

# May 2010 Provincial Bird Species Count

## Compiled by Judy Boyd for Nature Alberta

### **A. SUMMARY**

### **B. INDIVIDUAL COUNTS: INFO/HIGHLIGHTS/PARTICIPANTS**

### **C. SPECIES LIST 2006 – 2010 (EXCEL) EACH COUNT**

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### **A. SUMMARY**

The general consensus for the 2010 May Bird Species Count was that the weather was lousy! There were a number of Counts that didn't happen this year.

The number of species was down in 2010: from 280 in '09 to 269 this year. Number of individual birds also went down: from 269,851 to 217,140. In 2009, the most numerous species was Franklin's Gull (37,211), second was Canada Goose (13,347) and third was Red-winged Blackbird (13,266). This year, the top three didn't change, but the numbers dropped: Franklin's Gull (17,360), Canada Goose (12,748) and Red-winged Blackbird (10,878).

Last year, 27 species were seen in only one location and 12 species in only two locations around the province. This year, it was 33 species in only one location and 16 species in only two locations. Of the single sightings: Spruce Grouse (with a count week bird (CW) seen at Cold Lake), Northern Shrike and Common Redpoll at BowKan Birders; Lapland Longspur at Brooks (with a CW at Cold Lake); Peregrine Falcon, Northern Pygmy Owl, and Dusky Flycatcher at Calgary; Bullock's Oriole and Northern Cardinal at Claresholm; Greater White-fronted Goose (only seen here during CW), Yellow Rail (and a CW at Calgary), Sanderling, Ruddy Turnstone (only during CW), Parasitic Jaeger, Pacific Loon, Sabine's Gull, Sedge Wren, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, and Harris's Sparrow at Cold Lake; Wild Turkey and American Tree Sparrow at Crowsnest Pass; Bohemian Waxwing at Fort McMurray (with a CW at Lac La Biche); Palm Warbler and Golden-crowned Sparrow at Lac La Biche; Yellow-breasted Chat at Medicine Hat; Snow Goose at Taber-Vauxhall; and Dusky Grouse, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Steller's Jay, Cassin's Finch (with a CW at Crowsnest Pass), White-winged Crossbill (with a CW at Cold Lake) and Pine Grosbeak at Waterton.

Of the species found in two locations: Northern Goshawk (with a CW at Calgary) and Semipalmated Plover at Central Alberta and Cold Lake; White-rumped Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Herring Gull, Barred Owl (with a CW at Central Alberta), Nashville Warbler, and Nelson's Sparrow at Calgary and Cold Lake; Burrowing Owl at Brooks and Fort McMurray; Great Gray Owl at Calgary and Central Alberta; Cape May Warbler at Calgary and Fort McMurray; Connecticut Warbler at Cold Lake and Lac La Biche; Canada Warbler at Cold Lake and Fort McMurray; Grasshopper Sparrow at Brooks and Taber-Vauxhall; Red Crossbill at Calgary and Lac La Biche; and Indigo Bunting at Central Alberta and Claresholm.

Last year, 5 species were seen in all areas that reported; however, this year we upped that to 15 species in all areas: Canada Goose, Mallard, American Coot, Spotted Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, Northern Flicker, American Crow, Tree Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, American Robin, Yellow Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird and Brown-headed Cowbird. In 2009, 3 species were found in all but one area and 11 species in all but two count areas. This year, it was 10 species in all areas but one: Blue-winged Teal, Red-tailed Hawk, Killdeer, Least Flycatcher (one of the areas saw it only during CW), Common Raven, Barn Swallow, Swainson's Thrush, European Starling, Yellow-rumped Warbler (only during CW in one of the areas) and Clay-coloured Sparrow. Four species were found in all areas except two: Northern Shoveler (one of the areas saw it only during CW), Black-billed Magpie, Cliff Swallow and Common Yellowthroat.

Watch for word on your local area's Spring and Summer Species Counts, and sign up to take part. It is fun even when the weather is not overly good!

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## **B. INDIVIDUAL COUNT INFO/PARTICIPANTS**

### **Banff**

**Date:** May 30-31, 2010

**Compiler:** Brenda Lepitzki

**Participants:** Jason Rogers, Diane McIvor, Mike McIvor, Jill Beleyne, Jacques Beleme, various participants of Banff Community Bird Walk, up to 17 participants.

**Area Covered:** Recreation grounds and Warner stables to Cave and Basin marsh area, Vermilion Lakes drive, Johnson Lake and area, Tunnel Mountain

**Weather:** Day 1: Temp. 0 to 9°C

Wind speed: 0 to 5 km/hr. Wind direction: n/a

Precipitation: intermittent brief rain showers

Comments: Mixed sun and clouds

Day 2: Temp. 1 to 11°C

Wind speed: 0 to 5 km/hr. Wind direction: N/A

Precipitation: none

Comments: Mixed sun and clouds

**Team Distance/Hours:** Total Team Mileage: 32.7 km; by vehicle 29.2 km; on foot 3.5 km. Total Team Hours: 5 hr; by vehicle 1 hr; on foot 4 hr.

**Number of Species:** 83

**Number of Birds:** 590

**Other species seen during count week:** Canada Goose X domestic goose hybrid, 1, at Vermilion Lakes, by Jason Rogers, on 31 May

## **Beauvais Lake P.P.**

**Date:** June 2, 1010

**Compiler:** Teresa Dolman

**Participants:** Douglas Dolman, Teresa Dolman

**Area Covered:** Within Park boundaries

**Weather:** Temp. 12 to 13°C

Wind speed: 20 to 32 km/hr. Wind direction: NNE

Precipitation: nil

**Team Distance/Hours:** Total Team Mileage: 16 km; by vehicle 4 km, on foot 12 km.

Total Team Hours: 7 hr; by vehicle 0.5 hr; on foot 6.5 hr.

**Number of Species:** 63

**Number of Birds:** 381

**Other species seen during count week:** none

**Highlights:** It had been a cold, wet spring in southern Alberta and the insect-eating birds were few in number, particularly the flycatchers. Still, 63 species were seen, which is greater than the long-term average of 58. In addition, three of those species were seen for the first time: a pair of Trumpeter Swans, a single Cliff Swallow and eight Tennessee Warblers. Interestingly, two Ovenbirds were also found; this warbler species was recorded regularly during the early years of this count but have not been seen since 2001. Osprey are recorded regularly on this count and a pair have usually occupied a nesting pole erected a kilometer or so north of the Park; this year a pair of Ospreys has built a nest inside the Park, on top of a tree in the parking lot of the boat launch – one hopes that they are tolerant of humans! (Note: as of July 1, the female Osprey was still on the nest, so it seems they are indeed tolerant.)

## **BowKanBirders (Bow Valley)**

**Date:** 29 May through 01 Jun 2010

**Compiler:** Cliff Hansen

**Participants:** Eric ?, Kevin Barker, Hugh Brooke, Dean Cooper, Jean Cooper, Ethan Denton, Monica Dragosz, Nancy Davis, Bert Dyck, Marilyn Dyck, Jim Jorgenson, Marg Jorgenson, Elizabeth Hamilton, Cliff Hansen, Jennifer Kleinitz, Fiona Koether, Gary Koether, Max Koether, Jason Leong, Max Mowat, Lucy Pesata, Josephine Purcell, Terry Purcell, Laura Reid, Rose Reid, Hanne Seidel, Jan Sommer, Barry Sproule, Lee Sproule, Paul Thompson, Anita Walker, Bill Wilson, Eva Zidek

**Area Covered:** The BowKan Birders area is a circle centred south of Exshaw. The area takes in the Bow Valley from (and including) Bow River Campground, just East of Canmore, to Nakoda Lodge along Highway 1A, Seebe and along the Trans-Canada to the Highway 40 overpass. To the North, all the valleys and mountains from Grotto to Yamnuska are included. To the South, all the valleys and mountains including Wind Ridge, Pigeon, Heart, McGillivray, Lorette and Highway 40 south to the bridge over the Kananaskis river on the road to the Nakiska Lodge are included.

**Weather:** Day 1: Temp. -1 to 4°C

Wind speed: 5 to 20 km/hr. Wind direction: NW

Precipitation: light rain, snow and sleet

Comments: snowy and cold

Day 2: Temp. 0 to 6°C

Wind speed: calm to 10 km/hr. Wind direction: W

Precipitation: light rain showers

Comments: stratus cloud all day

**Team Distance/Hours:** Total Team Mileage: 146 km; by vehicle 103 km, on foot 43 km. Total Team Hours: 74.5 hr; by vehicle 4 hr.; on foot 70.5 hr.

**Number of Species:** 109 (+1 cw)

**Number of Birds:** 2668 (+30 cw)

**Other species seen during count week:** Cedar Waxwings x 30. Mammals: Black Bear x 2, Coyote x 3, Elk x 9, Mule Deer x 8, Whitetail Deer x 13, Bighorn Sheep x 31, Beaver x 2, Snowshoe Hare x 1, Red Squirrel x 14, Columbian Ground Squirrel x 21, & Yellow Pine Chipmunk x 3

**Comments & Highlights:** Red-necked Phalaropes, Horned Larks, Purple Martin

The “BowKan Birders” is an informal group of local naturalists who share an interest in enjoying and protecting our local wildlife and habitats. Loosely organized, with some sixty members, there is no President, Chairperson, Secretary or Treasurer. However, they do need a Coordinator currently covered by the author. Twice each year, end of May and the Christmas/New Year period, they fan out in the BowKan Birders designated area (a 15 km diameter circle centered on the north face of Mount McGillivray) and complete a species count of birds, mammals, and in May, include flowering plants. The main purpose of the information is to build a local data bank of regional flora and fauna and perhaps indicate changes over time.

As for most organizations in North America doing similar counts, we plan to complete our spring species count on the last full weekend of May, this year it fell on 29 and 30 May. It is a busy time of year and the demands of work, family and other counts, for participant time, is fierce. On the scheduled weekend, many were not available to cover the count in several distinct and non-overlapping areas of our count circle. It became necessary to reschedule those portions of the count to 31 May and 01 June. The counts conducted on the four days (the official weekend plus two) are logged as “count days.” Where new species were found within plus or minus three days of the “count weekend” in an area already covered as a “count day,” it is logged as a “count week” species. The principle followed is that a “late count” is much better than a “no count” in our environmentally very important area.

Again this year, spring arrived late with repeated episodes of rain, sleet and snow through to the end of May. It felt like winter would never end. Bird migration north and blooming plant development was delayed and still in progress during our count. On the count weekend, rain and sleet tested our stamina and our optical equipment. Although a below average count, our intrepid observers persisted and produced a very creditable result.

Since our beginning in 1993, our average number of birds on May counts is now 2859

individual birds and 120 species. The corresponding numbers for this count are 2698 birds and 110 species (this includes 30 birds of one species reported during count week). Historically, the corresponding numbers range from a high of 3765 birds (1999) to a low of 2001 (1993), and a high of 136 species (2003) to a low of 83 (1993).

The lower numbers this year appear to be related to the late spring as indicated by the low numbers of some species normally seen in high numbers at the end of May. Chipping sparrows, however, were the exception; their count was about three times the average. All Flycatchers (except the Eastern Phoebe), and Swallows were below average. In fact, Cliff Swallows, previously counted in large numbers on every count near our bridges, were not seen until after count week. Cedar Waxwings were seen on the last day of the count week taking over our front lawn bird bath. At least another dozen species, except for the Common Grackle, seen on periodic counts were missing, of note, some waterfowl, owls, raptors and sparrows. On the other hand, there were four surprise species; Red-necked Phalarope (a new species for our count), Horned Lark, Purple Martin, and Rough-legged Hawk. They are not usually seen on our spring counts. They were probably waiting for better flight weather.

The mammal count was average except for the sighting of two Black Bear and the possible (uncounted) near presence of a third bear of undetermined species. On Sunday my companion and I were trying to spot a singing Northern Waterthrush in dense brush and trees when the movement of one nearby (about 20 metres away) young Aspen caught my attention. It silently and slowly bent over until it was out of sight behind dense willows then sprung back up. We know that creatures of the wild spot us far more often than we do them and almost always depart without incident. I checked my bear spray and we continued on with our count. The creature in the bush responsible for the tree bending must have silently departed our presence.

The average number of blooming plants identified on our May counts is now 59 species, which range from a low of 20 (2002) to a high of 97 (2005 & 2007). The variation seems to correspond to how late in May the last full weekend falls and to the lateness of warm sunny weather. This year, the count was near the end of May but the late spring was more influential. Though our dedicated cadre of plant counters are becoming better at the task, they need something to identify and count. Our count of 53 species was below average.

Margo and I hosted the after count “potluck.” It was well attended by enthusiastic participants and, again the food was fantastic. Also, it gave us a chance to trade stories of our adventures. The trying weather was central to every conversation. The highlight often included the sighting of a rare or unusual species for our area and time of year. Yes, the “potluck” was fun and I congratulate all the great home chefs for their high standard of cuisine.

A history by year of our spring bird, flowering plant and mammal counts are available on request. All you need do is ask. I can send them by email in MS Excel (other formats are possible), or printed copies by “snail-mail,” or you may visit the BowKan Birders table at

the Canmore Festival of the Eagles next October.

The next Christmas count is still six months away but now is the time to plan. Our next count, Christmas 2009, is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, 01 January, 2010.

Again, we had a creditable count. The data gathered is significant and adds to the recorded knowledge of our area. What could be better than being out in our natural environment with a sole purpose of observing nature at work, however, warm and sunny weather would have been appreciated.

## **Brooks/Lake Newell**

**Date:** May 22 and 23, 2010

**Compiler:** Bob Parsons

**Participants:** Lloyd Bennett, Judy and Larry Boyd, Teresa and Doug Dolman, Leona and Dick Flynn, Eileen Ford, Airlie and Krista Fowler, Wes Grout, Linda Hajash, Dorothy Hazlett, Liz and Bill Heinsen, Diane and Len Jellicoe, Steve Knight, John Manly, Michelle and Curtis Manly, Dave McKenzie, Jim Morrison, Mike Mulligan, Bob Parsons, Louis Pesti, Jerry Pliny, John and Lynn Riddell, Gerald Romanchuk, Elaine and Milt Spitzer, Donna and Les Trathen, Donna and Ben Verner, Donna Wieckowski, Lois and Walter Zwick

**Areas covered:** The well-defined count circle includes many reservoirs – Kitsim, Tilly A and Tilly B, Lake Newell, Bantry 1 and Bantry 2 as well as Eastern Irrigation District grasslands and spillways. There are many well-maintained Ducks Unlimited (DU) projects in the area and the Bow River also plays an important role. The communities of Cassils, Bow City, Duchess, Patricia, Scandia, Rainier and Rolling Hills are dotted throughout the count circle and contribute to the event. Native prairie grasslands, woodlots and agricultural lands are well studied by those taking part in the 2-day event.

**Weather:** Day 1: Temp. 7 to 9°C

Wind speed: 12 to 20 km/hr. Wind direction: NE

Precipitation: some drizzle in places

Comments: Cloudy, light to gusty winds

Day 2: Wind speed: 3 to 16 km/hr. Comments: Overcast 90%, some sun, cool, calm winds. Strong winds in Brooks and around Lake Newell 15-25 kph.

**Team Distance/Hours:** Team Mileage: 3102 km by vehicle; 47 km on foot. Team

Hours: 163 hours by vehicle; 34.5 hours on foot

**Number of Species:** 161 (+ 4 cw)

**Number of Birds:** 48533

**Other species seen during count week:** Hairy Woodpecker, Black-and-white Warbler, Lark Bunting, Dark-eyed Junco

### **Highlights: BACKGROUND**

The Brooks count, now in its 12<sup>th</sup> year, is traditionally held on the May long weekend and continues to be a joint Edmonton/Calgary multi-club initiative, drawing over 40 participants from central and southern Alberta, as well as northerly parts of B.C.

## **PREPARATION**

As per usual custom, I arrived six days prior to the weekend enabling me to contact local press and media. Linda Hajash, my liaison in Brooks, again set up a nice distribution of brochures and flyers. Tillebrook Park campsite was our HQ again and on arrival I was informed that there would be complimentary camping for everyone this year! Ben Velner from the Medicine Hat had his motor home all set up, under the watchful eye of his charming wife Donna who told me “you sleep here.” Nice, no back strains from crawling in and out of my tent! Ben and I were soon out and about, scouting the park’s surroundings as well as the immediate area. It was soon obvious that after all the recent wet weather most of the reservoirs were topped up and all ponds and sloughs were overflowing. To be honest, there was water lying in areas where I had never seen moisture before so it looked like an interesting few days lay ahead.

Sponsorship funding from Cenovus, TransCanada Pipelines and DU (Canada) allowed us to freely spend up to fifty gas-scouting dollars each day. The first couple of days was spent in the Kitsim, Cassils and Rolling Hills areas and around 80 species were seen. Whimbrel numbers (300) appeared to be way down on previous years but we were fortunate to find a Ruff mixed in with Black-bellied Plovers and Red Knots at the north-west corner of Kitsim Reservoir. It was soon apparent that “peeps” were going to be hard to find and even the folks at DU and EID were not sure which species were around! Tillebrook was relatively quiet during the days leading up to the count...very few warblers, intermittent waves of sparrows, no kinglets, few flycatchers but big numbers of Swainson's Thrush and Common Grackle.

## **COUNT WEEKEND**

Weather conditions were cool and overcast as the 40 plus participants started to count in the nine zones. Nine regions were represented this year and I was especially delighted to see the big, enthusiastic Calgary contingent as well as the regular “keeners” from Red Deer who wimped out staying in a local motel! A total of 161 bird species were counted over the weekend, which is just about average for the count but checking on the zone results it was obvious we missed some of the usual suspects – Turkey Vulture, Prairie/Peregrine Falcon, Stilt Sandpiper, Short-eared Owl, Say’s Phoebe, Cedar Waxwing(!), Pine Siskin and American Goldfinch. Some thought some species were late, others queried the fact that some species had overflown the area due to weather conditions.

Nineteen species records were broken this year (ie. a high number of individual birds.) Broad-winged Hawk (9) was a real surprise, plus Bufflehead (175), Black Tern (569), Gray Catbird (21), Swainson’s Thrush (290) and Ovenbird (4). In fact a kettle of 8 Broad-winged Hawks was seen just west of Brooks so an exceptional sighting by Wes Grout and crew. Higher than average totals include American Bittern (10), Green-winged Teal (66), Black-necked Stilt (146), Brown Thrasher (20) and Baird’s Sparrow (30). A Lapland Longspur was seen in the Contra Costa Project which is, I think, a first for the count.

As a consequence of the cold, sometimes windy, conditions, and maybe because of early migration, some species were seen in low numbers compared to previous years. Western Grebe (17), White-faced Ibis (1), Red-tailed Hawk (19), Red Knot (36), and Pectoral Sandpiper (2) all come to mind. Only 20 Whimbrel were counted, down from an average of close to a thousand. Some low figures may be cause for concern but the reader has to wonder if the late cold spells played havoc during the migration north. I should also add that one lone Burrowing Owl was seen close to Kinivie Marsh. I managed to get good views of many McCown's Longspurs in the sections I was counting but I somehow managed to miss Lark Bunting and Lark Sparrow. I also looked for Bobolink in the usual spots but came up empty-handed like everyone else! Golden Eagle was missed by Milt Spitzer in Zone 8 this year, I think he said the nest had blown down. The Medicine Wheel Project resulted in some great birding again although 18 big electric pylons were down after the early May ice-storm. Curtis pointed out a Ferruginous Hawk's wire nest, placed on one of the towers by Hardy Pletz a few years ago, was lying on the ground.

Overall accessibility was excellent, level of expertise was of the usual high standard and it was satisfying to see the enthusiasm shown again this year. We again organized a nature walk for the children staying in the park. Special thanks to Donna and Terry who will try to post full results on the Nature Calgary website. Sponsors, we could not do this without you, so plenty of gratitude from those who hope to be back next year!

## **Calgary and area**

**Date:** May 29/30 2010

**Compiler:** Brian Elder

**Participants:** Tim Allison, Peter Aucoin, Sandy Ayer, Linda Bailey, John Bargman, Bruce Barnetson, Mike Bentley, Jim Black, Phil Cram, Marcia Crawford, Bernie Diebolt, Jim Donohue, Katie Donohue, Jean Dunn, John Duthie, Brian Elder, Anne Elliott, Joan Falcione, Dick Flynn, Lenora Flynn, Dave Gibson, Horst Grothman, Carole Hachey, Ian Halladay, Mike Harrison, Chris Havard, Ken Havard, Howard Heffler, Frank Hennessey, Sue Konopnicki, Terry Korolyk, Bob Lefebvre, Don Magnusson, Gary Malcolm, Tivan Malcolm, Zerind Malcolm, John Mendham, Roy Millar, Pat Mitchell, Mike Mulligan, Helen O'Brien, Ralph Pearce, Aileen Pelzer, Jerry Pilny, Alex Poulton, Terry Poulton, Chip Scialfa, Nimali Seneveratne, Matthew Sim, Destin Skauge, Andrew Slater, Ena Spalding, Dorothy Spring, Stephen Spring, Jim St. Laurent, Carole Steeves, Don Stiles, Bob Storms, Judy Swan, Monica Thomas, Tony Timmons, Hank Vanderpol, David Vernon, Robert Worona, Gus Yaki, Colin Young

**Area Covered:** 80km radius circle centered on the Centre St. Bridge in Calgary

**Weather:** Day 1: Temp. -2 to 4°C

Precipitation: snow (heavy in foothills & mtns), sleet, rain

Comments: windy, miserable conditions

Day 2: Temp. 0 to 7°C

Precipitation: light snow and rain at times; mostly cloudy with sunny periods

**Team Distance/Hours:** Total Team Mileage: 4290 km; by vehicle 4115 km; human powered 175 km. Total Team Hours: 330 hr; by vehicle 204 hr; human powered 126 hr.



**Number of Species:** 208 (+4 cw)

**Number of Birds:** 80,165 (+4 cw)

**Other species seen during count week:** Northern Goshawk, Yellow Rail (heard), Baird's Sandpiper, Caspian Tern

## **Cardston**

**Date:** May 29 & 30, 2010

**Compiler:** Shirley Sillito

**Participants:** Neldon Hatch, Priscilla Hatch, Kira Hinch, Liam Hinch, Maeran Hinch, Nancy Hinch, Nadine Leavitt, Ruth LeRoux, Pam Monson, Vicki Romeril, Don Shaw, Shirley Sillito (compiler), Althena Snyder, Michele Snyder, Mira Vanhala, Saska Vanhala

**Area Covered:** Cardston, Leavitt, Mountain View, Police Lake Provincial Park

**Weather:** Day 1: Temp. 0 to 3°C

Wind speed: 4 to 20 km/hr. Wind direction: NNE

Precipitation: 12 mm

Day 2: Temp. 2 to 9°C

Wind speed: 0 to 15 km/hr. Wind direction: N

Precipitation: NA

**Team Distance/Hours:** Total Team Mileage: 370 km; by vehicle 358 km; on foot 12 km

Total Team Hours: 52 hr; by vehicle 34 hr; on foot 9 hr; watching feeders 9 hr

**Number of Species:** 111

**Number of Birds:** 4189

**Other species seen during count week:** (1) Townsend's Warbler, (1) Blackpoll Warbler

**Highlights:** One new species was seen for this count, Forster's Tern. For the second time only, Lincoln's Sparrow was recorded. A thrill for observers was seeing a group of 20 Sandhill Cranes just south of the hamlet of Mountain View. Two grizzly bears were also spotted in the Mountain View area.

## **Central Alberta (Red Deer and area)**

**Date:** May 29 & 30, 2010

**Compiler:** Judy Boyd

**Participants:** Bud Bargholz, Jean Bargholz, Brian Biggs, Karin Bjorge, Myron Bjorge, Tony Blake, Sophia Bouw, Denise Bouw, Lorne Bowerman, Tyra Bowerman, Judy Boyd, Marilyn Brenner, Fred Brittain, Lois Burkenshaw, Phil Burkenshaw, Claudia Cameron, Ed Cameron, Sandra Cameron, Marg Dewald, Ben Fisette, Bertha Ford, Eileen Ford, Jordan Ford, Laurel Ford, Stewart Ford, Bernice Hafner, Robert T. Hall, Dorothy Hazlett, Bill Heinsen, Liz Heinsen, Gordon Johnson, Pat Johnson, Jessie Kinley, Keith Kline, Amanda Lasiuta, Victor Lawrence, Janice Lawrence, Ronald J. Leslie, David MacKenzie, Mary MacKenzie, Ron McDonald, Vi McDonald, Chloe Melnychuck, Autumn Melnychuck, Jasper Melnychuck, Mark Meunier, Ruby Meunier, Cecil Michaels, Hazel Michaels, Heather Montgomery, Lucien Partridge, Jean Paton, Doug

Paton, Myrna Pearman, Doug Pedersen, Marg Ramsey, Barb Rooney, Lawrence Rooney, Joanne Susut, Joan Susut, Kyle Wakaryk, Diane Witton, April Wood

**Area Covered:** Zone 1 (Red Deer), Zone 3 (Gull Lake), Zone 7 (Penhold), Zone 4 (Lacombe), Zone 5 (EBF), Zone 6 (Pine Lake), Zone 7 (Penhold), Zone 8 (Dickson, MRWC), Zone 10 (Eckville), Zone 15 (Alix), Zone 16 (Lousana), Zone 17 (east of Innisfail), Zone 18 (Davey Lake), Zone 19 (Bowden), Zone 20 (Eagle Hill), Zone 21 (Crammond), Zone 26 (Dry Island Buffalo Jump), Zone 27 (Rocky Mountain House)

**Weather:** Day 1: Temp. 0 to 6°C

Wind speed: 0 to 30 km/hr. Wind direction: mostly from the north

Precipitation: snow

Day 2: Temp. 0 to 12°C

Wind speed: 5 to 35 km/hr. Wind direction: variable

Precipitation: snow in places

**Team Distance/Hours:** Total Team Mileage: 1214.6 km; by vehicle 1282.1 km; on foot 33.5 km. Total Team Hours: 246 hr; by vehicle 144.5 hr; on foot 21.5 hr. feederwatch 80 hr.

**Number of Species:** 140 (+4 CW)

**Number of Birds:** 11699 (+4 CW)

**Other species seen during count week:** Cooper's Hawk, Barred Owl, Common Nighthawk, Gray Catbird

**Highlights:** Considering the weather, which was snowy and cold, we had a fairly good Count. The numbers were a bit down from the previous year (145 species down to 140 and 19033 down to 11699) but it was not our lowest count. Despite the weather, our number of counters went up from 54 last year to 63 this year.

Highest recorded numbers since 2000: Greater Scaup, White-winged Scoters, Merlin, Killdeer, Short-billed Dowitcher, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Western Wood-pewee, Alder Flycatcher, Western Kingbird, Eastern Kingbird, Gray Jay, American Crow, Bank Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Boreal Chickadee, American Robin, European Starling, Orange-crowned Warbler, White-crowned Sparrow, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Brewer's Blackbird, Purple Finch.

First time recorded since 2000: Indigo Bunting

Mammals: muskrat, Richardson's Ground Squirrel, Red Squirrel, White-tailed Deer, Mule Deer, Coyote, Badger, Meadow Vole, Moose, Northern Flying Squirrel, White-tailed Jackrabbit

Amphibians: Boreal Chorus Frog

Insects: black ants, bumblebee, spider

## **Claresholm**

**Date:** May 29 & 30, 2010

**Compiler:** Grace Norgard

**Participants** - Jason Attwell, Ruth Attwell, Rob Chisholm & family, Gary & Nola Cotter & family, Carley Egger, Hayley Egger, Kerry Hart, Audrey Helmer, Betty Hoare, Mike Hoare, Lawrence Hutchinson, Joan Larson, Leo Larson, Stanley Lewis, Debbie Lozeman, Judy Lucas, Arnold McCulloch, Arnold Norgard, Grace Norgard (compiler), Jeremy Norgard, Lorraine Norgard, Jack Peacock, Rosemary Wishart

**Area Covered:** 40-km radius around Claresholm, including Porcupine Hills

**Weather:** Day 1: Temp. 0.5 to 4°C

Wind speed: 17 to 30 km/hr. Wind direction: NNE

Precipitation: 12 mm

Day 2: Temp. 2 to 7°C

Wind speed: 7 to 22 km/hr. Wind direction: NNE

Precipitation: 2 mm

**Team Distance/Hours:** Total Team Mileage: 341 km; by vehicle 338km; on foot 3 km.

Total Team Hours: 56 hr; by vehicle 25 hr; on foot 1 hr; watching feeders 30 hr

**Number of Species:** 134 (+3 cw)

**Number of Birds:** 7419 (+3 cw)

**Other species seen during count week:** (1) Upland Sandpiper, (1) Hermit Thrush, (1) Northern Waterthrush

**Highlights:** Given the terrible weather conditions, observers did extremely well in finding 134 species. Two of these are new to the Claresholm May Species Count: one Black-crowned Night-Heron and one Northern Cardinal. The latter, a female which appeared at a ranch along Meadow Creek southwest of Claresholm, was well-described to the count coordinator. And for the second time only an Indigo Bunting, a male, was reported, this one from a ranch along Lyndon Creek northwest of Claresholm.

## **Cold Lake Area Bird Count**

**Date:** May 29 and 30, 2010

**Compiler:** Ted Hindmarch

**Participants:** 16 - Ted Hindmarch, Richard Klauke, Phil Shore, Mado Shore, Carol Hummerstone, Chris Etue, Bill Bretsch, Norm Parrish, Geoff Peruniak (Athabasca), Gavin (Guelph), Jim Davies (Calgary), Wes English, Dan Heinrichs and Bhalchandra Pujari (Edmonton), Tom Hince, Paul Pratt (both of Point Pelee)

**Area Covered:** 25Mi RADIUS COUNT CIRCLE CENTER 5327.30N 11030.00W Cold Lake Provincial Park Cold Lake Centre Bay, English Bay, North Bay, HorseShoe Bay and Marina, Jesse Lake, Moose Lake, Angling Lake, Ethel and Marie Lake. This covered areas within WR51-55, WR40-45, WR33-34, WR10-11, and WR01, WR02-04, WR12-15, WR 22-25

**Weather:** Day 1: Temp. 2 to 6°C

Wind speed: 11 to 40 km/hr. Wind direction: NE

Precipitation: Rain/Snow

Comments: Like many of the province's counts, Cold Lake's was hampered by a Cold Front that brought winds, rain, snow and a mix of both to the area. The weather held for a pleasant group BBQ and kick-off Friday night under the gracious hosting of Fred and Carol Hummerstone. A quick trip to the Ethel Lake Fen at midnight started our count rolling with Barred Owl but no Yellow Rail this

year, although a Yellow and Virginia rail were finally heard Saturday by Jim and Phil south of town in Saturday morning sunrise of 4:56AM was a tolerable +6C, overcast with moderate 11km/h winds. By noon conditions had deteriorated with colder NE winds picking up to 24+km/h, gusting to 40km/h. Rain began at about 11:35AM and increased steadily adding snow by 6PM. Lake viewing was lost due to precipitation and high waves. Those birds that had arrived in the area hunkered down and stopped singing. The weather became only decent for the ducks. Evening owling/rail trip was quickly shelved but for a few when temps lowered to 2C, in a rain/snow mix with 28k/hr winds.

Day 2: Temp. 3 to 6°C

Wind speed: 20 to 30 km/hr. Wind direction: NE

Precipitation: Mixed Snow/Rain Showers with odd Sunny breaks

Comments: Snow and rain continued overnight, heavier in some areas of the circle than others, but enough to have a bit on the ground through much of Sunday in the La Corey and Bonnyville areas. Sunday morning, we awoke to 3°C, light rain, and 20 km/h winds. Light rain continued throughout the day with some short breaks and the odd teasing glimpse of lightening skies. The high never got above 6°C, and wind speeds were consistently between 20-30 km/h.

**Team Distance/Hours:** Total Team Mileage: 1031.1 km; by vehicle 981.1 km; on foot 42 km. Total Team Hours: 91.5 hr; by vehicle 55.75 hr; on foot 33.75 hr.

**Number of Species:** 162 (+16 cw)

**Number of Birds:** 7213 (+ 16 cw)

**Other species seen during count week:** 16: Greater White-fronted Goose, Barrow's Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Spruce Grouse, Swainson's Hawk, Solitary Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Red-necked Phalarope, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, Brown Creeper, Wilson's Warbler, Lapland Longspur, White-winged Crossbill.

**Highlights:** Highlights: New count species: Pacific Loon, Parasitic Jaeger, Northern Rough-Winged Swallow. C-list sightings of large fallout of Sabine's Gulls estimated 175-200 strong; Virginia Rail, and Hooded Merganser(CW).

In terms of species it was not too bad for such a poor weather weekend. Some species, such as flycatchers, were not back yet in any numbers. Warblers were either on territory or in small mixed flocks. Migratory shorebirds were in low numbers, and we had almost no accipiters (1 Goshawk) and no Broad Winged Hawks reported.

This is our 3<sup>rd</sup> worst May count result in the 10 year history. Our lowest was 2008 with 157 +2CW, followed by 2006 at 161 + 4CW. 2008 was a late spring and count dates were earlier. 2006 results were partly due to effort as it was our lowest party hour numbers on record.

Two of our Participant – Tom Hince, and Paul Pratt of Point Pelee were in the area for parts of CW and for the Saturday of count weekend scouting for a Big Day attempt and for some upcoming tours. Their Big Day was conducted 2 Jun (starting in Cold Lake and finishing in Waterton) and they managed to get 212 species which is a new Alberta

record (they got 207 last year). They came within two species of the Canadian record (214 in Manitoba), getting the second highest total ever for a Canadian Big Day.

## **The Crowsnest Pass Birding Festival**

**Date:** May 29-30, 2010

**Compiler:** Merilyn Liddell (and Pat Lucas)

**Participants:** Dawn Hall, Denise Coccioloni-Amatto, Merilyn Liddell, Pat Lucas, Raymond Toal, Nel van Kamer

**Area Covered:** May 29: Junction of Hwys 3 & 22 to the Gap, returning via North Burmis Road; May 30 AM: Burmis Lake and area; PM Willow Drive in west Coleman

**Weather:** Day 1: Temp. 2 to 2°C

Wind speed: 6 to 9 km/hr. Wind direction: SE

Precipitation: snow-sleet-snow-sleet-rain

Comments: Wet!

Day 2: Temp. 1 to 6°C

Wind speed: 7 to 9 km/hr. Wind direction: SE

Precipitation: AM: snow & sleet - PM: heavy rain to partially sunny

Comments: Generally miserable weather for most of the weekend

**Team Distance/Hours:** Total Team Mileage: 207.5 km; by vehicle 203 km; on foot 4.5 km. Total Team Hours: 11.5 hr; by vehicle 7 hr; on foot 4.5 hr.

**Number of Species:** 72 (+40 cw)

**Number of Birds:** 1110

**Other species seen during count week:** Wood Duck, Northern Shoveler, Greater Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Common Loon, Red-necked Grebe, American White Pelican, Osprey, Northern Goshawk, Solitary Sandpiper, Calliope Hummingbird, Rufous Hummingbird, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Warbling Vireo, Gray Jay, Violet-green Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Mountain Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Marsh Wren, American Dipper, Gray Catbird, Cedar Waxwing, Tennessee Warbler, Orange-Crowned Warbler, American Redstart, MacGillivray's Warbler, Fox Sparrow, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Black-headed Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting, Bobolink, Baltimore Oriole, Purple Finch, Cassin's Finch, Evening Grosbeak, House Sparrow

**Non-avian species:** Moose, White-tailed Deer, Elk, Mule Deer, Columbian Ground Squirrel, Red Squirrel, Beaver, Bison, Muskrat

**Highlights:** Baltimore Oriole, eaglet (Bald) peering from its nest, a family of Common Loons with two young riding on one parent's back, two male Harlequins, large gatherings of Mountain Bluebirds.

## **Fort McMurray/Wood Buffalo Wild Bird Club**

**Date:** June 5 & 6, 2010

**Compiler:** Cathy Mountain

**Participants:** Jane Elser, Cheryl Freeman, Tom Klein, Byron Littleton, Cathy Mountain, Colin Russell, Christine Sparling, Steven Stryde

**Area Covered:** urban, roadside, hiking trails, horse pasture, mixed forest, riverside, ponds/slough, lakes, gravel pit, peat moss pit, muskeg, landfill. 3 yards/feeders also counted

**Weather:** Day 1: Temp. 10 to 16 °C

Wind speed: 10 to 15 km/hr. Wind direction: SSE

Precipitation: overcast with scattered showers

Day 2: Temp. 15 to 23 °C

Wind speed: 5 to 15 km/hr. Wind direction: E (am) & WNW (pm)

Precipitation: partly cloudy

**Team Distance/Hours:** Total Team Mileage: 352 km; by vehicle 314 km; on foot 38 km.

Total Team Hours: 48.5 hr; by vehicle 31.25 hr; on foot 17.25 hr.

**Number of Species:** 104

**Number of Birds:** 3413

## **Lac La Biche**

**Date:** May 29 & 30, 2010

**Compiler:** Jennifer Okraineec

**Participants:** Heather Dempsey, Bob Dunn, Bernie Gauthier, Ted Johnson, Mel Kuprowsky, Dave & Kathy Lawson, Muriel Mueller, Jennifer Okraineec, Don & Jean Welke, George & Barbara Ann Wicker

**Area Covered:**

Lac La Biche Area from Plamondon to Lakeland Provincial Recreation area, North to Owl River, South to Fork Lake.

**Weather:** Day 1: Temp. 3 to 7°C

Wind speed: 6 to 30 km/hr.

Precipitation: yes

Comments: overcast all morning; started raining about 1pm

Day 2: Temp. 3 to 9°C

**Team Distance/Hours:** Total Team Mileage: 510 km; by vehicle 507 km; on foot 3 km.

Total Team Hours: 44 hr; by vehicle 42 hr; on foot 2 hr.

**Number of Species:** 133 (+4 cw)

**Number of Birds:** 7301 (+15 cw)

**Other species seen during count week:** Northern Goshawk (1), Whooping Cranes (2), Mourning Dove (2), Bohemian Waxwing (10)

**Highlights:** Found a breeding ground for Sharp-tailed Grouse; they were dancing and drumming all around.

## **Lethbridge**

**Date:** May 29 & 30, 2010

**Compiler:** Teresa Dolman

**Participants:** Linda Cerney, Mary Cerney, Douglas Dolman, Teresa Dolman (compiler), Wayne Dwornik, Cam Goater, Ben Goater, Lori Goater, Graeme Greenlee, Patricia Greenlee, Ron Levagood, Ken Moore, Jay Yanke

**Area Covered:** Lethbridge, Fort Macleod River Valley Wilderness Park, Park Lake Provincial Park, Stirling Lake

**Weather:** Day 1: Temp. 0.5 to 5°C

Wind speed: 15 to 30 km/hr. Wind direction: NNE

Precipitation: 14 mm

Day 2: Temp. 3 to 6°C

Wind speed: 0 to 15 km/hr. Wind direction: NNE

Precipitation: 4 mm

**Team Distance/Hours:** Total Team Mileage: 103 km; by vehicle 67 km; on foot 36 km  
Total Team Hours 26 hr; by vehicle 1 hr; on foot 24 hr, watching feeders 1 hr.

**Number of Species:** 97

**Number of Birds:** 2257

**Other species seen during count week:** (1) Sora, (1) Philadelphia Vireo, (1) White-crowned Sparrow

**Highlights:** No new species were added to this count, and the total of 97 species was below normal. Three species were seen for only the third time for this count: Bald Eagle, Caspian Tern and White-faced Ibis. The other two times the Ibis were recorded there were only single birds observed – this year 35 Ibis were seen at Stirling Lake, south-east of Lethbridge.

## **Medicine Hat**

**Date:** May 30, 2010

**Compiler:** Marty Drut

**Participants:** Barry Anderson, Judy Anderson, Rick Carrier, Eileen Cowtan, Marty Drut, Val Felesky, Bob Frew, Corlaine Gardner, John Hide, Lauren Hider, Sue Higgin, Dale Holmes, Annalora Horch, Phil Horch, Jim Knelson, Cam Lockerbie, Dave MacKenzie, Jim Marshall, Michael O'Shea, David Parbery, Jennifer Roberts, Dan Schiebelbein, Mark Schiebelbein, John Slater, Elaine Spitzer, Milt Spitzer, Donna Steele, Jennifer Stroh, Julie Tingley, Ben Velner, Mike Velner, Rhea Wilson. Feeder Watchers: George Lulkasiewicz, Judy Simmons

**Area Covered:** 25 km circle around Medicine Hat

**Weather:** NO WEATHER DATA RECORDED

**Team Distance/Hours:** Total Team Mileage: 380.5 km; by vehicle 294.5 km; on foot 86 km. Total Team Hours: 86 hr; by vehicle 33.5 hr; on foot 52.5 hr.

**Number of Species:** 139

**Number of Birds:** 13,123

**Other species seen during count week:** Black-billed cuckoo (1).

**Highlights:** 2010 was another great year as there were 2 new species seen on the count – Baird's sandpiper and red-necked phalarope. Furthermore, there were 17 species with recorded high counts up from 11 in 2009; 4 (turkey vulture, prairie falcon, pileated woodpecker, and red-eyed vireo) tied high counts from previous years while the remainder set new highs (see Table 1 below). The number of participants increased from 2009 with a corresponding increase in distances driven and covered on foot (see Data Summary Table below). Many thanks to all those who volunteered their time this year!

**New Species Observed in 2010:** Baird’s Sandpiper – 1, Red-necked Phalarope – 2

Table 1. 2010 Spring Bird Count All Time High and Low Observations.

<b>2010 Spring Bird Count – Highs and Lows</b>			
<b>Species</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Previous High</b>	<b>Year</b>
Canada Goose	930	884	2000
Green-winged Teal	11	8	1997
Mallard	457	369	2000
Cinnamon Teal	9	8	1991
American Wigeon	54	36	1996
Turkey Vulture	23	23	2008
Prairie Falcon	6	6	2002
Marbled Godwit	68	58	1992
Franklin’s Gull	1,006	283	1993
Eurasian-collared Dove	11	7	2009
Pileated Woodpecker	2	2	2008
Violet-green Swallow	61	36	2009
Common Raven	9	2	1997
Black-capped Chickadee	71	63	2002
Rock Wren	31	18	2002, 1991
American Robin	918	894	2009
Red-eyed Vireo	8	8	1988
<b>Species</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Previous Low</b>	<b>Year</b>
No Lows in 2010	-	-	-

All of the species with observed highs in 2010 were native species except Eurasian-collared dove. Most of the Franklin’s gulls were observed in 2 flocks (580 and 375, respectively) by separate observers. Robins exhibited a high for the third straight year and highs for 2 species (Eurasian-collared dove and violet-green swallow) occurred previously in 2009. This is only the second time common ravens have been observed during a spring count and they were observed as two unique groups by separate observers (3 and 6, respectively). Water birds (waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls) accounted for the 2 new species observed and 7 of 17 high counts recorded.

Less frequently seen species observed in 2010 included sharp-shinned hawk (1), black-necked stilt (1), solitary sandpiper (1), common nighthawk (1), eastern phoebe (1), white-throated sparrow (1), and bobolink (1).

The top five for 2010 were: European starling (1,171), Franklin’s gull (1,006), Canada goose (930), American robin (918), and ring-billed gull (862).

One species, black-billed cuckoo (1), was seen exclusively during count week.



As for flowers in bloom, there were 53 species observed, which is above average for the spring count. Likely, the unusually wet spring translated to more wildflowers and increased numbers of water birds observed.

## **Milk River/Writing-on-Stone**

**Date:** May 28 & 29, 2010

**Compiler:** Bob Parsons

**Participants:** 7 participants

**Area Covered:** information not provided

**Weather:** Day 1: Temp. 1 to 6°C

Wind speed: calm Wind direction: S

Precipitation: drizzle, some early morning snow

Comments: Three days of incessant rain before count weekend meant waterlogged side roads on the weekend. Many inaccessible for the 7/8 participants. Count was almost abandoned. Saturday, counters had to stick to the few paved roads only.

Day 2: Temp. 1 to 9°C

Wind speed: calm. Wind direction: SE

Precipitation: slight drizzle at times

Comments: Many roads impassable due to muddy condition.

**Team Distance/Hours:** Total Team Mileage: 709 km; by vehicle 700 km; on foot 9 km.

Total Team Hours: 49 hr; by vehicle 40 hr; on foot 9 hr.

**Number of Species:** 119 (+ 5 cw)

**Number of Birds:** 18061 (+ 7 cw)

**Other species seen during count week:** Greater Sage Grouse (2), Rough-legged Hawk (1), Golden Eagle (1), Caspian Tern (1), Hummingbird species (1), Yellow-rumped Warbler (1)

**Highlights:** PREPARATION

We saw lakes where we've never seen lakes before?

On completion of the Brooks count, I immediately headed to Milk River and into Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park, our traditional count HQ. It was soon apparent that the wet weather had affected this southerly area too, with high water levels in the wetlands and flooded fields wherever I looked. The park was in good shape and emptying out after the long weekend. I was not expecting too much company as Del Huget from Lethbridge was not expected to scout till mid-week. Tuesday and Wednesday saw cool, overcast conditions and I was able to check out most of the coulees as well as the Pinhorn Grazing Reserve where I came across a pair of Sage Grouse.

Secondary Road 880 from the 501, down to Aden, can be a bird watching Mecca and I saw many McCown Longspurs, as well as a Prairie Falcon being harassed by a Golden Eagle. Sprague's Pipit was active but no Grasshopper Sparrow this year. Viewing five elk was a pleasant surprise as I entered the Ross Ranch, where I found a few Lark Buntings and over 50 Swainson's Thrush. The predicted rain-showers on Wednesday night soon

turned into a two-day continuous downpour and by Friday evening it was soon obvious that many of the dirt and gravel roads in the count square were going to be impassable. A brief overnight visit to Medicine Hat resulted in aqua-planing in both directions!

### COUNT WEEKEND

Wet heavy snow greet Wes Grout and me early Saturday morning, so we quickly decided to concentrate on the paved 501. Wes said, "I'll go west towards Milk River and Coutts, then I'm heading home to Strathmore!" Del Huget phoned to say his team of four would do their best counting in the northern section and west towards Pakowki, so it was left to Marie Otis (park staff) and yours truly to concentrate on the paved eastern section of the 501. The overcast morning did not produce any bird species of note and we were not able to access any of the coulees to the north of us. I did not fancy waiting two hours or so for a tow truck! No 'peeps' were noted in the many roadside sloughs and duck counting kept us both very busy. Quite a few species were missing but who is going to perch on a fence post in these poor conditions? We did manage to find a few Ferruginous Hawks and many Swainson's of varying colour. Last year's cool spring breeding conditions had affected the Red-tailed Hawk population and we were hard pressed to find any this time around. Northern Harrier were active and two Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were found in a run-down property. We came across fair numbers of Avocet, Marbled Godwit but only one Loggerhead Shrike. The day's tally was a meagre 60 species with a travel distance of 150 km. Del phoned to say that he and his crew seemed to have had a better day than expected, totalling close to 70 species in the Crow Indian Lake and Etzicome Coulee areas. Terrible road conditions affected his counting too but he had good numbers of grebe, swallow and night heron.

Light winds and overcast skies greeted me on Sunday morning but I managed to find over 30 species when doing the park walk. Good looks at Rock Wren, tanager, Spotted Towhee, Prairie Falcon, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Gray Catbird (8), Gray-cheeked Thrush, American Redstart and a pair of Baltimore Orioles who were collecting the threads of string I left out!

Heading out I was able to access Verdigris Lake, the southern sections of Etzicome Coulee and Crow Indian. I searched in vain for quite a few missing species - Clark's Grebe, all the "peeps," Mountain Bluebird, and Bullock's Oriole - but many of the acreages were productive with McGillivray's Warbler, many Swainson's Thrush (again), Western Tanager, and Great Horned Owl. The wet weather closed in again as I headed to a soggy and desolate Writing-on-Stone Park. Del phoned to say that continuous downpours in Lethbridge had prevented him from venturing out to meet up with me. "you did not miss much," I announced!

The final total of 119 species plus 5 count week is below average for the count (as expected) and one can only hope for better weather next time around.

Count highlights include 1200 Eared Grebe and 860 Ruddy duck at Verdigris Lake, 5 Bobolink at the wonderful Gilchrist Ranch and a Black-headed Grosbeak found at a feeder in Milk River townsite. Ring-necked Ducks (51) were spotted in a large group on

the east side of Verdigris. 132 Swainson's Thrush was a new record as was Wilson's Snipe, Eastern Phoebe and Greater Scaup. Green-winged Teal (6) were spotted in a roadside slough, traditionally a tough duck to find on this Montana border.

Notable by their absence or low numbers include all the 'peep," W Grebe (1), Turkey Vulture, Say's Phoebe, and one one White-faced Ibis (35 reported in Lethbridge count!) Warblers were also in short supply with only five species counted. Hawk numbers were poor but again many sections were not surveyed...Ferruginous (5), Red-Tailed (3), Swainson's (30). A lone Burrowing Owl was found by Del Huget but outside the count week period.

Many thanks must go to the park staff and the seven participants who did their best in very tiring conditions. Bravo everyone! Gratitude to our sponsors as well - Cenovus, TransCanada Pipelines, Ducks Unlimited and the Wildbird General Store. This count is of real importance due to its isolation but the habitat and scenery is quite unique in my opinion.

## **Taber-Vauxhall**

**Date:** May 29 & 30, 2010

**Compiler:** Lloyd Bennett

**Participants:** Britney Bennett, Lloyd Bennett, Mary Bennett, Yolanda Bennett, Glen Gardner, Ron Levagood, Ben Tams, Carol Tams, Gideon Tams, Jacki Tams, Nolan Tams

**Area Covered:** Taber & Vauxhall areas, Purple Springs Dunes

**Weather:** Day 1: Temp. 0 to 4.5°C

Wind speed: 19 to 33 km/hr. Wind direction: NNE

Precipitation: 16.4 mm

Day 2: Temp. 4 to 9°C

Wind speed: 15 to 20 km/hr. Wind direction: NNE

Precipitation: 0.4 mm

**Team Distance/Hours:** Total Team Mileage: 486.5 km; by vehicle 476 km; on foot 10.5 km. Total Team Hours: 29.75 hr; by vehicle 20 hr; on foot 9.75 hr.

**Number of Species:** 127

**Number of Birds:** 6271

**Other species seen during count week:** Wilson's Warbler, Lark Bunting

**Highlights:** The count was very challenging due to wet weather conditions. The area was already saturated prior to the weekend, then Saturday dawned with heavy, wet snow, which greatly limited visibility. Country roads were extremely difficult to drive on, so we could not cover some of the areas that we usually go to. Conditions gradually improved during Saturday and into Sunday. But in spite of the terrible conditions, we still reached a total of 127 species, which is 1 more than the average of 126 for the 20 years that the Taber count has been done.

One new species was found: a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, which showed bright yellow underparts as compared to Least, which has very little or no yellow. Some birds were abundant, and set record high numbers. One was the Least Flycatcher, with 56 (previous

high 43). Others were Swainson's Thrush 80 (65), Tree Swallow 75 (48), Bank Swallow 316 (310), American Robin 107 (96), Snow Goose 2 (1) and Eurasian Collared-Dove 17 (10). A single Sharp-tailed Grouse was found, for only the second time, and ravens were also found for the second time. Other unusual things were a Hooded Merganser and a Broad-winged Hawk. No migrating shorebirds were found at all and only 4 kinds of migrating warblers. Many of the prairie and forest songbirds were hard to find because they were not singing, but most of the expected birds were found. Count week birds were a Wilson's Warbler and a Lark Bunting.

For mammals, the most memorable thing was coming face to face with a pair of raccoons along the Oldman River, early Sunday morning. Otherwise most of the small mammals were staying out of sight, so only 10 kinds of mammals were seen, plus one more found by tracks only.

## **Wakomao Lake**

**Date:** May 29, 2010

**Compiler:** Jim Lange

**Participants:** Vince Cottrell, Jim Lange, Fred Wiley

**Area Covered:** The area is divided by the highway as well as two township roads running along the north end of the lake and the second one along jackpine, mixedwood and pasture land. Regular range roads run along the other portions making good access for a thorough survey.

**Weather:** Temp. 4 to 6°C

Wind speed: 20 km/hr. Wind direction: W

Precipitation: steady light rain by noon, snow by 7:00 p.m.

Comments: the weather did not cooperate.

**Team Distance/Hours:** Total Team Hours: 9 hr

**Number of Species:** 61

**Number of Birds:** 794

**Highlights:** Wakomao Lake is located on Hwy 18 just east of Clyde (70 km north of Edmonton). The count area is an Atlas Square of 10X10 km which covers all the good area and is enjoyable and productive birding. Water levels in the area are not as bad as last fall but sure have a long way to go to get back to spring of 2007 levels. A pair of Trumpeter Swans were seen back once again on Bouchard L. located on the east side of the count area. In 2007 they nested there and raised three young. A visit to the site on June 8, 2010 found them swimming together so unsure if they are nesting or possibly the young from 2007. Good to see one way or another. We did not locate the Turkey Vultures, due to the weather. They are seen in the area each spring for the last 3-4 years and were seen during an Edmonton Nature Club field trip to the area June 12, 2010. Another treat.

## **Waterton Lakes National Park**

**Date:** June 5 & 6, 2010

**Compiler:** Teresa Dolman

**Participants:** Peter Achuff, Alison Bennett, Diane Bennett, Jeff Bennett, Lloyd Bennett, Nathan Bennett, Yolanda Bennett, Douglas Dolman, Teresa Dolman (compiler), Wayne Dwornik, David McIntyre, Ken Moore, Kim Pearson, Cyndi Smith

**Area Covered:** Within Park boundaries

**Weather:** Day 1: Temp. 8 to 15°C

Wind speed: 20 to 32 km/hr. Wind direction: NNE

Precipitation: 2 mm

Day 2: Temp. 7 to 19

Wind speed: 17 to 24 km/hr. Wind direction: NNE

Precipitation: nil

**Team Distance/Hours:** Total Team Mileage: 212 km; by vehicle 190km; on foot 22 km.

Total Team Hours 38 hr; by vehicle 22.5 hr; on foot 15 hr; watching feeders 0.5 hr

**Number of Species:** 114

**Number of Birds:** 1606

**Other species seen during count week:** none

**Highlights:** The total of 114 species seen was well above the average for this count (103). One species was added to the all-time list – a single Dusky Grouse was seen by an observer who was hiking along the top of Lakeview Ridge. Dusky Grouse have been recorded previously on the Waterton Christmas Bird Count, but until now not on the May Species Count. Two other species were seen for only the second time – Northern Saw-whet Owl and Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch.