

Thank you for helping with the 45th Rockwood Christmas Bird Count on December 22, 2018. Three species new to the count were added this year: Wild Turkey, Pileated Woodpecker and White-eyed Vireo which brings the total species over the past 45 years to 164. The total number of species was 79, just shy of the count average of 82. Snowy and Northern Saw-whet Owls were present the day after the count, relegating them to count week status. No doubt both birds were present on the day of the count but eluded detection. The latter is a particularly good find; Northern Saw-whet Owls have only been on 7 past counts and one previous count week.

Forty-five years has provided enough data to warrant an objective definition of what species to consider usual or interesting: those seen on fewer than 15 previous counts. Seven species met the criteria: Chipping Sparrow (twice before), Tree Swallow (3 past counts), Merlin (4 other years), Horned Grebe (8 times previously), Gray Catbird and Northern Mockingbird (11 past counts) and Lesser Black-backed Gull (12 previous counts). Record numbers of Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets were counted; two parties had Ruby-crowned Kinglets. Redheads were also more numerous than usual, this year's count being the 2nd highest. The number of Tree Swallows was phenomenal, obviously setting a new record high. Tree Swallows were recorded at 3 different locations, which is also unusual.

The mild conditions before and on the day of the count affected both the numbers counted and the species total. It no doubt enhanced the Tree Swallow count. But the lack of snow and ice allowed birds to be anywhere--not concentrated in the usual winter locations. It also diminished the need to visit feeders; many people commented on the number of full feeders with no birds at them. American Tree Sparrow and Dark-eyed Juncos had record low counts and the number of Song Sparrows tied with 2015 for a record low. Hopefully these low numbers were the result of the mild conditions and not reflective of actual declines. With all water open, ducks and other water birds had free rein and most species were present in lower numbers than usual (Canvasback and Redhead being the exception) or missed entirely (Wood Duck, American Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal). The absence of American Wigeon was especially noteworthy, the species having been seen on 36 past counts and every count since 1990. American Coot had the lowest total in 25 years (since 1993). There were no shorebirds, something that might be expected with the mild conditions but that could have been anywhere if still present. Other usual species that were missed this year include Horned Lark and Brown-headed Cowbird (42 past counts), Northern Harrier and Yellow-rumped Warbler (40 past counts), Common Grackle (39 past counts) and Snow Bunting (35 past counts). With the exception of Pine Siskin, there were no winter finches.

Special thanks must go to Paul Cypher and Kevin Arnold for making the Lake Erie Metropark Marshlands Museum available for the tally and to Ava Landgraf who greatly helped with the area assignments and other logistical issues. The count was sponsored by the Detroit Audubon Society, which also provided the chili for lunch and the tally.

The 2019 count will be on **Saturday, December 21, 2019**. Please mark this date on your calendars and I sincerely hope this date will prove doable for everyone.

Tom Carpenter, compiler

Results of the 45th Rockwood Christmas bird count held 22 December 2018

Canada Goose 1495	American Kestrel 7	Red-breasted Nuthatch 5
Mute Swan 622	Merlin 1	White-breasted Nuthatch 44
Tundra Swan 70	American Coot 46 (low)	Brown Creeper 12
Gadwall 68	Wild Turkey 16	Carolina Wren 12
American Black Duck 41	Bonaparte's Gull 183	Winter Wren 5
Mallard 781	Ring-billed Gull 466	Golden-crowned Kinglet 48* (47)
Canvasback 21,204	Herring Gull 103	Ruby-crowned Kinglet 3* (2)
Redhead 2044	Lesser Black-backed Gull 3	Eastern Bluebird 29
Ring-necked Duck 1	Great Black-backed Gull 14	Hermit Thrush 3
Greater Scaup 37	gull species 11	American Robin 154
Lesser Scaup 2	Rock Pigeon 166	Gray Catbird 1
scaup species 530	Mourning Dove 324	Northern Mockingbird 2
Long-tailed Duck 1	Eastern Screech Owl 10	European Starling 1109
Common Goldeneye 351	Great Horned Owl 8	Cedar Waxwing 139
Bufflehead 149	Snowy Owl cw	White-eyed Vireo 1
Hooded Merganser 4	Short-eared Owl 1	American Tree Sparrow 82* (89)
Common Merganser 3	Northern Saw-whet Owl cw	Chipping Sparrow 1
Red-breasted Merganser 1	Belted Kingfisher 4	Song Sparrow 5* (5)
Ruddy Duck 60	Red-bellied Woodpecker 46	Swamp Sparrow 10
duck species 2	Downy Woodpecker 78	White-throated Sparrow 46
Pied-billed Grebe 1	Hairy Woodpecker 14	White-crowned Sparrow 4
Horned Grebe 2	Northern Flicker 25	Dark-eyed Junco 82* (111)
Great Blue Heron 52	Pileated Woodpecker 1	Northern Cardinal 153
Bald Eagle 31	Blue Jay 104	Red-winged Blackbird 10
Sharp-shinned Hawk 1	American Crow 11	House Finch 59
Cooper's Hawk 8	Tree Swallow 146* (34)	Pine Siskin 24
Red-shouldered Hawk 1	Black-capped Chickadee 81	American Goldfinch 138
Red-tailed Hawk 32	Tufted Titmouse 12	House Sparrow 586

Total species counted: 79

Total individuals counted: 32,242

bold type indicates an unusual or noteworthy species or an unusually high number counted but not a record

asterisk designates a record high or low count for the species with the previous record in ()

cw = count week—species was seen in the count circle 3 days before or after the date of the count but was not seen during the day of the count

30 observers in 13 parties plus 2 feeder watchers

370 party miles: 33.25 on foot and 336.75 by car

61.75 party hours: 30.5 on foot and 31.25 by car

8.75 hours owling and 43.5 miles