

## The 38<sup>th</sup> Angwin Christmas Bird Count January 1, 2010

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 57 birders in 15 parties took part in the Angwin CBC, discovering 134 species on count day, plus an additional seven during count week, the three days before and after January 1. The count tallied almost 43000 individual birds, including 24700 American Robins. The weather was seasonable. Lower elevations dealt with fog, rain and drizzle; the hills around Angwin had a little more of each combined with variable visibility often under 100 feet. It was relatively warm and winds were light.

The approach to the count was fairly traditional – motoring from place to place, interspersed with walks down back roads, the Napa River, through private estates, into wastewater facilities, reservoirs and cemeteries. Birders also explored a few remote sites: Wild Lake Ranch, Moore Creek, Los Posadas and Hardin Creek. There are several additional areas in the eastern one-half of the circle that require a day hike to cover thoroughly. If we can manage this added coverage, I expect that the count total will increase and one day, dare we dream, exceed 140 species. The table below gives the count basics for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The complete historic results for every CBC are available at [www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/hr/index.htm](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/hr/index.htm).

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Participants	37	23	38	38	45	31	47	43	40	57
Party Hrs	82.75	78.0	85.75	70.25	62.25	50.75	78.5	70.5	76.75	98.25
Species	132	119	122	122	125	111	134	131	130	134
Low Temp	27	44	38	41	37	45	38	37	38	49
High Temp	70	52	60	48	47	56	62	53	52	56
Weather	Fair	Rain	Partly Cldy	Occ'l Rain	Occ'l Rain	Rain	Fair	Fair	Partly Cldy	Occ'l Rain

### The Birds

It was a good year for waterfowl with 15 species of ducks and four species of goose (plus one of each count week). A Ross's Goose grazed with Cacklers and Canadas in Pope Valley, while the reliable Barrow's Goldeneye returned to the Beringer Ponds for another winter. Bufflehead came in as the most abundant duck. A count week female Blue-winged Teal at the Angwin wastewater ponds evaded detection on New Years Day; it has been present since November. Lake Hennessey and several large vineyard reservoirs in Pope Valley hold the majority of the waterfowl. Birds are usually on the wrong side of Lake Berryessa for the count purposes, but this year a Common Loon wandered inside the circle. Among the large waders, American Bittern was in Area 2 and Green Heron in Area 1; both are excellent finds. The low overcast probably reduced detections of diurnal raptors. The usual Pope Valley Ferruginous Hawk eluded birders, while a Prairie Falcon was a bonus. A Golden Eagle over Moore Cr. was the only one found. Despite an abundance of low water/mudflat habitat at lakes and ponds, we found just 26 individuals of four species of shorebird, with Spotted Sandpiper only at the last minute near dusk. Likewise, and typically, gulls were relatively few and represented by

the usual four species. The 493 Band-tailed Pigeons is the highest total since 1982. Long-time Pope Valley residents describe pigeon numbers as unprecedented.

Owlers were out before dawn at Howell Mt. Rd., eastern L. Hennessey, Angwin, White Sulphur Springs Rd. and Pope Valley. Along with the usual suspects, a Northern Saw-whet Owl called from upper Conn Cr. Saw-whets are always around but they rarely call at this point in the season. At a more reasonable daylight hour, a wintering Burrowing Owl kindly revealed itself in Pope Valley. Not far away, at a Hardin Cr. walnut orchard, a new to the count Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was the bird of the day. Well-described, it is the second ever found in Napa Co. The count follow-up NSAS field trip went looking for it on January 3<sup>rd</sup> and obtained satisfying views of the bright male tending his wells on a fat walnut trunk.

As usual, all of the swallows were at Lake Hennessey where keen eyes picked out six Violet-greens among the more expected Tree Swallows. Once again, the Hennessey shore sheltered the lone Blue-gray Gnatcatcher of the count. There was little shelter anywhere inside the circle from flocks of American Robins passing overhead. Two factors contributed to this abundance: a massive crop of toyon berries in the hills and unpicked premium wine grapes everywhere. In contrast, it was a surprising to find fewer than 4000 European Starlings on count day. The week before, multiple flocks between Rutherford and St. Helena totaled tens of thousands of birds. Among the sparrows it was a disappointing count. We missed a few species: Lark, Rufous-crowned and White-throated. Lark Sparrow and White-throated Sparrow seem to be truly absent this year, but the resident Rufous-crowned was simply a miss. Somewhere in the hills there are Sage Sparrows too; a discovery that awaits a hiking birder next year. Rare in recent years, two "Slate-colored Juncos" were in Angwin. Finally, the Napa Valley bird of the day was the bright Western Tanager photographed at St. Helena, a species expected every year but absent since 1999.

A big thank you to all the participating birders (20+ new to the count), and to those that did most of the work leading up to count day: Cheryl, Laurie, Louise, Robin, Sylvia and Wendy. Richard and Laurie Hoppe welcomed us into their home at the end of the day. The recent Angwin count compilers, Wendy Cole and Floyd Hayes, and Benicia's Robin Leong shared their know-how in all things CBC. Phil Burton gained access to several Pope Valley properties for the post-count NSAS field trip to see the sapsucker. And every party leader delivered their results by the deadline. Thanks.

*--Murray Berner, Compiler*