

2021 Eugene Christmas Bird Count

By Vjera Thompson, Species Compiler

The Eugene CBC, held on January 2, 2022, was mild with no rain, but the wind picked up in the afternoon. The Field Counters, in small groups due to continuing COVID-19 safety guidelines, were rewarded with birds and even a few glimpses of the sun.

A total of 137 species and 60,587 individual birds were reported by the field teams and Home Counters on Count Day. An additional three species were found during Count Week. A Snowy Egret, possibly the same one as last year, is wintering here again and was during the Count. Other unusual finds were a Wilson's Warbler, found on the Count once, and three Soras, found twice previously.

Count Week additions were Red Crossbill, a Green Heron (usually 1 or 2 are found on the Count), and Tricolored Blackbirds, which have been wintering at a dairy farm in small numbers the last couple years. Expected birds we didn't see were White-tailed Kite (no longer wintering in the area), Swamp Sparrow, and Clark's Grebe.

Just like last year, the COVID-19 safety precautions led teams to split into smaller groups, which may have resulted in more thorough coverage, especially on foot. There were record high counts of several raptors, which may have been more visible due to the rainless day and high winds: 93 Turkey Vultures (seen by 14 teams), 120 Bald Eagles, 43 Red-shouldered Hawks, 199 Red-tailed Hawks, and 2 Prairie Falcons. We also had record highs of Buffleheads (185) and Western Bluebirds (302).

Observers commented that it was harder to find small birds than usual, perhaps due to the winds. But some uncommon small birds were sighted, such as 5 Orange-crowned Warblers (and 2 more wintering that weren't found on Count Day), and 3 Say's Phoebes.

As in the Florence CBC, Eurasian Collared-Doves were down, from 373 last year to only 180 this year. And despite the good visibility, we had a record low of Cackling Geese at 12,853.

The weather cooperated for a few intrepid owling teams, and we were able to find all the expected species of owls. One team enjoyed seeing a Barred Owl on a neighborhood roost mid-morning. Same team as last year, but a different roost!

Thanks to all the birders that made this another successful Count.