

2018 Christmas Bird Count – Another No Snow Year, and Yet.....!!

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Common Goldeneye female (c) Bill Schmoker

As we try and decipher trends, after fifty years of conducting the Evergreen-Idaho Springs Christmas Bird Count (CBC), it continues to be a most puzzling endeavor. Following in the footsteps of the prior two CBCs, we were confronted this year with yet another relatively dry and snowless period leading up to the count. But, for whatever reason, and I'm running short of hypotheses, this year was markedly different.

For starters, we had 78 people in the field and 26 feeder-counters. Having this many folks allowed us to put in a total of 231 party-hours. These are not record-setting numbers, but they are pretty darn good. That's a lot of folks contributing to the collective effort, and for whom we were extremely grateful.

So, just to remind you, 2015 was a huge year for us with 7,643 birds and 57 species, well above our average. This was followed by the two dry years of 2016 and 2017, in which we saw 6301 and 6063 birds, respectively, and each year we had only 49 species. As this year's count approached it appeared that we might be headed toward another one of these slower years. But, low and behold, the final tally was pretty interesting!

And then, on top of getting all these species, we had **all time high numbers for several birds**: Common Goldeneye (1), Cooper's Hawk (2), Great Horned Owl (7), Northern Pygmy-Owl (4), Hairy Woodpecker (94), Common Raven (200), Black-capped Chickadee (187),

Mountain Chickadee (886), Red-breasted Nuthatch (164), White-breasted Nuthatch (149), Brown Creeper (43), Golden-crowned Kinglet (33), Gray Catbird (1), and White-throated Sparrow (1). In addition, special mention needs to be made of the 1042 Pygmy Nuthatches we recorded this year. Our all-time high for these guys is 1046, so it's nice to be back close to that number again. For the last ten years we have been the world champs for Mountain Chickadees, and up until a few years ago we were the champs for Pygmy Nuthatches as well. With this year's results, we are **VERY WELL positioned to be world champs for both species once again.**

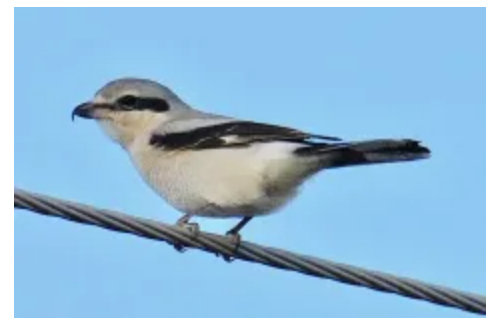
As for the birds, **we tallied 58 species, which was an all-time high**, and we ended up with 6,920 individual birds. Part of why we had so many species this year is that we picked up two new birds never seen before on our count: Common Goldeneye and Gray Catbird. Then, we also managed to get several other species that only make it into our area peripherally from lower in the foothills or out on the eastern plains: American Kestrel, Northern Shrike, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay (formerly Western Scrub-Jay), Bushtit, Canyon Wren, American Goldfinch, American Tree Sparrow, and White-throated Sparrow. And then we also did relatively well with the higher elevation species that we are never quite sure of getting: American Three-toed Woodpecker, Canada Jay (formerly Gray Jay), Clark's Nutcracker, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Pine Grosbeak, Brown-capped Rosy-Finch, and Cassin's Finch. Finally, we managed to pick up a couple of local rarities like Dusky Grouse (formerly Blue Grouse), Wild Turkey, Wilson's Snipe, Bald Eagle, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Goshawk, Northern Pygmy-Owl, and Belted Kingfisher.



Northern Pygmy Owl (c). Bill Schmoker.



American Tree Sparrow (c) Bill Schmoker



Northern Shrike (c) Bill Schmoker



Mountain Chickadee (c) Bill Schmoker



Canyon Wren (c) Bill Schmoker

What did we miss this year? Well, we had notably low numbers for Canada Goose (1) and American Robin (13), and our only Rosy-Finches were 2 Brown-capped (we had no Gray-crowned or Black Rosy-Finches).

The following table shows the bird species observed during the 2018 Evergreen-Idaho Springs Christmas Bird Count, the average number seen from 1969 to 2017, and the high count and year recorded for each species. Bolded entries are high counts recorded in 2018.

Common Name	Number per Year		High Count	
	1969-2017	2018	number	Year
Cackling Goose	<1		2	08
Canada Goose	8	1	70	90
Wood Duck	<1		2	93/07
Gadwall	<1		1	10
American Wigeon	<1		2	96
Mallard	63	72	248	12
Northern Pintail	<1		1	96/98
Green-winged Teal	<1		1	81
Common Goldeneye	<1	1	1	18
Chukar	<1		1	80
Dusky Grouse	<1	1	12	94
Wild Turkey	41	68	110	04
Rock Pigeon	75	54	212	81
Eurasian Collared-Dove	6	14	83	15
Mourning Dove	<1		3	16
Wilson's Snipe	1	2	4	78/91/00
Great Blue Heron	<1		1	88/90
Black-crowned Night Heron	<1		1	09
Bald Eagle	1	2	5	10
Northern Harrier	<1		2	04
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	1	3	several
Cooper's Hawk	<1	2	2	09/18
Northern Goshawk	1	1	3	72/87/11
Red-tailed Hawk	15	43	47	17
Rough-legged Hawk	<1		2	98
Ferruginous Hawk	1		11	85
Golden Eagle	3	3	8	89/15
Great Horned Owl	1	7	7	18
Northern Pygmy-Owl	1	4	4	95/18
Long-eared Owl	<1		1	74/82
Northern Saw-whet Owl	<1		1	70
Belted Kingfisher	2	1	6	04
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	<1		1	80
Am. Three-toed Woodpecker	<1	1	3	79/89

[View the full table \(PDF\)](#)

So, all in all, a very satisfactory day, both bird and data-wise! And, the Tally Rally continues to be world-class! What a great community we have!

Thanks to all section leaders, participants, and Barbara Jean Gard for coordinating the feeder-counters. A huge thanks, once again, to the Walds for hosting the Tally Rally, to JoAnn Hackos for making the meat chili, to Lisa Wald for providing the veggie chili, to Megan Fuse and Chris Pfaff for organizing the dinner, to all of you who contributed to the potluck, and to Brad Andres and David Wald for compiling our data.

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