

42nd Palo Alto Summer Bird Count – 4 June 2022

The count circle has a diameter of 15 miles, with center at 37° 24' N 122° 09' W near the intersection of Junipero Serra Blvd and Page Mill Rd. The territory covered is the same as for the Audubon Christmas Bird Counts.

The 105 participants on the count were in the field between 5:34 am and 7:20 pm on June 4th. One party reported owling and three parties contributed feeder watches. The breakdown of time in the field showed 55 parties spent 224.9 hours counting on foot, covering 204.5 miles. Five parties spent 19.1 hours by bicycle, covering 38.0 miles, and eight parties spent 14.4 hours by car, covering 85.3 miles. Time spent owling was 1.2 hours, and time watching feeders was 8.2 hours. Weather during the day was completely overcast in the morning to partly cloudy later in the day, with a light breeze starting in the late morning, temps from 54 – 76 F.

Canada Goose 878, Wood Duck 1, Cinnamon Teal 10, Northern Shoveler 6, Gadwall 206, American Wigeon 1, Mallard 1232, Northern Pintail 3, Green-winged Teal 1, Canvasback 11, Redhead 2, Greater Scaup 23, Lesser Scaup 7, Surf Scoter 2, Bufflehead 5, Ruddy Duck 236, duck spp. 1, California Quail 301, Wild Turkey 66, Pied-billed Grebe 28, Western Grebe 3, Clark's Grebe 23, Aechmophorus spp. 13, Rock Pigeon 232, Band-tailed Pigeon 246, Eurasian Collared-Dove 35, Mourning Dove 391, Vaux's Swift 2, White-throated Swift 28, Anna's Hummingbird 413, Allen's Hummingbird 6, hummingbird spp. 1, Ridgway's Rail 4, Virginia Rail 1, Common Gallinule 7, American Coot 58, Black Rail 2, Black-necked Stilt 59, American Avocet 119, Black-bellied Plover 367, Killdeer 66, Snowy Plover 51, Long-billed Curlew 4, Marbled Godwit 606, Red Knot 71, Dunlin 1, Least Sandpiper 1, Western Sandpiper 1, Short-billed Dowitcher 10, dowitcher spp. 177, Spotted Sandpiper 1, Greater Yellowlegs 37, Willet 35, Ring-billed Gull 2, Western Gull 3, California Gull 9300, Herring Gull 1, gull spp. 320, Caspian Tern 255, Black Tern 1, Forster's Tern 726, Elegant Tern 7, Black Skimmer 109, Double-crested Cormorant 204, American White Pelican 404, Brown Pelican 3, Great Blue Heron 33, Great Egret 60, Snowy Egret 135, Green Heron 2, Black-crowned Night-Heron 33, Turkey Vulture 111, Osprey 2, White-tailed Kite 11, Northern Harrier 2, Sharp-shinned Hawk 2, Cooper's Hawk 17, Accipiter spp. 1, Bald Eagle 5, Red-shouldered Hawk 41, Red-tailed Hawk 92, Buteo spp. 1, Western Screech-Owl 1, Great Horned Owl 6, Northern Pygmy-Owl 1, Burrowing Owl 5, Belted Kingfisher 2, Acorn Woodpecker 329, Downy Woodpecker 4, Nuttall's Woodpecker 138, Hairy Woodpecker 41, Pileated Woodpecker 6, Northern Flicker 39, American Kestrel 17, Peregrine Falcon 2, Mitred Parakeet 6, parakeet spp. 7, Olive-sided Flycatcher 8, Western Wood-Pewee 14, Pacific-slope Flycatcher 50, Black Phoebe 229, Say's Phoebe 6, Ash-throated Flycatcher 71, Western Kingbird 12, Hutton's Vireo 58, Cassin's Vireo 10, Warbling Vireo 55, Steller's Jay 276, California Scrub-Jay 305, American Crow 840, Common Raven 183, Chestnut-backed Chickadee 999, Oak Titmouse 327, Northern Rough-winged Swallow 65, Tree Swallow 48, Violet-green Swallow 266, Barn Swallow 638, Cliff Swallow 1061, swallow spp. 50, Bushtit 493, Wrentit 135, Golden-crowned Kinglet 2, Red-breasted Nuthatch 4, White-breasted Nuthatch 222, Pygmy Nuthatch 61, Brown Creeper 82, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 23, House Wren 40, Pacific Wren 13, Marsh Wren 41, Bewick's Wren 338, European Starling 469, California Thrasher 15, Northern Mockingbird 146, Western Bluebird 300, Swainson's Thrush 15, Hermit Thrush 5, American Robin 255, House

Sparrow **37**, House Finch 2036, Purple Finch **103**, Pine Siskin 6, Lesser Goldfinch **837**, American Goldfinch 1, Grasshopper Sparrow 16, Dark-eyed Junco **1318**, Savannah Sparrow 69, Song Sparrow 347, California Towhee 393, Spotted Towhee **548**, Western Meadowlark 24, Hooded Oriole 22, Bullock's Oriole 29, Red-winged Blackbird 214, Brown-headed Cowbird 85, Brewer's Blackbird 65, Great-tailed Grackle 2, Orange-crowned Warbler 106, MacGillivray's Warbler 12, Common Yellowthroat 62, Yellow Warbler 1, Yellow-rumped Warbler 1, Black-throated Gray Warbler 30, Townsend's Warbler 2, Hermit Warbler 4, Wilson's Warbler 78, Western Tanager 6, Black-headed Grosbeak 81, Lazuli Bunting 25

[Species listed in boldface have occurred on seven or fewer prior counts. Numbers in **red boldface** are record high counts. Numbers in **red italics** are record low counts. Species listed in **blue** were confirmed breeding.]

Total: 160 species and 33,368 individuals.

Participants: Gordon Abraham, Sabra Abraham, Matt Allshouse, Bill Bauriedel, Marilyn Bauriedel, Curt Bianchi, Bill Bousman, Cathy Brown, Doug Brown, Julie Bryson, Adam Burnett, Xeronimo Castaneda, John & Agnes Caulfield, Sue Cossins, Charles Coston, Ann Davidson, Malia DeFelice, Kelly Dodder, Matthew Dodder, Hazel Donaldson, Ed Ehmke, Ben Encisco, John Esterl, Nick Felt, Nancy Floerke, Kent Forward, Harold Fukuma, Tricia Gardner, Paul Gater, Alexander Gilbert, Aaron Gilkison, Naomi Goodman, Alane Gray, John Harshman, Garth Harwood, Chris Hayward, Ann Hepenstal, Howard Higley, Kirsten Holmquist, Susie Hons, Andy Huynh, Bob Iannucci, Susan Iannucci, Linda Johnson, Dan Keller, Don Keller, Susan Kritzik, Kenneth & Andrea Lajoie, Leslie Larson, Kathleen Lee, Mark Lindberg, Jim & Sue Liskovec, Chris MacIntosh, Nateri Madavan, Michael Mammoser, Carol Mathews, Bruce McAuley, Diane McCoy, Sonny Mencher, Rich Page, Carol Panofsky, Mary Jane Parrine, Sergey Pavlov, Donna Pomeroy, Rose Pozos, Max Rabbitt, Nina Rego, Frances Reneau, Sarrah Reshamwala, Mike Rogers, Steve Rottenborn, Pati Rouzer, Jennifer Rycenga, Emma Shelton, Martin Sidor, Dessie Sieburth, Clare Smith, Cliff Smith, Sam Smith, Emily Southerton, Susan Stratton, Jane Tatchell, Vayun Tiwari, Vivek Tiwari, Jack Tomlin, Alison Turner, Luis Villablanca, Zihan Wei, Jacob West, Simon Westley, Mary Wisnewski, Maya Xu, Claire Xue, Kathy Zeidenstein, David & Floy Zitten, Gena & Jeff Zolotar

Commentary:

For the second year in a row, the count set a record for the number of observers participating (105). They were organized in 56 parties which contributed 266.8 party-hours of volunteer effort to the count. Levees along San Francisco Bay were open to counters this year, with only Bedwell-Bayfront Park receiving no coverage.

Along with the record number of participants, the 2022 edition of the count set records for the number of species recorded (160) and the number of birds counted (33,368). 81 species had been found on all previous years of the summer count, and all 81 were accounted for again in 2022. Comparing the species found on the 41st count in 2021 with those found on the 42nd count this year shows 22 species were found in 2022 and not in 2021, while 12 species were

tallied in 2021 but not 2022. Hence there is no reason to expect the current record of 160 species to stand.

Two species were new to the count, Black Rail and Mitred Parakeet. **Black Rails** have been in the south bay during the summer months since 2013, and 2022 was the first year they reached the count circle. Black Rails were first heard calling from Stevens Creek Tidal Marsh on 8 Feb, with reports of as many as eight calling in late February. The two heard on 4 Jun set a high count for the Summer Count. Rails have been heard at Stevens Creek Tidal Marsh again in the spring of 2023. **Mitred Parakeets** have been in the area for many years, but not reported on the Summer Count until this year. A small group was found at Las Palmas Park.

Snowy Plovers set an encouraging high count of 51, surpassing the previous high count of 28 and well above the average of 6 (expressed as 51 versus 6/28). Two were at Crittenden Marsh and the remainder at the Ravenswood ponds. **Black Skimmer** counts increased in 2019 and every year since, with 109 counted in 2022. Most of these have been Skimmers at the Shoreline Lake colony, with one nest at Ravenswood pond SF2 this year. We recorded a high count of five **Bald Eagles**. They nested successfully again at Felt Lake, where two young Eagles and one adult were tallied. An adult and a subadult were seen flying over the Williams Sisters Ranch in the Santa Cruz Mtns in San Mateo county. **Say's Phoebes** set a new high count of six. They have been found on the count in each of the past eleven years. **Pygmy Nuthatches** also set a record high count (61 versus 14/44). They were reported by 12 parties in 2021 versus 16 parties in 2022. **Western Bluebirds** did well, with a new count of 300 surpassing the high of 294 set in 2020. The record high count of 5 **Hermit Thrushes**, while modest, was notable. The Thrush has occurred on the count in only 11 years, including the 6 most recent counts.



Bald Eagle nests can get quite large



Western Bluebird just out of the nest

Other high counts were perhaps not as encouraging, yet not unexpected. When nesters do well, nest-robbers can also do well. Both **American Crows** (840 versus 211/831) and **Common Ravens** (183 versus 74/182) recorded new high counts.

Among the notable nesters, in addition to the Black Skimmers and Bald Eagles mentioned above, were the **Elegant Terns** at Ravenswood pond SF2. Elegant Terns were spotted carrying food to occupied nests amidst the larger number of nesting Caspian Terns. 2022 is the second year Elegant Terns have occurred on the count, after their first appearance in 2019. A **Pileated Woodpecker** nest was found in a dead tree in Los Trancos OSP along a tributary of Los Trancos Creek. **Western Kingbirds** continue to do well, with 8 at Felt Lake, 2 at the Stanford Dish, and 2 at Moffett Field this year. Two nests were spotted at Felt Lake, one occupied by young nestlings being fed by their dutiful parents.

Other notable records contributed to the high species count this year. A **Black Tern** was at Shoreline Lake, where it spent the summer. Black Tern has only been on the count once before. **Spotted Sandpiper** was missed the ten previous years; this year one was at Felt Lake.

Two **Townsend's Warblers** were tallied, one at Skyline Ridge OSP and one near Palo Alto Baylands. Both were late to migrate; Townsend's Warbler hasn't been found nesting in Santa Clara or San Mateo counties. They join the count for the ninth time.

Turning to the low counts, **Downy Woodpecker** matched its previous low (4 versus 16/50). As noted in the 2021 count summary, the number of these small woodpeckers in the count circle has been trending down since the mid '80s. **California Thrasher** also matched its previous low (15 versus 45/89); the Thrasher's numbers have been trending down since the start of the count in the early '80s. The third species with a record low count is **House Sparrow** (37 versus 190/428), yet House Sparrows do not seem likely to disappear from the count circle.

Evidence of breeding was noted for 72 of the 161 species. Nests were located for 34 species, or almost half. 72 breeding confirmations is a record high, achieved this year in part due to the effort put into the count (breeding confirmations and effort in party-hours are positively correlated). Top honors went to **Dark-eyed Junco**, with 14 parties confirming breeding, followed by **Western Bluebird** with 11 and **House Finch** with 9. The most frequently cited codes were FL (49 reports of fledged young), ON (42 reports of occupied nest) and FY (32 reports of feeding young).

-Pete Dunten, 24 Apr 2023