

2011 Eugene Christmas Bird Count

by Dick Lamster, Count Coordinator

Fog and cold weather met the 140 bird watchers on Sunday, January 1, 2012, as they began looking for birds on the 2011 Eugene Christmas Bird Count (ECBC). This was the 70th ECBC and 112th National Audubon Society (NAS) Christmas Bird Count. Twenty-six teams, each led by an experienced birder, searched for birds from dawn to dusk in their assigned area within the traditional 15-mile diameter circle. Eight teams searched for owls before sun up, and a couple of teams even did some owling after the sun went down. The article below by Dan Gleason presents the results of these efforts. The 26 teams looked for birds for a combined total of 235 hours, walked 117 miles, and drove 491 miles. The weather did warm up by late morning and the sun even came out for a little while in the afternoon, so the birding just got better and better.

As the birdwatchers in the field were getting cold and trying to identify birds in the fog, 99 feeder watchers were counting birds in their backyards. Herb Wisner coordinated all these feeder watchers, sent them a checklist to help them keep track of the birds they were seeing, and then collected the results and sent the totals to Dan Gleason. Dan combined those totals with the results of the 26 teams in the field and submitted it to NAS. The results of our count and more than 2,200 other Christmas Bird Counts can be viewed at www.christmasbirdcount.org. Our count code is OREU.

At the end of the day, 88 birders who participated in the count gathered at the Eugene Garden Club for the traditional chili feed sponsored by Lane County Audubon Society. They were treated to delicious homemade vegetarian chili prepared by Allison Mickel. Sandy Poinsett and Kathy Wilson assisted Allison and organized the room, set up tables and chairs, served the chili, and then cleaned up afterward. The 26 team leaders were recognized for their efforts, and the traditional "countdown" of the birds seen during the day was the final activity in a long but fun day.

I want to thank the team leaders who organized their teams and led them through their areas during the day. Several of these people have been team leaders for over 20 years. I also want to thank the other members of the Organizing Committee for their hard work: Barbara Gleason, who matched people who called and wanted to be on a team with a team that needed more members; Dan Gleason, who prepared the bird checklist, compiled all the lists of birds seen by the teams and feeder watchers, verified the unusual and rare bird sightings, and then submitted the totals to NAS; and Herb Wisner, who coordinated the feeder watchers.

Be sure to put Sunday, December 30, 2012, on your calendar for the 2012 ECBC. Please plan to join a team or watch birds in your yard and have a fun day of birding. Your results are entered into the 112-year record of all the Christmas

Bird Counts around the continent and are used by scientists for research on bird life. Thanks again to all of you who participated and helped to make the 2011 ECBC one of the best in the world!

Eugene Christmas Bird Count Summary

Dan Gleason

On count day we were fortunate to have no rain, but the weather remained cool and foggy much of the day. Several observers remarked about low numbers of birds, but when totals came in, many species had higher than average numbers.

Field participants recorded a total of 132 species on count day plus 2 additional species-Cinnamon Teal and Western Tanager, a very good find for this time of year-that were missed on count day but sighted during count week. Low numbers were mostly reported for species where fog made it difficult or impossible to see birds overhead or at a distance. Canada Goose, gulls, American Pipits, and Red-winged Blackbirds are examples of such species that were probably present in greater numbers than could be observed. However, 44 species were in significantly higher numbers than average and of those, 14 were in record high numbers and 5 tied the previous record high. All in all, these are very good numbers, especially considering the weather many of us dealt with all day.

A Red-naped Sapsucker found and photographed by Thomas Meinzen and the group he was with was a new species for the Eugene count and a very good find for the Willamette Valley. The Western Tanager is also a bird far out of winter range and not to be expected. A few other unusual species found were: Golden Eagle (also seen on one previous count), Say's Phoebe (4 previous times), Tree Swallow (on 11 previous counts and becoming more regular), Northern Mockingbird (12 previous counts), Common Yellowthroat (8 previous counts), and Chipping Sparrow (11 previous counts).

Species in record high numbers were: Bufflehead (145), American White Pelican (5), White-tailed Kite (31), Red-shouldered Hawk (36), Golden Eagle (1, ties previous high), Prairie Falcon (1, ties previous high), Virginia Rail (12), Eurasian Collared-Dove (133), Barred Owl (2), Anna's Hummingbird (167), Red-naped Sapsucker (1, first appearance), Black Phoebe (22, more than double last year's high of 10), Bushtit (1,342), Wrentit (21, ties previous high), Western Bluebird (207), Northern Mockingbird (2, ties previous high), Orange-crowned Warbler (9), Common Yellowthroat (1, ties previous high), and American Goldfinch (343).

It is interesting to note the increase of some species in our area as they expand their range northward. This would include White-tailed Kite, Red-shouldered Hawk, and Black Phoebe. Additionally, there are more sightings of species not usually present in winter. No one saw an Osprey, although a few observations are usually expected in recent years during the winter in western Oregon. Swallows are becoming more regular and Orange-crowned Warblers have come

to be expected in small numbers during the winter. It will be interesting to see where this trend leads in the future.

The fog was problematic for some, but overall this was a very good Christmas Bird Count. My thanks to all who made it possible.