

Oakland Owlets' Feb. 2020 ~The Great Backyard Bird Count

In February the Young Birders' Club participated in the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). This count was initiated in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. The GBBC encourages birders around the world to get outdoors and count birds. This count spans four days and the results are posted in real time online. In 2019, 160,000 people participated from more than 100 countries. This year the GBBC started on Valentine's Day with the slogan "*Show your love of wild birds*". It is great introduction to birdwatching and citizen science.

On February 15th, a small group of young birders, family and friends gathered at the E.L. Johnson Nature Center to begin our count. Blanche Wicke, OAS member and naturalist, hosted this field trip. The ELJ



Nature Center has a wonderful bird feeding station where the group was able to observe some great birds. Along with regular feeder visitors we saw some unusual birds like Wild Turkey, Fox sparrow and White-throated sparrow. Within a short time, 16 species of birds were recorded. With temperatures below freezing, the group was able to bird indoors before hiking.



The ELJ Nature Center has extensive hiking trails which are open to the public. The trails meander through fields, woodlands, around a pond and along a tributary of the Rouge River. The sunshine and fresh layer of snow provided some exciting examples of animal tracks. The group also encountered flocks of American Robins, a sentinel Red-tailed hawk, some raucous Common crows and other birds on the trail. A few of us were lucky to see a well camouflaged Great-horned owl. In total, 21 species of birds were seen at the ELJ Nature Center.



After time at the nature center, the group headed for Beaudette Park in Pontiac. The open water along the Clinton River in the park makes it a birding hotspot in the area and a place to see a wide variety of waterfowl. The group was not disappointed. Large flocks of Redhead and Ring-necked ducks bobbed in the water. In smaller numbers Bufflehead, Canvasback and Common Goldeneye were also seen. Beautiful Hooded Merganser males were displaying, an amazing behavior to witness. Trumpeter and Mute swans



along with Mallards and Canada geese made this side trip worthwhile. Ten new species were seen at Beaudette Park, along with some of the birds also observed at ELJ Nature Center earlier.

A combined checklist from both sites is listed in this report. A special thank you to the ELJ Nature Center and Blanche Wicke for her assistance.

The bird checklists from the two sites as follows:

Canada Goose
Mute Swan
Trumpeter Swan
Mallard
Mallard (Domestic type)
Canvasback
Redhead
Ring-necked Duck
Bufflehead
Common Goldeneye
Hooded Merganser
Wild Turkey
Mourning Dove
Red-tailed Hawk
Hawk sp.
Great Horned Owl
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Blue Jay
American Crow
Black-capped Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
White-breasted Nuthatch
European Starling
American Robin
House Sparrow
American Goldfinch
Fox Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
White-throated Sparrow
Northern Cardinal



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