



Peter Brannon, Audubon Photography Awards

# 2024 SEATTLE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Sunday, December 15

## 2024 Christmas Bird Count Report

<b>Species tallied</b> (count day + count week)	<b>119 species</b>
<b>Count Day</b>	<b>117 species</b>
<b>Count Week</b>	<b>2 additional species</b>
<b>Individual Birds:</b>	52,892 [51,614 in-field, 1,278 at-home]
<b>Observers:</b>	268 [224 in field + 44 from home]

### Overview

The 2024 Seattle CBC was held on December 15, 2024. We managed decent weather and a lot of good birding on familiar sectors and some new routes around the count circle. Our species total of 119 was well below the 10-year average of 128 – the lowest total we’ve tallied in 20 years. Our overall count total on the other hand – 52,892 - was a little higher than usual, with our second highest number of birds recorded of the past decade of counts. With 268 observers including 44 at feeders and 224 in the field, we had fewer participants than the last two years, but still was better than average and our third highest total in our 100+ years of Seattle CBCs.

### Highlights

The highlight birds of this year’s count included a Common Yellowthroat on Bainbridge Island and a Wilson’s Warbler at Discovery Park.

### Notable misses

Two species were only picked up as count week birds: Brant and Sanderling. Additional notable misses included: Tundra Swan, Redhead, Eared Grebe, Barn Owl, Evening Grosbeak, Savannah Sparrow, and Western Tanager.

### Record high counts

For the modern period (1972-present), high counts were recorded for eight species. We set or tied record highs for: Common Goldeneye [500], Pelagic Cormorant [126], Hairy Woodpecker [22], Red-breasted Nuthatch [321], Cedar Waxwing [608], Common Yellowthroat [1], Yellow-rumped Warbler [544], and Wilson’s Warbler [1].

### Trends

Looking at trends over time, 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 2020). Species with a record-high count are 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 2013-2023 has been 200).

### **Ducks & geese**

Goose numbers were mixed. On the low end we found only a single Snow Goose [1, 34%] a couple Greater White-fronted Geese [2, 31%] and Brant only as a count week bird [CW, when our 10-year average has been 99]. Cackling Geese [365, 175%], Canada Geese [1488, 130%], and Trumpeter Swans [21, 131%], by contrast, were all present in stronger than usual numbers.

Dabbling ducks, in general came in below their 10-year average once again this year. The only dabbling duck above average was Mallard [1638, 116%]. Lower than average numbers included Wood Duck [46, 75%], Northern Shoveler [106, 61%], Gadwall [425, 74%], Northern Pintail [47, 64%], and Green-winged Teal [70, 64%].

The story for diving ducks was a bit more mixed. A few came in higher than average, including Harlequin Duck [64, 141%], White-winged Scoter [10, 217%], Common Goldeneye [500\*, 129%], Common Merganser [714, 182%], and Red-breasted Merganser [467, 149%]. Below-average numbers were reported for species including Canvasback [6, 4%], Greater Scaup [140, 93%], Lesser Scaup [74, 32%], and Black Scoter [2, 17%].

### **Grebes, hummingbirds and coots**

Western Grebes [612, 135%] were found in strong numbers again this year, while Pied-billed Grebe [161, 78%] were at their second lowest number in a decade. Horned Grebe [337, 117%] and Red-necked Grebe [91, 102%] did fine, and our Eared Grebe miss was only the second time we've missed this species in 20 years, despite their very localized small presence in the count circle normally. Anna's Hummingbird [574, 104%] were right on their average while American Coot [9475, 139%] tallied the largest number of any single species for the day.

### **Shorebirds, alcids & gulls**

Killdeer [51, 123%] and Black Turnstone [75, 121%] numbers were high, while Surf-bird [27, 44%], Dunlin [1, 3%], Wilson's Snipe [5, 42%] and Spotted Sandpiper [2, 63%] numbers were below-average, and we found Sanderling only as a count-week bird. Probably impacted by the CBC boat crew being unable to sail, our alcid numbers were below average, with Common Murre [14, 45%], and Rhinoceros Auklet [36, 91%] low, and Marbled & Ancient Murrelets missing altogether. Only Pigeon Guillemot [56, 116%] were present in above-average numbers. Gulls largely came in at slightly lower levels as well, including Short-billed Gull [835, 84%], Ring-billed Gull [43, 24%], and California Gull [38, 84%].

### **Loons & cormorants**

Loons were found in slightly low numbers as well with Red-throated Loon [14, 70%], Pacific Loon [14, 105%], and Common Loon [6, 76%]. The cormorant story was split: One species came in very low: Brandt's Cormorant [30, 16%]. One came in right on average: Double-crested Cormorant [831, 102%]. And one came in at record high levels: Pelagic Cormorant [126\*, 196%]

### **Raptors and owls**

Raptor numbers were pretty close to what we normally find, with falcons not quite as cooperative this year: Bald Eagle [111, 104%], Sharp-shinned Hawk [5, 67%], Cooper's Hawk [25, 102%], Red-tailed Hawk [35, 90%], Merlin [3, 27%], and Peregrine Falcon [1, 11%]. Owls were mostly difficult to find this year, with Barn Owl completely eluding us. Also low were Barred Owl [5, 54%], N. Saw-whet Owl [2, 77%]. Only Great Horned Owl [3, 141%] appeared in higher than usual numbers.

**Woodpeckers** were present and found in above-average numbers for the most part, including Downy Woodpecker [108, 133%], Hairy Woodpecker [22\*, 314%], Northern Flicker [380, 108%], and Pileated Woodpecker [17, 104%].

**Corvid** numbers remain difficult to report with much confidence in their accuracy because of the potential for many (especially Crows and Ravens) to move from sector to sector during the day. All told, we came up with estimates of numbers that included Steller's Jay [154, 78%], California Scrub-Jay [18, 117%], American Crow [4910, 78%], and Common Raven [18, 176%]

### **Chickadees, wrens & kinglets**

Our totals for some of the 'little' species were pretty solid. Those doing better than average included: Chestnut-backed Chickadee [424, 104%], Red-breasted Nuthatch [321\*, 199%], Brown Creeper [138, 136%], Golden-crowned Kinglet [1034, 116%], and Ruby-crowned Kinglet [519, 150%] Those coming in a little below average, included: Black-capped Chickadee [1381, 81%], Bushtit [700, 71%], and Marsh Wren [3, 37%]

### **Thrush & waxwing**

Hermit Thrush [24, 176%] appeared in good numbers this year, as did American Robin [3333, 125%], while Varied Thrush [74, 61%] came in a bit lower than average. Cedar Waxwing [608\*, 425%] numbers were almost twice the previous record we'd recorded on the count.

### **Finches**

While we didn't find any rarer finches, we did have solid numbers overall, including House Finch [956, 127%], Red Crossbill [26, 190% - mostly thanks to the Seward Park team], and Pine Siskin [2728, 280%]. We did miss Evening Grosbeak and Redpoll this year though.

### **Sparrows**

Looking pretty close to their normal showing on the sparrow front, we had: Spotted Towhee [333, 96%], Song Sparrow [887, 99%], White-crowned Sparrow [88, 105%], and Dark-eyed Junco [1895, 102%]. Fox Sparrow [70, 55%] were present in low numbers this year while White-throated Sparrow [10, 195%] and Golden-crowned Sparrow [316, 127%] numbers were strong.

### **Warblers**

The Wilson's Warbler at Discovery Park and the Common Yellowthroat on Bainbridge Island were both only the fifth sighting of these species for the count in over 100 years. Other warblers were out in good numbers as well including Orange-crowned Warbler [9, 180%], Yellow-rumped Warbler [544\*, 207%], and Townsend's Warbler [35, 210%]

### **At-Home Count**

**Count Day: 42 species**

**Individual Birds: 1278 birds**

**Observers: 44**

**Feeder Locations: 29**

This year, the total number of people participating as at-home counters was much lower than in recent years. Nevertheless, the feeder watchers filled in many gaps, helping us better understand the birds present in the yards around the count circle. 44 watchers found 1278 birds on count day.

The top five species found at feeders by number were: Dark-eyed Junco (185), Bushtit (161), Black-capped Chickadee (130), American Crow (128), and House Finch (89).

All in all, it was another fun day seeing what can be found when over 200 participants come together in a small circle for a day of birding. Thanks to all the participants who contributed to this year's count.

Matt Bartels  
Seattle CBC compiler

### All Species Recorded During the 2024 Seattle CBC

Snow Goose (1)	Pigeon Guillemot (56)	Common Raven (18)
Greater White-fronted Goose (2)	Rhinoceros Auklet (36)	Black-capped Chickadee (1381)
Brant (CW)	[alcid sp. (2)]	Chestnut-backed Chickadee (424)
Cackling Goose (365)	Bonaparte's Gull (1)	Bushtit (700)
Canada Goose (1488)	Short-billed Gull (835)	Ruby-crowned Kinglet (519)
Trumpeter Swan (21)	Ring-billed Gull (43)	Golden-crowned Kinglet (1034)
Wood Duck (46)	Western Gull (1)	Cedar Waxwing (608)
Northern Shoveler (106)	California Gull (38)	Red-breasted Nuthatch (321)
Gadwall (425)	Herring Gull (5)	Brown Creeper (138)
Eurasian Wigeon (9)	Iceland Gull (2)	Bewick's Wren (271)
American Wigeon (1835)	Glaucous-winged Gull (1488)	Pacific Wren (179)
[Eurasian X American Wigeon (1)]	[Western x Glaucous-winged Gull (294)]	Marsh Wren (3)
Mallard (1638)	[gull sp. (384)]	European Starling (1167)
Northern Pintail (47)	Red-throated Loon (14)	Hermit Thrush (24)
Green-winged Teal (70)	Pacific Loon (14)	American Robin (3333)
Canvasback (6)	Common Loon (6)	Varied Thrush (74)
Ring-necked Duck (474)	Brandt's Cormorant (30)	House Sparrow (185)
Greater Scaup (140)	Pelagic Cormorant (126)	House Finch (956)

Lesser Scaup (74)	Double-crested Cormorant (831)	Purple Finch (25)
[scaup sp. (13)]	[cormorant sp. (3)]	[Haemorhous sp. (1)]
Harlequin Duck (64)	Great Blue Heron (43)	Red Crossbill (26)
Surf Scoter (581)	Sharp-shinned Hawk (5)	Pine Siskin (2728)
White-winged Scoter (10)	Cooper's Hawk (25)	American Goldfinch (284)
Black Scoter (2)	[accipiter sp. (3)]	Fox Sparrow (70)
Bufflehead (703)	Bald Eagle (111)	Dark-eyed Junco (1895)
Common Goldeneye (500)	[Bald Eagle, adult (85)]	[Dark-eyed Junco (Oregon) (1152)]
Barrow's Goldeneye (216)	[Bald Eagle, immature (12)]	[Dark-eyed Junco (Slate colored) (3)]
Hooded Merganser (104)	[Bald Eagle unspecified (14)]	[Dark-eyed Junco (unspecified) (740)]
Common Merganser (714)	Red-tailed hawk (35)	White-crowned Sparrow (88)
Red-breasted Merganser (467)	[hawk sp. (1)]	Golden-crowned Sparrow (316)
[duck sp. (16)]	Great Horned Owl (3)	White-throated Sparrow (10)
Pied-billed Grebe (161)	Barred owl (5)	Song Sparrow (887)
Horned Grebe (337)	Northern Saw-whet Owl (2)	Lincoln's Sparrow (6)
Red-necked Grebe (91)	Belted Kingfisher (43)	Spotted Towhee (333)
Western Grebe (612)	Red-breasted Sapsucker (7)	Western Meadowlark (1)
Rock Pigeon (2467)	Downy Woodpecker (108)	Red-winged Blackbird (109)
Band-tailed Pigeon (15)	Hairy Woodpecker (22)	Brewer's Blackbird (10)
Anna's Hummingbird (574)	Northern Flicker (380)	Orange-crowned Warbler (9)
Virginia Rail (2)	[N Flicker (red) (200)]	Common Yellowthroat (1)
American Coot (9475)	[N Flicker (red x yellow) (2)]	Yellow-rumped Warbler (544)
Killdeer (51)	[N Flicker (unspecified) (178)]	[Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's) (116)]

<b>Black Turnstone (75)</b>	<b>Pileated Woodpecker (17)</b>	<b>[Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle) (21)]</b>
<b>Surfbird (27)</b>	<b>Merlin (3)</b>	<b>[Yellow-rumped Warbler (unseparated) (407)]</b>
<b>Sanderling (CW)</b>	<b>Peregrine Falcon (1)</b>	<b>Townsend's Warbler (35)</b>
<b>Dunlin (1)</b>	<b>Hutton's Vireo (11)</b>	<b>Wilson's Warbler (1)</b>
<b>Wilson's Snipe (5)</b>	<b>Steller's Jay (154)</b>	<b>[warbler sp. (1)]</b>
<b>Spotted Sandpiper (2)</b>	<b>California Scrub-Jay (18)</b>	<b>[Passerine sp. (13)]</b>
<b>Common Murre (14)</b>	<b>American Crow (4910)</b>	<b>[domestic goose sp (1)]</b>