

WINTER FEEDER CENSUS FOR ALLEN, AUGLAIZE,  
HARDIN, HANCOCK AND WOOD COUNTIES

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Even though the winter feeding of birds is artificial, a large amount of information concerning wild populations of birds can be obtained for an area. This is especially true if a number of observers sampling different habitats in the same area cooperate by using standard methods of data taking. From January, 1985, to the present, I coordinated a winter bird feeder census for Allen, Auglaize, Hardin, Hancock and Wood Counties. Six observers worked in Allen, 1 in Auglaize, 6 in Hardin, 1 in Hancock, and 2 in Wood County. Except for Auglaize and Hancock Counties, the observation sites were evenly distributed among 3 major habitats: rural areas with adjacent fields and woods, city areas with little surrounding natural environment, and city areas with significant surrounding natural environment.

Monthly data sheets were provided to the observers who recorded types of food used, bird species seen, and number of individuals per species seen for each day. The type of food given was left to the discretion of the observer, although this increased the variability in the study. Averaging of data decreased this problem. An individual or species was counted if it was seen near the feeding area, even if it did not actually eat the food. Many species are drawn to the feeding area because of the presence of other bird species. Therefore, raptors were counted as well as birds such as Brown creepers that feed in winter mixed species flocks. Number of birds per species was recorded by writing the largest number of individuals seen each day at any one time. For example, 2 or 3 Dark-eyed Juncos may be seen feeding most of the day, but occasionally a flock of 15 may feed. The number 15 was recorded in the blank. This provided population estimates and eliminated the possibility of counting the same individual twice. This method also permitted the observer to be flexible with respect to observation times, and fitted more conveniently around the household chores where a person may be free to watch the feeder for only a few minutes at a time.

Most observers provided several types of food including mixed bird seed, black oil and striped sunflower, and suet. Others added niger, cracked corn, and safflower. Several provided water. The table below shows census results for the winter months of December to March for 1985-1986 and 1986-1987. Forty-five species were recorded in 1167 days of observation by 13 observers in 1985-1986. Thirty-nine species were recorded in 920 days of observation by 10 observers in 1986-1987. The two chickadee species present in this area in the winter were combined because of the difficulty of identifying them without body measurements or calls. In general, few differences were noted between number of species and number of individuals per species for the two years of the study. However, these data show the major increase in White-crowned sparrows, White-throated sparrows, Tree sparrows, Oregon Juncos, and Red-breasted nuthatches during the winter of 1985-86. The large increase in crow numbers in 1986-87 was recorded at a feeding station in a Findlay residential area of Hancock County. This may reflect a tendency, casually observed by many in our area, of an increased crow population, particularly in residential habitats. The Varied thrush visited two Bluffton (Allen County) feeders in December and January of 1986-1987 before being killed in a collision with a window. The specimen is now located in the vertebrate museum at Ohio Northern University.

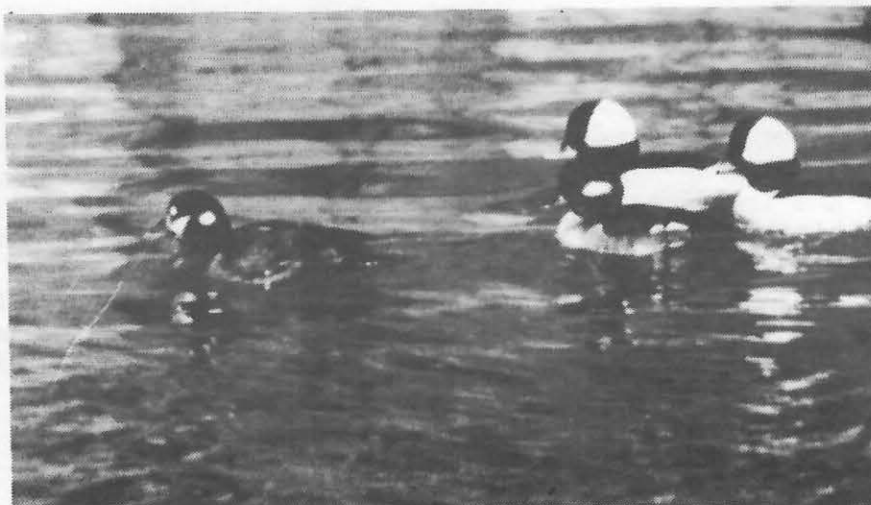
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Table 1. Total number of individuals/species and average number of individuals/ days/species of birds seen at winter feeders in 1985-86 (1167 days) and 1986-87 (920 days). (-) indicates a value less than .01.

SPECIES	Total 85-86	Ave./day	Total 86-87	Ave./day
1. Cooper's Hawk	2	-.01	8	-.01
2. Red-shouldered Hawk	1	-.01	0	0
3. Red-tailed Hawk	3	-.01	0	0
4. American Kestrel	3	-.01	0	0
5. Ring-necked Pheasant	0	0	1	-.01
6. Rock Dove	65	.06	64	.07
7. Mourning Dove	4369	3.74	4326	4.7
8. Red-bellied Woodpecker	237	.2	93	.1
9. Northern Flicker	36	.03	21	.02
10. Red-headed Woodpecker	0	0	7	-.01
11. Hairy Woodpecker	107	.09	30	.03
12. Downy Woodpecker	735	.63	503	.55
13. Eastern Phoebe	0	0	1	-.01
14. Blue Jay	1850	1.59	1660	1.8
15. American Crow	0	0	47	.05
16. Tufted Titmouse	867	.74	465	.51
17. Chickadee (combined species)	221	.2	404	.44
18. Brown Creeper	1	.01	36	.04
19. White-breasted Nuthatch	813	.7	571	.62
20. Red-breasted Nuthatch	150	.13	5	.01
21. Carolina Wren	0	0	2	-.01
22. Varied Thrush	0	0	17	.02
23. American Robin	117	.1	76	.08
24. Cedar Waxwing	85	.07	9	.01
25. European Starling	5418	4.64	3675	4
26. Cardinal	2549	2.18	1432	1.56
27. Vesper Sparrow	1	-.01	0	0
28. Savannah Sparrow	44	.04	0	0
29. Song Sparrow	301	.25	113	.12
30. Tree Sparrow	428	.37	12	.01
31. Field Sparrow	1	-.01	0	0
32. Chipping Sparrow	2	-.01	0	0
33. Dark-eyed Junco (slate-colored form)	4478	3.84	1845	2
34. Dark-eyed Junco (oregon form)	138	.12	7	.01
35. White-throated Sparrow	547	.47	60	.07
36. White-crowned Sparrow	377	.32	1	-.01
37. Fox Sparrow	1	-.01	0	0
38. Dickcissel	2	-.01	0	0
39. Red-winged Blackbird	61	.05	4	-.01
40. Brown-headed Cowbird	1555	1.33	744	.81
41. Common Grackle	660	.57	730	.8
42. House Sparrow	16828	14.42	15349	16.68
43. Pine Siskin	515	.44	575	.63
44. American Goldfinch	2815	2.41	2522	2.74
45. White-winged Crossbill	1	-.01	0	0
46. Common Redpoll	14	.01	0	0
47. Purple Finch	31	.03	8	-.01
48. House Finch	5649	4.84	3651	3.97
49. Evening Grosbeak	35	.03	69	.08

DATE	Mogadore Res.	Lake Co.	Akron Lks.	Mogadore Res.	L. Rockwell	Mogadore Res.	Ladue Res.	Akron Lks.	Fairport/Perry	L. Rockwell	Eastlake	Lorain/Avon Lk.	Akron Lks.	Cleveland	Akron Lks.	Akron Lks.	Edgewater
Species	D 5	D 6	D 8	D 13	D 19	D 21	D 22	D 23	D 26	D 30	J 1	J 10	J 31	F 6	F 20	F 28	F 28
Common Loon	1	1						1	4	1							
Pied-billed Grebe	2		18	1	4		1	22		12			5		10	16	
Horned Grebe	4	8	2	3	3	1	4	17					2			2	
Red-necked Grebe																	1
Tundra Swan									33	45							
Mute Swan			1					1				6	1		2	1	
Canada Goose	50	200	700	200	200	250	60	550	40	220	60	40	250	40	550	700	15
Snow Goose								1									
Wood Duck										1							1
Green-winged Teal										3							
Mallard	4	80	300	6	60	16	20	800	80	38	130	100	250	60	850	1300	10
Black Duck	2	100	40	4	60	4	10	15	10	46	30	75	30	40	60	40	16
Gadwall					30	10			1	20				3	4		
Am. Wigeon	2				1								2				
N. Shoveler					3					5							4
Canvasback	12	8		8		17		1				1	2			2	2
Redhead	4			4		4				2		10		30		30	
Ring-necked Duck	40					130											
Greater Scaup						4					2	400					75
Lesser Scaup		12				16			8		20	200				2	250
Oldsquaw																	3
White-winged Scoter									2								
Common Goldeneye	12	75		53	12	25		10	44	3	150	800	30	75	10	75	200
Bufflehead	20	3	1	40	3	40			9		6	30		14		1	10
Hooded Merganser	34				60	16	20	30		1				1			
Red-br. Merganser	110000			1			1		16		200	1000		20			
Com. Merganser		20		3	2			2	10		30	750		1			
Ruddy Duck	297	5	3	100		121		7		1		3	4		1	8	
Am. Coot	200		600	300		300		450				1	75		80	60	

Winter waterbird survey in NE Ohio, 1987-88, compiled by Larry Rosche.



Harlequin Duck at Lorain, Ohio, February 1988. Photograph by Vic Fazio.