

INDIAN PEAKS FOUR SEASON BIRD COUNTS

Spring, Summer 2002

Newsletter

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Spring Count Summary

The dry and mild spring weather contributed to one of our better spring counts in terms of both total number of birds and number of species. Both were the third highest for a spring count.

Spring Count Summary

Number of Species – 92

(Average – 83)

Individuals – 44 Per Hour

(Average – 36)

As I glean the 20 years of data for the Indian Peaks Bird Counts, two trends are appearing during the spring with this year's count being no different. The first is that many of our migrants seem to be arriving during early May in greater number. This is especially true for the "short-distance migrants," those birds that primarily winter in the American Southwest and Mexico. This was most evident this year for what I will call the "big three" short-distance migrants: broad-tailed hummingbird (1.42 seen per count hour against a 20 year average of .57/hour), ruby-crowned kinglet (5.55/hour versus an average of 1.91/hour), and yellow-rumped warbler (2.72/hour versus 1.11/hour average). Other short-distance migrants following this trend with high counts this spring included: spotted sandpiper, house wren, hermit thrush, chipping sparrow, fox sparrow, song sparrow, and white-crowned sparrow.

The second trend is the early arrival of some neotropical migrants, the long-distance movers. Early finds this year (with initials of observers) included: western wood-pewee (3rd time, MP, LI, LMc, NMc); dusky flycatcher (7th time and seen each of the last 4 years,

DH); cliff swallow (2nd time, MP, LI, LMc, NMc); MacGillivray's warbler (4th time, all in the last 5 years, MP, LI, LMc, NMc, JH, M&SM); and yellow warbler (5th time, all since 1994, DH).

Other good finds included: pied-billed grebe (5th time, MF, NL); eared grebe (3rd time, MP, LI, LMc, NMc); American white pelican (2nd time, DK, EH, BG, JH); white-faced ibis (3rd time, JH, M&SM), sora (2nd time, DH); northern pygmy-owl (2nd time, BK, AB, AC, GM, GG, EZ, BS, RT); and blue jay (3rd time, all since 1997, DH).

Of course, not everything was rosy. Species with below average numbers included barn swallow, pygmy nuthatch, mountain bluebird, Townsend's solitaire, European starling, Brewer's blackbird, common grackle, and evening grosbeak. Species normally observed at least half the time that were absent included cinnamon teal, golden eagle, great horned owl, western bluebird, and brown-capped rosy-finch.

Breeding Count Summary

It was not the usual breeding count. Many of us were wondering how the drought and smoke might affect the birds. And we were probably expecting the worst. Much to our surprise in terms of numbers it was one of the best breeding counts. The number of individuals (53 per count hour) is just under the record. The number of species (107) is 5th highest (the record is 112).

The record year for number of birds was 1992, which was also a year with a dry and warm spring and summer. Are the birds doing what people do as well; when it is hot down below you head for the high country?

Breeding Count Summary

Number of Species – 107

(Average – 100)

Number of Individuals – 53

(Average – 42)

of sounds like a stock market report). Species that more than doubled their average numbers throughout the count circle included band-tailed pigeon, three-toed woodpecker, dusky flycatcher, cordilleran flycatcher, Clark's nutcracker, black-capped chickadee, golden-crowned kinglet, Swainson's thrush, glack-headed grosbeak, chipping sparrow, and fox sparrow. Ruby-crowned kinglets were almost double their average.

Species that more than doubled their average numbers in the montane included mourning dove, Hammond's flycatcher, northern rough-winged swallow, cliff swallow, black-billed magpie, yellow warbler, song sparrow, and house sparrow. Broad-tailed hummingbirds were almost double their average.

Species that more than doubled their average numbers in the subalpine included gray jay, rock wren, and Brewer's sparrow (more on this one later). White-crowned sparrows were almost double their average.

There appear to be signs of an elevational shift that is possibly related to the heat and drought. For me, this seemed most pronounced with such species as Hammond's flycatcher, cliff swallow and yellow warbler in the montane, and black-capped chickadee, rock wren and chipping sparrow in the subalpine. I even had a song sparrow, for the first time I can remember, in the Woodland Flats willow carr.

Then there were the oddities, especially in the krummholz at treeline, including lazuli bunting, MacGillivray's warbler, and green-tailed towhee. It is probable that many of these sightings are of post-breeding or non-breeding birds. Most of the subalpine counts are conducted in July, with mid-June generally being

the earliest time to ascend the high peaks. So, certainly by July, and maybe even earlier, sightings can be of post-breeding movements from below. This can also be true in the montane. Over the next few years there are a group of species that we should try to confirm breeding in the high subalpine lakes, forests and krummholz: spotted sandpiper, green-tailed towhee, chipping sparrow and Brewer's sparrow.

Yes, the Brewer's sparrows were back. Since 1994 have they been spotted on an occasional basis. Then last year we found them at four sites, three of which were in the krummholz. This year the number of sites increased to 10, 7 being in the krummholz. The list included east and west flanks of Bald Mountain (the one west of Rainbow Lakes), Niwot Ridge, east flank of Niwot Mountain, Chittenden Mountain, and near the 4th of July Mine on the Arapaho Pass trail. There were sometimes multiple individuals at the sites. Several sites that had repeat visits found singing males over a several week period (a "territory" would be the term from the Breeding Bird Atlas days). But we have yet to confirm breeding. To be continued next year.

And sage thrashers were back in the krummholz as well. Last year we had three individuals at two sites. This year, one of last year's sites had a single singing individual. Again, could not confirm what they are doing up there.

Of course, not all the news was good. There were some declining species and some of these appear to be chronic. Those that have been steadily declining since the start of the Indian Peaks counts 21 years ago and did not follow this year's bounty included green-winged teal, brown-capped rosy-finch and evening grosbeak. Those showing a decline over the past 10 years that continued that trend included olive-sided flycatcher, barn swallow, Virginia's warbler, and western tanager. Finally, others that showed a decline this year included pygmy nuthatch, Brewer's blackbird, common grackle, pine siskin, and Cassin's finch.

Tree-cone seedeaters, particularly red crossbills, had their highest count since Fall 2000. And corvids had their highest breeding count numbers, breaking the 3 per count hour barrier.

There were a number of good finds, including (species followed by number of times seen during 21 counts and initials of observers): pied-billed grebe (2nd time, BB, PP); double-crested cormorant (4th time, NM, MT, BB, PP); lesser scaup (1st time, NL); ring-billed gull (3rd time, MP, LMc); boreal owl (2nd time, RT); blue jay (7th time, NM, MT); veery (8th time, HG, DH); sage thrasher (3rd time, DH); common yellowthroat (3rd time, DH, BB, BP); orange-crowned warbler (4th time, DH); Brewer's sparrow, 5th time, BK, GM, AB, GB, EZ, TVZ, KG, JS, DH); lazuli bunting (4th time, DH, BK, GM, AB, GB, EZ); and western meadowlark (6th time, CL, EH, DK, MG).

Several species, normally seen more than 50% of the time, were not observed, including golden eagle, common nighthawk and spotted towhee.

Thanks

I want to give a special thanks to Bill Kaempfer, who not only has done the compilation for the spring and fall counts, but also has been passing on to me information from the COBORDS web site (I am not a subscriber) that has been pertinent to various local sightings (Hector Galbraith seeing 4 veeries below Barker Reservoir and Richard Trinkner hearing a pair of boreal owls singing near Jasper Lake) and bird issues (especially Brewer's sparrows).

Looking Ahead

Next Counts

Fall

Count Day – Sept 21

Count Period – Sept 14 – 29

Winter

Count Day – Jan 11

Count Period – Dec 15 – Feb 15

Happy Birding,
Dave Hallock

2002 INDIAN PEAKS SPRING BIRD COUNT

Count day – May 4; Count period – May 1-14. Weather: milder and warmer with less precipitation than normal, light snow on May 4 and 7” of snow on May 12. Twenty-nine observers, 17 (of 25) areas covered. Total party hours: 89.5.

Pied-billed Grebe	1	Horned Lark	27
Eared Grebe	1	Tree Swallow	63
American White Pelican	31	Violet-green Swallow.....	55
Great Blue Heron.....	2	Cliff Swallow.....	4
White-faced Ibis	1	Barn Swallow	1
Turkey Vulture.....	10	Black-capped Chickadee	42
Canada Goose.....	4	Mountain Chickadee	353
Gadwall.....	3	Red-breasted Nuthatch.....	50
Mallard.....	59	White-breasted Nuthatch	32
Blue-winged Teal.....	2	Pygmy Nuthatch	15
Green-winged Teal.....	17	Brown Creeper.....	23
Ring-necked Duck	21	Rock Wren.....	4
Common Merganser	5	House Wren.....	46
Osprey	2	American Dipper	11
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	Golden-crowned Kinglet.....	57
Cooper’s Hawk.....	1	Ruby-crowned Kinglet.....	497
Northern Goshawk	3	Mountain Bluebird.....	33
Red-tailed Hawk	11	Townsend’s Solitaire.....	33
American Kestrel	3	Hermit Thrush	5
White-tailed Ptarmigan	2	American Robin.....	310
Blue Grouse	9	European Starling	8
Sora.....	1	American Pipit	83
Killdeer	1	Yellow Warbler.....	2
Spotted Sandpiper.....	9	Yellow-rumped Warbler.....	243
Common Snipe.....	12	MacGillivray’s Warbler.....	2
Band-tailed Pigeon	58	Green-tailed Towhee.....	10
Mourning Dove.....	22	Chipping Sparrow	94
Northern Pygmy-Owl.....	1	Vesper Sparrow.....	6
White-throated Swift.....	2	Fox Sparrow	35
Broad-tailed Hummingbird.....	127	Song Sparrow.....	34
Belted Kingfisher.....	5	Lincoln’s Sparrow.....	2
Williamson’s Sapsucker.....	17	White-crowned Sparrow.....	26
Red-naped Sapsucker	25	Dark-eyed Junco	461
Downy Woodpecker.....	5	Oregon Junco.....	1
Hairy Woodpecker	24	Gray-headed Junco	285
Three-toed Woodpecker	4	Red-winged Blackbird.....	75
Northern Flicker	68	Western Meadowlark.....	1
Western Wood-Pewee.....	2	Brewer’s Blackbird.....	37
Dusky Flycatcher	3	Common Grackle.....	15
<i>Empidonax</i> species.....	2	Brown-headed Cowbird.....	75
Gray Jay	7	Pine Grosbeak.....	8
Steller’s Jay.....	121	Cassin’s Finch.....	24
Blue Jay.....	1	House Finch.....	3
Clark’s Nutcracker	10	Red Crossbill	9
Black-billed Magpie.....	41	Pine Siskin.....	106
American Crow	103	Evening Grosbeak	1
Common Raven	51	House Sparrow	23

Totals: 92 species plus 2 additional races; 3947 individuals; 44 individuals per count hour. Participants: Linda Andes-Georges, Bev Baker, Barbara & Earl Bolton, Alex Brown, Diane Brown, Andy Cowell, Marty Dick, Libby Ellis, Mike Figgs, Beverly Gholson, Gregg Goodrich, Dave Hallock, Elaine Hill, Jim Holitz, Jody Hovorka, Lynne Ihlstrom, Bill Kaempfer, Dawn Kumli, Nan Lederer, Gary Matthews, Lisa McCoy, Nate McCoy, Merle & Sally Miller, Mark Pscheid, Bill Schmocker, Richard Trinkner, Eric Zorawowicz.

2002 INDIAN PEAKS BREEDING BIRD COUNT

Count day – June 15; Count period – June 1 – July 15. Weather: Warmer and dryer than normal. Thirty-nine observers, 22 (of 25) areas covered. Total party hours: 131.75.

Pied-billed Grebe	1	Hammond's Flycatcher	22	Sage Thrasher	1
Double-crested Cormorant	2	Dusky Flycatcher	86	Orange-crowned Warbler	1
Great Blue Heron	1	Cordilleran Flycatcher	97	Virginia's Warbler	6
Turkey Vulture.....	6	<i>Empidonax</i> species	10	Yellow Warbler	35
Mallard.....	52	Warbling Vireo	232	Yellow-rumped Warbler	341
Cinnamon Teal	2	Gray Jay	26	MacGillivray's Warbler	29
Green-winged Teal	4	Steller's Jay	139	Common Yellowthroat	3
Ring-necked Duck	23	Blue Jay	1	Wilson's Warbler	211
Lesser Scaup	2	Clark's Nutcracker	95	Western Tanager	26
Osprey	4	Black-billed Magpie	41	Green-tailed Towhee	77
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	American Crow	45	Chipping Sparrow	109
Cooper's Hawk	1	Common Raven	49	Brewer's Sparrow	14
Northern Goshawk	2	Horned Lark	37	Vesper Sparrow	5
<i>Accipiter</i> species	2	Tree Swallow	222	Savannah Sparrow	2
Red-tailed Hawk	11	Violet-green Swallow	151	Fox Sparrow	55
American Kestrel	1	N. Rough-winged Swallow	8	Song Sparrow	60
White-tailed Ptarmigan	6	Cliff Swallow	28	Lincoln's Sparrow	197
Blue Grouse	6	Barn Swallow	21	White-crowned Sparrow	363
Sora	1	Black-capped Chickadee	42	Gray-headed Junco	287
Killdeer	2	Mountain Chickadee	241	Black-headed Grosbeak	69
Spotted Sandpiper	21	Red-breasted Nuthatch	52	Lazuli Bunting	3
Common Snipe	17	White-breasted Nuthatch	19	Red-winged Blackbird	105
Ring-billed Gull	1	Pygmy Nuthatch	11	Western Meadowlark	2
Band-tailed Pigeon	157	Brown Creeper	22	Brewer's Blackbird	28
Mourning Dove	28	Rock Wren	34	Common Grackle	6
Boreal Owl	2	House Wren	114	Brown-headed Cowbird	90
White-throated Swift	6	American Dipper	11	Brown-capped Rosy-finch	5
Brd-tailed Hummingbird	534	Golden-crowned Kinglet	63	Pine Grosbeak	14
Belted Kingfisher	2	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	526	Cassin's Finch	22
Williamson's Sapsucker	11	Mountain Bluebird	54	House Finch	7
Red-naped Sapsucker	20	Townsend's Solitaire	56	Red Crossbill	59
Downy Woodpecker	5	Veery	7	Pine Siskin	227
Hairy Woodpecker	24	Swainson's Thrush	35	American Goldfinch	6
Three-toed Woodpecker	10	Hermit Thrush	200	Evening Grosbeak	2
Northern Flicker	61	American Robin	448	House Sparrow	26
Olive-sided Flycatcher	8	European Starling	5		
Western Wood-Pewee	33	American Pipit	142		

Totals: 107 species; 6956 individuals; 53 individuals per count hour.

Participants: Linda Andes-Georges, Bev Baker, Barbara & Earl Bolton, Alex & Gillian Brown, Diane Brown, Marty Dick, Libby Ellis, Lee & Virginia Evans, Mike Figgs, Hector Galbraith, Kathy Gibson, Maddy Goldhawk, Dave Hallock, Susan Harris, Elaine Hill. Jim Holitza, Steve Jones, Bill Kaempfer, Dawn Kumpli, Margy Lanham, Nan Lederer, Cherie Long, Gary Matthews, Lisa McCoy, Merle & Sally Miller, Paul Mintier, Naseem Munshi, Carol Newman-Holitza, Pam Piombino, Mark Pscheid, Jan Stogsdill, Richard Trinkner, Michael Tupper, Tom VanZandt, Eric Zorawowicz.