

The 82nd Eugene CBC was held on December 31, 2023, in heavy fog. The forecast of sunshine did not materialize but everyone was grateful for the lack of rain.

We recorded a total of 133 species, matching last year, just above our average for the last five years, and 66,334 individual birds. We had two sightings that were new for the count: a Costa's Hummingbird at a private feeder and a surprising Magnolia Warbler, only found twice in Lane County previously. Other unusual birds were a Cinnamon Teal (16th year), a Red-necked Grebe (seen once, in 2012), a Snowy Egret (4th year), 12 Tree Swallows, 2 Mountain Chickadees (irruption year), and two Yellow-headed Blackbirds at Fern Ridge (previously found on count week in 1985, 1993, and 1994).

An additional seven species were found during count week (the three days before and after the count): Ross's Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose, Greater Scaup, Black-bellied Plover, Iceland (formerly Thayer's) Gull, and two unusual visitors that were not refound on count day: Pygmy Nuthatch (a first for the count) and Nashville Warbler (3 records). Other misses were Canvasback, Green Heron, Osprey, Prairie Falcon, and Brown-headed Cowbird.

We set some new high records, although not as many as some years. We bested our Red-shouldered Hawk record again, with 51 (last year's record was 45). Seven Semipalmated Plovers at Fern Ridge was a new high count (previously 6 in 2009), as was 15 Barn Swallows (5 in 2003). We've found a wintering Common Yellowthroat on eight different counts, but this was the first year we found two (one at Alton Baker, one at Stewart Pond). Lesser Goldfinches jumped from 281 in 2020 to 325 this year. We also had a twenty-year high count for Red-breasted Sapsuckers, with 39 reported (our high record is 59 in 1990).

We had some twenty-year lows: 2574 Canada Geese, 29 California Quail, 1 Short-billed (formerly Mew) Gull, 1 W. Screech-Owl, 1 Red Crossbill, and only 123 Fox Sparrows (we've averaged 278 in the 20-year time period). Eurasian Collared-Doves peaked at 373 in 2020 but have dropped the last couple of years; this year only 143 were reported, the lowest since 2013.

The fog did not help the owling teams, with only Great Horned Owls vocalizing in the morning, and the one W. Screech-Owl tracked down at 11 pm at night. Thankfully we had daytime sightings of two Barred Owls, one Barn Owl, and three Short-eared Owls. We missed N. Pygmy-Owl and Saw-whet Owl.

Thanks to all the birders that made this another successful count, including working together to find missed birds for count week.

By Vjera Thompson