

The 40th Angwin Christmas Bird Count

I knew that it had been a great count the minute I entered the Carnegie Building. The room was floating a little with the sound of happy birders. The buzz continued throughout the countdown as people took great pleasure in reporting the birds they'd found, adding up to about 60000 individuals of 148 species. The previous high was 142 in 1990. (However, two species on that count were far up Swartz Canyon, now known to be outside the count circle). A couple of years ago, I thought it would be a wonder if we could find 140 species. Now we have a new milestone to reach.

The table below shows nine years of count basics. See the complete results of past CBC's at www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/hr/index.htm.

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Participants	38	45	31	47	43	40	57	49	60
Party Hrs	70	62	51	79	71	77	98	94	111
Species	122	125	111	134	131	130	134	126	148
Low Temp	41	37	45	38	37	38	49	32	32
High Temp	48	47	56	62	53	52	56	45	67
Weather	Occ'l rain	Occ'l rain	Rain	Fair	Fair	Prtly cldy	Occ'l rain	Occ'l rain- snow	Fair

The Birds

Waterfowl boosted the count total considerably. About 700 geese flew north high overhead during the morning, mostly Greater White-fronted, with Snow and Ross's mixed in. One of both Cinnamon Teal and Redhead were in Pope Valley. Rarities at L. Hennessey included the count's third-ever Tufted Duck, present since November, and a Redhead. Eye candy ducks were a flock of 140 Woodies on the Napa River, and 62 Hooded Mergansers around Angwin. Hard to find herons were American Bittern and Green Heron in the valleys of Pope and Napa, respectively. Raptors offered no surprises. There was an Osprey at St. Helena, in addition to the more expected four at Lake Berryessa. Everyone's favorite *Buteo*, Ferruginous Hawk, continues to winter in Pope Valley. A couple of marshes gave up Sora and Common Gallinule.

A Northern Saw-whet Owl called from Howell Mt. Rd. above Conn Valley. This is a reliable location. I went owling early and prompted duets from W. Screech-Owl pairs at three of the four locations at which I played tape. There are lots more owls out there to find. Found most years in the 1980s and 90s, the last Spotted Owl was 2001. The Pope Valley Burrowing Owl is elsewhere this year, but Lewis's Woodpecker made a rare appearance there.

I need to keep mentioning that Loggerhead Shrike made it onto the count; one of these years is likely to be the last. In no particular order, the rarest birds were Phainopepla and Common Yellowthroat at both Pope Valley and Lake Hennessey; Brown-headed Cowbird in Pope Valley and Swamp Sparrow at Hennessey. The Hennessey Hermit Warbler was the second count record, and Lawrence's Goldfinch was

found for the fifth time, a female along Putah Creek. The three most abundant native songbird species were American Robin, Lesser Goldfinch and Brewer's Blackbird. A few species that used to be easy have become difficult to find. We've missed Pacific (*fka* Winter) Wren in five of the past six years. In 1981, the count tallied 21 California Thrashers, with 12 as recently as 1999. At present, I know of a single reliable population of thrashers within reach, those at Wild Lake Ranch. In addition to the party at Wild Lake, birders hiked Pope Canyon, Las Posadas and Hardin Ranch, each returning with good birds. For the first time in many years, a boat went up Putah Creek, something that may be an annual adventure.

My thanks to the area leaders. Louise Vicencio helps coordinate the count. Carol Boykin and her boat went up Putah Creek, and Phil Burton towed the boat from Napa to the lake (and back). Helen Walka Dake is responsible for every aspect of the Carnegie Building countdown dinner. Laurie Hoppe made the chili. The 60 birders in the field equals the largest ever turn out for the Angwin count. Thank you.