

63rd Annual Denver Christmas Bird Count

Day, Date, and Time: **Saturday, December 17, 2015, 7:00 a.m. to 4:40 p.m.**

Compiler: **Joey Kellner** Feeder Coordinator: **Bob Shade**

Weather: **AM overcast w/light snow, PM mostly clear** Temperature: **-10 to 15° F** Wind: **variable, 0 to 10 mph**

Snow Cover: **3 to 13"** Still Water: **Frozen to partly open** Moving Water: **Frozen to partly open**

Observers: **101 (92 in 33 parties, 9 watchers at 9 feeders)**

Total Party Hours: **185.7 (113.5 on foot, 64.05 by car, 10.15 feeder watching)**

Total Party Miles: **500.8 (85.05 on foot, 415.7 by car)**

Hours Spent Watching Feeders: **10.15**

Count Day Totals: **112 species; 36,561 individuals**

Participants by Area (Area Leader's names in bold):

1. Red Rocks Park (RRP): **Dan Stringer**
2. Lower Bear Creek (LBC): Rick Creswell, David Gillilan, **Michael Kiessig**, George Mayfield, Christy Payne
- 2A. Bear Creek Lake Park (BCP): **Mark Amershek**, Mary Geder, A.J. Gest
3. Bow Mar/Marston (BMM): Tina Jones, Taylor Long, Joe Roller, **Chris Rurik**, Scott Somershoe
- 4A. Lower South Platte-east (LSP): Nelson Ford, **Ed Holub**, Thomas Holub
- 4B. Lower South Platte-west (LSP): Dave Mellblom (+23 helpers), **Dick Schottler**, Christopher Warneke
5. Highline Ditch (HLD): **Nancy Crews**, Susan Dunn, Pam Schmidt
6. Plum Creek (PCK): Dan Brooke, Jesse Casias, Renee Casias, **Norm Erthal**, Cheryl Teuton
- 7A. Middle South Platte (MSP): Joey Angstman, **Charles Lawrence**
- 7B. Middle South Platte (MSP): **Hugh Kingery**, **Urling Kingery**, Paul Petzke, Mike Serruto, Celia Greenman
8. Chatfield Reservoir (CHA): Chris Gilbert, **Joey Kellner**, Andy Knolla, Bob Spencer, Ali Warren
9. Upper South Platte (USP): Lynn Forrester, Betty Glass, **Jill Holden**, Mary Keithler, Meredith McBurney
10. Lower Deer Creek (LDC): **Not covered due to weather. ****
11. Upper Deer Creek (UDC): Karen Drozda, **Paul Slingsby**
12. Yegge Peak (YPK): **Ann Bonnell**, **Audrey Boag**
13. Doublehead Mountain (DHM): **Amy Davis**, Nancy Davis, Tim Davis
14. North Turkey Creek (NTC): **Ed Furlong**
15. Indian Hills (IHL): Chuck Aid, Caroline Gilbert, Michael Gilbert, Elaine Lockey, **Dick Prickett**, Rob Raker, Bobby Strom, Jeanette Strom
16. Upper Bear Creek (UBC): Melissa Mezger, **Laura Steadman**
17. Ken Caryl Ranch (KCR): **Tom Bush**, Debra Fulton, Ruth Gabreski, David Suddjian, Bea Weaver
18. Garrison Gate (GGT): Area not covered this year.
19. Morrison/Willow Brook (MWB): Eric Knoshaug, **Jessica Knoshaug**
20. Willow Creek (WCK): **Not covered due to weather. ****
21. Mt. Lindo/Willow Springs (MLW): **Bob Shade**

**** Christmas Bird Counts must be performed on a single calendar day. Any species seen outside that date can be added as "Count Week" if the sighting falls within three days prior or after the count date.**

2016 Denver Christmas Bird Count Highlights

Joey Kellner, Compiler

The 2016 Denver Christmas Bird Count (CBC) took place on December 17th. This is the 63rd consecutive year that the Denver Field Ornithologists has conducted a Christmas Count within the same 15-mile diameter count circle established in 1954 and centered just north of the old Ken Caryl Ranch entrance.

The weather on count day started overcast with 8+ inches of new snow that fell the prior night. Morning temperatures started at -5F, but thankfully no wind to light winds. It was a COLD day to be out with the team reporting a respectable 36,475 individual birds of **112 species recorded** by 92 field observers and 9 feeder watchers. Unfortunately, three Count Areas were not able to be covered due to the weather. AMAZINGLY with only two-thirds of the observers and the bad weather we were only one species shy of the record high count of 113 species seen in 1977!

One new species was added to the cumulative Denver CBC list in 2016, Grasshopper Sparrow. The grand total of species seen since 1954 thus increased to 201!

The Chatfield Reservoir (Area 8) group found an afternoon **Grasshopper Sparrow** along the main park road (one of the only bare ground areas around). A first ever for the Denver CBC! Very good photos were taken and shared at the compilation meeting.

Other “Rare” birds (seen on less than 10% of the previous counts) and found this year included

- Black Scoter (only the 3rd time recorded on the Denver CBC) found in Area 4B (Lower South Platte-West) on South Platte Park Reservoir;
- Dunlin (only the 2nd time recorded on the Denver CBC) found in Area 4A (Lower South Platte-East) on McClellan Reservoir;
- Northern Saw-whet Owl (7th time recorded on the count) found on count day in Area 17 (Ken Caryl Ranch).

“Uncommon” birds (seen 10–24% of the previous counts) found this year included

- Ross’s Goose (found in Area 3),
- Cackling Goose (multiple areas—split and tracked starting in 2004),
- Long-tailed Duck (found in Area 4B),
- Eurasian Collared-Dove (multiple areas—recent explosive addition to the annual count),
- Say’s Phoebe (Area 8),
- Clark’s Nutcracker (Area 17),
- Brown Thrasher (Area 7A),
- Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon’s race) (Area 8),
- Lapland Longspur (Area 7B),
- Brown-capped Rosy-Finch (Area 13), and
- Lesser Goldfinch (several individuals found in two count areas and at feeder watchers’ homes).

Record-high individual numbers were established for three species this year: Cackling Goose (5,820), Grasshopper Sparrow (1), and Lesser Goldfinch (23).

The ten most numerous species observed on the 2016 count were (1) Canada Goose (12,360), (2) Cackling Goose (5,820), (3) Dark-eyed Junco (1,804), (4) Mallard (1,686), (5) Ring-billed Gull (1,404), (6) American Robin (1,019), (7) Common Merganser (887), (8) American Crow (828), (9) House Finch (775), (10) European Starling (603). Together, these ten species accounted for 74.3% of the birds counted.

Two additional “Count Week” species were noted in the three days on either side of count day: Eastern Phoebe found along the South Platte River and Hermit Thrush found in Area 4A. **Making an overall count of 114 species for the circle this year!**

As compiler of the 63rd Denver Christmas Bird Count, I thank all of the field observers and feeder watchers for participating. Special thanks go to the Area Leaders whose efforts and knowledge make this count a success and to Cheryl Teuton and Dan Brooke who did an amazing job once again of coordinating this year's potluck. Thank you Bob Shade for contacting, coordinating, and compiling all the Feeder Watcher data. Thanks also to Colorado Parks and Wildlife for the use of the Chatfield State Park Multi-purpose Room for our compilation meeting. Lastly, thanks to all who brought drinks and food to share! Sharing food and friendship after a day in the field was a great way to relax before the holidays. I hope to see you all at the compilation next year!