

INDIAN PEAKS FOUR SEASON BIRD COUNTS

Summer 2004

Newsletter

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Twenty-Year Summary

Most of you should have received a copy of the "Indian Peaks Bird Counts Twenty-Year Summary" in the mail. If you did not, let me know and I will send you one.

The question remains if the relationships between weather and numbers of birds explored in the report have any meaning? Warmer temperatures generally correlated with more breeding birds, particularly neotropical and short-distance migrants; more precipitation often resulted in fewer birds. Of course, more precipitation generally means cooler temperatures, so the two are interrelated.

The timing of the weather change is of interest, and this year brings that to light more than ever. As you will see in the summary that follows, the 2004 Breeding Count had the highest numbers ever during one of the coolest and wettest summers. But there is evidence suggesting that the birds had trouble producing offspring. Dr. Robert Cohen, who has been studying tree swallows in our area for 30 years (he has all the nest boxes on the Arapaho Ranch, Tolland and other sites) says this year had the lowest nestling success ever for his study period. The cool and wet weather tipped the energy balance of the birds toward the negative side; the nestlings were more susceptible to parasites and the adults had a harder time getting enough food to overcome the greater energy needs. So, my prediction is that next year, at least for some neotropical migrants, there will be a decline in numbers.

Steve Jones feels that the preceding year's weather, particularly during the breeding season (May-July), should be the key to the relationship between weather and number of birds. I will have to do some

rearranging of the data to look at this, but it intuitively makes sense. What occurred this year and what we may find in 2005 could help solve the puzzle.

Breeding County Summary

This breeding count set the record for total number of birds. The 59 seen per count hour were well above the 20-year average of 42/hour. The previous high was 53/hour, achieved in 1992 and 2002. The number of species was above average but below the record.

Breeding Count Summary

Number of Species

2004 – 108

20-year Average – 100

Record – 112 (2001)

Number of Individuals

2004 – 59/count hour

20-year Average – 42/count hour

Previous Record – 53/count hour (1992 & 2002)

So why the exceptional numbers? One direct reason was a good cone-crop on ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, Engelmann spruce and limber pine that brought in crossbills. Red crossbills had a record breeding count and white winged crossbills were counted on the breeding count for only the 3rd time. Most tree-cone seed-eaters, including Clark's nutcracker and red-breasted nuthatch, had very high counts. But the high numbers went well beyond seed-eaters and increasers outnumbered decliners by 55 to 19. There were very high counts for mourning dove, broad-tailed hummingbird, cliff swallow, both chickadees, rock and house wren, ruby-crowned kinglet, and hermit thrush, to name a few.

Two other reasons hit me as possibilities. The first is the fact that the previous two breeding seasons had above average numbers, providing a good base to begin with; 2002 was a record year (up to that point), while 2003 had a cooler spring and June, but July was hot and dry.

The second reason is one I call detectability; the ability of a birder to detect a bird, particularly by song. Birds tend to perform most of their singing in the morning and get quiet after 9 or 10 AM. My experience this year was the birds kept on singing throughout the day on cloudy days. When I did the Caribou area during the third week of June on a cloudy day, which included an upslope storm system moving in around 2 PM, it was like dawn chorus all day. My lowest numeric counts were during the one warm and dry week during the 1st week of July.

Of course, there were some decliners. The blackbird group (red-winged, Brewer's, grackle, and cowbird) all fell in number. Is part of this due to West Nile Virus? Green-winged teal, band-tailed pigeon, song sparrow, Cassin's finch, and pine siskin also had low numbers. No evening grosbeaks were seen.

Good finds included bald eagle (2nd time; KE, DH, DB), rufous hummingbird (7th time; KG, JS, MM), Say's phoebe (3rd time; DH, JH, CN-H, M&SM), orange-crowned warbler (6th time; DH, BB, LA-G), sage thrasher (5th time; DH), Brewer's sparrow (6th time; DH), lark bunting (3rd time; AG), white-winged crossbill (3rd time; DH), and lesser goldfinch (5th time; MP, LI, LM). Bald eagles appeared to be making a nesting attempt south of Nederland, but osprey came back to this site where they have successfully nested the past several years. The sage thrashers and Brewer's sparrows were found in the krummholz again.

Looking Ahead

Fall Count

Count Day – September 18
Count Period – September 11-26

Winter Count

Count Day – January 15
Count Period – Dec 15 – Feb 15

Happy Birding,

Dave Hallock

2004 INDIAN PEAKS BREEDING BIRD COUNT

Count day – June 12; Count period – June 1 – July 15. Weather: exceptionally cool and wet. Forty observers, 23 (of 25) areas covered. Total party hours: 135.75.

Great Blue Heron..... 3	Olive-sided Flycatcher 16	Sage Thrasher.....2
Turkey Vulture 1	Western Wood-Pewee..... 26	American Pipit 151
Canada Goose..... 20	Hammond’s Flycatcher 15	Orange-crowned Warbler.....2
Mallard 59	Dusky Flycatcher 86	Virginia’s Warbler4
Green-winged Teal 2	Cordilleran Flycatcher 91	Yellow Warbler..... 15
Ring-necked Duck 8	Empidonax species..... 15	Yellow-rumped Warbler404
Duck species..... 3	Say-s Phoebe..... 2	MacGillivray’s Warbler44
Osprey..... 4	Plumbeous Vireo..... 1	Wilson’s Warbler287
Bald Eagle 1	Warbling Vireo 232	Western Tanager46
Sharp-shinned Hawk..... 2	Gray Jay 25	Green-tailed Towhee 76
Cooper’ Hawk..... 1	Steller’s Jay..... 121	Spotted Towhee..... 1
Accipiter species..... 4	Clark’s Nutcracker..... 114	Chipping Sparrow 79
Red-tailed Hawk 12	Black-billed Magpie..... 39	Brewer’s Sparrow.....4
Golden Hawk..... 1	American Crow 131	Vesper Sparrow5
American Kestrel..... 1	Common Raven 50	Lark Bunting 1
White-tailed Ptarmigan..... 8	Horned Lark..... 61	Savannah Sparrow.....3
Blue Grouse 8	Tree Swallow 154	Fox Sparrow49
Sora..... 1	Violet-green Swallow 109	Song Sparrow 33
American Coot..... 2	N. Rough-winged Swallow 1	Lincoln’s Sparrow246
Killdeer 2	Cliff Swallow 35	White-crowned Sparrow 362
Spotted Sandpiper..... 15	Barn Swallow..... 30	Dark-eyed Junco459
Wilson’s Snipe..... 15	Black-capped Chickadee..... 45	Black-headed Grosbeak 32
Rock Pigeon..... 2	Mountain Chickadee 392	Red-winged Blackbird 51
Band-tailed Pigeon..... 32	Red-breasted Nuthatch..... 111	Brewer’s Blackbird 1
Mourning Dove..... 81	White-breasted Nuthatch 32	Common Grackle 5
Great Horned Owl 1	Pygmy Nuthatch..... 27	Brown-headed Cowbird 55
Common Nighthawk..... 3	Brown Creeper 25	Brown-capped Rosy-Finch..... 11
White-throated Swift 2	Rock Wren 31	Pine Growbeak25
Broad-tailed Hummingbird.... 486	House Wren 146	Cassin’s Finch 35
Rufous Hummingbird 1	American Dipper..... 8	House Finch 10
Belted Kingfisher..... 4	Golden-crowned Kinglet..... 80	Red Crossbill..... 359
Williamson’s Sapsucker 5	Ruby-crowned Kinglet..... 572	White-winged Crossbill 10
Red-naped Sapsucker..... 22	Mountain Bluebird..... 74	Pine Siskin..... 321
Downy Woodpecker 5	Townsend’s Solitaire 57	Lesser Goldfinch 2
Hairy Woodpecker..... 33	Veery..... 1	American Goldfinch.....5
Three-toed Woodpecker 11	Swainson’s Thrush..... 31	House Sparrow 20
Northern Flicker 74	Hermit Thrush..... 315	
Woodpecker species 3	American Robin 542	

Totals: 108 species; 7996 individuals; 59 individuals per count hour. Participants: Linda Andes-Georges, Linda Bailey, Bev Baker, Barbara & Earl Bolton, Maggie Boswell, Alex & Gillian Brown, Diane Brown, Marty Dick, Kayla Evans, Lee & Virginia Evans, Mike Figgs, Kathy Gibson, Audrey Godell, Maddy Goldhawk, Greg Goodrich, Dave Hallock, Paula Hansley, Susan Harris, Elaine Hill, Jim Holitza, Lynne Ihlstrom, Steve Jones, Bill Kaempfer, Dawn Kumli, Nan Lederer, Cherie Long, Mary Makepeace, Gary Matthews, Lisa McCoy, Merle & Sally Miller, Carol Newman-Holitza, George Oetzel, Mark Pscheid, Randy Seibert, Janet Stogsdill, Eric Zorawowicz.