

INDIAN PEAKS BIRD COUNTS

Summer 2021

Newsletter

Vol.40 No.2

Breeding Count Summary

If you thought the numbers of birds were low this year you were right. On a per count hour basis, this was the worst breeding count we have had. The 25 birds seen per count hour was 60% of the average of the past 5 years. The montane count areas were not so bad - this was only the second worst breeding count as total numbers were 77% of the average of the past 5 years. The subalpine/alpine areas were worse at 49% of the average of the past 5 years.

Species that were under 50% of the past 5-year average included Hairy Woodpecker, Barn Swallow, Clark's Nutcracker, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Western Bluebird, Mountain Bluebird, Townsend's Solitaire, American Pipit, Yellow Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Cassin's Finch, and Pine Siskin.

Some other bird reports from Colorado are showing similar results. The Guanella Pass Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) route observed just 33% of their 5-year average (email from David Suddjian to CoBirds). Possible explanations include the extended drought in much of the West, heavy smoke, and the mass die-off last Fall documented in parts of the West that was partially triggered by an early cold spell.

<p>Breeding Count Summary</p> <p><u>Number of Species</u></p> <p>2021 – 112</p> <p>30-Year Average – 102</p> <p>Last Year – 108</p> <p>Record High – 112 (2001)</p> <p>Record Low – 88 (1984)</p> <p><u>Number of Individuals</u></p> <p>2021 – 25 per count hour</p> <p>30-Year Average – 44</p> <p>Last Year – 40</p> <p>Record High – 59 (2004)</p> <p>Record Low – 31 (1982)</p>

I don't always trust the per count hour data, so let's look at raw numbers. The 3,806 birds observed is the first time since 1990 that we have been below the 4,000 bird mark and is the 5th lowest total count. The declines were pretty much across the board. The following table looks at the top 10 species for 2021 and compares them with the 2020 numbers. Also keep in mind that in 2021 we had more field hours, more participants, and more count areas covered than in 2020. For all birds, 2021 saw a 32% decline from 2020. Any way you look at it, it was a very poor count. We could only find a single Brown Creeper (I have yet to hear or see one this summer, which makes me think my hearing might be going).

<p>2021</p> <p>Top 10 Species</p> <p>(followed by 2020 count)</p> <p>Broad-tailed Hummingbird. 355 (540)</p> <p>American Robin..... 313 (374)</p> <p>Dark-eyed Junco..... 223 (363)</p> <p>Ruby-crowned Kinglet 210 (249)</p> <p>Lincoln's Sparrow..... 198 (164)</p> <p>Mountain Chickadee..... 163 (199)</p> <p>Warbling Vireo..... 148 (152)</p> <p>Yellow-rumped Warbler..... 125 (204)</p> <p>Tree Swallow..... 109 (138)</p> <p>Hermit Thrush 94 (144)</p>

There were some exceptions. Warbling Vireo, Lincoln's Sparrow, and Wilson's Warbler had average counts - the Guanella Pass BBS also noted that Warbling Vireo and Wilson's Warbler were near average numbers. Most flycatchers (Dusky, Hammond's and Cordilleran), Downy Woodpecker, Swainson's Thrush, Western Tanager, and Black-headed Grosbeak were also at average numbers. Canada Goose saw a record high - their higher than historic numbers on the Breeding Count began in 2018, possibly in response to concerted efforts to haze them away from golf courses and parks in the metro area.

Since there was an average to above-

average snowpack and May was wet, I thought maybe some of the birds that would normally nest in the subalpine would opt for the montane. From numerical evidence only the American Robin may have chosen this strategy as their numbers in the subalpine were about half of normal, while in the montane they were above average.

In terms of total species this was a very good count as the 112 species observed tied the record, attesting to our outstanding field effort. Good finds included Wild Turkey (6th time; Eldora and Caribou Ranch; all sightings since 2008), Western Grebe (3rd time; Nederland), Eurasian-collared Dove (9th time; Sugarloaf - all sightings since 2000), Calliope Hummingbird (3rd time; Caribou Ranch), American White Pelican (4th time; Arapaho Ranch), Boreal Owl (3rd time; Nederland), Bushtit (2nd time; King Lake - a small flock at 11,000 feet), Lazuli Bunting (7th time - Caribou Ranch).

Species normally seen over 50% of the time but missed this year included Green-winged Teal (this is 7th Breeding Count in a row they have not been seen), Northern Rough-winged Swallow, and Western Bluebird.

This is our 40th year of the Indian Peaks Bird Count. Our field effort - 153 hours - was excellent. There is no loss of effort for the Breeding Count. We continue to pick up some new participants to supplement us old-timers with some fresh legs and young ears. We will continue the Breeding Count in the years ahead.

As always, thanks for your continued participation.

Looking Ahead

<p>Fall Count Count Period - September 11-26</p>

This will be the 40th and final Fall Count. To the new participants on the Breeding Count, if you can make it out that would be great.

Happy Birding,
Dave Hallock

2021 INDIAN PEAKS BREEDING BIRD COUNT

Count period – June 1 – July 15; Weather: first 3 weeks of June were warmer and drier than normal, remainder of period was more seasonal with average to above average moisture. Forty-one observers, 22 (of 25) areas covered. Total party hours: 153.

Canada Goose.....66	Northern Flicker..... 35	American Robin 313
Mallard41	Olive-sided Flycatcher 10	European Starling..... 4
Ring-necked Duck2	Western Wood-Pewee..... 15	House Sparrow 17
Common Merganser2	Hammond’s Flycatcher 14	American Pipit 31
Wild Turkey.....2	Dusky Flycatcher 29	Pine Grosbeak 17
White-tailed Ptarmigan.....7	Hammonds/Dusky Fly. 1	Brown-capped Rosy-Finch... 4
Dusky Grouse1	Cordilleran Flycatcher 60	House Finch 8
Western Grebe1	Empidonax species..... 8	Cassin's Finch..... 13
Band-tailed Pigeon15	Say's Phoebe 1	Red Crossbill 8
Eurasian-collared Dove4	Warbling Vireo 148	Pine Siskin..... 189
Mourning Dove 14	Canada Jay 7	Lesser Goldfinch 2
Common Nighthawk.....3	Steller’s Jay..... 70	American Goldfinch..... 2
White-throated Swift3	Clark’s Nutcracker 32	Chipping Sparrow 35
Calliope Hummingbird.....1	Black-billed Magpie..... 53	Brewer’s Sparrow 7
Rufous Hummingbird.....7	American Crow 58	Fox Sparrow 8
Broad-tailed Humming.355	Common Raven 52	Dark-eyed Junco..... 223
Sora.....1	Horned Lark..... 5	White-crowned Sparrow ... 95
American Coot.....1	Tree Swallow 109	Vesper Sparrow 2
Wilson's Snipe 12	Violet-green Swallow 79	Savannah Sparrow..... 2
Spotted Sandpiper.....8	Barn Swallow..... 22	Song Sparrow 24
Double-crested Cormorant.. 12	Cliff Swallow 31	Lincoln's Sparrow..... 198
American White Pelican1	Black-capped Chickadee.... 25	Green-tailed Towhee 54
Great Blue Heron4	Mountain Chickadee 163	Spotted Towhee..... 2
Turkey Vulture10	Bushtit..... 6	Red-winged Blackbird..... 55
Osprey1	Red-breasted Nuthatch..... 41	Brewer's Blackbird 3
Sharp-shinned Hawk.....1	White-breasted Nuthatch... 25	Common Grackle 5
Cooper's Hawk.....4	Pygmy Nuthatch 37	Brown-headed Cowbird 30
Northern Goshawk.....2	Brown Creeper 1	Orange-crowned Warbler.... 1
Red-tailed Hawk 11	Rock Wren 7	Virginia’s Warbler..... 1
Golden Eagle1	House Wren 70	MacGillivray's Warbler 31
Great Horned Owl1	American Dipper..... 5	Yellow Warbler 9
Boreal Owl.....1	Golden-crowned Kinglet.... 10	Yellow-rumped Warbler... 125
Belted Kingfisher.....1	Ruby-crowned Kinglet..... 210	Wilson’s Warbler 78
Williamson’s Sapsucker7	Mountain Bluebird 17	Western Tanager 26
Red-naped Sapsucker26	Townsend’s Solitaire 11	Black-headed Grosbeak..... 27
Am. 3-toed Woodpecker.....6	Veery..... 3	Lazuli Bunting..... 1
Downy Woodpecker 18	Swainson’s Thrush..... 27	passerine species 4
Hairy Woodpecker.....20	Hermit Thrush..... 94	

Totals: 112 species; 3806 individuals; 25 individuals per count hour. Participants: Linda Andes-Georges, Bev Baker, Maureen Blackford, Gary Brower, Alex Brown, Diane Brown, Gillian Brown, George Coffee, Patricia Cullen, Virginia Evans, Mike Figgs, Audrey Godell, Dave Hallock, Paula Hansley, Jim Holitza, Steve Jones, Gerard Kelly, Nan Lederer, Eric Maxfield, Holden Maxfield, Lisa McCoy, Carron Meaney, Loren Merrill, Merle Miller, Sally Miller, Timo Mitzen, Naseem Munshi, Carol Newman-Holitza, Chris Petrizzo, Mark Pscheid, Jeannie Reynolds, Matt Reynolds, Peter Ruprecht, Cara Stiles, Lucy Stroock, Mike Tupper, Claudia Van Wie, Susan Wagner, Marty Wolf, Jeff Yegian, and George Young.