

The 98th Glenolden Christmas Bird Count part of the 118th National Audubon CBC was held Saturday December 16, 2017. Our field teams and feeder watchers covered a 15 mile diameter circle centered in Media, Delaware County, PA.

Last year's count was challenged by an icy snow/rain in the morning & wet, slippery conditions all day. This year count day occurred in the early phases of what turned out to be a prolonged deep cold spell. Count day morning temperatures were in the mid teens but the high for the day was a balmy 44F. It was a beautiful morning to be out as a fresh 3-4 inches of snow from an overnight storm covered the ground and clung to the tree branches. The wind was a little brisk, at times gusting to 10-15 mph. Unfortunately there was very little unfrozen water which kept waterfowl numbers and species down.

Participation was good. We had 67 field observers in a maximum of 27 daytime parties and 8 folks kept an eye on 5 feeders for a total of 75 participants. Seven parties covered 19 miles in 11 hours of owling.

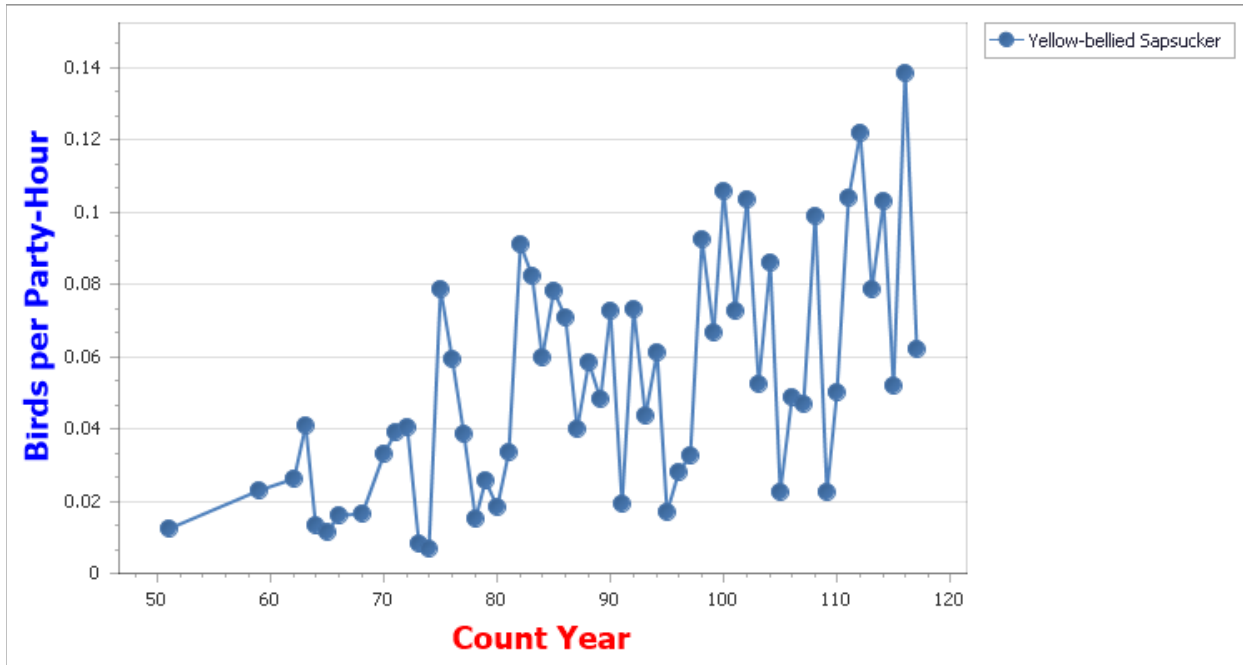
Officially we reported 88 species to Audubon. This includes 87 specifically identified species plus one scaup sp. There was one count week bird - a **white crowned sparrow** at Heinz Refuge Delco section. This is the same number of species as last year and slightly below our 10 year average count of around 90 species.

We added one new species to our all time list this year. A **black-headed gull** at Heinz Refuge-Delco. This is presumably the same bird that wintered last year and has returned. Our grand total all-time species list for the Glenolden CBC now stands at 193 species. My records had previously indicated a total count of 195 species. To check this I downloaded an updated checklist of all species recorded on our CBC provided by Audubon and double checked it with a manual count of the historical records. The total of 193 including this year's new species appears to be correct. I suppose lumps & splits have something to do with the discrepancy.

We achieved record high counts for two species: **fish crow** and **yellow-bellied sapsucker**.

As might be expected high counts for **fish crow** are very variable. Identified on our CBC since the 1930s and usually found in the single digits, 10s, or 20s, our count of 261 **fish crows** beat the previous record of 220 in 1969. All but one individual this year was counted in a large flock at Linvilla by Damon Orsetti ("Gigantic flock very vocal. Counted by 10s as best I could."). The third and only other Glenolden CBC record in triple digits for this species is a tally of 202 in 1980.

Our count of 40 **yellow-bellied sapsuckers** smashed the previous high of 25 set in 2015 which had beat the record before that of 21 in 2011. Their numbers are clearly increasing as seen on this graph of birds per party hour on the Glenolden CBC since the species was first reported in 1950:



For perspective the previous high in 2015 (count #116) was 0.14 birds per party hour as seen on the graph. This year's birds per party hour is not on the graph but comes out to be 0.27 which would be a huge spike on the graph.

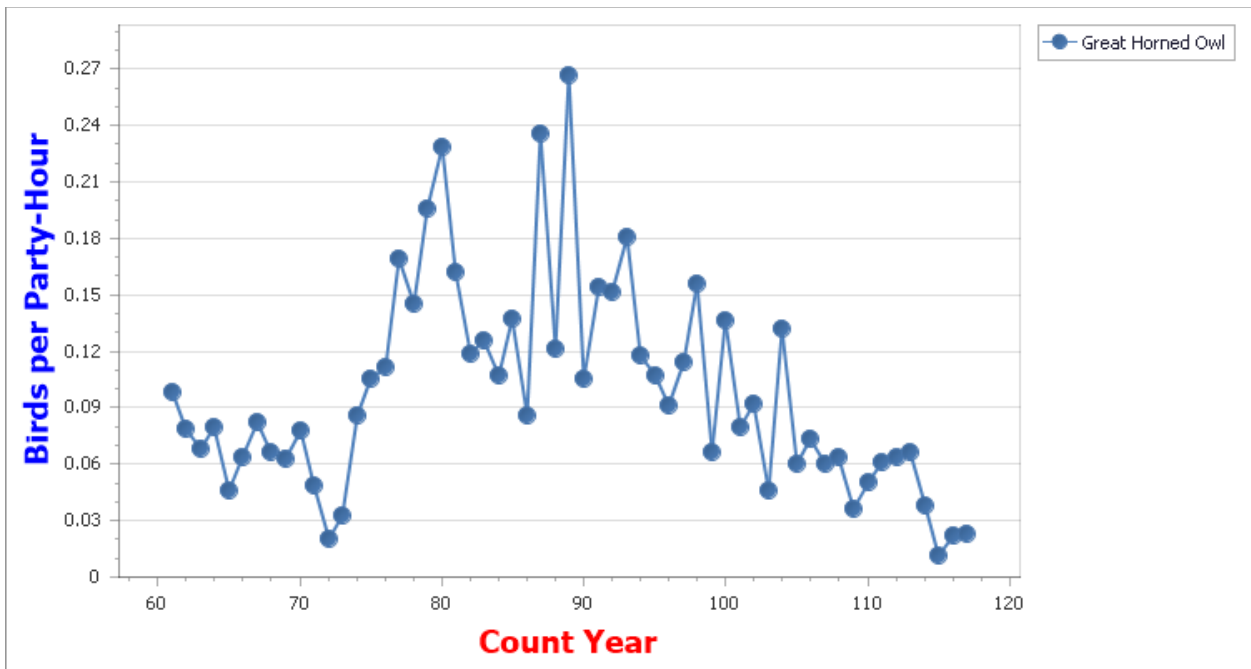
Why the high numbers? I participated in the Rutland County, Vermont CBC on 12/29 this year and sapsuckers were the talk of the town. Common breeders up there, they are rarely found on CBCs in Vermont. Everyone anticipated records would be broken. The most popular theory was that the mild weather in the fall season kept the birds north. They hung around and perhaps unfortunately were trapped by a sudden cold snap (it was -17 when we started our count that day). Sapsuckers are north woods breeders whose breeding range extends into the mountains of Pennsylvania and Maryland. They are short to medium distance migrants to the mid Atlantic and southern US and can migrate as far south as Panama. It certainly seems reasonable that the mild fall weather has shortened the migration distance of these birds. The same phenomenon could be true for birds in our area as well.

I wonder about another possible explanation for the historical increase in abundance of this species in general. [Birds of North America online](#) states that **yellow-bellied sapsucker** prefers early successional tree species over old growth forest species. It seems reasonable to conclude that as we replace stripped bare farmland with regrowth woods and suburban lots we are providing more and more early successional trees for the species.

What else was interesting? Our count of 4 **northern harriers** offers a glimmer of hope that they are rebounding some. For the 30 years prior to 2009 harrier numbers were in the 5-20 range. From 2009 to 2015 the counts were 0 to 2. Last year we had 5 and this year 4. Maybe.

American woodcock, Wilson’s snipe, marsh wren, common yellowthroat, and American pipit were all uncommon CBC birds noted this year that deserve mention.

On the low side we see the continued decline in **great horned owls**. We only had 3 this year which is similar to the past few years. However what we see may be a return to near “normal” after a 25 year spike. Here is a graph in numbers per party hour since 1960 (effort prior to 1960 was too sporadic to give reliable data).



[Birds of North America online](#) makes mention of this spike in CBC data which is noted in the nationwide overall CBC data. It cautions that CBC protocols are not well suited for **great horned owl** detection but still may be helpful for detecting long term trends. It offers no good explanation for the spike which peaked in the late 1980s. West Nile virus apparently did have some effect on owl populations but WNV was first detected in New York in 1999, after the peak. Habitat change or just natural population cycles are also postulated as possible causes for the decline.

American tree sparrow has been reported on every Glenolden CBC since the 1930s, at times in numbers in the thousands (all time record 3700 in 1965). This year we tied the all time low of 3 individuals first set in 2012. The next lowest count of 4 was in 2014. Perhaps the most recent lows may also be attributable to warmer falls up north. Tree sparrows breed in northern Canada and winter in the northern half of the United States. Warmer falls could be keeping them from moving this far south. Anecdotally **American tree sparrow** was one of the most abundant feeder birds we noted on the Rutland Vermont CBC this year; an unusual phenomenon according to the two veteran birders with whom I counted.

Also notable this year was the complete absence of “winter finches”. We had zero **red-breasted nuthatches**, **purple finches** and **pine siskins**. The famed winter finch report was for a good cone crop this year in the northeast so on count day I suspect there was plenty of food to our north. The last time **red-breasted nuthatch** was missed was 2011 but the last miss prior to that was 1967. Interestingly the years of the last misses for **purple finch** and **pine siskin** were the same, 2006 and 2000 for both species. A testament to their irruptive nature.

As always I like to list all of our participants and their years of service as a thank you. For special recognition those in their first year, 5 year anniversaries, and those who have contributed 25 years or more are listed in bold type (as always, corrections are welcome): **Ellis Akers (46)**, **Beck Armstrong (1)**, Allison Barnes (6), Gary Becker (14), Debbie Beer (6), **Rob Bierregaard (5)**, Adrien Binns (3), **Jim Bodine (25)**, Sarah Boucas-Neto (11), Sarah Busch (2), **Tom Bush (5)**, Brian Byrnes (9), Bruce Childs (6), Bill Cranny (7), Alan Crawford III (9), **Nicholas Crocetto (5)**, **Nick Crocetto (43)**, Cynthia Curry (16), Susan Damico (17), **Krista Dimond (1)**, Dick Eales (4), **David Eberly (27)**, Kevin Fryberger (9), **Cole Gaboriault (5)**, Stephanie Gaboriault (7), **Liam Gallagher (1)**, Kim Gruener (2), **Al Guarente (42)**, Liz Hoffman (4), **David Holtz (1)**, Emily Holtz (2), Patty Holtz (2), **Rich Horwitz (29)**, Bill Howard (4), Lois Hunn (19), Letitia Jeavons (7), Kristen Johnson (7), Sheryl Johnson (22), Steve Kapski (23), Bob Kelly (9), Noel Kelly (4), Dan Kobza (6), **Mary Ellen Krober (31)**, Bill Lucas (2), **Sue Lucas (10)**, Dave McDonald (6), **Doris McGovern (34)**, Art McMorris (6), Kathy Meermans (11), Rob Megraw (24), **Alison Mostrom (26)**, **Damon Orsetti (5)**, Jason Porter (6), **Matt Porter (1)**, Chris Pugliese (9), Brian Quindlen (11), **Tom Reeves (42)**, **Mike Rolli (1)**, **Matt Rose (1)**, **Abigail Schwartz (1)**, Marcy Seminoff (3), **Karen Serwatka (1)**, Alice Sevareid (8), Win Shafer (12), Nathaniel Sharp (2), Marilyn Smith (4), Max Smith (4), Gary Stolz (11), Carol Storey (12), Don Storey (3), Marca Tate (7), Gloria Todor (12), Pat Trevelino (12), Anthony Uhrich (2), Mark Wallace (3).

This year we mark the passing of a dedicated feeder watcher, **Alvera Crocetto**. She died this year at age 91. Our records indicate that Alvera participated in 41 of our CBCs. She is the mother of Nick Crocetto and grandmother of Nicholas Crocetto, both CBC participants. The birding family, or dynasty if you will, extends even further as she is the aunt of the birding cousins Al Guarente and Nick Pulcinella. Her reports will be missed and we extend our sympathies to her family.

Historical results for our count and all CBCs are available on the CBC website christmasbirdcount.org. In the past the CBC collected a \$5 fee from all participants. Thankfully they ended that practice a few years ago. In lieu of the fee they now only publish the national CBC report in the online version of **American Birds** magazine. This is available on the National Audubon website.

Once again thank you one and all for your participation. Mark your calendars! Next year's CBC will be held Saturday December 15, 2018.

Below is the report I submitted to Audubon. Please let me know if you have any corrections or questions. I have also attached our all time historical species list for your interest.

Dave

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Count Summary Report

Printout Date: 1/14/2018

Count Name: Delaware County (Glenolden)	Count Code: PAGL	Count Date: 12/16/2017
Organizations & Sponsors:	# of Party Hours: 149.25	Species reported on count date: 88

Compiler(s)

First Name	Last Name	Email	Is Primary Compiler
David	Eberly	david.eberly@gmail.com	Yes

Start & End Times

Start time	End time
04:30 AM	05:00 PM

Effort

Observers	
In Field	Total Number: 67
	Minimum Number of Parties (daylight): 24
	Maximum Number of Parties (daylight): 27
At Feeders	Total Number: 8

Party Hours and Distance (excludes viewing at feeders and nocturnal birding)			
By	Hours	Distance	Units
Foot	108.25	101.25	Miles
Car	41.00	288.25	Miles
Air			
All-Terrain Vehicle			
Bicycle			
Dog Sled			
Golfcart			
Horseback			
Motorized Boat			
Non-Motorized Boat			
Skis/Xc-Skis			
Snowmachine			
Snowshoe			
Wheelchair			

Other Time and Distance			
	Hours	Distance	Units
At Feeders	11.50		

Count Summary Report

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Nocturnal Birding	11.00	19.00	Miles
Total Party	149.25	389.50	Miles

Weather

Weather Summary			
Temperature	Minimum: 17.0 Fahrenheit	Maximum: 44.0 Fahrenheit	
Wind Direction	Southwest		
Wind Velocity	Minimum: 10.00 Miles/hour	Maximum: 15.00 Miles/hour	
Snow Depth	Minimum: 1.00 Inches	Maximum: 3.00 Inches	
Still Water	Frozen		
Moving Water	Partly Open		
AM and PM Conditions			
Cloud Cover	AM: Partly Cloudy	PM: Cloudy	
AM Rain	None		
AM Snow	None		
PM Rain	None		
PM Snow	None		

Checklist

Species	Number or cw	Flags	Max Number	# Of Counts	Editor Comm.
Snow Goose	900		2115/112	40	
Canada Goose	9780		15880/109	70	
Tundra Swan	34		172/114	45	
Wood Duck	1		13/102	43	
Gadwall	16		82/102	45	
American Black Duck	168		13007/39	88	
Mallard	319		2245/76	86	
Northern Pintail	20		107537/52	81	
Ring-necked Duck	5		105/80	59	
Greater/Lesser Scaup	1		1500/39	11	
Bufflehead	1		85/79	71	
Common Goldeneye	2		34/86	51	
Hooded Merganser	42		95/114	55	
Common Merganser	132		335/90	86	
duck sp.	13		13/118	2	
Common Loon	1		4/102	32	
Double-crested Cormorant	52		90/115	36	

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Great Blue Heron (Blue form)	24		96/93	78	
Black Vulture	96		191/111	31	
Turkey Vulture	148		322/111	74	
Northern Harrier	4		34/51	87	
Sharp-shinned Hawk	16		45/102	66	
Cooper's Hawk	8		26/108	76	
Accipiter sp.	1		2/107	7	
Bald Eagle	16		20/116	38	
Red-shouldered Hawk	9		15/52	85	
Red-tailed Hawk	73		117/102	98	
Killdeer	3		313/55	83	
Wilson's Snipe	4		11/105	5	
American Woodcock	1		12/75	39	
Black-headed Gull	1	US,	1/118	1	
Ring-billed Gull	644		4003/84	86	
Herring Gull	34		10000/71	92	
Great Black-backed Gull	9		220/93	69	
Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon)	274		1521/93	50	
Mourning Dove	381		1743/93	82	
Eastern Screech-Owl	16		66/83	36	
Great Horned Owl	3		44/89	67	
Belted Kingfisher	19		41/99	77	
Red-bellied Woodpecker	178		205/112	61	
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	40	HC,	40/118	57	
Downy Woodpecker	132		262/82	97	
Hairy Woodpecker	26		50/108	94	
Northern Flicker	62		134/85	28	
Pileated Woodpecker	15		17/108	52	
American Kestrel	3		66/78	93	
Merlin	1		3/117	25	
Peregrine Falcon	2		3/112	35	
Blue Jay	314		1158/82	92	
American Crow	382		4164/93	74	
Fish Crow	261	HC,	261/118	76	
crow sp.	71		1500/31	29	
Common Raven	1		3/116	7	
Carolina Chickadee	234		1045/82	77	
chickadee sp.	1		55/40	14	
Tufted Titmouse	201		605/83	93	

Count Summary Report

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White-breasted Nuthatch	137		242/83	94	
Brown Creeper	6		45/83	91	
Winter Wren	20		40/113	9	
Marsh Wren	1		14/67	26	
Carolina Wren	182		401/93	95	
Golden-crowned Kinglet	36		123/93	87	
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	10		33/73	70	
Eastern Bluebird	58		132/106	72	
Hermit Thrush	7		29/108	76	
American Robin	2533		9867/102	83	
Gray Catbird	3		23/85	70	
Northern Mockingbird	40		284/83	72	
European Starling	4092		19000/71	97	
American Pipit	3		50/33	33	
Cedar Waxwing	50		4649/86	72	
Common Yellowthroat	2		9/85	33	
Yellow-rumped Warbler	9		63/85	10	
American Tree Sparrow	3		3700/66	98	
Chipping Sparrow	12		19/114	45	
Field Sparrow	23		320/67	94	
Fox Sparrow	22		248/59	88	
Dark-eyed Junco	739		1604/85	7	
White-crowned Sparrow	cw		87/75	56	
White-throated Sparrow	1769		2926/58	97	
Savannah Sparrow	2		68/59	74	
Song Sparrow	421		3600/67	97	
Swamp Sparrow	34		520/66	90	
Eastern Towhee	40		136/112	43	
Northern Cardinal	309		967/89	98	
Red-winged Blackbird	516		6300/66	94	
Rusty Blackbird	13		400/41	71	
Common Grackle	2711		9377/95	59	
Brown-headed Cowbird	3		1500/71	65	
blackbird sp.	90		90/118	8	
House Finch	357		2673/94	60	
American Goldfinch	104		1400/62	71	
House Sparrow	110		1600/72	88	
Total Individuals	29662				
Total Species Reported	88				

Count Summary Report

Printout Date: 1/14/2018

<p>cw = Reported count week US = Flagged as an unusual species HC = Flagged as an unusually high count LC = Flagged as an unusually low count</p>	
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Species Requiring Rare Bird Reports to be Submitted to Regional Editor

Species

Black-headed Gull [Chroicocephalus ridibundus]

Special Aspects

Total Species= 88; 87 specifically identified +1 scaup sp. One cw species-white crowned sparrow.

Black-headed gull is a new species for our count. This is presumably the same bird that overwintered at Heinz refuge last year. It had been present & seen by many observers for a few weeks prior to our count. No photos were taken by the CBC team that observed the bird. There are photos on ebird from this season.

The party was led by Rob Megraw. Here is his description:

"continuing bird seen well by all members of party

a Black-headed Gull had been spotted in the area for some time so we knew to look for it. we found a group of gulls on an exposed area of mud in the marsh and began scanning quickly coming to a bird smaller than the surrounding ring-bills. the dark 'ear muff' smudges and reddish bill were obvious. red legs were also noted on standing bird."

Table 1

Region: Pennsylvania	
Circle: Delaware County (Glenolden)	
Species	
Snow Goose	
Ross's Goose	
Brant	
Cackling Goose	
Canada Goose	
Mute Swan	
Tundra Swan	
Wood Duck	
Gadwall	
American Wigeon	
American Black Duck	
Mallard	
Blue-winged Teal	
Northern Shoveler	
Northern Pintail	
Green-winged Teal	
Canvasback	
Redhead	
Ring-necked Duck	
Greater Scaup	
Lesser Scaup	
Surf Scoter	
White-winged Scoter	
Black Scoter	
Long-tailed Duck	
Bufflehead	

Common Goldeneye	
Hooded Merganser	
Common Merganser	
Red-breasted Merganser	
Ruddy Duck	
Northern Bobwhite	
Ring-necked Pheasant	
Ruffed Grouse	
Wild Turkey	
Red-throated Loon	
Common Loon	
Pied-billed Grebe	
Horned Grebe	
Red-necked Grebe	
Double-crested Cormorant	
Great Cormorant	
American Bittern	
Great Blue Heron (Blue form)	
Great Egret	
Green Heron	
Black-crowned Night-Heron	
Glossy Ibis	
Black Vulture	
Turkey Vulture	
Osprey	
Northern Harrier	
Sharp-shinned Hawk	
Cooper's Hawk	
Northern Goshawk	
Bald Eagle	
Red-shouldered Hawk	

Broad-winged Hawk	
Red-tailed Hawk	
Rough-legged Hawk	
King Rail	
Virginia Rail	
Common Gallinule	
American Coot	
Black-bellied Plover	
Killdeer	
Greater Yellowlegs	
Lesser Yellowlegs	
Ruddy Turnstone	
Ruff	
Dunlin	
Pectoral Sandpiper	
Semipalmated Sandpiper	
Western Sandpiper	
Long-billed Dowitcher	
Wilson's Snipe	
American Woodcock	
Bonaparte's Gull	
Black-headed Gull	
Laughing Gull	
Ring-billed Gull	
Herring Gull	
Iceland Gull	
Lesser Black-backed Gull	
Glaucous Gull	
Great Black-backed Gull	
Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon)	
Mourning Dove	

Barn Owl	
Eastern Screech-Owl	
Great Horned Owl	
Snowy Owl	
Barred Owl	
Long-eared Owl	
Short-eared Owl	
Northern Saw-whet Owl	
Rufous Hummingbird	
Belted Kingfisher	
Red-headed Woodpecker	
Red-bellied Woodpecker	
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	
Downy Woodpecker	
Hairy Woodpecker	
Black-backed Woodpecker	
Northern Flicker	
Pileated Woodpecker	
American Kestrel	
Merlin	
Peregrine Falcon	
Eastern Phoebe	
Loggerhead Shrike	
Northern Shrike	
Blue-headed Vireo	
Blue Jay	
American Crow	
Fish Crow	
Common Raven	
Horned Lark	
Carolina Chickadee	

Black-capped Chickadee	
Boreal Chickadee	
Tufted Titmouse	
Red-breasted Nuthatch	
White-breasted Nuthatch	
Brown Creeper	
House Wren	
Winter Wren	
Marsh Wren	
Carolina Wren	
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	
Golden-crowned Kinglet	
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	
Eastern Bluebird	
Hermit Thrush	
Wood Thrush	
American Robin	
Gray Catbird	
Brown Thrasher	
Northern Mockingbird	
European Starling	
American Pipit	
Cedar Waxwing	
Lapland Longspur	
Snow Bunting	
Ovenbird	
Black-and-white Warbler	
Orange-crowned Warbler	
Nashville Warbler	
Common Yellowthroat	
American Redstart	

Northern Parula	
Palm Warbler	
Pine Warbler	
Yellow-rumped Warbler	
Black-throated Green Warbler	
Wilson's Warbler	
Yellow-breasted Chat	
Le Conte's Sparrow	
American Tree Sparrow	
Chipping Sparrow	
Clay-colored Sparrow	
Field Sparrow	
Fox Sparrow	
Dark-eyed Junco	
White-crowned Sparrow	
White-throated Sparrow	
Vesper Sparrow	
Savannah Sparrow	
Song Sparrow	
Lincoln's Sparrow	
Swamp Sparrow	
Eastern Towhee	
Northern Cardinal	
Dickcissel	
Bobolink	
Red-winged Blackbird	
Eastern Meadowlark	
Yellow-headed Blackbird	
Rusty Blackbird	
Brewer's Blackbird	
Common Grackle	

Brown-headed Cowbird	
Baltimore Oriole	
Pine Grosbeak	
House Finch	
Purple Finch	
Red Crossbill	
White-winged Crossbill	
Common Redpoll	
Pine Siskin	
American Goldfinch	
Evening Grosbeak	
House Sparrow	
Total species= 193	