

The 105th Christmas Bird Count

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Frank B. Gill
Senior Ornithologist

Geoffrey S. LeBaron
*Director, Christmas Bird Count and
Editor-in-Chief*

Paul Green
Director, Citizen Science

Kathy Dale
Director of IT, Audubon Science

Richard J. Cannings
*Christmas Bird Count Coordinator,
Bird Studies Canada*

Avery English-Elliott
Ruth Helmich
Christmas Bird Count Assistants

Carol Capobianco
Managing Editor

M. Boisvert
mb.design@comcast.net
Art Director/Graphic Designer

Greg Merhar
Graphics Associate

Caroline Jackson
GIS Technician

Heidi DeVos
Production Director

Patrick J. Downes
pdownes@audubon.org
Publisher



Audubon

Audubon Science Center
545 Almshouse Road
Ivyland, PA 18974
www.audubon.org/bird



BIRD STUDIES CANADA
ÉTUDES D'OISEAUX CANADA

Bird Studies Canada/
Études d'Oiseaux Canada
P.O. Box 160
Port Rowan, Ontario N0E 1M0
www.bsc-eoc.org



Not your run-of-the-mill CBC find was this “green-backed” Western Spindalis (*Spindalis zena*), present for some time—to the delight of many observers—in Key West, Florida. This bird was of the Cuban form of this poorly understood species. If a split occurs, this sighting would represent the first in the CBC database; other reports on CBCs have been of the Bahamian form. Photo/Keith Brady

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The 105th Christmas Bird Count

December 14, 2004, to January 5, 2005

Geoffrey S. LeBaron

No matter what the measure, the 105th Christmas Bird Count was a season of superlatives. Records of many types fell by the wayside—total number of counts, total number of participants, North American species total on one count, and all-time high species total on a CBC. From the North American arctic to southern South America, and from the Mariana Islands to Bermuda, birders again set out into the field or watched their feeders, continuing the Christmas Bird Count tradition.

Why were so many records broken this season? It is difficult, if not impossible, to point to just one reason. Weather conditions were favorable during the CBC period—especially on weekends—across much of the Americas. The increasing number of international partners that help coordinate the CBC in their regions can dramatically boost participation and the number of counts outside the United States. The lure of exciting new finds—either first count records or new “life” birds—may have been stronger than in some seasons, especially given the substantial and well-publicized movements of charismatic rarities from both the northern forests and from the neotropics. Mostly, as always, members of the Christmas Bird Count community went out and did what they have done so well for over a century now—tromp and drive through the “usual” areas and count all the “usual” birds (ever hoping for that out-of-range or out-of-season rarity) with friends and family during the holiday season.

Why is this important? Obviously, each CBC participant and compiler has personal reasons for doing Christmas counts. Often, the motivation is preserving a holiday tradition, or using the CBC as a great excuse to bird (and we all take every opportunity to go birding), or seeing friends whom we may only meet on our annual CBC jaunts. Yet, as you’ve

been reading in past *American Birds* reports, the Christmas Bird Count is rapidly growing in its importance to bird conservation. New statistical methods have been developed for the CBC, with application to analyses of other citizen science databases, enabling an increasing amount of important research on the vast, untapped dataset that is the Christmas Bird Count. The CBC data we all collect have already been of use on many fronts, including the documentation of the spread and impact of the West Nile virus and the analyses of the status of birds of the Boreal Forest, and the data are being used in many other ongoing studies, as well. Just take a look at the “CBC Bibliography” <www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/biblio.html> to see the tip of the iceberg!

Furthermore, Dan Niven, Audubon’s Senior Scientist for Bird Conservation, is currently working through the CBC database, performing analyses on all species that are well-sampled by the

Christmas Bird Count. Trend data gathered from the CBC will be compared with similar results garnered from the Breeding Bird Survey, giving us a window to how birds are doing both in the breeding and non-breeding seasons. Audubon’s upcoming “State of the Birds” multi-year report will document Dan’s findings. In addition to the State of the Birds report, CBC data are being utilized to look at the effects of climate and habitat changes on the shifting numbers and distribution of birds. At long last, as the Christmas Bird Count database provides more and more information for use in bird conservation efforts, the cumulative counting efforts of all CBC participants and compilers are coming to fruition.

Another major effort over the next few seasons will be the implementation of the recommendations listed in “Improving the Christmas Bird Count: Report of a Review Panel” published in



Great rewards often await us on Christmas Bird Counts, even in the most urban of settings. This Boreal Owl (*Ageolis funereus*) was located on count day in Central Park in New York City, on the Lower Hudson, New Jersey-New York, CBC. What a fitting find so close to the American Museum of Natural History, where the CBC’s roots began 105 years ago. Photo/Lloyd Spitalnik

last season's 104th Christmas Bird Count issue of *American Birds*. These recommendations take many forms, with the aim of increasing the integrity of the CBC database, enhancing the value of CBC data to researchers, making the CBC web site more user friendly, and hopefully, gaining long-term funding for the CBC program (and thus possibly reducing the CBC participation fee). Some of the recommendations have already been implemented, others are in the planning stages, and many (the larger ones, of course) will require separate funding to complete. High on the list among these latter recommendations is the separation within the database of birds counted at feeders from those counted by field observers, and also the ability to access data from individual route sectors run on Christmas Bird Counts. Even when implemented, we envision that these potential alterations to CBC protocol would be voluntary new features of the CBC web site, and only compilers with interest in contributing to the expanded data set would need to enter their data into the new fields. The improvements represent much work on

both the programming and data management fronts indeed, but exciting times lie ahead for the CBC!

The first showstopper of the 105th Count was the whopping record total number of counts—2022 circles completed, surpassing for the first time the 2000 count mark in one season. This handily breaks the old record of 1996, set just last year. Included in this year's lofty total are 39 counts new to the cumulative Christmas Bird Count database—10 in Canada, 23 in the United States, and six in Latin America and the Caribbean. These new counts are listed in Table 1, and we extend a hearty welcome to all!

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the record number of counts, a record was also set for total participation—56,623 observers (47,326 in the field, plus 9297 at feeders)—breaking the old high mark of the 102nd CBC by about 500. The regional breakdown of these totals shows 11,829 observers in Canada (7705 in the field, 4124 at feeders), 43,516 in the United States (38,366 in the field, 5150 at feeders), and 1278 observers in the Caribbean, Latin America, and the Pacific Islands (1255 in the field, 23 at feeders).

The organizational skills of many Christmas Bird Count compilers are legendary, as they need to be to successfully marshal observers into field parties, scout for birds, and deal with the ever-changing logistics of running a CBC. Some smaller counts in far-flung locations present their own special challenges for compilers,

Table 1. New counts in the 105th (2004–2005) Christmas Bird Count.

Count Code	Count Name
CANADA	
ABOP	Opal, Alberta
BCBY	Blaeberry, British Columbia
BCCK	Charlie Lake, British Columbia
BCPO	Powell River, British Columbia
BCRW	Rossland-Warfield, British Columbia
BCTR	Trail-Beaver Valley, British Columbia
NBED	Edmundston, New Brunswick
ONFL	La Foret Larose, Ontario
ONSR	Saugeen Shores, Ontario
YTTE	Teslin, Yukon Territory
UNITED STATES	
AKGI	Gambell Island, Alaska
CADM	Diamond Valley, California
COSD	Salida, Colorado
ILAP	Arklands Pyramid, Illinois
ILMR	Marion County, Illinois
KYWC	Wayne County, Kentucky
LACB	Claiborne, Louisiana
LAFP	Fort Peck, Louisiana
MIC	Ionia County, Michigan
MSDG	Dahomey-Great River Road, Mississippi
NMCM	Cimmaron, New Mexico
NMCN	Chaco National Historical Site, New Mexico
NMOV	Orilla Verde, New Mexico
OHBF	Brown Family Environmental Center, Ohio
OHBS	Black Swamp, Ohio
OHHH	Hocking Hills, Ohio
TNWH	White County, Tennessee
TXGF	Guadalupe River Delta-McFaddin Family Ranches, Texas
TXMW	Matador Wildlife Management Area, Texas
TXWP	Westcave Preserve, Texas
UTOR	Ouray National Wildlife Refuge, Utah
WYGF	Guernsey-Fort Laramie, Wyoming
WYSD	Sundance, Wyoming
CARIBBEAN, LATIN AMERICA	
BRRC	Rio Claro, Sao Paulo, Brazil
CLBB	Rio Barbas-Bremen Natural Reserve, Colombia
MXCL	Colonias de Perritos, Llanero de Coahuila, Mexico
MXCR	Colorado River Delta, Mexico
MXVS	Valle de la Soledad, Coahuila, Mexico
VIAN	Anegada, British Virgin Islands



One of the most sought-after species in North America, and notoriously difficult to locate in winter, this Kirtland's Warbler (*Dendroica kirtlandii*) was a first for Bermuda's CBC and a first for the cumulative CBC database. Video still/Eric Amos

Table 2. Counts with 100 or more participants in the 105th (2004–2005) CBC.

Code	Count Name	# Observers	(Field + Feeder)
ONNB	North Bay, ON	711	(30 + 681)
ABED	Edmonton, AB	483	(167 + 316)
MACO	Concord, MA	329	(229 + 100)
BCVI	Victoria, BC	240	(196 + 44)
CAOA	Oakland, CA	215	(203 + 12)
ABCA	Calgary, AB	210	(101 + 109)
CAPR	Point Reyes Peninsula, CA	199	(199 + 0)
VAFB	Fort Belvoir, VA	184	(177 + 7)
WASE	Seattle, WA	167	(161 + 6)
NSHD	Halifax-Dartmouth, NS	154	(87 + 67)
CASB	Santa Barbara, CA	150	(147 + 3)
SCHH	Hilton Head Island, SC	150	(150 + 0)
CTHA	Hartford, CT	147	(126 + 21)
CAWS	Western Sonoma County, CA	146	(146 + 0)
OHCF	Cuyahoga Falls, OH	144	(96 + 48)
WASD	Sequim-Dungeness, WA	140	(123 + 17)
OREU	Eugene, OR	136	(105 + 31)
PAPI	Pittsburgh, PA	136	(98 + 38)
AKAN	Anchorage, AK	132	(88 + 44)
COBO	Boulder, CO	132	(104 + 28)
ONOH	Ottawa-Gatineau, ON	129	(98 + 31)
BCVA	Vancouver, BC	128	(122 + 6)
MBWI	Winnipeg, MB	127	(70 + 57)
NSWO	Wolfville, NS	126	(43 + 83)
SCSC	Sun City-Okatie, SC	126	(109 + 17)
DCDC	Washington, DC	125	(124 + 1)
CAMC	Marin County (southern), CA	122	(119 + 3)
ABSR	Strathcona, AB	119	(37 + 82)
CODV	Denver (urban), CO	117	(89 + 28)
NYIT	Ithaca, NY	117	(103 + 14)
SKSA	Saskatoon, SK	117	(61 + 56)
ILFB	Fermilab-Batavia, IL	112	(110 + 2)
MANO	Northampton, MA	112	(100 + 12)
AKFA	Fairbanks, AK	109	(75 + 34)
CODE	Denver, CO	109	(74 + 35)
FLSC	Sanibel-Captiva, FL	106	(106 + 0)
ILWA	Waukegan, IL	106	(22 + 84)
ONLO	London, ON	106	(61 + 45)
ABSA	St. Albert, AB	105	(49 + 56)
CASD	San Diego, CA	104	(104 + 0)
NJLH	Lower Hudson, NJ	104	(104 + 0)
TXMM	Matagorda County-Mad Island Marsh, TX	104	(104 + 0)
ONHA	Hamilton, ON	103	(85 + 18)
CAOC	Orange County (coastal), CA	102	(102 + 0)
CASF	San Francisco, CA	101	(98 + 3)
PACH	Chambersburg, PA	100	(67 + 33)
QCQU	Quebec, QC	100	(96 + 4)
TXAU	Austin, TX	100	(99 + 1)
TXBF	Buffalo Bayou, TX	100	(65 + 35)

while those counts with large number of observers call for other types of skills. The sum total results in the numbers reported above, and as always, a significant number of Christmas Bird Counts were graced with 100 or more observers this season. Table 2 includes the full list of counts in the 105th CBC with at least 100 participants, with numbers of field and feeder watchers detailed. Once again topping the list is the triumvirate of North Bay, Ontario; Edmonton, Alberta; and Concord, Massachusetts—the reigning champions of mobilizing

large numbers of people to count birds.

The numbers of birds in the 105th Christmas Bird Count were impressive as well. A very grand total of 69,901,741 birds (66,219,394 in the United States, 3,051,957 in Canada, and 630,390 outside North America) were tallied this season. This is still far below the all-time high of more than 193 million birds counted during the 88th CBC. Once again the huge blackbird roosts were outside all circles—remember that one single roost can contribute more than 100 million birds to the overall total! Regional

species totals were impressive as always, but not record high: 652 species, 36 infraspecific forms, and 29 exotic species in the United States, 300 species in Canada, and an additional 1544 species in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Pacific Islands. One new species—**White-throated Robin**—was added to the cumulative Christmas Bird Count list for North America, and two new species—Pyrrhuloxia and McKay's Bunting—were added to the cumulative Canadian CBC bird list. One of the most exciting finds of the season was on the island of Bermuda, where a **Kirtland's Warbler** was tallied, the first ever for the island and the first ever in the CBC database. Cackling Goose, or at least the newly split species-level Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*), is included for the first time this season. The field identification of this species from the small forms of Canada Goose is still being worked out; not all small Canadas are Cacklings! Observers should be conservative when presented with challenging species identifications such as this; it is better to tally “Canada/Cackling Goose” or “small morph Canada Goose” unless Cackling is absolutely certain.

Two other species—Tristram's Storm-Petrel and Laysan Finch—were known to be present on counts in the Hawaiian Northwest Chain, but various logistical difficulties made it impossible to get census numbers for these two birds. Thus, unfortunately, they are only listed as count week species (with notation that they were present on count day), and not included in the final totals for the 105th season. The challenges of conducting counts in remote areas are many, and hopefully, we'll continue to have numbers for these species in future seasons.

While the regional species totals did not set new records, many species totals on individual Christmas Bird Counts reached new heights. Table 3 lists all the counts making, and breaking, the 150-species mark tallied on count day. You'll note a slight change in the format of this table this season, with proper ranking by order. Two major bars were raised yet

again—the species tally in North America north of Mexico, and the overall species total on a CBC. Matagorda County-Mad Island Marsh, Texas, counters included **246 species** during count day, breaking that count's previous North American record of 243 during the 103rd Count. Can a species total of 250 in Texas or California be far in the future? And in species-rich and taxonomically challenging South America, its second running of the Napo, Amazon, count in Ecuador reported more than 500 species, possibly as high as 552! Of course, this count's list adds many new species to the cumulative CBC database; with each new CBC in Latin America the total list will grow by leaps and bounds for some time. This lofty species total is slightly uncertain, given the chaotic state of the understanding of some species groups in South America. Hopefully, these challenges will be resolved in the near future, as the American Ornithologists' Union finalizes its checklist of birds of South America, and as that list is incorporated into the Christmas Bird Count database.

Each and every Christmas Bird Count has its own highlight, whether it is the highest number of participants, coldest temperatures, or lowest species total for the season. (Three counts tied for this last honor this year—with one species each.) However, it's often the high species total competition that gets folks into the field, either by aiming to break their own record (even if that record was one) or by topping their region for species tally. Table 4 lists the regional high counts in the 105th CBC, the high species total for each of the regions, and the number of counts in each region.

The ebb and flow of birds across the Americas is challenging to monitor, but the Christmas Bird Count gives us a great perspective and an adept yardstick with which to measure their progress and status. While long-term trends, as learned by analyses of CBC data over time, are critical to our understanding of the status of the regions' avifauna, each season also gives us a snapshot of where

Table 3. Counts with 150 or more species recorded on the 105th (2004–2005) CBC.

Table 3a. Counts north of the United States-Mexican border.

Count Code	Rank	Count Name	Species Recorded
TXMM	1	Matagorda County-Mad Island Marsh, TX	246
TXCC	2	Corpus Christi, TX	239
TXFR	3	Freeport, TX	214
TXGF	4	Guadalupe River Delta-McFaddin Family Ranches, TX	212
TXSB	5	San Bernard N.W.R., TX	201
CASB	6	Santa Barbara, CA	200
CAMR	7	Morro Bay, CA	198
CAPR	7	Point Reyes Peninsula, CA	198
CAMD	9	Moss Landing, CA	197
CAOC	9	Orange County (coastal), CA	197
CASD	11	San Diego, CA	193
CACS	12	Crystal Springs, CA	188
CAAR	13	Arcata, CA	182
CASC	13	Santa Cruz County, CA	182
TXGA	15	Galveston, TX	181
CAOV	16	Oceanside-Vista-Carlsbad, CA	180
LASA	16	Sabine N.W.R., LA	180
TXBP	16	Bolivar Peninsula, TX	180
CAOA	19	Oakland, CA	179
TXCF	20	Corpus Christi (Flour Bluff), TX	178
TXRO	20	Rockport, TX	178
SCCA	22	Charleston, SC	177
CAMC	23	Marin County (southern), CA	176
CARS	23	Rancho Santa Fe, CA	176
CALU	25	La Purisima, CA	175
CATO	25	Thousand Oaks, CA	175
TXHG	27	Harlingen, TX	174
CACB	28	Centerville Beach to King Salmon, CA	173
NCSB	28	Southport-Bald Head-Oak Islands, NC	173
CAAN	30	Año Nuevo, CA	172
CAVE	30	Ventura, CA	172
CAWS	30	Western Sonoma County, CA	172
CAHF	33	Hayward-Fremont, CA	171
CAMP	34	Monterey Peninsula, CA	170
CAPP	34	Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA	170
TXAP	34	Attwater Prairie Chicken N.W.R., TX	170
CAPA	37	Palo Alto, CA	169
FLMI	37	Merritt Island N.W.R., FL	169
TXPA	39	Port Aransas, TX	168
CASJ	40	San Jose, CA	167
SCLP	40	Litchfield-Pawleys Island, SC	167
VACC	40	Cape Charles, VA	167
NCMC	43	Morehead City, NC	166
TXAR	43	Aransas N.W.R., TX	166
CASS	45	Salton Sea (south), CA	164
FLNR	45	West Pasco (New Port Richey), FL	164
NCWI	45	Wilmington, NC	164
TXSR	45	Sea Rim S.P., TX	164
SCMC	49	McClellanville, SC	163
CASF	50	San Francisco, CA	162
CADN	51	Del Norte County, CA	161
CAON	51	Orange County (northeastern), CA	161
FLJA	51	Jacksonville, FL	161
NCBP	54	Bodie-Pea Island, NC	160
NJCM	54	Cape May, NJ	160
ORCB	54	Coos Bay, OR	160
FLSB	57	South Brevard County, FL	159
CAMU	58	Malibu, CA	158
FLCO	58	Cocoa, FL	158
FLZE	58	Zellwood-Mt. Dora, FL	158
TXAZ	58	Anzalduas-Bentsen S.P., TX	158
TXWS	58	Weslaco, TX	158
GASV	63	Savannah, GA-SC	157
CALB	64	Long Beach-El Dorado, CA	156
GACI	64	Cumberland Island, GA	156
ORTB	64	Tillamook Bay, OR	156
CALA	67	Los Angeles, CA	155
CASU	67	San Juan Capistrano, CA	155
TXHO	67	Houston, TX	155
BCVI	70	Victoria, BC	154
CACC	70	Contra Costa County, CA	154
CAPS	70	Pasadena-San Gabriel Valley, CA	154
TXLA	70	Laguna Atascosa N.W.R., TX	154
FLSM	74	St. Marks, FL	153
LANO	74	New Orleans, LA	153
MSSH	74	Southern Hancock County, MS	153
TXLS	74	La Sal Vieja, TX	153
FLAB	78	Aripeka-Bayport, FL	152
FLGA	78	Gainesville, FL	152
MSJC	78	Jackson County, MS	152
TXVI	78	Victoria, TX	152
CABE	82	Benicia, CA	151
CACM	82	Claremont, CA	151
CARC	82	Rio Cosumnes, CA	151
FLSR	82	Sarasota, FL	151
FLWP	82	West Palm Beach, FL	151
SCAB	87	Ace Basin, SC	150

Table 3b. Counts south of the United States-Mexican border.

Count Code	Rank	Count Name	Species Recorded
ECNA	1	Napo, Amazon, Ecuador	552
ECNM	2	Mindo-Tandayapa, Ecuador	404
CRLM	3	Fila Costera (La Merced), Costa Rica	392
CRRF	4	Rain Forest Aerial Tram, Costa Rica	341
CRLS	5	La Selva, Lower Braulio Carillo N.P., Costa Rica	335
CRMO	6	Monteverde, Costa Rica	320
RPAC	7	Atlantic Canal Area, R.P., Panama	291
RPPC	8	Pacific Canal Area, R.P., Panama	280
BLPG	9	Punta Gorda, Belize	250
RPCC	10	Central Canal Area, R.P., Panama	242
MXSB	11	San Blas, Nayarit, Mexico	240
BLBC	12	Belize City, Belize	228
RPVC	13	Volcan, Chiriqui, Panama	210
BLGJ	14	Gallon Jug, Belize	201
MXES	15	Ensenada, Baja California, Mexico	196
TRTR	16	Trinidad, West Indies	188
PETR	17	Tambopata Research Center	186
MXGF	18	Gomez Farias, Tamaulipas, Mexico	175
MXOJ	19	Oaxaca de Juarez, Oaxaca, Mexico	167
MXRC	20	Rio Corona, Tamaulipas, Mexico	164



These two Laysan Ducks (*Anas laysanensis*) are pictured shortly before their release in 2004 at Midway Atoll. Founders of a new population, the birds have taken well to their new home, and CBC counters were treated to views of five of the 19 birds present. Photo/John Klavitter, USFWS

birds were at that period in time. During the 105th CBC, a number of very interesting events were taking place during an early winter period that followed a poor summer and fall wild seed crop, as well as a crash in small rodent populations to the north. Individual count results from both the north and the south benefited from the culmination of these events. To the north, the early stage of a major movement of owls was in full swing. With the lack of small rodents to feed on in the far north, Northern Hawk Owls, Boreal Owls, and especially, Great Gray Owls moved southward and eastward during the late fall. Counts in the Canadian Prairie

Provinces, Minnesota, and Ontario were especially blessed with amazing numbers of these charismatic boreal predators—see especially Roger Schroeder’s comments in the Minnesota regional summary (page 82). Interestingly, Snowy Owls were not well represented in this movement; perhaps the small mammals on the tundra stayed in normal numbers, while the four-legged food crop in the boreal forest crashed. Also of note was the abrupt line where the owls stopped in the east—while more Boreal Owls were found farther south than usual, in the east the Northern Hawk Owl and Great Gray Owl movement stopped sharply at

about the St. Lawrence River, with virtually none found in the Northeastern states, despite high numbers in Ontario and (eventually) Quebec. This is likely due to the heavy snow cover that built up rapidly to the south along the U.S. border, making hunting difficult for the already stressed owls.

From the other direction, an incursion of Mexican rarities began pushing into South Texas during the early winter. The aforementioned White-throated Robin at Anzalduas-Bentsen State Park, Texas, and some other interesting species you’ll find in the individual count results online illustrate this movement. The reasons for this northward flux from Mexico seem less obvious; perhaps regenerating habitat in South Texas was a lure, possibly a poor wild food crop in Mexico provided a catalyst for departure, or maybe degenerating habitat in Mexico contributed to what became a stellar array of rarities in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

Across much of the rest of the continent, the cool, wet fall and poor wild food crop in some northern regions pushed many birds—both in numbers of species and individuals—southward. Counts to the north in many areas reported somewhat fewer species than average and many fewer total birds than average. CBCs to the south—along the Gulf Coast and in the southeastern states especially—seemed to benefit from this movement; the ebb of birds in the north became the flow of birds in the south. Conversely, mild conditions northward in the Midwest left many bodies of water unfrozen, and waterfowl and other wetland-dependent species lingered to the north in above-average numbers.

After the large “winter finch flight” in the 104th Christmas Bird Count, it was expected that this conglomeration of species would remain in the north during the 105th Count. The high proportion of redpolls and their kin on counts in Alaska bear witness that this generally held true. However, there were several interesting irruptive movements (beyond the aforementioned owls) dur-

ing the 105th CBC. A surprisingly good flight of crossbills, Pine Grosbeaks, and Pine Siskins was observed in the northern Rockies, as well as in the Pacific Northwest. Purple Finches and Pine Siskins moved southward to the Gulf Coast in Louisiana and across Texas, and Purple Finches were found in unusually high numbers in Kansas. Blue Jays staged a big movement through Idaho and into the Pacific Northwest. And finally, Bohemian Waxwings poured southward into the Rockies, with great numbers on many counts in Colorado.

A few other long-term trends continue, some positive and some negative. On the downside, Northern Bobwhite, Red-headed Woodpecker, and Loggerhead Shrike continue their downward slide in many regions. Conversely, the march of Red-bellied Woodpeckers to the north continues, with record high numbers in many areas of southern Canada and the northeastern states. The introduced Eurasian Collared-Dove expanded in both range and number in the upper Midwest and in the Southwest. Also, the hummingbird express continues—not only in the now “expected” regions of the Pacific Coast, southern California, Arizona, Texas, the Gulf Coast, and the southeastern states, but with increasing

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Bohemian Waxwings (*Bombycilla garrulus*) staged their most impressive invasion into Colorado in nearly two decades. Nearly half of all Colorado CBCs recorded the species, with more than 4000 reported in total. This individual was photographed in Meeker, Colorado, on 29 December 2004. Photo/Christopher L. Wood

Table 4. Regional high counts for the 105th (2004–2005) Christmas Bird Count.

Region	# of CBCs	Highest Count (species total)
St.-Pierre et Miquelon	2	Île Saint-Pierre (48)
Newfoundland	13	Saint-Pierre et Miquelon (48)
Nova Scotia	21	St. John's (76)
Prince Edward Island	3	Halifax-Dartmouth (115)
New Brunswick	12	East Point (65)
Quebec	28	Grand Manan Island (67)
Ontario	105	Montreal (75)
Manitoba	17	Kingston (104)
Saskatchewan	21	Winnipeg (44)
Alberta	41	Saskatoon (46)
British Columbia	80	Calgary (68)
Northwest Territories	3	Victoria (154)
Nunavut	2	Fort Simpson (14)
Yukon Territory	7	Yellowknife (14)
Alaska	35	Arviat (1)
Maine	27	Rankin Inlet (1)
New Hampshire	17	Whitehorse (28)
Vermont	16	Kodiak (78)
Massachusetts	32	Greater Portland (89)
Rhode Island	4	Coastal New Hampshire (106)
Connecticut	15	Ferrisburg (79)
New York	67	Greater Boston (120)
New Jersey	29	Mid-Cape Cod (120)
Pennsylvania	63	Martha's Vineyard (120)
Delaware	7	Newport County-Westport (125)
Maryland	23	New Haven (127)
District of Columbia	1	L.I.: Brooklyn (129)
Virginia	37	L.I.: Southern Nassau (129)
North Carolina	46	Cape May (160)
South Carolina	18	Southern Lancaster County (108)
Georgia	22	Cape Henlopen-Prime Hook (140)
Florida	63	Ocean City (147)
Ohio	59	Washington (112)
West Virginia	15	Cape Charles (167)
Kentucky	11	Southport-Bald Head-Oak Islands (173)
Tennessee	27	Charleston (177)
Alabama	12	Savannah (157)
Mississippi	17	Merritt Island N.W.R. (169)
Michigan	55	Cincinnati (92)
Indiana	37	Charles Town (76)
Wisconsin	39	Land Between the Lakes (92)
Illinois	58	Reelfoot Lake (114)
Minnesota	45	Gulf Shores (142)
Iowa	29	Southern Hancock County (153)
Missouri	25	Rockwood (82)
Arkansas	19	Lake Monroe (98)
Louisiana	24	Madison (84)
North Dakota	20	Carlyle Lake (109)
South Dakota	16	Duluth (65)
Nebraska	9	Keokuk (87)
Kansas	25	Horton-Four Rivers (101)
Oklahoma	20	Holla Bend N.W.R. (120)
Texas	98	Sabine N.W.R. (180)
Montana	30	Garrison Dam (60)
Idaho	20	Pierre (70)
Wyoming	20	Lake McConaughy (100)
Colorado	39	Wichita (105)
New Mexico	34	Tishomingo N.W.R. (121)
Utah	20	Matagorda County-Mad Is. Marsh (246)
Nevada	13	Bigfork (81)
Arizona	33	Stevensville (81)
Washington	43	Lewiston-Clarkston (98)
Oregon	40	Cody (69)
California	116	Pueblo Reservoir (116)
Hawaii	11	Loving (116)
Northern Mariana Islands	4	Silver Reef (104)
Mexico	21	Trukee Meadows (110)
Belize	3	Ramsey Canyon (147)
Costa Rica	4	Grays Harbor (149)
Panama	4	Coos Bay (160)
Colombia	6	Santa Barbara (200)
Ecuador	3	Honolulu, O'ahu (55)
Peru	3	Saipan (47)
Chile	1	San Blas, Nayarit (240)
Brazil	2	Punta Gorda (250)
Paraguay	1	Fila Costera (Ia Merced) (392)
Trinidad	1	Atlantic Canal Area (291)
Bahamas	2	Rio Barbas-Bremen Natural Reserve (129)
Dominican Republic	2	Napo, Amazon (552)
Puerto Rico	3	Tambopata Research Center (186)
British Virgin Islands	2	Omora Park, Navarino Island (49)
U.S. Virgin Islands	3	Itirapina, Sao Paulo (140)
Bermuda	1	Asuncion Bay (123)
		Trinidad (188)
		New Providence Island (106)
		Salinas-Bani (56)
		Arecibo (123)
		Tortola (52)
		St. Croix (74)
		Bermuda (92)

The 105th Christmas Bird Count in Canada

December 14, 2004, to January 5, 2005

Richard J. Cannings



The Northern Hawk Owl (*Surnia ulula*) was in southern Canada in significant numbers during the CBC, including a count high of 40 in Opal, AB. Photo/Gordon Court

The total number of Canadian counts rose again this year, to 355, up from 345 last year. There were 11,829 participants, slightly more than last year; a small drop in field observers was offset by an increase in feeder watchers. The number of individual birds dropped about 7 percent, to 3.05 million, mostly due to big declines in the number of a few common species in Ontario, including Canada Goose, Mallard, American Crow, and European Starling. The species total moved up to 300, an increase of eight over last year's total and the highest total since I began summarizing Canadian results in 1999—the previous high was 299. Table 1 summarizes the counts by province and territory.

Victoria set a new Canadian record, with a total of 154 species. Across the Strait of Georgia, Ladner came up with 143 species, good enough to be top Canadian count in most years but not this one. In other provincial rivalries, the Alberta race was much closer this year as Calgary dropped back to 68 species while Edmonton moved up to 62. Kingston took back the Ontario crown from Long Point, with 104 species. Grand Manan was back in action this year and reclaimed the New Brunswick title with 67 species.

Table 1. Provincial and territorial summaries for the 105th Christmas Bird Count.

Province or Territory	Counts	Field observers	Feeder watchers	Species	Individuals	Highest species total and count
Alberta	41	906	811	118	17,6849	68, Calgary
British Columbia	80	2060	522	236	1,086,381	154, Victoria
Manitoba	17	263	136	78	63,920	44, Winnipeg
New Brunswick	12	222	79	111	68,190	67, Grand Manan
Newfoundland and Labrador	13	154	57	117	61,224	76, St. John's
Northwest Territories	3	46	8	22	3363	14, Fort Simpson, Yellowknife
Nova Scotia	21	490	435	149	206,278	115, Halifax-Dartmouth
Nunavut	2	3	0	1	92	1, Arviat, Rankin Inlet
Ontario	105	2596	1816	184	1,096,811	104, Kingston
Prince Edward Island	3	44	6	81	36,465	65, East Point
Québec	28	590	132	127	179,832	75, Montréal
St.-Pierre et Miquelon	2	31	0	63	9052	48, Ile St.-Pierre, St.-Pierre et Miquelon
Saskatchewan	21	232	92	85	59,353	46, Saskatoon
Yukon	7	68	30	36	4147	28, Whitehorse
TOTALS	355	7705	4124	300	3,051,957	



The Pyrrhuloxia (*Cardinalis sinuatus*) seen at West Elgin, ON, was a first for Canada. Photo/Barry Cheriére

North of 60, Whitehorse birders braved bone-chilling temperatures to set a new local record of 28 species.

As can be seen in Table 2, the top eight species have maintained their places. The top four species show continuing declines over the past three years. Over the past four years, four species have declined more than 20 percent: Herring Gull (36 percent), European Starling (31 percent), Mallard (22 percent), and Rock Pigeon (22 percent). Two species of concern with regards to West Nile virus (WNV)—American Crow and Blue Jay—had somewhat heartening results this year. The crow declined again, but only by 5 percent after last year’s 14 percent drop, while the jay count was actually up by 28 percent, to 31,207. On the west coast, Northwestern Crows remained more or less stable, not surprising considering that WNV has not reached British Columbia as of yet. The biggest increase among these abundant species was in the Snow Bunting, which soared to 85,572 this year after three stable years at less than half that number. One-fifth of all those buntings were on one count—Blenheim, ON, reported an astounding 17,132. American Wigeon dropped to its lowest level in four years, a drop almost entirely attributable to a low count from Ladner, BC. Ladner birders tallied only 20,143 wigeon this year, down from 47,252 last year. On the other hand, 34,800 “duck, sp.” were reported from Ladner, so maybe the wigeon were just too far out on the mudflats of Boundary Bay.

Another way to look at bird count results is in the distribution of species. Table 3 lists the top 15 species in Canada based on the number of counts on which

Table 2. The top 15 bird species by total number on the 105th Christmas Bird Count in Canada, with a comparison of results from the previous three years.

Species	Total 105th count	Total 104th count	Total 103rd count	Total 102nd count
European Starling	283,449	334,702	445,741	412,908
Canada Goose	224,129	233,240	267,320	236,760
American Crow	201,882	213,781	249,382	246,627
Mallard	170,692	205,199	222,468	220,214
House Sparrow	129,680	147,013	134,638	142,345
Black-capped Chickadee	121,104	129,437	112,361	123,571
Rock Pigeon	106,892	115,158	138,770	137,259
Dunlin	92,531	107,972	99,885	71,852
Snow Bunting	85,572	41,253	41,655	41,978
Glaucous-winged Gull	81,996	73,825	120,582	100,746
Herring Gull	75,395	81,439	98,361	117,855
Dark-eyed Junco	74,841	76,671	67,045	61,184
American Wigeon	58,820	91,064	75,970	62,789
Bohemian Waxwing	55,465	65,946	38,344	57,800
Northwestern Crow	49,898	49,559	54,649	45,314

Table 3. The most widespread species on Canadian Christmas Bird Counts, as measured by the number of counts on which they were reported.

Species	No. of counts	Rank 105th	Rank 104th	Rank 103rd	Rank 102nd
Downy Woodpecker	316	1	3	2	4
Black-capped Chickadee	313	2	2	1	1
Hairy Woodpecker	311	3	1	3	5
Common Raven	306	4	4	4	8
Common Redpoll	303	5	7	47	5
Dark-eyed Junco	301	6	9	10	2
Red-breasted Nuthatch	290	7	5	8	6
European Starling	283	8	6	5	7
House Sparrow	274	9	8	6	9
Rock Pigeon	267	10	10	7	10
Blue Jay	254	11	11	9	12
American Crow	236	12	12	11	13
Bald Eagle	233	13	14	14	16
Pine Siskin	221	14	15	33	19
Mallard	216	15	16	11	14

they were reported. Interestingly, this year’s top 15 is almost identical to last year’s list, although in slightly different order. Only the last-place species is different—this year Mallard took the spot away from White-breasted Nuthatch.

A Pyrrhuloxia on the West Elgin, ON, count was a first for a Canadian count (and a first for Canada, period); two McKay’s Buntings on the Vancouver, BC, count were also new to the Canadian CBC list. Red-bellied Woodpeckers were unusually common across eastern Canada, with a new Canadian high of 74 at Fisherville, ON, and individuals seen as far east as Corner Brook and Clarendville, NL.

Across central Canada, from the Rockies to the St. Lawrence, this was the

year of the owl. Great Gray and Northern Hawk owls moved out of their northern forests, perhaps driven by a crash in the vole population. Many moved through southern Canada and into the northern United States before the count period began, but significant numbers remained. One hundred and four Northern Hawk Owls were seen on 33 counts, most of them in Alberta. A new count at Opal, AB, had 40 Northern Hawk Owls, easily eclipsing the former Canadian record of nine. A total of 197 Great Grays were seen on 64 counts across the country—compare this with last year’s more typical count of 25 on 17 counts. Ontario had 107 Great Grays, including 16 at Thunder Bay; Opal, AB, had 16.