

# BOWKAN BIRDERS NEWSLETTER POST 2022 SPRING SPECIES COUNT



## PREAMBLE

The “BowKan Birders”, sponsored by the University of Calgary, BioGeoScience Institute, also known as the Barrier Lake Field Station, is an informal group of local naturalists who share an interest in our natural environment. We conduct Spring and Christmas Species Counts of birds, mammals, and in May, include flowering plants. The purpose of the count is to maintain an updated record of local flora and fauna. Our results are added to that of all other Alberta counts.



## POST 2022 Spring Species Count (28-29 May plus/minus 3 days)



22P5250057: Early Blue Violet, BVPP

The Last full weekend in May is the designated dates for the spring species count. As always, an additional plus and minus three days are available to add species not seen on the primary count days. We have another consideration. Some observers covering specific sub-areas were not available for a variety of very good reasons involving personal situations from family, to illness, to job commitments. As in the past we have allowed that sub-area to be covered on an alternate day within the plus/minus period and call that a primary day in that sub-area. I, as the compiler, was kept informed and was able to separate ‘count-day’ from ‘count-week’ sightings in each case. We believe in the principle that **“It is better to have a count on an alternate day rather than no count at all”**.

Spring 2022 weather returned slowly. The trees were about 25% leafed-out, many migrant birds were still on their way north and spring weather was just settling in. Air temperatures varied from morning lows of 0°C to afternoon highs ranging from +14°C to +20°C. Cloud cover varied from some overcast to mostly broken conditions. Winds varied from light to moderate from a westerly direction. Rain showers persisted through the count area for most of the count-week but did not hinder the count. To sum up, the weather for count week was reasonable.

Our spring tally of 2658 (includes CW 14 birds) birds is slightly below our 30 count average of 2749 birds. However, the count of birds is not a particularly significant indicator as the presence or non presence of even one large flock of birds, one party count or one feeder count can make a huge difference. The number of species reported is a more stable and better indicator. Our count of 123 species (includes 3 CW species) is significantly **above** our 30 year average of 118 species per count. We had a successful bird count with some surprises.



22P5250527: Eastern Kingbird, BVPP

There are notable observations and highlights in every count and this year was not an exception:

1. Twelve Trumpeter Swans were seen flying in formation westward following the Bow River at Exshaw on the first day of the Count-week. Their destination is unknown but they made the count as Count-week birds.
2. There are variations from count to count in the number of birds by species. This year the most significant increases were Cedar Waxwings (132 birds/Average 17), and Chipping Sparrows (208/132). The most significant decreases were Canada Geese (135/248), Cliff Swallows (12/183) and Pine Siskins (18/98). The late spring may have delayed the return of the Swallows and Siskins.
3. The 26 White Pelicans are new to our count. They were seen west of Exshaw on a Count-day flying westward. This is not the first time this species has been seen here but it is a first on a Count.
4. Also new and not expected in our count area, is one Eastern Bluebird seen in Bow Valley Provincial Park (S) on a count day. I managed to photograph this bird and I relied on experts in our community to assist in identification.
5. With the addition of the White Pelicans and the Eastern Bluebird the total number of species seen on only one count has now grown to 35 species.



22P5270017: Cedar Waxwings, BVPP



22P5300330: Eastern Bluebird, BVPP

BowKan Birders have now completed 30 Spring Counts.

A history of our counts is available to you at: <https://research.ualgary.ca/biogeoscience-institute/community-outreach/bowkan-birds>.

The mammal count consisted of sightings of the following ten

species: one Black Bear, a Coyote, 10 White-tailed Deer, 87 Bighorn Sheep, two Mountain Goats, two Snowshoe Hares, 32 Red Squirrels, 30+ Columbian Ground Squirrels, one Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel, and seven Chipmunks. Recently, at least one Black Bear is often seen in our little hamlet. During the count it entered and departed our back yard damaging the fence in two places.

As per last year our rather late spring weather delayed most of our blooming plants to early/very early stages of development.



22P6010033: Common Grackle, Hwy 40, north end.

We did identify 47 varieties which is higher than last year's 44 and higher than our average of 40. Also it is the best since 2018 with 64 varieties. I wish to thank Eva for willingly applying her vast plant knowledge to contribute to our count. Our numbers would be much lower without her.

## PHOTOGRAPHS

All photos included here were taken during our Count-week. I always welcome contributions from participants but I need to receive them.

## PRE CHRISTMAS 2022 COUNT ALERT

The Audubon official period for a Christmas Count is a day between 14 December and 5 January inclusive. Our best day from experience has been the first Saturday in the New Year but this time that Saturday is the seventh of January, 2023 and outside the official period. We will have to compromise with an alternate week date. Suggestions are requested.

## Final Thoughts

The count whether high or low is significant and adds to the data of the recorded knowledge of our area. For this reason I thank all our BowKan supporters for their efforts to make our count a continued success.

Cliff Hansen  
Coordinator, BowKan Birders



22P6010148: Mallard Family, BVPP.



22P5300374: Whitetailed Deer, BVPP.



22P5270104: Northern Waterthrush,  
along Bow River, north side.



22P5300293: Clay-colored Sparrow,  
BVPP(S).