

INDIAN PEAKS BIRD COUNTS

Summer 2023

Newsletter

Vol.42 No.1

Breeding Count Summary

The first thing that strikes me is the outstanding effort put into the count. The 157.82 hours is the most ever for a Breeding Count. We covered 24 of the 25 count areas (the only one not covered is the City of Boulder Watershed, where we have never had access).

This year continued a rebound in total numbers of birds from two years ago, though still below the 40-year average. The montane count areas were quieter than the subalpine areas. The montane areas had their 13th lowest count (out of 42), the 2nd lowest since 2013. The subalpine areas had their 19th highest count (out of 42), their highest since 2016.

Breeding Count Summary

Number of Species

2023 - 107

40-Year Average - 103

Last Year - 112

Record High - 112 (2001, 2021 and 2022)

Record Low - 88 (1984)

Number of Individuals

2023 - 4,950

40-Year Average - 5,144

Last Year - 4,555

Record High - 7,996 (2004)

Record Low - 3,141 (1986)

Number of Individuals - Per Count Hour

2023 - 31 per count hour

40-Year Average - 42

Last Year - 30

Record High - 59 (2004)

Record Low - 31 (1982)

There were some good finds on this count, including:

Wild Turkey - 8th time seen, all since 2008 and 6 of last 7 counts (Sugarloaf, Eldora, Caribou Ranch).

Rock Pigeon - 5th time seen and in the unlikely location of 4th of July Valley (North Fork).

Eurasian-collared Dove - 10th time seen, all

since 2008 and 8 of the last 10 counts (Sugarloaf). But their numbers continue to stay very low.

Common Poorwill - 4th time seen (Sugarloaf).

Bald Eagle - 10th time seen, all since 2000 (Rollinsville, Eldora, Nederland).

Swainson's Hawk - 5th time seen (Ward North).

Red-Headed Woodpecker - 3rd time seen (Sugarloaf)

Say's Phoebe - 12th time seen, all since 2000 (Arapaho Ranch).

Juniper Titmouse - 2nd time seen (Sugarloaf). The first time was last year and it was observed at the same location as last year.

Gray Catbird - 7th time seen, 4 of last 6 counts (Nederland).

Spotted Towhee - Though seen on 29 of the 42 counts, this year's sightings included 2 subalpine sites - North Fork and Brainard North.

Double-crested Cormorants were first seen on the count in 1996. They have become a regular member of our local summer avian community, being seen on 23 of the last 24 counts. We have no evidence of them nesting in the count circle.

There were several species missed that we normally see on the count, including:

Killdeer has not been seen on the Breeding Count since 2010. They were seen on 19 of the first 20 counts but only 6 of the second 20.

Golden Eagle has been seen on 30 of the previous counts but was missed this year.

American Goldfinch has been seen on 31 of the previous counts but missed this year.

Evening Grosbeak continues to be hard to find. They have declined by 91% when comparing average numbers of the first 20 years with the second 20 years of the count. They were found on 18 of the first 20 counts but only 13 of the second 20 counts.

We had above average counts for several species.:

The 9 **Great Blue Herons** seen ties for their high count. There are reports of a small rookery on Los Lagos Ranch.

Canada Goose continues to solidify their position as our most numerous species of

waterfowl. They have increased by 800% when comparing the first 20 years with the second 20 years; they were found on 9 of the first 20 counts and 18 of the second 20.

The 117 **Clark's Nutcrackers** observed was an all-time high for the Breeding Count (previous high of 114; last year 50).

The top 10 numeric species on this year's count were **Broad-tailed Hummingbird** (405), **American Robin** (368), **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** (328), **Dark-eyed Junco** (320), **Mountain Chickadee** (262), **Lincoln's Sparrow** (209), **Yellow-rumped Warbler** (200), **Warbling Vireo** (157), **White-crowned Sparrow** (148), and **Violet-green Swallow** (139).

There were some notable poor counts for several species. During the first years of the count the "big three" nesting ducks were Mallard, Green-winged Teal and Ring-necked Duck. We should be happy about the 1 **Green-winged Teal** observed, as they had not been seen since 2014 until last year. There has been a 78% decrease of average count between the first and second 20 years; they were seen on all of the first 20 counts but only 13 of the second 20 counts. The 6 **Ring-necked Ducks** observed was also good as they had not been seen on 2 of the last 4 counts - but they had been seen every count before back to 1982. They have seen a 57% decrease of average count between the first and second 20 years. A single **Dusky Grouse** was observed. There was a 25% decrease in average count between the first and second 20 years. Their numbers also decreased on the other 3 counts, including a 67% decrease on the Winter Count. Only 5 **Band-tailed Pigeons** were observed. This is the first time they have been in single digits since 1987; last year 37

were seen. Historically, the Arapaho Ranch was one of our primary locations for finding them, but bird feeding has become more sporadic at the ranch. They are likely still around, we just have not found their latest hot spots. The 68 **Wilson's Warbler** continues a trend of only double digit counts that began in 2018. From 1987-2006 all counts were over 100 and most were between 200-300. From 2007-2016 the counts averaged around 100. This is the third year in a row that the **Fox Sparrow** count has not hit double digits - you have to go back to 1985 to find counts this low. Only a single **Brewer's Blackbird** was observed. There has been a 78% decrease in their average count between the first and second 20 years. The same declining trend can be said for several other "agricultural" species, including European Starling, Common Grackle and Brown-Headed Cowbird; most cattle grazing and horse liveries are gone from the landscape.

As always, thanks for your continued participation. The effort was outstanding. We are getting new participants to help cover the alpine areas and some of our old-timers (but young at heart) are taking on more areas.

Looking Ahead

2024 Breeding Count
Count Period - June 1 - July 15

Happy Birding,
Dave Hallock

2023 INDIAN PEAKS BREEDING BIRD COUNT

Count period : June 1 – July 15; Weather: June saw above average precipitation and below average temperatures; the first half of July saw more seasonal temperatures and precipitation. Forty-four observers, 24 (of 25) areas covered. Total party hours: 157.82 (147.77 on foot; 10.05 by car). Total party miles: 232 (80.7 by car; 151.30 on foot).

Canada Goose	58	Downy Woodpecker.....	6	Townsend's Solitaire	25
Mallard.....	45	Hairy Woodpecker	31	Swainson's Thrush	26
Green-winged Teal.....	1	Northern Flicker.....	56	Hermit Thrush.....	125
Ring-necked Duck	6	Olive-sided Flycatcher	6	American Robin.....	368
Common Merganser.....	7	Western Wood-Pewee	17	Gray Catbird	1
Wild Turkey	6	Hammond's Flycatcher	3	House Sparrow.....	9
White-tailed Ptarmigan	4	Dusky Flycatcher	49	American Pipit	49
Dusky Grouse	1	Cordilleran Flycatcher	96	Pine Grosbeak	17
Rock Pigeon.....	1	Empidonax species	3	Brown-capped Rosy-Finch	9
Band-tailed Pigeon.....	5	Say's Phoebe	1	House Finch	9
Eurasian-collared Dove.....	1	Plumbeous Vireo	2	Cassin's Finch	20
Mourning Dove.....	16	Warbling Vireo.....	157	Red Crossbill.....	131
Common Nighthawk.....	3	Canada Jay	13	Pine Siskin	112
Common Poorwill.....	1	Steller's Jay	68	Chipping Sparrow	44
White-throated Swift.....	6	Clark's Nutcracker	117	Fox Sparrow.....	6
Broad-tailed Humming.	405	Black-billed Magpie	43	Dark-eyed Junco	320
Rufous Hummingbird	5	American Crow	62	White-crowned Sparrow	148
Sora	4	Common Raven	59	Vesper Sparrow	3
Wilson's Snipe.....	8	Black-capped Chickadee.....	21	Savannah Sparrow	4
Spotted Sandpiper	19	Mountain Chickadee	261	Song Sparrow.....	32
Double-crested Cormorant	15	Juniper Titmouse.....	1	Lincoln's Sparrow	209
Great Blue Heron.....	9	Horned Lark	10	Green-tailed Towhee.....	48
Turkey Vulture	11	Tree Swallow	107	Spotted Towhee.....	3
Osprey	4	Violet-green Swallow	139	Red-winged Blackbird	63
Bald Eagle.....	3	Barn Swallow.....	24	Brown-headed Cowbird	29
Sharp-shinned Hawk.....	1	Cliff Swallow	47	Brewer's Blackbird.....	1
Cooper's Hawk.....	2	Golden-crowned Kinglet.....	18	Common Grackle	1
Northern Goshawk	1	Ruby-crowned Kinglet.....	328	Virginia's Warbler	4
Accipiter species	1	Red-breasted Nuthatch.....	58	MacGillivray's Warbler	38
Swainson's Hawk	1	White-breasted Nuthatch	22	Yellow Warbler	12
Red-tailed Hawk	12	Pygmy Nuthatch	42	Yellow-rumped Warbler.....	200
Buteo species	1	Brown Creeper	8	Wilson's Warbler.....	68
Great Horned Owl.....	2	Rock Wren	7	Western Tanager.....	26
Belted Kingfisher.....	3	House Wren.....	110	Black-headed Grosbeak	34
Red-Headed Woodpecker	1	European Starling	3		
Williamson's Sapsucker.....	8	American Dipper.....	10		
Red-naped Sapsucker.....	24	Western Bluebird	2		
Am. 3-toed Woodpecker	7	Mountain Bluebird.....	29		

Totals: 107 species; 4950 individuals; 31 individuals per count hour. Participants: Bev Baker, Maureen Blackford, Alex Brown, Diane Brown, Gillian Brown, Neil Brown, George Coffee, Patricia Cullen, Todd Deininger, Mike Figgs, Hannah Floyd, Ted Floyd, Fern Ford, Janet George, Audrey Godell, Dave Hallock, Paula Hansley, Jim Holitza, Steve Jones, Bill Kaempfer, Kathryn Kay, Elena Klaver, Nan Lederer, Greg Massey, Holden Maxfield, Lisa McCoy, Merle Miller, Timo Mitzen, Naseem Munshi, Carol Newman-Holitza, Chris Petrizzo, Mark Pscheid, Jeannie Reynolds, Matt Reynolds, Peter Ruprecht, Eileen Rutherford, Kevin Rutherford, Susan Spaulding, Cara Stiles, Lucy Stroock, Mike Tupper, John Vanderpoel, Maribel Williams, and Jeff Yegian.