

# 2021 Iowa City Christmas Bird Count

## Chris Edwards

The 71st annual Iowa City Christmas Bird Count was held Sunday, December 19, 2021. The count area is a 15-mile diameter circle centered on Hwy. 965 and Penn Street in North Liberty, encompassing North Liberty, Coralville, Solon, Tiffin, and portions of Iowa City, as well as Lake Macbride and most of the Coralville Reservoir. Temperatures on count day were slightly below average at 14-28° F, with variably cloudy skies and winds increasing to 10-15 mph in the afternoon. Rivers and streams were partly frozen, still bodies of water were also partly frozen, and there was no snow cover.

### *Results*

After the 2020 “COVID” count in which participants birded alone, and in which we set multiple records for field participation and species high counts, 2021 was a welcome return to normal. We found 76 species, well above our ten-year count average of 69 species and the highest total since the record of 81 species in 2012. We tallied a count-record 32,612 individual birds, thanks in part to large flocks of European Starlings, Common Grackles, and Red-winged Blackbirds.

Three species which are considered rare on our count were found: a Ruby-crowned Kinglet along Clear Creek Trail in Coralville (sixth all-time record), a Double-crested Cormorant at Hawkeye Wildlife Management Area (eighth record all-time), and two Ruddy Ducks at Lake Macbride (ninth record all-time). Other unusual species (seen on four or fewer counts in the last ten years) were American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Short-eared Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Winter Wren, and Rusty Blackbird. Also notable was a Merlin – after finding only one in the first 56 years of the count, we have now found this species in 8 of the last 15 years.

Many species were seen in numbers significantly above the ten-year average, including seven that were seen in record numbers: Cackling Goose, Common Goldeneye (ten-year high), Hooded Merganser (ten-year high), Ring-billed Gull (ten-year high), Cooper’s Hawk (tied record high), Bald Eagle, Great Horned Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker (record high), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (record high), Hairy Woodpecker (record high), Pileated Woodpecker (record high), Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper (record high), Winter Wren (ten-year high), European Starling (record high), Eastern Bluebird, Eurasian Tree Sparrow, House Finch, American Goldfinch (ten-year high), Dark-eyed Junco (ten-year high), White-throated Sparrow, Common Grackle (ten-year high), and Northern Cardinal.

It’s somewhat remarkable that four woodpecker species were seen in record numbers this year. One wonders whether the derecho of 2020 led to better foraging opportunities and higher reproduction in 2021.

Some species were seen in below-average numbers: Wild Turkey, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Cedar Waxwing, Carolina Wren, American Robin, American Tree Sparrow, and Song Sparrow. Expected species not found this year were Brown-headed Cowbird and Yellow-rumped Warbler. Red-breasted Merganser was seen during the count week, but not on count day.

### *Count Effort*

This year there were 47 field observers (a new record) in 16 field parties. They spent 90.8 total party-hours in the field, well above the 10-year average of 72.1 hours. Field participants were Connie Aldridge, Elizabeth Aubrey, Kyle Belcher, Tom Bootsmiller, Mary Bowler, Fawn Bowden, Brian Broderick, Mark Brown, Russell Brown, Barry Buschelman, Trillian Connorridge, Jerry Denning, Karen Disbrow, Sandy

Eads, Addie Edwards, Bridget Edwards, Chris Edwards, Ellie Edwards, Mary Edwards, Ben Elwood, Linda Fisher, Jim Fuller, Karole Fuller, Rick Hollis, Ken Lowder, Nancy Lynch, Mark Madsen, Jamie McCoy, Ramona McGurk, Hank Miguel, Andrew Miller, Jenny Hollis Miller, JJ Miller, Mary Noble, Jason Paulios, Linda Quinn, Deb Rolfes, Mark Rolfes, Linda Rudolph, James Scheib, Janet Seiz, Jane Shuttleworth, Sharon Somers, Maria Story, Ryan Story, Donna Warner, Eliza Willis.

Two parties spent a total of 3.0 hours owl watching, just below the ten-year average of 3.3 hours.

There were 18 feeder watchers in 14 locations. They spent 43.5 hours watching feeders, far above the ten-year average of 24.9 hours. Feeder watchers were Janice Allen, Cindy Asmussen, Barbara Beaumont, Dena Belcher, Kaci Carolan & Ed Kuhrt, Anne Edwards, Drew Etienne, Janet Hollis, Kate Kostenbader & Ted Lepic, Kathy & Van Martensen, Milana Mitchell, Jim Scheib, James & Terri Stoner, Ronnye Wieland.

This year we met at the North Liberty Community Center for a noon lunch and compilation. We did not meet for an evening meal. We collected \$121 in donations for the National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count program.

Nationally, this year marked the 122st consecutive Christmas Bird Count. The results of all counts from 1900 to the present are available at [www.audubon.org/bird/cbc](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc). A table showing the results of every Iowa City count from 1951 to the present is available at [www.iowacitybirdclub.org](http://www.iowacitybirdclub.org).

Thanks to everyone who participated!

#### SPECIES LIST

Cackling Goose	17	Bald Eagle	148	Red-breasted Nuthatch	1
Canada Goose	4462	Red-tailed Hawk	82	White-breasted Nuthatch	165
Northern Shoveler	1	Rough-legged Hawk	3	Brown Creeper	15
Gadwall	4	Eastern Screech-Owl	2	Winter Wren	2
American Wigeon	4	Great Horned Owl	7	Carolina Wren	1
Mallard	1055	Barred Owl	6	European Starling	17471
Northern Pintail	1	Short-eared Owl	1	Eastern Bluebird	48
Redhead	3	Northern Saw-whet Owl	1	American Robin	5
Ring-necked Duck	15	Belted Kingfisher	3	House Sparrow	755
Lesser Scaup	15	Red-headed Woodpecker	11	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	59
Bufflehead	2	Red-bellied Woodpecker	148	House Finch	247
Common Goldeneye	27	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	4	Purple Finch	6
Hooded Merganser	15	Downy Woodpecker	170	Pine Siskin	17
Common Merganser	3	Hairy Woodpecker	37	American Goldfinch	257
Ruddy Duck	2	Northern Flicker	35	Fox Sparrow	2
Wild Turkey	3	Pileated Woodpecker	14	American Tree Sparrow	114
Ring-necked Pheasant	4	American Kestrel	21	Dark-eyed Junco	921
Rock Pigeon	195	Merlin	1	White-crowned Sparrow	17
Eurasian Collared-Dove	2	Northern Shrike	1	White-throated Sparrow	49
Mourning Dove	145	Blue Jay	157	Song Sparrow	7
Ring-billed Gull	1304	American Crow	352	Swamp Sparrow	1
Herring Gull	2	Black-capped Chickadee	310	Red-winged Blackbird	1029
Double-crested Cormorant	1	Tufted Titmouse	89	Rusty Blackbird	1
Northern Harrier	5	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	1	Common Grackle	2002
Cooper's Hawk	8	Golden-crowned Kinglet	1	Northern Cardinal	388
<i>Accipiter</i> sp.	2	Cedar Waxwing	130		