

Christmas Bird Count 2020 Saint John, NB

The 2020 Christmas Bird Count for Saint John, New Brunswick was held on Sunday, December 20, 2020. The weather had been very mild throughout December other than a brief moderately cold spell just a few days before the 20th. By Count Day, there was no snow and most water was open.

The general consensus from participants was that there was a large variety of birds, but numbers were lower than usual. These two phenomena are probably related to the fact that, with moderate temperatures, wild sources of food were easily accessible, and birds were widely dispersed. Species variety was also helped by the fact that throughout most of the early winter there had been a good variety of so-called northern species throughout southern New Brunswick.

Considering waterbirds, a single Long-tailed Duck in the St. John River near the pulp mill was unusual for the count. And three sandpipers seen near Irving Nature Park were also unusual. It's possible they were yellowlegs, but identification was uncertain so they have been shown as Sandpiper sp.

There were two Red-bellied Woodpeckers reported, one in Grand Bay and one on the Kingston Peninsula. Not as many as in previous years, but there was also a Black-backed Woodpecker, another fairly unusual species that was sighted a number of times in southern New Brunswick in the fall and early winter. Overall, six species of woodpecker were found.

Not many raptors other than 32 Bald Eagles. One Northern Shrike and a few Horned Lark were seen as well as a Belted Kingfisher. Nice to see a Northern Mockingbird and a Savannah Sparrow as well.

Our most abundant CBC species are usually European Starlings and members of the Gull Family, but numbers for both were lower than usual. The gulls, possibly because the count was undertaken on a Sunday and the huge numbers seeing at the Crane Mountain landfill site on days when the site is working were disbursed elsewhere for whatever they could scrounge.



Carolina Wren courtesy of Mary Lou MacLellan

Count Week and Count Period birds, as often happens, included some of the more unusual species. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet was seen around the feeders at Lily Lake and there was a Carolina Wren visiting a suet ball. A couple of Barrow's Goldeneyes, Lesser Black-backed Gulls visiting from Europe (or Newfoundland) and at least one bedraggled-looking Great Blue Heron were also seen. In addition, Ida and Dave McPherson had a Spruce Grouse near their home on the peninsula – the first time I recall that species being on the Saint John count.

I always figure there were there should be Gray Jays and Boreal Chickadees on a Canadian CBC, but this year there were neither.

Overall, 59 participants found 9087 birds from 73 species (plus another 6 species during Count Week or Count Period) by driving 728 km by car and covering another 52 on foot. It was close to both biking and kayaking weather, but no one opted for those modes. A 15-mile diameter circle is a surprisingly large territory; imagine counts that have only one or two people covering them.

Thanks for participating. Hopefully, we will all be immune to COVID-19 and be able to carry out the 2021 count under conditions we are more used to.

Saint John Christmas Bird Count

Sunday, December 20, 2020

Species	Individuals
Canada Goose	85
Wood Duck	2
Gadwall	3
American Wigeon	2
American Black Duck	707
Mallard	1128
Northern Pintail	8
Green-winged Teal	67
Ring-necked Duck	3
Greater Scaup	70
Common Eider	5
Surf Scoter	12
Black Scoter	1
Long-tailed Duck	1
Bufflehead	157
Common Goldeneye	115
Hooded Merganser	4
Common Merganser	48
Red-breasted Merganser	114
Ruffed Grouse	2
Red-throated Loon	4
Common Loon	13
Great Cormorant	1
Turkey Vulture	3
Bald Eagle	32
Sharp-shinned Hawk	4
Peregrine Falcon	1
Ring-billed Gull	48
Herring Gull	1199
Iceland Gull	77
Glaucous Gull	1
Great Black-backed Gull	46
Rock Pigeon	1060
Mourning Dove	244
Barred Owl	1
Belted Kingfisher	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	2
Downy Woodpecker	75
Hairy Woodpecker	29
Black-backed Woodpecker	1
Northern Flicker	1
Pileated Woodpecker	14
Northern Shrike	1
Blue Jay	174
American Crow	856
Common Raven	41
Horned Lark	8
Black-capped Chickadee	866
Red-breasted Nuthatch	102
White-breasted Nuthatch	17
Golden-crowned Kinglet	24
Hermit Thrush	1
American Robin	37
Northern Mockingbird	1
European Starling	827
Bohemian Waxwing	60

American Tree Sparrow	12
Savannah Sparrow	1
Song Sparrow	9
White-throated Sparrow	5
Dark-eyed Junco	41
Snow Bunting	4
Northern Cardinal	46
Pine Grosbeak	15
Purple Finch	25
House Finch	1
White-winged Crossbill	17
Common Redpoll	60
Pine Siskin	16
American Goldfinch	107
Evening Grosbeak	108
House Sparrow	48
Scaup species	2
Duck species	66
Hawk species	1
Sandpiper species	3
Gull species	92
Passeriformes species	2
Total Species	73
Total Individuals	9087

Additional during Count Week

Lesser Black-backed Gull	✓
Barrow's Goldeneye	✓
Great Blue Heron	✓
Carolina Wren	✓
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	✓

Additional during Count Period

Spruce Grouse	✓
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TOTAL SPECIES - Count Day, Week and Period **79**

Environmental & People Data

Weather: -8 in the morning, rising to just above zero by sunset; overcast in the am, snow by afternoon; almost no wind

Ground & water conditions: Fresh water bodies mostly open, all running water unfrozen. Snow cover 0 centimeters

Participants: 59; 40 in the 18 field parties; 19 at feeders

Hours: 78 by car; 30 on foot (no snowshoeing possible; biking was, but no one took up the option)

Distances (km): 728 by car; 52 on foot

Participants (some feeder counters missing)

Mike Bamford
Richard Blacquiere
Suzanne Bonnell
Paul Clark
Keith Dewar
Holly Haines
Kelly Honeyman
Madeline Honeyman
Frank Kelly
Marta Kelly
Dave MacPherson
Ida MacPherson
Don McAlpine
Lynne McAlpine
David Mansz
Paul Mansz
Rick Peacock
Joan Pearce
Jan Riddell
Ray Riddell
Joanne Savage
Carolyn Scarth
Hank Scarth
Ian Stead
Judy Whalen
Janet Whitehead
Jim Wilson