



# Bird Notes

From Northeast Kingdom Audubon  
1302 Main Street, Saint Johnsbury, Vermont 05819

## Christmas Bird Count...The Real Winners

“The more the merrier” stands true for Christmas Counts year after year. The more people on the count, the more birds will be counted. The more birds counted, the stronger the data will be that is submitted at the end of the count. From now until Jan 5, more and more people will be counting our winter bird visitors and residents all over the country and in Canada. Anyway, the Island Pond count lost a few counters after being rescheduled to Dec 15<sup>th</sup> due to the regularly occurring snow events this season. The day was sunny, quite cold and perfectly calm. Without any breezes, the sounds of the birds’ calls, pecking seeds open, pecking tree bark, and even wings beating are heightened. Lake Echo and Seymour’s open waters also increased our chances of counting some leftover waterfowl. All of the day’s conditions were especially welcome as the crew of six hardy birdwatchers began.

My route took me along RT 114 and 105. As I checked the bird feeders at the houses along the way, this year’s finch visitors, the pine grosbeaks, accompanied the usual birds. Described as a rosey breasted grosbeak, these pinkish colored cousins to the evening grosbeak are visiting New England due to a poor seed crop in Canada this year. Another feeder visitor this year was the wild turkey. Four were standing under a deck for cover before taking advantage of the birdseed on the ground. Later we saw turkeys flying up into trees, roosting in trees and fluttering over the snow banks to get to a bird feeding station.

Any open water be it lake, stream or pond, may hold birds long into the cold season. In fact, one lingering great blue heron was counted along with hooded mergansers and a common loon. The mid-December starting date of the Christmas Bird Count was designed to pick up the late season migrants on purpose. There have been reports of some warblers still in Vermont. Bluebirds may stay around berry sources in hedgerows. The early date for the count can also pick up the new winter arrivals as well. Snow buntings have been around since October this year, mixed in with the early irruptives from Canada such as Bohemian waxwings, evening grosbeaks, and crossbills (red and white-winged).

At the end of the day, with rosey cheeks and wrinkled field lists, we returned to tabulate the count and exchange stories in the warmth of the wood heat. Over homemade chili and bread, the day’s observations were shared, from a house fire to the wonder of hearing the birds in the quiet woods. The winner of the count may have been the black-capped chickadee, but we all won that day for having spent time with nature and in good company.

To find out where any count will take place, log onto the National Audubon website, <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/getinvolved.html>. For counts in northern Vermont and New Hampshire, go to <http://www.ebird.org/VINS/news/cbc.html> (Vermont) or contact Charlie Brown at the Fairbanks Museum, 802/748-2372, ext.104; email: [cbrowne@fairbanksmuseum.org](mailto:cbrowne@fairbanksmuseum.org). In New Hampshire, go to [www.nhaudubon.org](http://www.nhaudubon.org), or contact Chris Martin at NH Audubon, 603/224-9909 ext.317, e-mail: [cmartin@nhaudubon.org](mailto:cmartin@nhaudubon.org).

Happy Christmas Bird Counting!

Carolyn E. Boardman is a board member of NEK Audubon living in Brownington, Vermont. NEK Audubon is one of 8 chapters of Audubon Vermont and part of the National Audubon Society. NEK Audubon is a non -profit organization that encourages people’s enjoyment of birds, wildlife and natural habitats through field trips, programs and publications. For more information about meetings, field trips and special events visit [www.nekaudubon.org](http://www.nekaudubon.org). Art work by Robin Rothman.