

## Sea & Sage Audubon UNB Monthly Boat Trip/Bird Count from aboard the Newport Sea Base Pontoon Boat

**Date:** 2/19/14 **Trip Leader:** Nancy Kenyon **Tide:** 3.62 ft. high tide at 11:17 AM **Skipper:** Eric Walker  
**Counters:** Sally Menzel, Sharon Harrow, Dean Collins, Chris Johnson, & Nancy Kenyon were helped by Susen Kay, Karen Terry, Sandy Smith, & Ann Burk. **Comments:** It was incredibly cold out on the water even though there was no breeze. The water was absolutely still with perfect reflections. The overcast persisted for most of the trip, causing the shorebirds to show up in soft grays & browns and forcing us to use feeding behavior, body shape & bill length rather than feather color or pattern for identification. We heard Savannah Sparrows and Song Sparrows singing from the cord grass, mockingbirds singing from the hillside above us, and Western Grebes calling back and forth to each other across the bay. Several American Avocets were showing signs of breeding plumage. Despite the frigid temperature, spring was in the air.

<b>Geese &amp; Ducks</b>	
2	Gadwall
107	American Wigeon
9	Mallard
6	Blue-winged TEal
6	Cinnamon Teal
11	Northern Pintail
80	Green-winged Teal
76	Lesser Scaup
6	Surf Scoter
123	Bufflehead
<b>Grebes</b>	
6	Horned Grebe
8	Eared Grebe
64	Western Grebe
3	Clark's Grebe
<b>Pelicans &amp; Cormorants</b>	
2	Brown Pelican
60	Double-crested Cormorant
<b>Herons &amp; Egrets</b>	
7	Great Blue Heron
7	Great Egret
12	Snowy Egret
2	Reddish Egret
<b>Diurnal Birds of Prey</b>	
7	Turkey Vulture
3	Osprey
9	Red-tailed Hawk
1	American Kestrel
<b>Rails &amp; Coots</b>	
1	Clapper Rail
55	American Coot
<b>Plovers</b>	
214	Black-bellied Plover
1	Semipalmated Plover
2	Killdeer
<b>Avocets</b>	
31	American Avocet
<b>Sandpipers</b>	
3	Spotted Sandpiper

130	Willet
2	Long-billed Curlew
262	Marbled Godwit
182	Western Sandpiper
7	Least Sandpiper
55	Long-billed Dowitcher
<b>Gulls, Terns &amp; Skimmers</b>	
30	Ring-billed Gull
20	Western Gull
1	California Gull
95	gull sp.
3	Caspian Tern
12	Forster's Tern
51	Black Skimmer
<b>Pigeons</b>	
5	Rock Pigeon
<b>Kingfishers</b>	
3	Belted Kingfisher
<b>Woodpeckers</b>	
1	Northern Flicker
<b>Hummingbirds</b>	
1	Anna's Hummingbird
<b>Crows &amp; Ravens</b>	
10	American Crow
3	Common Raven
<b>Mockingbirds</b>	
3	Northern Mockingbird
<b>Sparrows</b>	
4	Savannah Sparrow
3	Song Sparrow
<b>Blackbirds</b>	
3	Red-winged Blackbird
<b>Finches</b>	
2	House Finch

*See the following page for more comments about the birds we saw.*

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It was a very busy morning full of bird activity. A Spotted Sandpiper flew across the water in front of our boat, showing us its distinctive stiff wing beats. We studied a 2<sup>nd</sup> year gull for a long time before finally coming to the conclusion that it was an immature California Gull. Several flocks of gulls flew high overhead but we were unable to identify them from below. An Osprey was sitting low on the nesting platform at the Back Bay Science Center, scarcely moving, while another Osprey was perched on a post near the water's edge farther up the bay, giving us a wonderful view of it. At the Big Canyon outfall, there was a mass of ducks, probably ousted from the Big Canyon pond which is undergoing some reed abatement work by OC Vector Control in order to control mosquitos. We saw 2 Horned Grebes swimming with a flock of Western Grebes, distinguished by their smaller size and the fact that they dove frequently while the Western Grebes did not. On "Skimmer Island" there were 6 Turkey Vultures on the sand surrounding 2 Red-tailed Hawks, one of which was eating something. We had the feeling that the vultures were waiting there for the leftovers. After leaving there, we encountered a long line of Double-crested Cormorants, Western Grebes, and Lesser Scaups in the water. Even though the tide was not particularly high, we spotted one Clapper Rail in the cord grass at the water's edge in Constellation Area where we had seen a number of them on previous high tide trips, and a Snowy Egret was hunkered way down in the water searching for prey. From the hillside above, a Northern Mockingbird could be heard singing. A Belted Kingfisher was actively flying & diving in one of the side channels. In the gray light of our overcast weather, the white vertical shoulder stripe on the Green-winged Teals on a mud flat was very pronounced, almost obliterating the shape & color of the birds. A large number of birds were perched on the floating pipe boom by North Star Beach: 25 Double-crested Cormorants, 5 Snowy Egrets, a Ring-billed Gull, a Killdeer, a Semipalmated Plover, a Black-bellied Plover, & a Spotted Sandpiper. We saw a Great Blue Heron standing on the bow of a skiff like a large greyish brown statue and a Red-tailed Hawk was on the bluff being mobbed by 3 crows, which couldn't quite reach him because of the bumpy terrain. The crows finally quit their harassment and the hawk stayed put. It was quite a morning with a lot to see!