

TOM RENICK COUNTY PARK BIRD COUNTS – DECEMBER, 2016

2016 is no more but it proved to be a very good year producing lots of surprises. The Black Guillemot on January 23 was the highlight but three Killer Whales on December 2 were unexpected. In all for the year I saw 188 species during 227 surveys and 1,165 hours of watching. There are two “old” records of Sooty Shearwater and Razorbill from the Christmas Bird Counts and they bring the grand total to 190 species (not the 200 I had hoped for). In December I saw 84 species during 20 surveys and 109 hours of watching. Now to the birds.

There were two Red-throated Loons on the 7th and up to two Common Loons were seen regularly. A total of 35 Horned Grebes were seen during the month with nine on the 4th. There were 4,880 Northern Gannets on the 17th (a high count) with 2,615 on the 4th and 3,110 on the 18th. There were 20 American White Pelicans on the 3rd with 35 on the 21st.

Now we come to a series of new high counts. There were 741 Turkey Vultures on the 13th with 14 Gadwall on the 16th, 420 Green-winged Teal on the 16th, 27 Canvasback on the 16th (there were 37 for the month including one that was hiding in the middle of a flock of Green-winged Teals!), 37 Redheads on the 16th with 69 for the month, 1,060 Greater Scaup on the 16th and 17,200 Lesser Scaup on the 16th with 3,150 on the 4th and the 17th. December 16 was very much the duck day. A total of 13 Surf Scoters were seen during the month. There was a White-winged Scoter on the 3rd with two on the 18th (a high count). Black Scoters peaked at 2,840 on the 7th. There were 18 Buffleheads on the 17th with 45 for the month. A solitary Common Goldeneye flew to the south on the 7th. Finally for the wildfowl there were 220 Red-breasted Mergansers on the 7th a new high count.

There was a Northern Harrier on the 30th. The Wilson’s Plover was seen again on the 2nd and there was a Semipalmated Plover on the 14th. Red Knot peaked at 260 on the 4th. There were 15 Pomarine Jaegers on the 4th with a total of 65 for the month. Just 13 Parasitic Jaegers located this month. There was a first-winter Franklin’s Gull on the 18th. The bird of the month was a first-winter Iceland Gull that flew to the south on the 18th (this was of course a new species for the park). There was a new high count of 24 Great Black-backed Gulls on the 17th. Whilst not a high count there was a very high count of 335 Sandwich Terns on the 3rd. Black Skimmers moved to the south all month with 187 on the 16th and 75 on the 31st.

There were new high counts of 21 Eurasian Collared-Doves on the 21st with 760 European Starlings on the 7th and 320 Brown-headed Cowbirds also on the 7th. Finally there was another new species for the park - a Chipping Sparrow on the 13th.

During 2016 I added 116 new species to reach the total of 190. I had hoped to get to 200 but Hurricane Matthew and the subsequent strong easterly winds in October put an end to that idea. For 2017 I am hoping to reach 215 (an additional 25 species); only time will tell.

Harry Robinson