

youth mentorship kit to four enthusiastic youngsters (ages 8 to 10); they were able to see a dark morph Rough-legged Hawk, a Merlin, and the red-shafted form of the Northern Flicker.

Though they were most excited about the White-tailed Deer that jumped in front of us, their appreciation for our natural world reinforces one fact: the simple gestures we make by lending our time, knowledge, and enthusiasm to others can provide the necessary spark that ignites the fuel of passion. This passion begins the process that leads from understanding, to experiencing, to loving, and to sharing that passion with others. This passion ensures that the spark will be passed into the future.

Something Blue: Eastern Bluebird was seen in its highest numbers ever in Minnesota this season; 50 individuals were observed from eight CBCs—all of which were in Eastern Minnesota. Two Eastern Bluebirds were also reported during the Marshall count period, which is very unusual for southwest Minnesota. Other species that were tallied in higher than usual numbers include the game birds Ring-necked Pheasant (2720) and Greater Prairie-Chicken (192), which were likely brought into good viewing due to deep snow cover during the count period.

Something Else: If accepted, the record of a pink-sided form of the Dark-eyed Junco observed on the Cottonwood CBC would be the state's first documented and published record of this subspecies. And one of the biggest CBC stories this season was the abundance of small finches. Purple Finch numbers (3295) were two and a half times the previous high count, while Pine Siskin totals (5681) were 1000 birds greater (and that does not include the nearly 1800 unidentified finch species that were observed in migration on the Duluth CBC). American Goldfinch and House Finch numbers were also stronger than usual.

In closing, 30 of 35 CBCs that have been conducted over the last 15 years reported species count totals greater than their 15-year average, indicating that once again high participation led to another successful CBC season in Minnesota.

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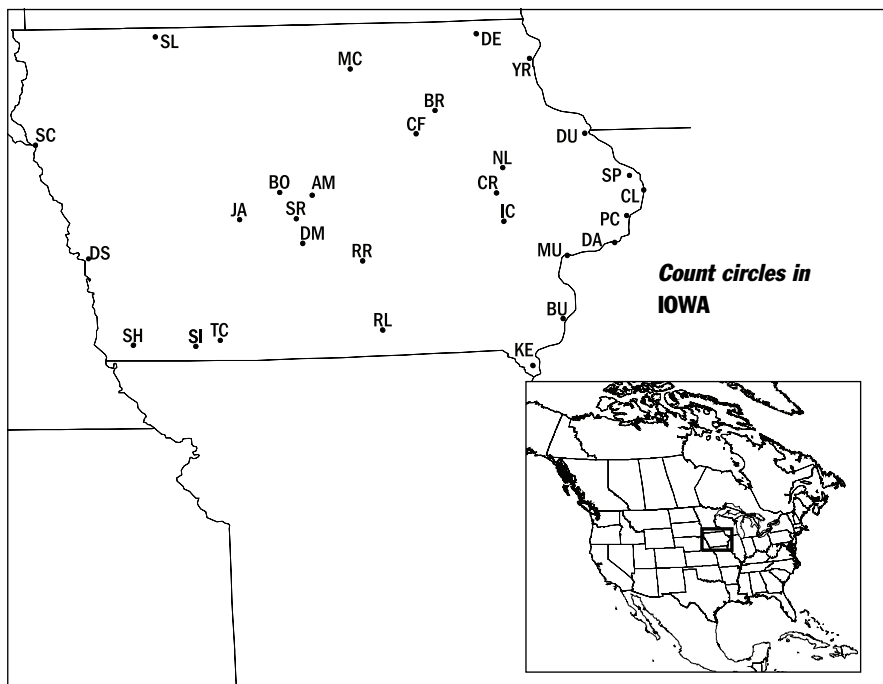
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The 2005–2006 Christmas Bird Count included 27 counts from Iowa. Keokuk in southeast Iowa led the way

for the sixth straight year with 91 species. Incidentally, the all-time record high count from Iowa is 92 species, set by Saylorville in December 1990. Other high counts this season included Davenport (77), Red Rock (73), Clinton (72), and Saylorville and Rathbun (71). De Soto National Wildlife Refuge (57) led the Missouri River counts. Decorah and Mason City (50) led the northern third. December was cold early, and most of the water across the state was frozen. Most of the waterfowl and gulls departed at that time and, despite a late month warm-up, did not return. However, most counts reported significant snow cover, making open country birds easier to find and forcing more birds to our roadsides and backyard feeders. Statewide it was a fantastic count by many measures. The species total of 136 exceeded the 132 species average, and there were few notable misses. A full 27 species were reported in record high numbers and many more were found at near record numbers.

No highly unusual birds were reported. The season's best was probably a Turkey Vulture on the Boone County count, but an American Pipit at Red Rock was a very close second. Other good birds included a Sandhill Crane at Union County, a Townsend's Solitaire at Taylor County, Varied Thrushes at Bremer County and Union-Eldora, a Bonaparte's Gull at Cedar Rapids, a Marsh Wren at Keokuk, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet at Muscatine, a Great-tailed Grackle at Des Moines, and a Common Loon at Saylorville. Seven Black-billed Magpies were found on the Westfield count, putting that species on Westfield's list for four of the last six years. Lastly, a count week Black-crowned Night-Heron was in Cedar Rapids. The only truly notable miss was Northern Goshawk. It was the first count in more than 20 seasons in which the largest *Accipiter* was not recorded.

Waterfowl numbers were down substantially. Canada Geese were found at their lowest numbers in six years. Nearly



Longspurs, and Northern Cardinals all established new records. Snow Buntings had their highest count in 10 years. Icterids were mixed. All regularly found species hovered around their averages. Six Brewer's Blackbirds were reported over three counts. Purple Finches were well above average, and House Finches (5025) posted record numbers. Ames reported the only Common Redpoll. Pine Siskins were relatively scarce. No crossbills or grosbeaks were reported for the second straight year. Eurasian Tree Sparrows (763) established a new high in southeast Iowa. A count of 334 at Keokuk was impressive.

MISSOURI

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Temperatures during the first third of December were unusually cold, averaging about 15 degrees below normal. During the Christmas Bird Count period, however, temperatures were above normal, although first-weekend counts in the north experienced some frozen water. There was little or no snow for most of the 26 counts. Fifteen of the counts were done during the first week of the count period.

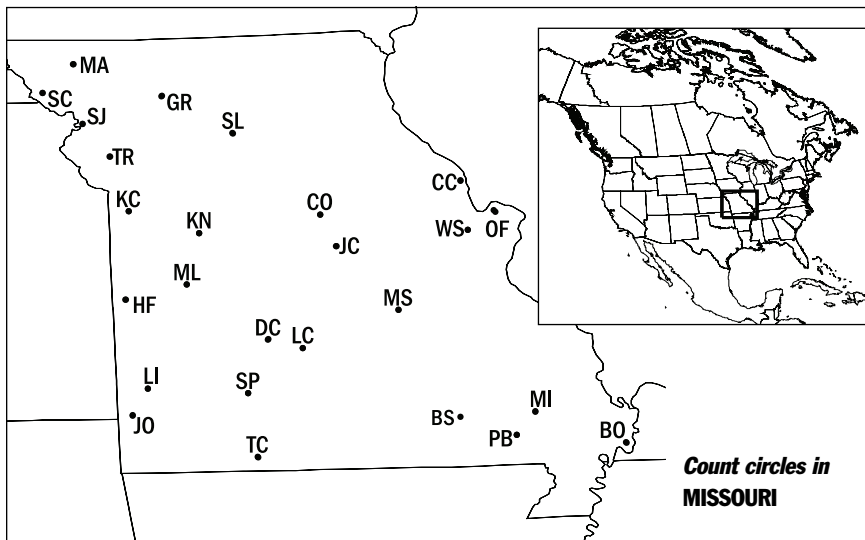
Species observed on fewer counts than normal included Greater Scaup (0 counts), Common Loon (0), Double-crested Cormorant (3), Spotted Towhee (1), and Pine Siskin (3). Species for which the total numbers were less than half of the average for the previous five years include Northern Pintail (2610), Horned Grebe (7), American Coot (721), Killdeer (150), American Pipit (14), and Red-winged Blackbird (23,000). Species seen on more counts than usual include Canvasback (9 counts), Long-tailed Duck (2), Prairie Falcon (5), American Woodcock (2), Eurasian Collared-Dove (9), Short-eared Owl (8), Eastern Phoebe (8), Red-breasted Nuthatch (16), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (18), and Hermit Thrush (19). Species for which the total numbers were high compared to the previous five

all the Snow Geese were found on the Shenandoah count. Seven of the counts' eight Greater White-fronted Geese were at Rathbun. Trumpeter Swans (55) were again found in record numbers, but Tundra Swans were nearly absent. Neither dabblers nor divers were numerous. Wood Ducks (5) posted the lowest total in more than 20 years; however, Greater Scaup (421) established a new high, with nearly all of those at Keokuk. Common Goldeneye (7341) were the most numerous divers. A Black Scoter was found at Keokuk. Long-tailed Ducks were found at Keokuk, Red Rock, and Cedar Rapids.

Thanks to the snow cover, gallinaceous birds were easy to find. Gray Partridge (174) were reported from 10 counts. A record number of Wild Turkeys were found for the second year in a row. Amazingly, Great Blue Herons (176) were found in near record numbers. Bald Eagles (4796) were found in record numbers. Golden Eagle (8) and Merlin (18) were also at record levels. Wilson's Snipes were found at an eight-year low. Gulls were nearly absent from the state. Eurasian Collared-Doves appear to be multiplying exponentially in Iowa. Eastern Screech-Owls (111) rebounded, Great Horned Owls (241) were at their highest numbers in nine years, and Barred Owls (164) were

found in record numbers. Has the threat of West Nile virus passed?

Woodpeckers were abundant. Red-headed Woodpeckers (267) rebounded to average numbers. Red-bellied Woodpeckers (2124) and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers (30) were tallied in record numbers. All other woodpeckers were found in well above average numbers. It was a below average year for both shrikes. Blue Jay numbers were well above average, while American Crow numbers fell to slightly below average numbers. Black-capped Chickadees and Tufted Titmice both rebounded to average numbers. Red-breasted Nuthatches (127) were found in respectable numbers, but it was no invasion. White-breasted Nuthatches (3250), on the other hand, posted record numbers. Carolina Wrens (115) smashed their previous record, and Winter Wrens (39) also did quite well. Eastern Bluebirds (1081) were found in record numbers, and Hermit Thrushes (21) were considered plentiful. The five Northern Mockingbirds was nearly a record, and Gray Catbirds were found on three counts. Yellow-rumped Warblers (45) were reported in above average numbers. Sparrow numbers were also high. Five Eastern Towhees and two Spotted Towhees were reported. White-crowned Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, Lapland



years include Canada Goose (82,000), Blue-winged Teal (17, with 10 at Mingo National Wildlife Refuge), Redhead (44, with 27 at Taney County), Long-tailed Duck (10, with 9 at Montrose Lake), Red-shouldered Hawk (136), Prairie Falcon (6, all in the west), Virginia Rail, (12, all at Columbia), American Woodcock (3), Barred Owl (125), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (211), Northern Flicker (1909), Eastern Phoebe (48), Brown Creeper (241), Carolina Wren (1251), Winter Wren (89), Golden-crowned Kinglet (455), Hermit Thrush (143, including 2 in the north, 1 at Grand River, and 1 at Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge), Cedar Waxwing (5630), Savanna Sparrow (570), Snow Bunting (5, all at Maryville), and Common Grackle (1.1 million, with an estimated 1 million at Meramec Spring). Reintroduced Trumpeter Swans were observed on four counts.

Rarities were few. The most unusual species was a kingbird with a yellow belly at Mingo NWR that was unidentified as to species. Other unusual sightings were one Gray Catbird at Squaw Creek NWR (north) and one Orange-crowned Warbler at Taney County. Eastern Bluebird numbers continue to increase; the total number of birds, 4037, exceeded that of many "common" species, e.g., Horned Lark (2761), House Finch (1907), and Tufted Titmouse (1763).

Missouri CBC observers found 141 species of birds, at the low end of the range of recent years. Mingo NWR had

the highest species total (101), with Columbia (94) and Montrose Lake (93) coming in second and third. A total of 369 persons participated, many of whom did several counts, for a total of 437 person-counts.

ARKANSAS

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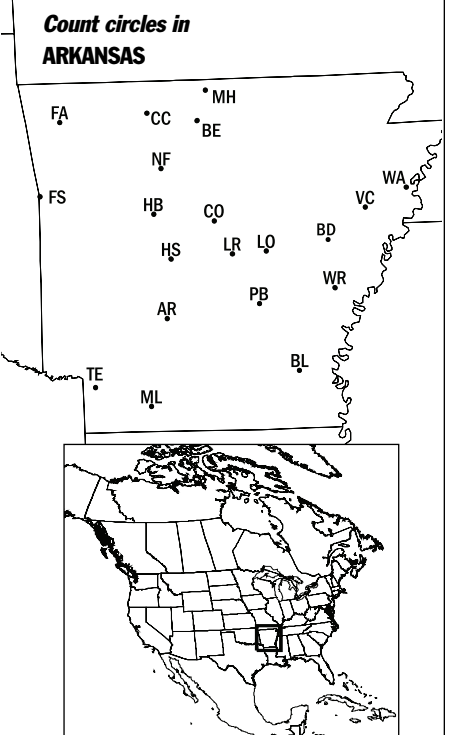
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Throughout this Christmas Bird Count season, weather in Arkansas was mild to warm. Drought conditions occurred across the state, with the western third suffering the most. Water levels were poor, though a few patches were good. Despite the low water levels, nine species of waterfowl set eight-year highs, with Common and Red-breasted mergansers putting in a good showing at Big Lake National Wildlife Refuge and Fayetteville. Low water levels along the Arkansas River created poor conditions for gulls. Overall, observers on 20 counts found 166 species, with 3,902,567 individual birds tallied. Ten counts managed to log more than 90 species, with Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge tying the state record at 122 species. White River National Wildlife Refuge had the highest number of individuals—2,939,053. This year's numbers were well above the region averages for the last eight years in numbers of both birds and species (150 species in the region). At least five counts achieved record high species totals.

The long established White River NWR and the new Bayou DeVew counts did not locate an Ivory-billed Woodpecker, despite good habitat and the presence of Big Woods Partnership Ivory-billed Woodpecker search teams. Maybe next year! Merlins put on a good show at five counts, but no Peregrines were present. Common wintering birds were well represented, with Cedar Waxwing, White-throated Sparrow, and Dark-eyed Junco appearing everywhere. Fort Smith-Moffett and Pine Bluff had the only rails (two species). Shorebird numbers were better than average across the region, with nine species present; Lonoke led with eight species. Four species set eight-year highs, with impressive numbers of Long-billed Dowitchers and Wilson's Snipes present. Semi-hardy lingerers put on an excellent show, with 14 species present on all 20 counts. Irruptive species were low in number; however, the declining Rusty Blackbird set an eight-year high with 1368 tallied, with Conway leading with 634.

It was an amazing year in Arkansas for rarities. Stellar finds included Mute Swan at Mountain Home, Tundra Swan at Big Lake NWR, Eared Grebe at Pine Bluff, Western Grebe at Conway, Anhinga at Texarkana, American Bittern at White River





Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*), Fayetteville, Arkansas. Photo/Sara Caulk

NWR, Little Blue Heron at Magnolia-Lake Columbia, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron at Hot Springs Village, and White Ibis at Texarkana. Equally impressive were the Rough-legged Hawk at Lonoke, Golden Eagle at Holla Bend NWR, Laughing Gull at Holla Bend NWR, Forster's Tern at White River NWR, White-winged Dove at White River NWR, and Inca Dove at Arkadelphia. Other notable rarities included Rufous Hummingbird (count week) at Hot Springs Village, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at Hot Springs Village, Bewick's Wren at Lonoke, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at Holla Bend NWR, a returning Summer Tanager at Fayetteville, Spotted Towhee at Big Lake NWR, and Great-tailed Grackle at Texarkana. But the Arkansas bird-of-the-year award goes to the **first state record Broad-billed Hummingbird** at Pine Bluff!

As always, kudos to the compilers for their tremendous work and to those who contributed to the 1174 hours of volunteer effort—despite the warm, dry weather.

LOUISIANA

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After a night spent in a FEMA camp, 10 birders passed through the security checkpoint into uninhabited coastal Cameron Parish to conduct the Sabine Christmas Bird Count on December 17. This was the first systematic survey of Cameron birdlife after the Katrina and

Rita hurricanes of 2005. Words simply are not adequate to describe the scene that greeted us. The devastation of both the natural and cultural landscapes overwhelmed us and distracted us from the task at hand, but in truth, there weren't that many birds to count. For example, I helped cover East Jetty, the site of the most extensive chenier woodland within the count circle. I saw one mockingbird but did not hear or see a single cardinal.

The CBCs conducted in coastal Louisiana in zones southeast and southwest that bore the brunt of Katrina and Rita are already being analyzed, and I will not dwell on the details—they'll be reported more completely and with more scientific rigor elsewhere.

The devastation of Cameron Parish meant that only one of its four traditional counts could be conducted. Sabine, the undisputed lead count circle in Louisiana, recorded only 117 species, 70 off the pace and 83 off its record—one behind Shreveport in the extreme northwest corner. The 23 counts statewide recorded a meager 242 species, a very poor showing for statewide species diversity. One count made its debut—Butte La Rose in the important, but not very diverse, Atchafalaya Basin.

In southeast Louisiana five count circles fell within the zone most severely affected by Hurricane Katrina—Venice, Grand Isle, New Orleans, Northshore, and St. Tammany. All of the Venice,

most of the New Orleans, and much of the Northshore circles, along with their companion counts on the Mississippi coast, were slammed with the highest storm surge ever recorded in the Atlantic Basin. Resident land birds in marshes and coastal woodlots were drowned outright. In leveed areas of the Venice and New Orleans circles, entrapped floodwaters drowned everything, killing ground covers, shrubs, and many of the trees that had not been blown down.

Despite the devastation, all five counts were conducted. Eight of the 12 observers at New Orleans had lost their homes, and by count day only one had reoccupied his house—living upstairs above his gutted ground floor. Virtually every observer in those circles had endured exiles of varying lengths.

For those able to remain and rebuild, the coming years will be an opportunity to observe and record the recovery, or the permanent loss, of the natural and cultural landscapes that were utterly changed by those storms. It is worth noting that at Grand Isle, overwashed by both Katrina and Rita, even though ground-level human infrastructure was wrecked, the oak woodlands survived. The Nature Conservancy purchased the largest remaining tract of those chenier woods in January, and this spring, transgulf migrants shared the woods with storm debris.

With the order of things completely overthrown, Reserve, which took a

