

2014 Glacier Bay Christmas Bird Count Summary

Nat Drumheller

The 42nd Glacier Bay Christmas Bird Count was held on 14 December 2014. **65 species** were found on count day. The average for the last 20 years is 64 species. The average for the last 41 years is 57. An additional 17 species were found during count week, 11-17 December, for a new count week record of **82 species**. The previous count week record was 78 species in 2007.

Thank you to everyone who participated. On count day, 28 people went looking for birds on foot, by car, and by boat. Several of them made stops at bird feeders, but we had no designated feeder watchers on count day this year. A big thank you goes to the Glacier Bay National Park protection rangers for again providing a boat and to Wendy Bredow for operating it. This is a huge contribution to our count.

Weather through October and November was warm and wet. Brief cold periods in mid-November and in late November-early December were enough to completely freeze the surfaces of ponds and lakes. Temperatures rose in the days leading up to count week allowing small portions of ponds to thaw where there was moving water. Weather during count week was good with temperatures between 32 and 45 degrees. There were periods of light rain through the week, usually at night. As luck would have it, the only windy day of the week was on count day, which was also the rainiest day of the week during daylight hours. Wind out of the east and southeast made birding difficult in Gustavus. The water in Icy Strait was too rough for our boat to go there and too rough for our shore based counters to see many birds there. It was also an incredibly dark day with tough lighting for birding. Water conditions on the Glacier Bay side of the count were good and winds were light from the north. Temperatures on count day were between 37 and 45 degrees.

The mild fall season resulted in a greater number and variety of birds being around this December than in most years. In addition, a big spruce cone crop brought in large numbers of White-winged Crossbills, Red Crossbills, and Pine Siskins. We were poised for a big species tally on count day, but it was not to be. The weather on count day was not terrible by Glacier Bay Christmas Bird Count standards, but it was not good. It was all the more frustrating given the much more favorable conditions during the three days on either side of count day. Many birds went unobserved on count day because of the weather.

Some of the good birds on count day included **Brant, ptarmigan sp., Northern Harrier, Wilson's Snipe, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Anna's Hummingbird, Peregrine Falcon, American Dipper, Red-breasted Nuthatch, red Fox Sparrow**, and the first count day **Savannah Sparrow**.

There were a remarkable number of high counts including record high counts for **Brant, Pacific Loon, Horned Grebe, Red-necked Grebe, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Steller's Jay, Varied Thrush**, and **Pine Siskin**. A count of **27 Great Blue Herons** was not only a record high count for our Christmas Bird Count, it was an all-time record for Glacier Bay/Gustavus. They were all together on the fuel dock at Bartlett Cove on the morning of count day, where large groups have been recently.

Count week birds included two that are new to our CBC list: **Lincoln's Sparrow** and **Northern Saw-whet Owl**.

Other good finds during count week were **Eurasian Wigeon, Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck, Sooty Grouse, Northern Goshawk, Great Horned Owl, Snowy Owl, Northern Pygmy-Owl, Barred Owl,** and **Horned Lark**.

<u>Species</u>	<u>Count</u> (cw=count week)
Brant	4 3 rd time in count with 1 in 1972 and cw in 2011. Very rare in winter.
Canada Goose	486 4 th highest count. High count was 635 in 1982.
Trumpeter Swan	21
Gadwall	cw
Eurasian Wigeon	cw 3 rd time in count with 1 in 1980 and 1981. Very rare in winter.
American Wigeon	39
Mallard	702
Green-winged Teal	10
Canvasback	cw 6th time in count. Very rare in winter.
Ring-necked Duck	cw 4th time in count. Rare in winter.
Greater Scaup	46 3 rd highest count. High count was 63 in 1998.
Harlequin Duck	26
duck sp.	32
Surf Scoter	1288
White-winged Scoter	1017 2 nd highest count with 2404 in 1989.
Black Scoter	165
scoter sp.	1000
Long-tailed Duck	350
Bufflehead	177
Common Goldeneye	28
Barrow's Goldeneye	526
Common Merganser	104
Red-breasted Merganser	234
merganser sp.	12
ptarmigan sp.	1 Identified as Rock/Willow from tail in flight. Willow Ptarmigan is most likely.
Sooty Grouse	cw
Red-throated Loon	2
Pacific Loon	310 Record high count. Previous high was 135 in 2011.
Common Loon	69
Horned Grebe	111 Record high count. Previous high was 76 in 2005.
Red-necked Grebe	46 Record high count. Previous high was 28 in 1994.
Pelagic Cormorant	184 Tied for 2 nd highest count with 184 in 2011. High count was 195 in 2005.
Great Blue Heron	27 All-time record high count. Previous CBC high count was 22 in 1999.
Bald Eagle	48
Northern Harrier	1 Rare in winter.

Northern Goshawk	1	
unknown large raptor	1	
Sanderling	14	
Rock Sandpiper	37	
Dunlin	195	
shorebird sp.	220	
Wilson's Snipe	1	Rare in winter.
Common Murre	370	
Pigeon Guillemot	231	
Marbled Murrelet	230	
Mew Gull	1500	3 rd highest count. Record high was 2377 in 1989.
Herring Gull	2	
Glaucous-winged Gull	550	
gull sp.	600	
Eurasian Collared-Dove	21	Record high count. 3 rd time in count. Previous high was 2 in 2011.
Great Horned Owl	cw	
Snowy Owl	cw	5 th time in count. Rare in winter.
Northern Pygmy-Owl	cw	
Barred Owl	cw	5th time in count since 2006. Used to be very rare.
Northern Saw-whet Owl	cw	1 st time in count. Three different owls.
Anna's Hummingbird	1	Only 2nd time in count with first in 2010 and only 2 nd winter record.
Belted Kingfisher	9	2 nd highest count with 12 in 2005.
Downy Woodpecker	cw	
Hairy Woodpecker	4	
Peregrine Falcon	1	Rare in winter.
Northern Shrike	2	
Steller's Jay	26	Tied for record high count with 26 in 2005.
Black-billed Magpie	23	
Northwestern Crow	232	
Common Raven	51	
Horned Lark	cw	3 rd time in count. Rare in winter.
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	160	2 nd highest count with 171 in 2007.
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	
Brown Creeper	cw	
Pacific Wren	11	Tied for 2 nd highest count with 11 in 2004. High count was 12 in 1997.
American Dipper	1	
Golden-crowned Kinglet	51	2 nd highest count. High count was 101 in 2005.
American Robin	1	Rare in winter.
Varied Thrush	25	Record high count. Previous high was 14 in both 1997 and 1998.
European Starling	1	Rare in winter.
Bohemian Waxwing	cw	
Snow Bunting	11	

American Tree Sparrow	8	
Savannah Sparrow	1	Only 2 nd time in count. One count week bird in 2010. Very rare in winter.
Fox Sparrow (red)	1	4 th Fox Sparrow in count. 2 nd red Fox Sparrow with a count week bird in 2004.
Song Sparrow	14	
Lincoln's Sparrow	cw	1st time in count. Second winter record and new late date.
Dark-eyed Junco	93	
Pine Grosbeak	cw	
Red Crossbill	52	3 rd highest count. Record high was 617 in 1975.
White-winged Crossbill	509	4 th highest count. Record high was 2380 in 2002.
crossbill sp.	400	
Common Redpoll	60	Tied for 3 rd highest count. Record high was 132 in 2007.
Pine Siskin	1600	Record high count. Previous high was 720 in 1986.
siskin/redpoll	400	

Total Number of Species on Count Day = 65 (includes ptarmigan sp.)

Total Number of Species for Count Week = 82 (includes ptarmigan sp.)

Five species missed that were seen in the days before or after count week were Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Black-legged Kittiwake, American Three-toed Woodpecker, and Rusty Blackbird.

An interesting note is that the sparrows were not found at feeders. Feeders around Gustavus had few birds this fall and were mostly without birds in the weeks before and during the count. My feeder has never been so birdless, and I heard the same thing from people around the community. The ground was mostly snow free and bugs were out, so that was probably part of it. Also, many birds were eating spruce seeds which fell to the ground during the colder days in November. One thing is certain, we miss the birds at our feeders!



There were still 25 Great Blue Herons on the Bartlett Cove fuel dock on 15 December 2014 (not all are visible here) with a few Northwestern Crows. -NKD



The Lincoln's Sparrow at Lake Gustavus on 11 December 2014. -NKD



The Anna's Hummingbird at the Gustavus Inn on 13 December 2014. -NKD