

2016 East Lansing Christmas Bird Count results

by Tom Wheeker, CBC Coordinator

On December 17, 2016, the Capital Area Audubon Society conducted its 71st East Lansing Christmas Bird Count. Conditions were quite different from last year, which featured no precipitation and no snow cover. This year several inches of snow fell on the night of the count to add to an existing snow cover. The weather bureau claimed that the snow depth was seven inches, but it was clearly more in some areas. Roads were snow-covered and treacherous. There was no significant precipitation during the count itself, but visibility in the morning was not good. Still water was frozen, but most moving water was open.

Forty-six stalwart birders were in the field on a very challenging day. There were two additional feeder watchers who contributed their sightings. There were 57 species discovered, slightly below our ten-year average of 59 species. However, there were 20,299 birds counted, which was well above our ten-year average of 16,235. The 6800 Canada geese counted, which was our second highest total ever, accounted for pretty much all of the difference between the average total and this year's total.

Unquestionably the bird of the count was the ovenbird discovered by **Clara Bratton, Jennifer Good, and Kristy Tealer**. Not surprisingly, that was the first record of that species on the East Lansing CBC. Other notable birds included a gray catbird found by **Steve Roels** and two ruddy ducks found by **Barb Hosler, Lise Schools and Ed Schools**. Those were only the fourth occurrence of those two species on this count.

Two new high counts were established: pileated woodpecker and ruddy duck. On the other hand, the total cedar waxwings was the lowest in at least 35 years. I guess the fruit crop was better elsewhere this year.

Finally, one species noted on the Count was eliminated from the totals. The sighting was not confirmed on eBird, which means that it would not be confirmed in the Christmas Count review process either. eBird has slowly been creeping into the Christmas Count process and I would expect its presence will only increase as the years go on.

Thanks to all of the participants. And special thanks to Lee and Roger Laylin for once again hosting the compilation dinner. This was the Laylins' final time hosting the dinner after more than 40 years.

The next E.L. Christmas Bird Count will be held on December 16, 2017.

Photo DickDaniels, Wikimedia Commons



East Lansing CBC species list

6800u	Canada Goose (3240/3084)
2u	Wood Duck (1/irreg)
7u	American Black Duck (5/7)
1074d	Mallard (1406/1176)
31u	Ring-necked Duck (irreg/irreg)
4d	Hooded Merganser (31/17)
6u	Common Merganser (4/5)
2uR	Ruddy Duck (irreg/irreg)
198u	Wild Turkey (57/81)
4u	Great Blue Heron (1/3)
3u	Sharp-shinned Hawk (2/2)
14u	Cooper's Hawk (9/11)
1s	Accipiter species
3d	Bald Eagle (2/irreg)
39u	Red-tailed Hawk (25/29)
2u	Rough-legged Hawk (1/1)
1u	Buteo species
989u	Rock Pigeon (924/836)
434u	Mourning Dove 196/280)
3s	Eastern Screech Owl (4/4)
1u	Great Horned Owl (1/1)
4u	Belted Kingfisher (3/3)
84u	Red-bellied Woodpecker (73/70)
159u	Downy Woodpecker (128/130)
34u	Hairy Woodpecker (19/20)
3u	Northern Flicker (16/13)
10uR	Pileated Woodpecker (4/3)
3s	American Kestrel 4/4)
2s	Peregrine Falcon (1/2)
1u	Northern Shrike (irreg/irreg)
263u	Blue Jay (228/235)
4846u	American Crow (4565/3747)
651u	Black-capped Chickadee (466/539)
111u	Tufted Titmouse (66/83)
8u	Red-breasted Nuthatch (10/12)
179u	White-breasted Nuthatch (140/135)
12d	Brown Creeper (13/17)
1u	Winter Wren (1/irreg)
7u	Carolina Wren (9/8)
2s	Golden-crowned Kinglet (8/6)
107u	Eastern Bluebird (60/57)
2u	Hermit Thrush (1/1)
66d	American Robin (75/56)
1u	Gray Catbird (irreg/irreg)
1554u	European Starling (1824/2060)
97d	Cedar Waxwing (276/385)
52u	Snow Bunting (irreg/136)
1u	Ovenbird (----/-----)
214d	American Tree Sparrow (158/170)
1d	Fox Sparrow (irreg/irreg)
424u	Dark-eyed Junco (387/389)
13d	White-throated Sparrow (18/12)
8d	Song Sparrow (8/8)
411u	Northern Cardinal (339/381)
2u	Common Grackle (irreg/irreg)
173d	House Finch (215/236)
1d	Pine Siskin (14/18)
368u	American Goldfinch (389/395)
775d	House Sparrow (741/957)

(**KEY:** The number in front of the species name is the 2016 total. **R**=record total. **T**=tied old record. **u**=up from 2015. **d**=down from 2015. **s**=same as 2015. **Irreg**=not seen in at least 3 of the last 5 years or 6 of the last 10 years. ----- = not seen in the five- or ten-year period. Following the species name is the average for the species for the preceding 5 and 10 years, respectively.

SEEN IN 2016 BUT NOT IN 2015: Ruddy Duck, Rough-legged Hawk, Great Horned Owl, Northern Shrike, Gray Catbird, Ovenbird, Common Grackle

SEEN IN 2015 BUT NOT IN 2016: Mute Swan, Northern Shoveler, Bufflehead, Horned Grebe, Sandhill Crane, American Coot, Bonaparte's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Red-headed Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Merlin, Horned Lark, Eastern Towhee*, Purple Finch

* one reported in 2016 but not confirmed on eBird; not included in official results