

CHILLIWACK CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT (124th CBC) – 16 December 2023

This was the 124th year for the Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Nature Chilliwack held the 45th CBC this year on 16 December 2023. The Chilliwack (BCCH) count covers a ~24.07km diameter circle reaching from Cultus Lake in the south to Deroche and Harrison Bay in the north. The western part of the circle enters the east end of Vedder Mountain and all of the Bert Brink Wildlife Management area (McGillivray Game Reserve) while the easternmost sections of the circle reaches almost to the centre of Rosedale, most of Slesse Trailer Park and the peak of Elk Mountain.

Temperatures on December 16 were at 4 to 9°C with light winds and fog till as late as 1:00 pm, in the north of the count area with clear sunny skies all day in higher elevations. The number of individual bird counters and groups were up from last year's count. Counters did an excellent job as usual of finding and identifying birds!

This year's count day attracted a total of **41** counters on **16** routes plus **10** feeder watchers. They observed **98** different bird species and 1 count week species the same as last year. The total of individual birds came to **45,000 up 5,724** birds. This year's numbers were above average. In the cold year of 2008, we had 89 species on the count day with 20,313 individual birds. The number of individual birds on 27 December 2021 was down 35,370 individual from birds counted in 2020, but way down by 47,016 from the extreme high of 65,978 individuals on the 2011 count. For comparison, our numbers on the 2009 and 2013 count days was 99 species both years with individual birds totalling 31,606 in 2009 and 41,091 in 2013, which is more typical of the normal numbers.

Last year we had 14 groups in cars on count routes with 34 observers. This year, we had 16 groups in cars on count routes consisting of a total of 41 observers. Hours in the field last year totaled 101.77hr. This year, the hours in the field totaled 109.50 hours and count area 22 route was not counted.

This year 7 species broke high record numbers for individuals and one tied a past record. The record breaking high counts were 10792 Cackling Goose, 77 Northern Shoveler, 147 Northern Pintails, 824 Lesser Scaup, 11 Western Gulls, 2 Orange-crowned Warblers, 568 White-crowned Sparrows. Merlin tied the 2014 high of 8 and Bewick's Wren was one down from the 1979 high of 10 individuals. We recorded 41 Anna's Hummingbirds and last year 40, 63 below the 2018 high of 102 birds. European Collard Doves were down with 195 seen this year 167 lower than the 2019 high count of 362 doves. We found three owl species on count day this year 2 Great Horned Owls and 1 Northern Pygmy-owl plus a Barn Owl for count week.

There were some species with relatively low numbers too. Only 46 American Robins and 35 Pine Siskin's were observed, plus we have never see more than one Northern Pygmy-owl.

We had some rare species as well on the count day, 1 Harris' Sparrow, 8 Bohemian Waxwings and on count week 7 Mourning Doves. We also had a new species a White-breasted Nuthatch.

Audubon also collects and prints birds observed in the Chilliwack CBC count week (cw). This year, cw ran from Dec. 14th to 20th, 2022 and 1 species was observed that was not seen on count day included a rare species for our area, 7 Mourning Doves. Count week helps to show birds that occur in the count area but eluded counters on the count day. So next year, be sure to report birds that you saw 3 days before or after the count date that were not located by anyone on the count day. You can report a cw bird anywhere in the 24.07 km diameter count circle.

One new bird species for Chilliwack the White-breasted Nuthatch was observed during the CBC count day and on count week (cw) this year. 'New' birds are defined as birds never before seen on the Chilliwack CBC day or week. 'Rare' birds include birds that are unusual species. For simplicity and clarity that means 'new/rare' birds are birds that have not been seen on our count for 6 years or more. Over the 45 years since the Chilliwack count started, we have only had 25 species in the total number of species commonly occur on our count every year, with 8 more additional species recorded on 41 counts.

Since the Chilliwack count started 45 years ago in the winter of 1978-79, our participants have found a total of 170 confirmed species in the Chilliwack CBC area. The confirmed number of course depends on the final tally accepted by Bird Studies Canada.

Click on your Regional Editors e-mail address: Jeremiah Kennedy to contact him christmasbirdbc@gmail.com. All regional summaries are contained in the Audubon publication *American Birds*, <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count> which can be accessed through the Audubon CBC home page. Also on the web is access to all CBC circles <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/View/index.html?appid=fadfb421e95f4949bde20c29a38228bd>. For more information contact Denis at 604 858-5141 or email to bcwildddenis@uniserve.com. Please pass this summary of the count on to any others that may be interested.

Thanks for all your help and enjoy the Birds!

Denis Knopp
Nature Chilliwack

<https://naturechilliwack.ca/membership/>