

The challenge is back. After two years of bizarrely pleasant weather, the 8th North American Fall Migratory Count was held on a blustery and sometimes drizzly day. The strong winds kept many small passerines deep in bushes making them impossible to locate. As a result, only 121 species were recorded, a new record low.

Despite the conditions, several rare birds were found. Gerard Lahey and I observed an adult male Eastern Bluebird among a flock of 40 Mountain Bluebirds. Frank Roy's team found a late staying Red-necked Phalarope. They also saw a Turkey Vulture as did Mike Gollop, a first for this count. Turkey Vultures nested in the Saskatoon area for the first time this year so perhaps their numbers are increasing. There is certainly no shortage of TV dinners along our roadways. A Sora spent 10 days, including count day, in a backyard on the west side of town. The residents fed it koi food and dog kibble which it apparently relished. Other rare sightings included a Fox Sparrow and a Black-throated Green Warbler.

As usual, most of the birds counted were geese and gulls, but some other species had surprisingly high totals. This year's most abundant bird was the Snow Goose with nearly 11000 seen. Oddly, geese were mainly found well east of the river; teams along the river reported few migrating geese. Adding in the other big numbers such as 10,000 Franklin's Gulls and 5000 ring-billed Gulls and the smaller numbers as well brought the total number of birds to a respectable 54462. Brewer's Blackbirds also put in a strong showing with large flocks in the Bradwell area. The count usually takes place about a week before Tundra Swans return. This year either the relatively late date or an early migration meant a record number of swans were counted, 95 in total.

However, most totals were down. There are 101 species that, over the last 8 years, have averaged a count of 10 or more. Of that number, fully 78 came in below average this year. The drought in the countryside continued to affect the populations of ducks and other waterbirds although conditions were not as dry as last year. Most duck numbers were down 60 to 90% from the long-term averages, and most ducks and coots were located at the reservoirs. Very few shorebirds were seen.

Flycatchers and vireos migrate before the time of the count so these are not expected in large numbers, but it is somewhat unusual that none were seen this year. All sparrow numbers were down with the exception of American Tree Sparrow, another indication of an early migration. Raptors were also scarce although the wind might have inhibited soaring. Even more surprising is that only a single Great Horned Owl was located. However, seven Bald Eagles were seen, a record high number. The wind may also be responsible for the record low numbers of Red-breasted Nuthatch and Western Meadowlark.

Warblers were also hard to find. Once again, Yellow-rumped Warblers proved the most abundant, but their number was 66% below the average yet above last year's record low. The other warblers that should be common in autumn, Palm and Orange-crowned, were very scarce. A few late migrants of other types brought the number of warbler species seen to a meager 8.

Many thanks to Michael Williams for organizing the count and to the 44 participants.

Robert Johanson
Statsman

8th North American Fall Bird Count

21 September 2002

NW	NE	Riv	Mil	Brad	Blkst	Indi	City	Aves	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995
A	B	C	D	E	F	G			9/21	9/15	9/16	9/18	9/19	9/20	9/21	9/16
46	34	39	47	62	72	56	80	Total Species	123	136	141	137	141	146	150	143
11.6	6.0	8.8	8.9	7.6	11.5	11.9	61.3	Party Hours	127	138	151	138	139	134	123	106
2	3	3	1	5	3	3	24	Participants	44	44	53	46	51	40	43	27
					1			Common Loon	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
			1	1	2		1	Pied-billed Grebe	5	7	31	49	64	16	31	17
				2				Horned Grebe	2	6	14	34	9	15	32	17
		1						Red-necked Grebe	1	1	4	2	3	19	9	8
			2	6	2	3		Eared Grebe	13	23	35	30	5	22	36	53
				1	9	7		Western Grebe	17	19	10	18	38	177	64	2
		10			23	3	3	American White Pelican	39	140	33	38	86	24	16	20
3		7	1	2	253	103	112	Double-crested Cormorant	481	135	340	270	278	142	137	163
								American Bittern			1			1		
		1	1	2	1		8	Great Blue Heron	13	6	12	6	4	4	6	11
								Black-crowned Night-Heron								1
			1	1				Turkey Vulture	2							
						380		• Goose sp. •	380		229					
31	3	250	30	160	232	21	20	Greater White-fronted Goose	747	716	2289	457	126	6815	435	1642
6	400	1210		6317	1535	1415	105	Snow Goose	10988	4368	3752	3261	647	13400	338	1710
					2000	44	1	Ross's Goose	2045	826	2715	252	282	5		208
127	80	509	87	278	292	89	2868	Canada Goose	4330	2377	6370	4789	1309	3858	2889	3743
	12			42		41		Tundra Swan	95	5	1	1		33	5	27
	85					200	175	• Duck sp. •	460	2092	3211	4953	2895	2497	1070	500
								Wood Duck					2	1	3	
3			27	39	85	39	1	Gadwall	194	64	423	847	572	739	219	201
9		3	25	51	107	16	8	American Wigeon	219	91	141	316	318	177	396	222
								American Black Duck			1		1			
50	5	16	102	530	291	57	358	Mallard	1409	667	1167	1726	3525	1830	1523	1429
38				20	12		21	Blue-winged Teal	91	103	160	312	227	149	145	137
								Cinnamon Teal		1						
		1	3	47	6	13		Northern Shoveler	70	260	142	189	179	212	198	112
		2	3	13	8	18	4	Northern Pintail	48	51	114	114	83	36	42	41
		3					23	Green-winged Teal	26	4	96	110	212	45	54	77
		5	9			4	2	Canvasback	20	9	36	101	1420	74	145	108
			6	4	8			Redhead	18	2	45	562	296	113	140	171
				2				Ring-necked Duck	2		16	73	10	15	34	29
		1		20	2	71		Lesser Scaup	94	50	115	182	525	541	133	238
								White-winged Scoter					1	2		
		3	23	106	3			Bufflehead	135	46	70	117	182	274	95	69
		4		1				Common Goldeneye	5	2	3		13		2	2
11				4			5	Hooded Merganser	20			12	8			
6								Common Merganser	6	5		1	1	28		1
								Red-breasted Merganser		1				1		
		15	3				5	Ruddy Duck	23	21	151	417	188	128	213	157
		1					1	Osprey	2	2	2	2	3	2		
		6				1		Bald Eagle	7	1		1	3	2	1	1
	9	7	2	7	5	10	1	Northern Harrier	41	20	28	68	14	58	42	26
1						1	2	Sharp-shinned Hawk	4	3	8	14	6	10	13	5
			2	1			1	Cooper's Hawk	4		3	3	3	9	4	3
								Northern Goshawk			1	1		1	2	
								• Buteo sp. •			3			3	7	3
2	3	3		2	7		3	Swainson's Hawk	20	37	52	34	18	34	37	15
9		3	3	2	24	2		Red-tailed Hawk	43	58	55	59	33	72	122	42
								Rough-legged Hawk				3			3	1
								Golden Eagle		2		1				
2		11	1	1	4	1	2	American Kestrel	22	14	26	22	16	30	13	14
1	1				1	1	9	Merlin	13	13	14	29	15	17	13	11
								• Large Falcon sp. •					1			
				1				Peregrine Falcon	1	3	1	2		2	3	1

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A	B	C	D	E	F	G			9/21	9/15	9/16	9/18	9/19	9/20	9/21	9/16
	5						18	Gray Partridge	23	39	28	8		1	20	5
								Ruffed Grouse		1	2	3	2	4	1	4
2								Sharp-tailed Grouse	2	2		18	1	35		1
							1	Sora	1	4	6	2	1	1	2	1
		6	60	33		117	1	American Coot	217	1457	1320	7624	1102	3567	7281	3200
7	370	1650	3		547	366		Sandhill Crane	2943	1502	1290	2037	2695	2358	1078	2488
								Whooping Crane								1
								• <i>Large Shorebird sp.</i> •			16					
							1	Black-bellied Plover	1		5	18	4	4	21	14
								American Golden Plover						15		
								Semipalmated Plover		2			1		7	
								Piping Plover							1	
			2	1	2		3	Killdeer	8	74	45	11	117	15	20	43
	1							American Avocet	1		32	15		1	109	11
	2			17	5	4	12	Greater Yellowlegs	40	48	52	64	68	67	54	170
	7			13		2		Lesser Yellowlegs	22	33	119	58	30	58	4	103
								Solitary Sandpiper		3		2				1
								Willet						2		6
	2							Spotted Sandpiper	2	9	9	1	1	10	9	6
								Hudsonian Godwit					1			
								Ruddy Turnstone								1
								Red Knot							1	
								• <i>Peep sp.</i> •		23	10		3	2	62	44
								Sanderling		3	7	10	1	2	10	106
								Semipalmated Sandpiper		3	156	6		1	1	
								Least Sandpiper			9	16	1	2		
								Baird's Sandpiper		31	37	8				37
						1		Pectoral Sandpiper	1	8	45	19	5	11	18	56
								Stilt Sandpiper		1	15		28	1	100	
						10		• <i>Dowitcher sp.</i> •	10	50	42	41	121		3027	242
								Short-billed Dowitcher					1			
								Long-billed Dowitcher				25	20		26	41
		4	5				1	Wilson's Snipe	10	11	8	70	34	5	10	43
								Wilson's Phalarope		1	3					
				3				Red-necked Phalarope	3	4						
55		500		181	1452	7380	510	Franklin's Gull	10078	1708	6136	1321	238	150	605	126
								Little Gull							1	
				25	45			Bonaparte's Gull	70	16	161	37	10	28	60	32
150	2	12			185	1200	685	• <i>White-headed Gull sp.</i> •	2234	1202	1008	4586	796	3870	510	222
6			113	62	1653	4	1038	Ring-billed Gull	2876	9343	7986	3933	1710	921	2349	1334
					3		1	California Gull	4	12	59	80	4	1	17	55
					1			Herring Gull	1	2	1	3			4	94
								Sabine's Gull						1	1	
								Common Tern		1	2		2		1	
						2		Forster's Tern	2		3		7		1	
								Black Tern						2		
41	1	18		49	11	7	638	Rock Dove	765	512	722	646	432	457	1599	190
1		1	12		2	2		Mourning Dove	18	48	40	53	23	32	11	56
					1			Great Horned Owl	1	8	8	7	2	3	6	5
								Short-eared Owl			1			3		
								Common Nighthawk						1		
								Ruby-throated Hummingbird							1	
						1	5	Belted Kingfisher	6	3	13	6	20	14	31	10
							1	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	2	16	6	4	2	31	11
								• <i>Picoides sp.</i> •								2
1					1		4	Downy Woodpecker	6	6	16	9		3	3	5
1			1				1	Hairy Woodpecker	3	4	3	18	7	13	20	14
1					2		24	Northern Flicker	27	39	100	56	102	77	261	78

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								• <i>Empidonax sp.</i> •			19			4	12	4
								Least Flycatcher		5	10				6	1
								Eastern Phoebe		2		1	1	1	2	1
								Eastern Kingbird		1	4			1		
								• <i>Shrike sp.</i> •							2	
								Loggerhead Shrike			2					
								Blue-headed Vireo			1				3	
								Warbling Vireo		1					4	
								Philadelphia Vireo								2
								Red-eyed Vireo		1	1			3		3
2					2		32	Blue Jay	36	39	69	60	70	58	45	76
49	20	12	58	7	41	28	209	Black-billed Magpie	424	387	424	492	506	484	468	332
505	20	500		19	5	21	1163	American Crow	2233	2002	1359	2342	2887	5919	2736	1413
			2	2	9	13	4	Common Raven	30	5	27	9	8	15	14	7
	7	1	13	1	8	1		Horned Lark	31	34	4	9	121	64	50	38
								• <i>Swallow sp.</i> •							20	
								Tree Swallow				1	2	4		
								Cliff Swallow					1			
1	5			15	18	4	2	Barn Swallow	45	52	35	102	120	51	3	267
23	1	7	15	1	18	5	149	Black-capped Chickadee	219	257	285	261	159	163	132	155
2							11	Red-breasted Nuthatch	13	111	86	65	24	121	58	74
							3	White-breasted Nuthatch	3	1	1	1	1		1	4
								Brown Creeper					5	2		
	1							House Wren	2	2	6	4	6	8	13	9
								Marsh Wren		5	23	3		4	12	9
							1	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	1	5	4	9	14	4	3	14
1								Eastern Bluebird	1							
60		32	135		108			Mountain Bluebird	335	45	56	191	383	113	383	117
								Townsend's Solitaire					1			
							1	• <i>Thrush sp.</i> •	1		1				1	
								Veery					1			
								Gray-cheeked Thrush					1			1
							1	Swainson's Thrush	1		3	8	11	5	37	5
							1	Hermit Thrush	2		3	3	5	1	3	1
65	2	22	22	11	2	3	139	American Robin	266	311	332	549	799	360	876	278
								Varied Thrush						1		
							2	Gray Catbird	2	5	5	3	2	4	7	9
								Brown Thrasher		2	6	4	1		4	5
				102		12		European Starling	114	92	149	326	173	1004	337	189
				2	35			American Pipit	37	143	25	19	58	3	45	120
			1					Sprague's Pipit	1			7				
2	3	15			13	10	14	Cedar Waxwing	57	139	250	264	41	193	455	322
							50	• <i>Warbler sp.</i> •	50		10	20	5		3000	
							6	Tennessee Warbler	6	6	8	12	23	4	108	19
1					3		13	Orange-crowned Warbler	17	31	43	37	64	43	214	86
								• <i>Nashville-like Warbler sp.</i> •							46	
								Nashville Warbler		1				4	6	3
							1	Yellow Warbler	1	3	29	3	2	8	25	1
								Chestnut-sided Warbler							3	
								Magnolia Warbler				1	5		15	4
								Cape May Warbler			2				3	
30	6	7	22	8	43	28	196	Yellow-rumped Warbler	340	287	1422	585	1039	1032	2168	511
							1	Black-throated Green Warbler	1							2
								Blackburnian Warbler							1	
								Pine Warbler *		1						
1		1			2		11	Palm Warbler	15	23	83	33	46	64	406	54
								Bay-breasted Warbler							5	
							2	Blackpoll Warbler	2	6	3	1	3	1	20	4

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A	B	C	D	E	F	G			9/21	9/15	9/16	9/18	9/19	9/20	9/21	9/16
								Black-and-white Warbler			5	1		1	5	1
								American Redstart				4	8	1	44	2
								Ovenbird		1		1			9	1
								Northern Waterthrush		2	2		1	1	9	2
								Connecticut Warbler			6					
								Mourning Warbler				1	1		1	2
							2	Common Yellowthroat	2	6	11	8	13	8	32	17
								Wilson's Warbler		2	3		1		6	1
								Canada Warbler							1	
	8					20	59	<i>• Sparrow sp. •</i>	87	278	103	62	33	14	255	
			1		1			Spotted Towhee	2	3	11	6	10	17	12	12
			1	3			23	American Tree Sparrow	27	10	5	36	22	7	4	1
					3		16	Chipping Sparrow	19	40	112	13	15	34	84	51
			1	3		1	6	Clay-colored Sparrow	11	62	6	13	11	7	98	39
18	13	20	10	8	9	21	2	Vesper Sparrow	101	79	100	77	94	144	88	138
								Lark Sparrow						1		
								Lark Bunting *		1						
9	2		3	4	12			Savannah Sparrow	30	82	127	66	60	101	80	109
								Baird's Sparrow			8					
								Le Conte's Sparrow							3	7
								Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow				2	2			
							1	Fox Sparrow	1			2	4	1	6	1
	1			3				Song Sparrow	4	37	35	12	15	1	68	33
1					2		2	Lincoln's Sparrow	5	9	24	7	26	8	49	19
								Swamp Sparrow		2	2	2	16	4	3	18
15			4	3	1	5	129	White-throated Sparrow	157	191	218	246	549	303	165	185
							5	Harris's Sparrow	5	2	7	5	40	19	8	18
13	3		6	5	2	4	64	White-crowned Sparrow	97	55	97	27	310	196	101	99
4			21	5	6		158	Dark-eyed Junco	194	29	117	91	777	239	75	149
	99		2	169	310	14		Lapland Longspur	594	558	1667	1099	980	720	558	409
								Snow Bunting						2		
								Rose-breasted Grosbeak					1		2	
								<i>• Blackbird sp. •</i>				43		1013	13	
				1	5	1	2	Red-winged Blackbird	9	9	4	532	100	59	24	87
1	10	9	2		14	3		Western Meadowlark	39	123	80	101	83	123	100	69
	1		4	25				Yellow-headed Blackbird	30	4	6	530	23	156	45	10
				2		12	1	Rusty Blackbird	15		13	12	36	4	1	2
	6			5000	11	1075	15	Brewer's Blackbird	6107	4859	1972	3090	6204	812	1263	1182
				10			146	Common Grackle	156	6	251	9	554	103	88	91
								Brown-headed Cowbird			41			1		30
							1	Purple Finch	1	2	1			2	1	11
							34	House Finch	34	43	18	21	5	15		
								Red Crossbill				1				
								Pine Siskin		16	276	177	172	138	46	157
7			6	22	11	2	17	American Goldfinch	65	194	227	58	180	216	102	187
								Evening Grosbeak						2		
9	1	2		75	48	97	621	House Sparrow	853	683	1005	470	753	764	852	481
1383	1197	4880	830	13474	9676	13025	9998	TOTAL BIRDS	54463	39861	52803	52545	38904	58357	42098	27858

species order follows the AOU checklist, 7th edition

NW	NE	Riv	Mil	Brad	Blkst	Indi	City		2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995
7:40	8:49	8:15	6:15	6:30	6:50	7:01		start								
19:42	15:15	17:00	15:35	14:45	17:30	20:03		end								
5.9	5.5	7.8	3.8	5.6	9.0	7.3	15.3	Car Party Hours	60	79	50	58	70	56	53	49
5.8	0.5	1.0	5.1	2.0	2.5	4.6	46.1	Foot Party Hours	68	59	101	79	68	78	62	57
								Bicycle Party Hours								7
								Train Party Hours				1				2
11.6	6.0	8.8	8.9	7.6	11.5	11.9	61.3	TOTAL Party Hours	127	138	151	138	139	134	123	106
157.0	113.0	148.0	81.0	107.0	230.0	218.4	187.3	Car Party km	1242	1245	1244	1195	1076	1160	997	891
9.7	0.5	2.0	14.5	1.5	3.0	2.0	52.7	Foot Party km	86	76	77	114	83	98	66	89
								Bicycle Party km								16
								Train Party km				52				5
166.7	113.5	150.0	95.5	108.5	233.0	220.4	240.0	TOTAL km	1328	1321	1321	1361	1159	1258	1084	980

Teams (Leaders)

SE sector

NW Robert Johanson, Gerard Lahey
 NE Phil Willson, Jennifer Froese, Kay Willson
 Riv Tony Allen, Alison Baudru, Louis Baudru
 Mil Mike Gollop
 Brad Frank Roy, John Bond, Don Johnston, Shirley Johnston, Judy Toews
 Blkst Stan Shadick, Bob Ewart, Karen Wiebe
 Indi Michael Williams, Theresa Chipeur, Mercedes Wayman

unique species

Common Merganser, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Eastern Blue
 American Avocet, Spotted Sandpiper
 Red-necked Grebe
 Sprague's Pipit
 Horned Grebe, Peregrine Falcon, Red-necked Phalarope
 Common Loon, Ring-necked Duck, Herring Gull,
 Forster's Tern, Great Horned Owl
 Pectoral Sandpiper, Dowitcher sp.

City

C Heather Wagg, John Horton, Hilda Voth
 N Philip Taylor
 NE Lorne Duczek, Vic Anton, Jim Hay, Keith Pahl
 U Mary Houston, Nancy Allan, Stuart Houston, Marlene Kalanack, Rajesh Nighot
 SE Hilda Noton, Linda Schnedar, Jan Tedesco, Terry Bethune (feeder)
 S Craig Salisbury, Lorriene Salisbury; Anna Leighton (feeder)
 SW Maureen DuWors, Maxine Morrison, Ivor Thokle
 E Donna Bruce

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Fox Sparrow
 Black-bellied Plover
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Blackpoll Warbler
 Sora, Black-throated Green Warbler
 Swainson's Thrush, Purple Finch
 Yellow Warbler

Weather

temperature range: 6-10°C
 sky: mostly overcast
 rain: occasional drizzle
 wind: very strong from NW

NW	NE	Riv	Mil	Brad	Blkst	Indi	City	Animals sans feathers	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995
								Beaver		3			1	2	1	3
								Muskrat		1	3		2	7	7	5
								Weasel				1 dead		1	1	
								Mink								
								Deer Mouse			1				1	
								Shrew				1				
								Vole								1
			3				12	Least Chipmunk	15	9	39	17	1	11	7	17
								Franklin's Ground Squirrel				4				2
								Red Squirrel		2	2	1		9		
								Eastern Fox Squirrel				1				
4							1	Richardson's Ground Squirrel	5	18	33	6		3	19	6
								13-lined Ground Squirrel		4	3				2	1
								Nuttall's Cottontail							1	
								White-tailed Jack Rabbit		2	1			1		4
							2	Snowshoe Hare	2				1			
							7	Pronghorn Antelope	7							
			2			1		Mule Deer	3	8	3	7		15	8	4
	1		1	2	2			White-tailed Deer	6	15	16	8	15	7	13	21
								Elk								
			1	1		1		Coyote	3	9	5	1		11	5	8
								Red Fox						2		1
								Skunk				1	1 dead		1	4
								Raccoon		2	1					
								Porcupine					1 dead			
								Bat sp.							1	
								Boreal Chorus Frog							1	1
								Wood Frog							2	
								Leopard Frog		1						
								Canadian Toad							1	
								Salamander		1						
								Garter Snake		1						3
								Red Admiral		4				2		
								Mourning Cloak		6	1	2		11	4	1
								-- White sp. --			19			1		24
								Cabbage White		33	801			13	5	49
								Western White		35				1		1
								Checkered White		3						
								Compton's Tortoiseshell						1		
								Milbert's Tortoiseshell		3	7			2	1	
								Variegated Fritillary		5						
								Painted Lady		10						1
							1	-- Sulphur sp. --	1	10	6			141	129	48
			1			3		Clouded sulphur	4	79	318	4		52	10	28
						1		Orange Sulphur	1	19	1					
								-- Blue sp. --			1					1
								-- Comma sp. --							1	2
								Satyr Comma						1		
								Checkered Skipper		3						
								Purplish Copper		1				2		2
								Woolly Bear Caterpillar				2	1			
							1	Dragonfly sp.	1					10	22	
								Damselflies						5		