

Birders annual count, 'way down' from previous year

By Carole Mathewson
Gazette Staff Writer

The number of species increased—from 82 to 86—but the total number of birds was down by 2,000 as the Payson Birders completed its annual bird count on Dec. 15.

“Our overall count was way down,” President Grace Knowles said. “We don’t know if it was a lack of berries, or, whatever the food line is.

“We had only 2,705 birds this year, and we are down 2,000 birds from last year. Last year we had 500 robins alone; this year we had only five.”

Starting at the Rim Country Mall by Sears, Knowles said, “We do a 15-mile radius of the Payson area. We pool cars and go out in groups.

“This year, I believe we had 13 people. We have anywhere from three to four in a car.”

She added that each car takes a different area, to avoid a double count. Among areas where the count is done are the fish

hatchery, Tonto Natural Bridge and along Doll Baby Road.

“Green Valley Park is terrific,” Knowles said. “We go to several places around here.”

She also listed Star Valley as a place of count—“some of the roadways behind the lumber company, where there is a pond. Moonlight Drive is a good birding area.”

She said they keep an eye out for anything unusual.

“We identify mostly and see how the migration goes in the spring and fall.”

“This is our fourth year,” Knowles said, “and we do this as a study for the Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratories. They keep a scientific study on the migration of birds in the entire country.”

Payson Birders also holds quarterly meetings.

“The purpose of the birders club is to educate and inform people of the importance of birds in our ecosystem,” Knowles said.

At yesterday’s meeting, at the Payson Library Meeting Room, guest speakers from Liberty Wildlife in Phoenix, brought with them, and talked about, live birds.

“They cannot be released because of their injuries,” Knowles said. “They’re used for educational purposes.”

Meetings are open to the public.

“We try to have a different speaker every quarter,” Knowles said. “We’ve been very fortunate in having outstanding speakers.”

The next meeting will be Wednesday, March 5.

“Then we will have our own Dave Hallock,” she said. “He lives in East Verde Estates. He will do a program on a 25-year study he has done on global warming and its effect on birds and plants. He does this in Colorado and comes here in the wintertime. He’s the coordinator of our bird count.

“Our meetings are always the first Wednesday of the quarter month—always at 1:30 p.m.,” Knowles said.”

Most Common and Least Common Birds Spotted During Payson’s Participation in the Audubon Society’s 108th Annual Christmas Bird Count

Most Common and number spotted		Least Common (Only one of each species spotted)	
Dark-eyed Junco	456	American Crow	Northern Cardinal
Canada Goose	393	Bald Eagle	Northern Harrier
Mallard	161	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Rock Wren
Common Raven	139	Crissal Thrasher	Vesper Sparrow
American Coot	128	Great Blue Heron	Wilson’s Snipe

To review complete results of the bird count, see www.audubon.org/bird. Under the story headlined 108th Christmas Bird Count, select Results here and fill in the appropriate information.

Species missing from the list this year include: Gambel’s Quail, Mountain Bluebird, Greater Roadrunner, Northern Mockingbird, Olive Warbler, Cedar Waxwing and several species of sparrows. Species new to the list include: Downy Woodpecker, American Crow, Canyon Towhee, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Western Meadowlark, Common Goldeneye, Green-winged Teal, American Goldfinch and Northern Harrier.



Cooper's Hawk
Photo by Pia Wyer



Yellow rumped warbler
Photo by Mary Williams



Common Raven
Photo by Ann Haver-Allen



Spotted towhee
Photo by Mary Williams



Dark-eyed junco
Photo by Mary Williams