

## EVERETT-MARYSVILLE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT (CBC)

### January 1, 2015: A DAY TO REMEMBER

**Congratulations to all of you**—our Christmas Bird Count was the most successful ever as measured by a number of indicators. **141 bird species were recorded—our all-time highest ever, and #1 in the entire State of Washington this CBC season.** This includes a remarkable number of rarities, all supported by details, multiple observers, detection before or after the CBC, photos and/or a combination of several of these. Only three Christmas Bird Counts statewide—**Sequim-Dungeness, Grays Harbor**, and ours—have ever reached the 140 species mile marker (although Bellingham and Padilla Bay have both been close at 139 once each). Our previous best was exactly 140 in 2008. We might have in fact had a couple more species than 141: **Rufous Hummingbird** and **Black-headed Grosbeak** were also reported, but no details were ever received so I did not include them. We also had a non-countable (escaped) **Green Pheasant** in Marysville. To have the highest number of species shows a great area, intense effort, and more—and we should recall that there were 41 Christmas Bird Counts statewide in Dec 2013-Jan 2014...

We also finished with **44,057 individual birds counted**, 2<sup>nd</sup> highest for our CBC in the last 20 years. 12 of 15 territories (80%) reported more species and individuals this year than last. Dabbling duck numbers, raptor counts and range of species, 12 types of shorebirds, and a blizzard of new record-high counts of songbirds and woodpeckers—all made big news this year. **Record-high counts for 22 species were recorded**, plus two subspecies, whereas we only had one record-low count (and that tied last CBC's mark). Several factors were involved in these remarkable results:

(1) **Participation.** No less than **113 people** participated in this year's CBC—eclipsing last year's record of 90 participants. Of particular note, the feeder/private property counters more than doubled (to 44), and feeder-watcher hours also more than doubled. (2) **Weather conditions.** New Year's Day (and the night prior) we had clear weather. Frozen fresh water cost us **Wood Duck**, but clear skies, cold temperatures (18 to 39 F) and almost no wind meant ideal counting conditions. And despite the late November-early December cold snap and cold day, late-lingerers (birds that are near their northern maximum for winter range) were in ample supply. Imagine **35 warblers** of four species! Hardly what was expected. (3) **Last summer's conditions.** Remember that great sunny weather we had last year, that lasted from about late May to September, with above-average temperatures for nearly all periods? No question resident and nearby regional breeders must have had high nestling survival rates. (4) **20 years of data.** Don't forget that our 22 record-highs are being measured against only 19 other years, not in fact a huge look backward. The Everett-Marysville Christmas Count has been in existence since 1976, but the circle shifted away from Stanwood in 1995 to avoid overlap with the Skagit Flats CBC.



Everett-Marysville CBC circle. Not an exact depiction but close. Shifted southeast in 1995

#### **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 140<sup>th</sup> (Fire Trail Road). This year we also had **Cindy and Ken Bailey** with a feeder at the northeast corner of Lake Goodwin.

Highlights for Area 1 included near-solos on **Merlin** and **Bonaparte's Gull**, plus highest counts of all territories for **Com. Merganser, Pied-billed Grebe, Hairy Woodpecker, Varied Thrush** (as usual), **Red Crossbill** and **Pine Siskin**. Overall, Area 1 turned in 66 species—the most of any year in recent memory and well above last year's 54.

**AREA 2** (*north of 172<sup>nd</sup>, west of I-5 up to Island Crossing, west to Frank Waters Rd*) was led by **Tim Brennan**, joined by **Rose and Anne Beede**. The **Stevens** family contributed both feeder time and field coverage of their neighborhood, off 188<sup>th</sup>.

This territory led for counts of **Trumpeter Swan**, **Band-tailed Pigeon** (one of three parties to find them this year, unusual), and **Mourning Dove**. Area 2 also tied for highest counts of **Pileated Woodpecker**, **Hutton's Vireo**, and **Com. Raven**. In sum, Area 2's 59 species was the highest recorded there that I can recall, and eight more than last year.

**AREA 3** (includes *Portage Creek WMA and Arlington Airport, all sites north of 172<sup>nd</sup> and east of I-5*) had a new core team this year, comprised of **Diann MacRae** and **Joanie Pryor**. **Tom Shultze** added bike-birding coverage of the Centennial Trail also, as last year. The **Edwards family** was absent owing to illness on the feeder side, but luckily **Billee Jo Winskowski** was covering her Glen Eagle feeder well. Just 40 species total were found, less than last year's 42, and **Rough-legged Hawk** was missed (though it showed during Count Week). But **Diann and Joanie's 8 Common Redpolls** were a nice find and a solo for the CBC. **Billie Jo** found and again photographed a **Red-breasted Sapsucker**—another CBC solo for Area 3! The Island Crossing effort also found most of this year's **W. Meadowlarks**. **AREA 4** (*west of I-5, north of 140<sup>th</sup> but south of Lakewood Rd, Gissburg Lakes, Lake Loma, Lakewood HS*) was covered again this year by **Jonathan Blubaugh**, joined by **Douglas Resnick**. Birding overall was better than last year, with an increase of 7 species to **49 total** for the day. The highlight this year was a near-solo **Brown-headed Cowbird** (heard only).



*Tale of two finches:* Cassin's Finch male on the left, Purple Finch male on the right. Photo courtesy of Sammy Catiis, at her place off 124<sup>th</sup>, Sysco Heights, January 1, 2015.

**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 a great CBC this year. Area 5 has an adjunct, **AREA 5A** (*areas north of 116<sup>th</sup> up to 172<sup>nd</sup>, west of 51<sup>st</sup> and east of I-5, and extreme south of Sysco Heights*). The **Wilds** covered Area 5, while **Caty Norton** did Area 5A.

Additional coverage for 5 and 5a came in the form of four new feeder-watchers: the **Gore family** (in 5A) while **Sammy Catiis**, and **Ida Katustik** have property in 5. **Tom Shultze** also had a section of Centennial Trail that he bike-birded. This team of 8 people turned in an astonishing **64 species**, a huge number for an entirely inland area east of I-5. Among the highlights: the **Gores** found the CBC's only **8 California Quail**; and **Sammy Catiis** photographed a lone male **Cassin's Finch** (a first-ever for the CBC, at left).

Interestingly, we had two other reports of **Cassin's** from feeders elsewhere, but both had to be deleted for lack of documentation. Area 5 led for a number of other species, including **Eurasian Collared-Dove** (half of the CBC total), **Great Horned Owl**, and **DE (Slate-colored) Junco** (two teams with a total of 6 birds!). In the flats, the **Wilds** picked up two **Savannah Sparrows**, again half of the CBC total, and by far and away the highest count for **Golden-crowned Sparrow**.

**Maxine Reid** led **AREA 6** coverage (*central-south Tulalip Reservation*) as she has for many years. In the back part of the property, **Kendall** and **Colleen Norcott** joined the count for the first time, greatly aiding in songbird counts. Here too the species count was better than last year (**64**, versus 57 last year). The sparkling rarity was the CBC's first **Turkey Vulture** which Maxine found and described well; we have now joined several nearby CBCs that have recorded this scavenger. In addition, Area 6 led all counters with 10 **Black Turnstones** and over 100 **Golden-crowned Kinglets**, and Maxine had the highest **Killdeer** and **Surf Scoter** counts. This territory also had two of the count's 5 **Hermit Thrushes**.

Another CBC veteran, **Dan Olson**, returned to cover **AREA 7** (*southeast Tulalip Reservation*), joined this year by **Nancy Rabel**. **Maureen Corlas** did a great job covering breakout **AREA 7A** (*northeast and north edge of the Tulalip Reservation*). Then we had a number of new feeder-watchers, including **Margaret ("Megee") Hatley** (Area 7), and **Linda Orrino**, the **Davenport**s, and **Kathy West** (all in 7A). This was a considerably larger team than in past years, so species and individual counts swelled. The species count jumped by 8 to **59**. Priest Point was, as usual, the hot spot for shorebirds, with one of the CBC's three **Spotted Sandpipers** and two of the CBC's four **Greater Yellowlegs** here; EBird on line documented a Count Week-only **Mountain Chickadee** also, the first in many years for our CBC. The 7-7A coverage also led all territories in counts of **N. Flicker**, **Red-breasted Nuthatch**, **Pacific Wren** (largely **Maureen** as usual—with her great ears), **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, and (tied with Area 6) **Hermit Thrush** (2). **Megee's** feeder provided a **cowbird** and a **hummingbird, sp.** which might well have been a **Rufous**.

The greatest change in coverage for this CBC was in *Marysville City, AREA 8*. Responding to the *Everett Herald* article or having been approached by yours truly, **15** new feeder-watchers participated in Marysville this year. **Susie Schaefer** returned to lead the main coverage, which included **Cathy Clark, Mandy “Scrub Jays are Cool” Mason, Nick French** and the **Baynes**. This remarkable cast of six field birders and 17 feeder/private property folks put together quite a bird list, totaling 61 species (three more than last year).



*Marysville W. SCRUB-JAY* (with peanut-prey),  
January 1, 2015.

Three solos were detected. **Susie’s** team had the only two CBC **Short-eared Owls** and two well-described **Barn Swallows** (!) in the core area around the Marysville Sewage Treatment Plant. The latter drew lots of comment at the tally, and were an amazing find; the last time we had them were two birds on the 2004 CBC. Meanwhile, **Bethany Fish** and **Mary Weber** on the one hand, and **Pearl Maddy** on the other, found one each of **Northern (Yellow-shafted) Flicker** at their Marysville feeders. These could have been the same bird, but I felt enough distance separated them for 2. Not a bad showing for first-time participants!! And while **Susie’s** team led all parties for counts of **Am. Coot** and **Herring Gull**, the vast feeder effort was the heart of CBC-leading counts of **Anna’s Hummingbird (50), Steller’s Jay (54)**, both **chickadees, House Sparrow**, and—my personal favorite—**5 Townsend’s Warblers** (such as the one below left). As is now well-known, suet seems to be the ticket for pulling **Townsend’s** down out of the tall trees. Most years we don’t get 5 birds for the whole count.



*Female Townsend’s Warbler*

**AREA 9** (*northwest Lake Stevens, Centennial Trail, Corson Wildlife Area, east to 123<sup>rd</sup> Street NE, west to Highway 9, including Lake Cassidy*) had returners **Mara Price** and **Al Eliot** (Al also contributed feeder birds from his place in Marysville City to Area 8), and **Bob Schmidt** joined the team this year. **Tom Schulze** covered the best section of the Centennial Trail here also (the section between Lake Cassidy and 84<sup>th</sup> Street NE is very good for small birds). And then while two former feeder-watching stations were out, we did gain three new feeder-watchers.

Birding was a lot better than last CBC, as shown by 52 species. Highlights included the

highest count of **Cooper’s Hawk (3)**, one of the CBC’s only two **Merlins**, and a mind-boggling 380 **Dark-eyed (Oregon) Juncos**, the highest area total by far. These were the best of 52 species recorded in the territory (10 more than last CBC). But the biggest surprise had to be a **Sora** that emerged in the open at one of the Cedar Crest golf course ponds—an extremely unlikely spot, especially in winter, and just one of two for the whole CBC!

Like Area 8, **AREA 10** (*Sunnyside Boulevard south, n. end of Ebey Island, southwest Lake Stevens south of Soper Hill Rd and Hwy 92*) was witness to major change in personnel this year. Two couples—**Rod Hanna** and **Julie Zarn** on the one hand, and **Mary** and **Peter Vosteen** on the other—formed the two field parties. Highlights here are almost too many to list, but like Area 9, this CBC the territory had 10 species more than last (Area 10 had 54 species). **Mary** had done well on her first CBC with us last year, and she had a heard-only **Mountain Chickadee** in her beat. This unusually elusive bird had been heard it the two days prior to the CBC also, and afterward, and later I also heard it only (!) within the week. I included it for this reason, we’ll see what our Regional Compiler thinks about this one. Aided by feeder-watchers (the **Rice family—N. Saw-whet Owl, Jennifer Brinkley** and **Peggy Heineck** (two **Barn Owls**), Area 10 also led all parties in high counts of **Brown Creeper, Yellow-rumped (Audobon’s) Warbler**, and **Purple Finch**, as well as tying for highest on **White-crowned Sparrow**.

**AREA 11** (*the low ground from the Everett Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) north to Biringer Farm, both east and west of I-5*) was once again a site of intense birding effort, this time 8 observers in 5 parties. The species count was the best ever at **94 (17 more than last year)**, including 8 solos. More than that, Area 11 led for high counts of 27 species, tying for the lead on about a dozen more. Area 11 had a stunning group of “hot” birds this year: two **Eared Grebes**, both **Blue-winged** and (three) **Cinnamon Teal**, a juv. **N. Goshawk**, a **Red-shouldered Hawk** (first since 2000), and a **Palm Warbler** (photograph below). The big change this year was the flooded-out Biringer Farm, where hunter **Duke Levan** documented the huge increase in dabbling ducks, as well turning up the CBC’s sole flock of 36 **Snow Geese**, the last of a solid 5-goose day. I was especially grateful to Duke because I entered the property late in the day. Duke had some time in his small drift-craft for a new twist. Clearly Area 11 was witness to a raptor year unlike any other: 36 **Red-tailed Hawks** were the highest of any territory, but four **Harlan’s (Red-tailed) Hawks** were the most we had seen. Then truly unique was a **Krider’s (Red-tailed) Hawk** at Dagmar’s Landing and later right along I-5 by the Biringer Farm. This bird’s head was so white that Diane Antunes, joining me this year, remarked that “it looks just like an **Osprey** head.” The bird was entirely white below also.



PALM WARBLER (Biringer Farm entrance), Jan. 1

The intrepid kayakers once again covered their new beat, **AREA 11A** (*inner Steamboat and Ebey sloughs south to Spencer, Ebey and Otter islands*). The Ebey team was comprised of NKSSA returners **Bill Brackin** and **Betsy Mullen**, joined by **Marcus** and **Heather Roening** up from Tacoma. The Steamboat team was led by **Larry Hubbell**. Though the species count of 43 was down some from last year's inaugural effort (54), the kayakers made a unique contribution, like last year. Somehow they led all parties for counts of **Ring-billed Gull** and (!) **Eur. Starling**, but more importantly gave us the CBC's only **Long-billed Dowitchers** (11). Added to this was one of the three **Northern Shrikes** found on the CBC. In short, the kayakers gave us a unique report from inside these remote waters, really great for us to have.

Rick Taylor led a best-ever coverage of **AREA 12** (*Everett City*) with **92** species found—**20 more than last year**. **Tina Taylor** and **Barry Johnson** were out in the field as well, as were the **Sudkamps** and **Tom Simmonds**. Four feeder-folk also turned in counts. As in Area 11, highlights were almost too many to report, but Area 12 had the only **Orange-crowned Warblers** (3) and led in high counts over all other territories for 13 species, tying for the lead on a number more. **Tina** found four **Semipalmated Plovers** also, joined only by the Houghtons on Jetty Island in that achievement. Of all of the inland species, three **W. Scrub-Jays** were perhaps most newsworthy, and gave us a new record-high of **five** for the CBC as a whole.

**AREA 13** (*Jetty Island*) had both kayak and on-foot coverage again this year—and as last time, the results were quite surprisingly good. As **Pattie Barton** (who has kayaked the beat for us for many years) encircled the island by kayak, **John** and **Kathy Houghton** covered the island on foot (second year in a row). This is the famous “quality over quantity” beat—the bird list is short but often loaded, and so it was again this year. Of the 34 species found, Jetty Island led on (**Black**) **Brant** and **Glaucous-winged Gull**, also turning in a **Northern Shrike**. But the plot thickened with a lone **Sanderling** putting in a showing, yet the Houghtons' also found the CBC's first-ever **American Avocet**, well described in written notes. These two shorebirds were both CBC solos. The island's CBC shorebirds have become almost legendary, yet we recall solo gulls and raptors in past years as well. I find myself wondering if **Rock Wren** and **Burrowing Owl** might show one day in the driftwood out there.

**Duane Karna** dropped Jon off before he, **Josh Adams** and **Steve Pink** did their usual great job in **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*). This year's coverage uncovered 44 species, one more than last year, and included CBC solos **Pacific Loons** (2) and **Western Grebes** (8). Additionally near-solos were registered for **Red-necked Grebe** and **Brandt's Cormorant**; Duane's Boat Party also led for individual counts of 9 other species in the deepwater/offshore categories. **Duane**, carrying the load of running the Edmonds CBC in addition to running his boat for our CBC, has done a simply outstanding job. And were this not enough, there is a chance we might even have on-foot coverage of **Hat Island** next CBC, once again thanks to him.

**AREA 15** (*southernmost Camano Island*) had a new team this year in **Allison Warner** and **Joan Schammeck**. The species list had nearly the same composition as last year, but a **N. Saw-whet Owl** was a first out there on the CBC, and one of a notable four total on the CBC this year. No doubt, a starry night with a nearly full moon made it easier to find the owls.

**MISSES**. As well as we did, we should note some expected species that did not show. **Wood Ducks**, like **American Bittern**, tend to disappear when their wooded ponds freeze over. **Eurasian Wigeon** had not been missed since 2004; **Duke** and I figured there had to have been a few in the large **Am. Wigeon** flock at Biringer farm, but they were not easy to observe. **White-winged Scoter** has been missed before, but not in recent memory. Count-week only were **Tundra Swan** (Sunnyside Blvd flats) and **Rough-legged Hawk** (Island Crossing). **Western Sandpiper** usually shows in small numbers in the large **Dunlin** flocks, but not this CBC. And then **Redhead**, **Ruffed Grouse** and **Cedar Waxwing** were all in the count area within a couple weeks of New Years.

**NEXT CBC—January 2, 2016 is our preliminary date for the next CBC.**

**Final note**—all these years I've stuck to the birds in this report, but some hard circumstances force me to speak. Folks, your long-time compiler-in-arms is unemployed and in bad need of work. If any of you know of a Contracts Manager/compliance type position or Outside Sales or Procurement spot needing to be filled, please let me know. I'm on the hunt and have a family of four to feed, two boys in college, and appreciate any leads!

**HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OF YOU—UNTIL THE 2016 CBC THEN—Scott Atkinson**