

INDIAN PEAKS BIRD COUNTS

Fall 2021

Newsletter

Vol.40 No. 3

Fall Count Summary

Last year the Fall Count summary started with the following: "Numerically, it was one of the poorest Fall Counts we have had - on a per count hour basis it was the worst." Well, this year was even worse. On a per count hour basis it was the worst Fall Count of all. In terms of total number it was the third lowest Fall Count and only the 6th where we found under 2,000 birds. Number of species was also very low.

This summer's Breeding Count was also numerically a very poor count - on a per count hour basis the worst we have had. Only the Winter Count saw above average numbers.

Fall Count Summary

Number of Species

2021 - 70

Last Fall - 93

30-year Average - 83

Record High - 99 (1992)

Record Low - 67 (2018)

Number of Individuals

2021 - 20/count hour

Last Fall - 24/count hour

30-year Average - 34/count hour

Record High - 48/count hour (1991)

Record Low - 24/count hour (2020)

While some participants felt they had good counts, the majority who commented kept asking "where are all the birds?" I worked multiple count areas - some areas seemed fairly active but others seemed quiet. It can always be hit-and-miss, particularly as birds congregate in flocks, but on a landscape scale the numbers appear to be down and for the most part have been since last Fall.

The list of species missed that are normally seen at least half the time is very long: Northern Goshawk, Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon, Dusky Grouse, White-tailed Ptarmigan, Mourning Dove, Rufous Hummingbird, Red-naped Sapsucker, Horned Lark, Tree Swallow, Violet-green Swallow, Barn Swallow, Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-capped Rosy-Finch, American Goldfinch, and Evening Grosbeak.

There were a couple of good finds on the count. A Blue Grosbeak was found in the Ward North area, a first for the Fall Count and only the second sighting for any season on the counts. A Wood Duck was seen in the Eldora area, the 2nd time on the Fall Count, while a Dusky Flycatcher was seen in the Caribou area, the 8th time on the Fall Count. Also noted was the sighting of a Ring-necked Duck in the Eldora area; they have been hard to find in recent times and this was the first sighting on the Fall Count since 2016.

Contributing to the overall poor count were species present in below average numbers, including Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Northern Flicker, American Crow, Brown Creeper, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, American Pipit, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, and Dark-eyed Junco.

Bucking the trend were a few species with above average numbers including Turkey Vulture, Black-capped Chickadee, and Lincoln's Sparrow. Additionally, the 40 Wild Turkeys seen was a high for any count - they were first seen in 2001 and 10 times since 2010 on the Fall Count, including each of the past 5 years.

40 Years!

When we started the count in 1982 I am not sure what was envisioned for longevity. But here we are 40 years later. The count started as an official Audubon Christmas Bird Count in 1982. Then starting with the 1982 Breeding Count we went to a four-season count format. In 1992 we went away from conducting the count on a single day to a count period to provide participants more flexibility, diminishing the influence of the weather on a single day count, and allowing some participants to cover more than one area. The Spring Count lasted 29 years. The Winter and Fall counts finished this year for a full 40 years. We will continue forward with the Breeding Count, where we have 40 years of data and hope to keep it going indefinitely.

There have been 9 participant who have been involved with the count for all 40 years - Diane Brown, Alex Brown, George Coffee, Virginia Evans, Mike Figgs, Jim Holitza, Steve Jones, Nan Lederer, and myself. A tip-of-the-cap for a job well done.

I would have liked to have had a celebration get-together this fall, but COVID got in the way. Maybe next year.

The summary spreadsheets of the four counts (yearly summaries by species)

are kept on the Boulder County Nature Association web site (www.bcna.org) under research reports and can be accessed and used by anyone. University researchers have already utilized the data base for their work. I will be spending the next several years gleaning what the counts tell us about changes over these 40 years. If you want me to send you the spreadsheets let me know.

Next Count - Breeding 2022

The next count will be the 2022 Breeding Count, to be held from June 1 through July 15. I will send out a reminder.

Happy Birding and thanks for your past and continued involvement!

Dave Hallock

2021 INDIAN PEAKS FALL BIRD COUNT

Count period – September 11-26. Weather: dryer and warmer than normal - 3 cold fronts came through on Sept 14, 17, and 20. Thirty participants. Seventeen (of 25) areas covered. Total party hours: 93.25.

Canada Goose	13	Say's Phoebe	1	House Finch	3
Wood Duck.....	1	Warbling Vireo	3	Cassin's Finch.....	23
American Wigeon.....	3	Canada Jay	13	Red Crossbill.....	7
Mallard	47	Steller's Jay.....	8	Pine Siskin.....	73
Ring-necked Duck	2	Clark's Nutcracker	39	Lesser Goldfinch	8
duck species.....	1	Black-billed Magpie.....	36	Chipping Sparrow	32
Common Merganser	3	American Crow.....	59	Fox Sparrow	1
Wild Turkey.....	40	Common Raven	45	Dark-eyed Junco.....	82
Band-tailed Pigeon	2	swallow species.....	1	Pink-sided.....	(1)
Broad-tailed Humm.	6	Black-capped Chickadee....	73	Gray-headed	(61)
gull Species.....	1	Mountain Chickadee	303	White-crowned Sparrow	64
Turkey Vulture	9	Red-breasted Nuthatch.....	61	Vesper Sparrow	2
Osprey	2	White-breasted Nuthatch....	47	Song Sparrow	12
Sharp-shinned Hawk.....	1	Pygmy Nuthatch	69	Lincoln's Sparrow.....	26
Cooper's Hawk.....	2	Brown Creeper	11	Green-tailed Towhee	12
Red-tailed Hawk.....	13	House Wren	11	sparrow species	1
Great Horned Owl	5	American Dipper.....	2	Orange-crowned Warbler.....	2
Belted Kingfisher.....	3	Golden-crowned Kinglet....	32	MacGillivray's Warbler	2
Williamson's Sapsucker.....	1	Ruby-crowned Kinglet.....	30	Yellow Warbler	2
Am. Three-toed Wood.....	3	Mountain Bluebird	29	Yellow-rumped Warbler.....	58
Downy Woodpecker.....	2	Townsend's Solitaire	20	Townsend's Warbler	11
Hairy Woodpecker.....	19	Hermit Thrush.....	2	Wilson's Warbler	33
Northern Flicker	21	American Robin	217	warbler species	1
American Kestrel.....	1	House Sparrow.....	7	Blue Grosbeak.....	1
Dusky Flycatcher.....	1	American Pipit	6	Passerine species	9
		Pine Grosbeak	4		

Totals: 70 species plus 1 race; 1,868 individuals; 20 individuals per count hour.

Participants: Linda Andes-Georges, Sharon Badian, Bev Baker, Maureen Blackford, Alex Brown, Diane Brown, Gillian Brown, George Coffee, Virginia Evans, Mike Figgs, Doug Gibney, Pat Gibney, Audrey Godell, Dave Hallock, Paula Hansley, Jim Holitza, Steve Jones, Elena Klaver, Nan Lederer, Merle Miller, Sally Miller, Naseem Munshi, Carol Newman-Holitza, Chris Petrizzo, Jeannie Reynolds, Matt Reynolds, Cara Stiles, Lucy Stroock, Mike Tupper, and Jeff Yegian.