

National Audubon Christmas Bird Count, West Virginia

119th National Audubon Christmas Bird Count West Virginia Report

Let's look back on last year's Christmas Bird Count here in West Virginia during the 119th count season.

One hundred and eleven species were accounted for here in West Virginia during the 119th season. All twenty currently active WV Christmas Bird Counts conducted surveys. Nine of our counts were held on the first weekend of the CBC season December 15th – 16th, nine were completed between Dec. 18th – 30th, and two were conducted in January. Four of the counts were held on weekdays.

Seasonal Weather Report:

Temperature Lows: Only five counts began below freezing, the Athens Princeton CBC had the coldest morning at 19 degrees. Starting the morning much warmer were, Charleston 48, Morgantown 46, Ona 45 and Lewisburg at 43 degrees. The McDowell County count averaged the coldest in WV this season, with a temperature range of 28 to 35 degrees.

Temperature Highs: Ten counts reached 50 degrees or higher, with Charleston peaking at 59 degrees. Charleston's December 18th count was the warmest recorded in WV this season, with a 48-degree low and a 59-degree high.

There were no reports of snow on the ground or falling during count days. Eleven counts did report light rain at some point, while Canaan and Charles Town noted heavy rain at times.

Effort Report:

Participation: The Inwood count had the highest participation with 32 field birders. Two counts had 29 in the field and three other counts had more than 21 participants. Seven counts had 10 or under.

Hours: Seven counts had over 60 party hours: Hampshire County 90.75, Canaan 86.75, Inwood 74.5, Pendleton County 63.5, Morgantown 63, Huntington 60.75 and Charles Town 60. Six other counts reported between 39 - 56 party hours on their count day.

Miles: Inwood lead the way with 496.5 party miles, followed by Charles Town 365.75, then Ona with 352.5 miles. Ten other counts had between 242 - 328 miles reported.

Feeder Watching: Fifteen counts had participants watching their feeders/yards. The Pendleton count had the highest participation with 14 feeder watchers, Charlestown with 6, while Pocahontas County, Parkersburg and Elkins all had 5 helping.

Nocturnal Birding: Fourteen counts had owling teams. Four counts reported over four hours of owling. Ona lead the way with 9 hrs., then Morgantown 8, Huntington 7.75 and Inwood at 4.5 hours. Four of those counts covered over 30 miles owling. Ona, with 70.5 miles, covered the most ground.

WV State Effort Totals: **By car:** 4985.75 miles in 576.75 hours. **By foot:** 328.75 miles in 382.25 hours.

National Audubon Christmas Bird Count, West Virginia

Bird Reports:

The avian groups in this report are listed in the order that reflects the 119th National Audubon's Christmas Bird Count seasonal checklist, and do not reflect the current American Ornithological Society (AOS) checklist. Most species within these groups are in order of abundance.

Note: Only Count Day data is listed below unless otherwise noted.

Geese/Swans: Canada Geese (6,931) were the third most abundant species this count season, found on nineteen counts. Rarer, one Cackling Goose was reported on the Inwood count.

Sixteen species of ducks were reported this count season.

Dabblers: Mallards (2,306) were the most numerous duck species and the eighth most abundant state species, found on all 20 counts. Black Ducks (87) were seen on ten counts. Other dabblers found included; Gadwall (14), Wood Duck (10) Green-winged Teal (9). Rarer this season were the two American Wigeon found on the Inwood CBC, and the single Northern Pintail, located on the Charles Town count.

Diving Ducks: The Common Mergansers (323), found on 11 counts, were the most abundant diver. Thirteen counts reported Hooded Mergansers (116). The second most numerous diving duck, found only on seven counts was Bufflehead (179), with Morgantown having the high count of 93. Three counts tallied Lesser Scaup (22), Ona-17, Charleston-6 and Pendleton-cw. Four counts posted Ring-necked Duck (20), Charleston-10, Pipestem-8, Morgantown-2 and Pendleton-cw. Three counts reported Ruddy Duck (12), Morgantown-7, Wheeling-3, and Charleston-2. Rarer this season was the lone Canvasback, Parkersburg; a single Greater Scaup, Pocahontas; and the one Common Goldeneye, Morgantown.

Game Birds: Seventeen counts saw Wild Turkey (511), the highest numbers reported came in from Charles Town-141, Morgantown-93, and Ona-92 counts. Only six Ruffed Grouse were reported, Canaan had 3 while Morgantown, Pendleton and Pocahontas posted only single birds.

Loons/Grebes: The Pipestem Area posted the only Common Loons (4) in the state last season. Pied-billed Grebes (12) were on five counts, Oak Hill with 5 birds, the highest. Single Horned Grebe reports came in from Morgantown and Ona.

Cormorant/Heron: Double-crested Cormorants (8) were reported on four circles, Huntington-3, Pipestem & Wheeling-2 and Morgantown-1. Great Blue Herons (82) were found on 16 counts, Hampshire's 14 the highest reported. Rarer, a lone Great Egret was found on the Pocahontas count.

Vultures: Turkey Vultures (1,790) were prevalent on 19 counts, Lewisburg had 390 of them, the state's high count. Black Vultures (864) noted on 18 counts, continue their widespread distribution. Lewisburg, reporting an impressive 463 BLVU, the highest tallied in the state, a distant second was the 90 reported on the Pendleton count.

Eagles/Hawks: The Golden Eagles (5) reported this season came in from the Pendleton-4 and the Pocahontas-1 counts. Northern Harriers (16) were located on 8 CBC's with Inwood's six, the highest reported. Cooper's Hawks (44) found on 17 counts, outnumbered the Sharp-shinned Hawks (16) located on 8 counts. Sixteen counts posted Bald Eagles (93), four of those CBC's had impressive eagle numbers, Hampshire-22, Pipestem-16, Pendleton-11 and the Moorefield count with 10 eagles.

National Audubon Christmas Bird Count, West Virginia

Only two Buteo species were reported this season. Red-tailed Hawks (283) were found on all twenty counts, with high counts from, Inwood-52, Hampshire-46 and Pendleton-30. Seventeen counts reported Red-shouldered Hawk (159), high tallies were noted on the Charles Town-31 count while both the Huntington & Inwood counts reported 21 RSHA.

Shorebirds: Four counts posted Killdeer (38), with Huntington reporting 29. The Pendleton count discovered a Wilson's Snipe and a Spotted Sandpiper, the only other shorebirds found this season.

Gulls: Ring-billed Gull (78) was the only gull species found last season. Wheeling reported all but the one found on the Parkersburg count. The Pipestem Area count did report RBGU during count week.

Owls: The most abundant owl reported was Screech Owl (41), with Inwood having the high count of 13. The Inwood count also reported seven of the Great Horned Owls (17). Twelve counts reported Barred Owls (12) this season. The three Northern Saw-whet Owls reports came in from, Canaan-1 and Morgantown-2. Two rarer owls reported, Moorefield's Barn Owl and Morgantown's Long-eared Owl.

Woodpeckers: Common on all counts were, Red-bellied Woodpecker (657), Downy Woodpeckers (657), Northern Flicker (348), and Pileated Woodpecker (249). Eighteen counts tallied Hairy Woodpecker (125), while fifteen circles saw or heard Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers (86). Always a good find, nine Red-headed Woodpeckers were reported on five counts, two other counts reported them as cw birds.

Falcons: American Kestrels (144) were sighted on nineteen counts. Merlins (7) were tallied on five counts, Charleston reporting three while Elkins, Inwood, Morgantown and the Pipestem Area counts all had single birds. Four counts noted Peregrine Falcons (7), Charleston-3, Huntington-2, and both the Athens-Princeton Area and Oak Hill counts posting one each, Parkersburg reported PEFA during cw.

Flycatchers: Eastern Phoebes (27) were tallied this season on fourteen counts.

Vireos: A single White-eyed Vireo was found on the Morgantown CBC again this season, a rare find on a WV CBC.

Crows/Ravens: The Charleston, Raleigh County and Wheeling CBC circles all have large crow roosts that normally reflect the substantial number of crows/birds reported each count season in WV. This season, a significant number of crows that typically roost in the Wheeling circle, apparently relocated, still American Crow (29,245), was the top species recorded in WV. Fifteen counts tallied Common Raven (216), with the Hampshire-49 and Pendleton-40 counts both reporting high numbers.

Thrushes/Mimids: All twenty counts tallied Eastern Bluebirds (1,031) making it the states 17th most prevalent species with high numbers reported from Huntington-134 and Hampshire County-122. Hermit Thrushes (58) were located on fifteen counts, Huntington tallied an impressive seventeen, the highest count tally. Most counts reported seeing American Robins (939) in low numbers. Elkins and Morgantown each located single Catbirds and both Canaan and Huntington recorded a Brown Thrasher.

Warblers: Three warbler species were spotted this season. Yellow-rumped Warblers (129) the most typical, were recorded in twelve circles, while only three Palm Warblers were found, Charleston-2 and Hampshire County-1. Rarer still, a lone Pine Warbler was recorded on the Pendleton CBC.

Sparrows: Thirteen species of sparrows were found this season. Three sparrow species made the top twenty state list, Dark-eyed Juncos (3,440) the fifth, White-throated Sparrow (1,948) the tenth and Song

National Audubon Christmas Bird Count, West Virginia

Sparrow (1,601) the twelfth most reported species. Hampshire County reported very impressive numbers of DEJU-835, WTSP-372 and SOSP-181, high counts for all three species.

Blackbirds: Red-winged Blackbirds (430) were on six counts, Inwood tallied all but seven. Six counts noted Brown-headed Cowbirds (348), Charles Town (213) with the most. Eight counts had Common Grackles (198), Inwood posted a high count of 177. Four counts reported finding Eastern Meadowlarks (58), Hampshire County located 38 of those. Rarer were the seventeen Rusty Blackbirds tallied this season from only the Charles Town count.

Finches: The fifteenth most reported species, American Goldfinch (1,174), was located on all counts. Pendleton County's-251 AMGO tally, was the highest by far. Pine Siskins (34) were noted on five counts, the highest tallies came in from Pendleton County-15 and Charles Town-10. Rarer were the thirty-six Evening Grosbeaks found, Canaan-33 and Pocahontas County-3.

Other noteworthy birds: Fourteen counts found Red-breasted Nuthatch's (178), Ona-44 with the greatest abundance. Ruby-crowned Kinglets (16) were tallied on nine counts. A very special, rare WV Christmas Bird Count find was the male Painted Bunting on the Charles Town count!

For more information on West Virginia's Christmas Bird Counts and complete seasonal CBC data, go to the Brooks Bird Club website <http://www.brooksbirdclub.org/wv-cbc-results.html>

Learn where all the West Virginia circles are located, compiler contact information, and count dates (when available) for all twenty WV counts.

This is my third year as the West Virginia State Editor and I would like to thank all the WV state compilers for their dedication and all their hard work. Without these compilers and their participants our state would not have been so well represented in this 119th winter bird survey.

Respectfully submitted,

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