

The 41th Angwin Christmas Bird Count

It was the second year with perfect calm weather for New Year's Day birding. Count day began with few preconceptions. December passed with lots of rain, filling most reservoirs and streams. That isn't always a good thing. Whether that was the cause of the primary topic of the evening bird talk, the lack of waterfowl, who knows. The count was mostly routine but with some excitement for everyone along the way. The final numbers were 135 species, 30000 individuals, 57 birders in the field. Coverage of the circle was mostly as usual. A new party covered the several roads above Conn Valley. Putah Creek kayakers had to cancel at the last minute. Remote parts of the count circle were not well covered. I have in my mind's eye about five full day hikes that would be fun and productive.

The table below describes nine recent counts. See the complete results of past CBC's at <http://netapp.audubon.org/cbcoobservation/>. This is a new version, and it's a bit of a struggle to navigate.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Participants	45	31	47	43	40	57	49	60	57
Party Hours	62	51	79	71	77	98	94	125	114
Species	125	111	134	131	130	134	126	148	135
Low Temp	37	45	38	37	38	49	32	32	33
High Temp	47	56	62	53	52	56	45	67	59
Weather	Occ'l rain	Rain	Fair	Fair	Prtly cldy	Occ'l rain	Occ'l rain- snow	Fair	Fair

The Birds

Lake Hennessey and the dozens of ranch ponds held relatively low numbers of ducks and all the geese except Canada. Fast water on the Napa R. held down the number of Wood Ducks in the Napa Valley to six, made up somewhat by 46 birds in upper Pope Valley. Berryessa eked out a Common Loon and two Horned Grebes. The high water left us lacking all but the basic two shorebirds, Killdeer and Spotted Sandpiper. Wilson's Snipe had to be out there somewhere. The 74 Red-tailed Hawks exceeded all other raptors combined. This comparison only works because falcons are no longer raptors (I think), but more closely related to woodpeckers and flycatchers. It will be awhile before I move the falcons into their proper new place in the order. With all of the robins aloft, just the two each Merlin and Peregrine was a surprise. Somewhat encouraging in the 'not very many' department was the total of only 25 Eurasian Collared Doves, half of them in Pope Valley. I'm always pleased when we find Sora, Virginia Rail, and gallinule.

Both before dawn and after dark, a Northern Saw-whet Owl called from above the Conn Creek bridge at Hennessey. This might be a reliable location. I've decided that seeking Spotted Owl in January is a waste of time. The last was 2001. The Pope Valley Burrowing Owl resurfaced this year, with rumors of a few more nearby. Lewis's Woodpecker was in Pope; it is found about one year in three. Fifteen were a little outside

the circle in Snell Valley a week after the count. The Red-naped Sapsucker at L. Hennessey is the count's second and it is still being seen. The several years' trend of a few hundred swallows continued. They were mostly Violet-green.

Blanket coverage of Howell Mt. might have set a record for Red-breasted Nuthatch. As is, 38 were on that peak, six elsewhere. Pacific Wren at Bell Canyon and Glass Mt were the first since 2009. Decoding the comings and goings of American Robin is a popular pursuit. Daily, they travel long distances from roosts to foraging areas so probably we double count some; however, there are certainly tens of thousands in the hills each year, and our count of 13683 seems a reasonable tally. Look in the Napa Register this weekend for a related story. A more exotic berry-eating bird, Phainopepla, returned to its north shore Hennessey tree for a second winter. Nine Townsend's Warblers was a good showing. They are widespread this winter.

The best bird of the day showed up the previous Saturday at the Smith's feeder in St. Helena. The sparkling Green-tailed Towhee is the first count record. It is still around but a little less reliable than earlier. Also near St. Helena, the Western Tanager is less rare, but always one of the most pleasant surprises of a winter day. Red Crossbills at Las Posadas and the Friesan Lakes are the first on this count since 1992. They continue to wander the Angwin area.

If you are wondering why there was no box to check 'yes' to American Birds this year, it is because it will now be an online publication.

My thanks to the area leaders. Louise Vicencio helps coordinate the count. Helen Walka is responsible for setting up the Carnegie Building countdown dinner. Laurie made the chili and Ava the tamales. Thanks again to all the birders. We'll do it again in 2014.