

The 42nd Angwin Christmas Bird Count

Following the rain and snow of the 2011 count, the last three years we have enjoyed ideal birding conditions. Sometimes such conditions result in lots of birds everywhere, or not so much depending on how things went in the month prior to New Year's Day. This year, the 12 months prior to January 1st were the same. Obviously, the drought results in empty reservoirs, dry streams and brown hills. Less obvious are the effects on birds. Perhaps the region's CBCs will tell us something about early winter 2013-14.

The table below describes nine recent counts. See the complete results of past CBCs at <http://netapp.audubon.org/cbcobservation/>.

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Participants	31	47	43	40	57	49	60	57	61
Party Hours	51	79	71	77	98	94	125	114	118
Species	111	134	131	130	134	126	148	135	139
Low Temp	45	38	37	38	49	32	32	33	30
High Temp	56	62	53	52	56	45	67	59	68
Weather	Rain	Fair	Fair	Prtly cldy	Occ'l rain	Occ'l rain- snow	Fair	Fair	Fair

The Birds

Impacts of the drought on waterfowl and other aquatic species were not apparent. I'd supposed that dry streams would limit Wood Duck but it did not, the tally exceeded the recent average. 147 Green-winged Teal sounds like a good number until one looks back to 1978 and almost 2800 birds. Lake Berryessa records the majority of several species; how many often depends on whether the birds and the birdwatchers intersect. Bait fish concentrations at the mouth of Putah Creek attract large numbers of Eared and *Aechmophorus* grebes, Common Merganser and a few loons. If the fish are elsewhere, or the birds have had their fill, the birds disperse outside the count circle to the open lake and are "missed."

Many perceived raptor numbers as down. Not really. Tallies were typical for most species. Eleven Bald Eagles bunched up at the mouths of Pope and Putah Creeks. How many wintering eagles inhabit the entire lake is anyone's guess. Two White-tailed Kites in Pope Valley seems a tiny number but is not too different than historical results, yet it is disappointing considering the record high count last year. American Kestrel is in decline, now about one-half the birds found 1980-2000. *Buteos* and Northern Harrier seem to be doing well.

Nocturnal birds of prey received a little more attention than usual. The silent canyon streams provided excellent listening conditions. There are lots of owls out there, far more than we know. Four N. Saw-whets were along Howell Mt. Rd before dawn. N. Pygmy-Owls were concentrated at Hennessey and Pope Canyon.

Acorn Woodpecker and Red-breasted Sapsucker were found in the highest numbers ever, both in real numbers and birds/party hour. The Hennessey Red-naped Sapsucker returned for a second season, residing in the same oaks as a year ago. Berryessa counters eked out six Lewis's Woodpeckers. The lonely Pope Valley Loggerhead Shrike continues. The vast "middle class" of the birds – the jays through the finches – were out there as usual, ordinary stuff providing interest throughout everyone's day. Our simple tallies of these many species are at the heart of what we learn from the annual CBC. Irruptive, mostly montane species were almost completely absent. Siskins, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Golden-crowned Kinglet and Band-tailed Pigeon demonstrated their cyclical proclivities by residing elsewhere in winter 2013-14. Not really irruptive but more of a random wanderer, a Mountain Bluebird found its way to Pope Valley, only the second count record.

Birders in Pope Valley found two species new to the count. An adult Sandhill Crane at Dollarhide Ranch (St. Supery) is only the fourth county record and first in more than 20 years. A Lesser Yellowlegs, rare to uncommon near sea level in the Bay Area, made a surprise appearance near Aetna Springs. These two bring the cumulative Angwin CBC species total to 202.

My thanks to the area leaders. Louise Vicencio helped me by making a lot of phone calls prior to the count. Helen Walka is responsible for setting up the Carnegie Building countdown dinner. Laurie made the chili and Ava the tamales. Everyone pitched in with great food and drink. I am most grateful to have this wonderful conclusion to New Year's Day. We continue to have almost 60 birders in the field each year, thanks to all.