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Christmas Bird Counts for North Dakota 2004

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Christmas Bird Counts were made in 21 areas in North Dakota again in the year 2004. During the year a new count site was established in Pembina County and registered with the Audubon Society but an actual count was not made in the area this year. The location of the all areas in which counts were actually made is shown in Fig. 1.

A relatively mild fall season leading up to the count period left much more open water than normal. Weather conditions during the count period varied widely with some areas reporting temperatures in the 40's and 50's °F, while one count made at the end of the count period experienced a temperature of minus 35°F. Some areas had high winds and others reported cold, blustery conditions with near blizzard conditions at the end of the day. There was very little or no snow in most counting areas.

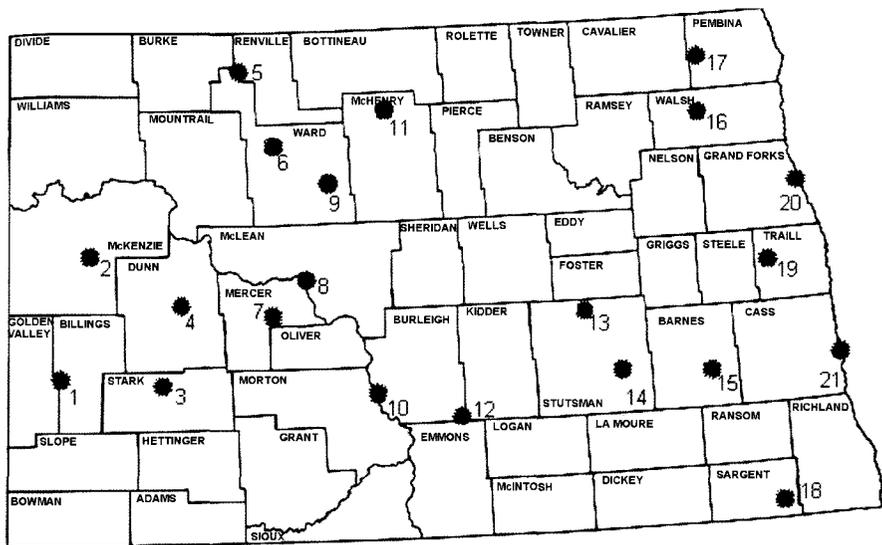
A total of 236 observers took part in the field counts and an additional 69 persons counted the birds that visited their feeders during the day. Field parties were out for 606.75 hours with 129.75 hours on foot, 3.5 hours on horseback, and 476.5 by car. The field parties covered 174.6 miles on foot, 4 miles on horseback, and 5,824.5 by car for a total of 6,003.1 miles. In addition, 12 hours and 152 miles were devoted to "owling" during the hours of darkness.

One hundred and two species and two additional races of birds were found on the 21 counts. This sets a new record for the number of birds found on Christmas Bird Counts in North Dakota. Two of these species and one race were seen only during count week. The list included three species which were new to the list. These were the trumpeter swan that was seen on the Fargo-Moorhead count, the cackling goose, which was a result of the recent splitting of the Canada goose group and was identified in three areas, and the great gray owl that was added as a count week bird at Grand Forks-East Grand Forks. Three areas, which also reached new record high count numbers, were Grand Forks-East Grand Forks, Bismarck-Mandan, and Mayville-Portland while Des Lacs NWR, Garrison Dam, and Icelandic State Park all had totals that were second highest on record. The species

NORTH DAKOTA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS 2004

Species	North Star		Buckhorn		Lakota		Devils		Upper Missouri		Blount		Garrison		Sheridan		Bismarck		Chickadee		Langford		Fessenden		Mandan		Fargo		Total		
	12/24/04	12/25/04	12/24/04	12/25/04	12/24/04	12/25/04	12/24/04	12/25/04	12/24/04	12/25/04	12/24/04	12/25/04	12/24/04	12/25/04	12/24/04	12/25/04	12/24/04	12/25/04	12/24/04	12/25/04	12/24/04	12/25/04	12/24/04	12/25/04	12/24/04	12/25/04	12/24/04	12/25/04	12/24/04	12/25/04	
Observers	9	5	4	7	4	12	10	10	7	7	16	7	7	7	7	7	43	16	11	11	9	9	7	7	1	17	22	22	17	683/8	
Parus fairs	26	25.5	10.75	6	21	24.75	8.75	30.25	30	14.5	19	33	21.5	54.75	49	27	26.5	8	22.25	16.5	8	23.5	16.5	8	22.5	10.5	16	48	606/75		
by car	7.5	12.5	16.5	9.75	5.5	17	20.75	5.5	17.25	7.25	9	7	5.5	18.5	1	3	8	1	10.75	10.5	1	10.5	7	22.5	54.5	23	179/75				
by horseback	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	476.5		
Parus Miles	170	200	145	56.3	210	347.25	164.25	352.5	370.25	565.5	192.8	409	412	480	134	232	276	51	245.25	605	306	306	51	245.25	605	306	306	603/1			
by car	11	11	1	0.3	8	4.25	10.5	8.25	10	15	6.8	10	10	31	3	4	8	1	1.25	14	18	18	1	1.25	14	18	18	374.6			
by horseback	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	582.5			
Osprey, hawks	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Osprey, falcons	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Feeder watchers	0	0	0	4	0	0	33	0	15	12	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Feeder hours	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	0	26.5	15	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	106.5
Staus depth	18" to 24"	16" to 42"	17" to 42"	34" to 26"	18" to 46"	19" to 46"	20" to 29"	8" to 16"	12" to 16"	30" to 30"	23" to 31"	9" to 15"	17" to 28"	10" to 42"	11" to 27"	5" to 16"	20" to 25"	4" to 6"	13" to 17"												

Red face indicates new or unusual records for an area.



- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. Medora | 12. Long Lake NWR |
| 2. North Unit, Theodore Roosevelt N. P. | 13. Arrowwood NWR |
| 3. Dickinson | 14. Jamestown |
| 4. Lake Ilo NWR | 15. Valley City |
| 5. Des Lacs NWR | 16. Edinburg |
| 6. Upper Souris NWR | 17. Icelandic State Park |
| 7. Hazen | 18. Tewaukon NWR |
| 8. Garrison Dam | 19. Mayville-Portland |
| 9. Minot | 20. Grand Forks-East Grand Forks |
| 10. Bismarck-Mandan | 21. Fargo-Moorhead |
| 11. J. Clark Salyer NWR | |

Figure 1. Location of count areas

list includes one that was seen in all 21 areas, 24 that were seen in only one area, and 13 that were represented by only one individual bird.

The unusual amount of open water at the beginning of the count period was responsible for a number of waterfowl species being added to area lists. In addition to the trumpeter swan and cackling goose, Fargo-Moorhead added the canvasback. Minot added the tundra swan and wood duck, while Upper Souris NWR added the American wigeon and bufflehead. The green-winged teal was added at Grand Forks-East Grand Forks, and Bismarck-Mandan added the greater

white-fronted goose, American wigeon, canvasback, and redhead. Jamestown added the northern pintail, wood duck, and snow goose. Long Lake NWR added the snow goose and mallard to their list. The additional open water also might have been responsible for the unusual number of five great blue herons that were found in three different areas. Species other than waterfowl that were added to area lists were a Clark's nutcracker at Icelandic State Park, the red crossbill at Upper Souris NWR, and herring gull at Bismarck-Mandan. Two additions to the Edinburg count list were a great blue heron and varied thrush. Grand Forks-East Grand Forks also added the northern hawk owl, while Long Lake NWR added the merlin and northern harrier.

Bald eagle numbers continue to increase in the state. They were seen in 19 of the 21 counting areas with a total of 77 individual birds. Merlins were found in nine areas with 14 individuals being reported. Northern harrier numbers were the highest since 1999 and were the second highest on record. The sharp-shinned hawk also was found in nine areas with the highest total number of individuals for any year. Three times the number of Townsend's solitaire was seen than ever before and it was reported from seven areas. Bohemian waxwing numbers were the highest since 1992. Common redpoll numbers were somewhat below those of a year ago, but still fairly high when they were expected to be low this year due to the regular up and down two year cycle of the past 16 years. Pine siskin numbers at 3,939 were up from recent years and were the highest since 1985 when an all-time high of 11,125 was reached.

The black-capped chickadee was the only species seen in all 21 counting areas but its numbers were the lowest since 1979. Snow bunting numbers were the lowest since 1997 and the purple finch was the lowest since 1984. After a steady and rapid increase in numbers after they first appeared in North Dakota, house finch numbers have been on a decline for the past three years. Black-billed magpie numbers were the lowest since 1979.

Some other unusual observations during the counts included the northern hawk owl that was seen on the Grand Forks count. This species had been seen only five times before. The northern mockingbird seen at Mayville-Portland had been recorded five times previously and the chipping sparrow reported at Long Lake NWR, Mayville-Portland, and at Grand Forks-East Grand Forks had been found on a Christmas Count in only four previous years. The Wilson's snipe at Garrison Dam had been reported only twice before.

While several observers felt that many species were found in lower numbers than usual the total number of individuals was just a little below the last six year average. Interestingly, three species, the Canada goose, the European starling, and the house sparrow, make up about 60% of the total number of individuals that were found.