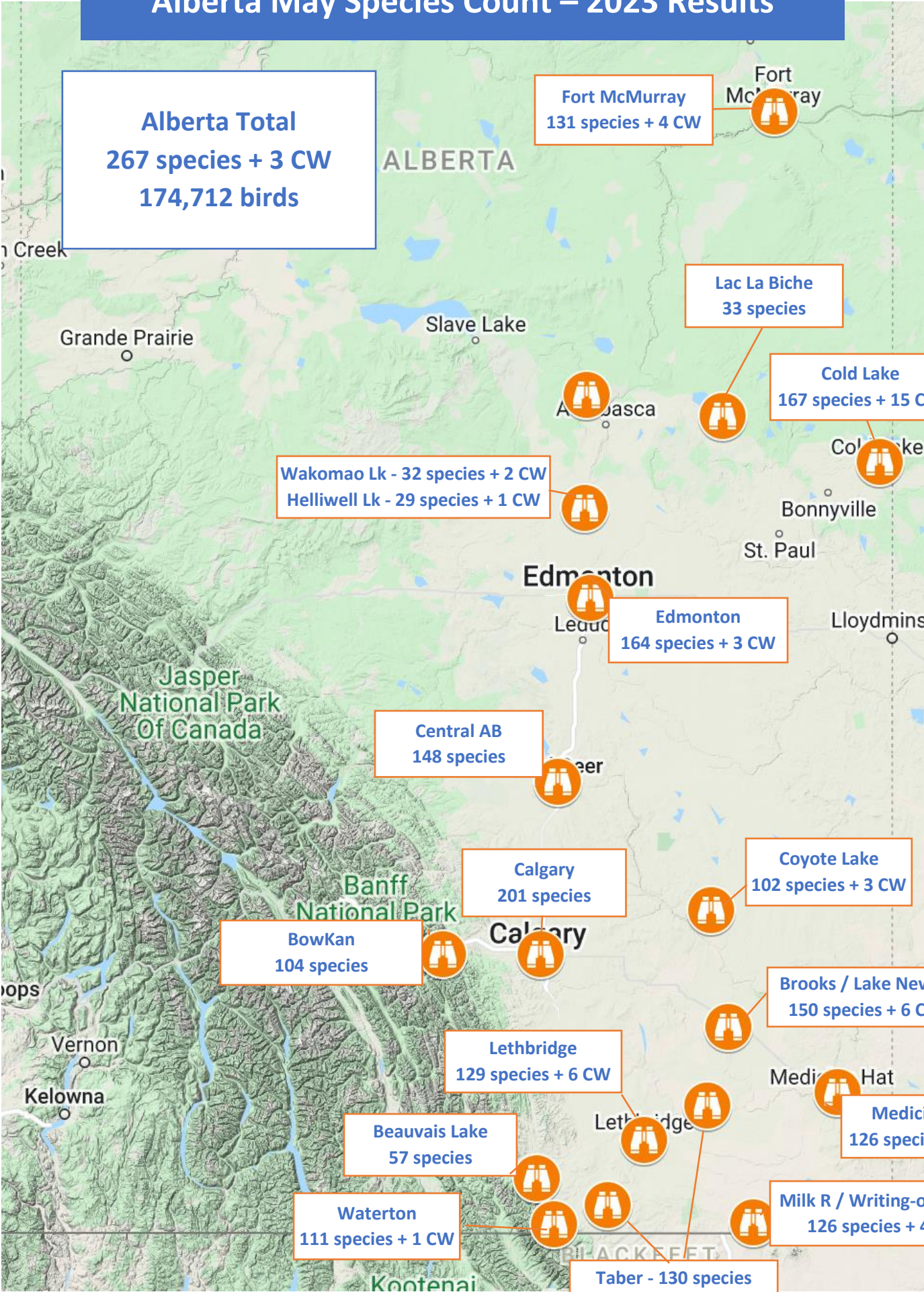


# Alberta May Species Count – 2023 Results



# Alberta May Species Count 2023 – Bird Count Results and Commentary

## Alberta Totals

### Count Results

Number of Species: 267 (just below the 15-yr average of 271 species)

Number of Birds: 174,712 (19% below the 15-yr average of 215,688 birds)

Count Week Species: Across Alberta, 3 species were seen on the days immediately before or after count day (but not on count day at any location): Hudsonian Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, and White-rumped Sandpiper (all at Cold Lake)

### Effort

Number of Participants: 451 (12% above the average of 404 participants over the last 15 years)

Total Team Hours: 1,469 (8% below the 15-yr average)

Total Km Traveled: 11,392 (10% below the 15-yr average)

Number of Locations: 18 (just below the 15-yr average of 19 locations)

Alberta Count Compiler: Lara Fitzpatrick

## Comments

### Interesting or Unusual Species:

- An Indigo Bunting was reported in Edmonton – a great find, seen only six times in the count back to 1976. An eBird checklist was submitted with photos. This was the only “reportable” Alberta rarity in this year’s count.
- Other unusual species reported this year included two Lewis’s Woodpeckers in Waterton (7 reports since 1976), three Ross’s Geese in Taber (only reported in the Alberta MSC 10 times since 1976), and six Cackling Geese in Fort McMurray (5 reports since 1976).
- No new species were reported for Alberta, keeping the cumulative species count at 340 species since 1976

### Other Observations or Highlights:

- This was a low year for overall bird numbers, with 40,000 fewer birds seen vs. the 15-year average. About half of this drop was due to low Franklin’s Gull numbers (down over 20,000 or 66%); other low counts included American Coots (down over 4000 or 76%), Black-bellied Plovers (down over 3200 or 85%), and Tree, Cliff and Bank Swallows (down 6100 in total or 35%). This year marks a 15-year low for 37 species, ranging from waterfowl to gulls & terns to raptors and songbirds. It should be noted that for many of these species, only a few birds may be reported in any given year.
- At the same time, 21 species hit their 15-year high, with notably high numbers of Mourning Doves and Yellow Warblers. Of these, 13 species saw an all-time high, including widespread species (Black-capped Chickadee, House Wren, House Finch and Least Flycatcher), and more narrowly distributed species like Blackburnian Warbler, Nashville Warbler, and Rock Wren.
- No Semipalmated Plovers were reported this year, and White-rumped Sandpipers were missed on count day but seen during count week; both species have been seen 14 of the last 15 years.
- Three species were observed at every count location in Alberta: Canada Goose, Mallard, and Red-winged Blackbird (the same three as last year). 29 species were observed in only one count location.

## Beauvais Lake Provincial Park

Area Covered: Within Park boundaries – Beauvais Lake, ponds and several trails

Count Date: May 31, 2023

Count Organizer / Compiler: Teresa Dolman

### Count Results

Number of Species: 57

Number of Birds: 302

Number of Local Count Week Species: 0

### Effort

Number of Participants: 3

Total Team Hours: 5.3

Total Km Traveled: 5.0

### Comments

**Interesting or Unusual Species:** Of the 57 species seen, one was new for the count: Violet-green Swallow. Baltimore Oriole was recorded for only the third time.

**Weather & Conditions:** Temperature 15-19°C; Wind S at 15-30 Km/Hr; no precipitation

## Bow and Kananaskis Valleys

Area Covered: Highway 40 to Kananaskis Village. Highway 1 from Exshaw to Lac des Arcs

Count Date: May 27-28, 2023

Count Organizer / Compiler: Cliff Hansen / Briana Van Den Bussche

### Count Results

Number of Species: 104

Number of Birds: 1,303

Number of Local Count Week Species: 0

### Effort

Number of Participants: 27

Total Team Hours: 54.8

Total Km Traveled: 170.5

### Comments

**Interesting or Unusual Species:** Turkey Vultures have been reported in our area in the past but until now not on a count. We spotted and photographed an individual on this count. This is a new addition to our records. Two bird species (Black-backed Woodpecker and House Finch) were reported for only the second time.

The count of birds per species is noted for being below average numbers with a few statistically not meaningful increases. The only exception was the count of 33 Warbling Vireos which is more than double the average of 16.

**Other Observations or Highlights:** Our spring tally of 1303 birds is far below our 31 counts average of 2703 birds. The more significant indicator is the number of species reported but hereto the count of 104 species is significantly lower than the average count of 117 species. The reasons for the shortfall is not clear. We know that 100% leaf cover makes it difficult to spot birds and one subarea was not fully explored. Also, many birds were identified by their song but that doesn't tell us how many birds were there or how many individuals or species are hiding except for the one noisy one. Also, there could be fewer birds. I have heard reports that avian flu has taken a toll on bird populations in North America.

The mammal count consisted of sightings of the following eight species: 1 elk, 2 Mule deer, 14 white-tailed deer, 43 Rocky Mountain Big-horned sheep, 19 red squirrel, 22 Columbian ground squirrel, 1 golden mantled ground squirrel, 4 yellow pine chipmunk. 2 boreal chorus frogs reported. Except for bear scat, no predators were reported.

Our count party did use the new Merlin Bird ID app from The Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Many times it alerted us to faint twittering with suggested identifications before we heard them. This caused us to pause, listen and confirm. We found the Merlin app to be easy to use and accurate.

**Weather & Conditions:** Spring 2023 arrived early. The trees were 100% leafed out providing a lot of cover for birds. However, the weather was pleasant for the entire count-week. Air temperatures varied from morning lows of about 5EC to afternoon highs ranging from +20EC to +25EC. Sun and cloud cover varied from scattered to broken conditions. Winds varied from light to moderate with some gusts mainly from a westerly direction. Only a few sprinkles of precipitation were reported. To sum up, the weather for our count week was ideal.

## Brooks - Lake Newell

Area Covered: 20 mile radius from centre of circle at Hwy 873 and TWP 180 plus Majorville Medicine Wheel area

Count Date: May 20-21, 2023

Count Organizer / Compiler: Debra Hornsby and Donna Wieckowski

### Count Results

Number of Species: 150

Number of Birds: 33,526

Number of Local Count Week Species: 6

List of Count Week Species: Virginia Rail, American Golden-Plover, Whimbrel, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Spotted Towhee, Northern Waterthrush

### Effort

Number of Participants: 33

Total Team Hours: 185.0

Total Km Traveled: 1,787.5

### Comments

**Interesting or Unusual Species:** First ever Wood Duck (always expected - finally observed), second Black-throated Green Warbler (plus another on CW), third Nashville Warbler on count. First Yellow-bellied Sapsucker since 2011.

**Other Observations or Highlights:** Low number of warblers, meadowlarks, extremely low duck and shorebird numbers. Higher than average Chestnut-collared Longspurs - highest number since 2014. Pelicans double the 24 year average. 3 birds missed completely for first time in count history on count days: Whimbrel, Blue Jay, Warbling Vireo. Swallow numbers scarily below average: TRES 82% below, BANS 99% below, BARS 59% below, CLSW 45% below.

**Weather & Conditions:** Saturday - Smoky, 14-24 Calm. Sunday - Smoky to clear, 16-30, calm.

## Calgary

**Area Covered:** 80 km circle centered on Centre Street Bridge in downtown Calgary, encompassing 20,114 sq km. The area extends to just south of Olds in the North, just north of Nanton in the south, just west of Exshaw and Highway 40 in the west and just past Standard in the east. The area covers portions of the Rocky Mountains, Foothills, Parkland and Grassland biomes, and is within the western Central Flyway and eastern Pacific (Rocky Mountain) Flyway of bird migration. The area falls just east of the Rocky Mountains, which served as a barrier that separated distinct populations of many species that lived in North America during several periods of glaciation.

**Count Date:** May 27-28, 2023

**Count Organizer / Compiler:** Andrew Hart / Lara Fitzpatrick

### Count Results

**Number of Species:** 201

**Number of Birds:** 57,818

**Number of Local Count Week Species:** 0

### Effort

**Number of Participants:** 103

**Total Team Hours:** 367.1

**Total Km Traveled:** 2,922.5

### Comments

**Interesting or Unusual Species:** Unusual species this year included two Spruce Grouse in the Kananaskis area (seen only 7 times in Calgary May Species Counts since 1979), a Nashville Warbler (10 reports since 1979) also seen in the Kananaskis area, and a Common Nighthawk at Glenbow Ranch near Cochrane (14 reports since 1979).

**Other Observations or Highlights:** We enjoyed great weather, mainly clear skies and strong participation for the Calgary May Species Count this year.

The overall result of 201 species is below our average of 209, in part due to a number of missed "regulars". There were no Harlequin Ducks, Red-naped Sapsuckers, Cassin's Vireos, Swamp Sparrows or Fox Sparrows reported; most of these species are seen every year.

The total count of birds was well below average: 57,818 vs. a 10-year average of 71,291 birds. This was mainly driven by low numbers of Franklin's Gull, Canada Goose, Tree & Bank Swallow, American Coot, Eared Grebe, Yellow-headed Blackbird, and various shorebirds. These low counts were partly offset by higher numbers of California Gulls and Yellow Warblers.

New records were set for six species: Yellow Warbler, House Wren, American White Pelican, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Red-eyed Vireo, and American Redstart. Belted Kingfisher and Spotted Towhee counts tied with prior records.

While we had a few more participants than average, hours spent and distance travelled were below average. However, this could be a result of the "eBird-only" approach used this year - for the first time, no separate data template was required from participants, and distance and time were downloaded from eBird.

**Weather & Conditions:** Clear and mainly sunny both days, with occasional clouds and brief showers. Temperatures ranged from 7 to 25 degrees C, averaging around 17 C. Light wind and no smoke.



## Cardston

Area Covered: 50 Km radius circle around Cardston.

Count Date: May 30-31, 2023

Count Organizer / Compiler: Lloyd Bennett / Teresa Dolman

### Count Results

Number of Species: 123

Number of Birds: 2,774

Number of Local Count Week Species: 0

### Effort

Number of Participants: 8

Total Team Hours: 32.0

Total Km Traveled: 448.5

### Comments

**Interesting or Unusual Species:** No less than four new species were added to the all-time list: Broad-winged Hawk, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Cape May Warbler and Chestnut-sided Warbler. For only the second time Alder Flycatcher and White-breasted Nuthatch were recorded, and for only the third time, Turkey Vulture and Brewer's Sparrow.

**Weather & Conditions:** Temperature: 15-22°C; Wind W at 0-25 Km/Hr; no precipitation.

## Central Alberta

Area Covered: Zone 1 (Red Deer), Zone 2 (Sylvan Lake), Zone 3 (Gull Lake), Zone 4 (Lacombe), Zone 6 (Pine Lake), Zone 7 (Penhold), Zone 8 (Dickson, MRWC), Zone 10 (Gilby, Medicine Lodge Hills), Zone 14 (Clive), Zone 15 (Alix), Zone 16 (Lousana), Zone 17 (Bigelow Reservoir), Zone 18 (Davey Lake), Zone 19 (Bowden), Zone 22 (Didsbury), Zone 23 (Didsbury), Zone 25 (Three Hills), and Zone 26 (Dry Island Buffalo Jump).

Count Date: May 27-28, 2023

Count Organizer / Compiler: Judy Boyd

### Count Results

Number of Species: 148

Number of Birds: 12,629

Number of Local Count Week Species: 0

### Effort

Number of Participants: 68

Total Team Hours: 164.5

Total Km Traveled: 1,214.5

### Comments

**Interesting or Unusual Species:** First recorded sighting since 2000: Nashville Warbler. Only second recorded sighting: Yellow Rail (other time was in 2008)

**Other Observations or Highlights:** Highest recorded numbers since 2000: Snow Goose, White-throated Sparrow, House Wren, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Least Flycatcher, Western Wood-Pewee, Pileated Woodpecker (tied with numbers counted in 2013 and 2019).

**Weather & Conditions:** Weather for Saturday: Temp. 4 to 26oC Wind speed: 5 to 40 km/hr. Wind direction: variable Cloud cover: 05-80% Weather for Sunday: Temp. 10 to 27oC Wind speed: 1 to 40 km/hr. Wind direction: variable Cloud cover: 0-100%

## Cold Lake

Area Covered: 20-mile radius count circle center: 5427.30N 11030.00W.

Area of transition between Parkland Agricultural areas and Boreal forest, with many lakes, sloughs and wetlands of various sizes. The count area included Cold Lake Provincial Park, English Bay, North Bay, HorseShoe Bay and Marina, Jesse and Charlotte Lake, Ernestina Lake, Angling Lake, Ethel, Hilda and Marie Lakes, Crane Lake, Margaurite Lake, Manitokan Lake, Moose Lake PP and Muriel Lake MD Park. This covered areas within WR51-55, WR40-45, WR30-33, WR 20-22, WR10-14, and WR01-04, WR23,24,25 and WR 34,35 were covered this count. Count areas in WR15, WR25-26 and WR 35 received only cursory coverage due to remoteness and limited count participation.

Count Date: May 27-28, 2023

Count Organizer / Compiler: Ted Hindmarch

### Count Results

Number of Species: 167

Number of Birds: 8,247

Number of Local Count Week Species: 15

List of Count Week Species: Cinnamon Teal, American Golden-Plover, Hudsonian Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, Least Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Black-backed Woodpecker, American Kestrel, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Orange-crowned Warbler, Wilson's Warbler

### Effort

Number of Participants: 25

Total Team Hours: 107.6

Total Km Traveled: 836.5

### Comments

**Interesting or Unusual Species:** No previously unreported species this count but some highlights.

Trumpeter Swan was reported for only a 2nd count record in 23 years and for a 2nd straight year with 2 individuals observed in Cold Lake Provincial Park's Hall's Lagoon. A pair was initially reported there on April 26 by Emily Gorda and Jae Lee (eBird checklist S29231230) and probably the same pair continued to be reported through Jun 11 (eBird Checklist S141506292) - Many observers over that period with great photos (see eBird checklist s140227198). A 3rd swan, a probable Trumpeter/Tundra hybrid, was also documented by Richard Klauke at "Sandy Lake" northwest of La Corey (Checklist S139618939). It also had been around since 6 May. Our 1st count record of Trumpeter Swan was 2022 at Crane Lake.

The first breeding evidence for Northern Rough-Winged Swallow was documented by Richard Klauke in a gravel pit near the Medley River west off the Primrose Hwy. 3 Pair were active in nest preparation (Checklist S139423953). This is also only the 3rd count record for the species with previous reports in 2010 and 2013.

A CW Hudsonian Godwit, only the 5th count record and first since 2013, first reported by Amanda Guercio on 22 May; it was observed by several observers in the Jessie/Charlotte Lake areas through 26 May but did not stick around into the weekend (CW photo by Richard Klauke at S139323550).

Other "C List" species (seen on less than 25% of Counts) are as follows: Black-Necked Stilt - 4th Record. Continue for 3rd consecutive year to nest in Jessie/Charlotte Lake area - multiple eBird reports; CW Short-Billed Dowitcher 2nd count record (both CW) Charlotte Lake (X3) by R Klauke (S139323550) and Jessie Lake (X1) by Ben Evans (S139231163). The Jessie Lake SBDO was photographed on 23 May by Amanda Geurcio (S139019296); Long-Eared Owl (X1) 5th record Heard Donna Michaud Cold Lake N outskirts (FW); Yellow-Bellied Flycatcher (X3) 5th record and 3rd consecutive year - various locations - R Klauke (S139423953, S139457278) T and K Hince (S139506369); House Finch (X11) 5th record and highest count to date - 11 reported by feeder watchers in Cold Lake; Bobolink (X2) 5th record and 5th consecutive year with breeding evidence. Two locations with singing/displaying birds discovered over count week, with photo's obtained by Trevor Churchill 27 May (S139461181).

The CW discovery of a B-list nesting pair of Black-Backed Woodpeckers in Moose Lake PP was another count highlight.

**Other Observations or Highlights:** Cold Lake ran its 23rd Annual May Species Count on the last weekend in May (May 27/28). Count week-end numbers (167) met the 23 year average (166). CW numbers (15) were substantially higher than average (9.6). Including CW the total species count was 182 which exceeded our 23 yr average of 176. The CW number was mainly a result of shorebird habitat being more extensively covered by multiple observers during the countweek period - the bulk of the CW species were shorebirds. Several visiting at-large eBirders, although far fewer than last year, were a contributing factor to our overall results.

The individual number of participants/contributors was 25. This broke down to 8 of our regulars, 9 local feeder watchers, and 7 at large eBirders (plus 2 only active CW). These eBirders provided extensive coverage of hotspots and helped to fill out numbers. Where multiple reports came from a given area, only the highest individual count or unreported species were used in the count numbers. A big thanks to our annual participants who year after year travel the rural roads to cover many of the lesser visited areas in the count circle.

Waterfowl numbers this year were again led by Eared Grebe, followed by Canada Goose, Lesser Scaup, Mallard, Blue-Winged Teal, Ruddy Duck and Northern Shoveller. Highlights were Trumpeter Swans and a CW Cinnamon Teal.

Whether due to migration timing, water levels or other factors the area was not a very active migration stopover for shorebirds count week. Stopover spots at/near Charlotte and Sandy/Manatoka Lakes yielded most of the few shorebird numbers reported. Fair numbers of locally breeding American Avocet topped the shorebird list, followed by Killdeer and Marbled Godwit. A-list Yellow Rail were not reported anywhere on this count, with one of the more reliable habitats at Osborne Creek being destroyed with drainage ditches. With the C list species already covered, the highlight again this year was the number of Black-Necked Stilts on nesting territory, along with B List Black-Bellied Plover X1, Ruddy Turnstone (CW1), White-Rumped Sandpiper (CW4), Pectoral Sandpiper (CW3), Long-Billed Dowitcher x1, and Red-Necked Phalarope x12.

Franklin's Gull numbers were lower this count as were Black Tern numbers. The small number of Sabine's Gulls were picked out over Cold Lake again this year. Always a nice find as they have become more regular on our count.

With the exception of Broad-Winged Hawk, raptors numbers were low.

Red-Winged Blackbird, Cliff Swallow, and Red-eyed Vireo were the top three in the passerine category. A-Listed White-Crowned Sparrow were missed this year. We continued to have Bobolink observations in the Charlotte Lake area first reported in this area in 2019.

22 of the possible 22 Warbler species were observed (Orange-Crowned and Wilson's CW only) with Yellow-rumped and Ovenbird taking over top spots and the usual Tennessee winner down in numbers. Overall, warbler numbers were up with only 5 of the 22 reported in numbers of 5 or less.

**Weather & Conditions:** Early May saw temperatures above the normal average for the most part, but the start of the week of 22nd May they returned back within the average range of 7-17C. By count weekend, however, temperatures were once again well above the normal average. The count area saw no significant precipitation for the month preceding the count.

Saturday May 27 Sunrise 4:58AM Set 9:38PM Temp low 5C high 25C with shallow fog in early morning 4AM to 6:30AM and light rain showers in the evening 8:30-9:45PM. Sky mostly clear through morning hours and mostly cloudy after 3PM. Wind E-SE 0 at 6AM to increasing to 22-24km/h by mid afternoon.

Sunday May 28 Sunrise 4:57AM Set 9:40PM Temp low 11C high 28C. Thundershowers in the evening 7-10PM. Sky mostly clear 6AM-6PM. Wind S-SW 3 to 18km/h (gusting during thunderstorms).

## Coyote Lake

Area Covered: Coyote Lake, Battle Lake, Pigeon Lake, Medicine Lake Provincial Grazing Reserve

Count Date: May 27, 2023

Count Organizer / Compiler: Javan Green

### Count Results

Number of Species: 102

Number of Birds: 1,507

Number of Local Count Week Species: 3

List of Count Week Species: Cliff Swallow, House Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow

### Effort

Number of Participants: 3

Total Team Hours: 13.5

Total Km Traveled: 252.0

### Comments

**Interesting or Unusual Species:** Lark Sparrow, Nelson's Sparrow, Connecticut Warbler, Mourning Warbler

**Other Observations or Highlights:** Trumpeter Swan and American White Pelican seem more common in the area.

Mammals: white-tailed deer, elk, coyote, red squirrel

**Weather & Conditions:** 9-16 degrees Celsius, 0-15 kph wind, partly cloudy

## Edmonton

Area Covered: 80 km circle centred south end of Groat Road Bridge: 53 degrees 32', 113 degrees 32' BUT excluding Wakamoa Lake Area in the north. Includes riparian, aspen parkland, agricultural, and boreal.

Count Date: May 27-28, 2023

Count Organizer / Compiler: Brian Stephens / Edmonton Nature Club

### Count Results

Number of Species: 164

Number of Birds: 13,556

Number of Local Count Week Species: 3

List of Count Week Species: Swainson's Thrush, Baird's Sparrow, Bay-breasted Warbler

### Effort

Number of Participants: 48

Total Team Hours: 144.5

Total Km Traveled: 498.7

### Comments

**Interesting or Unusual Species:** Indigo Bunting at a yard in Edmonton: photographed, Ebird and ABRC

**Weather & Conditions:** Variable cloud. Temperatures from morning lows of 5 to highs of 28. Light winds. Many marsh and lake areas have low water.

## Fort McMurray

Area Covered: From about 30 km north to 50 km south of Fort McMurray

Count Date: May 27-28, 2023

Count Organizer / Compiler: Christine Godwin

### Count Results

Number of Species: 131

Number of Birds: 2,918

Number of Local Count Week Species: 4

List of Count Week Species: Sharp-tailed Grouse, Common Nighthawk, Broad-winged Hawk, American Kestrel

### Effort

Number of Participants: 29

Total Team Hours: 62.5

Total Km Traveled: 413.7

### Comments

**Interesting or Unusual Species:** Blackburnian Warbler, Nashville Warbler

**Weather & Conditions:** May 27: Temp 10 to 26 C, wind 5 to 10 km/hr, mostly sunny.

May 28: Temp 19 to 28 C, wind 0 to 15 km/hr, partly cloudy, light drizzle by end of day



## Helliwell Lake

Area Covered: Helliwell Lake, Athabasca

Count Date: May 27-28, 2023

Count Organizer / Compiler: Jim Lange

### Count Results

Number of Species: 29

Number of Birds: 165

Number of Local Count Week Species: 1

List of Count Week Species: Mourning Dove

### Effort

Number of Participants: 1

Total Team Hours: 1.6

Total Km Traveled: 6.0

### Comments

**Other Observations or Highlights:** There are no Ruddy Ducks and all the other ducks are either singles or spaced far apart. It takes a lot of time and careful scanning with binoculars. In hindsight it is a good thing the Bald Eagles chose not to nest there this year as there are not enough ducks to sustain a pair of adults, never mind a couple of youngsters as well. Did the eagles have some insight into this ahead of time?

**Weather & Conditions:** Sunny in AM, +24C, winds NW15km/h, then increasing cloud in PM with approaching thunderstorm. Water levels remain fairly high, despite low snow levels during the winter, but the lake is developing a very thick algae mat along the edge of RR252 on the east side of the road.

## Lac La Biche

Count Date: May 28, 2023

Count Organizer / Compiler: Jennifer Okrainec

### Count Results

Number of Species: 33

Number of Birds: 221

Number of Local Count Week Species: 0

### Effort

Number of Participants: 6

Total Team Hours: 9.0

Total Km Traveled: 7.0

## Lethbridge

Area Covered: Lethbridge and 50 Km radius circle. City parks & coulees, outlying towns, one provincial park, several reservoirs

Count Date: May 27-28, 2023

Count Organizer / Compiler: Teresa Dolman

### Count Results

Number of Species: 129

Number of Birds: 8,385

Number of Local Count Week Species: 6

List of Count Week Species: Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Varied Thrush, White-crowned Sparrow, Orange-crowned Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Western Tanager

### Effort

Number of Participants: 17

Total Team Hours: 52.0

Total Km Traveled: 162.0

### Comments

**Interesting or Unusual Species:** A count week Chestnut-sided Warbler would have been a new bird for the count had it been seen one day later. Ruffed Grouse was reported for only the second time in count history (of 48 years), and Pileated Woodpecker for only the third time. Species seen this year but not for many years previously (number of years of absence in parentheses): Common Nighthawk (10), Chestnut-collared Longspur (18), Black-and-white Warbler (19), Short-billed Dowitcher (20), Loggerhead Shrike (26) and Ruffed Grouse (33).

**Other Observations or Highlights:** The average number of species seen over the 48 year span of the count is 117. This year 129 were seen. One bird (a Greater/Lesser Yellowlegs) not identified to species, but since no other Yellowlegs was reported for the count, this bird could be considered to contribute to the total number of bird species, which would then total 130.

**Weather & Conditions:** Temperature: 12-17° C on Saturday and 8-25° C on Sunday. Winds 0-17 Km/Hr both days. 2.6 mm of rain on Saturday, none on Sunday.

## Medicine Hat

Area Covered: 10 Km radius around Medicine Hat. City, parks, farmland, and mixed native grasslands

Count Date: May 28, 2023

Count Organizer / Compiler: Ian Langill

### Count Results

Number of Species: 126

Number of Birds: 9,136

Number of Local Count Week Species: 1

List of Count Week Species: Ovenbird

### Effort

Number of Participants: 43

Total Team Hours: 108.4

Total Km Traveled: 571.0

### Comments

**Interesting or Unusual Species:** This year, one new species was seen during the count. In Ranchlands, 3 Sandhill Cranes were heard and seen flying overhead, heading North.

**Other Observations or Highlights:** We saw 126 bird species, which is on par with the historical average. We were able to count 9,136 individuals, which is an increase of 1,147 birds compared to last year, and 228 more than the historical average.

There were 11 species at an all-time high. These include the White-faced Ibis, Long-billed Curlew, Osprey, Swanson's Hawk, Eurasian Collared Dove (which beat last year's high), Northern Flicker, Alder Flycatcher, Blue Jay, Common Raven, Lazuli Bunting, and the House Finch.

Although we have many new highs in this count, we did have one all-time low in 2023, the Great Blue Heron, which has been steadily declining since 2020. One reason for their lower numbers this year, may be due to the abandonment of their rookery near the sewage treatment plant. They were seen in the area in early spring, but never ended up using this location. Another species which has been declining over the last few years is the Brown Thrasher. The average seen over the past five years (14) is well below the historical average of 38 individuals. It will be important to continue to monitor these two species going forward.

Species missing from this year's count that are typically seen in previous counts include the Cinnamon Teal (7 years), Golden Eagle (5 years), Prairie Falcon (24 years), and the American Avocet (4 years). The Common Goldeneye, was not reported in the count for the first time in 32 years.

The Top 10 for 2023 were: European Starling (1,283), American Robin (808), Common Grackle (537), House (English) Sparrow (482), Yellow Warbler (459), Red-winged Blackbird (434), Black-billed Magpie (320), Canada Goose (310), House

Finch (247) and the Ring-billed Gull (235). This is the eighth year in a row that the invasive European Starling has taken the top spot.

**Weather & Conditions:** The Spring Count had relatively seasonal temperatures (high 25°C, low 9°C), light winds (Southerly wind, 7-15 km/hr) and an overcast to partly cloudy sky for most of the day.

## Taber

Area Covered: Taber and Vauxhall areas  
Count Date: May 26-27, 2023  
Count Organizer / Compiler: Lloyd Bennett / Teresa Dolman

### Count Results

Number of Species: 130  
Number of Birds: 7,104  
Number of Local Count Week Species: 0

### Effort

Number of Participants: 8  
Total Team Hours: 34.0  
Total Km Traveled: 531.0

### Comments

**Interesting or Unusual Species:** Two new species were added to the all-time list: Western Sandpiper and Golden-crowned Kinglet.

**Weather & Conditions:** Saturday: 10-22°C, wind variable 3-18 Km/Hr, 20 mm rain. Sunday: 13-21°C, wind variable 2-13 Km/Hr, no precipitation.

## Wakomao Lake

Area Covered: Wakamao Lake, Athabasca

Count Date: May 27-28, 2023

Count Organizer / Compiler: Jim Lange

### Count Results

Number of Species: 32

Number of Birds: 324

Number of Local Count Week Species: 2

List of Count Week Species: Common Goldeneye, Common Grackle

### Effort

Number of Participants: 1

Total Team Hours: 6.8

Total Km Traveled: 57.0

### Comments

**Other Observations or Highlights:** Cliff Swallows were not back yet and Canada Geese are late with broods. Only managed to find one pair with young in all the Count area.

A noticeable change around Wakomao L. this spring is a total absence of Red-tailed Hawks. Usually there are several along with Swainson's next to the highway between Clyde and Wakomao. Also along RR250 north of TWP602 along the west side of Wakomao L. there were always Red-tailed Hawks in that area. Not this year as they were very tough to even find one!

**Weather & Conditions:** Sunny, +13C to +21C with slight smoke haze, winds SE 20 km/h. Water levels stable, but the north end of Wakomao L. shows signs of a dry season.

## Waterton

Area Covered: Within Park boundaries. All roads; a few trails; Maskinonge, Linnet and Cameron Lakes, and the town.

Count Date: June 3-4, 2023

Count Organizer / Compiler: Melanie Triganne / Teresa Dolman

### Count Results

Number of Species: 111

Number of Birds: 1,102

Number of Local Count Week Species: 1

List of Count Week Species: American Bittern

### Effort

Number of Participants: 17

Total Team Hours: 30.0

Total Km Traveled: 148.2

### Comments

**Interesting or Unusual Species:** Two species were added to the historical count list, both woodpeckers and both with Very Rare status within the Park; namely, Lewis's Woodpecker and Black-backed Woodpecker. The two Lewis's Woodpeckers seen this year are a pair and have occupied a nest cavity.

Last year Blue Jay was added to the list and this year another Blue Jay was seen. In 1985 Spotted Towhee was added to the list and it was only this year that Towhees were again recorded on the WLNP May Species Count.

**Weather & Conditions:** Saturday: 10-21° C; wind E 7-22 Km/Hr; no rain. Sunday 16-26°C; wind SW 12-27 Km/Hr; no rain.



## Writing-on-Stone / Milk River

Area Covered: N to S - Foremost to US border: E to W - Milk River to Pakowki Lake

Count Date: May 27-28, 2023

Count Organizer / Compiler: Debra Hornsby, Donna Wieckowski

### Count Results

Number of Species: 126

Number of Birds: 13,695

Number of Local Count Week Species: 4

List of Count Week Species: Common Merganser, Red-eyed Vireo, Lark Sparrow, Cape May Warbler

### Effort

Number of Participants: 11

Total Team Hours: 90.3

Total Km Traveled: 1,360.8

### Comments

**Interesting or Unusual Species:** Eastern Phoebe 3rd sighting, second Cape May Warbler during count week

**Other Observations or Highlights:** Duck species individual numbers are significantly above the last few years. Mourning Doves 3x higher than average. Franklin's Gulls 1% of average. Swainson's and Ferruginous Hawks well above average. All long term regular occurring species were seen.

**Weather & Conditions:** 13C-22C, overcast light drizzle to partly cloudy

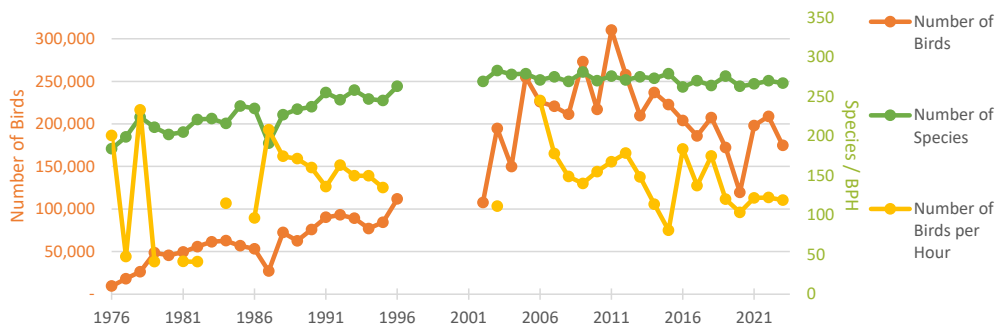
## Alberta May Species Count History

The Alberta May Species Count (MSC) has been running since 1976, and has grown steadily over the years. As you might expect, records are not perfect over that period, and data is currently not available for 1980, 1983, 1985, 1996-2002, 2004 and 2005.

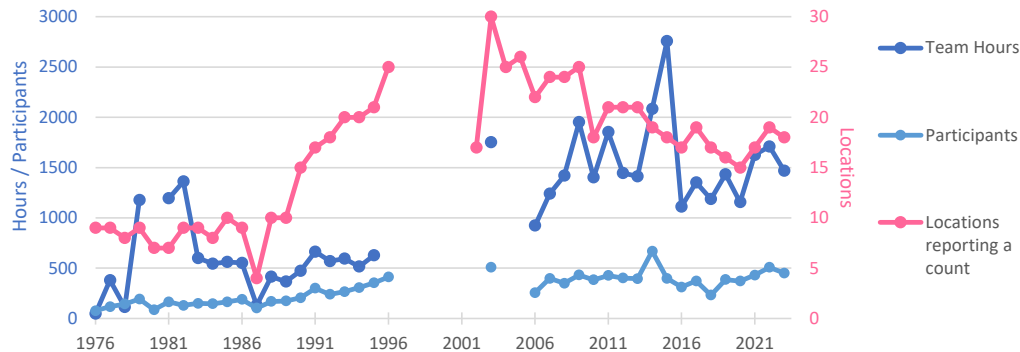
The first Alberta May Species Count identified 184 different species, and based on the data available, another 156 species have been added on count days since then. This brings us to a cumulative total of 340 species, plus another four “count week” species (observed a few days before or after the count weekend) since 1976.

The first Alberta MSC included 76 participants who spent 47 hours counting birds in 9 locations, with a total count of 9,441 birds. These days we average about 400 participants at 15 to 20 locations, usually spending nearly 1,600 hours and observing around 215,000 individual birds

### May Species Count - Alberta Summary - Results



### May Species Count - Alberta Summary - Effort



### Alberta May Species Count - Cumulative Species over time

