

# 1<sup>st</sup> Annual FRONTENAC CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) originated 115 years ago, when 17 people chose to celebrate Christmas by observing and counting birds, rather than shooting them, as was typical practice at the time. Since then, the CBC has grown into the largest Citizen Science project worldwide. See [www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/cbc/index.jsp?targetpg=index](http://www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/cbc/index.jsp?targetpg=index) for more information on CBC's.

**The inaugural Christmas Bird Count for the new "Frontenac" circle, held on Saturday, December 19, was a huge success!** Twenty-one participants counted birds in the field and at feeders, achieving decent coverage over a large survey area having a significant proportion of undeveloped protected land. Weather conditions were unseasonably mild, but high winds and flurries in the afternoon likely suppressed bird activity. This report summarizes the day's events.

More gratifying than the hundreds of birds from 38 different species that were counted, was the realization by several self-described "novice" participants that they are actually familiar with more birds than they had thought, as well as the insights and knowledge gained by those who might never before have thought to identify – let alone count – the birds around them. As one participant commented: *I may have earned my 'Bird Counting 101' credit all in one afternoon!*

Thus, an enormous **THANK YOU** goes out to all who counted birds and promoted the Frontenac CBC. This year's event was pulled together at the last minute, and its success is due in no small part to your involvement and interest. We hope to count on your support again next year!



The Frontenac Christmas Bird Count was supported by the following organizations:



The Friends of  
**Frontenac Provincial Park**  
Return a favour to Nature



**2015 Frontenac CBC Summary**

All the usual resident birds made an appearance on Count Day, with the notable exception of Wild Turkey. Too close to Christmas dinner, perhaps? Reflective of the unseasonably warm weather, 35 American Robins, one Red-Shouldered Hawk and one Turkey Vulture remained in the area. Of the anticipated winter visitors, only one Northern Shrike and two Pine Siskins were counted. The highlight of the day was a mature Golden Eagle, an Endangered species in Ontario, and only occasionally seen in our area in spring and late fall/early winter.

The tallies at right do not include birds counted at feeders or nocturnal surveys, which are reported separately in the CBC .

Despite 1.5 hours of effort, no owls were tallied during the nocturnal survey. Feeder watchers at five locations counted Blue Jays, chickadees, White-breasted Nuthatches, juncos and goldfinches, as well as one Pine Siskin, two Downy Woodpeckers and one Hairy Woodpecker.

Species	Count
Canada Goose	44
Tundra Swan	3
Wood Duck	1
American Black Duck	2
Mallard	56
Ring-necked Duck	5
Hooded Merganser	106
Common Merganser	357
Red-breasted Merganser	64
duck sp.	29
Ruffed Grouse	5
Common Loon	1
Turkey Vulture	1
Golden Eagle	1
Bald Eagle	7
Red-shouldered Hawk	1
Red-tailed Hawk	2
Ring-billed Gull	121
Herring Gull	58
gull sp.	16
Mourning Dove	20

Species	Count
Barred Owl	1
Downy Woodpecker	6
Hairy Woodpecker	7
Downy/Hairy Woodpecker	1
Pileated Woodpecker	1
woodpecker sp.	2
Northern Shrike	1
Blue Jay	93
American Crow	21
Common Raven	18
Black-capped Chickadee	136
Red-breasted Nuthatch	2
White-breasted Nuthatch	30
Brown Creeper	3
American Robin	35
European Starling	29
American Tree Sparrow	5
Dark-eyed Junco	39
Pine Siskin	2
American Goldfinch	46
sparrow sp.	2



**Christmas Bird Count for Kids!**

Meanwhile, at the Elbow Lake Environmental Education Centre, two families took a nature break to learn about common winter birds and to participate in the Frontenac circle’s Christmas Bird Count for Kids. A summary of their findings, including more beautiful photos by Laurie Swinton, is on the ELEEC website, <http://elbowlakecentre.ca>. We look forward to growing this event in future years, and to welcoming more young birders to the official Frontenac count.

Christmas Bird Count  
For Kids!



### More Than Just Birds...

The Christmas Bird Count is more than a celebration of winter birds. It is also an opportunity for outdoor and nature enthusiasts to explore new areas, share knowledge and enjoy the camaraderie of like-minded souls.

With thousands of hectares of protected natural areas to explore – including Frontenac Provincial Park, Gould Lake Conservation Area, the Kingston Field Naturalists' Helen Quilliam Sanctuary, and the Nature Conservancy of Canada's Elbow Lake property – most field parties incorporated a substantial hiking component into their census routes. In all, five birding parties hiked a whopping 36 km of trail over the course of the day!

Although finding and counting birds was the primary focus, many other interesting encounters caught our attention:

- 🐦 In addition to expanding their knowledge of local birds, surveyors in one party were treated to an interpretive history of Frontenac Provincial Park's early settlement, and the discovery of two old homesteads along their census route.
- 🐦 The brave members of another party opened a loosely-tied garbage bag found lying on a hiking trail, and were surprised at the contents within: A goose nest!
- 🐦 Another unexpected find was a rusted old 1950's car, fully outfitted with new wheels.
- 🐦 Not all birds seen could be included in the count, such as the *ex-Blue Jay*, but renditions of Monty Python's *Dead Parrot* sketch did much to alleviate the loss.



An ex-Blue Jay. *It has ceased to be.*



Nice wheels! Body needs some work, though...

Thanks to Simon Smith for sharing some photos of the day!

### Wrap-up

Results from the official Frontenac CBC have been submitted to the National Audubon Society, while site-specific observations from the CBC For Kids event (Elbow Lake property), Gould Lake Conservation Area, Frontenac Provincial Park and the Helen Quilliam Sanctuary have been shared with eBird Canada. See <http://ebird.org/content/canada> for details.