

21st & 22nd-annual LAKE HENSHAW Christmas Bird Counts – Compared
Mondays, 18 December 2000 and 17 December 2001

The results for the 2000 and 2001 LAKE HENSHAW Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) are listed side by side for direct comparison. In contrast to the 2001 San Diego bird count, the outcome of the 2001 Lake Henshaw CBC was fairly average, with 130 species being recorded. This is in spite of relatively nice weather with little to none of the blustery winds that sometimes descend upon this count. There has been an overall lack of rain prior to the count, resulting in fewer and lower ponds and lakes supporting fewer bird species this year. The Lake was particularly low compared to past years. However, we still found some good birds.

The most outstanding finds were two new species to the Lake Henshaw CBC, Harris' Hawk that was observed near the Warner Springs fire station and an adult Zone-tailed Hawk found along Black Canyon Road west of Mesa Grande.

THE LAKE HENSHAW CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS
2000 TO THE LEFT AND 2001 TO THE RIGHT
OUTSTANDING AND UNUSUAL SPECIES ARE IN UPPERCASE LETTERS
>>NOTEWORTHY SPECIES IN FOUND IN 2001 ARE UNDERLINED<<
SEE ADDITIONAL COMMENTS BELOW

The following list generally follows the 42nd Supplement to the A.O.U. Check-list, as published in The Auk 117: 847-858, 2000.

<u>2000/2001</u>	<u>SPECIES</u>
5 / 3	Pied-billed Grebe
= / 6	Eared Grebe
15 / 21	Western Grebe
45 / 105	Double-crested Cormorant
38 / 55	American White Pelican
1 / =	<u>AMERICAN BITTERN</u>
6 / 8	Great Blue Heron
= / 2	Green Heron
2 / =	Black-crowned Night-Heron
1 / 2	Turkey Vulture
1 / 174	Canada Goose
3 / =	Wood Duck
1 / =	<u>EURASIAN WIGEON</u>
446 / 240	American Wigeon
13 / 10	Gadwall
45 / 28	Green-winged Teal
9 / 81	Mallard
= / 19	Northern Pintail
210 / 119	Northern Shoveler
3 / 4	Canvasback
= / 1	Redhead
4 / 33	Ring-necked Duck
1 / =	Lesser Scaup

2 / 1	Bufflehead
5 / 15	Common Merganser
1 / 1	Bald Eagle
6 / 2	Northern Harrier
= / 3	Sharp-shinned Hawk
2 / 3	Cooper's Hawk
= / 1	<u>HARRIS' HAWK</u>
11 / 25	Red-shouldered Hawk
= / 1	<u>ZONE-TAILED HAWK</u>
41 / 75	Red-tailed Hawk
6 / 9	Ferruginous Hawk
4 / 2	Golden Eagle
21 / 36	American Kestrel
3 / 4	Merlin
4 / 5	Prairie Falcon
2 / 10	Mountain Quail
47 / 92	California Quail
53 / 97	Wild Turkey
= / 5	Virginia Rail
433 / 1258	American Coot
= / 1	<u>AMERICAN AVOCET</u>
10 / 16	Common Snipe
1 / 2	Greater Yellowlegs
4 / 5	Spotted Sandpiper
50 / 25	Long-billed Dowitcher
= / 6	Western Sandpiper
14 / 149	Least Sandpiper
33 / 25	Killdeer
64 / 52	Ring-billed Gull
= / 6	Bonaparte's Gull
25 / 29	Domestic Pigeon
209 / 214	Band-tailed Pigeon
361 / 464	Mourning Dove
2 / 1	Barn Owl
3 / =	Western Screech-Owl
5 / 3	Great Horned Owl
1 / =	Spotted Owl
= / 1	<u>BURROWING OWL</u>
2 / =	<u>LONG-EARED OWL</u>
= / 3	Northern Saw-whet Owl
3 / 12	Anna's Hummingbird
13 / 6	Belted Kingfisher
13 / 3	Lewis' Woodpecker
243 / 359	Acorn Woodpecker
2 / 3	Red-naped Sapsucker
= / 3	Red-breasted Sapsucker
27 / 75	Nuttall's Woodpecker
= / 3	Ladder-backed Woodpecker
= / 1	<u>DOWNY WOODPECKER</u>
3 / 1	Hairy Woodpecker
= / 1	White-headed Woodpecker

81 / 100	Common Flicker
13 / 28	Say's Phoebe
38 / 48	Black Phoebe
6 / 11	Loggerhead Shrike
4 / 9	Hutton's Vireo
85 / 108	Steller's Jay
279 / 420	Western Scrub-Jay
5 / =	CLARK'S NUTCRACKER
741 / 672	American Crow
139 / 307	Common Raven
139 / 151	Phainopepla
51 / 55	Cedar Waxwing
406 / 608	Western Bluebird
51 / 8	Mountain Bluebird
9 / 7	Townsend's Solitaire
20 / 41	Hermit Thrush
362 / 130	American Robin
= / 1	<u>VARIED THRUSH</u>
602 / 460	European Starling
10 / 32	Northern Mockingbird
15 / 33	California Thrasher
8 / 4	Pygmy Nuthatch
1 / =	Red-breasted Nuthatch
22 / 78	White-breasted Nuthatch
1 / 1	Brown Creeper
1 / 4	Cactus Wren
4 / 4	Rock Wren
10 / 4	Marsh Wren
6 / 41	Bewick's Wren
5 / 12	House Wren
= / 3	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
121 / 102	Mountain Chickadee
150 / 208	Oak Titmouse
289 / 373	Bushtit
6 / =	Golden-crowned Kinglet
67 / 160	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
43 / 52	Wrentit
147 / 920	Horned Lark
20 / 59	House Sparrow
434 / 96	American Pipit
= / 2	Pine Siskin
6 / 3	American Goldfinch
56 / 214	Lesser Goldfinch
2 / 5	Lawrence's Goldfinch
29 / 3	Purple Finch
2 / =	CASSIN'S FINCH
409 / 583	House Finch
8 / 14	Fox Sparrow
103 / 196	Song Sparrow
4 / 4	Lincoln's Sparrow
562 / 1360	White-crowned Sparrow

10 / 29	Golden-crowned Sparrow
1166/1608	Dark-eyed Junco
183 / 102	Savannah Sparrow
5 / 44	Chipping Sparrow
124 / 23	Vesper Sparrow
454 / 906	Lark Sparrow
= / 1	Black-throated Sparrow
4 / 2	Sage Sparrow
= / 2	Rufous-crowned Sparrow
56 / 212	Spotted Towhee
94 / 184	California Towhee
2 / 5	Orange-crowned Warbler
62 / 215	Yellow-rumped Warbler
= / 2	Townsend's Warbler
21 / 12	Common Yellowthroat
809 / 460	Red-winged Blackbird
46 / 40	Tricolored Blackbird
163 / 512	Western Meadowlark
1641/ 863	Brewer's Blackbird
33 / 8	Brown-headed Cowbird

145 OVERALL SPECIES RECORDED ON THE LAKE HENSHAW CBC, 2000-2001

COMMENTARY ABOUT THE 2001 SAN DIEGO CBC, Mostly By Phil Unitt

Infra-specific identifications such as “Myrtle” Warbler and “Gray-headed” Junco will appear in the final results on the National Audubon CBC website, www.audubon.org. A few minor modifications are possible for the 2001 CBC totals since not all of the supporting write-ups for a few of the rare birds have been received. Trying to pull up the results from 1985 through 1999 through the Audubon website yields only 10 of the 15 years; evidently some years have not been entered. So any seat-of-the-pants assessment is even more tentative than it was for San Diego.

Nonetheless, numbers for the American Wigeon, Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, American Crow, and Purple Finch appear low. Lack of rain has dried up some ponds that normally have wigeons, such as those where Ken Weaver and John McColm had Eurasian Wigeons on past years' counts. Low numbers of the Purple Finch and Mountain Bluebird reflect off years for those irregular species. Maybe the crows have decided National City suits them better than Lake Henshaw [See the 2001 San Diego CBC results and commentary].

Conversely, numbers are on the high side for so-called "Wild" Turkeys [self-domesticating and rapidly proliferating since their introduction into San Diego County 1993], Townsend's Solitaire [which are bucking the trend for 2001-2002 being an off year for many other montane invaders], Phainopepla and Northern Mockingbird [which are associated with good crops of fruit produced by native mistletoe (*Phoradendron sp.*) and toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), as well as planted firethorn (*Pyracantha* cultivars) plants, in these species' natural environments, as well as in suburban areas], and Lark Sparrow. Eleven species of water birds, plus this year's single Bald Eagle, were only at Lake Henshaw within the count circle.

Twelve bird species were observed on and around Lake Henshaw only – eared grebe, western grebe, American white pelican, American wigeon, northern pintail, canvasback, bufflehead, common merganser, bald eagle, spotted sandpiper, long-billed dowitcher, and Bonaparte's gull.

Typical birds observed on and around the Volcan Mountains were northern saw-whet owl, white-headed woodpecker, Townsend's solitaire, pygmy nuthatch, and Townsend's warbler.

Commentary about certain noteworthy bird species that were observed:

Harris' Hawk – One, soaring near the Warner Springs fire station, a first for the LH CBC

Zone-tailed Hawk – Adult, observed about one-half mile down Black Canyon Road from Mesa Grande, at 33° 10.722' N, 116° 46.684' W by GPS. This is another new species for the Lake Henshaw count, although there have been observations not far from this site over the hill to the north during the breeding season.

Virginia Rail – Uncommon and secretive, recorded near Swan Lake NE of Lake Henshaw.

American Avocet – A rare bird inland, has been reported previously on the Lake Henshaw CBC.

Burrowing Owl – Declining, rare on this bird count. One found north of Lake Henshaw.

Lewis' Woodpecker – At Love Valley and north of Lake Henshaw; but none on Mesa Grande

Ladder-backed Woodpecker – In addition to the two that were found in expected semi-desert habitat in the San Felipe Valley, a suspicious woodpecker appeared and sounded closer to the Ladder-backed than to Nuttall's near Swan Lake, out of this species' normal range and habitat.

Downy Woodpecker – Evidence of its continued spread in San Diego County, one was along Bloomdale Creek north of Mesa Grande Road. This is a rare species inland and to this count.

Mountain Bluebird – Somewhat reduced in number, these were north of Lake Henshaw only.

Varied Thrush – One, discovered at the NE base of Volcan Mountain near San Felipe Valley.

Pine Siskin – Reported only from along Canada Verde, at the SW base of Hot Springs Mt.

Lawrence's Goldfinch – Unlike most years, they were reported only from Santa Ysabel.

Townsend's Warbler – Surprisingly hardy, found in the Volcan Mountains only.

Tricolored Blackbird – Present at a known colony site near V.I.D. Gate 2, south of Route 79

Thanks to everyone who braved the morning's sub-freezing temperatures to participate this year: Don Adams, Lariann Baretta, Joe Barth, Gale Bustillos, Claude Edwards, Kylie Fischer, Marj & Jim Freda, Mel Gabel, Ivan Getting, Pete Ginsburg, Bill Haas, John Hammond, Lori Hargrove, Art & Dorothy Hester, Ron & Linda Johnson, Ann & Tom Keenan, Jason Kurnow, Kathy Lapinsky, Brian Lohstroh, Brian Loly, John McColm, Judy & Thane McIntosh, Bill Mittendorff, Gretchen Morse, Thomas Myers, Doug Nail, Oz Osborn, Marjorie Oslie, Dennis Parker, Ingrid Quon, Jeanne Raimond, Royce Riggan pere et fils, Geoff Rogers, Bob Sanger, Betty Siegel, Bob Theriault, Don Waber, Ken Weaver, Mark Webb, Kirsten Winter, and Jim Wilson. Thanks especially to Bill Mittendorff and John Hammond for making the complete circumnavigation of Lake Henshaw on foot, carrying scopes. Thanks also to Paul Dorey and Jan Head of the Vista Irrigation District, for authorizing our access to that agency's lands encompassing the northern portions of the count area [although some of its lessees, in a fit of illogic, questioned whether our access permits allowed us to climb through the fence!].