



CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT REPORT 1981

The very mild and springlike weather of the first few weeks of December had led to high expectations for excellent returns on this year's Christmas bird counts. For the first time ever, almost all water (both salt and fresh) was open.

However, the day before the first count, winter arrived. On December 19th, birders on the P.E.I. National Park Count were impeded by thickly falling snow, which reduced visibility and kept birds under cover. Open water meant that wintering ducks, which usually concentrate in the few open 'holes', were well scattered and harder to count in poor viewing conditions. Recent mild weather had been providing good foraging in natural habitats and birds had not yet established themselves as feeder visitors. However, the 5253 individual birds reported is about average and more than double the total seen last year following a month of bitter weather. Disappointing though was the drop to 34 species from last year's 41. One species new to the count was recorded - an oiled Common Murre which was sent to Lorraine MacLeod in Murray River for care and rehabilitation.

The week between the two counts was marked by seasonable winter weather. On December 28th, Hillsborough Count birders awoke to a snowy morning but, fortunately conditions steadily improved as the day went on. The 41 species and 6312 individuals are both above average for the count. Two new species were seen: Pintail and Great Horned Owl.

Thanks to all who participated in the bird counts this year. It is only through your efforts that our counts can be so successful. Special thanks to Winston and Eileen Johnston and to Rosemary Curley for hosting the after-count suppers.

MAMMAL COUNTS

Once again, on Christmas Bird Counts, participants recorded mammals. Conditions for mammal-watching were so poor on the P.E.I. National Park Count on December 19 that only some hare tracks and one red squirrel were reported.

Snowfall on the Hillsborough Count day was lighter, and more mammals and sign could be observed: 7 harbour seals, 2 mink (1 carrying a fish), 1 muskrat, hare tracks in various locations and the smell of a skunk. In addition a frog was seen being carried off by a crow.