

Calgary and Area May Species Count May 27 & 28, 2006 **(Links to the count tables can be found at the end of this document)**

Introduction

The Calgary and area May Species Count was first conducted in 1976, was missed in 1977 and again resumed in 1978. The first two years were more of an exploratory nature with few participants and only a portion of the circle's area covered. Thereafter the effort and participation grew quickly such that data from 1979 onward is compatible and comparable with normalization for effort. The table of Historical Data reflects this and data for 1976 and 1978 are not included but are available upon request.

The 80 kilometer count circle is centered on the Center Street Bridge in Calgary and the rim extends to just south of Olds in the north, just north of Nanton in the south, just west of Exshaw and Mount Lorette in the west and past Standard in the east. Birding teams are assigned individual areas within the circle. This is a vast area and no amount of teams could hope to cover the entire area in the two day survey. Thus the teams are assigned areas and they concentrate on "birdy" areas within their assignments. As much as possible the same "birdy" areas are covered each year. With this type of coverage it is hoped that the data will provide a snapshot of species within the area at the time, a representation of the total number of birds, and with normalization a rough indication of population trends. These data are particularly useful to twitchers and for planning such things as "Big Days".

2006 Count

In 2006 the count circle was broken down into 13 individual areas within the City of Calgary and 24 areas outside the City's limit. Sixty-five individuals, with supplemental help from another three individuals, participated in the count. These people were extremely dedicated and produced efforts far beyond what could be expected particularly with the less than ideal weather conditions which prevailed throughout the weekend. Many of the participants surveyed more than one area while others spent two days within their assignments to ensure full coverage of the individual areas. Very special thanks to all the devoted surveyors.

As indicated the weather conditions were far from ideal as on both mornings of the count rain was experienced throughout the count circle with the exception of the western areas where the precipitation fell as snow, sleet or rain. In the west the cloud cover was continuous on both days while in the eastern regions some blue sky was seen in the late afternoons. In the western regions the temperatures varied from 0 to 5 C each day while in the east the temperature began at about 2C and rose to about 10C by late afternoon. Thankfully the wind was not a factor.

Participants, Areas and Highlights

Area 1: Fish Creek Provincial Park (FCPP) from 37th Street SW to Bridge 6:

Participant(s) Rob Vorona (supplemental data from Cedric Hitchon)

Highlights: Western Tanager, Ovenbird, 18 of 36 Ruby-crowned Kinglets within the city.

Area 2: FCPP Bridge 6 to Macleod Trail:

Participants: Gus Yaki, Anne Elliott, Tony Timmons, David Vernon, and Doug Waycett

Highlights: Only Rufous Hummingbird in City, 4 Spotted Towhees (only ones in city).

Area 3: FCPP Macleod Trail to Bridge 14:

Participant: Rob Vorona

Highlights: Bald Eagle (only one in city); 2 of 6 House Finches in city (undercounted in city as no coverage of residential areas).

Area 4: Burnsmead South to Hwy 22X:

Participants: Judy Swan and Romana Windsteig

Area: Both sides of river as described in title

Highlights: First ever Hooded Warbler on count; Only Pelicans (3) on count in the city; only Herring Gull of count; 16 of 34 Wood Ducks on count.

Area 5: FCPP: Mallard Point to Burnsmead:

Participants: Jim St.Laurent, Mary Huston, Karen Larson, Laurie Warkenton

Highlights: four of nine American Kestrels in the city

Area 6: Carburn Park to Beaverdam Flats:

Participants: Bruce Barnetson, Don Magnusson, Tony Timmons

Area: Includes coverage of both parks as well as area in between.

Highlights: 1 of 2 Merlins in city, 1 of 2 Great Horned Owls in city, Only Red-eyed Vireos (6) in the city, 4 of 6 Veeries in city, 9 of 12 Yellow-rumped Warblers in city.

Area 7: Inglewood Bird Sanctuary:

Participants: Volunteers data collated by Amanda Cole. Volunteers included: Marlene Swingle, Robert Swingle, Debbie Enders, Jim Brennan, Mick Mulloy, Marnie Schaetti, John Gorcyka, Shannon Dunning, Fez Qureshi. Supplemental data was provided by Bob Storms.

Highlights: Only Harlequin Ducks (3) in city, 2 of 3 Mourning Doves in the city, 1 of 2 Belted Kingfishers in city, 1 of 2 Ovenbirds in the city.

Area 8: North Glenmor/ Weaselhead:

Not covered. Likely would have added to hummingbird, veery, towhee and others totals.

Area 9: South Glenmore/ Weaselhead:

Participants: Ken and Chris Havard and Al Borgardt with supplemental data from Bob Storms.

Highlights: Only Surf Scoters (7) of count, only Caspian Terns (2) of count, Only Ruffed Grouse in city, only Calliope Hummingbird in city, 3 of 4 Eastern Phoebes in city, only Blue-headed Vireo in the city.

Area 10: Bowmount Natural Area:

Participant: Horst Grothman

Highlights: 1 of 2 Merlins seen in city, 4 of 10 Ospreys observed in the city.

Area 11: Lowery Gardens/Edworthy Park:

Participants: Ena Spalding and John Bargman

Highlights: Good number of White-throated Sparrows; a Brown Thrasher was observed by Brian Elder and added to this area's count.

Area 12: Springbank Area:

Participants: Ena Spalding and John Bargman

Highlights: Big percentage of the water birds recorded in the city, 22 of 34 city Swainson's Hawks, 1 of 2 Great Horned Owls in city, 1 of 2 Belted Kingfishers in city, only Boreal Chickadees (2) in city, only Mountain Bluebirds (16) in city, only Vesper Sparrow in city, only Dark-eyed Juncos (2) of city, only Brewer's Blackbirds (100) in city.

Area 12A: Twelve Mile Coulee Natural Area, Bowness Park, Varsity area:

Participants: Ellie and Sarah Nichol

Highlights: First time these areas were surveyed and there is concern that development is encroaching on the Twelve Mile Coulee Natural Area; only Northern Harrier in city.

Northwest Quadrant:

Area 13: West of Highway 2 Olds/Crossfield:

Participants: Bernard Goulet and Therese Goulet

Boundaries: Eastern Boundary Highway 2, northern boundary the circle rim, western boundary Highway 766, southern boundary Tp. Rd. 282 including Nier Lake.

Highlights: 1 of 3 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 1 of 2 Lesser Yellowlegs, 1 of 3 Stilt Sandpipers, 1 of 2 Loggerhead Shrikes, 2 of 4 Blue-headed Vireos.

Area 14: Water Valley North:

Participants: Ray Woods, Brian Elder, Terry Poulton

Boundaries: southern boundary Tp. Rd. 294, northern and western boundaries the circles rim, eastern boundary Hwy. 766.

Highlights: Only Sandhill Cranes (2), only Solitary Sandpipers (2), only Hawk Owls (2), 3 of 8 Great Gray Owls, only Ruby-throated Hummingbird, 13 Townsend's Solitaire's (high count of 29 recorded this year), 1 of 3 areas to report American Pipit, only Lark Sparrow, only Swamp Sparrow, only Black-headed Grosbeak.

Area 15: Water Valley South:

Participant: Andrew Slater

Boundaries: Northern boundary Tp. Rd. 292, eastern boundary Hwy. 766, southern boundary Tp. Rd. 280, western boundary the circles rim.

Highlights: 5 of 7 Alder Flycatchers, only Connecticut Warblers (2), 10 of 25 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks.

Area 16: Cochrane North:

Participant: Frank Hennessey

Boundaries: Jamieson Road, Ghost Reservoir area, and western boundary Highway 22, northern boundary Rge. Rd. 280, southern boundary Bow River, eastern boundary Bears paw.

Highlights: 7 of 8 Tundra Swans.

Area 17: Bow Valley Provincial Park and Exshaw

Participants: Bernard Goulet, Therese Goulet and Brian Donnelly

Boundaries: the park, Exshaw and Seebe areas

Highlights: 1 of 2 Calliope Hummingbirds, 7 of 10 Rufous Hummingbirds, 2 of 3 Blackpoll Warblers.

Area 37: Southern Grand Valley & Horse Creek Roads:

Participants: Lois and Brian Lewis

Boundaries: northern boundary Tp. Rd. 280, western boundary Grand Valley Road, eastern boundary Highway 22, southern boundary Hwy. 1A

Highlights: only Yellow Rail; 2 of 4 Greater Scaup, 1 of 3 Blackpoll Warblers.

Southwest Quadrant:

Area 18: Mount Lorette:

Participant: Peter Sherrington

Boundaries: Mount Lorette Natural Area

Highlights: Walked 26 km in two days; 4 of 9 Harlequin Ducks, fittingly the only Golden Eagle, 5 of 12 Great Horned Owls, 100 American Pipits, ten species of warblers including 16 of 20 Townsend's Warblers, 5 of 7 Fox Sparrows.

Area 19: Sibbald Flats:

Participants: Phil Cram and Al Borgardt

Boundaries: Highway 40 western boundary, Eastern Boundary Jumpingpound road, Jumpingpound Creek basin southern boundary.

Highlights: only Hooded Mergansers (4), 1 of 3 Barred Owls, 2 of 4 Lesser Yellowlegs, 1 of 2 Winter Wrens and a pair of very far west Western Kingbirds.

Area 20: Elbow River Basin:

Participants: Dick and Lenora Flynn

Boundary: Elbow River basin west of and including Bragg Creek

Highlights: only Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches (200), 1 of 3 areas reporting American Pipit, new to count Pine Grosbeak (2).

Area 21: Gorge Creek Road:

Participants: Colin Young and Linda Bailley

Boundary: Gorge Creek Road from hwy. 549

Highlights: both a Barred Owl and a Great Gray Owl, 1 of 2 Winter Wrens, an Ovenbird.

Area 22: Millarville Area:

Participants: Terry Korolyk

Boundaries: Threepoint Creek basin west of Millarville excluding Gorge Creek Road.

Highlights: Only Sharp-tailed Grouse (likely several more as there was vocalization), four Rose-breasted Grosbeaks.

Area 23: Priddis Area:

Participants: Gus Yaki, Monica Thomas, Nimali Seneviratne

Boundaries: Hwy. 22 on east, hwy 22x on north, Hwy 762 on west, hwy. 749 in south.

Highlights: six Gray Jays, four Rose-breasted Grosbeaks

Area 24: Brown/Lowery Provincial Park:

Participants: Colin Young and Linda Bailley

Boundaries: the Park

Highlights: only 10 species but 3 of 4 Cape May Warblers (perhaps re-establishing a breeding area in the park), only American Three-toed Woodpecker of the count.

Area 25 South of Calgary:

Participants: Terry Korlyk

Boundaries: Hwy. 2 on east, Hwy 22 on west, Hwy 22x on north, 338th Avenue on south

Highlights: 1 of 3 Cooper's Hawks, 28 of 140 Baltimore Orioles

Area 26: Upper Sheep River Basin:

Participants: Michael Harrison and Amanda Cole

Boundary: Sheep River basin north of the river and west of Turner Valley

Highlights: 1 of 2 Prairie Falcons, a Barred Owl and two Great Gray Owls, only Brown Creeper, only Lazuli Buntings (3), 10 of 12 Pine Siskins.

Area 27: Southside Sheep River Basin:

Participants: Colin Young and Linda Bailley

Boundaries: Sheep River basin south of Sheep River.

Highlights: 1 of 2 Bobolinks, 4 of 5 Evening Grosbeaks.

Area 28: Highwood River Basin West of Longview:

Participants: David Lieskie

Boundaries: as described in title

Highlights: 1 of 3 Rock Wrens, 4 of 5 Evening Grosbeaks.

Area 29: Central Highwood River Basin:

Participants: Rob Vorona

Boundaries: southern boundary the circle rim, Hwy 22 on the west, 338th Ave on north, and Hwy 2 on east.

Highlights: 2 of 3 Rock Wrens, only Short-eared Owls, seven Gray Catbirds, four Spotted Towhees.

Eastern Hemisphere:

Area 30: Didsbury East Bluebird Trail:

Participants: Don and Andrew Stiles

Boundaries: northern boundary the circle rim, southern boundary hwy 582, western boundary hwy. 2

Highlights: 1 of 5 Sprague's Pipits

Area 31: Irricana North:

Participants: Milt Spitzer, Jean Dunn, Jeff Hazell and Phil Cram

Boundaries: southern boundary Tp. Rd. 262, Western Boundary Hwy 2, Eastern Boundary circle rim, northern boundary hwy 582.

Highlights: four falcons tallied including a Peregrine and Prairie Falcon, only Upland Sandpipers (3), only Long-billed Curlews (2), 13 of 14 Red-necked Phalaropes, 1 of 2 Loggerhead Shrikes.

Area 32: Strathmore North:

Participants: Russ and Sue Costello

Boundaries: Highway 1 and extension east (hwy 561) on south, Rge. Rd. 261 on west but including Bruce Lake, Tp. Rd. 262 on north, circle rim on east.

Highlights: 1 of 3 groups to tally Black-bellied Plover, 45 Semipalmated Sandpiper, 15 Common Grackles and 3 House Finches in Strathmore.

Area 33: East of Calgary:

Participants: Ken and Chris Havard

Boundaries: City Limits and/or Hwy 2 on west, Hwy 24 and northern extension on east, highway 560 on south, hwy 566 on north (excluding Bruce Lake)

Highlights: 2 of 3 Peregrine Falcons, only Black-necked Stilts (3), a Red-necked Phalarope, only Purple Martins (14).

Area 34: Carseland/Dalmead/McKinnon Flats:

Participants: Mike Mulligan, Hank Vanderpol, Sandy Ayers

Boundaries: Hwy 560 to north, Bow River on south, Hwy 24 on east but jogging to include Wyndham/Carseland PP, city limit on west.

Highlights: 2 of 3 Brown Thrashers, only Ferruginous Hawk, one of two groups to record Baird's Sandpipers.

Area 35: South of Strathmore:

Participants: Dick and Lenora Flynn

Boundaries: Hwy 1 and extension (hwy 561 on north), circle rim on east, hwy 24 on west, southern boundary Bow River from Carseland otherwise tp. rd. 222.

Highlights: 2 of 4 Greater Scaup, only White-winged Scoters (6), 224 of 227 Black-bellied Plovers, only Semipalmated Plover, only Least Sandpiper, 2 of 3 Stilt Sandpipers, only Common Terns (7), 4 of 5 Sprague's Pipits, only Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow.

Area 36: Frank Lake and High River East:

Participants: Bruce Barnetson, Don Magnusson, Dave Gibson supplemented by Shonna McLeod

Boundaries; Hwy 2 on west, hwy 552 on north, 594th Avenue on south, hwy 547 to the east but normally including the Brandt Hutterite Colony.

Highlights: Only White-faced Ibis (9).

Birds, Species and Numbers:

In spite of the adverse weather conditions a total of 207 species were recorded during the count, second only to the 2002 count when 216 species were recorded. A total of 64,700 individuals were tallied beating the former high of 58,000 individuals. It is likely that this record number of birds is directly correlated to the extra efforts expended by the participants in the count.

In all highest, or tied for highest, numbers were tallied for 42 species. Three new species were added to the historical species list for the count including Pine Grosbeak, Black-throated Sparrow (came to feeder in Bears paw and is documented by photographs) and a female Hooded Warbler.

Seen this year but only seen once or twice before were Gray-crowned Rosy-finches, Cape May Warblers, Northern Hawk-Owl (same site as last year), and Caspian Terns.

Loons, Grebes, Pelicans and Cormorants:

-Record number of Common Loons;

Herons, Egrets and Bitterns

- Record number of Great Blue Heron
- no Egrets nor Bitterns

Ducks, Geese and Swans:

- no white geese
- seven Tundra Swans
- record number of Ring-necked, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead and Barrow's Goldeneye

Hawks, Eagles and Falcons:

- record number of Kestrels
- normal number of other raptors

Shorebirds:

- most of migrant shorebirds had passed through area earlier in the month,
- record number of Killdeer and Wilson's Snipe.

Gulls and Terns:

- Low number of Common Terns

Pigeons, Doves and Owls:

- Record number of Mourning Doves,
- good numbers of Great Gray and Barred Owls
- only one Short-eared Owl
- Great Horned Owl numbers in the normal range

Hummingbirds:

- Rufous numbers normal others low

Woodpeckers:

- except for Flickers numbers very low

Flycatchers:

- as usual survey done too early to record many of the *Empidonax* species, others in normal range.

Vireos:

- Record number of Warbling Vireos, others in normal range.

Crows and Jays

- normal numbers except for record number of Ravens

Swallows:

- total numbers are problematic because of the huge numbers hawking insects over large bodies of water.

Chickadees and Nuthatches:

- low numbers of all species

Kinglets:

- record number of Ruby-crowned Kinglets

Thrushes, Pipits

- record numbers of Townsend's Solitaires, American Robins, Hermit Thrushes, Varied Thrushes and American Pipits.

Wood Warblers:

- sixteen species of warblers were recorded,
- record number of Common Yellowthroat and Wilson's Warblers.
- a first record of Hooded Warbler.

Sparrows, Towhees and Juncos:

- a first ever Black-throated Sparrow on the count,
- record high numbers of Vesper and Fox Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos.

Blackbirds:

- record high numbers of Red-winged and Brewer Blackbirds.

Finches:

- weather induced large numbers of Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches?
- first ever Pine Grosbeaks recorded on count,
- highest count of House Finches but could be much higher if residential areas were covered in more detail,
- where are the Pine Siskins?
- no Crossbills.

Of course all of the above records, large numbers, low numbers, etc. are quite subjective and data should be normalized for effort to give a truer indication of trends and populations.

Animals:

Probably the most thrilling and unexpected animal observation was that of a Bobcat in the Bearspaw area. Other animals seen (not everyone reported animals or their numbers so will not ascribe numbers to the sightings) include:

- Coyote
- Red Fox
- Richardson's Ground Squirrel
- Yellow Pine Chipmunk
- American Red Squirrel
- Meadow Vole
- Muskrat
- American Elk
- Mule Deer
- White-tailed Deer

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