

ANALYSIS OF THE WYNCOTE, PA.
CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 1970-1979

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For eighty years the Wyncote Chapter of the National Audubon Society has been conducting Christmas Bird Counts. This is one of the oldest counts. The center of the count circle is located at the Briar Bush Nature Center located on Edge Hill Rd. in Abington Township. The area was not highly developed when the Wyncote Bird Club began these counts. Today the area is a highly developed suburban community which is heavily populated. There are very few natural habitats left in the count circle. Some small wooded areas can be found in parks and recreation areas operated by the various townships. There are no large standing bodies of water. A few small park and farm ponds can be found. The only significant body of water is the productive Wissahickon Creek which cuts through a corner of the coverage area. Swampy areas are few. The count circle includes an area within the limits of the City of Philadelphia.

Despite the apparent drawbacks of this area for birding, this count has proven very interesting for a number of reasons. First, it is significant because of the continuous record gathered during decades of development and growth. Such a pattern of development is taking place now in many areas throughout the Delaware Valley. It is interesting because it was not chosen, as so many count areas are, for its promise as a birding area. It is a common unspectacular habitat. Finally, it has proven interesting for the birds that have been reported.

Some of the more exciting birds seen on this count during this decade have been the Horned Grebe, Pied-billed Grebe, Whistling Swan, Redhead, Lesser Scaup, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Ruffed Grouse, Laughing Gull, Red-headed Woodpecker, Saw-Whet Owl, Long-billed Marsh Wren, Western Tanager, Palm Warbler, and Savannah Sparrow.

In all, 101 species were reported on this suburban count during the decade. Some species which have risen dramatically in the seventies in terms of numbers of individuals are the Canada Goose, Mallard, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Starling, House Finch, Dark-eyed Junco, and White-throated Sparrow.

One change in the count worthy of note was the change in compilers. Edward H. Parry, a DVOC member for many years, resigned after serving as compiler for fifty years. Another change during the seventies was a large increase in the number of participants from a low of 19 to 60 or so late in the decade. This is explained by the phenomenal growth in the membership of the Wyncote Chapter of the National Audubon Society that sponsors the count, and a more aggressive approach to the count by the participants. An increase can also be seen in the number of species reported per count and a spectacular increase in the number of individuals per count. This data is shown in figure A, and can probably be accounted for by increases in the number of observers, total party hours, and miles traveled.

Figure B lists the ten most common species reported on this count, and Figure C lists twenty-five species reported only once during the decade. Individual species and yearly data have been published elsewhere and will not be included here.¹

Date of Count	12-27	12-19	12-17	12-16	12-21	12-20	12-18	12-17	12-16	12-15 ²
Year	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
# of birds	4877	5048	3261	4071	10856	12179	8584	14492	14422	14162
# of species	45	50	48	49	61	70	69	63	63	68
# of observers	24	22	14	19	39	51	50	54	55	65

Figure A. Count data.

1. Canada Goose	15587
2. Starling	13513
3. Common Crow	11903
4. Mallard	7409
5. White-throated Sparrow	5369
6. Mourning Dove	4644
7. Dark-eyed Junco	4152
8. American Robin	3352
9. House Sparrow	2721
10. House Finch	2228

Figure B. The Ten Most Common Species Reported on Wyncote Christmas Bird Counts 1970-79

Horned Grebe	Turkey Vulture	House Wren
Pied-billed Grebe	Red-shouldered Hawk	Long-billed Marsh Wren
Mute Swan	Rough-legged Hawk	Palm Warbler
Whistling Swan	Ruffed Grouse	Rusty Blackbird
American Wigeon	Laughing Gull	Northern Oriole
Green-winged Teal	Barn Owl	Western Tanager
Lesser Scaup	Saw-Whet Owl	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Bufflehead	Red-headed Woodpecker	Savannah Sparrow
Yellow-crowned Night Heron		

Figure C. Twenty-five Species Reported on Only One Wyncote Christmas Bird Count 1970-79

1. American Birds, Vol. 25, July, '71, p. 237.
 American Birds, Vol. 26, July, '72, p. 253.
 American Birds, Vol. 27, July, '73, p. 254.
 American Birds, Vol. 28, July, '74, p. 265.
 American Birds, Vol. 29, July, '75, p. 290.
 American Birds, Vol. 30, July, '76, p. 297.
 American Birds, Vol. 31, July, '77, p. 549.
 American Birds, Vol. 32, July, '78, p. 561.
 American Birds, Vol. 33, July, '79, p. 437.
2. 1979 data courtesy of Wyncote PA Chapter of National Audubon Society, Sam Jones, president.

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