

2018 Ferrisburgh Christmas Bird Count Summary

The 59th Ferrisburgh Christmas Bird Count took place on Saturday December 15th. It was a fine day for winter birding with temperatures in the mid-30s to mid-40s. The day was calm with most teams reporting little or no wind. The ground was bare and we saw no precipitation during the day. Forty-six participants broke into twelve teams and spent a cumulative 139 hours in the field while receiving assistance from an additional three feeder watchers. Six teams spent an additional 16 hours owling. As far as birding, overall the numbers were low but our species count was well above average. We found 86 species plus one count week, our highest species count since 2005; our 10-year average is 78. However, we counted only 15,477 birds (including one large flock of waterbirds of uncertain species - possibly cormorants) which is 30% below our 10-year average.

Birders discovered three species that hadn't been seen on a Christmas count in the last ten years. There was a **Wilson's snipe** from the territory on the east side of Otter Creek, our first since 2001. The New York team reported a **winter wren**, the first since 2004. There were two **common grackles**, one on the Buck Mtn. territory and one nicely photographed from the Dead Creek territory. We last had a grackle in 2007.

We had high counts for four species. Most unusual were the five **turkey vultures**, which tied the total number of turkey vultures seen on all previous counts, the last time being in 2008. Owl-ers found 20 eastern screech-owls, topping the record of 15 set in 2015 and tied last year. Increased numbers of this species represent increased effort at finding owls coupled with ideal overnight conditions for hearing them. The 135 Eastern bluebirds topped the record of 101 set in 2012. Our 49 red-bellied woodpeckers continued the trend of increasing numbers for this species, topping the record of 46 set just last year.

Five common species saw their lowest numbers in over a decade. The 11 snow buntings counted was the lowest total since only 1 was seen in 2006. Our 181 American goldfinches was the fewest since 2002 when only 115 were counted. The 323 American crows was the lowest total since 1999 when there were 280. The 14 bufflehead was the lowest since 13 were seen in 1989. And the big shocker was American tree sparrows where the total this year (89) was the lowest since 73 were recorded in 1966!

On the plus side, we had a small resurgence of winter finches. Teams found evening grosbeaks (last seen 2011), pine grosbeaks (last seen 2012), and common redpolls (last seen 2014). And the 44 pine siskins was the most seen since 2010.

Eighteen species were found by all of our field teams: red-tailed hawk, rock pigeon, mourning dove, downy woodpecker, red-bellied woodpecker, blue jay, common raven, American crow, black-capped chickadee, tufted titmouse, white-breasted nuthatch, American robin, Eastern bluebird, European starling, northern cardinal, dark-eyed junco, American goldfinch, and house sparrow.

Eighteen species, plus a count period bird, were found by only one group:

- From Charlotte: red-necked grebe, snow goose, black scoter, lesser scaup, long-tailed duck, and a hermit thrush
- From New York: ring-necked duck, ring-necked pheasant, winter wren and double-crested cormorant
- From Dead Creek: Northern mockingbird
- From Otter Creek East/Vergennes: wood duck, Northern goshawk, N. saw-whet owl, and Wilson's snipe
- From the Otter Creek West/Buck Mtn.: Merlin, American kestrel, and Evening grosbeak
- Count period feeder bird: Eastern towhee

Thank you to all the participants. We look forward to heading out to the field again for next year's count on Saturday December 14, 2019. The complete species list and count is below.

Sincerely,
Mike Winslow

Species	
Common Loon	13
Red-necked Grebe	1
Horned Grebe	26
Double-crested Cormorant	1
Great-blue Heron	3
Canada Goose	3394
Snow Goose	4
Mallard	280
American Black Duck	112
Common Goldeneye	1403
Bufflehead	14
Black Scoter	1
Hooded Merganser	31
Common Merganser	68
Greater Scaup	17

Lesser Scaup	10
Scaup sp.	17
Ring-necked Duck	3
Long-tailed Duck	1
Wood duck	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	5
Cooper's Hawk	6
Northern Goshawk	1
Red-tailed hawk	75
Rough-legged hawk	14
Bald Eagle	23
Northern Harrier	8
Merlin	2
American Kestrel	1
Peregrine Falcon	2
Turkey Vulture	5
Ruffed Grouse	4
Ring-necked Pheasant	1
Wild Turkey	91
Wilson's Snipe	1
Great Black-backed Gull	13
Herring Gull	42
Ring-billed Gull	266
Rock Pigeon	1061
Mourning Dove	513
Eastern Screech-owl	20
Great Horned Owl	10
Barred Owl	10
Short-eared Owl	3

Northern saw-whet owl	1
Belted Kingfisher	3
Northern Flicker	9
Pileated Woodpecker	24
Hairy Woodpecker	34
Downy Woodpecker	88
Red-bellied Woodpecker	49
Northern shrike	3
Blue Jay	166
Common Raven	42
American Crow	323
Horned lark	166
Black-capped Chickadee	747
Tufted Titmouse	98
White-breasted Nuthatch	144
Red-breasted Nuthatch	17
Brown Creeper	13
Carolina Wren	7
Winter Wren	1
American Robin	138
Eastern Bluebird	135
Hermit Thrush	1
Golden-crowned Kinglet	3
Northern Mockingbird	2
European Starling	3396
Cedar Waxwing	57
Northern Cardinal	143
Dark-eyed Junco	281
American Tree Sparrow	89

White-throated Sparrow	28
Song Sparrow	18
Eastern towhee	cw
Snow Bunting	11
Common Grackle	2
Brown-headed Cowbird	2
Purple Finch	7
House Finch	94
Evening Grosbeak	15
Pine Grosbeak	8
Common Redpoll	240
Pine Siskin	44
American Goldfinch	181
House Sparrow	570
# species	85
# birds	14977