

## BEAUTIFUL WEATHER + RECORD PARTICIPATION=

### GREAT EVERETT-MARYSVILLE CBC (CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT) ON JANUARY 2nd

The results are in: congratulations to all of you—we had another terrific bird count on January 2nd. *140 species of birds were detected—almost certainly the second-highest of all 40+ Washington State CBCs.* This high species count equals our best year (2011) and is very close or even with our last CBC on January 1, 2015 (which I originally claimed at 141, but was then edited down, to 139-140). This CBC we were just short of 40,000 individuals, down some from the 44,059 record on the Jan. 1, 2015 CBC. Still, like last year, we recorded a significant number of **record-high individual counts—for 17 species**, while tying for the record-high on five more, so the total individuals were well above average. These are as measured with in the current positioning of our CBC circle, which is now 21 years old. New to our CBC this year were the **Lesser Goldfinch** at Island Crossing, and **Harlequin Ducks**. On the opposite end, **W. Gull, Red-necked & Western Grebes** were close to, or tied with, 21-year record lows.

**I. Effort.** **125 people** participated in this year's CBC—eclipsing last year's record of 113. Of particular note, the feeder/private property counters increased to 52, though feeder-watcher hours were down slightly from last year. Field observers were 73, four more than last year, in 31-38 parties. *Party miles increased* over last year (126 on foot vs. 119 last year, 670 by car over 588 last year), *as did party hours on foot* (154 this year vs 144 last), car hours were 53, as last year. Weather conditions (clear and cold, 18 to 42 F) were nearly a dead match for last year, though many more of you reported that the cold this year slowed the morning birding. Please note territory-by-territory map (at end) and report that follows.

**II. Coverage.** **AREA 1** (*outer west part of Tulalip Reservation: Spee-bi-Dah, McKee's Beach, Kayak Pt., inland to lakes Goodwin and Shoecraft*) was covered very well once again by **Art Wait's** team (**Wilma Bayes, Virginia Clark, and Sherrill Miller**), and separately by **Becky Berry**, covering her beat off 140<sup>th</sup> (Fire Trail Road). This year we also had **Trish Whitworth** with a feeder at the northwest corner of Lake Goodwin, & **Clint Hall** gave his feeder list over to the Wait team.

Area 1 had the only **Hermit Thrush** on this year's CBC—somewhat of a surprise since we hit a 21-year record-high of **300 Varied Thrush** for the CBC. Normally we could have expected 1-2 more **Hermit Thrush** with that many **Varieds**. Both **Maxine Reid** and I also shared (unbeknownst to either of us at the time!) the solo **N. Saw-whet Owl** in the pre-dawn hours off 140<sup>th</sup> also in Area 1. It made perfect sense that Area 1 led all parties for **Varied Thrush** with a humongous 109 total, and led in individual counts of 9 other species—mostly birds of the deep woods as it should be, but notably also for both **Hooded** and **Common Mergansers**.

**AREA 2** (*north of 172<sup>nd</sup> Street, west of I-5 up to Island Crossing, west to Frank Waters Rd*)—**Reg Reisenbacher, Pamela Myers** and **Kim Kendall** had highest individual counts of all parties for 6 species, including near-solos (2 each) of **Rough-legged Hawk** and **Northern Shrike**. But it was **Adam Stevens**, covering private property near the area's central core, who saw and heard the Area 2 solo--five **Tundra Swans** that flew over his property.



**AREA 3** (*Island Crossing east of I-5, to Portage Creek WMA, varied Arlington sites north of 172<sup>nd</sup> Street, such as Arlington Airport*) might have had the most interesting and diverse coverage change this year. On the one hand, **Diann MacRae** and **Joanie Pryor** returned, but **Jock Young** (who was on special assignment in several territories) helped out near Arlington. Airport.



*Tale of 2 finches again this CBC— LESSER GOLDFINCH (left, photo courtesy of Steve Giles), & COMMON REDPOLL (right, Billee Jo Winskowski)*

Then **Dave Poortinga** provided a list from his place—at the very north edge of our CBC close to Island Crossing—including the justly-famous **LESSER GOLDFINCH—our CBC's first!** **Billee Jo Winskowski** (of previous **RB Sapsucker** solo-fame on our CBC) turned in still another solo—this time 16 **Common Redpolls** (and a **redpoll, sp.**) from her Glen Eagle property. This marked the second year in a row that this finch was an Area 3 solo (**Diann** and **Joanie** had 8 last year). All told, Area 3 had 51 species—far above last year's 40, and with an interesting mix of coverage.

**AREA 4** (*west of I-5, north of 140<sup>th</sup>, but south of 172<sup>nd</sup>/Lakewood Rd, Gissburg Lakes, Lake Loma, Lakewood HS*) was covered again this year by **Jonathan Blubaugh**, joined by **Douglas Resnick** and **Terry & Sue Nightingale**. **Jock Young** was allowed to enter Camp Kiloqua, our first access in years; I was also lucky (the day before the CBC!) to run into **Dan Eide** at the 88<sup>th</sup> Street Starbucks in Marysville. A random conversation led to discovery that he and his wife **Jan** had an active bird feeder, so they sent in a list as well from private property. In short, *Area 4 had the most bird species of all inland parties, with 62*—and quantum leap from 49 and 42 in the last two CBCs. Most of what I call the “Jonathan goose” (**Cackling Goose**) found on our CBC, 8 birds, were here. Hats off to Jonathan—years back he insisted that the species was increasing locally in winter, despite some skepticism from yours truly—now the trend is clear throughout our area.

**Area 5** (*south of 172<sup>nd</sup> in Arlington and north of 108<sup>th</sup> in Marysville, going all the way to I-5 and to the northeast edge of the circle in Sysco Heights*) marked another great CBC this year. Area 5 has an adjunct, **AREA 5A** (*extreme northwest Marysville/Stimson, west of 51<sup>st</sup> and east of I-5, and extreme south of Sysco Heights*+). The **Wilds** covered Area 5 expertly as always, while **Caty Norton** and new participants **Bruce Thompson** and **Michele Martin** did Area 5A. Both 5 and 5A both benefitted from feeder and private-property observers like **Sammy Catiis**, **Glenda Smith** (returning after several years), and **Ida Maye Katustik** with **Floyd Pederson** (all in Sysco Heights). Alas, the **Gores** and their **Calif. Quail** were missing, as was **Tom Shultze**, our Boeing biker-birder doing Centennial Trail. Broken out for the first time in the Excel sheet, areas 5-5A still collectively found 55 bird species, with highest counts for all parties of 4 of them.

Then **Maxine Reid** and **Mike Bacon** returned like clockwork to **Area 6** (*Tulalip including Tulalip Bay and Hermosa Pt., inland to central sections of the Tulalip Reservation*). In addition, we were lucky to have **Jason Gobin** with the Tulalip Tribe covering the most remote inner sections of the reservation; and off Turk Rd., the **Spinnings** and **Dave Constantine** covered their lively feeder and property as custom in recent years. **Maxine** spotted the only three **Red-throated Loons** (3) for us this year, and she led all parties on counts for two others on our list. Somehow, counters here detected 65 bird species, one more than last year’s strong showing.

Few people have been more loyal to this CBC and their territory than veteran **Dan Olson**, who—with **Judith Wheeler** and **Erin** and **Curtis Martin** covered **Area 7** (*southeast Tulalip Reservation including Priest Pt.*). **Margaret Hatley**’s overrun bird feeders and also by first-time coverage (on special territory) by good ‘ol **Mike Sheldon** (new to our count) were also important. Then we lucked out and had **Graham Hutchinson** (with **Bud Brouwer** and **Jim Beneteau**) back on Area 7A (*northeastern-most Tulalip Reservation; Ross Lake*). The Hutchinson party core coverage was further backed by **Linda Orrino**’s great yard with feeders, as well as **Kathy West**’s feeders. All told the combined coverage turned up 55 bird species—including the only **W. Screech-Owl**, barely off 140<sup>th</sup> (Firetrail Rd), that answered my whistle just before dawn. **Dan**, per CBC tradition, also reported most of the CBC’s **Spotted Sandpipers** and **Greater Yellowlegs** (3 each).

While Area 3 had perhaps the most interesting coverage, **AREA 8** (*Marysville*) had arguably the most comprehensive roster ever this year. **Susie Schaefer** once again put an astonishing field of observers together, no less than **ten** field observers including many younger birders who are most especially encouraging. And if Area 8’s field coverage was the most impressive of all parties, so was the feeder coverage—*no less than 15 participants at 12 different residences*, including several first-timers. Highlights and great tally-dinner stories from Marysville were many. **Cathy Clark** had to have had one of the best entries, with nice details she submitted on the CBC’s long-overdue first-ever **Harlequin Ducks**. And the Area 8 teams led all territories for high counts on 13 bird species, part of an amazing **72-species day**—11 more than last CBC. Susie and company had so many of our less common birds—near-solos on **Rough-legged Hawk**, **Herring Gull**, **Barn Owl**, and **Townsend’s Warbler**, for example. Susie said they are going to be doing regular surveys of the new estuary in the flats just south of Marysville, and just east of the Marysville Sewage Treatment Plant. The feeder-watchers had their contributions too, including the largest share (65) of a new all-time high of **152 Anna’s Hummingbirds**; **Ross Turner** also described well a single Count-Week **Common Redpoll** in with siskins. In sum, one had the feeling there was not just record participation here, but record-breaking enthusiasm!

**AREA 9 coverage** (*northwest Lake Stevens, Centennial Trail, Corson Wildlife Area, east to 123<sup>rd</sup> Street NE, west to Highway 9, including Lake Cassidy*) included veterans **Mara & Perry Price**, and **Al Eliot** (who also contributed feeder birds from his place in Marysville City). The solid group of feeder-watchers included **Kevin Gusman & Linda Johnson**, the **Thurmans** (**Dana** and **Kathryn**), **Sue Babich** (with very good group of birds), and **Jock Young** was on special assignment. If the overall species count was down (52 to 44), quality was up—as shown by the CBC’s only **Ruffed Grouse** (**Al** at Corson) and the **Thurmans** had the CBC’s solo intergrade **N. Flicker**. Near-solos were **Al**’s **Wood Ducks** (2) and Sue reported 2 **Ring-necked Pheasants** (a bird we have not had in years, perhaps part of local release). A burgeoning **Great Horned Owl** population here was shown by 5 birds (of the CBC’s 11 counted). Amazingly, if all this wasn’t enough for Area 9, the day after the CBC, I saw and heard two **White-winged Crossbills**. These were off 123<sup>rd</sup> Street, north of 84<sup>th</sup> Street NE, and a likely third was near the Gores on January.4th.

Every CBC has much continuity to the ones before, but every single one has its own distinct features, too. **Mary & Peter Vosteen**, who only joined us a few CBCs back, but have become steadily more evident on the CBC, in **Area 10** (*south end of Sunnyside Boulevard, southwestern-most Lake Stevens—south of Soper Hill Rd and Hwy 92*). **Suzie** and **Donna Rice** also gave us a nice feeder report, and **Peggy Heineck** of **Heineck Farms** really helped us along Sunnyside Blvd. This year's 52 species (exceeded in history only by last CBC's 54) wasn't the big news—it was an unheard-of *three solos* that were completely unexpected. These included two **Cedar Waxwings** and—part of an unprecedented 7-sparrow day—three **Swamp Sparrows** and an **Am. Tree Sparrow**. Certainly we've had these in Area 11, but never before in Area 10. Yet with dike breaches and loss of bottomland just north, the low ground near the Lake Stevens Sewer District could become our new hot sparrow spot. This was underscored when I walked some of the area a week later. Not walking quite the same way as **Mary** did, I missed the **Am. Tree Sparrow**, but had one **Swamp**, double-digit numbers of **Lincoln's**, and a **White-throated Sparrow** in a large **Golden-crowned** flock. And before I forget—**Mary** also had her **warblers** again and also a **W. Scrub-Jay** at her home feeder, this latter one the first time in Area 10.

**AREAS 11 & 11A** (*the low ground from the Everett Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) north to Biringer Farm, both east and west of I-5, Pacific Topsoils on Smith Island; 11A—the kayak team going down the sloughs to Otter Island*) was well off last year's 94 species at 84. Area 11 led for high counts of 25 species, tying for the lead on others. Area 11 did not have the stunning rarities of last year, but managed three outright solos—**Gr. White-fronted Geese**, **3 Soras**, and **3 Lapland Longspurs**. The latter were the first since the 2011 count, and were at Biringer Farm. Areas north of the Everett Sewage Treatment Plant were significantly cleared of brush in preparation for more dike-breaching/estuarine restoration, which clearly impacted songbird numbers.



Still, remaining areas adjacent to the tree farm retained significant sparrow counts, including one each of **Red** and **Slate-colored** forms of **Fox Sparrow** (note photos of first to left). The first had been recorded twice previously on the CBC, but the latter had not, except for a count-week bird in Marysville.

Photos of a *zaboria*-type (**Red**) **Fox Sparrow**, Area 11 on the CBC. Note subtle rusty spots on upper breast, rusty wings, tail & crown in closer view. Also faint rust streaks on back, absence of dark chocolate brown like of (Sooty) Fox

The **11A kayak coverage** this year was lower for total species than the last two years, but I needed to place another birder with **Bill Brackin**. Still, **Josh Adams** and **Donald Erickson** spent a healthy 6.5 hours and four miles going down the slough and back, recording 32 species, including a near-solo on **Spotted Sandpiper**, which we have been known to miss some years. Otter Island and other backwater areas still hold great potential for the future, especially since species like **Great Egret** and **Black-crowned Night-Heron** are overdue on our CBC, and seem to have best chances to show here.

For the first time ever, **Area 12** (*Everett City*) had the highest total species count of all territories. **Rick** and **Tina Taylor** did their usual outstanding job, joined by **Phil & Mary Dickinson**, who had just moved up from North Carolina, and **Jeremy Davis**. This team of five detected 87 species—and feeder counters (**M. Rairdin**, **Matt Freed**, **Mary Ann Sudkamp**, **Kinuko Noborikawa** and **Melissa Negretti**) added two more for a total of 89 species for the day. As in other years, highlights were just about too many to list, but the only **Com. Murres** (4) were offshore here, and near-solos were registered for **Western Gull** and **Western Scrub-Jay** (three each). Among many impressive counts (including highest individual counts for 19 species) were a jaw-dropping five **Orange-crowned Warblers**, by far the most of any party and the main reason for a record-tying 11 for the whole CBC, despite the cold, and a record that had stood since 1995.

**Patty Barton** (kayaker) and **Jon** and **Kathy Houghton** (on foot) once again did a stellar job with **Area 13** (*Jetty Island*). This year 39 species were detected, 5 more than last year, with the **Houghtons** finding 5 **Semipalmated Plovers** (5<sup>th</sup> time in 6 CBCs) and 15 **Sanderlings**—both CBC solos! A **Short-eared Owl** was a near-solo also. **Pattie** found an unusual medium shorebird, sp. that defied identification, although **Red Knot** was a strong consideration. **Area 13** had on highest individual counts for 4 species.

**Area 14** (*boat party, offshore waters; new this year—Hat Island on foot*) for the first time ever this year included on-foot coverage of Hat Island. Special thanks and kudos go to veteran offshore lead **Duane Karna**, who announced his planned retirement for driving his boat this year, yet managed to bring off the island coverage (as we had long sought). **Douglas Cooper** had a backup craft at the ready, and other participants included **Bob** and **Laurie Schmidt**, **Steve Pink** and island resident **Shawn Potter**. Other island residents provided valuable assistance and guidance. Near-solos included **Com. Loon**, **Brandt's Cormorant** and **Marbled Murrelet**. Among the 51 species found (a new record), Area 14 had the highest counts for 7 species, none of greater surprise than 13 **Brown Creepers** in the Doug-Fir laden woods out there.

Last but not least **Area 15** coverage this year was comprised of **Allison Warner** and **Val Huddleston-Koehler** (*southernmost Camano Island*). They had to split hours with the South Whidbey CBC the same day, but still detected 24 species, including one of our only three **Hutton's Vireos**.

**III. Missed.** As well as we did, **Am. Bittern**, **California Quail**, **Western Sandpiper**, **Rhinoceros Auklet** and **Evening Grosbeak** were missed. The latter was present during count week just east of the circle, and the **Am. Bittern** was seen the day before the CBC near the Spencer I. bridge. I was also unable, as most years, to include a few entries, this year including **Chipping Sparrow** and **House Wren**. Both have been recorded on area CBCs, but with photos or other documentation.

**IV. Trends.** Once again, our count benefitted from great participation and talented counters, and also another lucky break on weather—probably the two most important factors in most of the record-high counts. We did have another very warm, dry summer during 2015, so this once again also probably helped many resident nesting species as well as those nesting to our north. Still, the picture on climactic factors are less clear this time around than in past years, given exceptional dryness, fires and other negative factors that could have worked against some of our wintering birds.

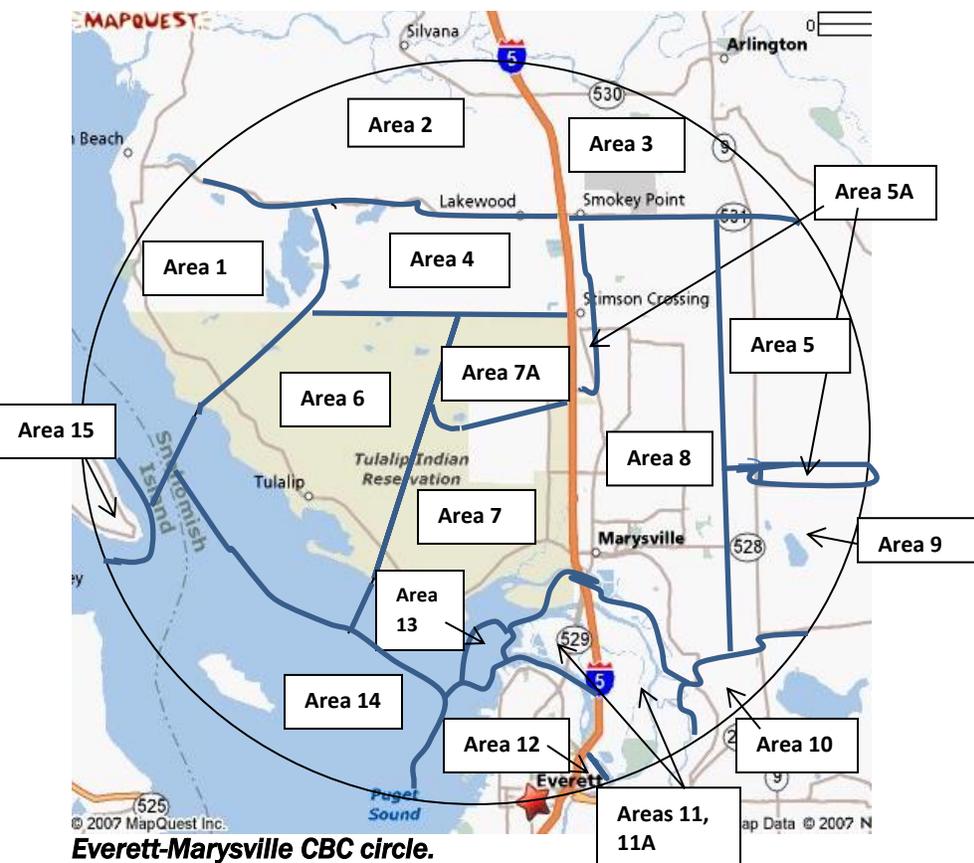
**Ducks** seemingly had a pretty good showing, and it was good to see the return of a few **Wood Ducks** (despite most inland sites being frozen) and a few **Eurasian Wigeon** (which we actually missed last CBC). Most observers felt **Hooded** and **Common Mergansers** were more frequent this year, probably owing to them being concentrated at open waters with inland waters not usable. **Common Merganser** was simply much more widespread across the territories than usual. On the downside, **White-winged Scoter** seems gone from the CBC area, fitting declines regionally, such as out at Sequim. Given about five straight years of misses, I don't even include it in the "missed" category anymore because it is no longer expected.

**Grebes** and **loons** were mediocre to poor in numbers looking at the 21-year averages, and a recent note on Tweeters indicated similar results on the Seattle CBC. The same was true of our two offshore **cormorants**, **Pelagic** and **Brant's**. Evidently bait fish (such as herring) were down this season. Meanwhile, **raptors** overall were up numbers, including 116 **Bald Eagles** (please note birds not listed to age were given as adults here in Excel). 3 **Soras** marked the fourth time in 21 years we've found this many (best in the state); note that most field guides still don't show **Sora** wintering this far north...**Shorebirds** were again one of our strongest groups, with 11 species; most Puget Sound CBCs don't get this many. Snohomish River delta and Jetty Island help a lot. Record-highs for two of our **plovers** were noteworthy.

Our standard 8 gull species were present in near-normal numbers, but **alcids** fit the pattern of divers and cormorants, putting in a mediocre showing. Both **Anna's Hummingbird** and **Eurasian Collared-Dove** continued their increases, both with new record-highs and fitting the regional trend. Night **owls**—thanks to a windless, starry night with a decent moon—were well represented, with 5 species and 26 individuals, in 16 hours of owling—approaching 2 owls per hour. We still need to work on detection of **N. Pygmy-Owl**, however, as I believe it is at least a bit more common than our CBC numbers suggest. The Skagit Flats CBC adjoining to our north had 3 on their last CBC.

**Woodpeckers** had a strong showing with records on **Pileated** and for **Red-breasted Sapsuckers**. This latter species often floods the lowlands when we go into deep-freeze mode, with temperatures down into the teens. For passerines, we could not quite surpass last year's record for **W. Scrub-Jay**, but four is still a high number for us; AI reported that a bird is just east of us now in Granite Falls, too. Most other passerines were about normal, but **warblers** were, like last year, unexpectedly strong—32 birds of 3 species. 11 **Orange-crowned Warblers** were especially surprising since we usually get about 2-3. Local breeders that surely benefitted from last summer's warmth and dry conditions were **Bushtit** and **Spotted Towhee**; both were way high on count and the latter was about 30% higher than the last record high! **Sparrows** were again mostly up this year, with 8 species and two additional forms. **Song Sparrows** were like **towhees**, unusually abundant (over 1000 for the first time), and at least the Sequim CBC saw similar record-highs (they had over 1600 this year). As usual, Area 11 had the highest concentrations, with over 300 **Song**, and over 450 **sparrows** total.

Finishing out, the **blackbirds** were collectively a bit above average, though **W. Meadowlark** seemed flatly more numerous and widespread this year. On the other hand, typical **finches** were down in numbers overall, yet we managed a first-ever **Lesser Goldfinch**, **Com. Redpolls** returned, and I had the count-week **White-winged Crossbills**.



**Everett-Marysville CBC circle.**  
**Macro-scale (boundaries not exactly as shown)**

**CBC Area land-use changes.** We had more-than-usual change in the CBC area this year. On the upside, regaining **Pacific Topsoils** access on Smith Island and the first-time **Hat Island coverage** marked our biggest coverage gains. Losses of flatlands scrub habitat in Area 11 were substantial north of the Everett STP; **Biringer Farm** seems to be edging closer to estuarine flooding, much to the dismay of this long-time observer. Yet new dikes there give rise to questions as to what the final look will be. The new estuary in the south of Area 8 was also much discussed.

**Looking ahead.** We continue to see growing involvement locally and increased interest in birds. It seems there has never been so many people feeding birds from home. As far as participation, the feeder-watchers continue to be our biggest opportunity for growth. Some folks start with feeders, and then expand to cover their neighborhood—or more. As participation grows, larger territories might be divided a little more, as we’ve seen with areas 5, 7 and 8. At this point we seem to have only one major piece of real estate left to gain, that being the old **Tulalip land-fill site on the south side of Ebey Slough** and west of I-5. True, I was able to cover the south shoreline looking across from **Miller Shingle** this year.

Finally, I truly hope you had a great time out there on the CBC, and hope you can all make it back for the next one. We are still working on the next CBC date, but provisionally it will be in mid-December, such as on my birthday, December 18.

--SA