

## Christmas Bird Count for 2016

On Friday, December 16, HPAS participated in Audubon's 117<sup>th</sup> Christmas Bird Count or CBC. Twenty-five eager birders--bundled up against the pre-dawn, 20-degree weather--formed six teams under the leadership of Brock Hutchins, Jack Johnson, Kyle Pursel, Russ Regnery, Cynthia Strain and Romney Bathurst. The teams fanned out from Founders Park in Highlands to: Chaney Lane, Cold Springs and Buck Creek Road; Turtle Pond Road; Dillard Road to Scaly Mountain, Overflow Creek and Bald Mountain Road; Flat Mountain Road, tree farm and old ranger station; Horse Cove and Highlands township; and Highlands Falls including Highway 64 toward Cashiers lake. The conditions were cold but mostly clear and this plus the leafless trees made for good birding.

A total of 1961 birds were identified, ranging unevenly across 46 species. By far the most common species, again this year, was the Dark-eyed Junco, sighted 565 times. Other species sighted many times included: the Carolina Chickadee (159), American Goldfinch (117), American Crow (106), Mallard (95), Song Sparrow (87), Tufted Titmouse (81), Pine Siskin (80), Blue Jay (71), Wild Turkey (63), American Robin (59), Northern Cardinal (58), Mourning Dove (56) and White-breasted Nuthatch (52). Some notable low count birds included the Sharp-shinned Hawk, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Fox Sparrow, Winter Wren and Hermit Thrush. All species totals appear on the accompanying table.

We saw several species of wren but no House Wrens, after having seen many House Wrens in our nest boxes during the summer, prompting Russ Regnery to conclude that this particular species of wren migrates to warmer climates for the winter. Other conclusions can be drawn from studying this year's numbers and comparing across recent and remote years. We identified more birds this year than last (1139 versus 1961) but that is probably the result of having had more birders this year (22 versus 25).

Our participation in this longitudinal citizen science initiative was led by Brock Hutchins. Sheila Peavey and Patty Hutchins served the returning six teams a hot chili lunch arranged in part by Michelle Styring. Russ Regnery brought a now traditional platter of tasty corn bread following the Poole recipe from years past. Several photographs from the day appear in this newsletter.

### HPAS 2016 CBC Counts by Species

Canada Goose 10	Mallard 95	Bufflehead 2
Hooded Merganser 4	Wild Turkey 63	Sharp-shinned Hawk 1
Red-shouldered Hawk 10	Red-tailed Hawk 3	Mourning Dove 56
Belted Kingfisher 1	Red-bellied Woodpecker 6	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 5
Downy Woodpecker 21	Hairy Woodpecker 6	Northern Flicker 1
Pileated Woodpecker 9	Eastern Phoebe 13	Blue Jay 71
American Crow 106	Common Raven 5	Carolina Chickadee 159
Tufted Titmouse 81	Red-breasted Nuthatch 47	White-breasted Nuthatch 52
Brown Creeper 1	Carolina Wren 33	Winter Wren 5
Golden-crowned Kinglet 28	Ruby-crowned Kinglet 1	Eastern Bluebird 16
Hermit Thrush 3	American Robin 59	Northern Mockingbird 2
Brown Thrasher 2	Eastern Towhee 38	Field Sparrow 1
Song Sparrow 87	White-throated Sparrow 18	White-crowned Sparrow 3
Fox Sparrow 1	Dark-eyed Junco 565	Northern Cardinal 58
Purple Finch 13	House Finch 3	American Goldfinch 117
Pine Siskin 80		
<b>Total number of birds= 1961; Total species= 46</b>		