute Swan, Peregrine Falcon, American Coot, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Rusty Blackbird - all except the Peregrines were found at F. D. Roosevelt Park (Horwitz, Russell, Shock, Towey); Canvasback, Common Goldeneye, Horned Lark (Sharp); Red-breasted Merganser, Northern Harrier (Walters, McMorris, Shafer); Red-shouldered Hawk, Wild Turkey, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Eastern Towhee (McGovern, Dellwo, Severeid); and Eastern Bluebird (SCEE). In some species (e.g., Ruby-crowned Kinglet) only one individual was recorded, but that species was not included in the above list because the lone individual recorded was reported by more than one party.

A complete absence of wind before dawn provided excellent conditions for owling and eight teams recorded 45 screech-owls this year, with top honors again going to David and Jeff Belford who found 26 individuals just in the upper Wissahickon, between 3 and 6:30 am. Great Horned Owls however, continue to be in very low numbers. This year's 4 was the second lowest total ever (only 2 were recorded in 2005).

Thanks again to everyone who participated in this year's census for another excellent effort. I hope you will be able to join us again next year when the census will tentatively be held on January 7.

Keith Russell - Census Coordinator
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