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2014–2015 Christmas Bird Counts

Don Paseka

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2014-2015 Christmas Bird Counts

by Don Paseka

Fourteen counts were held during the 2014-15 Christmas Bird Count season, which is one less than last season. Although the Beaver Valley and Harrison counts were not done this season, the Harlan County count was resumed after a twelve year hiatus and produced several noteworthy species counts. It also should be noted that the Grand Island count was held on December 13, which is one day before the official Audubon sanctioned count period begins, but its results are included in this discussion.

Following a very mild first week of November, the second week started with a sudden cold snap which persisted through the week. When the wind stopped blowing at the end of the week, most of the open water across the state had frozen. It was expected that many species had departed for the winter, but milder weather returned and lasted well into mid-December. The result was considerable open water for the counts held during the first half of the count period and respectable totals for both species (133) and individuals (246,311).

Nine species set new or tied previous high counts, including the first-ever record on a Nebraska count of Baltimore Oriole, a single bird visiting a feeder in Seward. While 19 species were found in every circle, 20 species were found in only one circle and 11 of those were single birds.

Although all the expected Anseriformes were counted, no scoters or Long-tailed Ducks were found. However, Ring-necked Ducks were found in seven circles and produced a new high count of 366, besting the previous high of 342 from 2012. The total of 41 Wood Ducks counted, 39 of which were found on the Grand Island count, was second only to the 46 found in 2012. The count of 83 Trumpeter Swans is second only to the 155 counted last year, and the 3 Tundra Swans found on the Lake McConaughy count were only the fifth time this species has been recorded on a Nebraska count.

While as expected Lake McConaughy produced the most species (100) of any of the counts, the Harlan County count provided a high proportion of the Nebraska totals for several species. For example, it produced 22,444 of the 24,137 total Snow Geese and 13,999 of the 16,119 of the Common Mergansers found this year. Overall the Harlan county total of 51,755 individuals represented 21% of this year's total for all counts.

Although Bald Eagles were found in every circle, 241 of them were found at Harlan County, helping to set a new high of 576 individuals, which easily bested the previous high of 375 from 2012. Nine circles produced a total of 3509 American Coots, a total second only to the 6163 found in 2011, but 3201 of this year's coots were found at Harlan County.

Harlan County also recorded six of the seven gull species found on this year's counts including all 17 of the Bonaparte's Gulls and 790 of the record high count of 1020 Herring Gulls. The previous high of 649 had been set in 1996.

On the Columbiformes front, as they continue their relentless quest for global domination, Eurasian Collared-Doves were counted in all circles and established a new high count of 1959, topping the old high of 1370 from 2012. Three White-winged Doves were found at Scottsbluff, which was only the second time this species has been counted on a Nebraska CBC. (A single White-winged Dove was found in 2005 and a count week bird was noted in 2009; both were on the Scottsbluff CBC.) Perhaps they're coming, too.

This year's count of 15 Merlins was another new high, bettering the old high count of 14, which was achieved on four previous counts. The Great Horned Owl count of 95 birds was the best since 110 were counted in 1989, prior to the West Nile Virus epidemic. Several species achieving second highest count status were Hairy Woodpeckers at 142 behind the 150 found last year, the 73 Yellow-rumped Warblers trailing the 92 found in 2011 and the 919 Northern Cardinals which was second only to the 1001 found in 2009.

Several sparrows also had a good year. The 5897 Tree Sparrows were the most counted since 6874 were found in 1999. The 2 Chipping Sparrows found on the North Platte count were the first since 10 were reported on the Lincoln count in 1998, and the total of 10 Lincoln's Sparrows found in three circles ranks second only to the 12 found last year. The 407 White-crowned Sparrows were a surprising new high; the Scottsbluff total alone (254 individuals) topped the old high of 222 set in 2007.

2014-2015 Christmas Bird Count

	Ames	BOL	Calamus-Loup	Crawford	DeSoto-Boyer	Grand Island	Harian Co.	Lake McConaughy
Gr White-fronted Goose	1						5	
Snow Goose	1201	2			1	5	22444	181
Ross's Goose	cw						7	
Cackling Goose	181	42	5		98	10	12	40
Canada Goose	2862	1788	3050		12998	2918	567	2825
Trumpeter Swan	cw				41			36
Tundra Swan								3
Wood Duck					2	39		
Gadwall	12	7						245
American Wigeon	5	9					31	268
American Black Duck								
Mallard	1073	1259	376	4	14741	3051	7230	177
Northern Shoveler	2					6		
Northern Pintail	cw					1	1	2
Green-winged Teal	1	14					5	60
Canvasback								101
Redhead								189
Ring-necked Duck	6				8			240
Greater Scaup								72
Lesser Scaup	5				1			272
Bufflehead						3	2	310
Common Goldeneye	36	37	6		24	7	37	165
Hooded Merganser		4					1	4
Common Merganser	26	1835			29	7	13999	141
Red-breasted Merganser		1					20	1
Ruddy Duck	1	2						17
Duck sp.								
Northern Bobwhite	cw	6	56		9	9		5
Ring-necked Pheasant	4	3	3	19	3		2	33
Sharp-tailed Grouse			14	8				
Greater Prairie-Chicken			92				36	29
Wild Turkey	51	350	55	55	183	150	15	91

2014-2015 Christmas Bird Count

	Lincoln	Norfolk	North Platte	Omaha	Ponca SP	Scottsbluff	TOTAL
Gr White-fronted Goose			1			2	9
Snow Goose	1	2			300		24,137
Ross's Goose							7
Cackling Goose	88	33	442	11		48	1,010
Canada Goose	2945	2438	4948	2834	436	4028	44,637
Trumpeter Swan			cw	6			83
Tundra Swan			cw				3
Wood Duck							41
Gadwall	18		28			24	334
American Wigeon		1	42			84	440
American Black Duck			2				2
Mallard	561	2065	7328	171	5253	2369	45,658
Northern Shoveler			52			16	76
Northern Pintail		2	16			16	38
Green-winged Teal	6		119	22			227
Canvasback						7	108
Redhead	7	1				12	209
Ring-necked Duck		8	51		1	52	366
Greater Scaup		1					73
Lesser Scaup	2	5				2	287
Bufflehead			1			1	317
Common Goldeneye		11	39	92	9	144	607
Hooded Merganser	1	2	1			1	14
Common Merganser	1		4	44	33		16,119
Red-breasted Merganser							22
Ruddy Duck							20
Duck sp.				33			33
Northern Bobwhite	7	1					93
Ring-necked Pheasant	4	4	3	1	47	11	137
Sharp-tailed Grouse							22
Greater Prairie-Chicken							157
Wild Turkey	59	103	62	76	42	45	1,337

2014-2015 Christmas Bird Count

	Ames	BOL	Calamus-Loup	Crawford	DeSoto-Boyer	Grand Island	Hallam Co.	Lake McConaughy
Common Loon								1
Pied-billed Grebe	1							3
Horned Grebe								1
Western Grebe								39
Clark's Grebe								1
Double-crested Cormorant							7	
American White Pelican							cw	
Great Blue Heron	4		1		1	2		2
Bald Eagle	56	2	23	1	81	5	241	36
adult				1	51	3	33	
immature					21	2	13	
unspecified age	56	2	23		9		195	36
Northern Harrier	cw	12	cw	1	12	3	12	18
Sharp-shinned Hawk	cw	4						6
Cooper's Hawk	3	1	3		2		2	6
Accipiter sp.		2	1					
Red-tailed Hawk	44	48	14	3	99	21	53	35
Ferruginous Hawk								1
Rough-legged Hawk	3	1	8	6	3	2	1	3
Buteo sp.			13					
Virginia Rail								1
American Coot	16					2	3	3201
Killdeer								3
Wilson's Snipe	1							14
Bonaparte's Gull							17	
Ring-billed Gull		655					559	168
California Gull		3						3
Herring Gull		88					790	141
Thayer's Gull		1					1	3
Lesser Black-backed Gull							1	2
Glaucous Gull							1	
Rock Pigeon	68	41	20	35	168	401	32	321

2014-2015 Christmas Bird Count

	Lincoln	Norfolk	North Platte	Omaha	Ponca SP	Scottsbluff	TOTAL
Common Loon							1
Pied-billed Grebe	1						5
Horned Grebe							1
Western Grebe			1				40
Clark's Grebe							1
Double-crested Cormorant							7
American White Pelican							
Great Blue Heron	2	1	2	1	1	1	18
Bald Eagle	4	14	11	60	17	25	576
adult				39		13	140
immature	2			16		12	66
unspecified age	2	14	11	5	17		370
Northern Harrier		1	5	7	3	2	76
Sharp-shinned Hawk	3	1	1	5	1		21
Cooper's Hawk	3	3	1	3			27
Accipiter sp.				1			4
Red-tailed Hawk	53	50	25	104	22	23	594
Ferruginous Hawk			4			1	6
Rough-legged Hawk			5	5	12	9	58
Buteo sp.	3	2				2	20
Virginia Rail							1
American Coot	43	8	24		2	210	3,509
Killdeer			2			1	6
Wilson's Snipe			3				18
Bonaparte's Gull							17
Ring-billed Gull			17	43			1,442
California Gull							6
Herring Gull			1				1,020
Thayer's Gull							5
Lesser Black-backed Gull							3
Glaucous Gull							1
Rock Pigeon	2693	1043	658	319	71	428	6,298

2014-2015 Christmas Bird Count

	Ames	BOL	Calamus-Loup	Crawford	DeSoto-Boyer	Grand Island	Harlan Co.	Lake McConaughy
Eurasian Collared-Dove	87	27	120	85	12	242	22	175
White-winged Dove								
Mourning Dove	40	1			8	2		10
Eastern Screech-Owl	7	2	2		2	12		2
Great Horned Owl	3	12	27		4	2	3	6
Barred Owl	2	5			7			
Long-eared Owl								4
Short-eared Owl	cw							1
Medium owl sp (Asio sp)	1							
Belted Kingfisher		1	3		3	2	1	2
Red-headed Woodpecker					1			
Red-bellied Woodpecker	44	64	7		56	7	22	9
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker		2			3		2	
Downy Woodpecker	39	58	9	3	88	12	23	17
Hairy Woodpecker	9	16	5	3	24	13		11
Northern Flicker	57	81	10	2	13	53	67	45
Red-shafted		1	3	2			8	
Red x Yellow-shafted	1							
Yellow-shafted	56	27	2		13		47	
unspecified		53	5			53	12	45
Pileated Woodpecker					2			
American Kestrel	3	4	10	1	8	9	6	16
Merlin	2		7			1	1	3
Peregrine Falcon								
Prairie Falcon	1							1
Large falcon sp		1						
Northern Shrike	2	6	7	1	1		1	2
Blue Jay	70	95	8	2	87	45	11	23
Black-billed Magpie							3	24
American Crow	262	52	2337	14	94	20	22	4
Horned Lark			327	340	140		686	978
Black-capped Chickadee	52	55	10	9	203	7	15	11

2014-2015 Christmas Bird Count

	Lincoln	Norfolk	North Platte	Omaha	Ponca SP	Scottsbluff	TOTAL
Eurasian Collared-Dove	49	208	178	26	58	670	1,959
White-winged Dove						3	3
Mourning Dove	365	25	10	18			479
Eastern Screech-Owl		5			4		36
Great Horned Owl	6	25		3	4		95
Barred Owl	1			2	1		18
Long-eared Owl		2					6
Short-eared Owl					1		2
Medium owl sp (Asio sp)							1
Belted Kingfisher	2	1	4	1	2	3	25
Red-headed Woodpecker				58			59
Red-bellied Woodpecker	65	30	6	112	26		448
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	2		1				10
Downy Woodpecker	130	20	12	118	25	4	558
Hairy Woodpecker	14	5	5	33	4		142
Northern Flicker	64	34	14	26	18	20	504
Red-shafted	2	1	6				23
Red x Yellow-shafted						2	3
Yellow-shafted	36		8			2	191
unspecified	26	33		26	18	16	287
Pileated Woodpecker				4			6
American Kestrel	6	17	9	20	1	27	137
Merlin	1						15
Peregrine Falcon				1			1
Prairie Falcon		1	2			1	6
Large falcon sp							1
Northern Shrike	1		1	1	5	1	29
Blue Jay	350	70	11	122	47	67	1,008
Black-billed Magpie		1	2			7	37
American Crow	109		1	53	56	4	3,028
Horned Lark		20	70	1		191	2,753
Black-capped Chickadee	180	73	9	163	92	15	894

2014-2015 Christmas Bird Count

	Ames	BOL	Calamus-Loup	Crawford	DeSoto-Boyer	Grand Island	Harlan Co.	Lake McConaughy
Mountain Chickadee								
Tufted Titmouse					2			
Red-breasted Nuthatch		3			1	4		12
White-breasted Nuthatch	53	67	8	2	55	15	26	15
Pygmy Nuthatch								
Brown Creeper	2	6	4		2	3	3	8
Winter Wren		1			3		1	2
Marsh Wren								2
Carolina Wren	1	1			1	2		
Golden-crowned Kinglet	14	10		2	3	4	3	20
Eastern Bluebird	70	136			23	6	42	11
Mountain Bluebird							5	
Townsend's Solitaire		1					2	11
Hermit Thrush		cw					1	2
American Robin	1036	940	987	20	35	730	942	2553
Northern Mockingbird		1						
Brown Thrasher			1					
European Starling	1812	1568	480	80	648	4682	344	5998
Cedar Waxwing	246	233	9		61	86	73	120
Lapland Longspur		1			18		232	231
Snow Bunting		cw						12
Yellow-rumped Warbler	10	16	3			2	4	33
Spotted Towhee		1			2			
American Tree Sparrow	210	425	357	65	1145	139	1509	228
Chipping Sparrow								
Field Sparrow								1
Fox Sparrow	1	2			1		1	
Song Sparrow		2		3	67	1	29	10
Lincoln's Sparrow					3		1	
Swamp Sparrow					3			1
White-throated Sparrow	7	7			12	1	2	
Harris's Sparrow	8	32	21		26	12	82	4

2014-2015 Christmas Bird Count

	Lincoln	Norfolk	North Platte	Omaha	Ponca SP	Scottsbluff	TOTAL
Mountain Chickadee						1	1
Tufted Titmouse				22			24
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	4	16	1		8	50
White-breasted Nuthatch	161	41	6	155	60	1	665
Pygmy Nuthatch						4	4
Brown Creeper	9	3	8	16	1		65
Winter Wren				3			10
Marsh Wren			1				3
Carolina Wren	1			16			22
Golden-crowned Kinglet	31	4	8	3	1		103
Eastern Bluebird	68			95	39		490
Mountain Bluebird							5
Townsend's Solitaire						1	15
Hermit Thrush							3
American Robin	1325	88	156	130	54	313	9,309
Northern Mockingbird							1
Brown Thrasher							1
European Starling	3665	9098	5023	2414	766	932	37,510
Cedar Waxwing	74		108	72	358	13	1,453
Lapland Longspur		10					492
Snow Bunting							12
Yellow-rumped Warbler	5						73
Spotted Towhee			1	1			5
American Tree Sparrow	303	442	92	591	332	59	5,897
Chipping Sparrow			2				2
Field Sparrow							1
Fox Sparrow				1			6
Song Sparrow	23		4	42		4	185
Lincoln's Sparrow			6 cw				10
Swamp Sparrow				1			5
White-throated Sparrow	4		1	14			48
Harris's Sparrow	8		3	58	11		265

2014-2015 Christmas Bird Count

	Ames	BOL	Calamus-Loup	Crawford	DeSoto-Boyer	Grand Island	Hartlan Co.	Lake McConaughy
White-crowned Sparrow	1	2			33	7	38	25
Sparrow sp.		15						
Dark-eyed Junco	300	489	336	63	847	155	427	414
Slate-colored		333		25			339	
Oregon		4		3			4	
Pink-sided				2				
White-winged				8				
Gray-headed								
unspecified subspecies	300	152	336	25	847	155	84	414
Northern Cardinal	55	116	20		202	44	40	21
Red-winged Blackbird	2124	79	30		404	9	444	14
Western Meadowlark	3		31	3 cw		199		
Meadowlark sp.	19	39			246		246	68
Yellow-headed Blackbird					1			
Rusty Blackbird	8						33	1
Brewer's Blackbird					1			
Common Grackle	26		4			182		6
Great-tailed Grackle						160		
Brown-headed Cowbird		1					1	3
blackbird sp.		198						
Baltimore Oriole		1						
Purple Finch	13	31	2		cw			
House Finch	78	76	70	2	8	90	73	92
Common Redpoll					1			
Pine Siskin		3	1				2	42
American Goldfinch	65	169	73	6	195	56	90	361
House Sparrow	188	81	21	40	328	277	40	251
TOTAL SPECIES	66	75	49	30	70	57	76	100
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	12,694	11,452	9,087	878	33,637	13,935	51,755	21,432

2014-2015 Christmas Bird Count

	Lincoln	Norfolk	North Platte	Omaha	Ponca SP	Scottsbluff	TOTAL
White-crowned Sparrow		6	11	8	22	254	407
Sparrow sp.							15
Dark-eyed Junco	638	405	139	725	122	324	5,384
Slate-colored	305		133			62	1,197
Oregon	2		5			38	56
Pink-sided			1			6	9
White-winged							8
Gray-headed						1	1
unspecified subspecies	331	405		725	122	217	4,113
Northern Cardinal	177	47	13	149	35		919
Red-winged Blackbird	125	360	6112	361	260	69	10,391
Western Meadowlark		1	4		6		247
Meadowlark sp.				21		29	668
Yellow-headed Blackbird							1
Rusty Blackbird				1			43
Brewer's Blackbird			150				151
Common Grackle	3	1	7				229
Great-tailed Grackle			cw				160
Brown-headed Cowbird		10	2		10		27
blackbird sp.	600						798
Baltimore Oriole							1
Purple Finch	10	5		7			68
House Finch	252	25	53	25	4	106	954
Common Redpoll							1
Pine Siskin	34		1 cw			30	113
American Goldfinch	308	165	107	265	212	51	2,123
House Sparrow	900	1114	215	368	163	226	4,212
TOTAL SPECIES	60	58	75	64	49	57	133
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	16,575	18,166	26,483	10,165	9,050	11,002	246,311

2014-2015 CBC Participants

Ames Larry Einemann, Jane Hollst, Paula Hoppe, Rita Jensen, Jan Johnson, Richard Johnson, Clem Klaphake, Don Paseka (compiler), Janis Paseka, Gary Roberts, Ken Shuster, Ruth Stearns, Jerry Toll (13)

Branched Oak–Seward Edward Allen, Noah Arthur, Anne Beurivage, Eugene Brott, Norma Brott, John Carlini, Bonnie Daenzer, Gil Daenzer, Kenny Dinan, Lauren Dinan, Larry Einemann, Gene Faszholz, Boyd Gabel, Richard Gardner, Larry Grothaus, Joseph Gubanyi (compiler), Virginia Hughes, Ethan Hutton, Delbert Junge, Thomas Labeledz, Daniel Leger, Don McKibbin, LaQuita McKibbin, Ingrid Minchow, Mark Minchow, Don Paseka, Janis Paseka, Gary Roberts, Barbara Schauer, Shari Schwartz, Ruth Stearns, Tony Vrana, Sue Wickersham, Michael Willison (17 + 17 feeder watchers)

Calamus-Loup Betsy Bolli, Jesse Bolli, Kathi Gerten, Robert Gerten, Robin Harding, David Heidt (compiler), Marty Mathieson, Richard Mathieson, Lanny Randolph, Duane Wolff (10)

Crawford Michael Willison (1) [Bruce Walgren, compiler]

DeSoto Elliott Bedows, Myrna Brown, Adam Duresky, John Duresky, Linda Ferring, Jonas Grundman, Suzanne Gucciardo, Sylvia Hanson, Veronica Kelly, Clem Klaphake, Jim Kovanda, Sandy Kovanda, Veronica Mecko, Don Paseka, Janis Paseka, Brian Peterson, Kathleen Pyper, Sandy Reinken, Gary Roberts, Ken Shuster, Heidi Swanson, Jerry Toll (compiler), John Wupper (23)

Grand Island Cathy Aubushon, Dorothy Aubushon, Gordon Backer, Faye Conlon, Tony Curtis, Jim Etherton, Robin Harding, Blake Hatfield, Bob Hausmann, Mary Ann Kaliney, Ron Kruse, Anne Kruse, Connie McCartney (compiler), Steve Morris, Vicki Orr, Lanny Randolph, Patricia Smith, Vern Throop (18)

Harlan County DeAnna Anderbery, Lauren Dinan, Jessica Edgar, Larry Einemann, Andrew Furman, Robin Harding, Joel Jorgensen (compiler), Marty Mathieson, Lanny Randolph, Ross Silcock (10)

Lake McConaughy Elliott Bedows, Mary Bomberger Brown, Mike Carlson, Stephen Dinsmore (compiler), Sherry Erlewine, Luke Hamilton, Robin Harding, Bill Huntley, Bette Klaphake, Clem Klaphake, Kevin Murphy, Lanny Randolph, Al Reyer, Cindy Reyer, Ross Silcock (15 + 19 feeder watchers)

Lincoln Colleen Babcock, Elaine Bachel, Anita Breckbill, Mary Bomberger Brown, Linda R. Brown, Pat Cole, Lynn Darling, Barbara DiBernard, Rick Eades, Larry Einemann, Andrea Faas, Sue Guild, Phyllis Higley, Adam Hintz, Michelle Johnson, Jamie Kelley, Tim Knott, Tom Labeledz, Dan Leger, Dwain Leonhardt, George Maly,

Linda Maslowski, Pete Maslowski, Katie McKinney, Bruce Mellberg, Bertha Mesarch, Rosalind Morris, Lana Novak, Linda Plock, Kevin Poague (compiler), Susan Quinn, Ken Reitan, Dave Rus, Jennifer Smith, Ruth Stearns, April Stevenson, Barbara Straus, Moni Usasz, Jake Walker, Bruce Wendorff (40)

Norfolk Branden Anderson, Kapri Anderson, Marc Bathke, Ed Brogie, Mark Brogie, David Heidt, Dee Jenkins, Layne Miller, Jean Rumsey, Gary Schuurmans, Austin Stewart, Paul Timm, Seth Totten, Matthew Walker, T. J. Walker, Tom Walker, Duane Wolff (compiler) (17)

North Platte Virginia Clark, Neal Feldman, Gregg Hoover, Rich Junker, Jim Petersen, Matthew Walker, T.J. Walker (compiler) (7)

Omaha Elliott Bedows, Ruth Bentzinger, Elaine Bickham, Jessica Bickham, Mary Clausen, John Duresky, Robin Duresky, Bob Fuchs, Betty Grenon (compiler), Suzanne Gucciardo, Sylvia Hanson, Lois Inskeep, Clem Klaphake, Jim Kovanda, Sandy Kovanda, Catherine Kuper, Terry Lassek, Don Paseka, Janis Paseka, Brian Peterson, Deb Ratzlaff, Neal Ratzlaff, Sandy Reinken, Al Reyer, Cindy Reyer, Justin Rink, Gary Roberts, Mary Jo Rome, Rick Schmid, Steve Schmitt, Eric Scholar, Jerry Toll, Ray Turkle, Pat Williams (34)

Ponca Jessica Boschen, Vern Cummings, Teri Dolezal, Jeff Fields, Bill Huser (compiler), Jan Johnson, Richard Johnson, Sarah Paulos, Paul Roisen, Scott Schmidt, Jim Swenson, Linda Swenson, Rob Towler, Jerry VonEhwegen (14)

Scottsbluff Kathy DeLara, Ann Duey, Donald Gentry, Meredyth Gentry, Alice Kenitz (compiler), Ed Newbury, Ruben Siegfried (7)