

## 2018 GBBC Summary

March 16, 2018

By Marshall Iliff, Pat Leonard, and Kerrie Wilcox

Another edition of the Great Backyard Bird Count is in the books, with a great showing for the birds and the bird watchers who joined in from around the world. As always, participants tell us they really enjoy this opportunity to do their favorite thing and contribute to science at the same time:

*"Thanks for conducting the GBBC! We really enjoyed checking out the cool birds in our backyard today."*

*"I have been looking forward to this since I have heard of it! Birding always brings me pleasure!"*

*"I try to submit on eBird whenever I get the chance, this is so much fun!! I can never get enough birding done. I have been a birder since I was a kid."*



Photo by Rebecca Pry, Pasadena, California, 2018 GBBC.

Checklist and species totals for the 2018 GBBC have set two new records:

**Species: 6,310** (2017 species total: 5,940)

**Complete Checklists: 176,905** (2017 checklists: 173,826)

**Estimated Participants: 192,456** (2017 participant estimate: 214,018)

Note that some of the numbers may still change slightly as the final checklists for the GBBC dates are added through eBird or flagged reports are validated by our reviewers and added to the database.



## Top 10 most frequently reported species:

(number of GBBC checklists reporting this species)

Image: Northern Cardinal by Wendy Trucheon, 2018 GBBC

Species	Number of Checklists
Northern Cardinal	48,956
Dark-eyed Junco	43,742
Mourning Dove	43,412
American Crow	40,959
Blue Jay	37,549
Downy Woodpecker	36,495
House Finch	34,766
Black-capped Chickadee	31,942
House Sparrow	31,884
European Starling	28,683

### Data totals as of March 5, 2018

Note: All Top 10 species are common in North America, reflecting continued high participation from this region.



## Top 10 most numerous species:

(sum of how many individuals were observed across all GBBC checklists):

Image: Snow Geese by Bernadette Banville, Massachusetts, 2018 GBBC.

Species	Number of Individuals
Snow Goose	4,957,116
Canada Goose	1,626,585
Common Murre	1,365,546
Red-winged Blackbird	778,311
Ring-billed Gull	743,932
Mallard	742,408
European Starling	701,381
American Coot	461,082
Common Grackle	382,268
Herring Gull	333,047

### Data totals as of March 5, 2018

Note: These Top 10 species are common in North America, reflecting high participation from this region.

## Top 10 states by checklists submitted

[See the current listing for all states.](#)

State	Number of Species	Number of Checklists
California	373	8,530
Texas	361	6,785
New York	171	6,520
Pennsylvania	145	5,953
Florida	290	5,612
Virginia	182	5,073
Michigan	131	3,890
Washington	221	3,866
North Carolina	215	3,862
Ohio	133	3,786

Data totals as of March 14, 2018

## Top 10 Canadian provinces by checklists submitted

\* New provincial checklist record

[See the current listing for all Canadian provinces.](#)

Province	Number of Species	Number of Checklists
Ontario	148	5,880
Quebec	112	2,317*
British Columbia	204	2,202
Nova Scotia	127	944*
Alberta	84	809
Manitoba	62	524
Saskatchewan	65	490*
New Brunswick	101	476
Newfoundland & Labrador	89	213*
Prince Edward Island	56	113*

Data totals as of March 14, 2018

## Top 10 countries by checklists submitted

[See the current listing for all participating countries.](#)

Country	Number of Species	Number of Checklists
United States	657	108,921
Canada	251	14,008
India	832	13,276
Australia	536	1,872
Spain	288	1,452
Mexico	780	1,258
Costa Rica	681	952
Portugal	222	668
United Kingdom	186	652
Colombia	996	544

Data totals as of March 14, 2018

## Rare Thrush Reported



Two views of the New Brunswick Mistle Thrush. Photos by [Peter Gadd](#) (left) and [Kate Steele](#) (right), 2018 GBBC.

Rare birds are always fun, and the North American headliner this year has been the long-staying Mistle Thrush in New Brunswick, Canada. This bird was first found in early December and has been pleasing hundreds of visitors for months as it has been defending berry trees consistently in a small area of Miramichi. The first North American sighting ever for the GBBC is documented [in this list](#). Mistle Thrush is usually found in Europe and is regularly reported from GBBC participants there.

Other notable sightings in Canada include:

-- high numbers of Bald Eagles in Southern Ontario;

-- 7,500 Dunlin in Boundary Bay, British Columbia;

-- a Tufted Duck in Windermere, Ontario;

-- and a Costa's Hummingbird in Powell River on the Sunshine Coast northwest of Vancouver.

## Crossbills Galore



Red Crossbill by Lori Smith, Wyoming, 2018 GBBC.

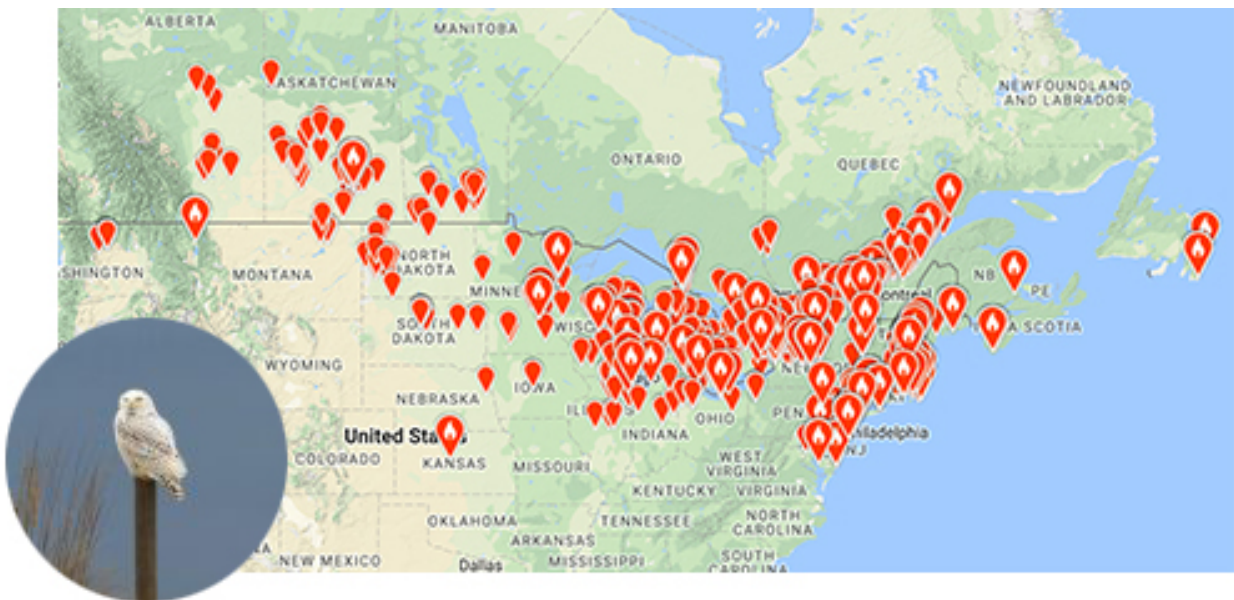
Across the Northern Hemisphere, Red Crossbill is an exciting species to see. They are on the move in North America this winter, since cone crops are scarce in many areas. The desert Southwest, Great Plains, parts of the northeastern U.S., and eastern Canada are all reporting higher-than-average numbers. (Map below.) [Learn more about this fascinating species.](#)



Red Crossbill reports across the Northern Hemisphere. Click image for larger view.

Other winter finches are mostly staying north this winter, but there has been a push of Common Redpolls into the Midwest, Great Plains, and northern Rockies, [including some in Colorado](#) where the species is usually scarce.

## Snowies Are Back



Snowy Owl by Colleen Fresco, New Jersey, 2018 GBBC. Click image for larger map.

This is a "good" year for Snowy Owls moving south of the Arctic, at least in the eastern U.S. and southern Canada. The map shows how far south they've been reported with the Great Lakes and East Coast being the hot regions this winter. Among the southernmost owls reported for the GBBC was [one in Washington, D.C.](#)

## More Count Highlights

-- Some Rocky Mountain birds moved onto the Great Plains and mountain valleys this year in search of better food resources. This movement is still taking shape, and the GBBC helped track species like Mountain Chickadee, Steller's Jay, and others that rarely make it to lower elevations. GBBC maps show that the eastern front of those species is farther east than usual this year.



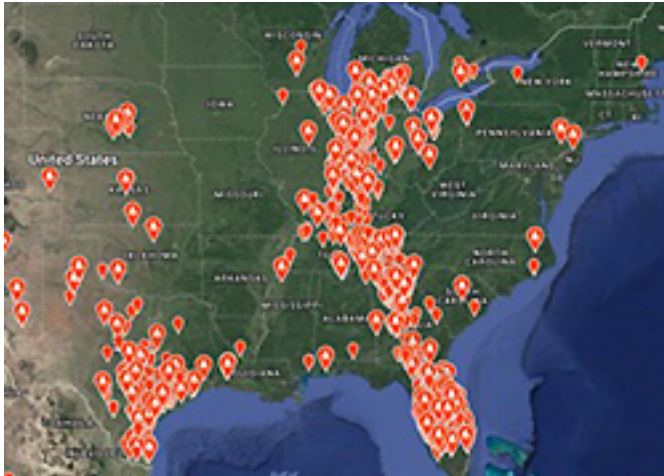
*Steller's Jay by Cri, Oregon,  
2018 GBBC.*

-- Recent counts, including the 2018 GBBC, have shown an increase in reports of Greenlandic geese in the northeastern U.S. and eastern Canada. The Pink-footed Goose has gone from just a handful of records up through the 1990s to multiple individuals annually. Prince Edward Island, New York, and New Jersey each had a GBBC pink-foot. One of the southernmost ever, and Maryland's third, [was found on GBBC weekend](#). New Jersey also hosted a Barnacle Goose, another Greenlandic breeder that is increasingly found in North America. Other Greenland geese, like Greater White-fronted Goose, show continued signs of increase in the Northeast.

-- Eurasian Collared-Doves—a species native to India, a species native to Europe and south Asia—escaped into the wild in the Bahamas during a pet-shop robbery in the 1970s. This species has been expanding northwest across the United States and into Canada ever since. During this GBBC, the Eurasian Collared-Dove was counted in the four westernmost provinces of Canada (British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba) and one bird has been a continuing presence in Nova Scotia. This is only the fifth record of this bird for Nova Scotia.



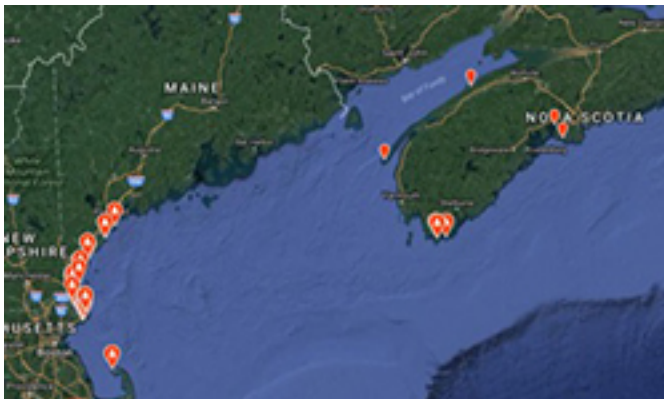
## Early Migrants



Spring migrants in mid-February? It is not just rare geese that headline GBBC weekend. Some geese and cranes get an early start on their migrations over GBBC weekend. The first Greater White-fronted Geese were pushing through the western Great Plains. Snow, Ross's, Canada, and Cackling Geese were also pushing north in February. Sandhill Cranes, especially, have an impressive movement, and the increasing eastern population now shows a virtual

northbound river of birds during the count. The more westerly population, which moves from Texas to the Platte River in Nebraska, is not on such an advanced schedule but still shows the first hints of movement on our map.

## The Dovekie Story



The Dovekie is a small ocean-going relative of puffins, only about as large as an American Robin. This winter has been an interesting one for Dovekies in the Northeast. A good number have been seen close to shore from Nova Scotia to New York, including along the coast of New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island, all areas where the species is irregular at best. Some large flights have been

observed when winds from the east have pushed them close to shore. GBBC weekend saw good numbers as well.



Dovekie (Little Auk) by Allan Hopkins via Birdshare.

The Dovekie (called a Little Auk) also prefers cold Arctic waters, often along the edge of sea ice, so it may be one species that will be at serious risk from a warming climate. Understanding why Dovekies are being seen nearshore will require understanding the population offshore, as well as ocean conditions (sea surface temperature and maybe fish stocks) in their normal range, but it seems likely that these birds are hungry and forced to less-than-optimal feeding areas this winter. The GBBC and eBird help document unusual events like this and help understand how environmental conditions may be helping or hurting the species in the area.

## Explore and Keep Counting with eBird!

These are just a few of the stories coming out of the GBBC. Take some time to do a little exploring on your own to see what's been reported where. The best place to start is with our [Explore a Region](#) tool. See what's been reported across the world or in your neck of the woods. Or find out where a particular species has been reported using the [Species Map](#) tool where you enter a species and location. And check out just a sampling of the images submitted for the GBBC photo contest by visiting the [2018 Online Gallery](#)

Most importantly: keep reporting your birds! Now that you've got the GBBC under your belt, you can use the same login name and password to report birds from anywhere in the world at any time of the year using [eBird](#). The information is vital to scientists studying changes in the numbers and distributions of birds, and to conservation leaders who use the reports to craft targeted plans to preserve declining species.

GBBC Sponsor



Wild Birds Unlimited

*Thank you for participating in the  
Great Backyard Bird Count!*

*Thanks also to GBBC founding sponsor, Wild Birds  
Unlimited.*