

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

The unusually mild and open weather of fall and early winter this year led many of us to expect better than usual results on our annual bird counts. However the strong winds and almost complete lack of snow cover made birds hard to spot on both the P.E.I. National Park and Hillsborough Counts.

The 30 species recorded on the P.E.I. National Park Count was the second lowest on record for that count (29 in 1972), and well below the average of 36. The total of 3,066 individual birds was also somewhat below the 11 - year average of 4,456. However three species never before recorded on this count were identified this year: Common Loon, Glaucous Gull and Rufous-sided Towhee. This brings the total of all species seen on this count over the years to 82. Downy Woodpecker was the only species not found this year which had shown up on all ten previous counts.

On the Hillsborough Count the 38 species found is above the 12 - year average of 35, while the 4,646 individuals is slightly below the 5,014 average. No new species were added to the count so the total stands at 77 species.

A new count was begun this year in the Montague area, which turned out to be a highly successful event. The 37 species and 3,408 birds recorded provide an excellent start to what may in future years become an official National Audubon Society count. Since this was a first time effort, it was difficult to predict what sorts of results to expect. Interestingly, the following species which were not found on either the P.E.I. National Park or Hillsborough counts this year, did show up on the Montague Count: Greater Scaup, Bald Eagle, Bonaparte's Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Belted Kingfisher, Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, American Goldfinch and Dark-eyed Junco. The Lesser Black-backed Gull is a new species for the provincial checklist.

Prince Edward Island National Park, P.E.I. 46°23'N 63°08'W, center 0.75 mi. S of junction of Routes 25 and 6 on Route 25, to include Rustico, Brackley, Covehead, Tracadie and Winter Bays, those areas north of Sherwood and West Royalty, as well as Harrington, North Milton, Milton Station and Cymbria, also Gulf of St. Lawrence between Rustico Island and Blooming Point; elevation 0 to 200 ft.

Dec. 18, 1982; 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. A.M.: overcast, intermittent snow. P.M.: overcast, intermittent snow. Temp. 18° to 26° F. Wind N, 15-35 m.p.h. Snow cover 0 to 1 in. Fresh water partly frozen. Salt water partly frozen. Wild food crop poor.

Thirteen observers, in 5 parties. Total party hours, 29½ (7½ on foot, 18 ¾ by car, 3¼ stationary). Total party miles, 343 (9 on foot, 334 by car). Total species 30; about 3066 individuals.

Participants: Winifred Cairns (compiler), Rosemary Curley, Geoff Hogan, Winston Johnston, Norah Longworth, Gerald MacDonald, Joyce MacLeod, Dan McAskill, Rosemary Proctor, Julie Singleton, Sue Stephenson, Jane Symmes and John Wright.

Thanks to all participants, plus Danny McAskill and especially to Rosemary Proctor for hosting the pot-luck supper.

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Editor's Note: Non-metric units are used here to report Christmas Bird Count results in order to conform to requirements of the National Audubon Society of New York.

