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## 1981 Christmas Count

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## 1981 CHRISTMAS COUNT

Eighty-eight species (fourteen less than last year) were reported in the 1981 Christmas Count, and one species (two less than last year) was reported present during the count week but not recorded on the count day on any count. Seven localities reported this year, the same as last year, but Grand Island and Tri-state replaced Kearney and Hastings. Two additional races were reported, the same as last year. The individual count this year was 64,054, compared to 317,910 last year. The drop in the Snow Goose (178,719) and Mallard(81,291) counts more than accounts for the difference. Nineteen species were reported on all of the counts, compared to twelve last year.

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The columns are arranged in an approximate west (left) to east (right) order, with the northernmost of those of about equal longitude given first. The symbol "H" is used to indicate a species present during the count week but not recorded on the count day. Figures which were underlined in the report, or which were marked "high", are underlined; those which were marked "low" are overlined.

DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge, 20 December, the count circle centered on the Refuge headquarters building, west to Blair and east to Missouri Valley, Iowa, including all of the Refuge, Wilson Island, and Fort Calhoun; elevation 992 to 1375 ft.; habitat coverage: cultivated fields 40%, woodland 40%, water areas 15%, residential 5%; 5:15 AM to 5:00 PM; AM mostly clear, PM partly cloudy; 8° to 28°F; wind south 5 to 15 mph; snow cover .5 to 4 in.; water mostly frozen; wild food crop fair. Fifteen observers in 5 parties, none at feeders; total party hours 49 (16 on foot, 33

by car), 4.5 owl; total party miles 360.5 (16.5 on foot, 344 by car). Tanya Bray, James Conway, Ruth Godenour, Ruth Green, Thomas Hoffman, Jim and Sandy Kovanda, Dave Menke (compiler), Steve Moorman, Neal Ratzlaff, B.J. and Sharon Rose, Rick Sojda, Barbara Wilson, Rick Wright.

Grand Island, 19 December; elevation around 1860 ft.; 7:50 AM to 4:30 PM; AM 100% cloud cover, light snow flurries, PM sunny; 9° to 12° F.; wind south 5 to 10 mph; 100% snow cover; 10% open water; medium mast crop. Eight observers in 4 parties, plus one at feeder; total party hours 22; total party miles 188.75 (2.75 on foot, 186 by car). Vera Coons, Paul Currier, Dennis Grundman, Gary Lingle (compiler), Gene and June Miller, Helen Seim, Lona Shafer, Bee Mellin.

Lincoln, 20 December, the count circle centered on South Codington and A, to include Pioneers Park, about 8 miles of Wilderness Park, Lagoon Park, Yankee Lake and Conestoga Lake areas, eastern half of Pawnee Lake, and Wyuka Cemetery; elevation 1,000 to 1,300 ft.;

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habitat coverage deciduous creek bottoms 40%, rural farmland 25%, coniferous woods 15%, residential and cemeteries 10%, lakes 5%, city landfill 5%; 12:15 AM to 5:30 PM; AM partly sunny, PM cloudy; 0° to 36°F; wind SSW 15 to 40 mph; blowing and drifting snow; lakes 100% frozen, creeks and streams partly open, Salt Creek below Lincoln 100% open; wild food crop good. Twenty-one observers in 9 parties; total party hours 73 (46 on foot, 27 by car), plus 6 hours feeder watching and 8 hours owling; total party miles 459 (48 on foot, 411 by car). Irene Alexander, Cindy and David Cochran, Daryl and Margaret Giblin, Everett and Mildred Gross, David, Ellen, and Ralph (compiler) Harrington, Raymond Heitman, Craig Herzinger, Mike and Robert Manning, Pete Maslowski, Lee Morris, John and Mabel Ott, Frances Taylor, Angie and Donald Williams.

Mr. Harrington commented: Considering the weather I thought this to be a most successful count despite the fact that fewer species were seen than in previous years. Strong winds and

blowing snow seemed to cause birds to assemble in large flocks, driving Horned Larks, Longspurs, and Snow Buntings from open fields to gravel roads, where they were easily observed. In a protected section of Wilderness Park there were more birds bunched up in two separate pockets than I had ever seen before. Large numbers of Chickadees, Nuthatches, Woodpeckers, Cardinals, finches, Harris', Song, and Tree Sparrows, Brown Creepers, and others. Nothing unusual, but many of them. However, the Titmice seemed to be lacking — I haven't found any in this area in recent years. It is my opinion that Starlings, House Sparrows, and House Wrens are driving them and Eastern Bluebirds from their natural nesting sites.

Several good views of a Swainson's Hawk, both perched and soaring, were presented to Dave and Cindy Cochran in Wilderness Park. They were able to see the reddish-brown streaks on the breast and the tail banding. Cochrans are long-time, experienced birders. The only shrike on the count, a Northern, was seen by the Giblins. The two Townsend's Solitaires, also seen by

the Goblins, were found in a cedar grove southwest of Lincoln. Lee Morris and I saw these same Solitaires last Saturday. The two Snow Buntings were seen at close range with a flock of Horned Larks on a gravelled road in open country by Lee, Ellen, David, and me.

Most parties found birding poor and adverse weather conditions limited the time spent on foot. One party got stuck and had to be pulled out, as dangerous driving conditions were experienced by all of us.

North Platte, 2 January, the count circle centered on Bicentennial and Philip streets; elevation around 2,810 ft.; 8 AM to 5:30 PM; AM cloudy and snow, PM clear; 18° to 28°F; Twelve observers in 4 parties; total miles 311 (3 on foot, 308 by car). Marie and Harold Cunningham, Dorothy Danzler, Erma Grill, Eva Kieborz, Edith McIntosh, Pat McEvoy, Margaret Morton, Esther Newhouse, Carol and Bert Somerhalder, Howard and Wilma (compiler) Wyman.

Omaha, 19 December, the count circle centered on Offutt AFB Lake, to include Fontenelle Forest, Lake Manawa Iowa State Park, Plattsmouth Waterfowl Refuge, and portions of the Platte and Missouri rivers; elevation 985 to 1200 ft., habitat coverage: cultivated fields 50%, woodland 20%, meadows and grassy fields 10%, roadside ditches 10%, rivers and lakes 5%, residential 2%, parks and cemeteries 3%, 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM; AM mostly clear, fog, PM partly cloudy; -10° to 12°F; wind SSE 0 to 8 mph; snow cover 0 to 4 in.; water partly open; wild food crop good. Thirty-five observers, 34 in 13 parties, 1 at feeders; total party hours 99.5 (41 on foot, 58.5 by car) plus 2 hours at feeders, 4 owl; total party miles 588 (34.5 on foot, 553.5 by car). Mike Baroni, Paul Bedell, Steve Bellinghiere, Tanya Bray, Duane Bright, James Conway, Terry Cox, James Glather, Marg Graf, Denise Graf, Ruth Green, Janet Greer, Alan Grenon, Betty Grenon, Gene Hickman, Thomas Hoffman, James Hurst, Perry and Stephanie Jamieson, Diane Jones, Petie Knisely, Jim and Sandy Kovanda, Dave Menke, Marion Meier, Neal Ratzlaff, Jean Rickter, Ken Seger, Mel Tingley, John and Marcia Upchurch, John and Marlene Weber, Melba Wigg (compiler), Rick Wright. Two groups of Field Sparrows — 2 and 5 — were observed by different observers at different locations.

Scottsbluff, 19 December, the count circle centered on the bridge over the North Platte River at S. Broadway, to include Scottsbluff and Gering; elevation 3,810 to 5,030 ft.; 7:00 AM to 4:00 PM; AM partly to mostly cloudy, PM mostly cloudy; 21° to 38°F; wind NW at 5 to 28 mph; snow cover none to trace; water partly open; wild food crop excellent. Eight observers, 7 in 3 parties, 1 at feeder; total party hours 24 (1 on foot, 23 by car) plus 6 at feeders; total party miles 219 (3 on foot, 216 by car). Mary Ann Banghart, Lydia Bolz, Joyce Brashear, Mary Harvey, David and Helen Hughson, Alice Kenitz (compiler), Anne Meyer. The Yellow-headed Blackbird was observed by Mary Ann Banghart and Lydia Bolz in a grassy field with a flock of Common Crows. The birds were on the ground and the yellow head of the Blackbird was visible.

Tri-state, 2 January, the count circle centered on Mile 556 on the Missouri River (southeast of Nebraska City), to include Nebraska City and the Missouri River bottoms and farmlands in Nebraska, Waubonsie State Park and Hamburg in Iowa, and extreme northwest Missouri, down to the Nishnabotna River; 7:30 AM to 4:45 PM; AM freezing rain and snow, PM not specified; 28° to 36°F; wind SE swinging to NW, 5 to 20 mph; snow cover mostly 4 to 6 in.; water frozen, some open streams, Missouri River open with ice floes. Paul Bedell, Tanya Bray, Charles Frisk, Ione Getscher, Jim Kovanda, Sandy Kovanda, William Otto, Rebecca Otto, Ross Silcock (compiler). The Swainson's Hawk was seen by the Ottos. He reported: We first viewed the hawk hovering over the highway. I pulled off the road, got out, and viewed it at about 75 ft. away. It then flew directly overhead, no more than 25 ft., and hovered for 2 or 3 minutes, affording excellent viewing. It then flew and disappeared behind a hill 200 feet away. The body, wings, and tail were dark gray to black. The gray tail was banded and had a black terminal band. The beak was surrounded by light (whitish) feathers that extended a short distance down his throat. I was confused by the wing coloring because the usual light under-wing coverts and dark primary pattern appeared reversed. I discovered, however, that sunlight passing through the primaries gave them a lighter appearance. Therefore, the wings were uniformly dark underneath. When the hawk did fly away I observed that its head, back, and upper tail coverts were gray. It was hazy and overcast, and the sunlight was to one side of the bird.

I eliminated Red-tail (and Harlan's) Hawks because this hawk definitely had a banded tail, it had white facial-throat feathers, and it had uniformly dark primaries and under-wing coverts. (Both Scottsbluff and Lincoln reported Swainson's, too. Ed.) Mr. Silcock commented that the weather was terrible and the roads were very icy.

	Scotts- bluff	North Platte	Grand Island	Lincoln	DeSoto	Omaha	Tri- state
Great Blue Heron	H	1	-	-	1	-	-
Canada Goose	-	682	-	15	1	4	-
White-fronted Goose	-	-	-	1	2	-	-
Snow Goose	-	-	-	-	840	41	3,000
Mallard	<u>20</u>	30	275	135	6,520	15	3,650
Black Duck	-	-	-	-	6	-	1
Gadwall	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
Green-winged Teal	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
American Wigeon	-	-	4	-	1	-	-
Wood Duck	-	-	-	-	<u>2</u>	-	-
scaup sp.	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Common Goldeneye	-	-	-	-	17	-	-
Common Merganser	-	-	-	-	9	-	-
duck sp.	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Sharp-shinned Hawk	-	-	-	-	4	1	-
accipiter sp.	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Red-tailed Hawk	2	3	10	22	43	46	<u>3</u>
Swainson's Hawk	1	-	-	1	-	-	1
Rough-legged Hawk	1	7	13	4	-	1	-
Ferruginous Hawk	<u>1</u>	5	-	-	-	-	-
buteo sp.	-	-	-	-	1	11	1
Bald Eagle	2	2	1	-	54	16	2
adults	(2)	-	(1)	-	(26)	-	(2)
immatures	-	-	-	-	(25)	-	-
undesignated	-	(2)	-	-	(3)	(16)	-
Marsh Hawk	2	5	-	2	2	-	-
Prairie Falcon	H	-	-	-	<u>1</u>	-	-
Merlin	3	-	2	-	-	-	-
American Kestrel	17	23	18	20	17	31	8
Greater Prairie Chicken	-	83	-	-	-	-	-
Sharp-tailed Grouse	-	12	-	-	-	-	-
Bobwhite	-	10	50	35	137	112	8
Ring-necked Pheasant	<u>36</u>	22	32	76	250	70	<u>3</u>
Turkey	-	-	-	-	<u>1</u>	15	5
Killdeer	3	-	-	4	-	-	-
Common Snipe	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
Rock Dove	<u>207</u>	119	265	114	78	67	144
Mourning Dove	-	-	2	165	5	6	12
Screech Owl	-	-	-	24	7	4	-
Great Horned Owl	4	-	2	13	17	11	1
Barred Owl	-	-	-	3	-	H	1
Long-eared Owl	-	-	-	14	-	-	-
Short-eared Owl	-	-	2	-	-	2	-



	Scotts- bluff	North Platte	Grand Island	Lincoln	DeSoto	Omaha	Tri- state
Belted Kingfisher	H	-	3	10	3	1	-
Common Flicker	39	39	17	38	86	78	7
Red-shafted	-	-	-	(3)	-	(1)	-
Yellow-shafted	-	-	-	(31)	-	(77)	-
undesignated	(39)	(39)	(17)	(4)	(86)	-	(7)
Red-bellied Woodpecker	-	1	1	17	34	60	13
Red-headed Woodpecker	-	-	-	9	3	19	19
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	-	-	-	3	3	3	<u>8</u>
Hairy Woodpecker	<u>2</u>	4	1	12	8	12	3
Downy Woodpecker	<u>2</u>	5	9	60	63	175	15
Horned Lark	5	182	711	2,031	595	273	81
Blue Jay	17	6	7	182	73	137	85
Black-billed Magpie	45	4	2	-	-	-	-
Common Crow	<u>292</u>	6	55	175	44	80	23
Pinon Jay	H	-	-	-	-	-	-
Black-capped Chickadee	34	11	54	236	181	426	26
Tufted Titmouse	-	-	-	-	-	27	3
White-breasted Nuthatch	1	6	10	43	12	84	12
Red-breasted Nuthatch	-	7	3	9	-	7	4
Brown Creeper	-	-	2	21	3	4	7
American Robin	46	140	43	25	234	78	19
Hermit Thrush	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Eastern Bluebird	-	6	-	-	1	21	1
Townsend Solitaire	4	6	-	2	-	-	-
Golden-crowned Kinglet	2	5	3	7	-	4	<u>13</u>
Cedar Waxwing	-	-	-	50	70	89	29
Northern Shrike	1	1	-	1	-	-	-
Loggerhead Shrike	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Starling	1,140	1,778	366	8,861	1,121	1,191	332
House Sparrow	558	607	379	2,568	1,907	2,309	1,175
Western Meadowlark	6	-	12	-	-	5	1
meadowlark sp.	-	33	-	251	37	48	1
Yellow-headed Blackbird	<u>1</u>	-	-	-	5	-	-
Red-winged Blackbird	290	16	-	10	1,312	11	<u>0</u>
Rusty Blackbird	-	-	36	-	-	6	-
Brewer's Blackbird	-	40	-	-	-	-	-
Common Grackle	3	-	11	1	1	2	2
Brown-headed Cowbird	-	-	1	-	2	1	-
blackbird sp.	-	-	-	1	5	500	-
Cardinal	-	1	10	141	81	334	28
Purple Finch	-	-	-	27	7	6	-
House Finch	41	64	4	-	-	-	-
Common Redpoll	-	2	-	-	-	-	-

	Scotts- bluff	North Platte	Grand Island	Lincoln	DeSoto	Omaha	Tri- state
Pine Siskin	38	78	15	100	-	11	-
American Goldfinch	<u>132</u>	300	30	302	51	153	<u>12</u>
Red Crossbill	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Rufous-sided Towhee	-	-	-	3	1	-	-
Dark-eyed Junco	86	66	71	495	889	2,535	361
Slate-colored	-	-	-	(484)	(888)	(2,528)	-
Oregon	(86)	-	-	(11)	(1)	(7)	-
undesignated	-	(66)	(71)	-	-	-	(361)
Tree Sparrow	179	43	229	1,379	1,300	608	<u>28</u>
Field Sparrow	-	-	5	-	-	2	-
Harris' Sparrow	-	9	93	241	79	58	71
White-crowned Sparrow	10	1	2	2	-	-	-
White-throated Sparrow	-	-	-	2	1	-	-
Fox Sparrow	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Swamp Sparrow	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Song Sparrow	1	-	3	32	32	46	12
Lapland Longspur	-	-	-	19	22	3	13
Snow Bunting	-	-	-	2	<u>12</u>	2	-
Species reported	39	44	45	56	61	55	44
Additional races reported	-	-	-	2	1	2	-
Present but not seen	4	-	-	-	-	1	-
Total individuals	3,274	4,471	2,865	18,020	16,301	9,878	9,245