

# ROCKLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY

## 71<sup>st</sup> RAS and 118<sup>th</sup> National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count Summary

Date: 12/17/2017

Thanks to all our field and feeder counters for making this effort such a success!

**Weather:** Weather conditions were almost ideal for the RAS 71<sup>st</sup> annual CBC. While skies were overcast, temperatures were seasonally moderate. During daylight birding hours, air temperatures ranged from 27.8 to 33.0°F while dew point temperatures ranged from 18.8 to 23.2°F. Temperatures during nocturnal birding hours (from the earliest start time to sunrise) ranged from 28.0 to 28.5°F with dew point temperatures ranging from 18.6 to 19.6°F. Winds were calm throughout the entire count day; during the day wind gusts averaged only about 3 mph from the NW. After about 4:30 PM, winds dropped to nearly 0 mph for the remainder of the day (Figure 1).

The Hudson River and most of the larger rivers were ice free, but standing water, lakes, ponds, and small streams were mostly to completely ice covered. There were small patches of snow, primarily in shady spots, from a storm several days prior.

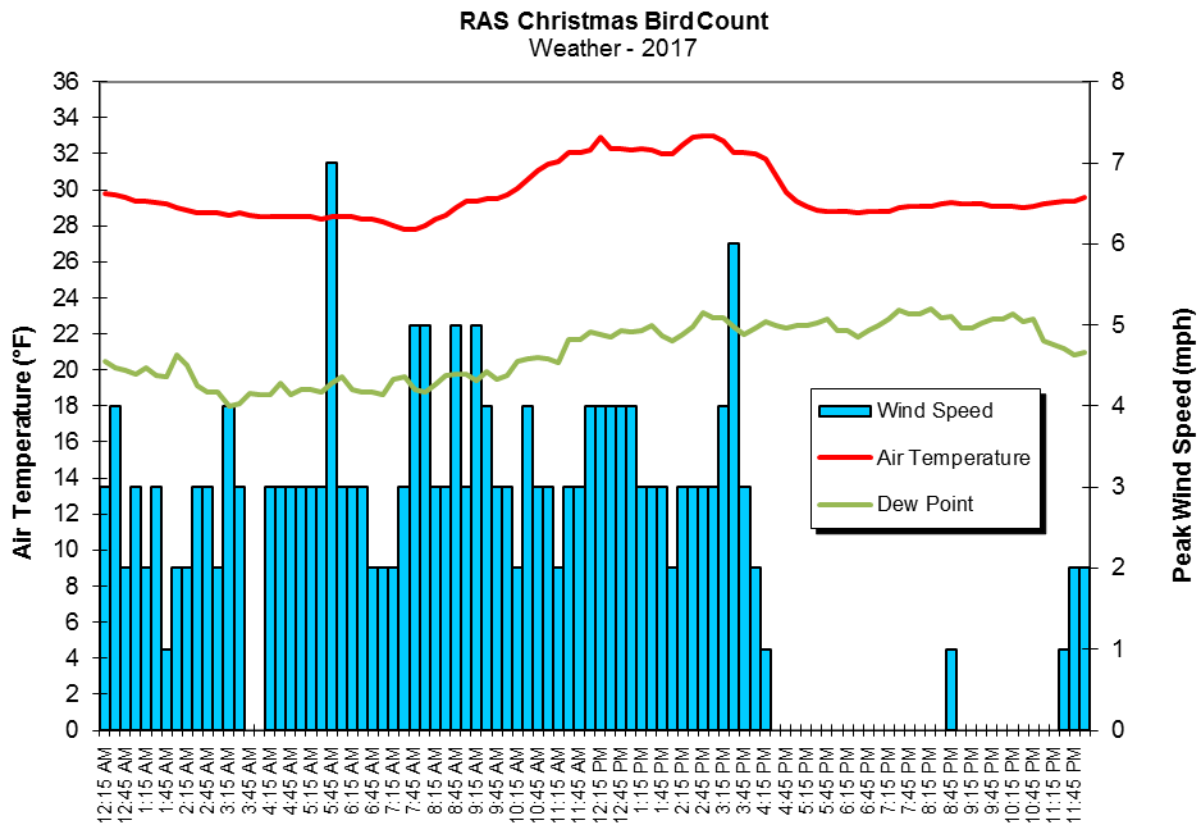


Figure 1. Weather conditions for 2017 CBC.

**Field Observers** (44 field counters + 1 fledgling):

District	No.	Counters
1	5	Alan Wells, Liz Cherry, Della Wells, Tom Cunningham, Julia Warger
2	4	Simon Streatfeild, Judy Cinquina, Elyse Fuller, Tom Fuller, (+Phoebe Fuller)
3	3	Frank Kemmer, Catherine Parker, Caroline McDonald
4	4	Nancy Slowik, Karen Nickeson, Tim Brandon, Joanna Galdone
5	6	Peter Johnson, Zenon Bachir, Karen D'Alessandri, Susan Freiman, Pat Murray, Lorrie Pallant
6	5	Stephanie Garber, Michael Garber, Veronika Krause, Walter Aurell, Suzanne Barclay
7	3	Carol Weiss, Ken McNichol, Barry Babcock
8	3	Jim Previdi, Ron Conzo, Dan Albantides
9	9	Vince Plogar, Tom Dow, Chris Healy, Elda Dow, Drew Ciganek, Karl Knoecklein, Tom Harten, Frank Bonanno, Matt Ceplo
10	2	Elijah Goodwin, Bob Lewis

**Feeder Counters** (7 Locations): Caroline McDonald, Donna Nye, Laurence Pringle, Nancy Slowik, Carol Weiss, Beverly Simone, Pat Murray.

**Coverage:** Daytime birding recorded 442 miles traveled by car, 64 miles traveled by foot; 63.6 hrs on foot and 32.1 hrs by car. An additional 12.5 hours were spent on nighttime birding (owling).

**Results:** Rockland Audubon Society conducted its 71<sup>st</sup> annual Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, December 17, 2017. Forty-four individuals (plus 20 month old Phoebe Fuller) participated in the field count, tallying 20,384 birds (nearly twice as many as counted in 2016) of 86 different species. Seven feeder counters added 327 birds of 27 species. Combining both field and feeder counts, 20,711 individuals representing 86 species were tallied. No additional species were added during Count Week.

New maximum count numbers were established for: **Snow Goose** (124 flyover vs 21 in 2004); **Red-bellied Woodpecker** (124 vs 118 in 2010) (Photo 1); **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** (13 vs 8 in 2014); **Pileated Woodpecker** (15 vs 10 in 1980 and 2010); **Blue Jay** (508 vs 502 in 1962); and **Common Raven** (19 vs 16 in 2015).

Overall, the number of species recorded (86) was among the highest reported for the Rockland count. The number of species ranks in the 87<sup>th</sup> percentile since 1947 and the 78<sup>th</sup> percentile since 1978. The number of species was the eighth highest species count for both periods. The number of individuals, however, ranks among the lowest counts. For the 1947-2016 period the count ranked only in the 58<sup>th</sup> percentile (41<sup>st</sup> highest out of 71 years). When compared, however, to our more modern count period (1978-2016), the number of species ranked only in the 28<sup>th</sup> percentile (11<sup>th</sup> highest out of 40 years).

The top five species (in order) for the 2017 count were: **European Starling**, **Canada Goose**, **Ring-billed Gull**, **Dark-eyed Junco**, and **House Sparrow**. Together, these five species made up 59.8% of all the birds counted.

**Some Highlights:**

**Merlin** – One sighted on Count Day in District 1 (at Helen Hayes Hospital) and one in District 9 during Count Week. Additionally, another (?) Merlin was sighted during Count Week (Dec 15) in District 1 (Patriot Hills Golf Course.) Merlin have not been recorded on the Rockland CBC prior to 1992. Since that year, single sightings have occurred in only eight years; double Count Day sightings have only occurred in 2008 and now 2017.

**Misses**

**Wood Duck** – seen in 36 previous years. Last seen in 2016. Rare from 1947-1975, but becoming more abundant thereafter.

**Pied-billed Grebe** – seen in 36 previous years. Last seen in 2014. Generally sporadic and occurring in small numbers.

**Ruffed Grouse** and **Ring-necked Pheasant** were again missed this year. Both have been seen in 40 previous counts. Ring-necked Pheasant has not been seen since 1995 but are now probably extirpated from the county. Any recent sightings are likely released or escaped farm raised game birds. Ruffed Grouse has not been seen on the count since 2001.

**American Kestrel** – seen in 55 previous years. Common before 1997, but sporadic and declining thereafter. Last seen in 2014.

**Red-breasted Nuthatch** – seen in 47 previous years. Last counted in 2016. An irruptive species, seen in small numbers in most years since 1976.

**Purple Finch** – seen in 60 previous years. An irruptive species, but generally at least a few seen nearly every year. Becoming less abundant and more sporadic after about 1987.

**Pine Siskin** – seen in 35 previous years. Last seen in 2014. An irruptive species, but occurring more or less regularly prior to 1984. Thereafter, becoming less abundant and more sporadic.

**Savannah Sparrow** – seen in 32 previous years. An uncommon grassland species seen sporadically in small numbers. Last seen in 2016.

## RAS Christmas Bird Count

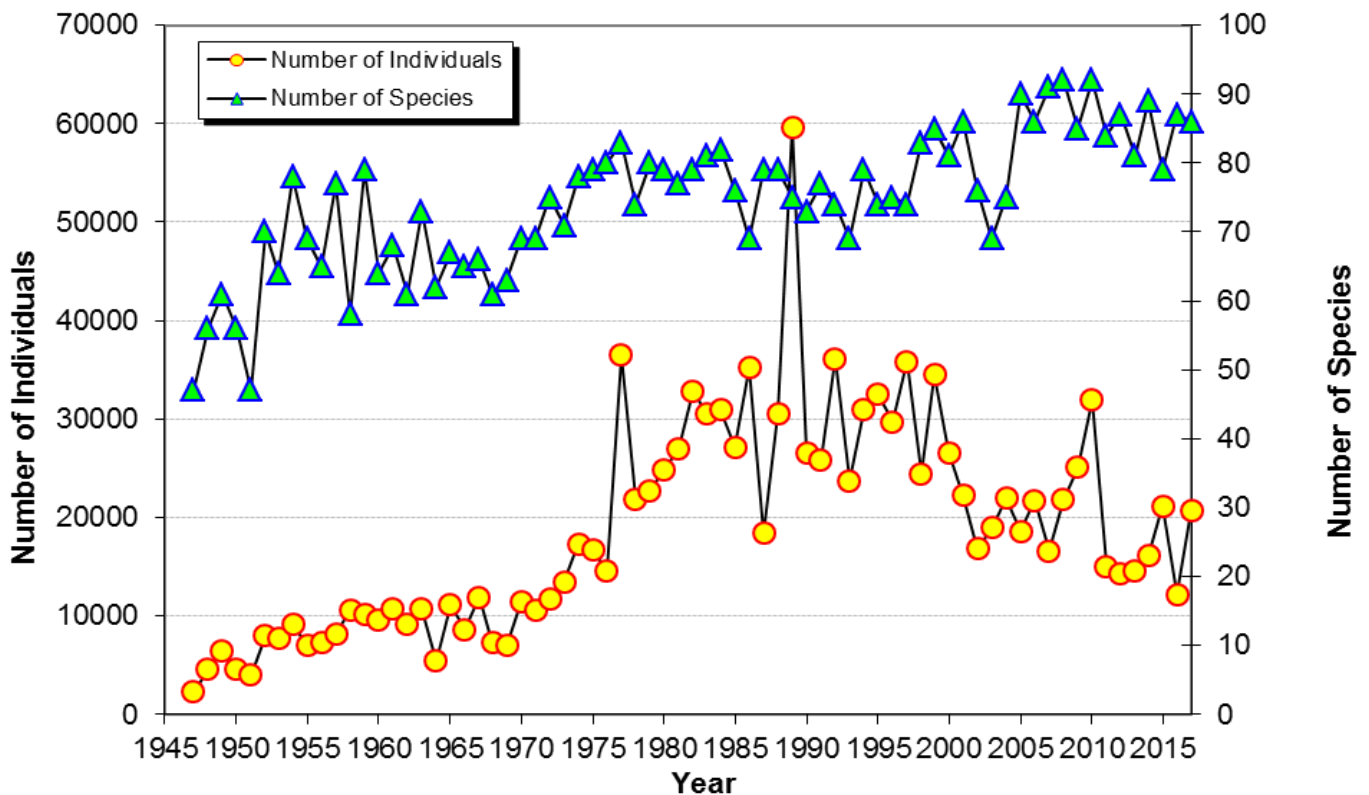


Figure 2. Number of species and individuals by year reported for Rockland Audubon CBC.



**Photo 1.** Adult female Pileated Woodpecker photographed at Beaver Pond Campground, Harriman State Park during Count Week. The number of Pileated Woodpeckers seen during this year, 15, breaks the old High Count record by five. (Photo by Alan Wells).

# ROCKLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, 2017

Common Name	Total	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	Years Seen	Previous High Count	New High ?	Current Year Rank
Snow Goose	124	24	100									21	21	Yes	23
Canada Goose	4206	1009	406	36	89	328	145	663	455	934	141	54	4401		2
Mute Swan	65	2						51	9	3		67	137		32
Gadwall	34							4	30			41	189		38
American Black Duck	57	19						10		28		71	493		33
Mallard	693	223	1	27		202	29	14	90	76	31	70	2782		8
Northern Shoveler	4								2	2		37	133		64
Canvasback	83									83		65	4203		30
Redhead	5							5				18	10		61
Ring-necked Duck	24								24			41	60		43
Scaup spp.	8									3	5	51	315		59
Bufflehead	106	16				8		2	4	61	15	60	138		25
Common Goldeneye	3										3	61	155		67
Hooded Merganser	103	6				6	15	8	28	35	5	41	147		27
Common Merganser	1208	1				95	135	135	809	33		70	5700		3
Ruddy Duck	486									486		64	761		12
Wild Turkey	67		20		12	1	10	5		19		25	86		31
Double-crested	3	3										35	40		67
Great Cormorant	2	1									1	23	8		74
Great Blue Heron	26	2			1	1	1	7	10	3	1	46	53		41
Black Vulture	91	68	13			1	1		1	6	1	16	122		29
Turkey Vulture	51	12	6	15		5			3	10		31	105		34
Bald Eagle	20	3					4	3	1	6	3	40	44		45
Northern Harrier	4							2		2		40	5		64
Sharp-shinned Hawk	3		1					2				45	11		67
Cooper's Hawk	5		2		2					1		36	10		61
Red-tailed Hawk	43	8	5	1	1	7	4	3	4	6	4	65	68		37
Merlin	2	1								1		11	2		74
Peregrine Falcon	2	1									1	21	5		74
American Coot	31							19	12			64	304		40
Killdeer	1									1		36	10		81
Ring-billed Gull	1184	268	66			143	168	42	215	270	12	69	8922		5
Herring Gull	17	7				6			4			71	5636		49
Great Black-backed Gull	19	15								2	2	71	458		46
Rock Pigeon	367	16	36			138	35	99	40		3	41	1027		15
Mourning Dove	453	38	140	9	34	14	51	38	24	102	3	70	750		13
Eastern Screech-Owl	15					1		3		11		55	22		52
Great Horned Owl	2									2		42	11		74
Barred Owl	1									1		22	4		81
Belted Kingfisher	11		1	1		1	1	3	2	1	1	68	20		57
Red-bellied Woodpecker	124	15	15	6	7	8	22	14	3	23	11	47	118	Yes	23
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	13	3	3		1		2	3		1		38	8	Yes	55
Downy Woodpecker	105	20	10		11	8	5	7	3	30	11	71	187		26
Hairy Woodpecker	32	1	7	1	1	2	3	1		12	4	71	58		39
Northern Flicker	26	2	3	3	2	2	1	2	1	8	2	69	34		41
Pileated Woodpecker	15	2	2		1	2				3	5	61	10	Yes	52
Blue Jay	508	70	95	45	18	33	54	45	16	115	17	71	502	Yes	11
American Crow	411	75	119	21	4	52	31	10	21	57	21	71	38520		14
Fish Crow	17	2	7			3		1		2	2	43	86		49
Common Raven	19		3		1	2			3	4	6	20	16	Yes	46
Horned Lark	5	5										14	56		61
Black-capped Chickadee	126	12	26	1	5	9	13	6	11	36	7	71	579		21
Tufted Titmouse	133	17	19	8	12	5	11	21	1	29	10	71	292		20
White-breasted Nuthatch	125	21	24	10	8	3	11	10	1	18	19	71	150		22
Brown Creeper	3				1		1			1		69	26		67
Carolina Wren	51	3	9	1	2	2	4	2		14	14	62	59		34
Winter Wren	4		2		1					1		66	12		64
Golden-crowned Kinglet	24	2	6		5					7	4	65	41		43
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	6	1						5				53	17		60
Eastern Bluebird	10		2		4					2	2	33	135		58

## ROCKLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, 2017

Common Name	Total	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	Years Seen	Previous High Count	New High ?	Current Year Rank
Hermit Thrush	2		1							1		48	14		74
American Robin	261	36	100	2	6	6	6	30		72	3	70	3702		17
Gray Catbird	3			1	1					1		59	11		67
Northern Mockingbird	51	18	4			4	1	5	2	14	3	66	170		34
Brown Thrasher	1		1									16	3		81
European Starling	4253	821	284	106	167	190	345	174	17	2077	72	71	13665		1
American Pipit	2									2		12	32		74
Cedar Waxwing	1									1		60	415		81
Yellow-rumped Warbler	15									15		54	280		52
Eastern Towhee	2		2									50	23		74
American Tree Sparrow	17		5							12		71	762		49
Field Sparrow	3		2							1		57	75		67
Fox Sparrow	3						1			2		61	32		67
Song Sparrow	311	40	131	1	7	5	3	4	1	108	11	71	322		16
Swamp Sparrow	13		12							1		62	38		55
White-throated Sparrow	522	72	85	30	15	26	19	35	5	184	51	71	587		10
Dark-eyed Junco	773	128	157	35	34	47	38	124	5	159	46	71	1224		7
Snow Bunting	1									1		13	46		81
Northern Cardinal	158	17	29	8	10	7	18	16	6	30	17	71	339		19
Red-winged Blackbird	570		2				1			567		71	4230		9
Rusty Blackbird	18		6							12		27	121		48
Common Grackle	1203	18	6		150		1			1028		62	8817		4
Brown-headed Cowbird	1									1		51	431		81
House Finch	100	10	20		7	5	11		17	30		56	333		28
American Goldfinch	207	18	34	2	3	44		13		53	40	71	486		18
House Sparrow	834	58	86	55	21	136	83	286	14	59	36	71	1293		6
<b>TOTAL COUNT</b>	<b>20711</b>	<b>3230</b>	<b>2116</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>644</b>	<b>1558</b>	<b>1284</b>	<b>1932</b>	<b>1894</b>	<b>6982</b>	<b>646</b>				
<b>TOTAL SPECIES</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>41</b>				

**Districts:** 01 Haverstraw and Stony Point; 02 North Ramapo; 03 South Ramapo; 04 North and West Clarkstown; 05 Central Clarkstown; 06 South Clarkstown; 07 West Orangetown; 08 East Clarkstown; 09 East Orangetown; 10 Westchester

For those that attended the Countdown Dinner, here are the answers to the Quiz.

American Black Duck	Coastal Shadow Mallard
American Wigeon	The Happy Whistler
Black Scoter	The Easy Scoter
Blue-winged Teal	Crescent-faced Teal
Brant	The Marine Goose
Bufflehead	Duckling in Black and White
Cackling Goose	Toy Canada Goose
Common Merganser	Freshwater Merganser
Gadwall	The Dapper Gray Dabbler
Greater Scaup	Coastal Scaup with a Green Gloss
Greater White-fronted Goose	The Laughing Goose
Green-winged Teal	Small, Dark, and Restless
Hooded Merganser	A Dark Dart with Wings that Sizzle
Mallard	The Ubiquitous, Archetypal Duck
Northern Shoveler	The Headless Duck
Redhead	False Canvasback
Ring-necked Duck	The Ring-billed! Duck
Ruddy Duck	Clearly the Bathtub Duck
Surf Scoter	The Skunkhead
Wood Duck	Swamp Squealer

Tie Breakers:

American Coot	Blackened Teapot with a White Spout
American Woodcock	Meatloaf on a Stick
Brown Thrasher	Eastern Roadrunner

Quiz based on P. Dunne (2006) Essential Field Guide Companion.

There was a tie for first place between Carol Weiss and Tom Fuller both with 13 out of 20 correct answers. Tom correctly answered one of the tie breakers and was awarded first prize.