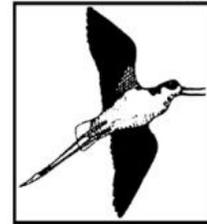


## Logan's 2011 Christmas Bird Count

January 2012

It had all the makings of a great count (clever literary trick, eh?) – low temperatures had not reached zero all month, there was little snow on the ground, and a few “really good birds” had been staked out. We were 63 observers taking to the field, including several owling parties, plus six feederwatcher homes. The weather forecast predicted temperatures in the mid-30s, light winds, and no snow. Then the inversion arrived and it took until mid-afternoon for most of the count area to break out of an icy fog.

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This was the 52nd Logan Christmas Bird Count, first conducted in 1956 and centered around the Diet Coke machine at the convenience store on Highway 91 in Hyde Park. For the first 20 years or so, there were only a handful of participants recording 3,000-4,000 birds of 30-40 species. Then the late Allen Stokes and a passel of other folks, including at least one fellow who is still participating, started racking them up. Within a few years, total numbers of birds jumped four or fivefold and species counts routinely reached 80-90. Despite counts of 20-30,000 birds almost every year since, however, it wasn't until 2007 that we broke 100 species – a mark we have yet to repeat.

The CBC is the longest and largest citizen science effort *in the world*. In just three weeks between December 14 and January 5, over 60,000 people will count more than 60,000,000 birds of nearly 650 species in more than 2,000 count circles much like ours. The highest species count will probably be in Ecuador – over 400 species. In the U.S., the count at Mad Island, TX will likely find the most species – over 230. Meanwhile, the intrepid folks at Prudhoe Bay will see just one – but a good one – the Common Raven.

So, where do we fit in? Considering the fog, we did very well this year. Our 11 sectors reported almost 16,700 birds (almost half were European Starlings...), and although that was half as many total birds as last year we still found 90 species.

New for our count were two –TWO – Lincoln's Sparrows, miles apart, one of which was discovered the previous week and the other was a total surprise, found apparently trying to drive a bulldozer at a construction company in Hyde Park. Lincoln's Sparrows breed in our mountains in summer but had never been found on our CBC. Record high numbers were set for Cackling Goose (5; previous high of 4 in 2010), immature Bald Eagle (9; previous high of 5 in 2008 and 2009), and Lesser Goldfinch (38; previous high of 18 in 2010, and which first appeared only in 2008).

Other, very unusual birds (seen less than half the time over the last decade) included a Double-crested Cormorant nursing a broken wing at the Logan Fish Hatchery, three White-faced Ibis

hanging around mud patches near the landfill, two Hooded Mergansers at First Dam, two widely separated Fox Sparrows, a White-throated Sparrow hanging out with one of the Lincoln's, and a dozen Gray-crowned Rosy Finches in the mountains above Smithfield.

We recorded unusually high numbers of Merlins (4), Ring-billed Gulls (819) and Eurasian Collared-doves (192).

Of course, we also had some disappointments with unusually low numbers of Barrow's Goldeneyes, Northern Harriers, Red-tailed Hawks, Prairie Falcons, Ring-necked Pheasants, Downy Woodpeckers, Northern Flickers, Horned Larks, both Black-capped and Mountain Chickadees., American Dippers, American Tree Sparrows, Western Meadowlarks, House Finches, American Goldfinches, and House Sparrows. And we totally missed Barn Owls (after finding several just a week before), Northern Saw-whet Owls, and Northern Shrikes.

The chatter at the potluck after the count centered around how few birds were active in the morning fog; nothing seemed to be moving. What sane Northern Harrier wants to cruise above the marshes in an ice fog? Another thread concerned this past spring, which was very wet and probably drowned many of the voles that normally provide sustenance for raptors and owls, so those bird species' numbers were down. Although not bitter, the cold had been steady all month, freezing most of the open water, including nearly all of the Logan Sewage Lagoons, which undoubtedly reduced the number of ducks and gulls. It was disappointing not to find the Long-eared Owls that were such a treat the last few years. Although Black-billed Magpies were higher than the previous few years, other corvid numbers seemed low. The only other pattern seemed to be lower numbers of invasive species, such as Ring-necked Pheasants, Wild Turkeys, European Starlings (relatively), and House Sparrows. We can only hope.

Many thanks to all who participated: Grant Allan, Robert Atwood, Betty Baird, Richard Baird, Terry Barnes, Eric Bingham, Lyle Bingham, Adam Brewerton, Jim Cane, Allen Christensen, Gail Christensen, Hayden Dattage, Scott Datwyler, Mary Debyle, Norb Debyle, John Ellerbeck, Barbara Farris, Mike Fish, Craig Fosdick, Jake Gibson, Heather Godding, C.Val Grant, Jack Greene, Dane Hepworth, Allen Hoffmann, Frank Howe, Joanne Hughes, Paul Jamison, Reinhard Jockel, Dan Kelly, Linda Kervin, Elmer Kingsford, Tara Kingsford, Jim Kingsland, Carol Kochan, Dave Kotter, Kurt Kotter, Caitlin Laughlin, Adam Liberatore, Andrea Liberatore, Jean Lown, Bill Masslich, Jake Masslich, Connie McManus, Marion Murray, Ryan O'Donnell, Teri Peery, Guillaume Péron, Ron Ryel, Anne Shifrer, Frank Smith, Mike Taylor, Kalon Throop, David Tidhar, Wendy Tidhar, Heath Weaver, Dennis Welker, Martin Welker, Bryan Williams, Nancy Williams, Mike Wolfe, Dan Zamecnik.

For electronic copies of this year's count data, contact [bdixon@xmission.com](mailto:bdixon@xmission.com). For historical data on this and other CBC count circles, go to <http://birds.audubon.org/data-research>.

- Bryan Dixon