

Christmas  
Bird Count  
2022





## Christmas Bird Count Report

I did a special edition Christmas Bird Count (CBC) Report this year because there is quite a lot to write

about in this month's January's Bird Wing Report and I didn't want such an important event as the CBC to not get the due it deserves, and because Lori Anderson, our compiler par excellence, was not able to provide us with an update at January's Zoom Bird Wing meeting because of her technical difficulties.

I especially thank Lori who provided the count numbers to all the field observers and feeder watchers by email, who entered the numbers in Audubon, and who patiently answered my numerous questions I put to her by email.

As always, it was fun working with Gary Sturge on the East Ferris Count Report, a report that goes to Mayor Rochefort for allowing Gary and Connie access to the East Ferris landfill site. For the CBC year 2022, East Ferris was a major contributor to the number of species seen because of the open waters on Trout Lake and because some unusual birds for the CBC were spotted in East Ferris.

I thank the photographers who provided excellent photos to go with the text in the CBC report.

I am also thankful that the media in North Bay, Dave Dale at *Small Town Times*, and Jeff Turl at *Bay Today*, took the time to write articles about our count and used photos taken by Bird Wing members. If you haven't read the articles, you can still do so at: <https://smalltowntimes.ca/2023/01/03/mild-weather-surprises-in-christmas-bird-count/> and at <https://www.baytoday.ca/membership/features/local-bird-count-spots-37-bird-species-and-3449-individual-birds-6336179>.

- Renee Levesque, *Bird Wing Scribe*



Dorothy Williams



# North Bay's 44th Christmas Bird Count Summary

The Christmas Bird Count is one of our most exciting events in the bird calendar, and although we don't see nearly as many

species as counts to the south of us, we nevertheless embrace what we see with great delight, especially if the bird is unusual or the count of a particular species is high for that time of the year.

For our 44<sup>th</sup> year, we had 23 field surveyors and 23 feeder watchers who found 37 species and 3,449 individual birds within our 24 km diameter circle. Tallying up the numbers seen by all of us was Lori Anderson, our compiler.

By far, and not surprisingly, the most species seen were Black-capped Chickadees, 660 individuals, followed by 366 Mallards, 413 European Starlings, 257 Evening Grosbeaks, 191 Common Ravens, 124 American Goldfinch, and 139 American Crows.

Because Trout Lake still had open water on the day of the bird count, in addition to Mallards and a couple of American Black Ducks, other ducks were more plentiful than usual with 24 Hooded Mergansers (below), 18 Common Goldeneye, and 2 Common Mergansers. The Common Mergansers, the Common Goldeneye and 22



*Common Redpoll, Stephen O'Donnell*



*Renee Levesque*



of the Hooded Mergansers were seen by Dick Tafel, Linda Stoner and Renee Levesque. The other two Hoodeds were seen by Paul Smylie.

Although Canada Geese are more than plentiful during the summer and early fall, they are not often seen during the Christmas Bird Count. This year, three were found in Trout Lake! (Photo in East Ferris count article that follows.) Most years, none are seen, although in 2001, 90 were seen!

Gulls also are not often seen during the count, but perhaps because of the warmer weather preceding the count and the open lake, 24 Herring Gulls in total were spotted by Greg Jaski and Brent and Laura Turcotte.

Blue Jay numbers were down. Only 53 were found this count, compared with 195 in 2021. However, there have been other low counts. In 2016, only 39 were seen, but as many as 665 have been seen other years. Their numbers at this time of the year depend on the availability of winter food.

Surprising finds were 2 American Robins, one seen in the field by Grant and Shirley McKercher and one seen by feeder watcher Vic Rizzo; 1 Brown Thrasher (at right) seen by feeder watcher Mary Young; 1 Red-bellied Woodpecker also seen by Mary; 1 Gray Catbird (Matt Walter's photo graces the cover of this report) seen in the field by Gary and Connie Sturge; 3 Northern Cardinals, one heard in the field by Stephen O'Donnell, and the other two by feeder watchers Vic Rizzo and Kaye Edmonds; and 3 Common Grackles, one seen by Mary, one seen in the field by Lori Anderson and Ken Gowing, and one seen in the field by the Sturges.



*Wikimedia Commons*

Kaye made some Christmas treats for her backyard birds – suet balls with cranberry, blueberries and natural peanut butter. Messy work, but she got three balls. (Kaye advises that if you make these balls, be sure to use natural peanut butter because regular peanut butter has salt in it.)

Feeder Watcher Nona Schorse also saw the Brown Thrasher, but after count day. It was felt it was the one at Mary's feeder as Nona lives in the same area as Mary. Of interest, the Brown Thrasher was seen on 7 previous counts, most recently in 2009 when 2 were recorded. Two were also recorded in 2006.

Bald Eagle numbers at 14, all seen at the East Ferris landfill site by Connie and Gary, were down somewhat from last year, but Red-tailed Hawk numbers were at a record high of three! They were seen by Kevin and June Telford, Lori and Ken Gowing, and Grant, all three seen in very separate areas.

Other nice finds were 80 Bohemian Waxwings (at right), 40 seen by Grant in West Ferris; 55 Pine Grosbeaks; 37 Mourning Doves; 36 Common Redpolls seen by feeder watchers Shirley McKercher, Vic and Kaye; 2 Brown Creepers seen in the field by the Sturge group; and 2 Ruffed Grouse whose numbers have varied over the years from 0 to 25;

Thanks to Stephen O'Donnell, Rachel Sturge and Nanda Cortez, there



Grant McKercher



were more White-breasted Nuthatches (36) seen this count than Red-breasted Nuthatches (8), and more Hairy Woodpeckers (40) than Downy (25) and Pileated Woodpeckers (15).

Also seen were 19 Pine Siskins (at right), 14 of which were seen by feeder watcher Elsa Tafel; 5 American Tree Sparrows, two seen by feeder watcher John Levesque, two seen by feeder watcher Jim Hasler, and one seen by the Sturge group; and 4 Dark-eyed Juncos, one seen in the field by the Sturge group and the other three seen by feeder watchers Sandy Robinson, Michael Arthurs, and Kaye. The American Tree and the juncos were the only two species of sparrows seen.



*Renee Levesque*

There were some noticeable misses. Not seen at all were owls, Canada Jays, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Purple Finches, Red Crossbills, White-winged Crossbills and, surprisingly, Snow Buntings, a species usually seen near the airport by Fred Pinto and Marc Buchanan.



*Mary Young*

John and Mary also reported animals coming to their feeders to take part in the count. Mary had a fisher (left) and John, a one-horned deer, now known as The Unicorn. Both also had flying squirrels. Mary's was attempting to get to one of her suet feeders and John's was on the patio eating spilled seeds.

*-Renee Levesque and Lori Anderson*

## A mild snowy count day and a lively tally party

Field surveyors always breathe a sigh of relief when the count day is mild. This year we got snow just prior to the count and during the count day. But unlike last year, the day was mild and there wasn't a harsh, bitter wind. I think we would much rather tramp through some snow than have the wind whip about our faces.

Because it had snowed the night before, some roads on our route were not yet plowed and occasionally we had to back up a long and winding road to get out of harm's way.

For most of the field surveyors (a collage of some follows this article with photos taken by Renee Levesque, Greg Jaski, Fred Pinto and Linda Stoner), it was a quiet count with what seemed to be fewer passerines than normal, so thank goodness for the feeder watchers. Many of the song birds were not in the snowy woods but at feeders! However, an American Robin (at right) was seen in the field by Grant McKercher who also saw 40 Bohemian Waxwings.



*Renee Levesque*

We don't get to meet with our regular feeder watchers after the count, but the field observers get together after the count day for what we call our tally count party.

For the past two years, we have had this party by Zoom and made the best of that, but this year Grant and Shirley McKercher hosted the party at their place, as they have done in the past. It is a pot luck affair and for some reason, like most pot lucks, works out well in that not all the food brought are desserts or salads. We had a wide variety of tasty dishes, lots of laughter, a Christmas Bird Count song



composed by me (lyrics follow) that we all sang heartily. We also heard a great moose story told by Gary Sturge. (I know a moose is not a bird, but even at a Christmas Bird Count tally event, it isn't always about the birds!)

One interesting piece of information we found out is that when Stephen O'Donnell does his *Who cooks for you, who cooks for you all*, he actually does sound like a Barred Owl. You may think you do too, but Merlin isn't always fooled. On Merlin, Stephen comes up as a Barred Owl, but later when I tried it, I didn't. Apparently imitating a Barred Owl brings White-breasted Nuthatches (below) into view. There may not have been as many seen in Callander by Rachel Sturge and Nanda Cortez if it hadn't been for Stephen's call, recorded by Rachel and Nanda for all to hear.



*Grant McKercher1*

Of course, the absolute highlight of the tally count party is giving the number of species we saw to our compiler, Lori Anderson, and oohing and ahing over some of the numbers, even three Canada Geese!

Thank you Shirley and Grant for hosting our tally party. A great ending to a great day.

*-Renee Levesque*









## Christmas Bird Count Wonderland

*Lyrics by Renee Levesque with apologies to songwriter Jeremy Stuart Smith*

Birds they sing  
Are you listening?  
In Trout Lake  
Mergansers glistening  
A beautiful sight  
We're happy tonight  
Counting in a Christmas wonderland.



Gone away, Eastern Bluebird  
Posting date onto eBird  
We're singing a song  
As we bird along  
Counting in a Christmas wonderland.



In the meadow we can build a bird house  
Then pretend that it's for Creeper Brown  
We'll say have you not seen any crossbills?  
He'll say "No but surely some must be around."



Later on  
We'll retire  
As we list by the fire  
To face unafraid  
The counts that we've made  
Birding in a Christmas wonderland.





## East Ferris Christmas Bird Count

The North Bay Christmas Bird Count includes East Ferris. It was a mild winter day with snow on the ground. It's a wonder there was any snow at all, given the unusually warm weather prior to the count day.

The East Ferris area, areas 5 and 6 of the count, were surveyed by two field crews consisting of 5 bird watchers who drove and tramped around the area looking for birds, and 2 feeder watchers who watched for birds flitting to and from their feeders.

There was some concern prior to the Christmas Bird Count because in the weeks leading up to the count, the number of birds seen over the entire area seemed to be lower than in previous years. Nevertheless, the results were good, helped in part by the open water on Trout Lake.

In total, the 5 field surveyors and 2 feeder watchers of East Ferris discovered a remarkable 30 species and 598 individuals!

Of particular note, all 14 of the Bald Eagles in the North Bay Count were found at East Ferris Landfill! Two magnificent adults are pictured at right.



Gary Sturge



Also of interest were the number of ducks found in Trout Lake, 61 in total, made up of 22 Hooded Mergansers, 20 Mallards, 17 Common Goldeneye and 2 Common Mergansers. In addition, a nice surprise was finding 3 Canada Geese, all three pictured below.



*Linda Stoner*

In the world of song birds, there were also some surprises and nice finds – Gray Catbird, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Brown Thrasher, Common Grackle, Dark-eyed Junco and American Tree Sparrow, some of which should have been in warmer climes at this time. And of the 19 Pine Siskins found over all the count areas in the North Bay circle, 14 of them were in East Ferris.

Finally, to top off a great East Ferris count day, one group of field surveyors came upon a Red-tailed Hawk, a hawk that contributed to a record high count of 3 in the North Bay Christmas Bird Count. Nice to know East Ferris helped make that record.

- *Renee Levesque and Gary Sturge – article sent to Mayor Rochefort*





*Stephen O'Donnell*

## **Burk's Falls Christmas Bird Count**

A lack of winter food – cones and nuts – resulted in a low number of land birds, a factor noted by most participants.

However, to compensate for this low number, the open waters of Lake Bernard proved to be beneficial, resulting in four species of ducks – American Black, Mallards, Common Goldeneye and Common Merganser – two Common Loons and three species of gulls – Herring, Iceland and Glaucous. The number of Mallards seen, 122, was more than twice the previous high.

A total of 11 Bald Eagles (seen above), 8 at the Burk's Falls landfill site, tied the high count established in 2018.

The number of Blue Jays was low, reflecting the massive southern migration of Blue Jays out of the province in the fall because of the poor nut crop.





Renee Levesque

A Fox Sparrow (above), at a feeder in the Magnetawan area, represented the second time one was seen on our count, and a Red-winged Blackbird, also visiting a feeder, was the 6<sup>th</sup> time one was seen on our count.

Also of special note were two Barred Owls and a Red-tailed Hawk.

Some other birds seen were a Northern Cardinal, a Common Grackle, Canada Jay (4), Northern Shrike (3), American Tree Sparrow (6), Dark-eyed Junco (1), Golden-crowned Kinglet (7), Wild Turkey (below) (64), and Black-capped Chickadees (646).

A total 1816 individuals were counted, representing 39 species.

*-Martin Parker, Stephen O'Donnell and Renee Levesque*



Gary Sturge