

The 68th Annual Santa Cruz Christmas Bird Count Final Report



Black-footed Albatross

By Alex Rinkert

December 21, 2024

The 68th Santa Cruz CBC was held on Saturday, December 21, 2024. Intermittent, light rain fell throughout most of count day, which unfortunately excluded the possibility of any offshore pelagic effort, but all other teams forged ahead and were able to make the most of the day. While landbirding seemed slow at times due to the rain, the sea watch effort turned out to be particularly productive.



White Wagtail

In a surprise result considering the weather, the species total of 184 was the highest recorded on this count since 2003! This year's species count was also quite high

compared to the recent (10-year) average of 167 species; the count had not cracked the 180 species threshold in nearly 20 years. The total birds (47,124) and birds per hour (169) this year were both well-above the recent averages of 37,518 birds and 140 birds per hour, providing reason for cautious optimism that the long-term decline in species and numbers on this count may reverse. Participation in the count remains high; the 125 birders who participated this year was the second-most ever! The 278 field hours logged by this large contingent matched the recent average, which was an impressive mark considering this year's inclement weather.



Magnolia Warbler

Leading a long list of rarities on count day was a **White Wagtail** (2nd count record, 6th county record) found by Emma Arul and group at Wilder Beach. Additional species of significance for the count included the following: **Lark Bunting** and **Black-footed Albatross** (1st count records); **Clay-**

colored Sparrow and **Magnolia Warbler** (2nd count records), and **Barrow's Goldeneye** and **Pacific Golden-Plovers** (3rd count records). A **Short-eared Owl** was the first seen on the count since 1999, and a flock of **Dunlins** were the first since 2003.



Pacific Golden-Plover

The eight
White-breasted
Nuthatches tallied on

count day was the highest since 1986.

Winter irruptive species were generally scarce or in average numbers. The Golden-crowned Kinglet was the only irruptive with decent numbers; a total of 21 was higher than in recent years. Otherwise, American Robin and Pine Siskin numbers were low, and shockingly, only 9 (!) American Goldfinches were found—a paltry total compared to the recent average of 157 and the lowest total since 1958.

Otherwise, numbers of many common birds such as Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Dark-eyed Junco, Golden-crowned and White-crowned Sparrow, and Song Sparrow were close to their recent averages. This indicates that the especially high total number of birds recorded on this year's count was due to higher numbers of seabirds.

A sincere thanks to all the participants for their efforts to further document the patterns and trends of

our winter bird populations. I would also like to thank especially the section leaders for all the additional responsibilities they accept that ultimately makes the count run smoothly. Thanks also to the Santa Cruz Bird Club, and specifically Ann Chandler and Larry Corridon, for organizing the countdown dinner, and to my co-compilers, Nick Levendosky and Phil Brown, for making the section assignments and handling logistics leading up to count day.



Clay-colored Sparrow



Barrow's Goldeneye

Compiled by Alex Rinkert

Participants (section leaders in **bold**):



Black-footed Albatross

Robin Abu-Shumays, **R.J. Adams**, Jennifer Anderson, **Kumaran Arul**, Emma Arul, Carolyn Bailey, Eileen Balian, **Phoebe Barnes**, Bonnie Bedzin, Michael Bolte, Ronald Bourret, Linda Brodman, **Phil Brown**, Martha Brown, Zena Browning, Kimberly Butts, Matthew Coale, Jennifer Cox, Dana Cox, Dean Cutter, Lisa Dallimore, Kathy DeVoy, Genna deVries Mann, Judy Donaldson, Sam Eberhard, **David Ekdahl**, Erik Enbody, Max Ferrero, David Fickel, Alexandra Fischer, Abram Fleishman, Mary Flodin, Catherine Forest, Elisabeth Foster, Alexander Gaguine, Jake Gifford, Chandra Go, Lois Goldfrank, Diego Goldfrank, Tom Hambleton, Elizabeth Hammack, Diane Heckman, Tom Helman, Howard Higley, Larry Holland, Sharon Hull, **Lee Jaffe**, Kent Johnson,

Jeanne Kallerup, Kevin Kaos, Andrew Kenny, Surrey (Suzanne) Kent, Melodee Kistner, Larry Kistner, Gary Kittleson, Tasha Kowalski, June Langhoff, Inger Marie Laursen, **Nicholas Levendosky**, Lynda Lewit, Joan Ling-Zwissler, Bill Lynch, Nelle Lyons, Stephanie Martin, **Gary Martindale**, Michael Matiasovich, Bobbie Mayer, Barry McLaughlin, Bob Meads, Greg Meyer, Yonat Michaelov, **Paul Miller**, Eileen Murphy, Monte Neate-Clegg, Jane Orbuch, Vivienne Orgel, Jessie Pabros-Kraus, Kevin Padgett, Sylvia Patience, Ann Pelletier Eatinger, Susan Pender, Mr. Pender, Ellen Pizer, **Steven Poutsy**, Jackie Quinones, June Ralston, Bob Ramer, Teresa Rein, Michael Rhodes, Caitlyn Rich, Betsy Ricker, Alex Rinkert, Tanya Rogers, Ally Romanow, Lola Ross, Steve Rovell, Lauren Salazar, Vincent Salazar, Nicolas Schnack, Elena Scott, Ryan Sexauer, Todd Sexauer, Ashley Sexauer, Bill Shanbrom, Suzie Shook, **David Sidle**, Stephanie Singer, **Jeff Smith**, Copper Smith, Pete Sole, Dave Somerton, Mandy Spitzer, Linda St John, **Kitty Stein**, Matthew Strusis-Timmer, Nicholas Sundeen, Jonah Svensson, Glen Tepke, Scott Terrill, Tim Thompson, Breck Tyler, Branwyn Wagman, Ken Wagman, Jonny Wahl, Deb Wirkman.



Golden-crowned Kinglet

All photos courtesy of Alex Rinker

2024 CBC Comprehensive Table

Species	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	10-Year Avg
Snow Goose	1	0	0	0	2	0.2
Ross's Goose	0	0	0	1	0	0.1
Greater White-fronted Goose	1	1	72	0	3	7.8
Brant	0	0	0	1	1	0.3
Cackling Goose	50	13	0	28	28	10.2
Canada Goose	82	87	148	169	290	67.9
goose sp.	0	5	0	0	0	0.6
Wood Duck	26	36	26	54	52	38.0
Blue-winged Teal	0	2	0	0	1	1.1
Cinnamon Teal	CW	4	1	0	0	1.2
Northern Shoveler	20	6	8	9	18	10.5
Gadwall	0	0	0	2	9	0.9
Eurasian Wigeon	0	1	0	0	0	0.1
American Wigeon	34	43	28	33	65	24.2
Mallard	493	715	625	1013	1135	600.3
Mallard (Domestic)	0	0	8	2	17	1.0
Northern Pintail	0	50	10	2	1	44.0
Green-winged Teal	9	7	31	13	8	10.0
Canvasback	0	0	0	1	0	0.8
Redhead	0	1	1	0	1	0.2
Ring-necked Duck	44	65	34	111	89	78.9
Greater Scaup	4	0	0	0	0	1.4
Lesser Scaup	1	2	1	0	2	2.1
Greater/Lesser Scaup	9	0	0	0	0	1.0

Harlequin Duck	0	0	0	2	0	0.2
Surf Scoter	854	685	453	757	714	788.2
White-winged Scoter	1	1	0	1	0	0.4
Black Scoter	CW	0	0	0	0	0.2
Bufflehead	97	65	60	54	42	73.9
Common Goldeneye	65	71	38	54	48	56.2
Barrow's Goldeneye	0	0	0	CW	1	0.0
Hooded Merganser	11	10	18	24	24	12.2
Common Merganser	11	28	13	15	39	18.1
Red-breasted Merganser	27	8	16	20	10	15.6
Ruddy Duck	110	82	69	51	78	67.0
duck sp.	0	0	0	0	47	0.1
California Quail	183	167	207	303	314	221.0
Wild Turkey	184	270	250	318	377	140.9
Pied-billed Grebe	44	42	60	41	43	52.0
Horned Grebe	7	4	36	26	17	13.8
Red-necked Grebe	8	6	3	2	6	3.8
Eared Grebe	62	26	56	30	70	42.7
Western Grebe	571	273	1133	345	237	445.3
Clark's Grebe	10	1	11	5	5	6.1
Western/Clark's Grebe	339	68	71	122	34	283.5
Rock Pigeon	876	556	885	1174	934	1336.3
Band-tailed Pigeon	152	325	841	222	396	1032.0
Eurasian Collared-Dove	48	28	60	61	72	56.7
Mourning Dove	157	190	202	173	220	191.7
White-throated Swift	CW	69	CW	0	0	14.5
Anna's Hummingbird	590	437	584	637	409	441.1

Virginia Rail	3	2	2	2	7	3.7
Sora	1	1	4	7	6	2.2
Common Gallinule	0	0	1	0	0	0.3
American Coot	849	566	529	483	451	707.8
Black Oystercatcher	28	32	26	32	37	25.5
Black-bellied Plover	12	3	52	84	82	35.1
Pacific Golden-Plover	0	0	0	4	3	0.5
Snowy Plover	CW	21	39	96	22	68.1
Killdeer	137	7	104	205	62	81.9
Whimbrel	75	5	44	123	25	44.6
Long-billed Curlew	26	0	18	19	13	12.2
Marbled Godwit	13	0	32	55	5	19.5
Black Turnstone	82	69	35	117	59	89.7
Surfbird	57	23	32	85	45	56.2
Sanderling	590	380	668	894	633	537.8
Dunlin	0	0	0	0	5	0.0
Least Sandpiper	5	0	7	4	10	3.1
Western Sandpiper	0	0	CW	0	0	0.0
Long-billed Dowitcher	0	0	1	0	0	0.1
Wilson's Snipe	2	2	50	8	3	8.5
Red Phalarope	6	0	7	3	0	4.0
Spotted Sandpiper	7	8	5	8	5	7.2
Greater Yellowlegs	1	0	1	0	0	0.8
Willet	0	0	0	0	10	6.6
Parasitic Jaeger	0	1	0	0	0	0.2
Common Murre	371	198	192	200	3070	530.2
Pigeon Guillemot	1	0	0	0	0	0.2

Marbled Murrelet	6	21	9	4	8	7.7
Ancient Murrelet	0	2	0	CW	18	4.7
murrelet sp.	0	1	0	0	22	0.6
Cassin's Auklet	0	0	0	0	3	0.9
Rhinoceros Auklet	110	69	99	29	70	52.9
Bonaparte's Gull	7	2	4235	77	115	445.6
Heermann's Gull	132	270	491	275	175	313.6
Short-billed Gull	26	81	134	34	84	159.7
Ring-billed Gull	31	9	52	55	58	31.6
Western Gull	1199	1470	871	1444	2220	1835.1
Yellow-footed Gull	0	0	1	0	0	0.1
California Gull	886	838	718	1154	1463	1484.8
American Herring Gull	118	8	66	41	124	77.1
Iceland Gull	23	3	14	9	8	11.1
Glaucous-winged Gull	764	387	709	458	443	560.0
Glaucous Gull	1	0	1	0	CW	0.3
Western x Glaucous-w. Gull (hybrid)	6	4	14	32	14	17.7
Am. Herring x Glaucous-w. Gull (hybrid)	25	2	21	26	68	16.8
Glaucous-w. x Glaucous Gull (hybrid)	1	0	0	0	0	0.1
gull sp.	2198	3268	685	1225	2587	2783.7
Forster's Tern	0	6	55	44	50	21.4
Red-throated Loon	294	177	218	323	490	163.7
Pacific Loon	191	206	124	45	651	191.5
Common Loon	54	45	20	43	54	36.0
loon sp.	424	232	99	301	152	308.5
Black-footed Albatross	0	0	0	0	1	0.0

Northern Fulmar	35	237	4	1	1	28.5
Pink-footed Shearwater	0	0	0	0	2	0.0
Sooty Shearwater	0	1	0	0	1	0.1
Sooty/Short-tailed Shearwater	0	0	0	0	1	0.4
Black-vented Shearwater	0	135	0	0	0	569.4
shearwater sp.	0	1	0	0	0	2.6
Brandt's Cormorant	570	1163	1887	881	5959	833.8
Pelagic Cormorant	73	54	46	20	34	55.0
Double-crested Cormorant	220	331	411	304	508	285.3
cormorant sp.	43	0	0	0	0	34.8
Brown Pelican	379	679	1317	1131	1907	850.9
Great Blue Heron	25	19	26	33	26	22.2
Great Egret	15	28	14	18	36	22.1
Snowy Egret	68	96	15	62	97	65.0
Green Heron	4	5	4	5	6	4.4
Black-crowned Night-Heron	24	23	27	13	19	22.9
Turkey Vulture	79	49	61	74	40	46.4
Osprey	2	1	3	3	4	3.6
White-tailed Kite	22	9	1	0	8	11.6
Golden Eagle	2	1	3	1	0	1.4
Northern Harrier	35	27	17	17	16	20.0
Sharp-shinned Hawk	11	3	3	6	7	8.7
Cooper's Hawk	23	18	14	23	15	15.9
Cooper's/Sharp-shinned Hawk	5	7	1	1	1	3.0
Bald Eagle	0	2	2	1	2	1.4
Red-shouldered Hawk	84	93	76	57	70	70.5
Red-tailed Hawk	137	150	117	115	67	111.0

Ferruginous Hawk	2	0	0	0	0	0.6
hawk sp.	1	0	0	0	0	0.2
American Barn Owl	3	4	2	2	2	2.1
Western Screech-Owl	2	4	2	6	3	4.0
Great Horned Owl	64	27	22	22	12	20.2
Northern Pygmy-Owl	3	1	1	2	2	1.3
Burrowing Owl	0	CW	1	1	1	0.9
Short-eared Owl	0	0	0	0	1	0.0
Northern Saw-whet Owl	6	2	1	3	5	2.8
Belted Kingfisher	16	15	20	18	14	13.3
Red-naped Sapsucker	0	0	1	1	0	0.3
Red-breasted Sapsucker	6	10	15	13	14	10.0
Acorn Woodpecker	462	501	571	282	292	385.4
Downy Woodpecker	34	34	41	28	26	30.5
Nuttall's Woodpecker	26	25	20	26	24	22.6
Hairy Woodpecker	80	39	49	66	56	48.7
Pileated Woodpecker	9	6	8	8	5	5.8
Northern Flicker	100	68	135	75	81	88.5
Northern Flicker (Red-shafted)	18	21	20	19	10	26.9
Northern Flicker (intergrade)	0	2	1	1	3	1.1
American Kestrel	42	36	28	19	33	31.7
Merlin	8	6	9	5	11	7.4
Peregrine Falcon	3	6	8	8	6	6.7
Black Phoebe	333	274	310	308	261	274.0
Eastern Phoebe	0	0	0	0	CW	0.0
Say's Phoebe	41	36	54	41	50	39.2
Tropical Kingbird	CW	0	CW	0	0	0.4

Hutton's Vireo	55	25	14	32	15	41.0
Loggerhead Shrike	2	0	1	0	1	1.2
Steller's Jay	266	210	254	116	216	222.8
California Scrub-Jay	440	333	402	283	244	342.7
American Crow	1427	1314	1227	2948	1661	1349.9
Common Raven	725	380	514	538	439	464.1
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	955	742	754	773	886	721.8
Oak Titmouse	175	113	119	152	120	102.6
Tree Swallow	0	1	0	0	0	0.6
Violet-green Swallow	0	6	1	0	11	3.7
Barn Swallow	0	1	0	0	0	0.7
swallow sp.	0	5	5	0	0	1.4
Bushtit	1192	666	783	483	894	763.0
Wrentit	95	87	77	107	84	77.7
Golden-crowned Kinglet	9	0	1	7	21	7.6
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	515	282	198	222	462	328.5
Red-breasted Nuthatch	3	0	0	47	1	9.1
White-breasted Nuthatch	2	CW	6	3	8	1.6
Pygmy Nuthatch	292	219	177	256	176	194.7
Brown Creeper	99	35	58	37	69	68.9
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	9	7	4	12	9	8.9
Rock Wren	0	0	0	0	CW	0.1
Northern House Wren	6	4	7	8	8	8.7
Pacific Wren	19	7	9	18	15	12.1
Marsh Wren	15	11	11	7	12	13.5
Bewick's Wren	139	135	128	149	133	138.9
American Dipper	1	0	0	0	0	0.3

European Starling	653	655	1818	617	1659	951.8
California Thrasher	21	12	32	38	41	19.4
Sage Thrasher	0	0	1	0	0	0.1
Northern Mockingbird	31	25	19	21	11	27.2
Western Bluebird	202	148	247	222	106	123.5
Varied Thrush	58	2	2	13	50	139.2
Hermit Thrush	235	119	256	113	189	152.6
American Robin	648	945	650	608	379	1245.9
Cedar Waxwing	388	369	458	190	573	421.2
Scaly-breasted Munia	0	2	0	11	0	1.3
House Sparrow	26	29	146	12	14	46.7
White Wagtail	1	0	0	0	1	0.1
American Pipit	372	62	72	259	44	168.4
House Finch	1015	615	659	645	675	630.0
Purple Finch	89	91	52	33	31	72.6
Red Crossbill	0	4	0	27	0	18.2
Pine Siskin	3085	198	16	1088	280	795.6
Lesser Goldfinch	542	509	316	213	272	248.8
American Goldfinch	97	185	91	57	9	157.4
Clay-colored Sparrow	0	0	0	0	1	0.0
Lark Bunting	0	0	0	0	1	0.0
Fox Sparrow	112	33	59	22	26	71.1
Fox Sparrow (Slate-colored)	1	0	0	0	0	0.1
Fox Sparrow (Red)	0	1	1	0	0	0.2
Dark-eyed Junco	1050	597	1536	827	1706	992.8
Dark-eyed Junco (Slate-colored)	1	0	0	0	1	0.2
White-crowned Sparrow	1783	737	856	664	744	908.6

White-crowned Sparrow (pugetensis)	60	0	0	0	0	7.3
White-crowned Sparrow (Gambel's)	7	0	0	0	0	0.9
Golden-crowned Sparrow	2240	979	1257	705	1017	1130.7
Zonotrichia sp.	0	40	0	0	0	4.5
White-throated Sparrow	9	8	20	6	17	7.0
Savannah Sparrow	60	35	34	21	26	37.8
Song Sparrow	301	318	303	301	297	259.8
Lincoln's Sparrow	42	40	15	20	33	63.3
Swamp Sparrow	1	1	CW	0	1	1.1
California Towhee	285	231	296	249	381	283.9
Spotted Towhee	174	152	182	188	189	153.9
Yellow-breasted Chat	0	0	0	0	CW	0.0
Western Meadowlark	500	102	353	569	893	272.3
Orchard Oriole	0	0	0	CW	CW	0.0
Hooded Oriole	0	0	0	1	0	0.1
Bullock's Oriole	0	0	CW	1	2	0.1
Red-winged Blackbird	410	981	328	487	571	409.3
Tricolored Blackbird	184	76	97	36	272	241.4
Brown-headed Cowbird	17	48	72	1	78	21.0
Brewer's Blackbird	334	286	389	316	577	331.0
Great-tailed Grackle	0	1	1	5	4	0.7
blackbird sp.	280	123	529	411	607	205.4
Black-and-white Warbler	0	0	CW	CW	0	0.6
Tennessee Warbler	0	0	1	0	0	0.1
Orange-crowned Warbler	5	8	9	16	9	7.0
Lucy's Warbler	0	1	0	0	0	0.1
Nashville Warbler	CW	0	1	0	CW	0.1

Common Yellowthroat	49	46	34	30	36	32.1
Magnolia Warbler	0	0	0	0	1	0.0
Yellow Warbler	0	0	0	1	1	0.1
Palm Warbler	2	0	CW	1	1	0.9
Yellow-rumped Warbler	643	695	413	563	484	473.3
Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's)	231	194	199	109	31	197.8
Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle)	15	34	76	21	17	51.3
Black-throated Gray Warbler	2	0	0	0	1	0.3
Townsend's Warbler	173	131	193	226	249	165.7
Hermit Warbler	1	1	0	0	1	0.3
Summer Tanager	1	0	CW	2	1	0.6
Western Tanager	0	0	CW	2	0	0.2
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	0	0	1	0	0	0.1
Black-headed Grosbeak	0	0	0	CW	0	0.0
# Individuals	39,934	31,570	38,752	33,810	47,124	37,518
# Species	167	168	170	171	184	167
# Participants	100	109	109	130	125	97
# Field Hours	222	305	274	308	278	278