

**2017–2018**  
**Saint John, NB Christmas Bird Count**  
**Summary**

Continuing a 60-year Saint John, New Brunswick end-of-year tradition, the 2017-2018 Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was held on December 17, 2017. Species not observed on the December 17 Count Day, but seen during the Count Week (Dec 14 - 20) or the Count Period (Dec 14 - Jan 5), are included in the count and, as usual, there are several of these.

Weather is always an important factor in determining how many birds are found – and possibly also in the number of people who spend time outdoors trying to find them! Mild temperatures through mid-December changed just a few days before Count Day and, although snow cover was just a few centimetres, suddenly much open water was frozen over. Count Day started at around -13° and warmed up just a bit. It was mainly sunny with modest winds, although stronger along the coast.

As we look over the data and compare this year's numbers to the multi-year average for each species, here are a few conclusions we come to:

- Most open water species were seen in lower numbers than normal; just Mallards, scaup and mergansers were up.
- Turkey Vultures were above the 10-year average, but they have been increasing significantly over the last decade. Bald Eagles showed very strongly at 30 individuals, but raptors were scarce
- The CBC is a good time to practice gull identification skills as these birds huddle in mixed groups. This year, the five species of gull normally seen were all observed, but in significantly fewer numbers. Herring Gulls, sometimes the most numerous species of the count, were down by almost 2000 individuals. Only the relatively uncommon Glaucous Gull was up from an average of two individuals to eight.
- Downy Woodpeckers were widely seen. Hairy and Pileated as well – but no Flickers, a bird that usually shows up somewhere on Count Day. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was seen during the Count Period; three southern New Brunswick CBC sightings of this species last year may have been the first-ever for New Brunswick CBCs, so perhaps this species is finding it does not have to migrate as far south to survive the winter. Or is at least trying out the idea.
- Common Ravens and Blue Jays were both up in numbers and widely reported. Hardly need to mention it, but so were American Crows. Six species of sparrow and junco were observed (including a western race “Oregon Junco”), but numbers of all were down. There were no Snow Buntings.
- And it is a good thing we have American Goldfinches because other than three Purple Finches these were the only finches seen. No Siskins, no Grosbeaks, no Crossbills. None. (A couple of House Finches were added near the end of the Count Period.)
- Usually there are a few flocks of waxwings cruising about looking for frozen berries, but they too were almost nonexistent with only a single Bohemian Waxwing seen this year. Where were all his or her friends and family? Results from other CBCs across Canada may tell that story.
- Despite a lack of “winter birds”, the warm weather and green grass into mid-December meant there were summer holdouts. On Count Day, three species of warbler were seen. A Pine Warbler and an Orange-crowned Warbler were both seen near Irving Nature Park. If any

warblers are seen on a Saint John CBC, these would be the ones that would be expected. Completely unexpected was a Black-throated Green Warbler which is abundant here in the summer but is generally long gone by now. Non-Count Day summer hold out species included a Carolina Wren and a Summer Tanager at feeders, a Great Blue Heron seen flying towards Marsh Creek and a Gray Catbird seen at a heated birdbath. Watch for the video on this last one.

- The most abundant bird was an introduced species, European Starling. Almost 2400 in number, most were found in Saint John, but there were at least a few in many sectors. Herring Gulls, Crows and Black-capped Chickadees also numbered over 1000 each.
- Speaking of chickadees, anyone who made use of a “mobbing tape” will know that even the most frozen and apparently lifeless patch of roadside or residential street will yield a dozen chickadees plus perhaps nuthatches, woodpeckers, kinglets and other birds if the recording is played. Just how many of our provincial birds are there in the woods of New Brunswick?
- Crows and Chickadees were the most widespread birds, being found in every sector. Also, the Saint John count conformed to the Canadian norm by observing Ravens, the most widely-reported bird in Canada on CBCs. Ravens are reported in around 85 percent of the 500 Canadian counts.
- Finally, there are two northern species of bird that we always hope to find - Boreal Chickadee and Gray Jay. There was a single Boreal Chickadee observed on the Kingston Peninsula during the Count Period last year but none this year. It's been a couple of years since a Gray Jay was observed, but a teacher-lead group of students and parents from Rothesay Netherwood School, doing the count in the woods surrounding their school, found a Gray Jay. [Interestingly, the Hampton-Quispamsis CBC on December 30th counted four Gray Jays at a feeder near French Village. The owner of the feeders believes there are two family groups of four each using the feeders this winter. It's not far “as the jay flies” between French Village and the RNS campus; a healthy population of Gray Jays being sustained in that area would be noteworthy.]

Now to the people numbers. 42 participated in field parties and a further 21 monitored feeders at home, all part of 40,000 Canadians who participate in the CBC each year. Number of observers was up, hours and kilometres were up considerably but walking hours and distances were up only marginally. We seem to be doing more birding-by-car than we used to.

Total species: 65 on Count Day compared to a 10-year average of 67 species. Three more species were seen during each of the Count Week and the Count Period for a total of 71 species, compared to 76 last year. Overall, there were 11,303 birds seen compared to more than 15,000 last year and a 10-year average of 13,000.

Ann & Donald MacPhail  
Compilers

## 2017 Saint John Christmas Bird Count

Count Day Species	2006 - 2016		
	Number	Avg	+/-
Canada Goose	5	27	-22
Wood Duck	0	0	0
Gadwall	1	5	-4
American Wigeon	2	1	1
American Black Duck	664	574	90
Mallard	975	592	383
Blue-winged Teal	0	0	0
Northern Shoveler	0	0	0
Northern Pintail	6	1	5
Green-winged Teal	2	7	-5
Canvasback	0	0	0
Redhead	0	0	0
Ring-necked Duck	4	1	3
Tufted Duck	0	0	0
Greater Scaup	146	38	108
Lesser Scaup	4	6	-2
Common Eider	1	15	-14
Surf Scoter	0	1	-1
White-winged Scoter	0	0	0
Black Scoter	0	0	0
Bufflehead	183	167	16
Common Goldeneye	285	315	-30
Barrow's Goldeneye	11	2	9
Hooded Merganser	1	5	-4
Common Merganser	112	56	56
Red-breasted Merganser	201	79	122
Ring-necked Pheasant	1	0	1
Ruffed Grouse	2	4	-2
Spruce Grouse	0	0	0
Northern Bobwhite	0	0	0
Red-throated Loon	1	3	-2
Common Loon	2	5	-3
Pied-billed Grebe	0	0	0
Horned Grebe	6	1	5
Red-necked Grebe	0	0	0
Double-crested Cormorant	0	0	0
Great Cormorant	0	0	0
Great Blue Heron	0	0	0
Snowy Egret	0	0	0
Turkey Vulture	28	2	26
Bald Eagle	30	20	10
Northern Harrier	1	1	0
Sharp-shinned Hawk	0	2	-2
Cooper's Hawk	0	0	0
Northern Goshawk	0	0	0
Red-tailed Hawk	2	1	1
Rough-legged Hawk	0	0	0
Merlin	0	0	0
Peregrine Falcon	0	0	0

American Coot	0	0	0
Purple Sandpiper	0	2	-2
Little Gull	0	0	0
Black-headed Gull	0	0	0
Bonaparte's Gull	0	36	-36
Ring-billed Gull	98	103	-5
Herring Gull	1239	3194	-1955
Iceland Gull	280	255	25
Lesser Black-backed Gull	0	0	0
Glaucous Gull	8	1	7
Great Black-backed Gull	60	309	-249
Black-legged Kittiwake	0	0	0
Dovekie	0	0	0
Common Murre	0	2	-2
Rock Pigeon	735	686	49
White-winged Dove	0	0	0
Mourning Dove	292	228	64
Great-horned Owl	1	0	1
Snowy Owl	0	0	0
Barred Owl	1	0	1
Short-eared Owl	0	0	0
Northern Saw-whet Owl	0	0	0
Red-bellied Woodpecker	0	1	-1
Downy Woodpecker	63	30	33
Hairy Woodpecker	21	20	1
Black-backed Woodpecker	0	0	0
Northern Flicker	0	1	-1
Pileated Woodpecker	2	2	0
Northern Shrike	0	1	-1
Gray Jay	1	2	-1
Blue Jay	136	78	58
American Crow	1439	1030	409
Common Raven	110	73	37
Horned Lark	0	2	-2
Black-capped Chickadee	1263	728	535
Boreal Chickadee	0	1	-1
Tufted Titmouse	0	0	0
Red-breasted Nuthatch	60	67	-7
White-breasted Nuthatch	2	5	-3
Brown Creeper	4	1	3
Carolina Wren	0	0	0
Golden-crowned Kinglet	37	11	26
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	0	0	0
Hermit Thrush	0	0	0
American Robin	2	79	-77
Northern Mockingbird	1	0	1
European Starling	2397	2759	-362
American Pipit	0	0	0
Bohemian Waxwing	1	73	-72
Cedar Waxwing	0	11	-11
Orange-crowned Warbler	1	0	1
Yellow-rumped Warbler	0	0	0
Yellow-throated Warbler	0	0	0
Pine Warbler	1	0	1
Yellow-breasted Chat	0	0	0

Eastern Towhee	0	0	0
American Tree Sparrow	51	54	-3
Chipping Sparrow	3	2	1
Field Sparrow	1	0	1
Savannah Sparrow	0	0	0
Fox Sparrow	0	0	0
Song Sparrow	7	12	-5
Lincoln's Sparrow	0	0	0
White-throated Sparrow	7	26	-19
White-crowned Sparrow	0	0	0
Dark-eyed Junco	29	116	-87
Lapland Longspur	0	1	-1
Snow Bunting	0	25	-25
Northern Cardinal	58	48	10
Red-winged Blackbird	0	0	0
Common Grackle	1	1	0
Brown-headed Cowbird	0	0	0
Baltimore Oriole	0	0	0
Pine Grosbeak	0	11	-11
Purple Finch	3	25	-22
House Finch	0	6	-6
Red Crossbill	0	6	-6
White-winged Crossbill	0	23	-23
Common Redpoll	0	130	-130
Hoary Redpoll	0	0	0
Pine Siskin	0	18	-18
American Goldfinch	134	455	-321
Evening Grosbeak	0	11	-11
House Sparrow	23	71	-48

**Others on Count Day**

Black-throated Green Warbler	1		
Duck species	18		
Merganser species	5		
Gull species	52		

<b>Total Species</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>-2</b>
<b>Total Individuals</b>	<b>11303</b>	<b>13059</b>	<b>-1756</b>

**Additional during Count Week**

Carolina Wren - Dec 19  
 Summer Tanager - Dec 20  
 Great Blue Heron - Dec 20

**Additional during Count Period**

Sharp-shinned Hawk - Dec 22 - 97.3 radio website  
 Gray Catbird - Dec 28  
 House Finch - Jan 3

**TOTAL SPECIES, COUNT PERIOD** **71**

**People Comparables (to 2016)**

Number of Observers	63	46	13
Party hours by car	68	55	13
Party hours on foot	41	37	4
Total Party hours	109	92	16
Km by car	719	603	116
Km on foot	73	68	5
Total Km	792	671	121

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Compilers

## 2017 Saint John CBC Participants

### Field Observers

W1	Rick Peacock
W2	Don McAlpine
W2 - morna	Don McAlpine
W3	Richard Blacquiere, Harvey McLeod
W4	
W4 - bridge	Richard Blacquiere, Harvey McLeod
W5	Kelly Honeyman, Jim Wilson, Samantha Brewster
W6	Paul Clark, Shauna Sands
W7	Frank Kelly, Marta Kelly, Dave Ross
W8	Stephen & Barbara Clayden
C1 exc RP	Joan Pearce, Janet Whitehead, Holly Haines
RP	Suzanne Bonnell, Ian Stead
C2	Joan Pearce, Janet Whitehead, Holly Haines
C3 - north	Suzanne Bonnell
C3 - south	Ian Stead
E1	Hank & Carolyn Scarth
E2	Judy Whalen, Patty Fullerton
E3	Mike Bamford, Tom Keeler
E4	Paul Mansz, Merv Cormier
E4a	Tina & David McCormick
E5	Jim Russell
K1	Ann & Donald MacPhail
K2	Joanne Savage, David Putt, Karen Miller
RNS	Mary-Ellen Wilcox plus parents and students

### Feeder Counters

mary richard  
ida & dave macpherson + mitzy withers, patti kyle and  
others  
macphersons - K2 (11 counters)  
louise armstrong  
rick barlow (summerville)  
marion sherwood  
denise johnston  
jeanne finn-allen  
faye black