

Everett-Marysville Christmas Bird Count (CBC):

December 29, 2018:



the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

As you all know, with the Christmas Bird Count, the motto has always been, “the show must go on”—and so we stay the course, rain or shine. But this was the toughest count conditions in my all my years as your compiler. Most of you reported a windy morning, and heavy rain following lunch hour. The wind kept many small birds hunkered down, and wave action made it harder to see divers between rollers. Our kayak team had to cancel, and even the indefatigable **Duane Karna** and his boat were affected. He managed to get the **Houghtons** to Jetty Island and back, but little more could be done, wind gusting to 45 mph. Species counts were down in 13 of 17 territories; some were down by more than half! For individual counts, eight species had record-low individuals’ counts in the 1995-2018 period of our current CBC count area.

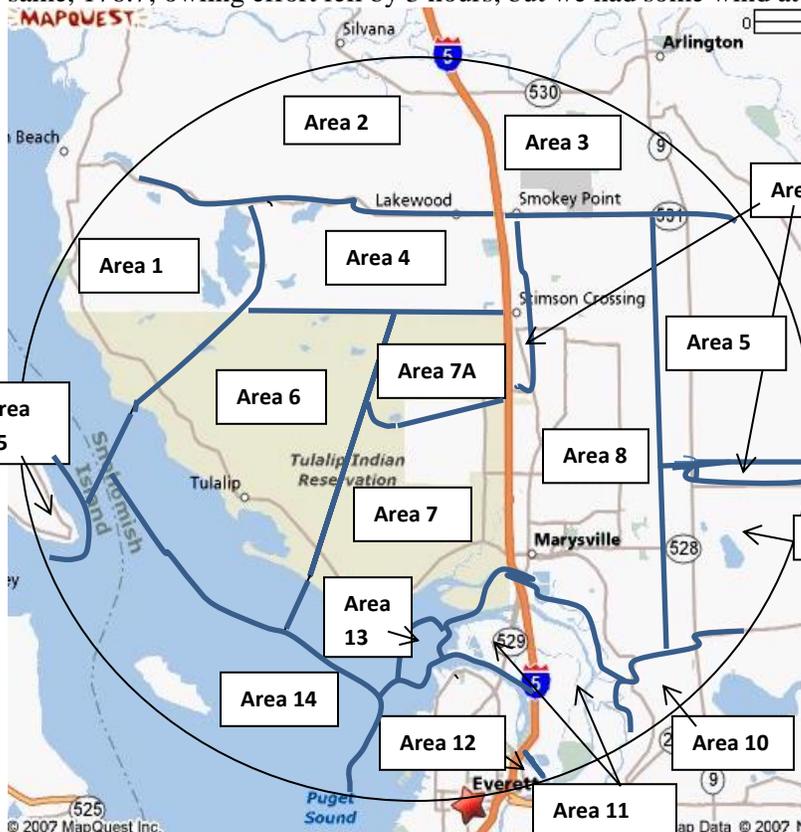
The Ugly included misses such as:

Western Grebe	N. Saw-whet Owl	Marbled Murrelet	Northern Shrike	W. Meadowlark
White-winged Scoter	Spotted Sandpiper	Com. Murre	Brown-headed Cowbird	Red Crossbill
Merlin	Pigeon Guillemot	Savannah Sparrow	Cedar Waxwing	Swamp Sparrow

But...the Good. There were high points too. Somehow, there was another record turnout of **129 participants** (67 in the field, 62 at home/neighborhood). And while misses and low counts were the big news this year, as one would expect, *we still managed to turn in a few surprises—and even a few record-high individual counts.* And if this year’s total of **125 species** was the lowest since the 2007 CBC, it could have been worse: the Padilla Bay Christmas Count, held the same day in Skagit County, found just 110 species; they are usually in the high 120s to low 130s. And we still counted **35,317 individual birds—down from last year’s 37,994.** *A separate Excel sheet attached separately shows territory-by-territory numbers.*

Rarities. This year, a gray-morph **Gyr Falcon** turned up, at Pacific Topsoils (private), our first since the 2006 CBC; and two drake **Redheads** were on the large ponds here. Maxine Reid had a count-week **Ruddy Turnstone** along the Tulalip shore.

Effort. This year, surprisingly, we saw a sharp jump in **miles walked**—121.6, versus just 102 last year; and feeder/private property hours also jumped really sharply—from 76.5 to 114.75 hours this year. Yet overall party hours spent stayed the same, 176.7; owling effort fell by 3 hours, but we had some wind at night, too.



Everett-Marysville Christmas Count circle, blue lines are territory boundaries.

While the count has been in existence since 1976, the circle was moved slightly southward in 1995 to accommodate the Skagit Flats CBC to the north.

TERRITORY-BY-TERRITORY

HIGHLIGHTS—Area 1 includes the outer west Tulalip shoreline (*Spee-bi-Dah, McKee’s Beach, Kayak Pt.* and more) and goes inland to *Port Susan Campground*, as well as including *lakes Goodwin and Shoecraft*. Art Wait’s team (**Wilma Bayes, Virginia Clark, and Sherrill Miller**) was back, and **Becky Berry** was also back covering her area off 140th (Fire Trail Road). **Trish Whitworth** was covering her feeder at the northwest corner of Lake Goodwin, and the **Halls** had a few birds at their place along Tulare Beach Rd. But overall species were just 47 for the area, compared to 61 last year.

Yet Area 1 nailed two solos—**Becky** found the first **Ruffed Grouse** we’ve had in years, near the Port Susan Campground; the Art Wait team found the count’s only two **Common Loons**, on a day when any loon was newsworthy. And at the tally, **Sherrill Miller** reported that Lake Goodwin was as loaded with waterfowl as ever, resulting in best-in-the-field counts of:

Bufflehead, Com. Merganser, Ruddy Duck, and Pied-billed Grebe; from the salt water accesses Sherrill also reported also most of the CBC's **Horned and Red-necked Grebes**.

AREA 2 (*west of Island Crossing, north of 172nd, northernmost CBC area*). **Maureen Corlas** led a great effort, joined by **Barbara Folmer**. New feeder-watcher recruits included **Amy Haugen-Hayes** and newcomers **Scott** and **Beth Lee**. Amazingly, this year's effort snared an *increased* species count by four to 49, a surprisingly good showing for the day, including Maureen's CBC solo **Rough-legged Hawks** (2), and 4 of the 5 CBC-solo **Evening Grosbeaks**. The Lees had one of the latter also. Area 2 bird-counters also led all parties for counts of **Pileated Woodpecker** and **Com. Raven**.

Area 3 (includes *Portage Creek WMA and Arlington Airport, all sites north of 172nd and east of I-5*) was again led by **David Poortinga**, joined by **Kendall Van Zanten**. **Tom Sultze** was back to bike-bird the Centennial Trail after last year's absence. After 2017's record-best coverage (including 64 bird species found), the rough weather for this CBC brought Area 3 back down to earth, with 55 species, still a remarkable number. Poortinga-Van Zanten accounted for the CBC's best counts of both **Eur. Collared-Dove** and **Brewer's Blackbird**, while **Barb** and **Ed Oleson** accounted for half of the count's **Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Juncos** (3) and **Sharp-shinned Hawks** (2). The Oleson place is like a finch-fest! Area 3 also led the field for **Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco**, just short of 200 birds. Six other feeder-counters helped in Area 3.

AREA 4 (*west of I-5, north of 140th but south of Lakewood Rd, Gissburg Lakes, Lake Loma, Lakewood HS*) while **Jonathan Blubaugh** was down in CA watching the Cougs play in the Alamo Bowl, **Terry Nightingale** led Area 4, joined by **Douglas Resnick, Sue Miller-Nightingale, Lisa Weber, Toney & Clara Luiting, and Kelli Marks**. Meanwhile, **Jan & Dan Eide** covered their place again this year, and the new counters were **Rich** and **Geraldine Roberts** on the west side of Lake Ki. Birding overall was much slower this year; but Terry's team led for all counters of both **Canada Goose** and **Trumpeter Swan**, the first count (over 500 birds) playing the key role in a record-high for the CBC. Rich and I watched a fly-by count-week **Merlin** at his place.

Area 5 (*south of 172nd in Arlington and north of 108th in Marysville, going all the way to I-5 and to the northeast edge of the circle in Sysco Heights*). The **Wilds** covered Area 5 once again, while **Bruce Thompson** covered uplands in the territory, and **Sierra Zweig** and **Michael Holman** did a pass-through the uplands late in the day. **Tom Sultze** had bike coverage of Centennial Trail again this year. And seven different feeder-watchers were also counting, led by **Janine Karsen** and **Al Agular**.



Cacklers....

The Wilds' 450 **Cackling Geese** shattered our all-time combined CBC record-high count of 367. Common as a fall migrant in October, there seems to be a regional trend of increasing numbers on the CBCs nearby also.

Area 5 counters also led all territories for counts of **American Wigeon**.

In this compiler's recollection, I believe this is the first time ever that the high count for this species has been inland and east of I-5. The territory also led, strangely, for **House Sparrow**, which has to be another CBC first. In all, Area 5 counters ticked off 49 species.

Caty Norton again led **Area 5A** (*areas north of 116th up to 172nd, west of 51st and east of I-5, and extreme south of Sysco Heights*), joined by **Michele Martin**. Feeder and private-property coverage were the province of **Don Thurman, Earl Haas** and **Tom Gore** at their respective sites north of Getchell Hill Rd. The count was way off this year with just 22 species, down from 35 in 2017. But the highlight was a mind-numbing **200 Bushtits** that Caty reported—nearly all in a single flock! This was the highest of any party, and an integral part of a record-high 515 total for the whole CBC, fitting a regional trend toward increase lately.

Maxine Reid, our veteran lead in **AREA 6** (*central-south Tulalip Reservation*), was aided again by **Mike Bacon**—and together they had another great contribution to the CBC. **Judith Wheeler** was new to the coverage with her new spot near Hermosa Pt.; and **Josh Adams** ably covered the interior of the Tulalip Reservation after the kayak trip cancelled. Maxine found the count's only **Red-throated Loons** and only **Killdeer** (!), and had a celebrated count-week **Ruddy Turnstone** also, which otherwise would have been a CBC first. She also had a **White-throated Sparrow** at her feeder, one of two found this year—the first time in quite a few CBCs for us. In all the species count was 58, nearly the exact same as last year, but this time with two solos, and a third count-week.

Another CBC veteran, **Dan Olson**, returned to cover **Area 7** (*southeast Tulalip Reservation*), while **Graham Hutchison** led perhaps the best-ever coverage of area **Area 7A** (*Northeast Tulalip*), with his team including **Frank Caruso**, **Bud Brower** and **Jim Beneteau** (all returners). Though it was a slow day in Area 7 with just 22 species, the **Hatley's** feeder, normally overrun with birds, helped Dan's count by one, by providing one of the CBC's two **Orange-crowned Warblers**. Then in 7A, **Linda Orrino**, the **Davenport**s, and new participants **Karuna** and **Dan Duval** chipped in with feeder birds.

Graham's team had the only **Hutton's Vireo** on the CBC this year, and Linda Orrino turned in the CBC's only two **Band-tailed Pigeons** at her feeder. Linda's very active feeder also provided 7A with CBC-leading counts of both **House** and **Purple Finches**, and both of Area 7A's CBC highest-counts of both **Chestnut-backed Chickadees** and **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** were largely the result of Graham's team. In all, 7A produced a really impressive 50 species, their best ever, and one of the only four territories to register an increase in species this year. Well done to all in Area 7!!

Marysville City, **Area 8**, once again saw the most intense coverage with 24 bird-counters—in large measure due, as in the past, to the great effort of **Susie Schaefer**. What would our CBC be, without Susie?! Susie's incredible team of 11 (split up into as many as three field teams in turn) this year included **Victoria Chaussee**, **Jeff Remington**, **David Richman**, **Randy Kolb**, **Cathy Clark**, **Brian Poor**, **Laura Brou**, **Edmond Anderson**, **Bev Bowe**, and **Karen Wosilait**. Yours truly recruited heavily on the feeder front before the CBC: we had 14 observers for the stay-home effort, including returners **Al Eliot**, **Tina & Rich Malean**, **Ken Price**, **Gary Siko**, **Gary Lindhof**, **Cecelia Johnson**, and **Bill & Norma Anderson**; new this year on the CBC were **Abbi** and **Rod Gomersall**, **Michael Morrow**, and **Carol Vezzani**. **Pamela Myers** returned home briefly (she was on the Padilla Bay CBC mostly this year) to find the **White-throated Sparrow** at her feeder, as reported on Ebird. Thanks Pam!

Susie's team had a CBC-solo **Greater Yellowlegs** this year, and Gary Lindhof (of **Mountain Chickadee** fame last year) had three of four CBC-solo **Townsend's Warblers** for Area 8; he also had just one of our two **Red-breasted Sapsuckers**. While Susie's counters led all parties for counts of (**Am.**) **Green-winged Teal**, **Gr. Scaup**, and **Am. Coot**, both feeder and field teams together contributed to the highest-of-all-territories counts of **Rock Pigeon**, **Anna's Hummingbird**, **Northern Flicker**, **Downy Woodpecker**, **Red-breasted Nuthatch**, and all three "**Zonos**"—**White-crowned**, **Golden-crowned**, and the **White-throated Sparrow**. Good 'ol **Al Eliot** saw most of the CBC's **Snow Geese** flying over his place in town.



Long-billed Dowitchers (photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

Last but not least—and the only species other than Cackling Goose to break the all-time CBC high—was **Long-billed Dowitcher**, with 145 birds (!) counted at the wetland. This count alone went well past the CBC's previous record-high, of 106, in 2012. All in all, the 24 participants in Area 8 found an astounding 65 species, two more than last year and third-best of all territorial species counts.

Area 9 (*northwest Lake Stevens, Centennial Trail, Corson Wildlife Area, east to 123rd Street NE, west to Highway 9, including Lake Cassidy*) had returners **Mara Price**, **Joanie Mack** and **Al Eliot** (Al also contributed feeder birds from his place in Marysville City as noted above, Area 8). Meanwhile, returners **Sierra Zweig** and **Michael Holman** covered a key section of the Centennial Trail, while **Kathy Rasmussen**, **Susan Babich** and **Lynette Hjort** (all returners) covered their respective private sites at home.

As in Marysville, the bird census here went better than expected. The two solos were a **Wood Duck** (at least Joanie, and probably Zweig-Holeman) and Kathy Rasmussen came through with her reliable **Calif. Quail**. 44 species in Area 9 were five more than 2017. Mike Holman reported that in their section of Centennial, probably in a lee of the wind, was pretty calm compared to nearby areas. Highest-in-the-field counts of **Black-capped Chickadee**, **Pacific Wren**, **Am. Robin** and **Golden-crowned Kinglet** bring special attention from Area 9; the Zweig-Holman team counted the most of these.

In **Area 10** (*Sunnyside Boulevard south, n. end of Ebey Island, southwest Lake Stevens south of Soper Hill Rd. and Hwy 92*), **Mary Vosteen** was out of town this year, but **Aleta Mueller** and **Betsey Mullen** were back, and I really lucked out having **Art Campbell** and **Michele Dewey** return again (Art and Michele had led Area 5 last year). **Donna Carter** also

submitted the birds coming to her place again, as our sole feeder-watcher in the territory. Area 10 had a very tough act to follow—last year’s record-best coverage was, as in Area 3, not to be repeated. Still 45 species included one CBC solo:

Aleta forwarded me written details on a **Sora** that she saw at close range at a retention pond just uphill of Sunnyside Blvd. Soras previous have not generally been outside the Snohomish River delta; however, another was seen in very similar circumstances along the edge of a small inland pond at Cedarcrest golf course in Marysville (2015 CBC).

Area 11 (*Everett Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) and the Snohomish River north to Biringer Farm, both east and west of I-5, including Spencer Island, and Pacific Topsoils on Smith Island*) once again had by far the highest total number of birds, 13,317, largely thanks to waterfowl; and was once again the territory with the highest species count--70. I can’t speak for **Steve Giles**, but it sure didn’t feel weather-wise like a banner-day, and some areas could not be reached. This largely explains a drop of 13 species in our combined count here, as compared to 2017. Steve was joined by **Julia Bent** and newcomer **Mark Burnett**, of Marysville Library, and our star participant, having arranged a library meeting room for us in the evening for the tally.

This team of three covered the core Everett STP area and Spencer Island, while my wife and I covered surrounding areas; **Libbie and Lee Soden** also did mop-up coverage in core areas, looking for species that might have been missed by the two core teams. Notably, Area 11 had highest-of-all territories’ counts for no less than **23 bird species**, tying for highest on five more. Steve’s solos were **Eurasian Wigeon**, 41 **Canvasback**, 3 **Western Sandpipers** and 74 **Black-bellied Plovers**; I added two **Eared Grebes**, two **Redhead**, a **Short-eared Owl** and a gray-morph **Gyr Falcon**. The latter was seen only by myself however, and as it was in flight, I was unable to obtain photos; so written details will be submitted to the regional reviewer. This is our first Gyr since one was seen from the 12th Street SE flats (opposite Dagmar’s Landing, just east of I-5) in 2006.

Area 12 (*Everett City*) had 67 species, in what leader **Rick Taylor** described as a mediocre day; in 2017, Area 12 had 81 species. Still, among 67 species this year were six CBC solos—**Bonaparte’s** and **Herring Gulls**, **Brandt’s** and **Pelagic Cormorants**, **Sanderling**, and **Hermit Thrush** were only found in north Everett. Rick’s wife **Tina**, **Mick & Mary Rairdin**, **Linda Howard**, and **Christine Dubois** were also all part of the field-teams coverage. Owing to the tough weather, **Duane Karna**, **Douglas Cooper** and **Steve Pink** also chipped in some water birds from Duane’s boat. Last but not least, **Mary Ann Sudkamp** and **Connie Veldink** contributed feeder reports. Little wonder that with a team like this, Area 12 led in highest individual counts for 11 species, and tied for the lead on a couple more. Well done Area 12!

The Houghtons, after a couple very big years in **Area 13** (*Jetty Island*), faced very user-unfriendly gale-force winds as they disembarked onto Jetty Island from **Duane Karna’s** boat. It was bleak. But even in the toughest conditions, it was still “quality over quantity” for the birds here. The Houghtons had the only **(Black) Brant** for the whole CBC—and led all counters of **Red-breasted Merganser** with 9 birds. And no less intriguing was a report of 14 “shorebird, sp.” here. As the years go by, it is clear why Jetty Island was originally broken out as its own territory, given its unique character.

AREA 14 (substantial expanse of *open salt water from n. Everett west to and around Hat Island, over to the southernmost shore of Camano Island, and Hat Island itself*). After CBC day, it was difficult to get in touch with the residents on Hat Island that had planned to meet the boat party. But I found a couple. Skipper of the Hat Island ferry, **Ray Brown**, and **Sharron Meadows**, a longtime resident with a very busy feeder, combined for a list of 12 species. But here again, a small list is better than none—Ray had a CBC-solo **Pacific Loon**.

Area 15 (*southernmost Camano Island*) combined **Allison Warner** and **Anthony Glizzo**. Careful study of the area by maps and good preparation generally allowed for discovery of a new access near the south end of the island, and of 26 species, nearly the same as last year, and had the highest count of any territory for **Brown Creeper**. Thanks for the effort folks!!

So, that stormy 2018 CBC is now behind us. Even with all the challenges, it was well worth it to give it a shot—and the results show that. We have another year of continued continuity in census. SPECIAL THANKS TO MARK BURNETT, Marysville veteran library employee and birder, for allowing us access for the CBC’s potluck dinner and tally in the evening. Great fun!

You are all congratulated for your participation, and—invited to return for the December 28, 2019 (a Saturday) CBC—get jacked up for a great one!

UNTIL DECEMBER 28th THEN—ALL THE BEST TO YOU

Scott R. Atkinson, Compiler, Everett-Marysville CBC