

All Time High Ohio Christmas Bird Count Records

by Tom Kemp

I have reviewed past issues of *American Birds*, *Audubon Field Notes*, *Bird Lore*, and Cornell's birdsources.org website to compile what I believe to be the all-time high Christmas Bird Count records for Ohio. Since 1900, when the first count was conducted in Ohio, a remarkable 242 species have occurred on Ohio CBCs. This number includes 13 warblers, 20 shorebirds, and 17 gulls! Twenty-six species have been detected just once. Cincinnati, with its veritable army of observers, leads the way with at least 26 high counts, followed by Toledo with 20. Elyria-Lorain, which garnered most of the gull records, has 14 high counts, as do Cleveland and Ottawa NWR. Some Christmas Bird Count records have been published that lack documentation and are not presently included on Ohio's official list of birds. They are discussed below. Other records that were obviously published erroneously (e.g., Steller's jay) or likely the result of misidentifications (e.g., multiple black-throated blue warblers) are omitted from the list. Other species were recorded in numbers that are, to say the least, a bit hard to believe. Are *all* of the additional records listed below (the ones not commented on) accurate? Probably not. Christmas Bird Counts attract a wide range of birders, some with limited ability and good imaginations. It would be impossible to ascertain the veracity of each record. So I present this list as much for the fun of it as for its accuracy.

Ohio Christmas Bird Counts - A Brief History

The first Christmas Bird Count in Ohio was conducted at Oberlin in 1900. Here is their list: red-shouldered hawk, 1; downy woodpecker, 6; hairy woodpecker, 1; blue jay, 6; crow, 4; chickadee, 8; tufted titmouse, cw (seen during the count week but not on the count day); white-breasted nuthatch, 14; bluebird, cw; song sparrow, 2; junco, 3; bronzed grackle, cw; purple finch, 14; cardinal, 1; flicker, 2; sparrow hawk, 1; tree sparrow, 40. From this modest beginning, the number of counts has burgeoned to over sixty statewide. Along the way, there have been dozens of others, many going by the wayside after lasting only a year or two. That makes the record of the Cadiz count all the more remarkable. Without question the champion for longevity, the Cadiz CBC has been held every year with no lapses since 1901! Congratulations to the compilers and counters of this Harrison County count. Wauseon's count lasted just one year (1924), but still garnered the all-time high record for gray partridge in the state, a record that will surely stand the test of time. Finally, Cincinnati's first count in 1911 found 14 cardinals; do you suppose they said, "Boy, there sure are a lot of cardinals around here!"?

Published Records, Obviously Wrong

Imagine the surprise of the Goll Woods compiler when he discovered that his group had seen Steller's jays and plain titmice on their 1986 count! Equally surprised must have been the Mentor compiler (ruddy ground dove in 1995) and the Trumbull County counters (ringed kingfisher 1996). These were obviously published erroneously. A report of 23 black-throated blue warblers on the 1965 Killdeer

Plains count was published, *with comments!* What were these birds? My best guess is dark-eyed juncos. What do you do with the red-cockaded woodpecker reported on the 1965 Oxford count? Seventeen California gulls were listed on the 1968 Lakewood count. Remarkable.

Published Records Not on the State List, or Extremely Suspect

There are still no accepted records, or in one case an accepted winter record, for the following species for Ohio. The great cormorant (Ashland 1986) may have been the least likely to occur here; one would have to think the documentation did not eliminate the far more likely double-crested cormorant, or the bird was entered in the wrong line of the form. You can bet that ferruginous hawk will eventually be convincingly documented in Ohio; the Grand Lake St. Marys (1980) bird was certainly possible, as was the Greenville bird in 1997. I understand that documentation does exist for the golden-crowned sparrow reported on the 1988 Wooster count. Although I have not been privy to that write-up, my guess is this bird was an immature white-crowned sparrow showing a bright buffy central crown stripe. I try to turn the white-crowns at my feeder into golden-crowns all the time. Three-toed woodpecker was listed on the 1981 Beaver Creek count; it sure would be a good one for the state list. Swainson's hawk was reported from the New Lexington count in 1977. Hard to say what this one was. Skuas have been reported on two counts (Ashtabula 1946, Gypsum 1979); it is possible.

High Counts: How Many Birds Were Really There?

Were there really that many ducks at Killdeer Plains in the late 1960s (wood duck, 2407; northern pintail, 1000; American wigeon, 1500)? And again in 1985 when 100 blue-winged teal were reported? Remarkably, 46 chipping sparrows were listed on two counts, when *one* on an Ohio CBC should be a noteworthy event. The count of 2500 white-winged scoters listed on the 1985 Firelands count is astonishing to say the least; this number would far exceed any high number ever reported for the state. These birds were probably red-breasted mergansers. Oxford listed 200 Brewer's blackbirds in 1995, an incredible total.

Counts I Would Like to Have Been On

Wouldn't you have loved to have been on the Kingston count in 1975 to witness the tremendous concentration of birds of prey, including 87 rough-legged hawks and 80 northern harriers? The 1956 Buckeye Lake count recorded the most species ever on an Ohio CBC, 97. It would have been nice to walk around with Milton Trautman and be part of CBC history. Can you imagine all those evening grosbeaks on the 1975 Logan count? Swarming everywhere! The 1962 Utica count featured gray partridge, a bird I wouldn't mind having on my Ohio list. The 1961 season was excellent for pine grosbeaks and Burton was the place to be, with a high count of 47.

The Rarest of the Rare

How do you choose the rarest bird ever found on an Ohio CBC? The vote has to go to those species that have occurred no other time in the state. So mountain

bluebird and Heermann's gull are the winners. Second place is a toss-up. I would go with Townsend's solitaire, common eider, western tanager, rufous hummingbird, boreal chickadee, mew gull, varied thrush, green-tailed towhee, and black-billed magpie. One might also argue for some of the neotropical migrants that failed to migrate. There are plenty of those to choose from.

All-time High Counts by Species

Many thanks to all those compilers who provided comments and corrected high totals. The author welcomes any further corrections in the list of high counts. For each species, I have listed the number seen, the name of the count, and the year of the count. For example: Black vulture, 112 (Paint Creek 1998). This notation indicates the 1998-1999 CBC season. If you detect any errors, please drop me a note at the address found at the end of this article.

Red-throated Loon, 1 on five counts
 Common Loon, 46 (Cleveland 1983)
 Pied-billed Grebe, 56 (Paint Creek 1984)
 Horned Grebe, 84 (Cleveland 1974)
 Red-necked Grebe, 2 (Cleveland 1931)
 Eared Grebe, 2 (Cleveland 1987, Paint Creek 2000)
 Western Grebe, 1 (Mansfield 1999)
 Northern Gannet, 2 (Cleveland 1949)
 Double-crested Cormorant, 94 (L. Erie Is. 1998)
 American Bittern, 4 (Hamilton-Fairfield 1927)
 Least Bittern, 1 (Toledo 1970)
 Great Blue Heron, 327 (ONWR 1976)
 Great Egret, 3 (ONWR 1981)
 Green Heron, 1 on 12+ counts
 Black-crowned Night-Heron, 103 (Toledo 1972)
 Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, 1 on five counts
 Black Vulture, 112 (Paint Creek 1998)
 Turkey Vulture, 357 (Athens 2000)
 Greater White-fronted Goose, 5 (Cleveland 1966)
 Snow Goose, 200 (Fremont 1975)
 Canada Goose, 19,671 (ONWR 1996)
 Brant, 19 (Firelands 1976)
 Mute Swan, 30 (Quail Hollow 1997)
 Trumpeter Swan, 15 (ONWR 1999)
 Tundra Swan, 496 (Toledo 1982)
 Wood Duck, 2407 (Killdeer Plains 1969)
 Gadwall, 601 (ONWR 1994)
 Eurasian Wigeon, 1 (Ashtabula 1941)
 American Wigeon, 1500 (Killdeer Plains 1969)
 American Black Duck, 16,715 (Gypsum 1959)
 Mallard, 27,356 (ONWR 1999)
 Blue-winged Teal, 100 (Killdeer Plains 1985)
 Northern Shoveler, 286 (Toledo 1998)
 Northern Pintail, 1000 (Killdeer Plains 1969)
 Green-winged Teal, 200 (Killdeer Plains 1966)
 Canvasback, 10,206 (Toledo 1976)
 Redhead, 500 (Fremont 1986)
 Ring-necked Duck, 503 (Cincinnati 1998)
 Greater Scaup, 3000 (Lakewood 1963)
 Lesser Scaup, 6778 (Lakewood 1954)
 King Eider, 3 (Elyria-Lorain 1973)
 Common Eider, 1 (Lakewood 1963)
 Harlequin Duck, 2 (L. Erie Is. 1986 & 1993, ONWR 1996)
 Surf Scoter, 5 (Cleveland 1964)
 White-winged Scoter, 2500 (Firelands 1985)
 Black Scoter, 42 (Ashtabula 1935)
 Long-tailed Duck, 85 (Ashtabula 1941)
 Bufflehead, 1681 (L. Erie Is. 1994)
 Common Goldeneye, 6564 (ONWR 1996)
 Hooded Merganser, 492 (Trumbull Co. 1987)
 Common Merganser, 10,757 (Toledo 1991)
 Red-breasted Merganser, 91,526 (L. Erie Is. 1991)
 Ruddy Duck, 1511 (Gypsum 1987)
 Osprey, 2 (Paint Creek 1986, Hamilton-Fairfield 1997)
 Bald Eagle, 36 (Fremont 1999)
 Northern Harrier, 80 (Kingston 1975)
 Sharp-shinned Hawk, 18 (Wilmot 1991)
 Cooper's Hawk, 34 (Columbus 1997)
 Northern Goshawk, 2 on seven counts
 Red-shouldered Hawk, 53 (Burton 2000)
 Broad-winged Hawk, 3 (Lakewood 1957)
 Red-tailed Hawk, 252 (Wilmot 1992)
 Rough-legged Hawk, 87 (Kingston 1975)
 Golden Eagle, 1 (Ashtabula 1945, Firelands 1986, Millersburg 1994, Chandlersville 2000)
 American Kestrel, 151 (Cincinnati 1975)
 Merlin, 5 (Cuyahoga Falls 1993, Cleveland 1999)
 Peregrine Falcon, 2 (Dayton 1947 & 1996, Ashland 1976, Toledo 1988 & 1995)
 Gray Partridge, 35 (Wauseon 1924)
 Ring-necked Pheasant, 436 (Toledo 1935)
 Ruffed Grouse, 19 (Ragersville 1994)
 Wild Turkey, 430 (Millersburg 2000)
 Northern Bobwhite, 551 (Cincinnati 1969)
 King Rail, 2 (Plymouth 1958)

Virginia Rail, 5 (Gypsum 1979)
 Sora, 1 on five counts
 Common Moorhen, 4 (Youngstown 1996)
 American Coot, 907 (ONWR 1994)
 Sandhill Crane, 51 (Preble Co. 1998)
 Black-bellied Plover, 4 (Salem 1984)
 Killdeer, 208 (Ohio River 1994)
 American Avocet, 1 (Toledo 1998)
 Greater Yellowlegs, 3 (Buckeye Lk. 1964)
 Lesser Yellowlegs, 3 (ONWR 1994)
 Solitary Sandpiper, 1 (Mansfield 1987)
 Willet, 1 (L. Erie Is. 1997)
 Spotted Sandpiper, 1 (Fremont 1987)
 Ruddy Turnstone, 1 (Elyria-Lorain 1981 & 1988, Ashtabula 1984, Mentor 1993)
 Sanderling, 4 (L. Erie Is. 1998)
 Least Sandpiper, 1 (Cadiz 1957, Ashtabula 1982)
 Baird's Sandpiper, 1 (Hoover Res. 1982)
 Pectoral Sandpiper, 2 (Wooster 1981)
 Purple Sandpiper, 3 (Mentor 1991 & 1994, Elyria-Lorain 1994)
 Dunlin, 225 (Ashtabula 1952)
 Long-billed Dowitcher, 5 (Grand Lake St. Mary's 1981)
 Common Snipe, 25 (Wooster 1987)
 American Woodcock, 7 (Warren 1950)
 Red-necked Phalarope, 1 (Cleveland 1953)
 Red Phalarope, 2 (Cleveland 1980)
 Pomarine Jaeger, 3 (Cleveland 1988, Mentor 1988)
 Laughing Gull, 1 (Gypsum 1988, E. Fork Lk. 1990, Delaware Res. 1991, O'Shaughnessy Res. 1991)
 Franklin's Gull, 6 (Ashtabula 1949)
 Little Gull, 4 (Lakewood 1978, 1979)
 Black-headed Gull, 1 (Elyria-Lorain 1980 & 1988, ONWR 1984, Lakewood 1986)
 Bonaparte's Gull, 56,136 (Firelands 1996)
 Heermann's Gull, 1 (Elyria-Lorain 1980)
 Mew Gull, 1 (Grand Rapids-Waterville 1994)
 Ring-billed Gull, 168,710 (Firelands 1996)
 California Gull, 1 (Elyria-Lorain 1993)
 Herring Gull, 64,005 (Elyria-Lorain 1989)
 Thayer's Gull, 7 (Elyria-Lorain 1989)
 Iceland Gull, 3 (Elyria-Lorain 1988 & 1989)
 Lesser Black-backed Gull, 8 (Elyria-Lorain 1988, Toledo 1999)
 Glaucous Gull, 16 (Elyria-Lorain 1989)
 Great Black-backed Gull, 1020 (Gypsum 1986)
 Sabine's Gull, 1 (Ashtabula 1952, Toledo 1974)
 Black-legged Kittiwake, 2 (Gypsum 1975)
 Caspian Tern, 1 (Elyria-Lorain 1975, Grand Lake St Marys 1993)
 Common Tern, 2 (Lakewood 1970, ONWR 1990)
 Rock Dove, 4384 (Washington Co.-Parkersburg 1987)
 Mourning Dove, 4500 (Hamilton-Fairfield 1970)
 Barn Owl, 12 (Toledo 1953)
 Eastern Screech-Owl, 112 (Grand Rapids-Waterville 1981)
 Great Horned Owl, 37 (ONWR 1994)
 Snowy Owl, 3 (Ashtabula 1941, Toledo 1967)
 Barred Owl, 19 (Oxford 1976)
 Long-eared Owl, 12 (Killdeer Plains 1990)
 Short-eared Owl, 38 (Toledo 1983)
 Northern Saw-whet Owl, 6 (Killdeer Plains 1990)
 Rufous Hummingbird, 1 (Mohican SF 1996)
 Belted Kingfisher, 49 (Cincinnati 1988)
 Red-headed Woodpecker, 268 (Buckeye Lk. 1956)
 Red-bellied Woodpecker, 521 (Millersburg 1999)
 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, 50 (Cincinnati 1958)
 Downy Woodpecker, 652 (Cincinnati 1980)
 Hairy Woodpecker, 147 (Millersburg 1999)
 Northern Flicker, 280 (Cincinnati 1987)
 Northern ("red-shafted") Flicker, 1 (Kingston 1972)
 Pileated Woodpecker, 103 (Millersburg 1999)
 Wood-Pewee sp., 1 (Lakewood 1963)
 Eastern Phoebe, 8 (Portsmouth 1992)
 Loggerhead Shrike, 3 (Buckeye Lk. 1958)
 Northern Shrike, 7 (Ashtabula 1956)
 White-eyed Vireo, 1 (Elyria-Lorain 1982, Tiffin 1984, Great Bend 1992, L. Erie Is. 1993)
 Blue-headed Vireo, 1 (Youngstown 1977, L. Erie Is. 1991 & 1997, Mentor 1992)
 Blue Jay, 1116 (Cuyahoga Falls 1995)
 Black-billed Magpie, 1 (O'Shaughnessy Res. 1956)
 American Crow, 100,381 (Youngstown 1957)
 Horned Lark, 2676 (W. Hamilton Co. 2000)
 Tree Swallow, 5 (Dayton 1977)
 Barn Swallow, 1 (Toledo 1984, Oxford 1997)
 Carolina Chickadee, 2636 (Cincinnati 1980)
 Black-capped Chickadee, 1748 (Cuyahoga Falls 1981)
 Boreal Chickadee, 1 (Cleveland 1972)
 Tufted Titmouse, 1108 (Cincinnati 1969)
 Red-breasted Nuthatch, 154 (Grand Rapids-Waterville 1997)
 White-breasted Nuthatch, 592 (Millersburg 1999)
 Brown Creeper, 141 (Dayton 1982)
 Carolina Wren, 1089 (Cincinnati 1974)
 Bewick's Wren, 4 (Parkersburg 1921)
 House Wren, 5 (Adams Co. 1974)
 Winter Wren, 36 (Sugar Grove 1947)
 Sedge Wren, 2 (Buckeye Lk. 1956)
 Marsh Wren, 8 (Buckeye Lk. 1941)
 Golden-crowned Kinglet, 223 (Grand Rapids-Waterville 1990)

Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 35 (Cincinnati 1975)
 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, 1 (Firelands 1980, Toledo 1987, W. Hamilton Co. 1987)
 Eastern Bluebird, 904 (Millersburg 1999)
 Mountain Bluebird, 1 (Ragersville 1989)
 Townsend's Solitaire, 1 (Toledo 1938)
 Gray-cheeked Thrush, 1 (Cincinnati 1947, Lakewood 1976)
 Swainson's Thrush, 2 (Adams Co. 1995)
 Hermit Thrush, 63 (L. Erie Is. 1990)
 Wood Thrush, 1 on seven counts
 American Robin, 15,120 (Cincinnati 1964)
 Varied Thrush, 1 (Mentor 1977, Columbus 1983, Lakewood 1988, Steubenville 1988, Hancock Co. 2000, Toledo 2000)
 Gray Catbird, 4 (Paint Creek 1986, Ragersville 1998)
 Northern Mockingbird, 416 (Cincinnati 1971)
 Brown Thrasher, 3 (Buckeye Lk. 1986)
 European Starling, 612,701 (Dayton 1952)
 American Pipit, 259 (Ragersville 1998)
 Bohemian Waxwing, 10 (Mentor 1926)
 Cedar Waxwing, 2746 (Cincinnati 1989)
 Orange-crowned Warbler, 1 (Columbus 1926, Youngstown 1953)
 Nashville Warbler, 1 (Hamilton-Fairfield 1969)
 Cape May Warbler, 1 on eight counts
 Yellow-rumped Warbler, 538 (Adams Co. 1998)
 Yellow-rumped ("Audubon's") Warbler, 1 (L. Erie Is. 1997)
 Yellow-throated Warbler, 1 (Youngstown 1971, Mansfield 1981)
 Pine Warbler, 2 (Logan 1983)
 Palm Warbler, 5 (Great Bend 1991)
 Black-and-white Warbler, 1 (Cuyahoga Falls 1979, Indian Lake 1998)
 Ovenbird, 1 on six counts
 Northern Waterthrush, 1 on seven counts
 Louisiana Waterthrush, 1 (Portsmouth 1956)
 Common Yellowthroat, 6 (Toledo 1969 & 1975)
 Yellow-breasted Chat, 1 (Buckeye Lk. 1956)
 Summer Tanager, 1 (Hamilton-Fairfield 2000)
 Western Tanager, 1 (Mentor 1971)
 Green-tailed Towhee, 1 (O'Shaughnessy Res. 1963)
 Eastern Towhee, 214 (Cincinnati 1980)
 American Tree Sparrow, 2531 (Millersburg 1998)
 Chipping Sparrow, 46 (Portsmouth 1953, Zanesville 1983)
 Field Sparrow, 193 (Cincinnati 1971)
 Vesper Sparrow, 16 (Dayton 1964)

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Lark Sparrow, 2 (Salem 1978)
 Savannah Sparrow, 50 (Cincinnati 1961)
 Grasshopper Sparrow, 1 (Cincinnati 1947, Oxford 1947, Ashland 1959, Hamilton-Fairfield 1981)
 Henslow's Sparrow, 1 (Steubenville 1949, Elyria-Lorain 1970, E. Fork Lk. 1985)
 Fox Sparrow, 23 (Alliance 1946)
 Song Sparrow, 2353 (Cincinnati 1968)
 Lincoln's Sparrow, 8 (Lakewood 1970)
 Swamp Sparrow, 163 (ONWR 1987, Fremont 1990)
 White-throated Sparrow, 2030 (Cincinnati 1984)
 Harris's Sparrow, 4 (Dayton 1947)
 White-crowned Sparrow, 1071 (Millersburg 1998)
 Dark-eyed Junco, 2609 (Cincinnati 1968)
 Dark-eyed ("Oregon") Junco, 6 (Lakewood 1966)
 Dark-eyed ("White-winged") Junco, 1 (Grand Rapids-Waterville 1985)
 Lapland Longspur, 3034 (W. Hamilton Co. 2000)
 Smith's Longspur, 1 (Tiffin 1956, New Lexington 1977)
 Snow Bunting, 9000 (Grand Rapids-Waterville 1967)
 Northern Cardinal, 3775 (Cincinnati 1970)
 Rose-breasted Grosbeak, 1 (Youngstown 1975, Gypsum 1981, Trumbull Co. 1996)
 Indigo Bunting, 1 (Grand Lake St Marys 1995)
 Dickcissel, 3 (New Lexington 1977)
 Bobolink, 1 (Ashland 1957, Cincinnati 1968)
 Red-winged Blackbird, 15,750 (Toledo 1990)
 Eastern Meadowlark, 387 (Buckeye Lk. 1956)
 Western Meadowlark, 1 (ONWR 1982)
 Yellow-headed Blackbird, 3 (Toledo 1979)
 Rusty Blackbird, 5008 (Buckeye Lk. 1978)
 Brewer's Blackbird, 200 (Oxford 1995)
 Common Grackle, 1,600,592 (Logan 1978)
 Brown-headed Cowbird, 80,098 (Dayton 1980)
 Baltimore Oriole, 3 (Wilmot 1986)
 Pine Grosbeak, 47 (Burton 1961)
 Purple Finch, 300 (Cincinnati 1982)
 House Finch, 2192 (Cuyahoga Falls 1987)
 Red Crossbill, 35 (Grand Rapids-Waterville 1979)
 White-winged Crossbill, 60 (Cleveland 1966)
 Common Redpoll, 253 (Youngstown 1969)
 Hoary Redpoll, 1 (Cleveland 1995)
 Pine Siskin, 500 (Youngstown 1919)
 American Goldfinch, 1859 (Cincinnati 1968)
 Evening Grosbeak, 765 (Logan 1975)
 House Sparrow, 21,356 (Dayton 1953)

The 2000-01 Christmas Bird Counts

by Ned Keller

This year's summary contains reports from the same 62 count circles as last year. Once again, most of the information is now reported via the internet, with only a few circles reporting directly to us. Although we asked to have copies of rare bird documentation forms sent to *The Ohio Cardinal*, we received only a few, which are marked with asterisks in the report. Hopefully, many more documentations were sent to Audubon. As always, we have published all sightings reported to us (except for some exotics), regardless of how well, if at all, they were documented. We have, however, lumped all sightings of a species into one number. For example, some circles reported northern flickers as yellow-shafted, while others did not; all are reported here simply as northern flickers.

We found a total of 148 full species this year, up one from last year. Surprisingly, no other species were added during count weeks. The total number of individual birds declined from 1,087,541 to 705,376. Millersburg and Cincinnati tied for the most species with 82, well below last year's 87 at Millersburg. Other high counts were 78 at Ragersville, and 77 at Dayton and Cleveland.

After unusually warm winters the past few years, winter arrived in December this year. Waterfowl numbers in general were down, probably because more water was frozen. Lapland longspurs and snow buntings made it all the way to the southern counties, with numbers of longspurs in particular way up over last year. But winter finches were nearly absent; and red-breasted nuthatch numbers were also down.

Changes from one year to the next are fun to look at, but seldom mean much in terms of population trends. If you want to learn more about those trends, data from all 101 Christmas Counts are available at <http://birdsource.cornell.edu/>. You can view population trend reports, and can also extract the raw data (with a little effort) to test your own hypotheses about winter bird populations.

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