

## 40 Years of Birding Sees Rise, Decline of Species

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Last week KMXT told you about the Kodiak Christmas bird count, an annual event that identifies species and numbers of birds along the road system. Rich Macintosh has been birding in Kodiak for more than 50 years and said this year's count spotted 77 species and 13,000 birds in one day. He said the count has been taking place in Kodiak for more than four decades and he's seen a lot of increase and decline in different bird species.

He said one example is the Steller's Eider. When they started the bird counts he said it was often the most abundant bird they saw and showed up in the thousands.

"This year we counted 334 and that's consistent with what we've seen in recent years, their numbers have declined pretty dramatically. The King Eider is another eider that we used to see regularly a hundred or more and recent years we see very few. We got two on the count this year."

On the flip side, Macintosh said this year's count produced record numbers of sightings for other birds.

"Northern Goshawk we had nine, and the other record we set was for a little forest bird called the Brown Creeper, and we had 12 of those, so those were all time highs for our count."

Macintosh said significant weather events can play huge roles in species survival. He pointed at the harsh winter Kodiak had two years ago, and the fact that many smaller birds, like the Pacific Wren and Golden-Crowned Kinglet, were killed in large numbers.

"And the one, the Pacific Wren, we saw 29 of them on Saturday and that is actually right around the average or just above the long term average. So they recovered in two breeding seasons, they recovered nicely. Whereas the Golden-Crowned Kinglet the average for 20 years is 182 per count and we saw only five this year, four last year. So they are still struggling and it's pretty obviously going to take them a lot longer to recover to their normal numbers. So that's pretty interesting."

While weather is a factor for some species survival, Macintosh said there are others, like the Steller's Eider, that he isn't sure about. All in all, he reiterated that this year's count was a good one and he's

pleased with the results.