

# The 102<sup>nd</sup> Christmas Bird Count 12/14/01–1/5/02

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A total of 204 species plus the subspecies Ipswich Sparrow were recorded on the thirty-four Massachusetts-based Christmas Bird Counts. Four additional species were found during count period, although not on any count day. The total is fourteen species more than last year, which many of you will remember was just awful weatherwise. This year, December in Massachusetts was the second warmest in 130 years of record, and the counts reflect the great weather.

The Cape Cod CBC recorded 133 species with record high numbers of Red-throated Loons (271) and new high counts for several waterfowl species — Mute Swan, Wood Duck, Green-winged Teal, and Hooded Merganser — reflecting the warmer weather and the fact that all ponds were open. The Martha's Vineyard CBC came in second with 128 species. The bronze medal went to Nantucket with 127 species.

In analyzing the data, it is interesting to note that just fourteen species were seen on all thirty-four counts: Canada Goose, American Black Duck, Rock Dove, Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, and Northern Cardinal. It is also noteworthy to see how many of the 204 species tallied are represented by a single individual. This year there were twenty: Eared Grebe, Northern Fulmar, Cattle Egret, Green Heron, Golden Eagle, Gyrfalcon, Common Moorhen, Sora, Pomarine Jaeger, Atlantic Puffin, Red-headed Woodpecker, Blue-headed Vireo, Sedge Wren, Nashville Warbler, Ovenbird, Wilson's Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Grasshopper, Lincoln's and Clay-colored sparrows.

New England winter bird populations have certainly changed during the last decades, and we have seen a dramatic increase in many species and a decline in just a few species. In the following chart you can see what a difference eleven years has made.

<b>Species</b>	<b>1990 (28 counts)</b>	<b>2001 (34 counts)</b>
Canada Goose	29,879	60,552
Cooper's Hawk	20	153
Ring-necked Pheasant	182	94
Wild Turkey	311	1525
Lesser Black-backed Gull	2	21
Red-bellied Woodpecker	29	586
Carolina Wren	557	1684
Eastern Bluebird	156	1860
Hermit Thrush	44	332
American Robin	2444	35,558
Northern Cardinal	3762	6214

The complete results of all the counts in the country are available on the Birdsource website (sponsored by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology); you can view the data going back to 1990 by visiting the following URL: <<http://www.birdsource.org>> and selecting Christmas Bird Count. For the Massachusetts results visit the Bird Observer website at: <<http://massbird.org/birdobserver/>>. For those who want a printed copy sent to them, please send a self-addressed envelope with 68-cent postage to Robert H. Stymeist, 94 Grove Street, Watertown, MA 02472-2829. 

## News from MassWildlife

### Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey

MassWildlife reports a final total of 70 bald eagles wintering in Massachusetts as reported during the January 2-16 Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey. State Ornithologist Brad Blodget has compiled the results from observers across the state and notes a total of 49 adult and 21 immature eagles found at 10 locations. Quabbin Reservoir was the seasonal home to 30 eagles while 16 were seen along the Massachusetts reach of the Connecticut River. Both the Quabbin and Connecticut River were surveyed by a MassWildlife crew riding in a helicopter provided courtesy of National Grid. . . . Nine eagles were reported on the Merrimack and two at Assawompsett Pond in Lakeville. Other Massachusetts water bodies with wintering eagles included Silver Lake in Pembroke (3), Housatonic River in the southern Berkshires (4), Wachusett Reservoir (3), Glen Charlie Pond in Plymouth (1), Cobble Mountain Reservoir in Blandford (1), and Webster Lake in Webster (1). No Golden Eagles were observed during the count window. Massachusetts' figures will be forwarded for inclusion in the national compilation, a database that tracks wintering eagle population and distribution trends in the participating states.

The nationwide Survey was first conducted in 1979, when 8 eagles were found in Massachusetts, and has been used annually to gain insight into the numbers and distribution of wintering bald eagles across the continental United States . . . . National Grid, a partner in eagle conservation since 1982, donates helicopter flight time enabling MassWildlife to quickly and efficiently cover the extensive Quabbin shoreline and meandering Connecticut River mainstem. "The National Grid helicopter has been an essential part of the Survey for more than a decade," notes Blodget. "It would be virtually impossible to cover the Quabbin and Connecticut River using people observing from the ground. The data we get from the helicopter team is accurate, complete and comparable to data from previous years. We have a lot of confidence in those numbers thanks to the cooperation of National Grid." . . . . Sixty-one eagles were counted in Massachusetts during the January 2001 survey, and the highest Bay State total ever recorded occurred in January 1998 when 76 eagles were tallied. Nationwide, 13,000-16,000 eagles have been censused in recent years.