

ROCKLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY

75th RAS and 122nd National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count Summary

Date: 12/19/2021

Despite a second year of COVID-19 restrictions our dedicated field and feeder counters came through with another rousing success! A giant **THANK YOU** to all participants!!

Weather: Weather conditions prior to the RAS 75th annual CBC had been unseasonably warm (50-60°F) but by Count Day began to cool off. During daylight birding hours, it was partly sunny with temperatures ranging from 34 to 37°F (**Figure 1**). Dew Point temperatures ranged from 21 to 30°F. Sustained winds ranged from 2 to 5 mph. Wind gusts ranged from 7 to 16 mph from the WNW throughout the day. With wind chill, daytime temperatures felt like 31 to 35°F.

Temperatures during nocturnal birding hours (from the earliest start time, 4:00 AM, to sunrise, 7:16 AM) ranged from 37 to 40°F with dew point temperatures ranging from 30 to 37°F. Sustained winds during the period were 2-4 mph. Wind gusts ranged from 8-17 mph from the WNW.

Prior to Count Week (Dec 16-22), air temperatures were relatively mild from December 1 through December 15 with the average daily high air temperature ranging from 35 to 64°F and the daily low air temperature ranging from 28 to 39°F. There were no snowfall events prior to or following Count Week and all waterways were entirely ice free up until and during Count Day.

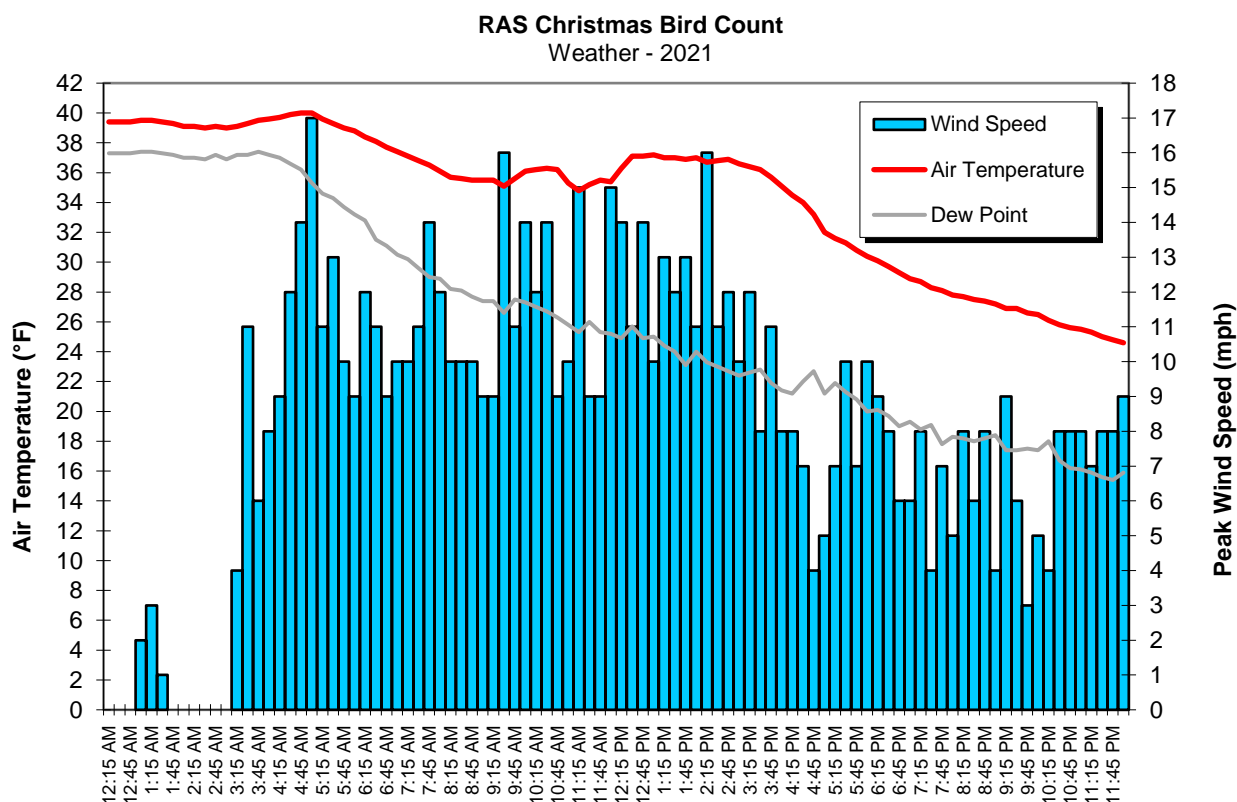


Figure 1. Weather conditions for December 19, 2021 RAS CBC: Air temperature, dew point, and maximum wind gusts.

Field Observers: 39 field counters on Count Day. ***Note:** Future official CBC counter, 5-year-old Phoebe Fuller, has now completed her sixth CBC! She is off to a great start!!

District	No.	Counters
01	4	(Team 1 & 3) Alan Wells (Compiler), Tom Cunningham (Team 2 & 3) Della Wells, Julia Warger
02	7	(Team 1) Simon Streatfeild, Gene Herskovics, Mary Thurber (part), Bob Source (part) (Team 2) Elyse Fuller, Tom Fuller, (Phoebe Fuller*), Tom Glover
03	3	(Team 1) Frank Kemmer, Liz Cherry, Sheryl Lerner
04	3	(Team 1) Nancy Slowik, Karen Nickeson (Team 2) Joanna Galdone
05	4	(Team 1) Zenon Bachir, Peter Johnson, Susan Frieman (Team 2) Pat Murray
06	4	(Team 1) Stephanie Garber, Michael Garber, Suzanne Barclay, Veronika Krause
07	5	(Team 1) Carol Weiss, Nigel Bark, Linda Pistolessi, Ken McNichol (part), Bernie Doyle (part)
08	2	(Team 1) Matt Papula, Ari Weiss (part)
09	6	(Team 1) Vince Plogar, Drew Ciganek, Karl Knoecklein (Team 2) Tom Dow, Elda Dow, Chris Healy
10	1	(Team 1) Elijah Goodwin

Districts: 01 Haverstraw and Stony Point; 02 North Ramapo; 03 South Ramapo; 04 North and West Clarkstown; 05 Central Clarkstown; 06 South Clarkstown; 07 West Orangetown; 08 East Clarkstown; 09 East Orangetown; 10 Westchester.

Feeder Counters (4 Locations): Gene Brown, Nancy Slowik, Judy Cinquina, Donna Nye

Coverage: The sixteen (16) teams spent a total of 80 team hours covering 69 miles by foot during their daylight birding effort. These teams also spent an additional 14 team hours covering 206 miles by car during daylight hours. An additional 7.5 hours were spent on nighttime birding (owling). Despite the challenges of COVID-19, the number of count participants, 39, is slightly above the 1977- 2021 median of 35.

Results: Rockland Audubon Society conducted its 75th annual Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, December 19, 2021. Thirty-nine (39) individuals (plus fledgling counter Phoebe Fuller) participated in the field count, tallying 17,254 birds of 84 different species. Four feeder counters (at four locations) added 103 birds of 15 species. Combining both field and feeder counts, 17,357 individuals representing 84 species were tallied. Eight additional species were added during Count Week bringing the total number of species detected to 92.

The eight Count Week species were:

Common Name	Date Seen	District	Location	Observers
Wood Duck	12/16	1	Lake Boyce	Ari Weiss
Northern Pintail	12/22	1	Lake Boyce	Mo Lehman / Ari Weiss
Scaup spp. (Lesser & Greater)	12/16	2	Lake Welch	Ari Weiss
Wild Turkey	12/16	4	New City, feeder	Philip Yacup / Nancy Slowik
Northern Harrier	12/22	9	Piermont Marsh	Linda Pistolessi
Snowy Owl	12/16	9	Piermont Pier	Ari Weiss
Golden-crowned Kinglet	12/22	5	Spring Valley, residential yard	Pat Murray
Rusty Blackbird	12/16	2	Ramapo Equestrian Center	Gene Herskovics

The number of species observed was relatively high by historic standards. The 84 count day species marks the 81st percentile of all RAS count years (1947-2021) and the 68th percentile of all modern RAS circle boundary years (1978-2021). The number of individuals is, however, low. It is just above the median count (53rd percentile) for 1947-2021 and only the 23rd percentile for 1978-2021. The ten most abundant species for 2021, in descending order, were: **Red-winged Blackbird, European Starling, Canada Goose, Common Merganser, Ring-billed Gull, Mallard, Common Grackle, White-throated Sparrow, American Robin, and Dark-eyed Junco**. Together, they comprised nearly 80% of the total individuals. Twenty-nine (29) species made up 95% of the total number of birds counted.

New High Counts:

New high counts were established for:

Greater White-fronted Goose – one seen, tied with single occurrences in 1999 and 2006

Mute Swan (205 v 159 in 2020)

Ring-necked Duck (193 v 60 in 1965) – see Photo #7

Double-crested Cormorant (112 v 40 in 2001) – all but 1 from Piermont Pier, Team 1

Turkey Vulture (178 v 143 in 2019)

Bald Eagle (78 v 53 in 2020)

Northern Flicker (40 v 34 in 1984).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (14 v 13 in 2017)

Common Raven (24 v 19 in 2019)

Some Highlights:

Greater White-fronted Goose – On the morning of December 3, Douglas Morel, a local birder, found a Greater White-fronted Goose floating among approximately 40 Canada Geese on Rockland Lake near Parking Lots 4 and 5. He posted his sighting on eBird that day. Subsequently, the bird was typically easily seen and documented most days from 12/3 to at least 12/25. This species is very rare in Rockland County, having been reported (to the best of my knowledge) only three times from 1884 through the present. Robert Deed, in his compendium of Rockland avian sightings from 1844 through 1983, cites only a single report – 4 individuals on an ice floe on the Hudson River during February 1970. More recently, the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count (RAS CBC) notes only two occurrences, one in 1999 in the East Orangetown District, and a second in 2006 in the South Ramapo District.

December 16 was the first day of the 2021 RAS CBC Count Week. To make sure that this continuing rarity made it onto our 2021 CBC, if only as a Count Week observation, Alan & Della Wells drove to Parking Lot 1 where they easily found the bird. A couple of quick photos (**Photo 1**) for documentation ensured at least a Count Week record for the RAS CBC. Turned out Matt Papula and Ari Weiss also found it on December 19, thereby ultimately giving us an official RAS CBC Count Day record!

Black-crowned Night-Heron – A single Black-crowned Night-Heron was found by Stephanie and Michael Garber, Suzanne Barclay, and Veronika Krause in the South Clarkstown District. The bird was spotted on the stream emanating below the dam at Lake DeForest. This species has been found in only seven previous RAS Christmas Counts.

Snowy Owl – On December 14, two days prior to the start of the RAS CBC Count Week, I received a call from Ari Weiss that a Snowy Owl had been found at Piermont Pier. When Della and I arrived, we discovered that there were in fact two Snowy Owls, one along the breakwater on the north side of the Pier and another at the end of the Pier. The occurrence of even one, let alone two, Snowy Owls in Rockland County is a very rare event; Robert Deed cited only 11 records during the period 1844 through 1983 with six of those sightings from the Harriman–Bear Mountain State Park and the Ramapo area. More recently, a Snowy Owl was seen sporadically from Jan 4 through Apr 8, 2007 at Piermont Pier. Another Snowy Owl was seen on Feb 23, 2014 at Piermont Pier. Only once, in 1971, did the species occur on the RAS CBC.

The two Snowy Owls on 12/14/21 were seen by numerous observers, but by the next day, both seemed to have disappeared. Ari Weiss re-located one of the owls on 12/16 (the first Count Week day) at the end of the Pier only to have it disappear again. Despite the extensive effort by our CBC Team, neither owl could be re-located on Count Day. On 12/20 a local birder sighted one of the owls, but there have been no subsequent sightings of either owl.

Misses

Missed birds are those birds “typically” seen but not found during the current year. A “MISS” is defined as any species not found on Count Day but (1) found in 50% or more of the RAS CBC counts since 1947 or (2) 50% or more of the RAS CBC counts in the previous 10 years.

Ruffed Grouse and **Ring-necked Pheasant** were again missed this year. Both have been seen in 40 previous counts. Ring-necked Pheasant has not been seen since 1995 and are now probably extirpated from the county. Any recent sightings are likely released or escaped farm-raised game birds. Ruffed Grouse has not been seen on the count since 2001.

Field Sparrow – Seen in 59 (80%) previous counts since 1947 and five (50%) out of the last 10 counts; last seen in 2020.

Savannah Sparrow – Seen in 34 (46%) previous counts since 1947 and five (50%) out of the 10 counts, last seen in 2019.

Brown-headed Cowbird – Seen in 52 (70%) previous counts since 1947 and six out of the last 10 counts; the species was last seen in the 2019 RAS CBC.

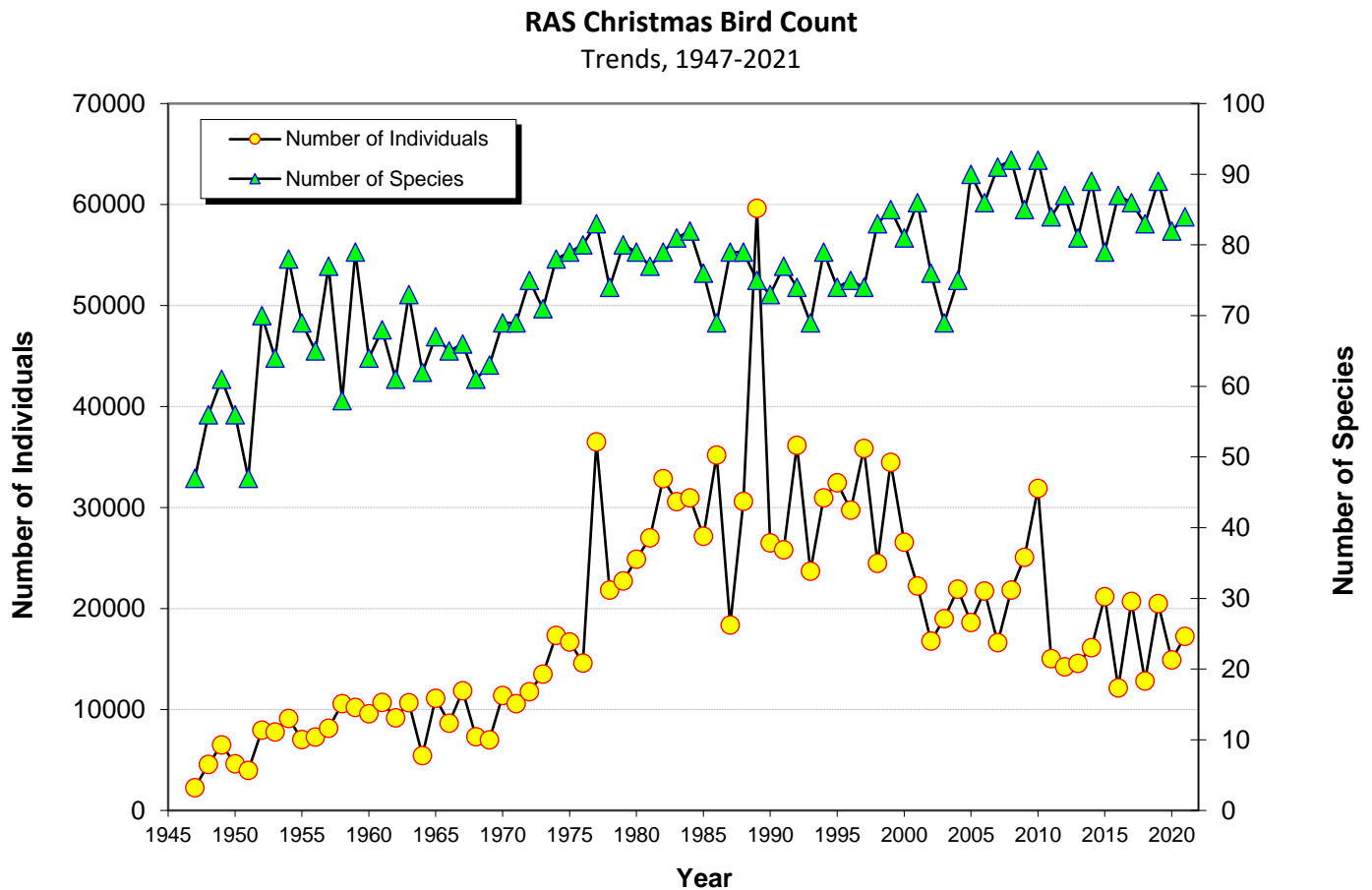


Figure 2. Number of species and individuals by year reported for Rockland Audubon CBC.



Photo 1. Greater White-fronted Goose is a Rockland County rarity found on only two previous RAS Christmas Counts. The above photo was taken on December 16, 2021 at Rockland Lake State Park, Parking Lot #1 by Alan Wells.



Photo 2. One of two Snow Owls first found on December 14, 2021, at Piermont Pier. One of the owls was found at the end of the Pier on 12/16/2021, the first day of Count Week, but was missing by Count Day. The above immature female bird was photographed by Alan Wells at Piermont Pier on December 14, 2021.



Photo 3. After being absent from the 2020 RAS CBC, Gray Catbirds were once again present. Photo taken by Alan Wells at Haverstraw Bay County Park on December 21, 2021.



Photo 4. Mute Swans set a record high count of 205 in 2021, surpassing the previous high of 159 set in 2020. This adult Mute Swan was photographed by Alan Wells at the Stony Point Battlefield SHS on December 10, 2021.



Photo 5. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker numbers have been increasing in recent years. The 2021 count established a new high count of 14, surpassing the previous high of 13 in 2017. The photo of this juvenile sapsucker was taken on Count Day (12/19/21) at the Haverstraw Landfill by Alan Wells.



Photo 6. Song Sparrow is one of 19 species that has been seen every year of the RAS CBC since its inception in 1947. This individual was photographed by Alan Wells on December 19, 2021 at Haverstraw Bay County Park.



Photo 7. During early December for many years, a dozen or so Ring-neck Ducks inhabit a small pond just at the northern edge of the Count Circle in Tomkins Cove. Invariably the pond ices over before the CBC and the ducks all leave. This year, an extraordinarily large number (177) of Ring-necks Ducks arrived, and without freeze-up, they stayed throughout the entire CBC period. This resulted in a record shattering high count, 193 versus 60 seen in 1965. This group of predominately males was photographed on December 20, 2021 by Alan Wells.

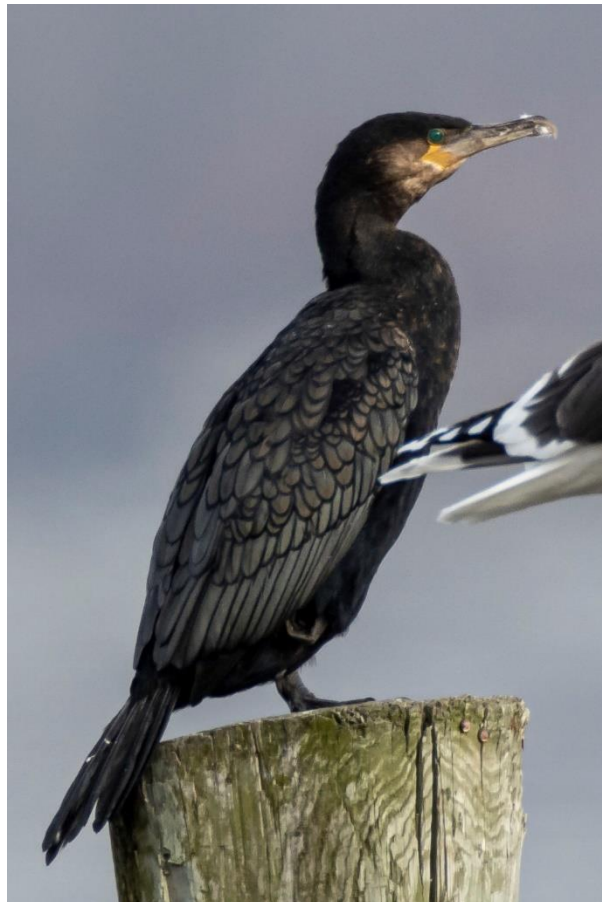


Photo 8. One of the six Great Cormorants, all from District 1, found during the 2021 RAS CBC. This one was photographed at Haverstraw Marina on December 21, 2021 by Alan Wells.

ROCKLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY, Christmas Bird Count 2021 Results

ROCKLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, 2021															
Common Name	Total	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	Years Seen	Previous High Count	New High ?	Current Year Rank
TOTAL COUNT	17357	1800	2283	391	389	2347	621	2254	1198	5444	630				
TOTAL SPECIES	84	48	56	26	34	37	29	47	55	54	37				
Gr White-fronted Goose	1								1			3	1	TIE	74
Canada Goose	2505	452	199	40	97	331	68	640	339	160	179	58	4892		3
Mute Swan	205	13	5			1		17	169			71	159	YES	14
Wood Duck	CW												42		
Gadwall	47		8			5			34			45	189		34
American Wigeon	3								3			26	116		66
American Black Duck	41		19				4		2	12	4	75	493		37
Mallard	656	93	103	112	1	95	4	86	61	67	34	74	2782		6
Northern Shoveler	10								10			40	133		52
Northern Pintail	CW												4		
Green-winged Teal	4							4				21	81		62
Canvasback	42									42		69	4203		36
Redhead	1								1			19	10		74
Ring-necked Duck	193	177	9						7			44	60	YES	15
Scaup spp.	CW												315		
Bufflehead	29		4		2	7		3	8	1	4	64	138		41
Common Goldeneye	1	1										64	155		74
Hooded Merganser	102	14			1	9		15	60	3		45	237		22
Common Merganser	1170	14	2		102	143	10	756	124	19		74	5700		4
Red-breasted Merganser	2								2			23	113		69
Ruddy Duck	51							7		44		68	761		33

ROCKLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, 2021

Common Name	Total	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	Years Seen	Previous High Count	New High ?	Current Year Rank
Wild Turkey	CW												86		
Pied-billed Grebe	2								2			39	13		69
Double-crested Cormorant	112								1	111		39	40	YES	20
Great Cormorant	6	6										26	8		56
Great Blue Heron	44	3	3			1	5	16	7	7	2	50	53		35
Blk-crowned Night Heron	1						1					8	2		74
Black Vulture	117	67	5	6	7	3		5	3	21		20	187		18
Turkey Vulture	186	62	9	8	14	38	8	7	14	25	1	35	143	YES	16
Bald Eagle	78	4	2			4	14	21	1	26	6	44	53	YES	26
Northern Harrier	CW												5		
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2			1						1		49	11		69
Cooper's Hawk	9	1	2		1	1				4		40	10		53
Red-shouldered Hawk	1				1							30	12		74
Red-tailed Hawk	28	4	2	5	1	2	2	1	2	5	4	69	81		43
American Kestrel	1										1	56	23		74
Merlin	2							1	1			14	2		69
Peregrine Falcon	5		1					2		1	1	25	8		60
American Coot	25								25			68	304		44
Killdeer	1								1			37	10		74
Ring-billed Gull	688	122	28		1	153	55	69	66	176	18	73	8922		5
Herring Gull	9	2							1		6	75	5636		53
Great Black-backed Gull	11	5							2	1	3	75	458		49
Rock Pigeon	254		97			105		25	12	15		45	1027		13
Mourning Dove	262	34	10	22	12	17	15	29	13	92	18	74	750		12
Eastern Screech-Owl	11	3						1		7		59	22		49

ROCKLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, 2021

Common Name	Total	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	Years Seen	Previous High Count	New High ?	Current Year Rank
Great Horned Owl	6	2						1		1	2	45	11		56
Snowy Owl	CW												1		
Barred Owl	1									1		25	4		74
Belted Kingfisher	13	3	2			1	3	1	1	1	1	72	20		48
Red-bellied Woodpecker	103	11	10	9	4	18	8	8	3	21	11	51	124		21
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	14	2	5	1	1	1			1	3		42	13	YES	47
Downy Woodpecker	73	7	11	4	5	10	8	7	3	16	2	75	187		29
Hairy Woodpecker	23	3	4	1	1		3	1	3	5	2	75	58		46
Northern Flicker	41	10	6	1	4	1	1	9	1	7	1	73	34	YES	37
Pileated Woodpecker	4		3		1							65	15		62
Blue Jay	175	11	27	14	7	25	21	14	11	42	3	75	508		17
American Crow	113	21	31	4	3	17	11	5	3	18		75	38520		19
Fish Crow	29									4	25	47	86		41
Common Raven	24	4	4		3	2		1	4	6		24	19	YES	45
Black-capped Chickadee	75	8	18	8	8	3		4	7	15	4	75	579		28
Tufted Titmouse	53	9	10	5	7	5	5	1	3	7	1	75	292		32
Red-breasted Nuthatch	2							2				50	17		69
White-breasted Nuthatch	65	14	8	4	8	12	3	4	2	3	7	75	150		31
Brown Creeper	5		1	1				1		2		73	26		60
Carolina Wren	38	12	8			1	2	4	2	8	1	66	92		39
Winter Wren	8	2	3					2		1		70	12		55
Golden-crowned Kinglet	CW												41		
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	1		1									55	17		74
Eastern Bluebird	11		5						6			37	135		49
Hermit Thrush	3		3									50	14		66

ROCKLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, 2021

Common Name	Total	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	Years Seen	Previous High Count	New High ?	Current Year Rank
American Robin	459	5	267	6	3	20	6	34	6	108	4	74	3702		9
Gray Catbird	4		3								1	62	11		62
Northern Mockingbird	32	5	5		2	4	5	3		5	3	70	170		40
European Starling	2710	299	351	64	45	1218	248	218	66	45	156	75	13665		2
Cedar Waxwing	1	1										63	415		74
Yellow-rumped Warbler	78	2	7					32	27	10		55	280		26
Eastern Towhee	6		1							5		52	23		56
American Tree Sparrow	3		3									75	762		66
Fox Sparrow	1		1									65	32		74
Song Sparrow	93	42	11	4	4	1		8	5	12	6	75	322		24
Swamp Sparrow	6	1	4						1			65	38		56
White-throated Sparrow	534	62	222	5	6	19	20	36	13	112	39	75	587		8
Dark-eyed Junco	393	72	12		25	26	51	73	18	86	30	75	1224		10
Northern Cardinal	82	14	10	3	6	4	7	6	5	23	4	75	339		25
Red-winged Blackbird	4038	35	56						2	3945		75	4230		1
Rusty Blackbird	CW												121		
Common Grackle	641		600					40		1		66	8817		7
Purple Finch	4		1		3							63	158		62
House Finch	96	8	12	11	1		15	4	2	26	17	60	333		23
American Goldfinch	66	4	13	17	2	2		4	4	15	5	75	486		30
House Sparrow	312	54	36	35		42	18	26	27	50	24	75	1293		11

Districts: 01 Haverstraw and Stony Point; 02 North Ramapo; 03 South Ramapo; 04 North and West Clarkstown; 05 Central Clarkstown; 06 South Clarkstown; 07 West Orangetown; 08 East Clarkstown; 09 East Orangetown; 10 Westchester