

Summary of the 15th Uxbridge Christmas Bird Count December 27th 2019

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Of the 5,158 birds counted this year 24% were starlings. Numbers of individual birds counted was lower than the fourteen-year average for most species except European Starling (1,210 up from 615), Wild Turkey (180 from 145), Rock Pigeon (479 from 403) and Red-breasted Nuthatch (84 from 64). The number of bird species seen was 44, was one less than last year. The 14-year species average is 46. We expected a reduction in species since the bumper crop in the north kept the northern finches such as redpolls, siskins and grosbeaks away this year. Snow buntings were also missed. While there were no new species added to the total list from previous years, highlights included: Merlin (1), Bald Eagle (1), Winter Wren (3), Song Sparrow (2), Swamp Sparrow (4), and Brown-headed Cowbird (3). Swamp Sparrow had only been observed once before five years ago. The bird is secretive and hides in the cattails; its presence can be easily missed, especially when it is windy. Winter Wren is also secretive and despite its name, is infrequent in winter being recorded on three Uxbridge counts. Finding these birds requires knowledgeable birders with a good ear for calls and spotting skills. Despite the mild weather on the day, the fog limited visibility of the birders in the morning and there was minimal open water for water birds. Numbers of many of the regular feeder birds were down including: Blue Jay, Dark-eyed Junco, American Goldfinch, and American Tree Sparrow.

The field crew consisted of 27 participants in 13 parties who covered 809 km by car, 52 km by foot and 16 km listening for owls at night. One keen individual walked 12 km through the Uxbridge Brook Wetland and was rewarded with a variety of birds. Our youngest member (8 years) spotted a Merlin from the back seat impressing his family. In addition, 25 others counted and reported the birds at their feeders. Full details can be found on our website www.northdurhamnature.com, and will be available on the National Audubon website www.audubon.org under Christmas Bird Count circle UXON.

Thanks go out to Kim and Anne Adams for hosting the Pot Luck Supper for those in the field, and to all the participants both at feeders and in the field. Also, thanks to Kim Adams for inputting the field data and to James Kamstra, Brian Henshaw and Kim Adams for editing the summary. Once again, another valuable contribution to citizen science was made and an enjoyable day spotting birds.