

2015 Oakridge Christmas Bird Count

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On Friday, December 18, 14 birders from Oakridge, Bend, Cottage Grove, Eugene, and Corvallis met at the Ridge Cafe in Oakridge for the annual Oakridge Christmas Bird Count. (The traditional meeting place, Lion Mountain Bakery, was gutted by a fire in early December.) Field teams encountered mostly fair birding conditions, except for a couple hours of rain during the middle of the day and fog at high elevations in one sector. Recent heavy rains had melted enough of the previous week's snowfall to allow access up to about 3,000 feet in some parts of the count circle. However, some routes were either still snowed in or blocked by slides or downed trees.

We found a total of 65 species on count day. A large owl sp. seen in conifer forest on Kwis Kwis Butte was most likely a Barred Owl, based on habitat and known occurrence. We found a Mountain Chickadee in a mixed feeding flock of kinglets—detected by hoarse calls and then identified by the white stripe above its eye as it fed in lichens on oak-tree twigs. We found both of the other chickadee species at the Elk Meadows golf course.

A Great Gray Owl that is known to be a resident on High Prairie was photographed one day before the start of Count Week, but was missed on count day. We were able to include it in the Count Week record because it was seen feeding on a vole on December 20.

New records were set for Common Loon (five on Hills Creek Reservoir) and American Coot (mainly on the old mill ponds). The conservative total of three Red-shouldered Hawks ties the previous record; this species now seems to be established in the Oakridge circle.

Three female scaup on Hills Creek Reservoir were too distant to identify to species. An American Wigeon on the mill ponds was only the fifth record for this count. American Dippers were found in good numbers despite high flows on the rivers.