

Matanuska Valley (AKMV) 38th Christmas Bird Count (CBC) Results

The 2016 Matanuska Valley Christmas Bird Count (CBC) took place on Sunday, December 18th. During the CBC, Field Teams and Feeder Counters at home counted all 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 totals for this year's Count are:

Mallard	628
Common Goldeneye	2 - Ties 2009 high count
Common Merganser	31 - Sets a new high - previous high 7 in 2001
Spruce Grouse	3
Bald Eagle	Adult - 93
	Imm. - 29
	Total 122
Northern Goshawk	2
Merlin	Count Week
Rock Pigeon	49
Great Horned Owl	1
Belted Kingfisher	1
Downy Woodpecker	27
Hairy Woodpecker	24
Northern Flicker	1 - Ties 2007 high count
Northern Shrike	2
Gray Jay	3
Black-billed Magpie	148
Common Raven	502 - Field Counters count ravens only until 12 noon
Black-capped Chickadee	776 - Count includes 1 w/deformed beak
Boreal Chickadee	7
Red-breasted Nuthatch	96
Brown Creeper	1
American Dipper	10
European Starling	218
Bohemian Waxwing	2,462
Snow Bunting	77
Dark-eyed Junco	5
Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch	Count Week
Pine Grosbeak	438
White-winged Crossbill	1
Common Redpoll	549

Species seen Count Day	28 - AKMV Circle High Count - 35 in 1999
Birds seen on Count Day	6,186
Count Week Species	2

We had 33 Field Counters and 24 Feeder Counters (6 of whom also Field Counted) participating. Although mostly in the mid-20's for the majority of the day, temperatures ranged from 5° to 31° with cloudy skies. The winds were very strong with a constant wind speed of about 10 MPH with many gusts to 40 MPH, which really suppressed most bird activity. Almost all of the lakes in our Count Circle were frozen as were most streams. 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 some parts of Spring Creek in the Old Matanuska Townsite area. Several roads in the area had not been plowed with snow depths up to six inches.

Although counts for almost all species were way down, there were three exceptions. We set a new high record count of 31 for Common Merganser (previous high - 7), and tied previous high counts for Common Goldeneye (2) and Northern Flicker (1). All of the Common Mergansers were found either at the Palmer Waste Water Treatment Plant outflow or at Spring Creek in the Old Matanuska Townsite area. Our high count for Bald Eagle was set in 2015 with a count of 277. A big factor in this Count's low Bald Eagle total is due to a major reconfiguration of the Palmer Landfill, where our biggest count normally occur. The Landfill has been modified and the area open to eagles is much smaller than its been in past years.

One Merlin was found during Count Week and a flock of Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches was also found during Count Week at a feeder in the Butte. Although those finches were at the feeder the day before our Count, they did not show on Count Day. They have been at those same feeders for three of the past five years.

At the end of Count Day, we finished up with a delicious potluck/wrapup meeting at Jean and Harry Holt's home on Finger Lake, with Jean providing the basic dishes for the potluck. Twenty of our participants took part in the fun wrapup meeting where everyone tried to outdo everyone else with their amazing stories of how they found their odd species.

A very special thanks to Jean and Harry Holt for a fun potluck/wrapup meeting and thanks to all of our Field and Feeder Counters for helping with this year's Christmas Bird Count!

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