

2022 Florence Christmas Bird Count Summary

By Vjera Thompson, Species Compiler

The 38th Florence Christmas Bird Count was held on Saturday, December 17. We had 40 birders in the field, and another 14 Home Counters. The weather was gorgeous but cold, with blue skies, heavy frost inland, and low 40s in town. We decided to be cautious about gathering indoors together and did our countdown virtually via video again.

We recorded 139 species, our highest count since 2004. Thirty-five species were found by one team only. Our four sea-watching teams were able to pick up Ancient Murrelet, Marbled Murrelet, Rhinoceros Auklet, Black-legged Kittiwake, Bonaparte's Gull, three Northern Fulmars, and a dark shearwater.

Two unusual species found before the Count stayed on for Count Day, both first-time species for this Count. One, a Tropical Kingbird, had been seen in Old Town Florence since early November. Usually Tropical Kingbirds are only in the area through late November or early December; this is the first time one has lingered for the Count. The other new sighting was an Orchard Oriole coming to a feeder in the Heceta Beach area, only the second Lane County record.

Three teams owled, but the number of owls observed was low, with only one Barred Owl, one Northern Saw-whet Owl, and one Northern Pygmy-Owl. One unusual sighting before dawn was a Marbled Murrelet, calling as it flew over Cape Mountain Road, 2.6 miles inland.

Record high counts included Bufflehead (587), Anna's Hummingbird (154), Ancient Murrelet (14), and Lesser Goldfinch (a flock of 11). We also tied high counts for Spotted Sandpiper (10) and Swamp Sparrow (8). In an extreme opposite from last year, we almost missed Pine Siskin, but luckily one of the Home Counters had a couple. Eurasian Collared-Dove numbers climbed back to 61 from last year's low of 38. Species often present, but not found, included Snowy Plover, Surfbird, Tundra Swan, and Northern Shrike.

Thanks to team leaders Alan Contreras, Ellen Cantor, Pat Blue Heron, Tye Jeske, Marcia Maffei, Vjera Thompson, Linda Gilbert, John Sullivan, Paul Adamus, Adele Dawson, Rich Hoyer, and Daniel Farrar. Thanks also to Ellen Cantor for doing the upfront coordination.