

December 19, 2020 was the 60th annual Christmas Bird Count in Fairbanks. It was a remarkable day in many ways perhaps starting with the fact that we were able to hold the count safely in the midst of a global pandemic! Along with our long-time cadre of area coordinators, we had three new coordinators join us this year. Dave Hejna took over the University area from John Wright, Maria Berger took over Goldstream East from Gail Mayo, and April Harding-Scurr took over Ester from Claire Stuyck. We had a record number of 157 participants this year- perhaps partially due to the cancellation of almost all traditional holiday events. All of those extra eyes at feeders and in the field counted higher than normal numbers of three-toed, hairy and downy woodpeckers, black-capped and boreal chickadees, nuthatches, Canada jays and waxwings.

There were also some very unusual bird sightings this year. A sharp-shinned hawk seen in the University area may have been the rarest find. However, USFWS biologist Ted Swem, counting ravens at the landfill saw 4 individual bald eagles. Prior to 2020, single eagles had only been noted twice before. To have 4 birds in the area at once is truly remarkable. The star of 2020 though, may have been the very common (and this year extraordinarily abundant) redpoll. In 2019, over 100 people scouring our CBC area found only 9 redpolls total. This year, the tiny finches were absolutely everywhere, and a record total of 8,629 were counted.

Thanks to all who participated this year. Hopefully our new volunteers will join us again next year and 2021 will find us back sharing good food, comraderie, and our avian finds of the day at our traditional compilation potluck.