

CBC – Florence

By Vjera Thompson, Count Compiler

The 39th Florence Christmas Bird Count was held on Saturday, December 16, 2023. We had our largest turnout ever with 57 birders in the field and 11 Home Counters (previous high was 47 and 11, respectively, in 2012). The weather was sunny with a brisk east breeze at some locations; it warmed up in the afternoon and was almost balmy on the beach. For the first time since 2019, we met together in person afterwards and had an enjoyable Countdown at Best Thai in Florence.

We recorded 128 species, down from last year's robust 138, but better than six of the last 10 years. We added an additional six species during Count Week: Eared Grebe, Clark's Grebe, Northern Fulmar, Brown Pelican, Peregrine Falcon, and Lesser Goldfinch.

We found several good birds for this count: 3 Band-tailed Pigeons (seen on 7 previous counts of 38), 5 Brants (12), 5 Rhino Auklets (13), and 12 Marbled Murrelets, second highest count since 2005. A possible Sedge Wren was seen, but unfortunately not well enough to include in the official numbers. We found Wild Turkey for the third year in a row.

We had high numbers of Ancient Murrelets, with at least 15 seen; the South Jetty team enjoyed getting to hear the murrelets vocalizing. We doubled our high count of Ring-necked Ducks to 521, which included a flock estimated at 500 in the flooded fields of the North Fork area. We also had record highs of Greater White-fronted Geese (33), Red-necked Grebes (26), Red Crossbills (more than 2,000), and Cedar Waxwings (37).

Six teams owled and found two Barred Owls (a new record high), one Western Screech-Owl, one Northern Saw-whet Owl, and one Northern Pygmy-Owl. Barn Owl and Great Horned Owl were missed.

We were able to find some birds that are often hard to find, including 22 Snowy Plovers, one Surfbird, one Bonaparte's Gull, and one Canada Jay. We missed Greater Scaup (30 years), Black-legged Kittiwake (30 years), American Pipit (29 years), Western Bluebird (increasing in the Eugene area), Swamp Sparrow (found the last 6 years), and Orange-crowned Warbler. Also missed and not around this year: Northern Shrike, Rough-legged Hawk, and Palm Warbler.

Thanks to team leaders Hendrik Herlyn, Peter Ralph, Pat Blue Heron, Alan Contreras, Marcia Maffei, Vjera Thompson, Linda Gilbert, Neil Bjorkland, Paul Adamus, Adele Dawson, Dennis Arendt, and TyeJeske. Thanks also to Ellen Cantor for doing the upfront coordination.