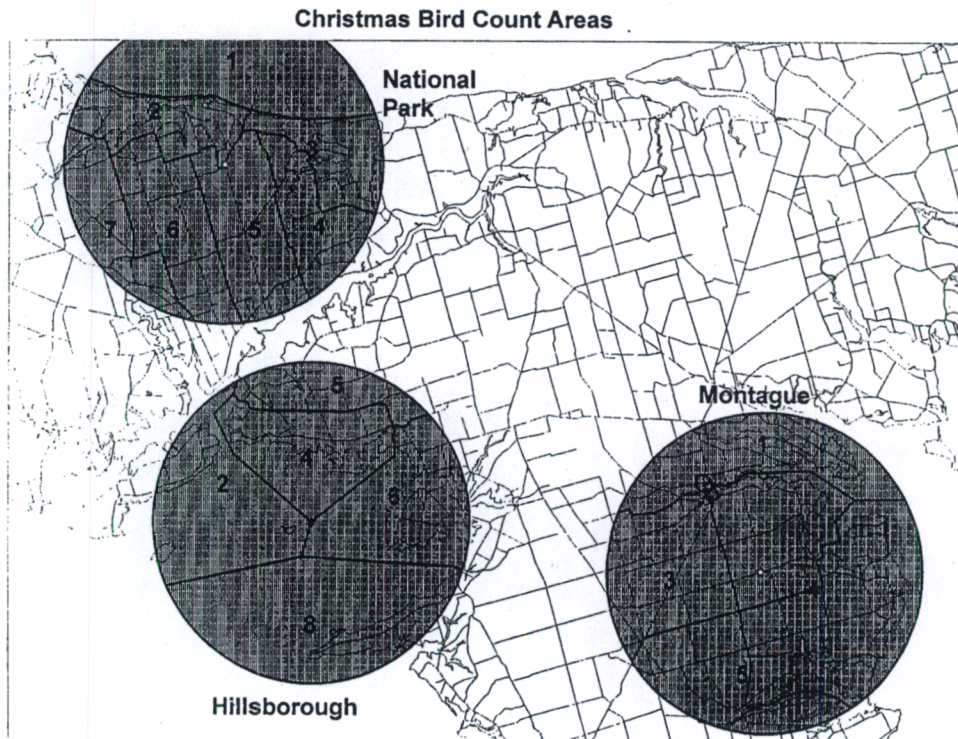


**CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS ON THE ISLAND - 30TH ANNIVERSARY:** by J. Dan McAskill & Ruth Richman

First started in 1900 by ornithologist Frank Chapman and 27 friends, Island birders took to the fields and their feeder observation sites for the 30th consecutive year to participate in the Christmas Bird Counts. The Island counters combined their efforts with approximately 50,000 others who participate in some 1,800 registered counts throughout North America, the Caribbean, Central America and South America. Their combined efforts over the past 101 years have created one of the longest running records in North America of the overall health of our environment. Now this data base is accessible on line, simply go to [www.birdsource.org](http://www.birdsource.org) and click your way to the results.

Christmas Bird counting is an annual tradition for many birders. It allows those who choose it to spend time with both feathered friends and fellow birders while contributing to the monitoring of North American winter bird populations. On Prince Edward Island's CBCs this winter, 43 participants went to the field (some participated in two counts and 1 in all three) and 23 families watched their feeders. The three count circles are shown below.



The first of the National Park bird counters was in the count area on December 16<sup>th</sup>, the designated counting day, just after 5 am to try for owls using a tape recorder and owl call tape to evoke responses. While Eric Marcum had no luck in the areas he played the owl tape, Ron Arvidson, Bonnie McOrmand and Jean Blanchard seen an owl briefly. While the flight pattern was the bat like floating of the of the Short-eared Owl, the look was too fleeting for confirmation. The day was quite pleasant and bird sightings came quite quickly to the various teams. The highlights of the day were a Gyrfalcon, 4 Northern Harriers, and a Great Blue Heron. The excellent crops of mountain ash and rose hips caused American Robin to stay on the Island and counters seen 439. Gull sightings and some waterfowl counts were down but the day concluded with a very respectable 54 species for this count area. Many counters concluded their count day at the pot luck hosted by Jesse Francis and Maurice Roy of the Canadian Parks Service at the Dalvay Interpretive Centre.

The weather forecast for the Hillsborough count was ominous. Consideration was given to canceling the count based on the forecast and the weather late on the evening before the count but a check at 530 am revealed