

ROCKLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY

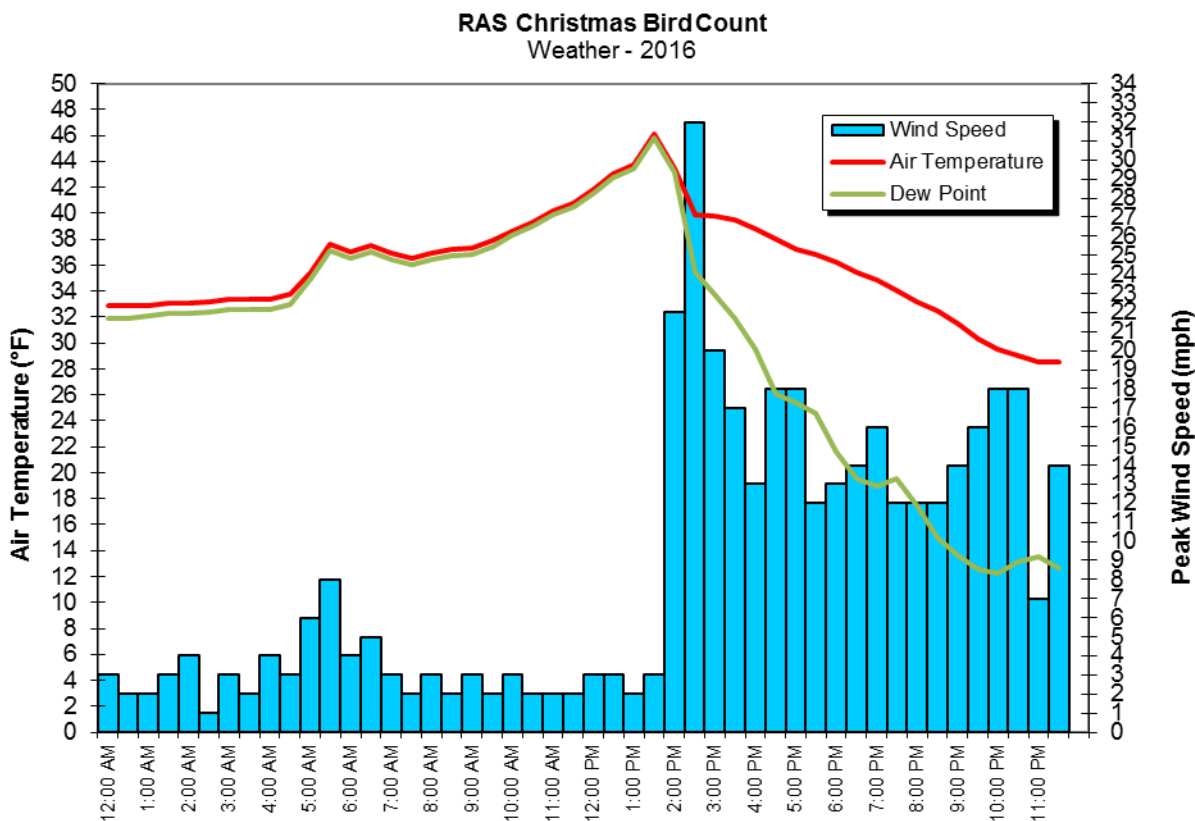
70th Christmas Bird Count Summary

Date: 12/18/2016

Thanks to all our field and feeder counters!

Weather: Weather conditions were less than ideal for the RAS 70th annual CBC. Heavy fog, drizzle, and rain dogged the counters all morning. Then at 2:00 PM a cold front roared through and within minutes the winds increased from the morning's high wind speeds of 2-4 mph to 20-30 mph, with occasional gusts even higher. During this time the high wind speed direction swung slightly from WSW (257°) to NW (306°). Air temperatures dropped rapidly from around 46°F to 40°F within an hour and then continued to decline, reaching approximately 28°F by the end of the day. Dew point temperatures dropped from 45.8°F to 35.5°F within an hour, almost instantly clearing the fog. Ominous cloud formations hung low over the Hudson River (**Figure 1**).

Overall, daily average temperatures ranged from 29 to 46 °F with Dew Point temperatures ranging from approximately 12 to 46°F. Peak wind gusts ranged from approximately 1 to 32 mph. The Hudson River and most of the smaller rivers were ice free, but standing water lakes and ponds were mostly to completely ice covered. The ground was mostly covered with 2-4 inches of snow from a storm several days prior.



Field Observers (36 field counters + 1 nestling):

District 1: Alan Wells, John Tyler, Della Wells, Tom Cunningham

District 2: Simon Streatfeild, Tom Fuller, Elyse Fuller, nestling Phoebe Fuller (mostly slept during her 1st CBC)

District 3: No Counters

District 4: Nancy Slowik, Karen Nickeson,

District 5: Peter Johnson, Zenon Bachir, Karen D'Alessandri, Susan Freiman

District 6: Stephanie Garber, Michael Garber, Veronika Krause, Walter Aurell, Suzanne Barclay, Anita Gossett, Ronnie Smith

District 7: Carol Weiss, Ken McNichol, Bernie Doyle

District 8: Jim Previdi, Gene Brown, Ron Conzo

District 9: Vince Plogar, Tom Dow, Elda Dow, Chris Healy, Karl Knocklein, Drew Ciganek, Matt Ceplo

District 10*: Elijah Goodwin, Anne Swaim, Debbie Van Zyl

* Over the past several years I have had requests from people in Westchester County to participate in the RAS CBC. Our 15 mile diameter count circle (NYRC) actually extends across the Hudson River for a short distance into Westchester County, but for reasons unclear (aside from the obvious reluctance of RAS folks to the long drive and bridge crossing to get there), RAS has never included this Westchester piece. Consequently, the area covered by our count has fallen short of the expected 176.7 Sq. Miles. After conversations with the National Audubon CBC Administrator, we have agreed to slowly start expanding our coverage to include previously uncounted areas within the NYRC circle. The ultimate goal is to cover the full count circle as far as participation and lack of circle overlap with other CBCs will allow.

Feeder Counters (7 Locations): Frank Bonanno, Karen D'Alessandri, Caroline McDonald, Laurence Pringle, Nancy Slowik, Donna Nye, and Carol Weiss.

Coverage: Daytime birding recording 425 miles traveled by car, 55 miles traveled by foot; 60 hrs on foot and 27 hrs by car. An additional 4.5 miles (1 hr) by foot and 16 miles (1 hr) by car were spent on nighttime birding (owling).

Results: Rockland Audubon Society conducted its 70th annual Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, December 18, 2016. Thirty-six individuals (plus 9 month old Phoebe Fuller) participated in the field count, tallying 11,820 birds of 87 different species. Seven feeder counters added 333 birds of 26 species. Combining both field and feeder counts, 12,153 individuals representing 87 species were tallied. Three additional species—Hermit Thrush (reported by Beverly Simone), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (reported by Laurence Pringle) and Baltimore Oriole (new to Count, see below)--were observed during Count Week, bringing the total number of species to 90.

New maximum count numbers were established for Wild Turkey (86 vs 83 in 1999) and Horned Lark (56 vs 40 in 2007).

Overall, the number of species recorded was among the highest reported for the Rockland count. The number of species ranks in the 87th percentile since 1947 and the 85th percentile since 1978. The number of species was the sixth highest species count for both periods. The number of individuals, however, ranks as one of the lowest counts. For the 1947-2016 period the count ranked only in the 31st percentile. When compared to our more modern count period (1978-2014), the numbers of species was the lowest recorded in the past 39 years. One possible explanation for the low count is the absence of District 3 counters this year. This loss however was likely offset by the first time inclusion of Westchester County (District 10). In 2015, District 3 reported a count of 391 individuals. This is very similar to the 435 individuals reported by District 10 in 2016. A more likely explanation for the low count lies with the weather. The heavy fog during the 70th count hampered the ability of counters to detect birds while the drizzle and rain likely minimized movement of birds.

The top five species (in order) for the 2016 count—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:

Evening Grosbeak – This species was relatively common on RAS CBC counts from 1954 through 1983. Since then, there has been only a single individual seen in 1986. Tom Dow, a veteran CBC participant, provides the following description of the 2016 encounter. *“We were leaving Bluefields, I was near the top of the old paved road which goes in from 303; Chris was a hundred yards away checking another area. About 9:30am. I heard the birds calling loudly & repeatedly from the slope to the west, already suspected what they were from the calls, went a short distance & spotted them high up in two trees about 100 feet apart, hardly had time to get the binos on one (a male) when they both flew off towards the center of Bluefields. I corralled Chris & we set off in that direction (where we had just been) but no sign of them & we gave up after a short time.”*

Baltimore Oriole – New to RAS CBC. Two sighted at Tom Dow’s feeder (District 9) during Count Week. Tom provided the sightings as “an immature female which first appeared on Dec. 11, and revisited a few times, and an adult male, first visited on Dec. 15 and every day thereafter until Sunday (**Figure 2**). Both orioles were here in the snowstorm Saturday morning, then vanished. Enclosed is a picture of the male oriole bickering with a cardinal in the snow (**Figure 3**).” Tom later reported (on 12/26/2016): “The young Oriole returned yesterday, after a week’s absence. Assuming it’s the same bird!” (**Figure 4**). It should be noted that other areas of Southern New York have reported Baltimore Orioles this year.

Merlin – One sighted on Count Day in District 6 and one in District 1 (**Figure 5**) during Count Week. Merlin have not been recorded on the Rockland CBC prior to 1992. Since that year, single sightings have occurred in only eight years; a double Count Day sighting has only occurred once (2008).

Misses

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

Yellow-rumped Warbler – seen in 53 previous years. Abundant until about 1962, then becoming less common and more sporadic in occurrence.

Field Sparrow – seen in 56 previous years. Moderately common until mid-1990s, then becoming more sporadic and declining thereafter.

Purple Finch – seen in 60 previous years. An irruptive species, but generally at least a few most nearly every year. Somewhat surprising that none were found as the fall migration seemed to produce unusually high numbers.

Ruffed Grouse and **Ring-necked Pheasant** were again missed this year. Both have been seen in 40 past years, but are now possibly extirpated from the county. Ruffed Grouse have not been counted since 2001 and Pheasant since 1995.

RAS Christmas Bird Count

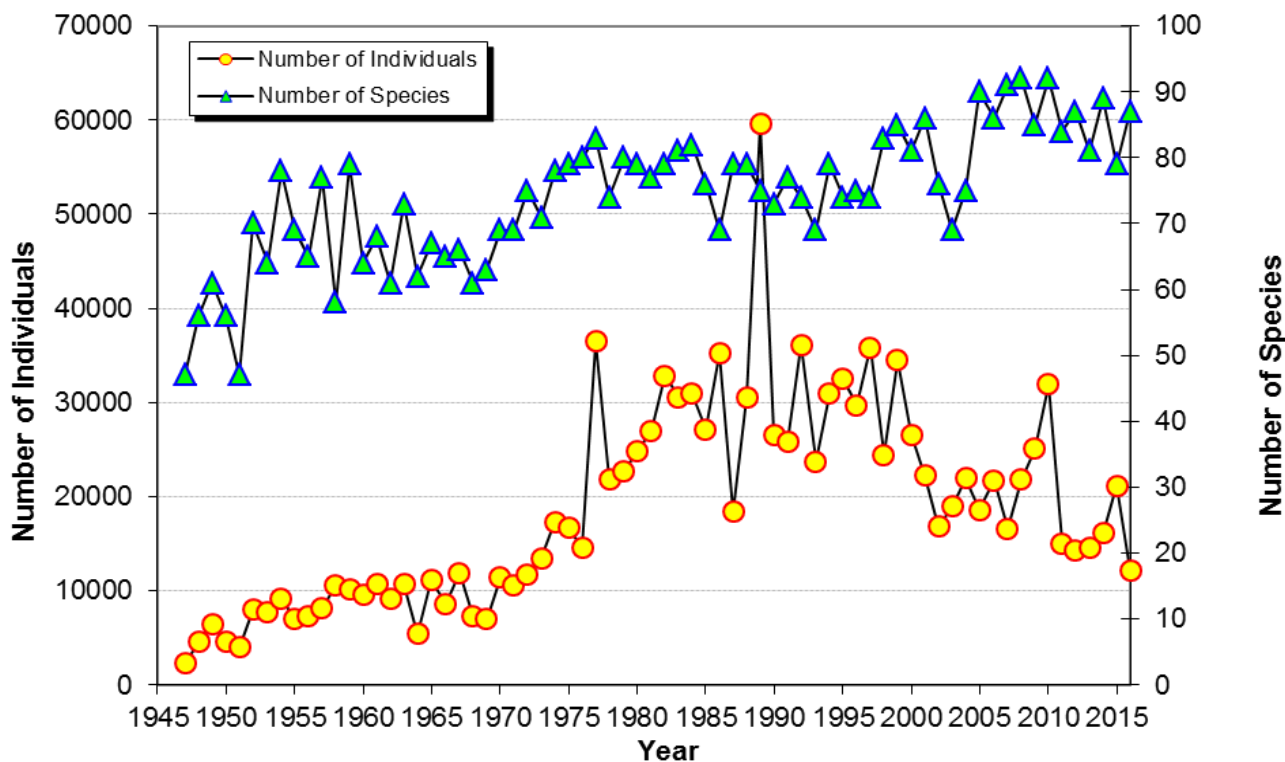




Photo 1. Cloud formations over Hudson River at 1:50 PM, just as cold front passes through. (Photo: Alan W. Wells)



Photo 2. Count Week Adult male Baltimore Oriole photographed at the feeder of Tom Dow in Grandview. It was one of a least two Baltimore Orioles making an appearance at this feeder. Both were regular guests up until Count Day. (Photo courtesy of Tom Dow).



Photo 3. Count Week immature female Baltimore Oriole photographed at the feeder of Tom Dow. It was one of at least two Baltimore Orioles making an appearance at this feeder. Both were regular guests up until Count Day. (Photo courtesy of Tom Dow).



Photo 4. An immature Baltimore Oriole photographed at the feeder of Tom Dow on December 25, 2016 (after Count Week). Was it the immature that was the regular visitor prior to Count Day or a new bird? (Photo courtesy of Tom Dow).



Photo 5. Merlin seen on December 16, 2016 (Count Week) at Bowline Pond (District 1). We were unable to relocate it on Count Day (Photo: Alan W. Wells).



Photo 6. Dark-eyed Junco seen on 12/16/2016 (Count Week) at Haverstraw Marina (District 1). Juncos were the fourth most abundant species seen on Count Day, common in all Districts. (Photo: Alan W. Wells).



Photo 7 Great Cormorant seen on December 18, 2016 (Count Day at Bowline Pond (District 1) (Photo: Alan W. Wells).



Photo 8. Scaup sp., probably Lesser Scaup, seen at Secor Pond, along Willow Grove Rd., Stony Point, NY, (District 1) on December 16, 18, and 21 (Count Day and Count Week). (Photo: Alan W. Wells).



Photo 9. Trio of mallards at Secor Pond, along Willow Grove Rd., Stony Point, NY, (District 1). Numerous mallards were seen at the location both during Count Week and Count Day. (Photo: Alan W. Wells).

ROCKLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, 2016

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	1									1		20	21		82
Canada Goose	2112	865	131		113	1	87	271	436	193	15	53	4401		2
Mute Swan	43							30	13			66	137		34
Wood Duck	13	1					6		5		1	36	42		51
Gadwall	27							10	9	8		40	189		40
American Wigeon	1									1		24	116		82
American Black Duck	58	25					2	3		25	3	70	493		29
Mallard	568	217	16			2	8	44	137	114	30	69	2782		6
Black Duck x Mallard Hybrid	1	1										7	2		82
Northern Shoveler	67	2							65			36	133		25
Canvasback	8									8		64	4203		55
Redhead	3								2	1		17	10		69
Ring-necked Duck	5	5										40	60		62
Scaup spp.	61	1								60		50	315		28
Bufflehead	65								13	38	14	59	138		26
Common Goldeneye	16									15	1	60	155		46
Hooded Merganser	64	7					12		40	4	1	40	147		27
Common Merganser	354	19				71	6	86	97	75		69	5700		8
Ruddy Duck	221								1	220		63	761		12
Wild Turkey	86	14	39					17		16		24	83	Yes	19
Horned Grebe	1										1	19	8		82
Double-crested Cormorant	4	1								3		34	40		66
Great Cormorant	1	1										22	8		82
Great Blue Heron	17	3	1				4	5	2	2		45	53		44
Black Vulture	55	24	5						26			15	122		31
Turkey Vulture	37	5	11		1	6	4	2	2	4	2	30	105		36
Bald Eagle	13	4				2		1	1	5		39	44		51
Northern Harrier	2									2		39	5		74
Sharp-shinned Hawk	4	1					1		1	1		44	11		66
Cooper's Hawk	5		1		1	1			1	1		35	10		62
Red-tailed Hawk	24	3	5			1	1	5	1	4	4	64	68		41
Merlin	1						1					10	2		82
Peregrine Falcon	5	1							2	1	1	20	5		62
American Coot	7	1							6			63	304		57
Killdeer	3									3		35	10		69
Ring-billed Gull	1081	411	7		9	81	15	65	354	128	11	68	8922		3
Herring Gull	22	12						4	1	1	4	70	5636		42
Great Black-backed Gull	20	6							6	8		70	458		43
Rock Pigeon	99	27	6		3	3	5		35	20		40	1027		18
Mourning Dove	259	5	14		37	10	21	62	22	73	15	69	750		10
Eastern Screech-Owl	14	1	1			5				7		54	22		48
Great Horned Owl	6	3				1				2		41	11		60
Barred Owl	2				1					1		21	4		74
Belted Kingfisher	7	1	1				1	2		1	1	67	20		57
Red-bellied Woodpecker	80	8	10		2	3	1	13	8	27	8	46	118		20
Downy Woodpecker	73	15	8		2	2	5	6	6	16	13	70	187		23
Hairy Woodpecker	14		2				1	2		5	4	70	58		48
Northern Flicker	17	2	4		1	1		4	1	3	1	68	34		44
Pileated Woodpecker	2					1					1	60	10		74
Blue Jay	353	15	60		17	46	48	34	21	91	21	70	502		9
American Crow	204	28	54		10	30	35	8	13	13	13	70	38520		13
Fish Crow	14							3		3	8	42	86		48
Common Raven	8		2						3	2	1	19	16		55
Horned Lark	56		18							38		13	40	Yes	30
Black-capped Chickadee	145	23	14		3	7	12	8	16	36	26	70	579		15
Tufted Titmouse	130	5	24		5	3	8	12	29	20	24	70	292		16
Red-breasted Nuthatch	7	1	2						4			47	17		60
White-breasted Nuthatch	77	10	11		5	5	7	5	7	10	17	70	150		22
Brown Creeper	2									2		68	26		74
Carolina Wren	35	8	3				3	3	3	8	7	61	59		37
Winter Wren	2	2										65	12		74
Golden-crowned Kinglet	9		1							7	1	64	41		53
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	4								2	2		52	17		66
Eastern Bluebird	3								3			32	135		69
American Robin	444	1	27		11	7	25	76		285	12	69	3702		7
Gray Catbird	3				1					1	1	58	11		69
Northern Mockingbird	39	12	4		1		5	5	3	5	4	65	170		35

ROCKLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, 2016

Common Name	Total	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	Years Seen	Previous High Count	New High ?	Current Year Rank
European Starling	2580	233	175		230	175	108	148	91	1377	43	70	13665		1
Cedar Waxwing	9						3			6		59	415		53
Eastern Towhee	2									1	1	49	23		74
American Tree Sparrow	30	3	3							20	4	70	762		38
Savannah Sparrow	5	2			3							32	50		62
Fox Sparrow	7		1					2		3	1	60	32		57
Song Sparrow	169	23	38		3		1	4	12	73	15	70	322		14
Swamp Sparrow	3									3		61	38		69
White-throated Sparrow	245	40	25		7	1	8	16	11	95	42	70	587		11
Dark-eyed Junco	779	64	180		36	34	35	164	61	179	26	70	1224		4
Snow Bunting	28	28										12	46		39
Northern Cardinal	131	24	27		6	7	4	11	10	25	17	70	339		17
Red-winged Blackbird	45		3						20	22		70	4230		33
Rusty Blackbird	2		1				1					26	121		74
Common Grackle	51		5			15			30	1		61	8817		32
Brown-headed Cowbird	15								12	3		50	431		47
House Finch	79	2	12		3	3		11	11	37		55	333		21
American Goldfinch	68	10	6		21			3	1	18	9	70	486		24
Evening Grosbeak	2									2		23	549		74
House Sparrow	719	121	64		51	7	159	224	46	36	11	70	1293		5
TOTAL COUNT	12153	2347	1022	0	583	531	643	1369	1702	3521	435				
TOTAL SPECIES	87	53	42	0	27	29	34	37	50	70	42				

Districts: 01 Haverstraw and Stony Point; 02 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