

2020 Ferrisburgh Christmas Bird Count Summary

The 61st Ferrisburgh Christmas Bird Count took place on Saturday December 19th. Birders were met with cold and calm and mostly clear conditions. Covid-19 required a change to birding procedures, breaking up teams and leading to an increase in the number of feeder watchers. Fifty-one participants broke into twelve teams and spent a cumulative 196.25 hours in the field while receiving assistance from an additional eleven feeder watchers. Five teams spent an additional 14.25 hours owling. As far as birding, we found 76 species, below our ten-year average of 80, but we did add four additional species during count week. A total of 13,212 birds were counted, which is 40% below our 10-year average.

The most unusual bird of the count was a king eider taken by a hunter at the mouth of the Little Otter Creek. This species has never before been recorded on the count.

Waterfowl numbers were low. We had the fewest common loons since 1989, the fewest horned grebes since 1975, and the fewest common goldeneye in the history of the count (previous low 146 in 1988). Species found on only one territory included the king eider, horned grebes, gadwall, and N. pintail. We also found an unusually low number of gulls: the fewest great black-backed gulls since 1977, the fewest ever herring gulls (previous low 15 in 1961), and the fewest ring-billed gulls since 2000.

Woodpeckers were abundant. Red-bellied woodpeckers populations continue to grow and this year's 67 set a new record for the fourth consecutive year. We saw the most downy woodpeckers since 1988 and the most hairy's since 1975. In addition, a yellow-bellied sapsucker made an appearance for the fifth time in the last ten counts. The first ever yellow-bellied sapsucker for the count appeared in 2007.

A few hawk and owl species were particularly abundant. The 105 red-tailed hawks topped the record 97 set in 2000, and 24 great-horned owls topped the previous record of 19 set in 2014. Short-eared owls have been found around the region and our 12 were the most seen since 1981. And a snowy owl put in an appearance near the mouth of Dead Creek.

The additional feeder watchers helped bump up the numbers of some of our more common species. We set records for the numbers of tufted titmice (225, previous record 158 in 2010), white-breasted nuthatch (236, previous record 207 in 2005), northern cardinal (349, previous record 280 in 2014), and Carolin wren (17, previous record 12 in 2005). Additionally, we set a record for red-breasted nuthatches (257, previous record 159 in 1997) with the New York section finding an astonishing 221. While not a feeder bird, we also set a record for common ravens (77, previous record 67 in 2015).

We missed waxwings completely. This was the first time since 1973 that no cedar waxwings were recorded on the count.

Winter finches were abundant. Common redpolls were found on eight territories. We had the most pine siskins since 2008, all but one found in a large flock near Vergennes. This was the sixth ever appearance for red crossbills and tenth for white-winged crossbills, and the first time that both were found in the same count since 1997. We also had a count week pine grosbeak.

As our winters warm we find a number of species appearing more regularly. I've already mentioned the yellow-bellied sapsucker. We've had hermit thrushes in each of our last three years. And we've had both ruby-crowned kinglets and savannah sparrows in five of the last seven years.

Thirteen species were found by all of our field teams: red-tailed hawk, rock pigeon, mourning dove, downy woodpecker, blue jay, common raven, American crow, black-capped chickadee, European starling, northern cardinal, dark-eyed junco, American tree sparrow, and house sparrow.

Seventeen species were found by only one group:

- From Charlotte: peregrine falcon, belted kingfisher, ruby-crowned kinglet
- From Button Bay: horned grebe, gadwall, northern pintail
- From New York: American kestrel, ruffed grouse, ring-necked pheasant, hermit thrush red crossbill
- From New Haven/Monkton: yellow-bellied sapsucker, northern shrike
- From Hawkins Bay: brown-headed cowbird, snowy owl
- From Otter Creek East/Vergennes: northern saw-whet owl
- mouth of Little Otter Creek duck hunter: king eider

Thank you to all the participants. We look forward to heading out to the field again for next year's count on Saturday December 18, 2021. The complete species list and count is below.

Sincerely,
Mike Winslow

Species	Total	Species	Total	Species	Total
Common Loon	6	Great Black-backed Gull	10	American Robin	455
Horned Grebe	4	Herring Gull	11	Eastern Bluebird	108
Great-blue Heron	cw	Ring-billed Gull	58	Hermit Thrush	1
Canada Goose	716	Rock Pigeon	901	Golden-crowned Kinglet	2
Mallard	496	Mourning Dove	388	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	1
American Black Duck	77	Eastern Screech-owl	13	European Starling	2114
Gadwall	4	Great Horned Owl	24	Northern Cardinal	349
Common Goldeneye	99	Barred Owl	10	Dark-eyed Junco	769
Bufflehead	32	Short-eared Owl	12	American Tree Sparrow	314

King Eider	1	N. saw-whet owl	1	White-crowned Sparrow	cw
Hooded Merganser	34	Snowy Owl	1	White-throated Sparrow	7
Common Merganser	77	Belted Kingfisher	1	Song Sparrow	14
Red-breasted Merganser	4	Northern Flicker	8	Savannah Sparrow	5
N. Pintail	1	Pileated Woodpecker	21	Lapland Longspur	6
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	Hairy Woodpecker	74	Snow Bunting	69
Cooper's Hawk	12	Downy Woodpecker	116	Brown-headed Cowbird	1
N. Goshawk	cw	Red-bellied Woodpecker	67	House Finch	98
Red-tailed hawk	105	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	Pine Grosbeak	cw
Rough-legged hawk	26	Blue Jay	334	Common Redpoll	1040
Bald Eagle	12	Common Raven	77	White-winged Crossbill	6
Northern Harrier	8	American Crow	316	Red Crossbill	18
Merlin	3	Horned lark	573	Pine Siskin	109
American Kestrel	1	Black-capped Chickadee	1062	American Goldfinch	261
Peregrine Falcon	1	Tufted Titmouse	25	House Sparrow	625
Ruffed Grouse	4	White-breasted Nuthatch	236		
Ring-necked Pheasant	1	Red-breasted Nuthatch	257	# species	76
Wild Turkey	283	Brown Creeper	16	Count week species	4
		Carolina Wren	17	# birds	13212