



MH INTERPRETIVE PROGRAM
MANAGED BY GRASSLANDS NATURALISTS
BASED IN POLICE POINT PARK

40th Annual Christmas Bird Count (2021)

Co-sponsored by the MH Interpretive Program and The Society of Grasslands Naturalists

The 2021 Medicine Hat Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was held on Sunday, December 19. Many thanks to the 42 participants who surveyed territories during the count, including 3 new contributors. Also, a big thank you goes out to the 24 feeder watchers who participated. There were 10 new people that helped with the feeder watch part of the count in 2021. Starting in 2010, the Interpretive Program began soliciting Hatters with feeders to help with the count. Since then, there has been a consistent group of 15 to 30 observers annually. Having these individuals participate usually adds one or more species seen exclusively by feeder watchers to the count's species total.

One large rural territory that encompasses the northeast section of the count circle was split into 2. This was done to allow surveyors to fully cover this portion of the count circle in a timely manner. A new territory was created that focused on the Waste Water Treatment Plant's sewage lagoons and nearby riparian area, which increased the number of territories to 25. All 25 territories in our count circle were surveyed.

Count day temperatures were cool (Low = -17° C/High = -10° C) and there was a consistent wind (N-NE 11 to 26 km/hr); the higher wind speeds occurred in the afternoon. Snow was present, but not deep, and ranged from 2 to 5 cm; there were also short periods of light snow (<1 cm) throughout the day.

In 2021, 45 species were observed, which was the lowest since 2013 (48). This was first time that total species fell below 50 during the previous 7 years (Average = 53). Total individual birds counted (25,210) were 27% above 2020's total (21,886) and well above the long-term average (14,847). One species observed that could not be identified (Sparrow) was included in total birds but not in total species. There were no new species observed in 2021.

As in 2020, the change in total birds was attributed to Mallards. In 2021, their numbers increased from 674 in 2020 to 2,438, which was much more similar to the long-term average (2,364). Other species of note that increased included Common Goldeneye, Bald Eagle, Ring-necked Pheasant, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Black-capped Chickadee, Bohemian Waxwing, European Starling, Dark-eyed Junco, Common Redpoll, House Finch, and House Sparrow. The increase in Northern Flickers noted earlier was a new high (169); the previous high (167) occurred in 2018. Flickers averaged 154 in the last 5 years whereas they averaged 54 in the 35 years before 2017 -- see Species List page 7.

In contrast, there were several species that decreased in 2021 from 2020. These included Prairie Falcon, Gray Partridge, Rock Dove, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Horned Lark, and American Tree Sparrow. Rock Doves had an all-time low in 2021 (270); the previous low (274) occurred in 1996. Typically, we observe about 1,000 Rock Doves on the CBC. Three other species (Prairie Falcon, Gray Partridge, and American Tree Sparrow) had no observations. This is a rare occurrence as Gray Partridges were seen in all years previously

except 1982 and 1997 and American Tree Sparrows were seen every year except 1988; Prairie Falcons were observed somewhat less (30 of 40 years) -- see Species List page 7.

Two species, Sharp-shinned Hawk and Eastern Screech-owl were observed during Count Week but not on Count Day. The Screech-owl has been present in the area for numerous months and was recorded during our spring bird count back in late May. Feeder watchers saw no species that were not observed by participants involved with surveying an assigned territory. However, feeder watchers did observe 2 of the 3 Hoary Redpolls reported.

Regarding the Top Ten Species, Canada Goose remained at the top but there were some changes. The most noticeable change was that Red-breasted Nuthatch dropped off the list and was replaced by Common Redpoll; Red-breasted Nuthatches fell to 19th place. The other 8 species were on the list in 2020 with Mallards regaining their usual 2nd place. Although Rock Doves had an all-time low, they remained in the Top Ten at number 8. One other item of note was that more Common Ravens (14) were observed than American Crows (13) for the second consecutive year.

Five species returned to the count in 2021 after short absences (< 3 years) and included Bufflehead, Snowy Owl, Hairy Woodpecker, Song Sparrow, and Snow Bunting. Two other species, Cackling Goose and Hoary Redpoll, returned to the count after absences of more than 5 years – see Table 2 below for details.

There were 33 species typically seen on our CBC that were not observed in 2021 (see full list in Table 3 below). Seven species had not been observed for 5 or more years: Northern Pintail (2014), Gadwall (2012), Northern Harrier (2015), Cooper's Hawk (2013), White-crowned Sparrow (2015), Red Crossbill (2012), and Evening Grosbeak (2007).

A complete species list, along with data from the previous 3 years is enclosed below. Birders interested in the results of this and/or other Christmas bird counts can find them at <http://web4.audubon.org/bird/cbc/hr/index.html>. Your comments are welcome, and should be forwarded to the Nature Line at (403) 529-6225 or email Ian Langill at ian.l@natureline.info; Ian will be coordinating our CBC going forward.

Since this is my last time as compiler, I would like to thank everyone for your effort over the past 14 years. Continued Good Birding to you all!

Marty Drut

Marty Drut, Compiler
December 28, 2021

New Species: None

Table 1. List of Species with Record Highs and Lows in 2021

Species	2021 Total	Previous High	Year
HIGHS:			
Northern Flicker	169	167	2018
LOWS:		Previous Low	Year
Rock Dove	270	274	1996

Table 2. Species seen in previous years that were not seen in 2020 but were seen in 2021:

Species	Number Seen	Year Last Seen
Cackling Goose	1	2014
Bufflehead	7	2019
Snowy Owl	1	2018
Hairy Woodpecker	6	2019
Song Sparrow	1	2018
Snow Bunting	41	2019
Hoary Redpoll	3	2012

Table 3. Species seen in most years that were not seen in 2021:

Species	Year Last Seen
American Wigeon	2020
Northern Pintail	2014
Gadwall	2012
Green-winged Teal	2019
Northern Shoveler	2020

Redhead	2018
Canvasback	2019
Ring-necked Duck	2018
Lesser Scaup	2020
Greater Scaup	2019
Northern Harrier	2015
Prairie Falcon	2020
Cooper's Hawk	2013
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2017 (Count Week 2021)
Northern Goshawk	2020
Short-eared Owl	2019
Gray Partridge	2020
Mourning Dove	2020
Belted Kingfisher	2020
Pileated Woodpecker	2017
Horned Lark	2020
Golden-crowned Kinglet	2020
American Tree Sparrow	2020
White-crowned Sparrow	2015
White-throated Sparrow	2018
Harris's Sparrow	2018
Rusty Blackbird	2017
Common Grackle	2020
Purple Finch	2018
White-winged Crossbill	2020
Red Crossbill	2012
American Goldfinch	2020
Evening Grosbeak	2007

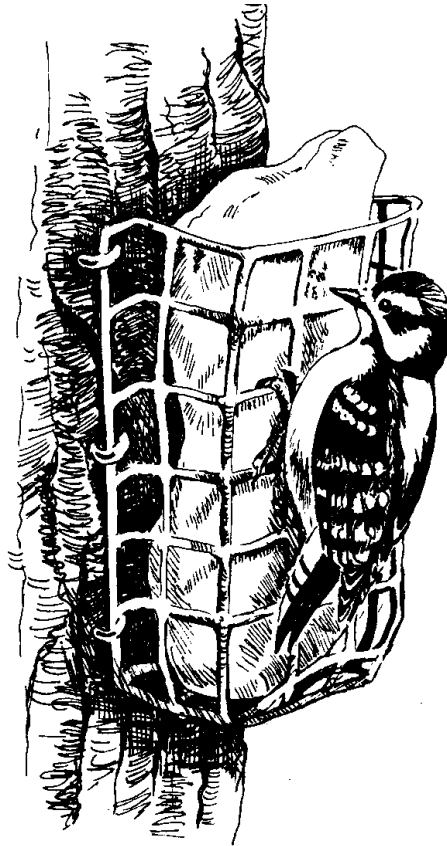
Top 10 Species:

1	Canada Goose	18,837
2	Mallard	2,438
3	House Sparrow	667
4	Black-billed Magpie	643
5	House Finch	556
6	European Starling	303
7	Black-capped Chickadee	279
8	Rock Dove	270
9	Eurasian Collared-dove	179
10	Common Redpoll	171



FIELD PARTICIPANTS:

Mark Schiebelbein
Dan Schiebelbein
Carol Wickenheiser
Christy Wickenheiser
Milt Spitzer
Elaine Spitzer
Jessie Bainbridge*
Morganne Wall*
Rob Wapple
Bob Frew
Phil Horch
Annalora Horch
Donna Steele
Sue Higgins
Eileen Cowtan
Cam Lockerbie
Jeremy Williamson
Colton Prins
Ian Langill*
Marty Drut
Amy Moores
Sandi Robertson
Jo-Anne Reynolds
Ian Turner
Angela Turner
Eric Vokes
Hugh Armstrong
Savannah Armstrong*
John Slater
Val Felesky
Bruce McLeod
Linda Fisher
Barry Anderson
Genevieve Mathieu
Martin Mathieu
Jim Black
Darlene Black
Dale Holmes
Charmaine Leidal
Rob Gardner
Corlaine Gardner
John McDougald*



FEEDER WATCHERS:
(If not already listed under
Field Participants)

Judy Anderson
Amanda Baxter-Fix
Duncan Baldie
Emma Bennett*
Charlotte Gallant*
Sarah Gallant*
Justine Bolen
John Dobbin
Brenda Fode*
Keith Gerrard
Verla Diamond
Lisa Holmes
Lisa Kennedy*
Sue Masterman
Gordon Meyers
Matt Read
Sandy Read
Lorrie Sielski
Carol Snedden*
Jack Snedden*
Sandra Wilson
Murray Thorpe*
Barbara Rutherford*
Blaine Whitford*

*New Participants in 2021

SPECIES	Dec 19 2021	Dec 20 2020	Dec 15 2019	Dec 16 2018
Eared Grebe	-	-	CW ¹	-
Canada Goose	18,837	16,849	16,764	21,586
Cackling Goose	1	-	-	-
Mallard	2,438	674	3,135	2,495
American Wigeon	-	1	-	4
Green-winged Teal	-	-	2	-
Northern Shoveler	-	6	2	-
Common Goldeneye	74	68	54	110
Bufflehead	7	-	3	8
Lesser Scaup	-	2	2	5
Greater Scaup	-	-	4	2
Redhead	-	-	-	1
Canvasback	-	-	1	1
Ring-necked Duck	-	-	-	1
Common Merganser	5	11	6	13
Hooded Merganser	-	2	-	-
Ruddy Duck	-	1	1 <i>NEW</i>	-
American Coot	7	12	4	4
Bald Eagle	24	16	18	6
Golden Eagle	4	3	3	2
Merlin	1	2	4	3
American Kestrel	1	1	1	-
Prairie Falcon	-	4	2	2
Red-tailed Hawk	1	3	1	1
Rough-legged Hawk	5	7	9	3
Northern Goshawk	-	2	1	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	CW ¹	-	-	-
Gull species ²	-	5 <i>NEW</i>	-	-
Gray Partridge	-	7	29	8
Ring-necked Pheasant	60	20	130	47
Sharp-tailed Grouse	2	4	31	12
Rock Dove (Pigeon)	270	1,194	2,332	778
Eurasian Collared-dove	178	184	236	159
Mourning Dove	-	9	CW ¹	1
Great Horned Owl	5	3	6	4
Snowy Owl	1	-	-	1
Short-eared Owl	-	-	1	-
Eastern Screech-owl	CW ¹	-	-	-
Belted Kingfisher	-	3	-	-
Downy Woodpecker	51	40	48	44
Hairy Woodpecker	6	-	3	2
Northern Flicker	169	131	158	167

Horned Lark	-	2	197	4
Blue Jay	77	97	122	130
Black-billed Magpie	643	643	566	524
American Crow	13	10	38	25
Common Raven	14	15	28	6
Black-capped Chickadee	279	255	367	321
Red-breasted Nuthatch	36	148	72	114
White-breasted Nuthatch	9	1	12	12
Brown Creeper	2	CW ¹	2	4
Golden-crowned Kinglet	-	3	1	4
Townsend's Solitaire	7	7	CW ¹	1
American Robin	16	10	24	7
Gray Catbird	-	-	-	CW ¹
Bohemian Waxwing	93	7	124	27
Cedar Waxwing	5	CW ¹	13	40
European Starling	303	175	854	936
Northern Shrike	1	2	4	3
American Tree Sparrow	-	14	35	28
Harris's Sparrow	-	-	-	1
White-throated Sparrow	-	-	-	3
Song Sparrow	1	-	-	1
Dark-eyed Junco	110	44	73	71
Sparrow species ²	1	-	-	-
Pine Siskin	2	31	20	43
Lapland Longspur	-	-	10	-
Snow Bunting	41	-	321	-
Common Grackle	-	1	2	2
Blackbird species ²	-	CW ¹	-	-
Western Meadowlark	-	2	-	-
Common Redpoll	171	67	39	13
Hoary Redpoll	3	-	-	-
Brambling	-	-	-	CW ¹
Pine Grosbeak	13	14	61	-
House Finch	556	431	642	422
Purple Finch	-	-	-	2
White-winged Crossbill	-	22	-	-
American Goldfinch	-	8	2	2
House Sparrow	667	596	645	460

¹CW indicates species seen during count week but not on count day and are not included in Total Species or Total Individual Birds.

²Individuals not identified to species were added to Total Individual Birds but not to Total Species.

Count Statistics					
	Dec 19 2021	Dec 20 2020	Dec 15 2019	Dec 16 2018	39 Year Average
TOTAL SPECIES	45	52	56	58	46
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	25,210	21,869	27,265	28,677	14,847
Territory Participants	42	42	44	37	37
Walking hours	42.0	47.0	41.5	44.0	45
Walking km	102.0	105.5	82.0	81.0	84
Driving hours	42.5	44.5	51.0	43.5	31
Driving km	573.0	777.0	689.5	744.0	478
Feeder Watchers Only	24	22	19	15	19
Feeder hours	49.0	51.0	49.5	46.5	30
Temp °C min/max	-17/-10	3/8	-7/-5	-7/7	-11/-3
Snow cover	2-5cm	0-5cm Patchy	5-15cm	0cm	4-10cm
Weather - Sky	Overcast with Sun Breaks + Periods of Light Snow	Mostly Sunny + Strong Winds	Overcast	Mostly Cloudy	N/A

*Feeder Watchers Only participants started in 2010.