

A Warm December Brings Unusual Birds to our Christmas Count

Bright yellow feet! This field mark stood out as I watched a Snowy Egret rise out of the reeds in Moonachie during Bergen County's 63rd annual Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, Dec. 17th. While several observers had reported that Great Egrets still lingered in the Meadowlands, no one had predicted that we should find a Snowy. In fact this was its first appearance ever for our CBC. Also brand new for the count was a Cackling Goose, which Chris Takacs had staked out at Garrett Mountain. A rare Greater White-fronted Goose was followed day by day before the count, but somehow eluded everyone on Saturday. Many other geese were moving southward during the day. Steve Kuitems found a huge flock of Snow Geese in flight in the afternoon.

Persistent warm weather throughout the month led to a wonderful day for birding, and many of us were pleased to encounter unusual species. Don Torino came across two outstanding birds at Skeetkill Marsh, a young Baltimore Oriole, and a Common Yellowthroat. Both are rarely found here in December, although we have now scored a Yellowthroat in two consecutive years. American Coots were found in high numbers, continuing a trend for the whole month leading up to the count. We also had a record high number of Black Vultures this year, a bird that had been exceedingly rare previously.

A few species were much reduced in numbers, perhaps because they were not inclined to come this far south until the winter really sets in. Those are indicated on the list in bold face with an "L". Exceptionally rare birds are marked with an exclamation point (!). Record high counts with an "H". Some birds seem to be undergoing long-standing uptrends in their winter numbers locally, including Bald Eagle and both Vulture species. Monk Parakeets are still spreading more widely along both sides of the Palisades.

As always, I want to give credit to our experienced set of leaders, and to thank the many participants who came out to help. Surely the nice weather was helpful too. Special thanks go out to Beth Goldberg, Gerry Byrne, and Sandy Bonardi, who stepped in to help me on many fronts this year. I encourage more members to join BCAS field trips this winter and spring. There is never any guarantee on what we might find, but even winter birding can prove remarkably productive.

Dave Hall

Pied-billed Grebe	6
Dbl-crst. Cormorant	119
Great Cormorant	2
Great Blue Heron	33
Great Egret	1 !
Snowy Egret	1 !!
Bl-crn. Night Heron	5
Mute Swan	4
Snow Goose	260 H
Canada Goose	8077

Cackling Goose	1 !!
Wood Duck	1 L
Green-winged Teal	45
Am. Black Duck	48 L
Mallard	955
Northern Shoveler	58
Gadwall	20
Ring-neckd Duck	27
Lesser Scaup	4
Com Goldeneye	1
Bufflehead	28 H
Hood Merganser	124
Com Merganser	8000
Red-br Merganser	2
Ruddy Duck	1015
Turkey Vulture	24
Black Vulture	16 H
Bald Eagle	30
Northern Harrier	5
Sharp-shin. Hawk	7
Cooper's Hawk	7
Red-shldrd. Hawk	1
Red-tailed Hawk	73
American Kestrel	3
Merlin	1
Peregrine Falcon	4
Wild Turkey	2
American Coot	54 H
Ring-billed Gull	5032
Herring Gull	209
Gr.Bl.-Bckd Gull	61
Rock Dove	1307
Mourning Dove	664
East. Screech Owl	10
Great-horned Owl	7
Belted Kingfisher	17
Red-bel. Woodpkr	112
Yellow-b. Sapsucker	6
Downy Woodpecker	127
Hairy Woodpecker	32
Northern Flicker	13
Pileated Wdpckr	3
Blue Jay	246
Common Raven	5
American Crow	291

Fish Crow	15
Bl-cap Chickadee	147
Tufted Titmouse	150
White-br Nuthatch	73
Brown Creeper	3
Carolina Wren	23
Winter Wren	9 H
Golden-crd Kinglet	10
Ruby-crnd Kinglet	5
Eastern Bluebird	6
Hermit Thrush	1
American Robin	224
Gray Catbird	3
N. Mockingbird	41
Eur. Starling	3765
Yellow-rmp Wblr	2
Cm Yellowthroat	1 !
Northern Cardinal	159
Ruf-sided Towhee	1
Am Tree Sparrow	15
Fox Sparrow	14
Song Sparrow	211
White-thr Sprw	298 L
Dark-eyed Junco	617
Red-wgd Blackbird	77
Common Grackle	6 L
Northern Oriole	1 !
House Finch	142
Am. Goldfinch	235
House Sparrow	412
Monk Parakeet	235 H

Exotics

Pekin Duck	6
Mallard X Dom Duck	1
Mallard X Pekin Duck	1

34,122 birds in total; **86 Species plus 3 Exotics**

Count Period Species: Gr. White-fr Goose, Killdeer, Woodcock, Chipping Sparrow