

The 112th Christmas Bird Count

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The Bewick's Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*) is a species commonly encountered west of the Mississippi on Christmas Bird Counts, but one that has nearly disappeared from the East. CBC data helped document this unexplained decline. This wren was photographed this season in California. Photo/Bing Wong

CONTENTS

The 112th Christmas Bird Count	2
<i>Geoffrey S. LeBaron</i>	
The 112th Christmas Bird Count in Canada	8
<i>Richard J. Cannings</i>	
The CBC is Now Free!	10
<i>National Audubon Society's Citizen Science Group</i>	
West Nile Virus and the Law of Averages	16
<i>Steve Hampton</i>	
[Star] Trekker	24
<i>Dusti Becker</i>	
Bill Graber at the Helm: Fifty Years of the Bolivar Peninsula Christmas Bird Count	30
<i>Royce Pendergast</i>	
Pictorial Highlights	34
Alphabetical Index to Regional Summaries	40
Regional Summaries of the 112th Christmas Bird Count	41
Christmas Bird Count Editorial Codes and Database Flags	107
Count Circles, Codes, and Compilers in the 112th Count	108
Summary of Highest Counts of Individuals for Canada	120
<i>Richard J. Cannings</i>	
Summary of Highest Counts of Individuals for the United States	123
<i>Brent Ortego</i>	

ON THE COVER: The 112th Christmas Bird Count had the promise of being a season with plenty of Snowy Owls (*Bubo scandiacus*) around, and the anticipation bore plentiful fruit as these magnificent birds moved southward in record number. The irruption was unusually widespread in geographic scope, but birders and CBC participants in Montana, where our cover subject was photographed, were treated to large numbers of Snowy Owls in that region. Photo/David Armer

The 112th Christmas Bird Count

December 14, 2011 to January 5, 2012

Geoffrey S. LeBaron

The anticipation has been building for weeks; the long-range weather forecast gets checked nearly daily. What unusual birds have been around as reported on the rare bird alerts and listserves? What about that huge snowstorm or cold snap back in October—how, if at all, will those have affected the birds that are around to be discovered in mid-December? These may be some of the thoughts that pass through the minds of birders who participate on the Christmas Bird Count. And each season all are rewarded in one way or another; it may be a fantastic bird turned up on the count, an all-too-infrequent day of catching up with old friends, or the satisfaction of braving less-than-ideal conditions and still successfully complete the count. Such has been the mind-set of conservation-minded birders since December of 1900, and new horizons for the CBC program are still opening up.

The 112th Christmas Bird Count indeed was a snowy season—though not in terms of the depth and expanse of crystalline H₂O, but instead in a rather remarkable geographic coverage of *Bubo scandiacus*, Snowy Owls. With reports of southbound Snowy Owls beginning in the end of October and high numbers recorded in November of 2011, it seemed that a big irruption was under way of these magnificent Arctic predators. And while the 112th CBC season did not

disappoint Snowy Owl watchers in many areas, there were other events of significant note as well.

Arguably the most notable feature of the 112th count was the weather—it was to prove to be one of the least snowy, or wintry, Christmas Bird Counts on record. From Atlantic Canada to coastal British Columbia, and from the Prairie Provinces to the Gulf Coast, compilers and regional editors alike remarked on the mild and open conditions. There was little snow cover or frozen water anywhere in the geographic area of CBC coverage, and in many regions where winter conditions are usually braved the weather on count day was downright balmy. Even more remarkable (and certainly a welcome break from the past couple of seasons), the weather conditions from coast to coast during the weekends of the 112th count period were nearly storm-free.

Furthermore, for the most part the fall leading up to the count period had also been very mild in general, according to the National Climatic Data Center maps online. Much of the United States had been in warmer than average or record warm conditions, although the Southeast was cooler than normal. For precipitation, the fall had been much wetter than normal in the Northeast, with continuing dry conditions over much of the west. All in all, the stage was set for a most interesting CBC.

Table 1. New counts in the 112th (2011–2012) Christmas Bird Count.

Count Code	Count Name
CANADA	
ABBLL	Blood Reserve, Alberta
ABCR	Crowsnest, Alberta
ABGR	Garden River, Alberta
BCHM	100 Mile House, British Columbia
BCSN	Slocan Lake, British Columbia
MBHO	Hodgson, Manitoba
NSTR	Truro, Nova Scotia
ONBD	Blind River, Ontario
ONCK	Cape Croker, Ontario
QCMM	MRC des Moulins, Québec
QCOS	Quyon-Shawville, Québec
SKCW	Chatsworth School District, Saskatchewan
SKFO	Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan
SKLP	Lac La Plonge, Saskatchewan
YTCM	Carmacks, Yukon Territory
UNITED STATES	
AKCC	Copper Center, Alaska
ARMR	Mississippi River S.P., Arkansas
CAOK	Oakhurst, California
CARP	Mariposa, California
CATT	Tall Trees, California
COFL	Flagler, Colorado
COPS	Pagosa Springs, Colorado
HICL	Lana'i: Lana'i City, Hawaii
IAWF	Westfield, Iowa
ILEM	Eastern Mercer County, Illinois
ILMM	Middle Mississippi River N.W.R., Illinois
INKC	Knox County, Indiana
KSED	El Dorado Lake, Kansas
LAWL	White Lake, Louisiana
MECB	Caribou, Maine
MNUP	Uppgaard W.M.A., Minnesota
NDFY	Fort Union-Yellowstone & Missouri Rivers Confluence Area, North Dakota
NYHP	Huyck Preserve, New York
NYUD	Ulster-Dutchess, New York
PABZ	Benezette, Pennsylvania
PATA	Tamaqua, Pennsylvania
TNCN	Cane Creek, Tennessee
TXLP	Lost Pines, Texas
TXPI	Pineywoods, Texas
UTPC	Park City, Utah
WASW	South End Whidbey, Washington
CARIBBEAN, LATIN AMERICA	
CCLCH	Chingaza P.N.N., Bogota, Colombia
CLPN	Planes de Neira, Caldas, Colombia
CUHP	Hicacos Peninsula, Cuba
JMMO	Mountainside, St. Elizabeth Parish, Jamaica
MXPB	Playa Blanca-Barra de Potosi, Guerrero, Mexico



Winter sparrow identification can sometimes be a challenge, even when well-defined species are encountered. But in the big sparrow flocks in the west, occasionally even more unique birds are encountered—hybrids! This White-crowned Sparrow x Harris's Sparrow (*Zonotrichia, hybrid*), a new inclusion to the cumulative Christmas Bird Count list of taxa, was discovered, studied, and photographed at Pueblo Reservoir, Colorado. Photo/Brandon K. Percival

Table 2. Counts with 100 or more participants in the 112th (2011–2012) CBC.

Code	Count Name	# Observers	(Field + Feeder)
ABED	Edmonton, AB	457	(132 + 325)
ORPD	Portland, OR	331	(210 + 121)
MACO	Concord, MA	322	(208 + 114)
BCVI	Victoria, BC	249	(219 + 30)
ABCA	Calgary, AB	240	(123 + 117)
OREU	Eugene, OR	239	(140 + 99)
CAOA	Oakland, CA	220	(205 + 15)
CASB	Santa Barbara, CA	217	(214 + 3)
CAPR	Point Reyes Peninsula, CA	199	(199 + 0)
WASE	Seattle, WA	182	(181 + 1)
SCHH	Hilton Head Island, SC	169	(162 + 7)
ABSA	St. Albert, AB	168	(44 + 124)
ECNM	Mindo-Tandayapa, Ecuador	160	(140 + 20)
AKAN	Anchorage, AK	150	(99 + 51)
SCSC	Sun City-Okatie, SC	149	(13 + 36)
WIMA	Madison, WI	149	(97 + 52)
VAFB	Fort Belvoir, VA	147	(139 + 8)
BCVA	Vancouver, BC	145	(140 + 5)
OHCF	Cuyahoga Falls, OH	145	(107 + 38)
CODE	Denver, CO	144	(123 + 21)
ILFB	Fermlab-Batavia, IL	144	(138 + 6)
NSHD	Halifax-Dartmouth, NS	142	(73 + 69)
DCDC	Washington, DC	141	(137 + 4)
NYIT	Ithaca, NY	138	(126 + 12)
ONLO	London, ON	137	(96 + 41)
NJLH	Lower Hudson, NJ-NY	135	(135 + 0)
WASD	Sequim-Dungeness, WA	135	(85 + 50)
ONTO	Toronto, ON	132	(132 + 0)
CAWS	Western Sonoma County, CA	130	(130 + 0)
NSWO	Wolfville, NS	128	(46 + 82)
UTBC	Bryce Canyon N.P., UT	128	(28 + 100)
CAMC	Marin County (southern), CA	127	(122 + 5)
CASZ	Sonoma Valley, CA	125	(123 + 2)
CASF	San Francisco, CA	123	(123 + 0)
MANO	Northampton, MA	123	(115 + 8)
CAOC	Orange County (coastal), CA	122	(122 + 0)
ONOH	Ottawa-Gatineau, ON	122	(105 + 17)
CAPA	Palo Alto, CA	121	(121 + 0)
VACL	Central Loudon, VA	121	(117 + 4)
CASJ	San Jose, CA	120	(120 + 0)
FLSC	Sanibel-Captiva, FL	120	(120 + 0)
CASD	San Diego, CA	118	(118 + 0)
OHCI	Cincinnati, OH	118	(107 + 11)
TXAU	Austin, TX	116	(114 + 2)
COBO	Boulder, CO	114	(104 + 10)
CODV	Denver (urban), CO	114	(95 + 19)
AKFA	Fairbanks, AK	113	(85 + 28)
QCQU	Quebec, QC	113	(96 + 17)
BCGS	Galiano-North Saltspring, BC	109	(77 + 32)
CABE	Benicia, CA	109	(106 + 3)
NSKI	Kingston, NS	109	(24 + 85)
CRLS	La Selva, Lower Braulio Carillo N.P., Costa Rica	105	(105 + 0)
FLCO	Cocoa, FL	104	(66 + 38)
CTHA	Hartford, CT	103	(94 + 9)
BCPM	Pitt Meadows, BC	102	(95 + 7)
PACH	Chambersburg, PA	102	(71 + 31)
FLGA	Gainesville, FL	101	(100 + 1)
NYCR	Cortland, NY	101	(23 + 78)
ONHA	Hamilton, ON	101	(91 + 10)
CACR	Calero-Morgan Hill, CA	100	(100 + 0)

The end result was another remarkable and record-setting season for the Christmas Bird Count. A new record total of 2248 CBCs are in the 112th season's database (up 88 from last year's one-year-wonder record high), including 410 in Canada, 1739 in the United States, and 99 counts in Latin America,

the Caribbean, and the Pacific Islands. Results such as these cannot be generated without the inclusion of a wealth of new circles, and the roster of the 46 new CBCs in the 112th Count (15 in Canada, 26 in the United States, and 5 in the Caribbean and Latin America) is listed in Table 1. Among the new circles are

two in the Caribbean that contribute results on islands long missing from the CBC—Cuba and Jamaica. We hope for many years of coverage (and perhaps more counts) from these fascinating and species-rich locations.

In addition to the new counts included this season, as was mentioned last year we always welcome the return of data from circles that have lapsed over time. Significant efforts have been made in Canada (many thanks to the efforts of Bird Studies Canada and all the Canadian CBC Regional Editors) as well as in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and other regions in recent seasons. This year we welcome back into the fold six re-started Christmas Bird Counts, and we will always look forward to hearing from compilers hoping to re-start other existing historical counts.

One focus of Audubon's bird conservation efforts is to use the lens of the four main migratory flyways that birds use during their movements across the Americas. The flyways view also helps connect conservation goals for species both north of the United States in Canada and to the south in the Caribbean and Latin America. Long-term Christmas Bird Count results are highly informative to staff and researchers working to preserve and protect species in the flyways, and the current breakdown of active CBCs in the United States as measured by this ruler is 568 CBCs in the Atlantic Flyway, 540 in the Mississippi Flyway, 451 in the Central Flyway, and 280 along the Pacific Flyway. Each season these numbers will likely increase as more and more CBCs are conducted, providing an ever more important data set for the protection of birds across the Americas.

Not surprisingly, given the number of CBCs and remarkably favorable weather, another new record level of participation is included in the 112th Christmas Bird Count—63,227 observers (54,262 in the field and 8965 at feeders) contributed their time and effort this season. That total is 603 higher than last year's record tally, swelled mostly by an increase in field participation, even though the number of feederwatchers slightly declined. This is not unexpected given the

Table 3. Counts with 150 or more species recorded in the 112th (2011–2012) 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	244
TXGF	2	Guadalupe River Delta-McFadden Ranch, TX	225
CASD	3	San Diego, CA	216
CASB	4	Santa Barbara, CA	215
CAOC	5	Orange County (coastal), CA	211
CAPR	6	Point Reyes Peninsula, CA	206
CAMR	7	Morro Bay, CA	201
CAMD	8	Moss Landing, CA	200
TXFR	9	Freeport, TX	199
CACS	10	Crystal Springs, CA	198
CAOV	10	Oceanside-Vista-Carlsbad, CA	198
TXSB	12	San Bernard N.W.R., TX	196
CARS	13	Rancho Santa Fe, CA	195
TXWS	13	Weslaco, TX	195
CAMP	15	Monterey Peninsula, CA	190
CAMC	16	Marin County (southern), CA	186
CAWS	17	Western Sonoma County, CA	185
TXCF	18	Corpus Christi (Flour Bluff), TX	184
TXBP	19	Bolivar Peninsula, TX	183
TXCC	19	Corpus Christi, TX	183
CATO	21	Thousand Oaks, CA	182
CAAR	22	Arcata, CA	181
CAOA	22	Oakland, CA	181
CAVE	24	Ventura, CA	180
CABE	25	Benicia, CA	179
CACB	25	Centerville Beach to King Salmon, CA	179
TXPA	27	Port Aransas, TX	178
CAHF	28	Hayward-Fremont, CA	177
CASF	29	San Francisco, CA	176
SCMC	29	McClellanville, SC	176
CALB	31	Long Beach-El Dorado, CA	175
CASJ	32	San Jose, CA	173
LASA	33	Sabine N.W.R., LA	172
TXRO	33	Rockport, TX	172
CASC	35	Santa Cruz County, CA	171
FLNR	35	West Pasco (New Port Richey), FL	171
TXAZ	35	Anzalduas-Bentsen S.P., TX	171
CAAN	38	Año Nuevo, CA	170
CAPP	38	Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA	170
CASZ	38	Sonoma Valley, CA	170
TXGA	41	Galveston, TX	169
CAPA	42	Palo Alto, CA	168
FLNP	42	North Pinellas, FL	168
TXSA	42	Santa Ana N.W.R., TX	168
CAPS	45	Pasadena-San Gabriel Valley, CA	167
TXCK	45	Choke Canyon, TX	167
CALA	47	Los Angeles, CA	166
TXBV	47	Brownsville, TX	166
FLZE	49	Zellwood-Mt. Dora, FL	165
CACT	50	Cheep Thrills, CA	164
CAMU	50	Malibu, CA	164
CASS	50	Salton Sea (south), CA	164
LALT	50	Lacassine N.W.R.-Thornwell, LA	164
TXKI	50	Kingsville, TX	164
TXAP	55	AttWater Prairie Chicken N.W.R., TX	163
TXAR	55	Aransas N.W.R., TX	163
TXHG	55	Harlingen, TX	163
CAON	58	Orange County (northeastern), CA	162
CASU	58	San Juan Capistrano, CA	162
GASV	58	Savannah, GA-SC	162
ORCB	58	Coos Bay, OR	162
CASG	62	Santa Maria-Guadalupe, CA	160
CASM	62	Sacramento, CA	160
NCWI	62	Wilmington, NC	160
FLAL	65	Alafia Banks, FL	159
FLCO	65	Cocoa, FL	159
LAWL	65	White Lake, Louisiana	159
FLSP	68	St. Petersburg, FL	158
NCMC	68	Morehead City, NC	158
TXST	68	San Antonio, TX	158
NCSB	71	Southport-Bald Head-Oak Islands, NC	157
TXAY	71	Armand Bayou, TX	157
AZPT	73	Phoenix-Ires Rios, AZ	156
FLGA	73	Gainesville, FL	156
FLSM	73	St. Marks, FL	156
MSSH	73	Southern Hancock County, MS	156
SCHH	73	Hilton Head Island, SC	156
TXBZ	73	Brazos Bend, TX	156
TXLA	73	Laguna Atascosa N.W.R., TX	156
CAEA	80	Eastern Alameda County, CA	155
FLSR	80	Sarasota, FL	155
LASC	80	Sweet Lake-Cameron Prairie N.W.R., LA	155
TXBR	80	Brazoria, TX	155
TXLS	80	La Sal Vieja, TX	155
FLJA	85	Jacksonville, FL	154
TXAU	85	Austin, TX	154
VACC	85	Cape Charles, VA	154
CACC	88	Cohtra Costa County, CA	153
CAES	88	Escondido, CA	153
FLLP	90	Lake Placid, FL	152
NCMA	90	Mattamuskeet N.W.R., NC	152
NJCM	90	Cape May, NJ	152
ORCV	90	Coquille Valley, OR	152
VACI	90	Chihcoteague N.W.R., VA	152
CACN	95	Carpinteria, CA	151
CACU	95	Cachuma, CA	151
FLAB	95	Aripeka-Bayport, FL	151
TXSR	95	Sea Rim S.P., TX	151
WASD	95	Sequim-Dungeness, WA	151
AZPA	100	Patagonia, AZ	150
CARC	100	Rio Cosumnes, CA	150
FLSB	100	South Brevard County, FL	150
MDOC	100	Ocean City, MD	150
SCLP	100	Litchfield-Pawleys Island, SC	150

spectacular counting conditions that would have enticed folks into the field. The regional breakdowns for the participation totals are as follows: in Canada, 12,019 observers (8635 in the field and 3384 at feeders); 49,158 birders (43,635 afield and 5523 at feeders) in the United States; and 2050 (1992 observers in the field and 58 at feeders) in the Caribbean, Latin America, and the Pacific Islands of Johnston Atoll, Guam, Saipan, and Tinian. From the boreal regions of Alaska and Canada to the Neotropics, compilers of many circles are blessed with an abundant wealth of observers to manage for their counts. Table 2 lists the 60 counts reaching or exceeding the 100-observer mark in the 112th CBC.

So that's a summary of the conditions, effort, and coverage—now what about the birds? As is invariably the case, millions upon millions of birds of thousands of species were tallied during the 112th count; 64,989,719 of our fine feathered friends in total. National and regional results by CBC observers included 3,943,480 birds in Canada, 60,502,185 in the United States, and 544,054 birds in other countries. Looking at the cumulative tallies of types of birds, 2298 species were reported on all circles combined, not surprisingly up considerably from other seasons given the new counts in Jamaica, Cuba, and Colombia, where endemism is incredibly high. In the United States, 666 species and 48 infra-specific forms (some of those potential future splits!) were tallied, including three new species to the cumulative 112-year CBC database: **Gray-tailed Tattler** and **Millerbird**, both from Laysan Island, Hawaii; and (unfortunately count week only) **Dusky Thrush** at Anchorage, Alaska. That pesky Dusky Thrush was a particular frustration for CBC participants in Anchorage; it had been present for weeks visiting a yard in Anchorage, and was seen both the day before *and* the day after the census, but could not be located on count day. In Canada, CBC participants tallied a new record total of 303 species, including one new species for the cumulative Canada list, the **Lazuli Bunting** discovered at Cape Sable Island, Nova Scotia. Counters there had an

entirely different experience from those in Anchorage—please have a look at Dick Cannings’ 112th Canada summary for the details!

Tens of thousands of birders in more than 2000 locations finding tens of millions of birds should come up with some pretty impressive count-specific species totals, and the 112th CBC was no exception to that rule. Table 3 lists all the counts this season tallying 150 species or more, and it’s quite interesting to peruse the list in light of the weather conditions during the 112th count period. This season there are 104 counts in the U.S. and Canada on this list (up from 98 last season), and a considerable number of those tallies are higher than last year. While the number of counts in Latin America on the list is a similar roster to previous seasons, many of those species totals are actually much lower than before. Both factors can likely be attributed to the weather—amazingly favorable in the U.S. and Canada, but considerably more inclement in Latin America. Lousy weather negatively affects both the number of birders in the field and the detectability of birds, likely hence these contrasting numbers.

Topping the list of counts north of the Mexican border in Table 3, as has usually been the case for the past decades, is Madagorda County-Mad Island Marsh, Texas, with a species tally of 244, skirting again with the 250-species mark and their third highest tally since the start of the count in the 94th CBC. They have retained their top spot for the entire run of that count except for the 107th CBC, when Corpus Christi, Texas, prevailed. Other counts in both California and Texas knock on the door; who knows what future seasons will bring! One major exception to the rule of depressed species totals in Latin America during the 112th count, however, as also seen in Table 3 is Yanayacu, Ecuador, out-tallying their hard-working neighbors at Mindo-Tandayapa with 492 species, nearly breaking the 500-species barrier. Some of the same observers participate on both of these awesome Ecuadorian counts, and one can only wonder what future tallies will achieve! Many thanks

Table 3b. Counts with 150 or more species south of the United States-Mexican border.

Count Code	Rank	Count Name	Species Recorded
ECYY	1	Yanayacu, Ecuador	492
ECNM	2	Mindo-Tandayapa, Ecuador	432
CRPR	3	Pacific Rainforest Aerial Tram-Carara Reserve, Costa Rica	382
CRRF	4	Rain Forest Aerial Tram, Costa Rica	378
CRLS	5	La Selva, Lower Braulio Carillo N.P., Costa Rica	340
CRCF	6	Western Cloud Forest, Balsa, Costa Rica	331
RPPC	7	Pacific Canal Area, Panama	290
CRMO	8	Monteverde, Costa Rica	286
ECGA	9	Gareno, Napo, Ecuador	276
RPPC	10	Central Canal Area, Panama	262
CROP	11	Osa Peninsula, Puntarenas, Costa Rica	251
RPAC	11	Atlantic Canal Area, Panama	251
MXSB	13	San Blas, Nayarit, Mexico	249
GMAV	14	Atitlan Volcano, Guatemala	239
BLPG	15	Punta Gorda, Belize	231
ECLA	16	Loma Alta, Ecuador	209
NIRJ	17	Reserva el Jaguar, Jinotega, Nicaragua	196
BLGJ	18	Gallon Jug, Belize	183
TRTR	19	Trinidad, W.I.	177
RPVC	20	Volcan, Chiriqui, Panama	176
MXOJ	21	Oaxaca de Juarez, Oaxaca, Mexico	173
GMTK	22	Tikal, Guatemala	171
MXCZ	23	Coast of Central Veracruz, Mexico	168
MXAL	24	Alamos, Sonora, Mexico	167
MXHU	24	Huatulco, Oaxaca, Mexico	167
CLCO	26	Cordillera Occidental, Valle del Cauca, Colombia	160
CRCA	26	Cacao - Area de Conservacion Guancaste, Costa Rica	160
MXEG	28	El Yugo, Sinaloa, Mexico	157
CRSR	29	Santa Rosa - Area de Conservacion Guanacaste, Costa Rica	153
MXEP	29	Ensenada de La Paz, BCS, Mexico	153

and congratulations go to all participants on each and every CBC, whether your species total remains at one (for Prudhoe Bay, Alaska) or skirts with 500 in the Neotropics. Every person on every one of the 2248 counts included this season contributes valuable data, and no field checklists go unappreciated.

However, every year each group on every CBC competes with themselves as well as with their neighboring parties, and also of course with their neighboring counts. Table 4 displays the roster of regional high species tallies in the 112th Christmas Bird Count, with both species totals and the number of counts in the region listed.

So what about the aforementioned avian snow cover during the 112th Christmas Bird Count? Was it really all that big—and how did it compare to other “big” Snowy Owl seasons? While the total number of Snowy Owls reported in Canada and the United States this season (546) was the highest of any year since the 60th CBC, the additional measure (usually used in analyses of CBC data) is to look at the effort-weighted data, using the birds per party hour. By that measure, the 75th CBC, the first season of the historic big double invasion

event of Snowy Owls, has the highest number at 0.063 birds per party hour. In the 112th count, this yardstick shows 0.033 birds per party hour; thus almost two times as many Snowy Owls were likely to be encountered per hour by parties during the 75th count.

However, the most remarkable thing about the Snowy Owl irruption this season was its geographic expanse. While there were not many Snowies that reached record southern areas, from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic shores Snowy Owls were found in good numbers on 256 counts across southern Canada and the northern tier of states, far exceeding the number of counts tallying this species than ever before; the previous high was 513 birds on 193 counts in the 97th CBC. Perhaps most unique about this flight was the fact that it was a wide geographic swath across the Canada–United States border; most other irruptions include a significant push southward either in the east, central, or western parts of the continent. Numbers of Snowy Owls were somewhat higher to the west—Regina, Saskatchewan, had the greatest number at 45, followed by Ladner, British Columbia, at 37—but there were double-digit counts in

Table 4. Regional high counts for the 112th (2011–2012) CBC.

Region	# of CBCs	Highest Count (species total)
St. Pierre et Miquelon	2	Ile St.-Pierre (45)
Newfoundland	11	St. John's (69)
Nova Scotia	22	Halifax-Dartmouth (114)
Prince Edward Island	3	East Point (52)
New Brunswick	16	Cape Tormentine (66)
		Grand Manan Island (66)
Québec	36	Montréal (75)
Ontario	112	Long Point (111)
Manitoba	21	Winnipeg (46)
Saskatchewan	35	Saskatoon (48)
Alberta	41	Calgary (69)
British Columbia	91	Ladner (140)
		Victoria (140)
Northwest Territories	4	Fort Simpson (18)
Nunavut	4	Arviat (4)
		Chesterfield Inlet (4)
Yukon Territory	12	Whitehorse (27)
Alaska	38	Kodiak (78)
Maine	32	Greater Portland (97)
New Hampshire	17	Coastal New Hampshire (117)
Vermont	18	Ferrisburg (81)
Massachusetts	33	Mid-Cape Cod (137)
Rhode Island	4	Newport County-Westport (127)
Connecticut	16	New Haven (128)
New York	69	L.I.: Southern Nassau (133)
New Jersey	30	Cape May (152)
Pennsylvania	71	Southern Lancaster County (107)
Delaware	7	Cape Henlopen-Prime Hook (146)
Maryland	24	Ocean City (150)
District of Columbia	1	Washington (89)
Virginia	46	Cape Charles (154)
North Carolina	48	Wilmington (160)
South Carolina	22	McClellanville (176)
Georgia	26	Savannah, GA-SC (162)
Florida	68	West Pasco (New Port Richey) (171)
Ohio	61	Toledo (108)
West Virginia	20	Ona (76)
Kentucky	16	Louisville (89)
Tennessee	30	Reelfoot Lake (111)
		Savannah (111)
		Gulf Shores (138)
Alabama	9	Southern Hancock County (156)
Mississippi	17	Anchor Bay (97)
Michigan	64	Goose Pond (103)
Indiana	42	Madison (93)
Wisconsin	48	Union County (107)
Illinois	61	Bloomington (68)
Minnesota	48	Davenport (91)
Iowa	31	Columbia (103)
Missouri	26	Holla Bend N.W.R. (119)
Arkansas	23	Sabine N.W.R. (172)
Louisiana	24	Garrison Dam (66)
North Dakota	20	Pierre (85)
South Dakota	17	Lake McConaughy (103)
Nebraska	12	Udall-Winfield (106)
Kansas	23	Tishomingo N.W.R. (125)
Oklahoma	18	Matagorda County-Mad Island Marsh (244)
Texas	109	Bigfork (90)
Montana	31	Bruneau (96)
Idaho	26	Casper (67)
Wyoming	20	Pueblo Reservoir (128)
Colorado	47	Caballo (128)
New Mexico	31	Salt Lake City (109)
Utah	25	Truckee Meadows (103)
Nevada	15	Phoenix-Tres Rios (155)
Arizona	33	Sequim-Dungeness (151)
Washington	41	Coos Bay (162)
Oregon	42	San Diego (216)
California	127	O'ahu: Honolulu (58)
Hawaii	14	Saipan (47)
Pacific Islands	5	San Blas, Nayarit (249)
Mexico	28	Punta Gorda (231)
Belize	2	Atitlan Volcano (239)
Guatemala	3	Reserva El Jaguar, Jinotega (196)
Nicaragua	2	Pacific Rainforest Aerial Tram-Carara Reserve (383)
Costa Rica	8	Pacific Canal Area (290)
Panama	4	Cordillera Occidental, Valle del Cauca (160)
Colombia	21	Yanayacu (492)
Ecuador	6	Trinidad (177)
Trinidad	1	New Providence Island (121)
Bahamas	4	Hicacos Peninsula (69)
Cuba	1	Mountainside, St. Elizabeth Parish (52)
Jamaica	1	Puerto Escondido (81)
Dominican Republic	2	Les Cayes (72)
Haiti	1	Arecibo (121)
Puerto Rico	3	Cabo Rojo (121)
		Tortola (54)
British Virgin Islands	2	East End, St. Croix (65)
U.S. Virgin Islands	3	Bermuda (88)
Bermuda	1	

Ontario, and high count or unusual species records from Nantucket Island, Massachusetts, through Iowa to Colorado. Snowy Owls, especially young birds, move southward in good numbers approximately every three to five years following the crash of small mammal populations in the Arctic, and this was a big year indeed. Will the 115th CBC be the next big irruption of Snowy Owls? Only the birds...and the lemmings...will be able to predict the answer to that question.

Another factor affecting birds on Christmas Bird Counts at a continental level is the ongoing and drastic drought in the Southwestern states, and especially in portions of Texas. Texas had the driest year on record in 2011, and New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Louisiana all had much below-average precipitation. Please read Brent Oretgo's Texas CBC regional summary for a more in-depth (and firsthand) view of this event. Productivity for many species in drought-stricken areas is likely very low, and birds that winter in these regions are showing up as vagrants in far-flung portions of the continent, both on CBCs and at other times of years. Green-tailed Towhees and Black-throated Sparrows are examples—each of these species has been tallied in regions where they would not normally occur in the past few CBCs. As the drought continues (though we hope it will not!) other southwestern wintering species may show up to the north and east in unexpected areas.

Of note continentally are three continuing long-term declines as documented on Christmas Bird Counts—Northern Bobwhite, American Kestrel, and Loggerhead Shrike. Bobwhites across the board in their range are mentioned by birders, compilers, and regional editors as in decline, and this trend has been significant since the last relatively high season in the 83rd CBC. In some areas where this jaunty quail was formerly commonly found it is now only present as a result of introductions for hunting stock. Quail in general have been declining for some time, likely as a result of loss of fallow fields and shrub land needed for breeding. But the Northern Bobwhite seems to be the poster child for this unwelcome phenomenon.



A great inclusion on the Helena, Montana, list (though only count week) was this Cape May Warbler (*Setophaga tigrina*), providing the state's first ever winter record. Photo/Terry & Shari Copenhaver

Meanwhile, American Kestrel has demonstrated a long, slow decline over the past 30 years. That decline seems to be flattening a bit, and in some regions even seems to be showing a rebound, but the overall trend is still negative. As with the kestrel, Loggerhead Shrike has been in trouble for decades, and while the numbers for this species on CBCs are still significantly depressed over historic times, again there is cause for hope as the trend has slightly reversed over the past three seasons. There have been similar up-ticks in the trend data for shrikes over the past 20 years, but if this slow increase continues it could be very good news for the predatory passerine species.

Another persistent pattern developing in Christmas Bird Count data is an increase in Northern Rough-winged Swallow reports and numbers, away from the southern regions of the continent. In years past, the only "expected" swallows to the north during the Christmas Bird Count period were Tree Swallow continentally and Violet-green Swallow on the West Coast. However, that may be changing. In the 112th CBC, Northern Rough-winged Swallows were reported (and documented) in small numbers in Connecticut, Tennessee, Indiana, and Illinois, and a flock of 150 was present at Pennypack Valley, Pennsylvania. They were also recorded away from their usual

haunts on many CBCs in Florida. This species is among the earliest of north-bound migrants in the spring; perhaps as winter temperatures moderate with a concurrent increase in availability of flying insects Northern Rough-winged Swallows will linger farther and farther north as well.

Important changes are coming for the Christmas Bird Count program. Audubon Science solicited your comments in an online survey earlier this year, and we thank the thousands of participants and compilers who responded. Your input helped Audubon to make two critical revisions under consideration for the CBC. Please take a look at the feature that begins on page 10, announcing these changes and summarizing the results of the online survey. In a nutshell, the participant fee for the CBC has been eliminated, and to financially enable this decision *American Birds* will no longer be mailed in printed form, and instead will be delivered in an online format.

Lots of interesting ideas were mentioned in the comment sections of the online survey, and one recurring theme that deserves mention here is the use of tapes, iPods, "pishing," and other attractant noises on Christmas Bird Counts. Such methods and devices are strictly forbidden on the Breeding Bird Survey, Breeding Bird Atlas, and other surveys of birds in the breeding season. However, because the CBC is monitoring birds in the non-breeding season (and most species are not singing, at least in North America) the use of tapes and attractant noises has always been allowed on the CBC. With the advent and proliferation of iPods and other hand-held devices that can readily play bird vocalizations and elicit responses from otherwise hidden birds, this use is reported to be on the rise.

The prohibition of the use of attractant noises on CBCs would be a relatively major programmatic decision that could quickly change the data collected by observers on many counts, and thus we need to continue their use at least for now. However, the use of such devices should be very judicious, and never done in a fashion that could affect the behavior of target species in any significant way. If

you use iPods or tapes on your CBC, please keep this in mind!

This is the 25th Christmas Bird Count I've had the honor of summarizing in these pages. Those years have spanned a lot of major changes in the CBC program. Early in my tenure the 87th CBC issue was the one-off and universally disliked "tabular" format, and participant fees were raised from three, to four, and then five dollars. On a hugely more positive note, the entire data set was made available in an interactive, free, online database, and an online data entry application was developed. The number of counts included in the 88th CBC (my first summary) was 1531, and 25 years later that number is 2248. With the advent of the free Christmas Bird Count starting in the upcoming 113th CBC and online delivery of *American Birds*, a whole new era of communication and conservation action lies ahead.

I've been doing Christmas Bird Counts since before I ever thought it could be possible to work for Audubon, and my traditional CBCs have been, and continue to be, the Newport-Westport and South Kingstown CBCs in Rhode Island. This past season we discovered some amazing avian changes on the Newport-Westport count, where over the past decades occasionally we hope to find one or two lingering Great Egrets. This season a guttural squawking caught our ears while we were combing the shores of Briggs Marsh; at first it sounded like a Sandhill Crane, but it just wasn't quite right. As we slowly rounded the corner of a cove, three, then five, then a dozen and eventually **21** Great Egrets were roosting in the trees—and equally amazingly, so was one Snowy Egret. This wasn't Florida, folks, but Rhode Island. It was a truly exciting moment in the field.

The global climate is changing, and the numbers and movements of birds are shifting in response. We can't be sure how this will all turn out in the long run, but we can be sure that citizen science programs as epitomized by the Christmas Bird Count will help understand what's happening and, as both birders and ornithologists are asked all the time, will continue to tell "So, how **are** the birds doing?" 