

AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS: SASKATCHEWAN TOPS IN HIGH INDIVIDUAL NUMBERS

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Christmas bird counts get us out to count birds all day at a time of year when without this stimulus we'd be finding pastimes within the comfort of our home. It has been of interest to us to list those species for which a Saskatchewan locality recorded a higher number of individuals than any other locality in North America, 1942-1985, or in Canada, 1971-1985, during that Christmas season.

Unlike the Saskatchewan Natural History Society counts published in *Blue Jay* (already summarized through 1986² and not considered further in this summary), the National Audubon

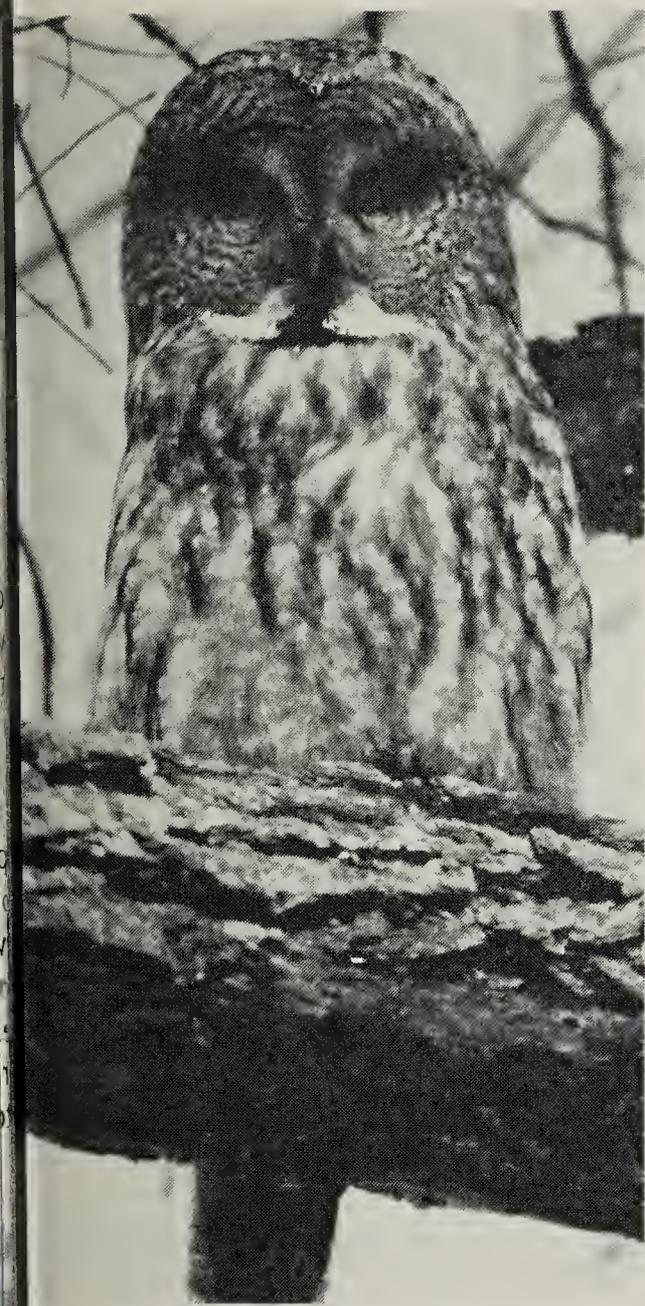
Society has rigid requirements including a minimum of eight hours in the field, keeping within a 15-mile (24 km) diameter circle. The 88th annual continent-wide count for Christmas week in 1987 required 1198 pages to print data from 41,920 observers in 15 localities.

Before 1942, there was sporadic publication in *Bird Lore*, the precursor to *American Birds*, of five Saskatchewan counts, one by S.W. Calvert of Lashburn (1913), two by Laurence B. Potter (1919, 1930) and two by Billings and Farley Mowat in Saskatoon (1935, 1936).¹



Bohemian Waxwing

Juhachi



Great Gray Owl

Wayne Lynch

Table 1. AUDUBON COUNTS IN SASKATCHEWAN THROUGH 1985

<i>Location</i>	<i>Counts</i>	<i>Years</i>
Besnard Lake	1	1974
Biggar	10	1976-85
Big Gully	3	1982-83, 1985
Black Lake	1	1972
Carlton	2	1956-57
Cumberland House	2	1969-70
Fort Walsh	10	1976-85
Gardiner Dam	7	1979-85
Govenlock	7	1979-85
Harris-Valley Centre	5	1971-76
Kamsack-Madge L.	1	1959
Kutawagan	4	1982-85
La Loche	1	1966
Last Mountain WMU	4	1982-85
Maidstone Bridge	3	1982-83, 1985
Prince Albert	2	1968-69
Prince Albert N.P.	4	1982-85
Raymore	4	1982-85
Regina	27	1955-57, 1961-71, 1973-85
Saskatoon	28	1955, 1959-85
Scott	4	1982-85
Sheho	1	1949
Squaw Rapids	7	1979-85
Yorkton	17	1942-54, 1956-59

from 1942 through 1959, missing by 1955, Yorkton counts were published in *American Birds*. For most of these years through 1954, Yorkton was the only locality in Western Canada, except for Winnipeg, Manitoba in 1947 and 1950, Sheho, Saskatchewan in 1949 and Grande Prairie, Alberta in 1953. Paradoxically, in 1955, when the Audubon Society first made a 10-cent participation fee compulsory, there was a sudden increase in submissions to *American Birds*. Regina, Saskatchewan and Edmonton, Alberta began fairly regular submissions in 1955; from British Columbia came the reports of Couver and Ladner, in 1957, Vic-

toria in 1958 and Banff in 1959. Winnipeg resumed contributions in 1961. Subsequent western participation continued to increase; this summary is of counts only from Saskatchewan.

In *American Birds*, counts from Saskatoon appeared once in 1955 and regularly from 1959. Regina counts were published in *American Birds* in 1955-57 and 1961-85 with the exception of 1972. Step-like increments in the numbers of localities occurred in 1976, 1979 and 1982 with a total number of 24 localities reporting to Audubon, peaking at 15 localities in one year, 1983. A summary of the years for each

Table 2. TOP NUMBERS OF INDIVIDUALS, CONTINENT-WIDE
 (Saskatchewan center that topped other centers on this continent in individuals
 that species for that year)
 [Year count period begins (number of individual birds)]

<i>Species</i>	<i>Counts</i>	<i>Harris</i>	<i>Regina</i>	<i>Squaw Rapids</i>
Northern Goshawk	5	-	-	79(13)
		-	-	80(16)
		-	-	81(10)
Merlin	1	-	-	-
Gyrfalcon	3	71(1)*	74(1)*	-
Prairie Falcon	1	-	71(1)	-
Gray Partridge	7	73(239)	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
Spruce Grouse	3	-	-	85(6)
Willow Ptarmigan	1	-	-	-
Sage Grouse	1	-	-	-
Sharp-tailed Grouse	13	71(232)	-	-
		73(183)	-	-
		74(180)	-	-
		75(217)	-	-
		76(150)	-	-
Snowy Owl	3	-	75(15)*	-
		-	79(24)	-
Northern Hawk-Owl	1	-	-	-
Great Gray Owl	1	-	-	84(1)*
Boreal Owl	13	-	-	82(1)
		-	-	83(1)*
Three-toed Woodpecker	1	-	-	-
Black-backed Woodpecker	1	-	-	85(6)
Bohemian Waxwing	3	-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
Snow Bunting	6	-	63(1780)	78(10012)
Pine Grosbeak	3	-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
Common Redpoll	1	-	-	-
Hoary Redpoll	4	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-

* number tied with another locality for that year

Saskatchewan locality is given in Table 1.

A Saskatchewan locality has in one year or another led the continent for 20

species, with upland game spe
 predominating (Table 2). Saskatoon
 the greatest number of "top numb
 (22), followed by Squaw Rapids
 Harris (8), Regina and Yorkton (5 ea

<i>Saskatoon</i>	<i>Yorkton</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Species</i>
71(2)* - -	- - -	Carlton 56(3) - -	Northern Goshawk
72(6)* 71(1)* -	- - -	- - -	Merlin Gyr Falcon Prairie Falcon
63(127) 67(269) 69(350) 70(532)	52(18)* - - -	Gardiner Dam 84(225) - - -	Gray Partridge
- - - -	- - - -	Besnard Lake 74(2)* LaLoche 66(1)* La Loche 66(6) Govenlock 79(106)	Spruce Grouse Willow Ptarmigan Sage Grouse
63(106) 65(53) 66(74) 68(138) - -	49(46) 56(63) - - - -	Last Mt WMU 82(137) - - - -	Sharp-tailed Grouse
- -	54(9) -	- -	Snowy Owl
77(1)* -	- -	- -	Northern Hawk-Owl Great Gray Owl
- - - -	- - - -	Big Gully 85(1) - Kamsack 59(1)* -	Boreal Owl Three-toed Woodpecker Black-backed Woodpecker
67(4299) 75(12442) 83(6047)	- - -	- - -	Bohemian Waxwing
55(792) - 55(118) 62(123) 69(422)	52(520) - - - -	Govenlock 84(4405) Raymore 82(33935) - - -	Snow Bunting Pine Grosbeak
63(1676) 63(13) 71(33)	- - -	- Cumberland House 69(62) Fort Walsh 82(15)	Common Redpoll Hoary Redpoll -

Similarly, Sharp-tailed Grouse and Sage Grouse have most often led the list with high numbers for Canada, compiled annually since 1971 (Table 3). Saskatoon again led this list with 9, fol-

lowed by Fort Walsh (8) and Govenlock (7).

With wide representation across the entire continent by standardized counts

Table 3. TOP NUMBER INDIVIDUALS FOR CANADA (since 1971)
 [NOTE: If tops continent-wide, not repeated here]
 [Year(number of individual birds)]

Species	Counts	Fort Walsh	Govenlock	Regina	Squaw Rapids	Saskatoon	Other
Turkey Vulture	1	84(1)	-	-	-	-	-
Golden Eagle	2	76(4) 77(5)*	-	-	-	-	-
Merlin	2	-	-	-	-	74(6)* 75(5)*	-
Gyr Falcon	2	-	-	-	79(1)*	73(1)*	-
Sage Grouse	5	-	80(2) 81(5) 82(7) 83(95) 85(3)	-	-	-	-
Sharp-tailed Grouse	6	-	-	-	-	78(93) 84(116) 85(58)	Biggar 77(99) Gardiner Dam 83(5) Harris 72(386)
Northern Hawk-Owl	2	-	-	-	79(1)* 85(1)*	-	-
Loggerhead Shrike	1	-	-	82(1)*	-	-	-
Harris' Sparrow	1	82(1)	-	-	-	-	-
McCown's Longspur	1	-	82(1)	-	-	-	-
Lapland Longspur	2	-	82(38)	75(21)	-	-	-
Rosy Finch	4	76(140) 79(22) 83(488) 84(143)	-	-	-	-	-
Common Redpoll	1	-	-	-	-	77(2453)	-
Hoary Redpoll	2	-	-	-	-	75(52)	Besnard Lake 74(12)
House Sparrow	1	-	-	-	-	72(2820)	-

* tied with one or more other counts in Canada

of high quality, a number of excellent studies have shown changes in continental winter bird numbers and distribution that would not have been possible otherwise. A central publication source makes gathering of this information possible. A comparison of Saskatchewan numbers with those of other regions has not been compiled previously.

¹ HOUSTON, M.I. and C. STUART HOUSTON. 1976. Prairie Christmas bird counts, 1906-1941. *Blue Jay* 34:214-219.

² RENAUD, W.E. and G.J. WAPPLE. 1977. A review of Saskatchewan Christmas bird counts, 1942-1976. *Blue Jay* 35:224-239.

³ RENAUD, W.E. and G.J. WAPPLE. 1979. A preliminary study of vegetation zones and winter bird distribution Saskatchewan. *Blue Jay* 37:202-208.

⁴ RENAUD, W.E., G.J. WAPPLE and R. WAPPLE. 1988. A summary of Saskatchewan Christmas bird counts: 1942-1986. *Blue Jay* 46:29-33.