



Bird Notes

From Northeast Kingdom Audubon
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For Immediate Release

ANOTHER HOLIDAY BIRD COUNT

For those of you who did not make a Christmas Bird Count this year, the fun is over and the numbers are in. In Vermont, over 25,000 birds were counted (69 species) and New Hampshire counted almost 12,000(66 species). Full bird feeding stations played a key role during the count not only providing an important energy source for winter's bird residents and visitors, but also helping the folks driving sometimes 60 miles in one day check off a few species. The best birds for me this year were two barred owls out in broad daylight. The best part of the entire day was the tally tea party where the excitement grew along with the count list.

Keeping birdfeeders full during winter has many benefits, primarily for the birds, but not entirely. Whether you choose sunflower seeds, suet, a seed mix or peanut butter, some birds will find your feeders, just about anywhere you put them. Feeders close to the window reduce the danger of collisions and give you a better view. The fun begins when you start to notice different birds each day. In fact, two common redpolls just showed up at my feeder for the *first time* this winter as I was writing this. Keep your field guide right by the window (along with the cats) to identify any new arrivals. Large flocks of these rare visitors seen mingling with our winter residents, (usually black-capped chickadees, blue jays, mourning doves) can tell us about the food supply farther north. Besides, it seems that watching winter birds helps the short days pass even more quickly.

And before you know it, it will be President's Day holiday weekend, when anyone who feeds birds or watches birds in winter can contribute to another national bird count. Sponsored by National Audubon and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, the **Great Backyard Bird Count** returns for its ninth season February 17-20, 2006. Schools, clubs and individuals anywhere, can count birds and send in the results. Don't worry if you are not sure, bird experts double check any unusual entries. This is really fun! Last year, some 6 million birds (613 species) were counted continent-wide, an impossible task by any other means. Monitoring the ever-changing patterns of birds in winter over such a large area contributes to bird population research in a BIG WAY, and that IS great!

These holiday bird counts are just two ways that people and the Internet can play a vital role in understanding our bird companions. Between February 17-20, just count for as little as 15 minutes or as long as you like, keeping track of the highest number of each bird species you see together at one time. It is so simple - and there is no fee or registration. Reporting is very easy, too. At www.birdsource.org/gbbc when you enter your numbers, you can follow the progress of the entire count on maps, lists and charts. What amazing technology! If you don't have Internet access and would still like to participate, contact Charlie Browne at the Fairbanks Museum at 802-748-2372.

Because technology also makes it easy to take digital photos these days, a photo contest will now be part of the count. Send in your pictures with your numbers via the web site. After all the data is in, localities that count the greatest number of birds or bird species will be receive awards and public recognition. Just in time for our town meetings!

Happy Bird Feeding!

Carolyn E. Boardman is a 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, visit www.nekaudubon.org. Art work by Robin Rothman.