

40th Matanuska Valley (AKMV) Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) Results

The 40th Matanuska Valley Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) took place on Count Day, Sunday, December 16, 2018. During the CBC, Field Teams, and Feeder Counters at home, counted all of the birds that they saw within the Matanuska Valley CBC Count Circle, a 15 mile diameter circle centered on the old Four Corners intersection of Old Trunk Road/Stringfield Road and the Palmer-Wasilla Highway. Count Team's species' totals for this year's Count are:

Mallard	640
Green-winged Teal	6
Common Goldeneye	1
Bald Eagle	Adult - 271
	Imm. - 80
Bald Eagle Total Count	351*
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1
Northern Goshawk	2
Red-tailed Hawk	1**
Rock Pigeon	187
Great Horned Owl	2
Northern Hawk Owl	1
Short-eared Owl	2
Northern Saw-whet Owl	Count Week
Downy Woodpecker	4
Hairy Woodpecker	21
Northern Shrike	4
Canada Jay (formerly Gray Jay)	4
Black-billed Magpie	179
Common Raven	638 - Field Counters count ravens only until 12 noon
Black-capped Chickadee	619
Red-breasted Nuthatch	46
Brown Creeper	4
American Dipper	7
European Starling	756*
Bohemian Waxwing	3647*
Dark-eyed Junco	3
Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch	52
Pine Grosbeak	35
Common Redpoll	47

* New high count record

** New species record

Species seen on Count Day

27 - AKMV Circle High Count - 35 in 1999

Birds seen on Count Day

7,260

Count Week Species

1 - (Count Week - 3 days prior & 3 days following Count Day)

37 Field Counters and 20 Feeder Counters (5 of whom also Field Counted) participated in this year's Count. Temperatures were mostly in the mid-20's for the majority of the day, and ranged from about 15° to 30° with mostly cloudy skies. There was light snow and some fog in the Palmer area. The winds were very mild with a maximum wind speed of about 5 MPH in some areas. Almost all of the lakes in our Count Circle were frozen but parts of many streams were open. There was some open water at the Palmer Waste Water Treatment Plant and at streams such as the Cottonwood Creek outflow from Wasilla Lake and below the Creekside Shopping area, and some parts of Spring Creek in the Old Matanuska Townsite area.

Counts for almost all species were down and appeared to be a reflection of what most birders in south-central Alaska have been seeing this winter at their bird feeders. Despite the generally low species' counts, new high record counts were set for three species. Bald Eagle - 351 (previous high - 277), European Starling - 756 (previous high - 408), and Bohemian Waxwing - 3,647 (previous high - 3,169). All of the owls seen on Count Day (Great Horned Owl, Northern Hawk Owl, and Short-eared Owl) were seen on the Palmer Hay Flats. Although Short-eared Owls are often seen on the Hay Flats, Northern Hawk Owl is rarely seen at that location. Great Horned Owls are generally not seen down on the Hay Flats.

At the end of Count Day, we finished up with a delicious potluck/wrapup meeting at Ellen and Ron Godden's home in Wasilla, with Ellen providing the basic dishes for the potluck. Sixteen of our participants took part in the fun wrapup meeting where everyone tried to outdo everyone else with their amazing stories of what they had seen during the Count.

A very special thanks to Ellen and Ron Godden for a fun potluck/wrapup meeting and thanks to all of our Field Counters, Feeder Counters for helping with this year's Christmas Bird Count! Final Count details will appear on the Mat-Su Birders' website (<www.matsubirders.org>).

Happy Holidays to all of our participants,
Bob Winckler <winckler@mtaonline.net>
Matanuska Valley CBC Compiler