



2021 Christmas Bird Count Report

Species tallied (count day + count week)	135 species
Count Day	130 species
Count Week	5 species
Individual Birds:	54,445 [51849 in-field, 2596 at feeders]
Observers:	260 [162 in field + 98 feeder watchers]

Overview

After a Covid year of a feeder-watch only CBC, in 2021 we returned to having in-field teams in addition to feeder-watchers. We still limited in-field participation to maintain safety, but it was great to be back to something closer to normal this time around.

The 2021 Seattle CBC was held on a partly cloudy but rain-free day. Overall, results were quite good – We tallied the highest number of birds [54,445] in 15 years – not since the era when the crow roost site was inside the count circle have we seen this many birds on the CBC. This is over 6600 higher than our 10-year average. The species total was also a record high – we recorded 130 species on count day [a record], with 5 additional count week species.

Highlights

While we added no new species to the CBC history this year, highlight birds for the count included Ancient Murrelets [8], Common Redpolls [7], Townsend's Solitaire and Western Tanager, as well as count week Great Egret, Pine Grosbeak and Lesser Goldfinch

Notable misses

Five species were only picked up as count week birds: Ruddy Duck, Great Egret, Marbled Murrelet, Pine Grosbeak and Lesser Goldfinch. In addition, notable misses included: Long-tailed Duck, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Ring-necked Pheasant, Western Screech-Owl and Red Crossbill.

Record high counts

For the modern period (1972-present), high counts were recorded for a remarkable 15 species. In addition to the high total count and high species count, we set or tied record highs for: Greater White-fronted Goose [20], Common Merganser [732], Red-breasted Merganser [516], Pelagic Cormorant [93], Double-crested Cormorant [1142], Northern Harrier [2], Cooper's Hawk [40], Red-tailed Hawk

[53], Northern Saw-whet Owl [8], Hairy Woodpecker [11], Peregrine Falcon [16], Spotted Towhee [518], Song Sparrow [1230], Golden-crowned Sparrow [373], and Orange-crowned Warbler [14].

Trends

It's always tough to be selective with the results to report, but here's how a few groups fared. [numbers in brackets indicate the total number seen and the percentage as a ratio of the 10-year average on the count (excluding last year), species with a record-high count noted with an *]. For example, a note of "[100, 50%]" would indicate that 100 individuals were seen, and that this is just 50% of the norm for the past 10 years (the average # seen from 2010-2019 has been 200).

Ducks & geese

Geese and Swans came in at or above average in most cases: Greater White-fronted Goose* [20, 286%], Brant [123, 102%], Cackling Goose [160, 138%], Canada Goose [1411, 142%], Trumpeter Swan [24, 197%], & Tundra Swan [3, 200%]. Only Snow Goose [50, 69%] bucked the trend with a lower than usual showing. Dabbling ducks were generally present in a bit lower than usual numbers this year: Northern Shoveler [52, 27%], Gadwall [453, 78%], Northern Pintail [28, 37%], & Green-winged Teal [90, 76%]. American Wigeon [2540, 105%] and Mallard [1438, 108%] were closer to their norms.

The diving duck story was a not great overall, with pretty much all species reporting lower than usual numbers, for example: Redhead [1, 15%], Lesser Scaup [109, 35%], Surf Scoter [600, 78%], White-winged Scoter [2, 26%], and Barrow's Goldeneye [117, 41%]. Mergansers were one group that did better than usual this year across the board, with two setting record-high totals: Hooded Merganser [84, 111%], Common Merganser* [732, 225%], and Red-breasted Merganser* [516, 178%].

Grebes, pigeons & hummingbirds

Grebes showed a mixed result. While Pied-billed Grebe numbers [182, 90%] were pretty stable and Red-necked Grebe [136, 125%] numbers were high, Horned Grebe [238, 75%] and Western Grebe [202, 30%] numbers were low this year. Our Rock Pigeon numbers were a little low [1667, 85%], but the three Mourning Doves found were the most we've seen on the count since 1978! Band-tailed Pigeon [10, 17%] were found at their lowest level since 1971. Anna's Hummingbirds [821, 190%] were found at the 2nd highest level ever.

Alcids

Our alcid story was mixed. On the one hand, Ancient Murrelet [8] was found on count day for the first time since 2006, and at a level not matched since 1990. A Count Week Marbled Murrelet [CW] was also a good find – only the 4th time in the past decade it has made the list. Rhinoceros Auklet [82, 140%] numbers were strong and Pigeon Guillemot [56, 102%] were found at normal levels. The Common Murre numbers [34, 47%] look low when compared to their 10-year average, but that average disguises the highly variable results they show from year to year – while half of that average, the 34 seen this year were also more than was seen in seven of the previous ten CBCs.

Loons & cormorants

Loon numbers were lower, at about 80% of their decade average: Red-throated Loon [23, 78%], Pacific Loon [21, 83%] and Common Loon [9, 79%]. On the cormorant front, Brandt's Cormorant were down [123, 61%], but Pelagic Cormorant* [93, 170%] and Double-crested Cormorant* [1142, 145%] were both seen in record high numbers.

Raptors & owls

Raptors overall were found in solid numbers: The Bald Eagle [131, 149%] total is particularly high if you consider that prior to 1990 we had never even tallied a double-digit total for this species – they've moved in! In addition, we saw higher than usual numbers for other raptors: Northern Harrier [2, 600%], Sharp-shinned Hawk [10, 135%], Cooper's Hawk [40, 178%] and Red-tailed Hawk [53, 145%] were all seen in higher than usual numbers. Likewise, falcons were strong: American Kestrel

[2, 800%], Merlin [13, 120%] and Peregrine Falcon* [16, 190%] all cooperated. We had four species of owl on the count: Barn Owl [2, 58%], Great Horned Owl [2, 95%], Barred Owl [15, 172%] and a record total for Northern Saw-whet Owl [8, 421%]. We did miss Western Screech-Owl again – their last sighting on the count was 2018....

Passerines

Corvids numbers were solid, all told: Steller's Jay [254, 132%], California Scrub-Jay [19, 173%], American Crow [6169, 92%], and Common Raven [15, 226%].

Numbers for the 'little ones,' from **Chickadees to Wrens**, were largely consistent with their recent trends: Black-capped Chickadee [1776, 104%], Chestnut-backed Chickadee [413, 110%], Bushtit [862, 86%], Ruby-crowned Kinglet [469, 136%], Red-breasted Nuthatch [207, 137%], Brown Creeper [100, 107%], Pacific Wren [246, 124%], Bewick's Wren [293, 105%]. Of these, only one, Golden-crowned Kinglet [636, 63%] was down significantly.

Thrush numbers were strong overall. In addition to our one Townsend's Solitaire, we also saw higher than usual Hermit Thrush [35, 302%] numbers, steady numbers for American Robin [2790, 103%], and high totals for Varied Thrush [192, 162%].

Sparrows showed up, with all nine species above average and three setting record high counts: Fox Sparrow [190, 136%], Dark-eyed Junco [2485, 158%], White-crowned Sparrow [102, 145%], Golden-crowned Sparrow* [373, 162%], White-throated Sparrow [4, 110%], Savannah Sparrow [2, only the 5th time in 20 years they've been found], Song Sparrow* [1230, 142%], Lincoln's Sparrow [16, 107%] and Spotted Towhee* [518, 167%].

Warblers: Orange-crowned Warblers* [14, 286%] were out in force. Yellow-rumped Warblers [290, 133%] were also present in above average numbers. Townsend's Warbler [17, 78%] numbers, on the other hand, were a bit below average. Pretty nice to find over 300 warblers in Seattle on a single December day.

At-Home Count

Count Day: 50 species

Individual Birds: 2596 birds

Observers: 98

Locations: 65

This year, our feeder watchers contributed about 5% of the total birds on the count and filling in many of the gaps in our coverage by watching backyards throughout the count circle. Overall, 98 observers found almost 2600 birds over the course of the day. These observers helped us in particular with the high overall sparrow numbers reported. Overall numbers of feeder watchers were lower than the past two years, perhaps a sign of the number of observers eager to get out of the house after the past year.

Top ten species found at feeders by number were: Dark-eyed Junco (454), Bushtit (332), American Crow (288), Black-capped Chickadee (178), Pine Siskin (141), Anna's Hummingbird (130), House Finch (114), American Robin (102), American Goldfinch (87) and Song Sparrow (83). Eight of those were on the top-ten list in 2019 as well.

Thanks to all the participants who contributed to this year's count.

Matt Bartels, Seattle CBC compiler

All Species Recorded During 2021 Seattle CBC

Snow Goose (50)	Wilson's Snipe (2)	Peregrine Falcon (16)
Greater White-fronted Goose (20)	Spotted Sandpiper (2)	[falcon sp. (1)]
Brant (123)	Common Murre (34)	Hutton's Vireo (8)
Cackling Goose (160)	Pigeon Guillemot (56)	Steller's Jay (254)
Canada Goose (1411)	Marbled Murrelet (CW)	California Scrub-Jay (19)
goose sp. (2)	Ancient Murrelet (8)	American Crow (6169)
Trumpeter Swan (24)	Rhinoceros Auklet (82)	Common Raven (15)
Tundra Swan (3)	[alcid sp. (4)]	Black-capped Chickadee (1776)
[swan sp. (4)]	Bonaparte's Gull (33)	Chestnut-backed Chickadee (413)
Wood Duck (58)	Heermann's Gull (4)	Bushtit (862)
Northern Shoveler (52)	Short-billed (Mew) Gull (594)	Ruby-crowned Kinglet (469)
Gadwall (453)	Ring-billed Gull (52)	Golden-crowned Kinglet (636)
Eurasian Wigeon (8)	Western Gull (1)	Cedar Waxwing (113)
American Wigeon (2540)	[Western x Glaucous-winged Gull (1161)]	Red-breasted Nuthatch (207)
[Eurasian x American Wigeon (2)]	California Gull (69)	Brown Creeper (100)
Mallard (1438)	Herring Gull (4)	Pacific Wren (246)
Northern Pintail (28)	Iceland (Thayer's) Gull (1)	Marsh Wren (9)
Green-winged Teal (90)	Glaucous-winged Gull (579)	Bewick's Wren (293)
[Green-winged Teal (American) (89)]	[gull sp. (563)]	European Starling (1699)
[Green-winged Teal (intergrade) (1)]	Red-throated Loon (23)	Townsend's Solitaire (1)
Canvasback (122)	Pacific Loon (21)	Hermit Thrush (35)
Redhead (1)	Common Loon (9)	American Robin (2790)
Ring-necked Duck (372)	[loon sp. (1)]	Varied Thrush (192)
Greater Scaup (242)	Brandt's Cormorant (123)	House Sparrow (266)
Lesser Scaup (109)	Pelagic Cormorant (93)	Evening Grosbeak (1)
[scaup sp. (18)]	Double-crested Cormorant (1142)	Pine Grosbeak (CW)
Harlequin Duck (51)	[cormorant sp. (6)]	House Finch (1060)
Surf Scoter (600)	Great Blue Heron (69)	Purple Finch (67)
White-winged Scoter (2)	Great Egret (CW)	Common Redpoll (7)

Black Scoter (15)	Northern Harrier (2)	Pine Siskin (2159)
Bufflehead (612)	Sharp-shinned Hawk (10)	Lesser Goldfinch (CW)
Common Goldeneye (331)	Cooper's Hawk (40)	American Goldfinch (609)
Barrow's Goldeneye (117)	[Accipiter sp. (7)]	[Spinus sp. (28)]
[goldeneye sp. (1)]	Bald Eagle (131)	Fox Sparrow (190)
Hooded Merganser (84)	[Bald Eagle (adult) (93)]	Dark-eyed Junco (2485)
Common Merganser (732)	[Bald Eagle (immature) (20)]	[Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco (1)]
Red-breasted Merganser (516)	[Bald Eagle (unspecified) (18)]	[Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco (1587)]
Ruddy Duck (CW)	Red-tailed Hawk (53)	[Dark-eyed Junco (undifferentiated) (897)]
[duck sp. (41)]	[Buteo sp. (1)]	White-crowned Sparrow (102)
California Quail (1)	Barn Owl (2)	Golden-crowned Sparrow (373)
Pied-billed Grebe (182)	Great Horned Owl (2)	White-throated Sparrow (4)
Horned Grebe (238)	Barred Owl (15)	Savannah Sparrow (2)
Red-necked Grebe (136)	Northern Saw-whet Owl (8)	Song Sparrow (1230)
Eared Grebe (1)	[owl sp. (1)]	Lincoln's Sparrow (16)
Western Grebe (202)	Belted Kingfisher (27)	Spotted Towhee (518)
Rock Pigeon (1667)	Red-breasted Sapsucker (9)	Western Meadowlark (4)
Band-tailed Pigeon (10)	Downy Woodpecker (101)	Red-winged Blackbird (151)
Mourning Dove (3)	Hairy Woodpecker (11)	Orange-crowned Warbler (14)
Anna's Hummingbird (821)	Northern Flicker (394)	Yellow-rumped Warbler (290)
Virginia Rail (2)	[Northern (Red-shafted) (192)]	[Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) (60)]