



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

41th Annual Christmas Bird Count (2022)

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

The 2022 Medicine Hat Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was held on Sunday, December 18. Many thanks to the 42 participants who surveyed territories during the count. Also, a big thank you goes out to the 23 feeder watchers who also helped. Having these individuals participate adds one or more species seen exclusively by feeder watchers to the count's species total.

Count day temperatures were the fourth coldest on record and the coldest in the last decade (Low= -33°C/High= -22°C). There was a consistent wind (W 6 to 17 km/hr) throughout the morning to early afternoon. Snow ranged from 10 to 20 cm, and there was light snow (<1 cm) throughout the morning.

Due to the colder weather, the effort was down from previous years. On the count day, participants were out for a total of 75.5 hours and travelled a distance of 627.5 km, while the ten-year average is 92 hours and 748 km respectively. The time participants watched their feeders (22 hours) was slightly above the average of 20 hours. Based on the lower effort level and the cooler temperatures, the total number of birds seen was significantly impacted and is not a definitive reflection of the bird population in Medicine Hat.

This year, 51 species were observed, up from last year (45) and on par with the ten-year average. Unfortunately, there were a total of 11,262 individual birds counted this year which is the lowest since 2008 and is 55% lower than last year's total of 25,210. One of the main reasons for this decline is due to the lower numbers of Canada Geese seen in this count. Only 6,621 Canada Geese were counted this year versus 18,837 last year. When I removed the number of Canada Geese counted, we still have a lower numbers of birds counted (4,641) compared to the past ten-year average (8,214). Other species of note that decreased this year compared to last year include the Mallard Duck, Common Goldeneye, Rock Dove, Black-billed Magpie and the Common Redpoll.

In contrast, a few species increased in 2022 from previous years. These included Green-winged Teals, Eurasian Collard-Dove, and Horned Larks. In addition, a record number of Bald Eagles were counted this year, 35, but as some were active on count day, some of the eagles may have been counted twice. Having said this, it is safe to say that their numbers are on the rise in Medicine Hat. Other good news is that 115 American Robins were counted, beating the previous high of 79 set in 2012. It was also the first time in 19

years that the Varied Thrush (1) and 34 years that a Great Blue Heron (1) were seen during the count. In addition, this was also the first year an Osprey was seen during the count (1).

Regarding the Top Ten Species, the Canada Goose remained at the top, but there were some changes. The most noticeable difference was that the American Robin made it to 10th place, bumping the Common Redpoll off the list. Although the Rock Dove had an all-time low, it remained in the Top Ten at number 8. Another note was that more Common Ravens (14) were observed than American Crows (12) for the third consecutive year.

There were eight species typically seen on our CBC that were not observed in 2022. These included the Lesser Scaup, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Prairie Falcon, Townsend Solitaire, Pine Grosbeak, Pine Siskin and the American Goldfinch.

A complete species list and data from the previous three years are enclosed below. Birders interested in the results of this and other Christmas bird counts can go to <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 emailed to Ian Langill at ian.l@natureline.info.

Ian Langill

Ian Langill, Compiler
December 29, 2022

New Species: Osprey

Table 1. List of Species with record highs and lows in 2022

Species	2022 Total	Previous High	Year
HIGHS:			
American Robin	115	79	2012
Green-winged Teal	6	5	2010
Bald Eagles	35	27	2007
LOWS:			
		Previous Low	Year
Rock Dove	193	270	2021

Table 2. Species seen in previous years that were not seen in 2021 but were seen in 2022:

Species	Number Seen	Year Last Seen
Gray Partridge	28	2020
Mourning Dove	3	2020
Belted Kingfisher	1	2020
Hairy Woodpecker	6	2019
Great Blue Herron	1	1988
Green-winged Teal	6	2019
Horned Lark	80	2020
Varied Thrush	1	1987
Harris Sparrow	1	2018
White-throated sparrow	6	2018
American Tree sparrow	8	2020
Red-winged Blackbird	4	2017
Western Meadowlark	1	2020
Common Grackle	1	2020

Table 3. Four-year history comparison of total number of birds

SPECIES	Dec 18 2022	Dec 19 2021	Dec 20 2020	Dec 15 2019
Eared Grebe	-	-	-	CW ¹
Canada Goose	6,621	18,837	16,849	16,764
Cackling Goose	-	1	-	-
Mallard	937	2,438	674	3,135
American Wigeon	-	-	1	-
Green-winged Teal	6	-	-	2
Northern Shoveler	-	-	6	2
Common Goldeneye	30	74	68	54
Bufflehead	4	7	-	3
Lesser Scaup	-	-	2	2
Greater Scaup	-	-	-	4
Canvasback	-	-	-	1
Common Merganser	13	5	11	6
Hooded Merganser	-	-	2	-
Ruddy Duck	-	-	1	1 NEW
American Coot	5	7	12	4
Great Blue Herron	1	-	-	-
Bald Eagle	35	24	16	18
Golden Eagle	1	4	3	3
Merlin	4	1	2	4
Osprey	1 NEW	-	-	-
American Kestrel	-	1	1	1
Prairie Falcon	-	-	4	2
Red-tailed Hawk	-	1	3	1
Rough-legged Hawk	2	5	7	9
Northern Goshawk	-	-	2	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	-	CW ¹	-	-
Gull species ²	-	-	5 NEW	-
Gray Partridge	28	-	7	29
Ring-necked Pheasant	44	60	20	130
Sharp-tailed Grouse	8	2	4	31
Rock Dove (Pigeon)	194	270	1,194	2,332
Eurasian Collared-dove	220	178	184	236
Mourning Dove	3	-	9	CW ¹
Great Horned Owl	1	5	3	6
Snowy Owl	-	1	-	-
Short-eared Owl	-	-	-	1
Eastern Screech-Owl	-	CW ¹	-	-
Belted Kingfisher	1	-	3	-
Downy Woodpecker	32	51	40	48
Hairy Woodpecker	7	6	-	3

Northern Flicker	103	169	131	158
Horned Lark	80	-	2	197
Blue Jay	35	77	97	122
Black-billed Magpie	289	643	643	566
American Crow	12	13	10	38
Common Raven	14	14	15	28
Black-capped Chickadee	246	279	255	367
Red-breasted Nuthatch	42	36	148	72
White-breasted Nuthatch	4	9	1	12
Brown Creeper	4	2	CW ¹	2
Golden-crowned Kinglet	-	-	3	1
Townsend's Solitaire	-	7	7	CW ¹
American Robin	115	16	10	24
Bohemian Waxwing	50	93	7	124
Cedar Waxwing	2	5	CW ¹	13
European Starling	818	303	175	854
Northern Shrike	1	1	2	4
American Tree Sparrow	8	-	14	35
Harris's Sparrow	1	-	-	-
White-throated Sparrow	6	-	-	-
Song Sparrow	1	1	-	-
Dark-eyed Junco	93	110	44	73
Pine Siskin	-	2	31	20
Lapland Longspur	-	-	-	10
Snow Bunting	83	41	-	321
Common Grackle	1	-	1	2
Red winged Blackbird	4	-	CW ¹	-
Western Meadowlark	1	-	2	-
Common Redpoll	19	171	67	39
Hoary Redpoll	-	3	-	-
Pine Grosbeak	-	13	14	61
House Finch	382	556	431	642
White-winged Crossbill	-	-	22	-
American Goldfinch	-	-	8	2
House Sparrow	649	667	596	645
Varied Thrush	1	-	-	-

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.

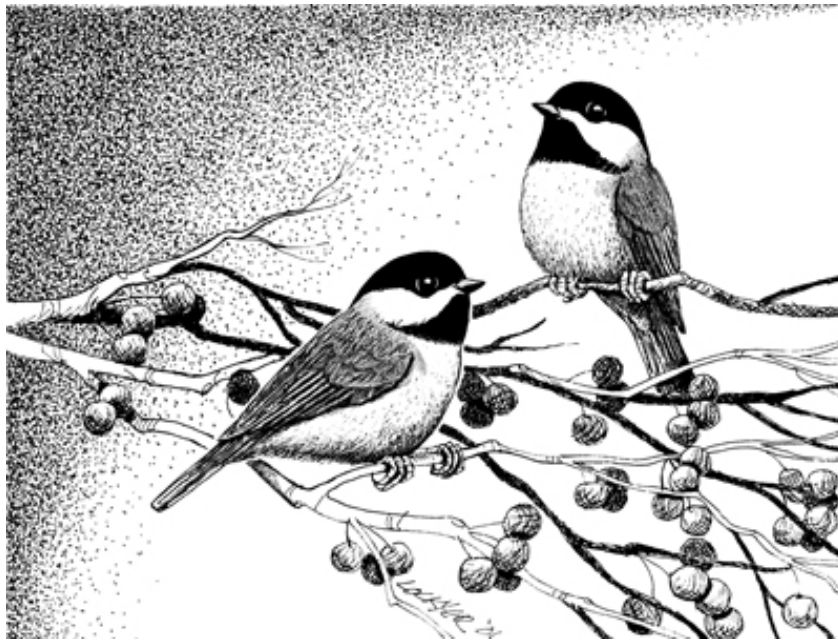
Table 4. Four-year comparison of weather and count effort

Count Statistics					
	Dec 18 2022	Dec 19 2021	Dec 20 2020	Dec 15 2019	40 Year Average
TOTAL SPECIES	51	45	52	56	46
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	11,263	25,210	21,869	27,265	14,847
Territory Participants	42	42	42	44	37
Walking hours	36.0	42.0	47.0	41.5	44.5
Walking km	76.0	102.0	105.5	82.0	84
Driving hours	39.50	42.5	44.5	51.0	31
Driving km	551	573.0	777.0	689.5	478
Feeder Watchers Only	23	24	22	19	19
Feeder hours	33.0	49.0	51.0	49.5	30
Temp °C min/max	-33/-22	-17/-10	3/8	-7/-5	-11/-3
Snow cover	10-20 cm	2-5cm	0-5cm Patchy	5-15cm	4-10cm
Weather - Sky	Overcast with Sun Breaks + Periods of Light Snow	Overcast with Sun Breaks + Periods of Light Snow	Mostly Sunny + Strong Winds	Overcast	N/A

*Feeder Watchers Only participants started in 2010.

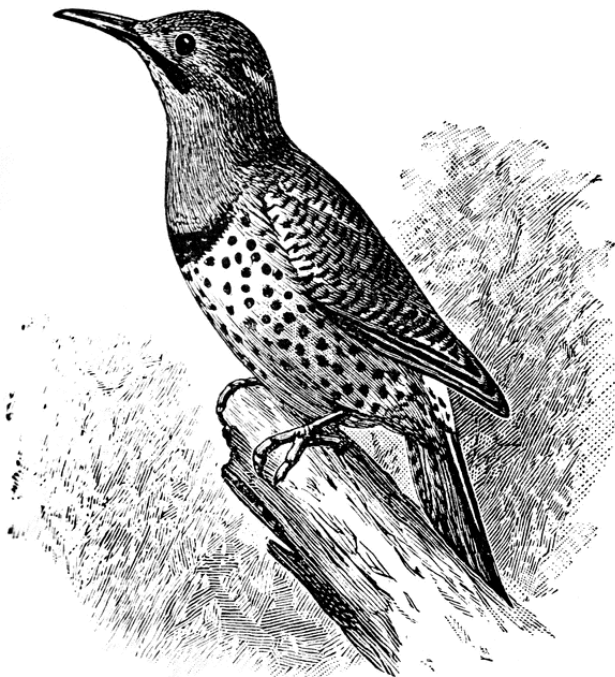
Top 10 Species in 2022

1	Canada Goose	6,621
2	Mallard	937
3	European Starling	818
4	House Sparrow	649
5	House Finch	382
6	Black-billed Magpie	289
7	Black-capped Chickadee	246
8	Eurasian Collared-dove	220
9	Rock Dove	194
10	American Robin	115



FIELD PARTICIPANTS:

Barry Anderson
Dee Armstrong
Hugh Armstrong
Darlene Black
Jim Black
Marty Drut
Cameron Felesky
Fay Felesky
Val Felesky
Linda Fisher
Corlaine Gardner
Rob Gardner
Sue Higgins
Kirsten Kinash
Morganne Koch
Pam Hodgkinson
Dale Holmes
Annalora Horch
Phil Horch
Ian Langill
Charmaine Leidal
Cam Lockerbie
Genevieve Mathieu
Martin Mathieu
Bruce McLeod
Amy Moores
Sandi Robertson
Jo-Anne Reynolds
Heather Steele
Dan Schiebelbein
Mark Schiebelbein
Lorrie Sielski
John Slater
Elaine Spitzer
Milt Spitzer
Donna Steele
Heather Steele
Ian Turner
Angela Turner
Rob Wapple
Carol Wickenheiser
Christy Wickenheiser



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

Judy Anderson
Duncan Baldie
Amanda Baxter-Fix
Verla Diamond
John Dobbin
Mhairi Donnelly
Kirk Ewasecho
Amanda Baxter-Fix
Brenda Fode
Charlotte Gallant
Sarah Gallant
Keith Gerrard
George Gorski
Martha Gue
Simone Hart
Lisa Holmes
Sue Masterman
Tamara Miller
Jennifer Nygaard
Fay Schmaltz
Carol Snedden
Jack Snedde
Sandra Wilson