



# Bird Notes

From Northeast Kingdom Audubon  
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## For Immediate Release

### Counting on Birds

There are things you can count on in this world and things you can't. So far this new year, the bird sightings have been worth counting, for example the number of snowy owls, northern hawk owls, white wing crossbills, evening grosbeaks, Bohemian waxwings, common and hoary redpolls, and even an ivory gull...one. The bird counters are hard at it this winter as the irruptive species are flocking to us for the food they can't get further north. These dedicated birders travel far and wide and back to their computers to let us in on the bird visitors' whereabouts. There is even a Super Bowl of Birding! If this effort exceeds your comfort level, watching your bird feeders is a reliable counting opportunity (kept full of course). There is sheer joy watching them come and go at the feeder, and finding them in the new field guide that you got for Christmas.

As you might have guessed, it's time once again for the Great Backyard Bird Count on Feb 13-19. Across the US and Canada, people of all ages and abilities will be creating a real-time snapshot of birds, whether at feeders or any other place they are spotted during the period. It takes 15 minutes or as long as you would like each day. To find out the details, log onto the NEK Audubon website and go to Birding on the Web. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society provide all the forms, posters and information you need to count birds during that time. You don't even need a computer. You can mail in your results. Last year participants counted an unprecedented 634 species. With counts such as this one, citizens like us can help scientists document the complex distribution and movements of birds, as well as any declines that can't be accounted for.

Some days at the feeder, I catch a glimpse of the more rare winter visitor, something I had not counted on. A northern shrike attempting to kill a shrew under the feeder always gets my attention and that of my indoor cats. These robin-sized, predatory songbirds perch in a nearby tree and watch for meal, pounce, and pounce again until they can carry off the catch and stow in on a tree thorn or fork for later. Looking like a bandit with a black mask, wings and tail, these otherwise pale gray birds do sing a song or harsh and musical notes.

There is no time like the present to start counting on birds; after all, they do have to count on us.

### Happy 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 fosters our stewardship and enjoyment of birds, other wildlife and natural habitats. NEK Audubon is a Vermont chapter of the National Audubon Society. For more information about meetings, field trips and special events visit [www.nekaudubon.org](http://www.nekaudubon.org). Art work by Robin Rothman.**