

TOGO BIRD AND MAMMAL COUNT

Submitted by Doug Elsasser

Nature Saskatchewan's annual Christmas bird and mammal count was completed in the Togo locality on January 05th. It was a fine sunny day with low winds and daytime temperatures near -12C.

Nineteen people, mostly rural residents, were enlisted to count birds at feeders, search for mammals and their tracks, and drive assigned routes to observe wildlife.

Doug and Barb Elsasser, who live south of Togo near the Assiniboine Slopes Ecological Reserve, acted as count compilers again this year.

According to the Elsassers, some 1,034 individual birds were recorded on the January 05th count day.

A total of 250 Pine Grosbeaks were observed, making them the most abundant bird species this year. The Common Redpoll, at 207 recorded sightings, came in second. 135 Black-capped Chickadees, 80 Blue Jays and 45 Evening Grosbeaks were also seen.

All three woodpecker species – the Downy, the Hairy and the Pileated, were observed during the Count Period from December 14 to January 05th. Both the Hairy and the smaller Downy Woodpecker were seen at feeders on January 05th, but the more elusive Pileated Woodpecker stayed hidden that day.

One bald eagle was observed on count day, while 3 others were noted during the count period. A few Ruffed Grouse and the Sharp-tailed Grouse were observed.

The Snow Bunting, an Arctic nester that generally flocks together and migrates south to winter in our area, was not seen during the 2015-2016 count period. Mild fall weather probably accounts for their absence.

Some 80 Common Ravens and 38 Black-billed Magpies were spotted on count day. In previous years these scavengers were seen in large numbers at landfill sites near Togo and Runnymede. Adapting to new and improved garbage disposal practices, the Ravens especially have abandoned the dumps to dine at plastic grain storage bags, cattle yards and combined fields.

On the mammal front, observers on January 05th saw a total of 21 White-tailed Deer, 8 Elk, 5 Snowshoe Hares, 3 Northern Flying Squirrels, 3 Red Fox and 1 Pine Martin. Mule deer, Moose and Timber Wolves were seen during the count period.

Overall, some 18 species of wild birds and 13 mammal species were recorded in the Togo locality.

Togo's bird and mammal count, one of approximately 70 carried out in Saskatchewan this winter, will be submitted and entered in a provincial database. Results of the counts, along with participants' names, are published in *The Blue Jay*, Nature Saskatchewan's natural history journal.