

# Naturalist bird count record

**By Ott Devitt**  
**RICHMOND HILL** — The 22nd annual Christmas bird census was taken by the Richmond Hill Naturalists' Club Dec. 18.

Ideal weather conditions produced comparatively mild temperatures along with a mixture of sun and cloud throughout the day.

Forty-nine observers divided into nine parties participated in the event to count 7,843 individual birds representing 54 species.

This was well above the average number of species and individuals that were seen on 21 earlier counts (average for 1955-1975, 39 species and 3,594 individuals).

As in former years, the census was restricted to a circle 15 miles in diameter, centred on the junction of Yonge Street (Highway 11) and Gormley Sideroad.

**Began in 1900**

Since its inception in North America in 1900, when only 25 census reports were submitted to the National Audubon Society in New York for inclusion in the magazine "Bird-Lore", the idea of a Christmas bird count gradually won acceptance of Naturalists' Clubs everywhere.

Today this annual event has grown so large it now takes six months to edit and compile the data.

Last year's count (1975) was taken by 28,688 observers organized into teams which covered 1,141 count areas from the Arctic to South America.

The grand total was 124,651,593 birds. Each team makes a search of its assigned count area during one calendar day of the Christmas holiday season and compiles a species-by-species list of the numbers of all birds it can find.

The results are published in a special edition of "American Birds", the National Audubon Society's ornithological journal.

Findings range from zero to the millions (Point Barrow, Alaska, was the zero, that team was unable to find a single bird).

Observers at Catemaco in Vera Cruz, Mexico, spotted the most species, 293.

Last year's top count in Ontario was 114 species recorded at Long Point on Lake Erie.

**Exciting discovery**

The highlight of our local count was undoubtedly the Mockingbird found feeding on multiflora rose hips in the Aurora area by Declan Troy's party.

The Mockingbird was the first ever recorded on the regional census and, with its addition, 96 species of birds have now been seen on the 22 censuses conducted by the club since 1955.

The best count of the day was turned in by party No. 5, led by Bob Cubitt.

This group, working the southwest section of the region, tallied 1,154 individual birds of 34 species.

In second place was party No. 8 led by Troy which recorded 28 species and 960 individuals.

In third place with 26 species and 1,074 individuals was the party led by C.E. Parsons and Rev. Ernie Johns.

The only Common Loon of the day was spotted by Gerry Bennett's party.

The only Long-eared Owl was located by Russ. Tilt's group working the Vandorf area, east of Yonge Street.

**5 hawk species**

Hawks were well represented by five species; two Goshawks being outstanding. Red-tailed Hawks were found in surprisingly large numbers, no fewer than 118 birds being observed during the day.

These superlative mouse-catchers are of great value to the farmer in controlling the rodent population.

Ruffed Grouse numbers were up with 15 being recorded in northern sections of the region.

Locally, this species appears to be



# 8,000 in portables new schools needed

**MARKHAM** — Establishing permanent facilities for 35 per cent of the 8,000 pupils housed in portables will be a major thrust of the new board, re-elected chairman, John McDermott told 150 people attending the York Region Roman Catholic separate school board inaugural meeting Tuesday at St. Patrick's Church Hall.

McDermott, chairman of last year's board, was returned unopposed. Larry Pelliccione, beginning his third term on the board, "was elected vice-chairman."

Foran as principal of the school.

**School condemned**

Sacred Heart School in King was condemned and closed in September. The board was forced to replace two members dismissed for missing too many meetings.

McDermott said he does not foresee any specific problems in the coming year, but urged "this year, stick with the ship".

**Difficult year**

McDermott described 1976 as a difficult year for the board.

"Everything happened to us that could last year," he said.

The parents of children at St. Patrick's School in Schomberg protested over the removal of Bill

**Appointments**

Richmond Hill Trustee John Taylor was appointed chairman of the education committee.

Markham Trustee Alex MacGregor was named chairman of the management committee.

Library board appointments in Markham are Mary Muir and Louise Brill; Richmond Hill, Pat LeClaire; Patrick's School in Schomberg Vaughan, Ines Chard and Jean Quattrin.

## Ruffed Grouse

Ruffed Grouse were observed by four of the census parties in northern sections of the region.

approaching a high point in its periodic population cycle.

Northern finches were scarce or absent. No Pine Siskins or crossbills were encountered.

After a bumper year in 1975, Evening Grosbeak numbers crashed. Not a single bird could be found during this year's census.

**The local count**

In order of abundance, the complete count was as follows: Snow Bunting (1,530), House Sparrow (1,361), Starling (940), Black-capped Chickadee (785), Rock Dove (757), Tree Sparrow (507), Dark-eyed Junco (399), Blue Jay (328), American Goldfinch (254), Mourning Dove (148), Cedar Waxwing (127), Mallard (124), Red-tailed Hawk (118), Downy Woodpecker (64), Cardinal (58), Common Crow (50), American Kestrel (40), White-breasted Nuthatch (39), Horned Lark (30), Ring-necked Pheasant (27), Northern Shrike (18),

Red-breasted Nuthatch (16), Ruffed Grouse (15), Hairy Woodpecker (13), White-throated Sparrow (12), Rough-legged Hawk (9), Great Horned Owl (8), Song Sparrow (8), Purple Finch (6), Brown Creeper (5), Pileated Woodpecker (5), Great Blue Heron (4), Pine Grosbeak (4), Swamp Sparrow (4), Common Redpoll (3), Common Grackle (3).

**Pairs and singles**

There were two each of Goshawk, Herring Gull, Belted Kingfisher, American Robin, Red-winged Blackbird and Brown-headed Cowbird.

Single individuals of the following were reported: Common Loon, Black Duck, Wood Duck, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Long-eared Owl, Common Flicker, Mockingbird, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Rusty Blackbird, Field Sparrow and White-crowned Sparrow.

## York Board prepares for next blizzard

**AURORA** — York County board of education is already preparing for the next big snowstorm of the winter.

Last week, in an effort to make sure everyone concerned knows just whether the school buses will be running on time, if running at all, the next time the weatherman rebels, the board agreed to a motion by Margaret Coburn of King calling for a change in announcement policy.

Mrs. Coburn said information about school buses during the storm was inaccurate on radio broadcasts, as it had come from four different area administrators.

To counteract any confusion, she suggested staff review procedures on

bus service during storms, with one person collecting the information from the various areas and readying it for radio use by 6:45 a.m.

The staff review is to be made before Jan. 17.

Another motion by Mrs. Coburn on school bus policy was also passed.

Trustee Coburn said that, because reduced provincial grants placed an additional \$300,000 on property taxes, staff should be asked to review the present administration of bus routes in order to ascertain whether the present bus policy can be administered more economically.

She said she wasn't asking for cuts, but for a look at the organizational set-up.

## Teachers put grievance on shelf

**AURORA** — York Region school teachers will put their grievances against York County board of education in mothballs for awhile, as a result of a meeting with the board Monday night.

At that time, the board, although not openly admitting it had been remiss in its dealing with the teachers in their salary negotiations, did, however, come up with a couple of resolutions that implied it had.

The main resolution, which was moved by Bob McMonagle of Markham, called for the board to advise District 11 of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation that

the board would exclude increments from its present submission to the Anti-Inflation Board.

The submission as applied to increments would then be approved by the OSSTF and the board, with the AIB being advised later that there was a superceding submission.

**Further actions**

The motion also called for the board to advise the AIB that a Dec. 20 submission from York County Elementary Teachers Association excluding increments be a superceding submission.

An amendment to the motion rescinded two previous motions per-

taining to AIB submissions for the OSSTF and YCETAF made last year.

In making the motion, McMonagle said the board had "a moral responsibility" in making joint submissions to the board; it was responsible for the "comedy of errors."

Monday's session with the board came about after the teachers filed a grievance against the board.

They said the board failed to file the same submission to the AIB as had been agreed to by the teachers.

**Teacher reaction**

Don Nixon, president of District 11 of the OSSTF, said the submissions on wage increases were to have been made without including the increments. But the board's report had them in.

The submission was to have been filed jointly. But the board sent it in without checking with the teachers first, he said.

"It's clearly a case of morality," Nixon said. "If the board is to retain credibility, it must honor its contract."

"What's the use of negotiating next year, if the board won't honor this?"

**Teachers justified**

Trustee Dorothy Zajac, chairman of the board's negotiating committee, said the teachers had "every right to be angry."

However, the draft submission to the AIB had never been shown to the board, either.

"We thought you had seen it," she said.

**The Liberal**  
 VOLUME 99, NUMBER 23  
 10101 Yonge Street, P.O. Box 390, L4C 4Y6, Ontario  
 TELEPHONE — 884-8177, 881-3373  
 CIRCULATION — 884-0991, 881-3376

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The Liberal is published each week by Metrospan Community Newspapers Limited. This newspaper is a member of the Canadian Community Newspaper Association and the Audit Bureau of Circulation.

Second Class Mail Registration No. 0190

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Some kind of proof of citizenship is a must wherever you go; it can be a voter registration card, a birth certificate, a passport, or an affidavit. Naturalized citizens should have either a passport or their naturalization papers. It may be a good idea to carry machine copies of

some of these important papers to avoid loss. If a country requires a tourist card, they can sometimes be acquired at tourist offices or consulates of the country of destination.

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