

Cambridge CBC 2021:

The 45th Cambridge Christmas Bird Count (CBC), was held on December 19, 2021 in the Cambridge area of Waterloo Region.

The Cambridge CBC has run consecutive years since 1977. It is centred on Branchton, and includes a large section of the Grand River Valley from north of Paris to just south of Blair on the north west and Puslinch Lake to the north east. The area is a mix of residential, upland, and riparian forest, agricultural land and some open river. Typically we find 60 to 70 species. The count always takes place the first Sunday of the count period.

We had a lovely day for the count with clear blue skies and occasional light clouds. It was an easy day for walking with only a few centimetres of snow and just enough ice to make things interesting. There were relatively mild temperatures of -4 to -7°C, worsened only slightly by winds of 10-20kph from the North-west. The water on ponds, lakes and the Grand River were all open.

This year we had forty-nine participants, mostly working in small groups and a few brave solo birders. We had several families participate. My own daughter, Alba, joined us for the full count this year and really loved the owling!

Our volunteers spent over one hundred thirty three hours counting birds, and found seventy-eight different species during the count period making this the second best year on record. We observed 12,963 individuals, a four year high yet slightly below the count average of 14,025. That being said, no species had notable low counts.

This was a good year for observing Sandhill Cranes in the Cambridge Area with three hundred twenty individuals spotted, the second highest number to date. It was also the second highest year for Eastern Bluebirds at 79 individuals and Carolina Wren at 10. All of these species have recently seen gradual increases in abundance in our area.

This year was a high count for Common Raven at 19 individuals observed, up from the previous high count of 14 in 2017.

We added a new species to the count this year. A Nashville Warbler, spotted by Larry Hubble on the Linear Trail near the sewage treatment plant! We had a count week Nashville Warbler a few years ago but missed it on the count.

Another notable bird was a Vesper Sparrow observed by Brett Fried in a flock of American Tree Sparrows east of the Church on Paris Plains Church Rd. Vesper Sparrow was last observed on this count back in 1987!

The count also had an unusual number of Blackbirds including a Common Grackle (last seen 2012), Red-winged Blackbird (last seen 2018), and twenty-one Brown-headed Cowbirds (last seen in 2018). The last time we had all three species was in 2006.

Also of note, were two Eastern Towhees. We first added Eastern Towhee to the count in 2015 and then had one more in 2018. This year, incredibly, there were two in two different places. One was found in the Southwest corner of the count circle near West River road and Watts Pond road, the other at Portuguese Swamp in Cambridge. This is a rare bird to get on the Cambridge count and an interesting accomplishment to get two in the same year.

Peter Coo and Dawn Miles found a Mockingbird near the intersection of Waynco and Cheese factory roads. This is the tenth time in the history of the count that a Mockingbird was found and the first one seen in six years. Certainly an interesting bird and one of my favorites.

Pinehurst Conservation area typically produces some rare birds and this year was no exception. A Saw-whet Owl was observed, as Brett reported, being harassed by some Chickadees in a White Cedar. Brett also found a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Ruffed Grouse, and a small flock of Common Redpolls as he explored the park. A worthy spot for a winter walk sometime this holiday season!

Cindy Cartwright joined our count this year and had the good fortune of observing a male Red-breasted Merganser near the Galt wastewater treatment plant. It was with four female Mergansers but they flew off before Cindy had a chance to examine them closely enough to be sure of their species. This is only the third time in the Cambridge count that a Red-breasted Merganser has been observed. Thanks Cindy!

A highlight of the count this year was a hatch year Golden Eagle seen by Brett Fried. This is the second time a Golden Eagle has been observed on the count. What makes this observation especially notable is that the only other observation of this species occurred in the very first year of the count, 1977! This bird seems to be moving around over a large area and it's worth double checking any eagles you see anywhere in the area.

Anyone with a particular interest in local history might be interested to know that Cindy Cartwright is working on a book about CBCs and during our count this year she walked the historic route (as closely as possible) of a CBC conducted in Galt during the mid 1950's. I have included her observations in the count tally and look forward to reading a comparison of her observations to those of historic record.

Like last year, the wrap-up, typically held at Wrigley Corners, did not occur this year. The tradition is not likely to survive the pandemic as the Waterloo Region District School Board has become much more conscientious about access to their facilities given the need to keep things sanitized. We will see what the future holds but Cambridge CBC wrap-ups will likely see a change in venue.

I should also point out that in the last few years the count has seen a few changes in volunteers. I'd like to recognize the immense contributions of a few long term volunteers that have stepped away from the count, namely the Burrells, Fraser Gibson as well as Bill and Heather Wilson. Their expertise and dedication are deeply appreciated and we will miss them. While these are big shoes to fill we have two excellent birders that have stepped in as area leaders: Todd Hagedorn has taken over area 1A and Ken Dance has taken over area 6. As the compiler I'm very grateful for their help!

Several new volunteers have joined the count (some for a few years now) that deserve recognition for their contributions, namely: Brain DeBruin, Matt Dill, Jasper Eagles, Anna Muss, Linda Dutka, Lisa Pacheriva, Sean McCammon, Kelly McCammon, Sawyer McCammon, Cindy Cartwright, Will Van Hemessen, Pauline Catling, Gwyneth Govers, Julia Shonfield, Alana Demko, Heather Polan, Rob Crawford and Eleysha. Thank you!

Thank you everyone for participating again in the Cambridge CBC. The count this year was about as good as it gets with decent weather, easy walking, great company and good birds. I hope you will all consider volunteering again next year. I encourage you to bring along a family member (if they don't already participate) and introduce them to the fun of a Christmas Bird Count!

Please find below a brief summary of the birds observed this year. If you would like to see a historic comparison please follow [this link](#). If you think I have missed anything please email me directly at levicmoore1@gmail.com.

Cambridge CBC Compiler,
Levi Moore

Species	Total Number of Individuals Observed 2021
Snow Goose	0
Canada Goose	2892
Mute Swan	6
Trumpeter Swan	65
Tundra Swan	4
Wood Duck	0
Blue-winged Teal	0
Northern Shoveler	0
Gadwall	0
American Wigeon	0
Mallard	782
American Black Duck	42
Northern Pintail	2
American Green-winged Teal	0
Canvasback	0
Ring-necked Duck	0
Greater Scaup	0
Lesser Scaup	0
Long-tailed Duck	0
Bufflehead	3
Common Goldeneye	91
Ruddy Duck	0
Hooded Merganser	26
Common Merganser	260
Red-breasted Merganser	1
Ring-necked Pheasant	0

Gray Partridge	0
Ruffed Grouse	1
Wild Turkey	21
Pied-billed Grebe	0
Red-necked Grebe	0
Rock Pigeon	687
Mourning Dove	684
American Coot	0
Sandhill Crane	320
Killdeer	0
American Woodcock	0
Wilson's Snipe	0
Bonaparte's Gull	0
Ring-billed Gull	74
Herring Gull	114
Iceland Gull	0
Lesser Black-backed Gull	0
Glaucous Gull	0
Great Black-backed Gull	0
Common Loon	0
Great Blue Heron	2
Black-crowned Night Heron	0
Turkey Vulture	0
Osprey	0
Golden Eagle	1
Northern Harrier	2
Sharp-shinned Hawk	7
Cooper's Hawk	7
Northern Goshawk	0
Bald Eagle	18
Red-shouldered Hawk	0
Broad-winged Hawk	0
Red-tailed Hawk	85

Rough-legged Hawk	1
Eastern Screech Owl	36
Great Horned Owl	9
Snowy Owl	0
Barred Owl	2
Long-eared Owl	0
Short-eared Owl	0
Northern Saw-whet Owl	1
Belted Kingfisher	8
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1
Red-headed Woodpecker	0
Red-bellied Woodpecker	64
Black-backed Woodpecker	0
Downy Woodpecker	119
Hairy Woodpecker	28
Pileated Woodpecker	10
Northern Flicker	5
American Kestrel	1
Merlin	4
Peregrine Falcon	0
Eastern Phoebe	0
Northern Shrike	0
Blue Jay	268
American Crow	654
Common Raven	19
Black-capped Chickadee	541
Tufted Titmouse	0
Horned Lark	26
Golden-crowned Kinglet	43
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	2
Red-breasted Nuthatch	34
White-breasted Nuthatch	95
Brown Creeper	14

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	0
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