



The 2012/2013 Christmas Bird Count

BY PAUL SWEET

The 2012/2013 Christmas Bird Count was another warm count season, with 13 counts exceeding 50 degrees, and two breaking 60. Thirteen counts failed to reach freezing, all in northern or central Illinois. On the other hand, 32 counts had lows above freezing. Similar to last year, open water was at least partly open on all counts, and only nine reported frozen still water. Twenty counts reported snow cover, with a surprising eight inches from far southern Union County. Things were even windier than 2011, with 35 counts recording wind speeds of at least 15 mph. Carlyle Lake recorded the highest wind speeds, with max winds of 45 mph, and minimum speeds of 30 mph. This would explain the 10 count-week species reported on that count! Across the entire state, there were 174 species recorded, slightly down from the previous Christmas Bird Count's 176 but still a very nice total, with two more count week birds. The highest count-day total was at Rend Lake, with 104, but Carlyle's 10 count-week birds pushed their overall total to 106, the highest in the state. Davenport, Iowa recorded 95 species, an impressive total for a northern count.

Sixty-seven counts reported total, with 1,209 field observers contributing 3,486 party hours across 21,698 miles (See tables). An additional 305 feeder counters added 580 hours of

Greater White-fronted Geese.
McLean County.
6 February 2013.

Photo by Matt Fraker.

**Increasingly large numbers
of this species are being
found on Illinois CBCs.**

observation. Observers also logged 338 nighttime hours. Fermilab's 116 field observers were down from last year, but they were still the only count in the state to exceed 100. Waukegan's 79 feeder counters put them back on top in that category.

A Mississippi Kite on Waukegan and a Barnacle Goose at Big Rock are both still pending IORC review. Mississippi Kites have occurred as a breeding species in northern Illinois in recent years, and have been departing the state considerably later than southern populations, but this would still be a remarkable record. Other notable sightings include Barrow's Goldeneye in Evanston, a Rufous Hummingbird at Kishwaukee, and another host of shorebirds.

Ducks through Herons

Greater White-fronted Geese nearly reached last season's record high, with a high count of 18,101 at Chautauqua NWR. Snow Geese were reported on 29 counts, with a near record count of 352,787 and a high of 238,217 at Carlyle Lake, while another near-record 171 Ross's Geese were reported on 13 counts. 100 of

those were at Marquette Park. Swans continue their impressive increases – after a series of lower years, 291 Mute Swans were reported. A record 275 Trumpeter Swans were reported on 15 counts, and 1,416 Tundra Swans at Clinton, IA, and 198 flybys on the Chicago Lakefront helped push that species to a new record of 1985 on 12 counts. Other notable waterfowl included 29 Blue-winged Teal on four counts, lone Surf and White-winged Scoters at Calumet City, two White-winged Scoters at Davenport, two Long-tailed Ducks at Chicago Lakefront, and the aforementioned Barrow's Goldeneye at Evanston.

Ring-necked Pheasants rebounded a bit from last year's low count, with 227 on 29 counts, and the 28 Greater Prairie Chicken at Newton were an improvement over last year's 11. There were 158 Northern Bobwhite reported on 15 counts, an increase over last year's record low count. Four counts reported a total of 13 Common Loons, but no Red-throated Loons were found. Two Western Grebes were at Calumet City, and Carlyle reported a count-week Eared Grebe. Nine counts reported 424 American White Pelicans, with a high of 202 at Carlyle and an additional 200 at Davenport. Chicago's wintering herons put in an appearance – Lisle Arboretum had a Great Egret, and three counts, all in the Chicago area, reported Black-crowned Night Herons.