

The 106th Christmas Bird Count

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This lovely Fulvous Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna bicolor*) was a pleasant surprise on the Santa Barbara, California, CBC. Photo/Wes Fritz

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The 106th Christmas Bird Count

December 14, 2005, to January 5, 2006

Geoffrey S. LeBaron

As birdwatchers and observers on Christmas Bird Counts, we are well aware of the weather and its effect on our activities. We also understand that weather affects birds' movements, other behaviors, and survival. As each CBC season approaches, we begin casting a weather eye to the future, studying predictions for our upcoming count day, as well as thinking about how the weeks preceding the season's count could influence the species we'll find. Will any late lingering migrants be around? Has it been cold enough in the northern part of the continent to move waterbirds into more southern count circles? Has snow cover hastened arctic raptors southward? And on a personal comfort level, will it be a pleasant, or grueling, day in the field?

Shifting Storms Challenge Birds

All these short-term weather concerns are, of course, quite relevant to any season's Christmas Bird Count overall results. But longer-term weather effects are probably more important. The year 2005 was a historic one, weatherwise. Perhaps because of warming surface water temperatures, the hurricane season in the Atlantic Ocean shattered all records, with 27 named tropical storms and hurricanes, one subtropical storm, and four additional numbered tropical depressions. We even ran right through our alphabetical names for these storms, using Alpha through Zeta for the first time ever. Furthermore, in recorded weather history there had only been as many as two severe (Category Five) hurricanes in the Atlantic. In the 2005 season, there were five. We are all only too aware that Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, each Category Five storms, devastated the Gulf Coast from Florida to Texas in August and September, respectively. The destruction of both human and natural habitats in that area was catastrophic, but, somewhat miraculously, CBC participants still went out, albeit in reduced force, in December and January. Even in New Orleans itself, observers were out doing their CBCs,

despite the fact that virtually all of them had lost nearly everything in the storms. What greeted them was the near annihilation of many key habitats used by birds and other wildlife. Many formerly wildlife-rich areas were found completely devoid of life—much as in the Gulf Coast towns and cities themselves. Here's to the fortitude of inhabitants along the Gulf Coast—continuing the run of Christmas Bird Counts in these areas will provide a key insight into the recovery of these regions, both the natural and human history.

The destruction from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita obviously had a major effect on the results of the 106th CBC in that area. However, a potentially even larger effect on the birds counted during the 106th Count was yet to come.

Consider a Blackpoll Warbler leaving Nova Scotia in the fall, bound nonstop for Venezuela some four or five days later. Consider also a flock of Franklin's Gulls migrating southward through Mexico on its way to warm winter climes. In fact, millions of birds of hundreds of species vacate Canada and the United States each fall, bound for Latin

America. Many are long-distance over-water migrants, while others make their journey southward over land. Late October is a key time for migrating neotropical birds, both transgulf migrants and those following the land-mass south. And in late October of 2005, millions of migrating birds were greeted by a wall of storm activity from Mexico to the Lesser Antilles in the Caribbean basin. Hurricane Wilma, a Category Five storm, formed slowly and lingered over the southern Gulf coast of Mexico, pounding the Yucatan Peninsula for days. At the same time, Tropical Storm Alpha had moved across the Caribbean to the Lesser Antilles and began a northward track toward the Bahamas. Wilma then raced across the Gulf of Mexico, across Florida, and collided with Alpha. The combined storm was pulled into a strong stationary front off the Atlantic coast of the United States and moved rapidly northward, finally making landfall again in the Atlantic Provinces of Canada on October 25. This massive, powerful storm had sucked up many, many migrating birds—both from the



The warbler most frequently found on Christmas Bird Counts in northeastern North America is, of course, the Yellow-rumped Warbler, but occasionally other surprises are turned up on CBCs in the area. This Yellow-throated Warbler (*Dendroica dominica*) was a great find on the New Haven, Connecticut, count. Photo/Mark Szantyr

Caribbean basin and from Mexico—and kept many of them in its grasp until landfall in Nova Scotia. Birds that had spent most of their energy reserves migrating toward the neotropics found themselves several thousand miles to the north again. Many western birds, most notably Franklin’s Gulls, Townsend’s Solitaires, and a scattering of western warblers and tanagers, were seen in November moving back southward through the eastern states. And quite a few interesting finds on Christmas Bird Counts can probably be attributed to this major weather event. Not only out-of-range and out-of-season rarities demonstrate the effects of these storms—a quick look at the online CBC database will show an astounding number of high counts of Gray Catbirds in eastern North America this past season!

Indeed, the weather was the big story for the 106th Christmas Bird Count. Not only the record-shattering Atlantic hurricane season, but also the continuing severe drought in southern and central Texas and other areas of Mexico and the southwestern United States played a significant role in what birds were found where, and in what numbers. And once again Mother Nature played her cards such that while the 106th CBC was under way, winter storms tended to fall during the week-

ends (especially along the Pacific coast), creating difficult counting conditions and suppressed bird activity.

New Participant Records

But of course, with great anticipation and come what weather may, Christmas Bird Count compilers marshaled their observers and we all went out in the field. Another amazing CBC season was the result—again with a new record high number of counts (2060) and participants (57,156), exceeding 57,000 observers during one CBC period for the first time. The regional participant breakdowns are as follows: 43,773 observers in the United States (38,443 in the field and 5320 at feeders); 12,201 in Canada (8154 in the field and 4057 at feeders); and 1182 in other regions (1155 in the field and 27 at feeders). And among those 2060 counts is a grand selection of new CBCs; 17 in Canada, 22 in the United States, three in Mexico, and one in the Dominican Republic. Table 1 lists these 43 new counts, and we look forward to their inclusion for decades to come!

Despite the occasionally inclement conditions, many of the counts this season included 100 or more participants in the field and at feeders. Table 2 presents the roster of all of the 50 counts in the 106th CBC meeting or surpassing

the century mark for participation. Once again we find North Bay, Ontario; Edmonton, Alberta; and Concord, Massachusetts, at the top of the list. But of course every count, no matter how many observers included, provides critical data each season in the CBC database.

Table 1. New counts in the 106th (2005–2006) Christmas Bird Count.

Count Code	Count Name
CANADA	
ABPC	Pincher Creek, Alberta
ABPR	Peace River, Alberta
ABWA	Wainwright, Alberta
BCAC	Ashcroft-Cache Creek, British Columbia
BCBV	Bridesville, British Columbia
BCCG	Castlegar, British Columbia
BCFE	Fernie, British Columbia
BCGS	Galiano-North Saltspring, British Columbia
BCSS	Sidney-South Saltspring, British Columbia
MBGI	Gimli, Manitoba
MBKL	Kleefeld, Manitoba
NSBL	Blandford, Nova Scotia
ONER	Eagle River, Ontario
ONHB	Holiday Beach, Ontario
ONUX	Uxbridge, Ontario
SKCC	Clark’s Crossing, Saskatchewan
SKPL	Pike Lake, Saskatchewan
UNITED STATES	
AKGK	Gakona, Alaska
ARBD	Bayou DeView, Arkansas
AZPY	Payson, Arizona
CASZ	Sonoma Valley, California
IDJS	Jim Sage Mountains, Idaho
KYLH	Lincolns Birthplace-Hodgenville Count LaRue County, Kentucky
KYWC	Wayne County, Kentucky
MEMA	Matinicus, Maine
MERG	Rangeley, Maine
MIKB	Keewenaw Bay, Michigan
MIMW	Muskegon Wastewater, Michigan
MTMV	Musselshell Valley, Montana
NEAM	Ames, Nebraska
NEPP	Ponca State Park, Nebraska
NHCF	AMC Crawford Notch, New Hampshire
OHCS	Caesar Creek-Spring Valley, Ohio
OKLA	Lake Atoka, Oklahoma
PASW	Western Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania
SCNG	North Greenville, South Carolina
SCWB	Winyah Bay, South Carolina
TNFR	Franklin-Coffee County, Tennessee
TXGR	Granger, Texas
CARIBBEAN, LATIN AMERICA	
MXEP	Ensenada de la Paz, BCS, Mexico
MXGJ	Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico
MXNP	Navopatia, Sonora, Mexico
RDPE	Puerto Escondido, Dominican Republic



The snow season for the 106th CBC included a lot of exciting, large flakes—Snowy Owls (*Bubo scandiacus*) made major incursions into several parts of the continent. The area with the highest density of these Arctic wanderers was in the Prairie Provinces and into the Northeast, but good numbers came south into western Montana as well, where this bird was one of many in a farm field. Photo/Dan Casey

Table 2. Counts with 100 or more participants in the 106th (2005–2006) CBC.

Code	Count Name	# Observers	(Field + Feeder)
ONNB	North Bay, ON	650	(21 + 629)
ABED	Edmonton, AB	452	(161 + 291)
MACO	Concord, MA	301	(218 + 83)
ABCA	Calgary, AB	223	(102 + 121)
BCVI	Victoria, BC	201	(180 + 21)
CAPR	Point Reyes Peninsula, CA	195	(195 + 0)
WASE	Seattle, WA	190	(186 + 4)
CAOA	Oakland, CA	178	(160 + 18)
VAFB	Fort Belvoir, VA	171	(168 + 3)
NSHD	Halifax-Dartmouth, NS	161	(87 + 74)
CASB	Santa Barbara, CA	157	(154 + 3)
BCVA	Vancouver, BC	148	(134 + 14)
SCHH	Hilton Head Island, SC	142	(136 + 6)
OHCF	Cuyahoga Falls, OH	136	(93 + 43)
DCDC	Washington, DC	134	(132 + 2)
NSWO	Wolfville, NS	134	(43 + 91)
CASZ	Sonoma Valley, CA	132	(130 + 2)
WASD	Sequim-Dungeness, WA	131	(98 + 33)
LABR	Baton Rouge, LA	130	(44 + 86)
ONOH	Ottawa-Gatineau, ON	130	(90 + 40)
MANO	Northampton, MA	125	(109 + 16)
OREU	Eugene, OR	123	(81 + 42)
PAPI	Pittsburgh, PA	123	(100 + 23)
SCSC	Sun City-Okatie, SC	123	(92 + 31)
ABSR	Strathcona, AB	122	(32 + 90)
NYIT	Ithaca, NY	122	(102 + 20)
AKAN	Anchorage, AK	121	(78 + 43)
MBWI	Winnipeg, MB	120	(68 + 52)
NJLH	Lower Hudson, NJ	119	(119 + 0)
ORPD	Portland, OR	119	(101 + 18)
TXMM	Matagorda County-Mad Island Marsh, TX	119	(116 + 3)
FLSC	Sanibel-Captiva, FL	118	(118 + 0)
OHMI	Millersburg, OH	117	(81 + 36)
CTGS	Greenwich-Stamford, CT	116	(87 + 29)
NSKI	Kingston, NS	115	(12 + 103)
ABSA	St. Albert, AB	114	(59 + 55)
ECNM	Mindo-Tandayapa, Ecuador	114	(109 + 5)
NBFR	Fredericton, NB	114	(63 + 51)
CTHA	Hartford, CT	113	(102 + 11)
SKSA	Saskatoon, SK	112	(56 + 56)
CODV	Denver (urban), CO	110	(82 + 28)
QCQU	Québec, QC	109	(102 + 7)
ILWA	Waukegan, IL	104	(28 + 76)
AKFA	Fairbanks, AK	103	(82 + 21)
ILFB	Fermilab-Batavia, IL	102	(101 + 1)
CALC	Lincoln, CA	101	(80 + 21)
CASD	San Diego, CA	101	(101 + 0)
CAPA	Palo Alto, CA	100	(100 + 0)
COBO	Boulder, CO	100	(81 + 19)
CODE	Denver, CO	100	(69 + 31)

Bird Records

The birds themselves proved to be no less impressive in number. All told, 61,579,355 birds were tallied on all counts in the 106th CBC: 57,357,023 in the United States; 3,231,694 in Canada, and 990,638 in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Pacific Islands. Cumulative and individual species tallies were good, despite the unusual weather mix. In the United States, 652 accepted species were tallied, including two never counted before—**Baikal Teal** at La Purisma, California (new to the cumulative CBC database), and **Redwing** at South Kingstown, Rhode Island (new to the United States, but seen twice before in Canada). This Redwing, of course, isn't the familiar Red-winged Blackbird (which many of us call "redwing" for short). It's the lovely Eurasian thrush *Turdus iliacus*! Additionally, 35 subspecific forms and 25 exotic species were listed across the country—including the other juncos, flickers, and such field-identifiable subspecific forms. Numbers in Canada were also excellent, with 289 species counted, including two new for Canada's all-time CBC list—**Buller's Shearwater** and **Le Conte's Sparrow**. Outside the United States and Canada, the tremendous geographic spread of Christmas Bird Count coverage is sure to net a large variety of additional species, and this season was no exception. In Latin America, the Caribbean, and Pacific Islands 1921 species and 10 subspecific forms were tallied.

Anticipated species diversity is one catalyst that gets us out into the field on Christmas Bird Counts each December, and as again documented this season observers are highly successful in every count circle, every year. There are actually two CBCs in the historical database where no birds were tallied at all—one each in Alaska and Canada, high above the Arctic Circle. These counts were by no means a failure—recording the absence of birds is as important as recording their presence. The key is to get out and look each season. Table 3 lists the counts in the 106th Christmas Bird Count at the opposite end of the species count spectrum—those that tallied 150 species or more this season.

We all have our own personal goals for each CBC on which we participate—



This Baikal Teal (*Anas formosa*) on California's La Purisma CBC was seen by many observers and is under review by the California Bird Records Committee. Though the wild-versus-escaped provenance of many exotic waterfowl is frequently debated, this sighting represents the first record of this species in the entire 106-year span of Christmas Bird Count data! Photo/Wes Fritz

whether to spend extra time owling, turn up an unanticipated rarity, hone our field identification skills, or break the record for species total in our area. Most CBC circles can't ever hope to produce 150 or more species, but many can vie for the high species tally in their geographic area, and Table 4 lists the regional high counts in the 106th Christmas Bird Count.

Taxonomic Changes

While on the subject of species, a few words on taxonomy—the classification of organisms in an ordered system that indicates natural relationships—are due. A list of changes in taxonomic status of forms—popularly called lumps and splits—is published nearly every year by the American Ornithologists' Union (the AOU). The AOU is the governing ornithological body in the Americas, and Audubon strives to keep the Christmas Bird Count database up to date with the most recent changes to *The A.O.U. Check-list of North American Birds*. In recent years, ornithologists have tended to separate out forms as accepted species, splitting out both old historically recognized forms and creating new species. A few seasons back “Rufous-sided” Towhee was split again to Eastern and Spotted towhees, and Bullock's and Baltimore orioles were resurrected from “Northern” Oriole. Over the past two years, two splits have caused some confusion—Cackling Goose from Canada Goose, and Wilson's Snipe from Common Snipe. The goose split has created a field challenge—the identification of the diminutive Cackling Goose from small forms of Canada Geese can require a good view of key, but subdued, field marks by an observer familiar with the differences between the two species. Plus, with the recent split there are many first or high count records for Cackling Goose being submitted each season. Hence many CBC regional editors require good documentation for Cackling Goose to be accepted in some areas. Our understanding of the status of Cackling Goose in North America is still evolving, and carefully considered records in the CBC database will help toward this end.

The Wilson's Snipe is a different issue—there's almost no question that

Table 3. Counts with 150 or more species recorded on the 106th (2005–2006) 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	250
TXCC	2	Corpus Christi, TX	227
TXGF	3	Guadalupe River Delta-McFadden Ranch, TX	223
TXFR	4	Freeport, TX	212
CAOC	5	Orange County (coastal), CA	200
CASB	5	Santa Barbara, CA	200
CASD	5	San Diego, CA	200
CAMR	8	Morro Bay, CA	197
TXSB	9	San Bernard N.W.R., TX	196
CAPR	10	Point Reyes Peninsula, CA	195
CACS	11	Crystal Springs, CA	191
CAMD	12	Moss Landing, CA	190
CARS	13	Rancho Santa Fe, CA	188
CAOV	14	Oceanside-Vista-Carlsbad, CA	183
CASC	14	Santa Cruz County, CA	183
CAMP	16	Monterey Peninsula, CA	180
CAMC	17	Marin County (southern), CA	177
CATO	17	Thousand Oaks, CA	177
CAAR	19	Arcata, CA	176
CAOA	20	Oakland, CA	175
TXPA	20	Port Aransas, TX	175
TXAP	22	Attwater Prairie Chicken N.W.R., TX	173
TXBP	22	Bolivar Peninsula, TX	173
TXAR	24	Aransas N.W.R., TX	172
FLNR	25	West Pasco (New Port Richey), FL	171
SCMC	25	McClellanville, SC	171
CABE	27	Benicia, CA	170
CASF	27	San Francisco, CA	170
FLZE	27	Zellwood-Mt. Dora, FL	170
CACB	30	Centerville Beach to King Salmon, CA	169
CAAN	31	Año Nuevo, CA	167
CAHF	31	Hayward-Fremont, CA	167
NCSB	31	Southport-Bald Head-Oak Islands, NC	167
TXCF	34	Corpus Christi (Flour Bluff), TX	166
FLCO	35	Cocoa, FL	165
CASS	36	Salton Sea (south), CA	164
TXGA	37	Galveston, TX	163
CAON	38	Orange County (northeastern), CA	162
CAVE	38	Ventura, CA	162
TXSR	38	Sea Rim S.P., TX	162
TXWS	38	Weslaco, TX	162
CALB	42	Long Beach-El Dorado, CA	161
CASJ	42	San Jose, CA	161
CASU	42	San Juan Capistrano, CA	161
FLMI	42	Merritt Island N.W.R., FL	161
NCWI	42	Wilmington, NC	161
TXKI	42	Kingsville, TX	161
FLJA	48	Jacksonville, FL	160
ORCB	48	Coos Bay, OR	160
SCCA	48	Charleston, SC	160
CAPS	51	Pasadena-San Gabriel Valley, CA	159
FLSB	51	South Brevard County, FL	159
FLSR	51	Sarasota, FL	159
GASV	51	Savannah, GA-SC	159
NJCM	51	Cape May, NJ	159
CAPP	56	Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA	158
FLAB	56	Aripeka-Bayport, FL	158
TXAZ	58	Anzalduas-Bentsen S.P., TX	157
TXCK	58	Choke Canyon, TX	157
TXHG	58	Harlingen, TX	157
VACC	58	Cape Charles, VA	157
AZRC	62	Ramsey Canyon, AZ	156
CAPA	62	Palo Alto, CA	156
FLSP	64	St. Petersburg, FL	155
SCLP	64	Litchfield-Pawleys Island, SC	155
CAMU	66	Malibu, CA	154
TXST	66	San Antonio, TX	154
CAEC	68	East Contra Costa County, CA	153
TXLA	68	Laguna Atascosa N.W.R., TX	153
CACM	70	Claremont, CA	152
CAES	70	Escondido, CA	152
MDOC	70	Ocean City, MD	152
SCAB	73	Ace Basin, SC	151
TXLS	73	La Sal Vieja, TX	151
TXRO	73	Rockport, TX	151
ALGS	76	Gulf Shores, AL	150
CARC	76	Rio Cosumnes, CA	150
CASZ	76	Sonoma Valley, CA	150
FLSM	76	St. Marks, FL	150
SCWB	76	Winyah Bay, SC	150
TXSA	76	Santa Ana N.W.R., TX	150

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

Count Code	Rank	Count Name	Species Recorded
ECNA	1	Napo, Amazon, Ecuador	472
ECNM	2	Mindo-Tandayapa, Ecuador	413
CRRF	3	Rain Forest Aerial Tram, Costa Rica	403
CRMO	4	Monteverde, Costa Rica	366
CRLS	5	La Selva, Lower Braulio Carillo N.P., Costa Rica	325
RPAC	6	Atlantic Canal Area, R.P., Panama	292
RPPC	7	Pacific Canal Area, R.P., Panama	280
RPCC	8	Central Canal Area, R.P., Panama	247
BLPG	9	Punta Gorda, Belize	236
MXES	10	Ensenada, Baja California, Mexico	201
BLGJ	11	Gallon Jug, Belize	186
TRTR	12	Trinidad, West Indies.	183
MXCZ	13	Coast of Central Veracruz, Mexico	168
RPVC	13	Volcan, Chiriquí, Panama	168
MXGF	15	Gomez Farias, Tamaulipas, Mexico	164
MXRC	16	Rio Corona, Tamaulipas, Mexico	162



Ordinarily one wouldn't think of going to Arizona to find terns, especially during the CBC season. However, these Forster's Terns (*Sterna forsteri*) were photographed in a very artistic setting on Arizona's Havasu National Wildlife Refuge CBC, two of three found on that count. Photo/Norma Miller

all snipe seen in North America are Wilson's Snipe. The confusion with this species arises over a split of the form in the Americas from that found commonly in Europe and Asia—the Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*). Before this split last year, snipe in Christmas Bird Counts were all “Common” Snipe. But with the split, suddenly Common Snipe disappeared from checklists—and Wilson's Snipe (*Gallinago delicata*) replaced it. Adding to the confusion, an old, historic name for Common Snipe in North America was Wilson's Snipe—but with the scientific name of the Eurasian species! But have no fear, when you find a snipe in the field in the United States or Canada it is almost without question a Wilson's Snipe, *Gallinago delicata*.

Upcoming taxonomic changes for the 107th Count include the splitting of Blue Grouse into Dusky Grouse and Sooty Grouse. Thus Blue Grouse will be gone from checklists, replaced by Dusky Grouse (in the Rockies and interior) and Sooty Grouse (in the Sierras and closer to the West Coast to southeastern Alaska). Other splits that may be in the

offing include Fox Sparrow, Warbling Vireo, Winter and Marsh wrens, and a few other species where researchers are still defining the limits of each form.

Population Movements

The big bird-related event during the 106th Christmas Bird Count was a good movement of Snowy Owls. It is interesting to note that Snowies were nearly absent in many areas during the big owl flight of the 105th Count. The Northern Hawk Owls, Boreal Owls, and Great Gray Owls that moved in the winter of 2004–2005 responded to a lack of (or perhaps unavailability of due to snow cover) small mammalian food in the northern forests. This past fall, Snowy Owls started moving southward relatively early, and a big push coincided with the first weekend of the count period in northeastern regions, in western Montana, and down the Pacific Northwest coast. Lemming and other medium to small arctic mammal populations in the tundra must have crashed in the summer of 2005, pushing large numbers of Snowy Owls southward in search of food for

the winter. As is typical, many of the southward vagrant white owls weren't so white—dusky immature Snowy Owls may be the first to head southward in times of stress. But a fair number of pristine white adult Snowies graced open country in many areas as well.

An anticipated “winter finch” flight did not develop during the 106th Count. Although both Red and White-winged crossbill and Pine Grosbeak movements tend to follow seed crop resources, and are thus less predictable, Pine Siskins and Common Redpolls historically have had a biannual cycle, staying north in the boreal forest in “off” years and moving southward across the continent in “on” years. The 104th CBC saw a major flight of Common Redpolls; the 106th Count seemed prime for another good flight. Interestingly, however, as mentioned in last season's summary, the in-between 105th Count had more redpolls to the south than expected. Redpolls, while not absent, did not stage a big movement southward during the 106th CBC—the only counts with reasonable numbers were well to the north, from New Brunswick westward to Alaska. It is interesting to note that the irruptive cycle in Pine Siskins has changed over the past few years (see the feature “Pine Siskins Across North America” in the “What We're Learning” section of the CBC website), and it appears that similar changes may be taking place with Common Redpolls. Future Christmas Bird Count seasons will help document this ongoing avian event. We can learn a great deal by looking at the Great Backyard Bird Count results, reported for mid-February, for these years too. For Common Redpoll, 2005 was the second “on” year, about 90 percent as high as 2004 across the continent. In 2006, a strong southward movement occurred in the East, but not in the West. Overall, numbers of Common Redpolls were down to about half in 2006, with North Dakota the most easterly state without GBBC reports for the species this winter. Quebec, for example, returned a 50 percent increase in reports in 2006. A monumental spruce cone crop in northern British Columbia and the southern Yukon attracted large numbers of Common Redpolls, White-winged

Crossbills, and Pine Grosbeaks; whereas in southern British Columbia the seed crop was poor, and birders report “the worst year in memory” for winter forest finches—not even Red Crossbills in any numbers. Snow Buntings and Pine Siskins mirrored Common Redpolls in this east-west divide. We encourage all CBC counters to send in results to the GBBC in February 2007 (www.bird-source.org/gbbc).

Rarity Reports

An interesting array of rarities was found across the continent, many perhaps a result of being displaced by storms earlier in the year. From the Atlantic Provinces down the East Coast to Florida, lingering neotropical migrant species, out-of-range western species, and high numbers of half-hardy migrants were tallied. Snowy and Great egrets were found in surprising numbers far north of their normal CBC range; an array of warblers, Townsend’s Solitaires, and Western Tanagers was uncovered in the northeast, and as mentioned earlier Gray Catbirds were positively abundant in the northern part of the CBC range. A Fork-tailed Flycatcher—a CBC first for Florida—was found at Zellwood-Mt. Dora. Could this bird have been deposited in Florida by Hurricane Wilma after it left Mexico?

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More species of hummingbirds are being found in diverse states each CBC season, and one of the crowning avian jewels in Arkansas during the 106th Count was this Broad-billed Hummingbird (*Cyanthus latirostris*) in the Pine Bluff circle. This bird was not only a CBC first there, but a first state record. Photo/Dan Scheiman

Table 4. Regional high counts for the 106th (2005–2006) Christmas Bird Count.

Region	# of CBCs	Highest Count (species total)
St. Pierre et Miquelon	2	Saint-Pierre et Miquelon (45)
Newfoundland	11	St. John's (70)
Nova Scotia	22	Halifax-Dartmouth (135)
Prince Edward Island	3	Hillsborough (52)
New Brunswick	12	Grand Manan Island (69)
Québec	27	Montreal (68)
Ontario	106	Blenheim (111)
Manitoba	19	Winnipeg (45)
Saskatchewan	22	Gardiner Dam (40)
		Saskatoon (40)
Alberta	45	Calgary (65)
British Columbia	84	Ladner (140)
Northwest Territories	3	Fort Simpson (15)
Nunavut	3	Arviat (3)
		Rankin Inlet (3)
Yukon Territory	7	Whitehorse (23)
Alaska	38	Kodiak (82)
Maine	28	Greater Portland (102)
New Hampshire	18	Coastal New Hampshire (100)
Vermont	16	Ferrisburg (89)
Massachusetts	33	Nantucket (138)
Rhode Island	4	Napatree, RI-CT-NY (128)
		South Kingstown (128)
Connecticut	16	New Haven (125)
		New London (125)
New York	69	L.I.: Southern Nassau (135)
New Jersey	30	Cape May (159)
Pennsylvania	69	Southern Lancaster County (109)
Delaware	7	Cape Henlopen-Prime Hook (137)
Maryland	23	Ocean City (152)
District of Columbia	1	Washington (112)
Virginia	38	Cape Charles (157)
North Carolina	46	Southport, Bald Head, & Oak Islands (167)
South Carolina	21	McClellanville (171)
Georgia	24	Savannah, GA-SC (159)
Florida	63	West Pasco (New Port Richey) (171)
Ohio	59	Millersburg (95)
West Virginia	16	Charles Town (93)
Kentucky	12	Calloway County (92)
		Land Between the Lakes (92)
Tennessee	28	Reelfoot Lake (115)
Alabama	12	Gulf Shores (150)
Mississippi	18	Jackson County (142)
Michigan	56	Anchor Bay (93)
Indiana	37	Lake Monroe (103)
Wisconsin	40	Madison (84)
Illinois	58	Mermet Lake, Massac County (109)
Minnesota	46	Bloomington (70)
Iowa	29	Keokuk (91)
Missouri	26	Mingo N.W.R. (101)
Arkansas	20	Holla Bend N.W.R. (122)
Louisiana	23	Reserve-Bonnet Carre Spillway (143)
North Dakota	20	Bismark-Mandan (53)
South Dakota	17	Pierre (69)
Nebraska	11	Lake McConaughy (99)
Kansas	25	Udall-Winfield (99)
Oklahoma	20	Tishomingo N.W.R. (127)
Texas	101	Matagorda County-Mad Is. Marsh (250)
Montana	31	Bigfork (81)
Idaho	21	Hagerman Valley (88)
		Nampa (88)
Wyoming	21	Casper (66)
Colorado	39	Pueblo Reservoir (119)
New Mexico	34	Cavallo (121)
Utah	20	Kanab (108)
Nevada	13	Trukee Meadows (112)
Arizona	33	Ramsey Canyon (156)
Washington	42	Sequim-Dungeness (142)
Oregon	41	Coos Bay (160)
California	114	Orange County (coastal) (200)
		Santa Barbara (200)
		San Diego (200)
Hawaii	10	Honolulu, O'ahu (52)
Northern Mariana Islands	5	Saipan (54)
Mexico	20	Ensenada, Baja California (201)
Belize	2	Punta Gorda (236)
Costa Rica	3	Rain Forest Aerial Tram (403)
Panama	4	Atlantic Canal Area (292)
Colombia	1	Sabana de Bogota. (126)
Ecuador	3	Napo, Amazon (472)
Peru	1	Rio Orosa, Loreto (114)
Chile	2	Omora Park, Navarino Island (46)
Trinidad	1	Trinidad (183)
Bahamas	3	New Providence Island (109)
Dominican Republic	2	Puerto Escondido (87)
Puerto Rico	3	Cabo Rojo (121)
British Virgin Islands	2	Tortola (48)
U.S. Virgin Islands	2	St. Croix (64)
Bermuda	1	Bermuda (103)

The 106th Christmas Bird Count in Canada

December 14, 2005, to January 5, 2006

Richard J. Cannings



Yellow-throated Warbler, Stanley, NB. Photo/Merv Cormier

The total number of Canadian counts rose again this year, to 366, up from 355 last year. Individual participation also climbed by 300, to 12,211. The number of individual birds reported bounced back by about five percent to 3.2 million, while the species total dropped to 289 from last year's record high of 300. Table 1 summarizes the counts by province and territory.

Halifax really set the standard for results this year, with 135 species—an all-time high for any count east of the Pacific coast, and coming close to this year's Canada high count of 140 species at Ladner, British Columbia. In Alberta, Calgary dropped to 65 species, but rival Edmonton reported only 52 species this year. Blenheim reported 111 species, making it the best in Ontario and sec-

ond best for an inland count; Oliver-Osoyoos, BC, tied their own previous high with a very respectable 112 species. Other provincial high counts are shown in Table 1. The largest increase in species numbers came from Nunavut, where for the last five years only one or two species had been reported. This year the three counts there combined for an amazing five species: Common Eider, Willow and Rock ptarmigan, Common Raven, and House Sparrow.

As can be seen in Table 2, there were some significant changes in the reported numbers of some of the commonest species of winter birds in Canada. Juncos and Bohemian Waxwings totals were about twice the highest totals in the last four years, while starlings, crows, Mallards, House Sparrows, and the two large gulls all were up in numbers as well, reversing some short-term declines. Reported numbers of Dunlin were way down, but almost all Dunlin seen in Canada come from two adjacent BC counts (Ladner and White Rock), so local conditions (e.g. tides, weather) could play a big role in any changes.

Table 1. Provincial and territorial summaries for the 106th Christmas Bird Count.

Province or Territory	Counts	Field observers	Feeder watchers	Species	Individuals	Highest species total and count
Alberta	45	1049	784	111	68,145	65, Calgary
British Columbia	84	2173	492	228	1,112,522	140, Ladner
Manitoba	19	318	126	74	52,296	45, Winnipeg
New Brunswick	12	228	98	114	60,073	68, Grand Manan
New Foundland and Labrador	11	139	40	113	45,364	70, St. John's
Northwest Territories	3	42	3	22	2616	15, Fort Simpson
Nova Scotia	22	490	474	171	216,667	135, Halifax-Dartmouth
Nunavut	3	5	2	5	115	3, Arviat, Rankin Inlet
Ontario	106	2707	1768	175	1,367,023	111, Blenheim
Prince Edward Island	3	46	8	74	20,828	52, Hillsborough
Québec	27	550	138	132	201,057	68, Montréal
St.-Pierre et Miquelon	2	21	0	61	9331	45, St.-Pierre et Miquelon Islands
Saskatchewan	22	302	83	90	72,116	40, Gardiner Dam, Saskatoon
Yukon	7	84	41	35	3541	23, Whitehorse
TOTALS	366	8154	4057	289	3,231,694	



Snowy Owls were seen in good numbers on this year's Christmas Bird Counts. Photo/Ralph Hocken

American Crow and Blue Jay numbers were the highest in years, seeming to dispel any worries that West Nile virus would have lasting population effects on these two species. Reported totals of Black-capped Chickadee, another species reportedly highly susceptible to West Nile virus, also increased this year.

Black-capped Chickadee, Hairy and Downy woodpeckers, and Common Raven shared top billing once again for the most widely distributed birds on Canadian counts (Table 3). Common Redpoll dropped off the top-15 lists this year, typical of its biannual movements into southern Canada, moving down to 18th place in terms of number of counts and 34th place in terms of abundance. Bald Eagles were seen on 258 counts, apparently continuing a winter range expansion.

One of the most exciting times for me this Christmas happened on the Vaseux Lake CBC in southern British Columbia, where my son, Russell, and I decided to do a diligent search for Northern Saw-whet Owls. We were aiming for the Canadian record of 26, held by Edmonton, but we ended up with 52! Snowy Owls moved south in significant numbers, with 225 seen on 74 counts, almost twice last year's good numbers. The biggest concentration was on the Fraser River delta at Ladner, BC, where 24 were seen. Great Gray and Northern Hawk owls were also widely reported, but numbers were well down from last year's extraordinary invasion.

Rarities always play an exciting role in Christmas Bird Count tallies. Two

Table 2. The top 15 bird species by total number on the 106th Christmas Bird Count in Canada, with a comparison of results from the previous four years.

Species	Total 106th count	Total 105th count	Total 104th count	Total 103rd count	Total 102nd count
European Starling	371,437	283,449	334,702	445,741	412,908
American Crow	250,642	201,882	213,781	249,382	246,627
Mallard	227,869	170,692	205,199	222,468	220,214
Canada Goose	204,373	224,129	233,240	267,320	236,760
Dark-eyed Junco	147,384	74,841	76,671	67,045	61,184
Bohemian Waxwing	146,750	55,465	65,946	38,344	57,800
Black-capped Chickadee	140,971	121,104	129,437	112,361	123,571
House Sparrow	137,371	129,680	147,013	134,638	142,345
Rock Pigeon	127,302	106,892	115,158	138,770	137,259
Glaucous-winged Gull	119,326	81,996	73,825	120,582	100,746
American Wigeon	92,111	58,820	91,064	75,970	62,789
Herring Gull	81,281	75,395	81,439	98,361	117,855
Snow Bunting	73,447	85,572	41,253	41,655	41,978
Mourning Dove	59,632	44,843	49,499	56,127	49,222
Dunlin	56,576	92,531	107,972	99,885	71,852

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 106th	Rank 105th	Rank 104th	Rank 103rd	Rank 102nd
Black-capped Chickadee	323	1	2	2	1	1
Downy Woodpecker	323	2	1	3	2	4
Hairy Woodpecker	321	3	3	1	3	5
Common Raven	316	4	4	4	4	8
European Starling	296	5	8	6	5	7
Red-breasted Nuthatch	292	6	7	5	8	6
Rock Pigeon	284	7	10	10	7	10
House Sparrow	283	8	9	8	6	9
Bald Eagle	258	9	13	14	14	16
American Crow	250	10	12	12	11	13
Blue Jay	249	11	11	11	9	12
Dark-eyed Junco	241	12	6	9	10	2
Mallard	235	13	15	16	11	14
White-breasted Nuthatch	231	14	20	13	20	15
American Goldfinch	227	15	21	20	17	29

species were seen for the first time on Canadian counts this year: a Buller's Shearwater in Hecate Strait, British Columbia, and a Le Conte's Sparrow in Kingston, Ontario. The all-time Canada species list for Christmas Bird Counts now stands at 404.

I would like to thank the count compilers who work tirelessly to organize these counts, then gather and edit the numbers before entering them into the

database. We rely greatly on their collective wisdom to make this project as valuable as it is. With that in mind, it is with sadness that I report the passing of three count compilers: Phil Gehlen of Vernon, BC; Chris Sanders of Sault Saint Marie, ON; and Charlie Whitelaw of Sudbury, ON. Their hard work over the years contributed a great deal to our knowledge of local bird populations. They will be missed. 🐦

Climate Effects

Coastal storms battered the Pacific Coast from British Columbia to California during the count period, creating difficult conditions for CBC participants but blowing in some birds most of us rarely get to see, including the first-ever Buller's Shearwater in Canada, at Hecate Strait in the Queen Charlotte Islands. While many areas basked in relatively mild conditions, frigid air was flowing southward through the central regions of the continent, perhaps pushing the Snowy Owls in its bow wave. It's interesting to note that after a mild fall, much of the western Great Lakes region was in the grasp of an arctic air mass for the CBC period, but that high counts of waterfowl were found in Illinois, the southern edge of the deep freeze. It seems likely that a snapshot of the southward movement of these birds was captured during the 106th Count as they retreated away from frozen conditions.

The drought in the Southwest continued. Much of Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Arizona—and regions of Mexico to the south—is still parched. While a respite in Arizona last season produced a good seed crop for sparrows and other seed-eating birds in the 106th Count, this year saw a return to drought. How birds respond to several successive years of such dry conditions varies, and White-tailed Hawks in Texas were of interest during the 106th Count. While this species' range extends from Mexico southward to Argentina, this lovely tropical buteo is found in the United States only in south Texas, where it is resident. This area is deep in long-term drought, and it is interesting to note that there were several high counts of White-tailed Hawks on CBCs in Texas this season. Notably, a new all-time high count for White-tailed Hawk was tallied this year—at Attwater Prairie-Chicken National Wildlife Refuge, at the very northeastern edge of the hawk's limited Texas range! Whether this species has benefited from the drought—potentially with more offspring surviving if prey is readily available with less green ground cover—or whether birds are dispersing from the drought-stricken region, only time will tell.

The Eurasian Collared-Dove continues to both expand and consolidate its range across North America. From the

beginning on the 87th CBC in south Florida when two counts recorded 106 birds, this season 490 counts tallied more than 29,400 Eurasian Collared-Doves. The species' range now extends from Florida northward to Virginia, and westward through the Midwest to California, and northward through the Great Plains. This season numbers increased greatly in Virginia, Texas, Montana, Idaho, New Mexico, Arizona, California, and in the Caribbean. And this species is now spreading southward into Mexico. The CBC is tracking this spread accurately, and it will be interesting to see how the story unfolds. Animated GBBC maps for the species are also worth reviewing.

Human Interest

The evolution and tradition of the Christmas Bird Count is a wonderful and amazing thing. Now well into its second century, it can be measured not only by its successes and the birds counted, but also by human life spans. We have been blessed with longevity of participants as well as of the Count itself—in fact, two significant people span the entire run of the CBC. Frank M. Chapman began the Christmas Bird "Census" in 1900, and as editor-in-chief of *Bird-Lore* was in charge of the CBC until his retirement in 1934. That very year, a budding young ornithologist both participated on and compiled his own CBC for the first time—and that person was Chandler S. Robbins. Chan to this day is very active with the CBC, still participating on multiple counts and compiling his CBCs every year. We have benefited greatly from Chan's involvement, and his feature article in this issue highlights some of his favorite memories (so far!) on Christmas Bird Counts.

Transitions are a fact of life in any program with the longevity of the Christmas Bird Count. Birds transition across the continent each season, counted by observers new and old every year. Participants, compilers, and regional editors have their own cycles. This was a year of losses for the CBC; you'll read about the passing of several compilers and participants, young and old, in the Regional Summaries. Keith Arnold is retiring after this season. Keith began reviewing Texas on the original team of regional editors that stood up when Allan Cruickshank (CBC Editor and

guru for many years) died in 1973. Jim Granlund, Michigan CBC Regional Editor, compiler of multiple CBCs, and educator par excellence, died suddenly just prior to the 106th Count. There are others each season...and all are missed.

Magic Moments

The enduring magic of the Christmas Bird Count is the possibility of transitions that can happen during a single count. One sighting, significant or otherwise, may serendipitously lead to a series of others, each even more surprising or memorable. This year, while the party I was in was busy counting Dunlin in a coastal wetland, an Eastern Bluebird called nearby. Though bluebirds are a common species in our area, none had been tallied yet during the day. We quickly located one bluebird, then checked a tree nearby (the only two trees along a stone wall between two long, sloping fields leading down to the marsh) for others. While scanning from one tree to the next, I noticed a big, white blob on the stone wall at the far end of the next field—a stunning adult female Snowy Owl! Needless to say our attention was diverted yet again. However, while studying the owl through our scopes, we then noticed two large shorebirds on the mud flats behind the owl—dowitchers! No dowitcher had ever been tallied on our count, and the "expected" species in our region on a CBC is Long-billed, but especially for a first count record we needed to confirm the identification. Thus we skirted around the owl (if she flushed, she might have scared the dowitchers), then worked our way down to the shorebirds. We ended up following the wall on the far side of the field down towards the owl, eventually confirming that the dowitchers, were, indeed, Long-billed. But it was hard not to watch the Snowy Owl as she in turn studied us at close range, full-frame in our scopes, in perfect afternoon light. The dowitchers eventually flew off, passing close by the owl, diverting her attention from the silly humans cautiously standing nearby. When her gaze returned to me, it was amazing how feline her glowing yellow eyes were, echoing the gaze of our recently deceased orange tiger cat.

Christmas Bird Count sightings can cut to our very souls. Keep up the great work, one and all! 