

Shuswap Naturalist Club Newsletter

January 2022

The January Newsletter is mostly about birds. There were three Christmas bird counts in our area. Seven of our members participated in the North Shuswap count that took place on December 15th. There were 53 species identified, with a count of 2,098 individuals.

Ted Hillary writes an excellent report on our December 19th count. Surprises include that there were only two Pine Siskins sighted and no American Dippers.

Thanks to Molly Cooperman for organizing the bird count for the young naturalists.

John Woods writes an article reminding us of the natural treasure we have in the Salmon Arm Bay. It should remind us of our commitment to protect this gem. When walking the trail, walk slowly and bow often.

Roger Beardmore photo



Christmas Bird Count Report 2021

By Ted Hillary

The annual Christmas Bird Count in the Salmon Arm area was held on Sunday December 19. It was a bright chilly day with temperatures from minus 1 to minus 12. The wind was mostly calm but sometimes blew with gusts up to about 15 km per hour. Shuswap Lake was frozen on the edges and its open water was choppy. Small bodies of water were frozen over. The snow coverage was from 10 to 32 centimeters.

The count area was covered by 29 participants in 11 groups of one to five people each. There were 459 kilometers covered by vehicles in a combined total of 45.5 hours. Also, participants on foot covered 28 kilometers over 15 hours. In addition, three feeder counts reported in.

A total of 64 species was seen with an additional three during count week. This is one of the lowest number of species ever seen on our Christmas Bird Count. Perhaps this is because of the cold weather in the week before the count, freezing open water and bringing in the snow. The total number of birds seen was 6950. This also is quite below our average.

The most common bird seen was the Canada goose with 1514, down about 1000 from the week before. In second place were the Bohemian Waxwings with 998, followed by European Starlings with 844. Rounding out the top five were 516 Mallards and 486 Rock Pigeons, both numbers somewhat below average.

There were some notable sightings. There were a record high number of Red-winged Blackbirds with 447; the previous record was 355 set in 2018. There were a couple of rarities both seen in the south east section: one Lincoln's Sparrow and four American Tree Sparrows; both species were last seen in 2004. A Cedar Waxwing feeding with Bohemian Waxwings at Raven was a rare winter visitor.

There was only one owl found this year, a Short-eared Owl near the Salmon River. Also, only two Pine Siskins were seen, at a feeder, when often hundreds are seen. There were no loons, wrens, Redpolls or crossbills.

A big thank you to all who participated in this year's count and helped to make it a success. It would not happen without you.

Listed below are the species seen and their numbers:

Canada goose 1514	Rock pigeon 486	Brown creeper 3
Trumpeter swan 154	Eurasian collared-dove 54	Golden-crowned kinglet 1
Swan (SP) 5	Mourning dove 7	Townsend's solitaire 2
Gadwall 6	Short-eared owl 1	American robin 34
American widgeon 1	Belted kingfisher 2	Varied thrush 3
Mallard 516	Downy woodpecker 3	European starling 844
Green-winged teal 7	Hairy woodpecker 1	Bohemian waxwing 998
Greater scaup 7	Northern flicker 5	Cedar waxwing 1
Bufflehead 9	Northern flicker (yellow-shafted) 1	American tree sparrow 4
Common goldeneye 19	Northern flicker (red-shafted) 86	Dark-eyed junco (slate-coloured) 9
Barrow's goldeneye 2	Northern flicker(intergrade)1	Dark-eyed junco (Oregon) 222
Hooded merganser 2	Pileated woodpecker 8	White-crowned sparrow 1
Common merganser 16	American kestrel 2	White-throated sparrow 4
California quail 28	Merlin Count Week 1	Song sparrow 97
Ring-necked pheasant 20	Northern shrike 3	Lincoln's sparrow 1
Pied-billed grebe 2	Steller's jay 23	Spotted towhee 2
Horned grebe 2	Black-billed magpie 94	Red-winged blackbird 447
Great blue heron 7	American crow 194	Pine grosbeak 1
Northern harrier 2	Common raven 202	House finch 118
Sharp-shinned hawk 2	Black-capped chickadee 289	Cassin's finch Count Week 1
Cooper's hawk 3	Mountain chickadee 12	Pine siskin 2
Bald eagle 42	Chestnut-backed chickadee 4	American goldfinch 136
Red-tailed hawk 26	Red-breasted nuthatch 23	Evening grosbeak 70
Rough-legged hawk 2		House sparrow 60
Wilson's snipe Count Week 1		



Bird count show in the SE quadrant
- Janet Aitken

I captured this picture of this Northern Flicker on our bird count. He lost his balance as he was trying to reach a berry. It made me chuckle.

Bird Count Tales from the NW

- Gillian Richardson

Thanks to our intrepid crew, with eight pairs of eyes scouring the area, we collected 33 species. On the Most Wanted list, one Townsend's Solitaire reappeared after an absence of a few years. And we came close to getting two of them! If you attended the November meeting, you heard John Wood's presentation about the Cornell Lab's free app, Merlin ID. I put it to work on Hacking Road where several chirps and twitters caught my attention. Merlin picked up three species at once: Black-capped Chickadee, Mountain Chickadee... and Townsend's Solitaire. But we couldn't see it, so it wasn't officially counted. Again, in Herald Park, Merlin said "Brown Creeper nearby"; heard it, but couldn't find it! Even though Merlin may not always be 100% accurate, I believe it was right both times. Too bad we can't count what we didn't see. Oh... I believe in Santa Claus, too!



Pictures from the SW

- Roger Beardmore
shares these photos.

How many birds can you count?

Northern Shrike
and Bohemian Waxwing



Kids Christmas Bird Count, December 21, 2021

Report from Molly Cooperman

Salmon Arm NatureKids BC Club met regardless of the weather (minus 6 to minus 8 degrees). It was a partially cloudy day with a few sunny breaks. We split into two groups as we had lots of adult keen bird mentors, and each group spent approximately two hours.



Foreshore Trail: Raven Trail from trailhead to turnoff to Christmas Island. (1.8 km).

Participants: John and Marcia Woods, Kathy and Dan Meakes, Brenda and Nathaniel Gaynor, Molly Cooperman.

Species:

Mallard: 202 (*visual and calls*)
 Ring-necked Pheasant: 4 (*visual of flying*)
 Wilson's Snipe: 4 (*close range visuals through binoculars, in dense cattails near beaver ponds*)
 Northern Flicker: 3 (*visual and calls*)
 Red-shafted Flicker: 1 (*underside of tail feathers clearly seen*)
 Song Sparrow: 14 (*visuals, call and 2 songs*)
 Passerine species: 19 (*not seen long enough to identify, likely Bohemian Waxwings or European Starlings*)

Peter Jannink Park
 and in front of Harbour Front Village,
 Geoff Styles reports:

With Kai Thingsted, Grayson Styles, Be Mai Boonyo, Michael Gage and Jacob Holmes. The ponds were frozen, as well as lake out about 200 feet.

Species:

Mallard: 107
 Eurasian Collared-Dove: 11
 gull species: 1 (*White bird, flying across the lake West-East north of Christmas Island, not enough detail to identify species*)
 Great Blue Heron: 3
 Northern Harrier: 1
 Red-tailed Hawk: 1
 Northern Flicker (Red-shafted): 2

Black-billed Magpie: 1
 American Crow: 2
 Black-capped Chickadee: 3
 European Starling: 3
 Bohemian Waxwing: 2
 House Finch: 3
 American Goldfinch: 20
 Dark-eyed Junco (Oregon): 3
 Song Sparrow: 8
 Red-winged Blackbird: 37



Salmon Arm Bay, a Hotspot for Birds and Bird-Watchers

By John G Woods

Boasting verified records of 278 species of birds and with an eBird database that recently surpassed 11,000 daily observation lists, by any measure Salmon Arm Bay is one of the best known and loved “hotspots” in British Columbia for both birds and bird-watchers.

Take a walk out on the Salmon Arm wharf or a stroll on Raven Trail or in Peter Janninck Park and you are likely to see several keen bird-watchers – these folks are easy to spot with their cameras, and telescopes. You’ll also likely notice that these bird-watching regulars often stop to answer questions from less obvious bird-watchers who are enjoying marvelously close views of wildlife as part of their fresh air and exercise routines.

For example, on an outing to Christmas Island in late November, a lady from Kelowna approached me and hopefully asked if I’d seen any pelicans that day. She’d heard that we had been seeing quite a few on the Bay this year and had driven up for the day with the hopes of seeing one. She didn’t have binoculars or a camera but had clearly made the trip to see the first pelican of her life.

Unfortunately, the pelicans had left a few weeks earlier but she was very happy to see a sizeable flock of Tundra and Trumpeter Swans feeding and calling nearby. After I explained that the best times to see pelicans on the Bay is from mid-April to the end of October, she enthusiastically promised to return in the spring, after all, who doesn’t want to see a pelican!

On the same walk, a gentleman stopped to tell me his bird story. A few minutes earlier he had counted 16 Great Blue Herons standing together on the mudflats in front of the hotel. He said that he had been casually counting the herons on his daily walks for many years and this was the largest number he’d ever seen in one group. He wanted to make sure that I didn’t miss them.

His enthusiasm reminded me of an occasion earlier this year when a breathless group of Grade One student rushed down the Wharf to tell me that a heron had flown right over their heads near the pavilion and that they had named ‘him’ Blue!



A Great Blue Heron people-watching at the Wharf,
John Woods photo

I’m also impressed by how many out-of-town avid bird-watchers I meet at the Bay. They come from all over British Columbia and beyond armed with latest news of rare-sightings listed on eBird, the online database that birders from around the World use to share their sightings. With our nesting colony of Western Grebes and thousands migrating shorebirds and waterfowl, some rarity or another is sure to be around.

What makes the Bay special to me is the sheer abundance of nature I can see and hear there—from hundreds of migrating swallows feeding over the water on a rainy morning in August to the thousands of ducks and geese filling the air with their voices during migration.

As many of us have learned in these COVID-times, exposure to nature is a tonic more important than ever. Aren’t we lucky to have our very own birding hotspot—Salmon Arm Bay!

Mini Winter Lake Limnology Fieldtrip

- Marge Sidney,
Director of the Gardom Lake Stewardship Society

The Gardom Lake Stewardship Society in conjunction with the BC Lake Stewardship, Rob Buchanan of School District 22 and perhaps the Splitsin Band are conducting a Mini Winter Lake Limnology Fieldtrip on Gardom Lake, January 19th to 21st. *Limnology means the study of lakes.*

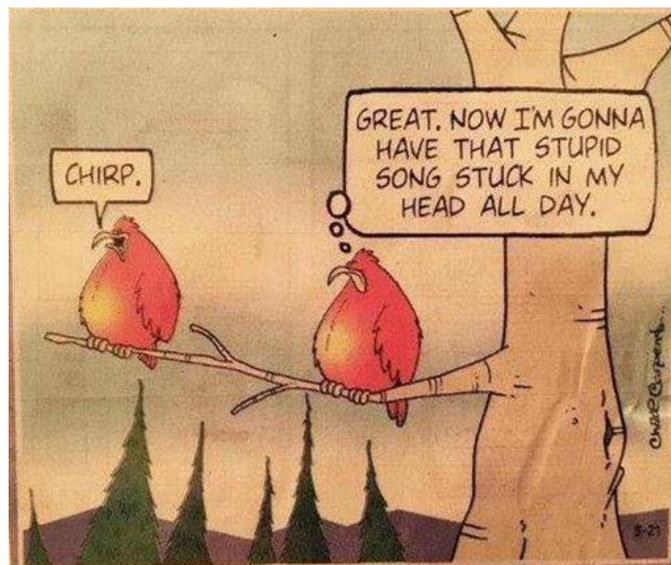
We will be setting gill nets under the ice to catch some fish, doing plankton hauls and dredging a small amount of mud at the bottom to see what small critters are living in the water column and in the bottom substrate of the lake (food for insects, fish, turtles, etc.) and then doing an oxygen/temperature profile at the deepest part of the lake. All fish and critters caught will be studied by students at the Bible Camp. The local public is invited to watch and learn.

If you are interested in joining the group, contact Marge: marg.sidney@gmail.com



Note from Janet Aitken -

We are in Sannich and it is minus 8 this morning. The hummingbird feeder freezes every hour. It is a full-time job alternating feeders but I'm not sure what else they would find to eat. They still have enough energy to chase the other one away! Save your energy you silly birds!



Membership Dues for 2022

Your membership fees, **\$25 for single** or **\$30 for family** include membership in BC Nature, the BC Nature magazine plus our club's liability insurance. The club keeps about \$5 from a single and \$10 from a family membership. Ted Hillary reminds us that for most of us our dues are now due. You can pay this either in person at our February meeting or send your money to Ted via mail.

Shuswap Naturalist Club Membership Renewal Form 1740 16th St. NE, Salmon Arm, BC, V1E 3Z7

Name: _____

Spouse/Partner: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Email Address: _____

Membership Type: [] Family (\$30) [] Single (\$25)

Current Club Executive and Directors

President: vacant

Vice-President: vacant

Past President: Ed McDonald

Treasurer: Ted Hillary

Secretary: Gillian Richardson

Directors: Janet Aitken

Pat Hutchins

Sharon Lawless

Dorothy Parks

Janet Pattinson

Current List of Committees

Programs: Anne Caughlin

Communications: Janet Aitken

Membership: Ted Hillary

BC Nature Director: Di Wittner

Website: Dorothy Parks

Publicity: Loretta Prosser

BC Nature e-news reporter: Gillian Richardson

Newsletter: Ed and Marlene McDonald

Historian: Gillian Richardson

Coffee Conveners: Pat Turner, Pam Saul

Award /Bursary:

Dorothy Parks, Janet Pattinson

SABNES: Janet Aitken (Pres.)

Grebe Count: Di Wittner

Bird House Project: Di Wittner

Enderby/Armstrong Bird Count: Geoff Styles

Salmon Arm Christmas Bird Count:

Ted Hillary

Mara Meadows Warden: Jeremy Ayotte

Songbird Committee: Janet Aitken,

Isobel Anderson, Roger Beardmore,

Pat Danforth, Gillian Richardson,

Clare Meunier, Loretta Prosser, Pat Turner

Weedpull Project: Ed McDonald, Janet Aitken

District Environment Committee:

Janet Pattinson

Naturalist Trail: Greg Wiebe

Outings Committee: Pat Danforth,

Hanne MacKay, Dawn McDonald

Young Naturalists: Molly Cooperman

Larch Hills Interpretive Trail: Pat Danforth,

Dawn McDonald, Anne Caughlan

