

2016 Benicia CBC Aspects

Due to the compiler's busy calendar, organization of this year's Benicia CBC (BCBC) was cut short from its normal timing. As a result, there were only 75 in the field with 7 at feeders. 82 represents a 20% drop in participants, down from the usual 100+ birders.

In spite of the low number of participants, the weather was magnificent, 27-54F with clear skies which helped our birders to come up 168 species which is within the range of species seen on a BCBC as well as 96998 birds, about average number of birds in the last 10 years. Highs or ties for highs for Benicia include mute swan 36, bald eagle 3, black rail 28, greater yellowlegs 170, Thayer's gull 16, Phainopepla 1, horned lark 323, rock wren 41, and house wren 26. As for missing in action, wood duck, short-eared owl, A total surprise was seeing one sandhill crane in flight in Green Valley. There were no new species to add to this 70 year old count. The current number of species seen on this count is 236.

I think there are four interesting trends. Just 10 years ago BCBC recorded its first Eurasian collared dove. This species has been increasing very quickly whereas the mourning dove's population has been decreasing. Another interesting factoid is that the Boy Scouts have been installing bluebird boxes in Solano Land Trust (SLT) properties that are within the BCBC circle. But 3 years ago the SLT started a concerted effort to clean out and monitor their Western Bluebird boxes. Many more boxes have been installed and monitored within BCBC's circle. There seems to be an increase of Western Bluebird sightings in the last 10 years. Bald Eagles are starting to be seen in the area of the BCBC circle both in the winter and summer. Now there is a breeding pair nearby. I think this species will show up more consistently than before. It shows that our rare and endangered program is working! I am sure that 28 Black rails raises a quizzical eye. But we have refined our searching techniques as well as increasing the area to be searched. It is great to see this increase.

Thanks to all those that helped counting and special thanks to Mary Tichenor for helping organize the food, as well as all those that cleaned up. This is a team effort that does not happen without volunteers. See you on Monday Dec 18, 2017!