

The Great Backyard Bird Count 2021 ~ Oakland Owlets

The Oakland Owlets participated in the 24th Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) on February 13th visiting both the E.L. Johnson Nature Center in Bloomfield Hills and Beaudette Park in Pontiac. A small group of 18 birders braved deep snow and cold temperatures to count birds wintering in Oakland County.

The GBBC is a four-day global birding event. This year the GBBC took place from



February 12th – 15th. Birders submit checklists of the birds they see where they live. Anyone can participate, the only requirement is to spend 15 minutes birding. The GBBC is a snapshot of bird populations globally. This year 328,668 checklists were submitted from 190 countries. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology estimates over 300,000 birders were able to see 6,449 species of birds. This amazing event brings the global birding community together. The love of bird connects us all no matter where we live.

Young birders families and friends started birding at the E.L. Johnson Nature Center. Naturalist **Cass Arsenault** led the group along the trails while sharing insights about programs and facilities. Located in a densely populated community, the mile hike was beautiful with fresh snow and great vistas of forests and fields. Nature Center Building was closed, but the feeders at the nature center's feeding station were filled for regular visitors. Both **Red-breasted** and **White-breasted** Nuthatch were spotted. American Robins were common on the trails feasting on berries. **Fifteen species** were seen at the ELJ. Nature Center



The second stop on the GBBC field trip was a short car trip to Pontiac where the Clinton River flows east from Sylvan Lake towards the city in Beaudette Park. The park is a birding hot spot. The water is typically open during the winter. Waterfowl congregate along the river where the water is ice free. Although February's cold temperatures limited the open water this year. **Kathleen Sexton**, from the Clinton River Watershed Council, joined the group to discuss the work of the watershed council and the

Clinton River in Pontiac. Factoid: The Clinton River flows from the Beaudette Park towards Pontiac, but it is hard to find the river in Pontiac. Even though the Clinton River was an important resource to the economic development of Pontiac, the river is buried under the city.



The Clinton River proved to be viable spot to see waterfowl. Hundreds of birds were congregated in the open water along the river. Three species of Swans were rested on the floating ice mats, including the Trumpeter Swan. The most abundance birds were Mallards, but the group was also treated to several species on diving ducks, include Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Redhead, Hooded Merganser and Ring-necked Duck. A few hardly birders who stayed awhile were treated to some close encounters with

landing Goldeneyes. Few other birds flitted in the shrubs along the riverbank while some raptors hunted overhead rounded out the checklist to **seventeen species** of birds.

Checklist for E.L. Johnson Nature Center

- Mourning Dove
- Red-bellied Woodpecker
- Downy Woodpecker
- Hairy Woodpecker
- Blue Jay
- Black-capped Chickadee
- Tufted Titmouse
- Red-breasted Nuthatch**

- White-breasted Nuthatch
- American Robin
- House Sparrow
- House Finch
- Pine Siskin
- Dark-eyed Junco
- Northern Cardinal

Checklist for Beaudette Park:

- Canada Goose
- Mute Swan
- Trumpeter Swan
- Trumpeter/Tundra Swan



- Mallard**
- Mallard (Domestic type)
- Redhead
- Ring-necked Duck
- Bufflehead
- Common Goldeneye**
- Hooded Merganser
- Red-tailed Hawk
- Red-bellied Woodpecker
- Downy Woodpecker
- Blue Jay
- American Crow
- Black-capped Chickadee
- House Sparrow
- House Finch

The GBBC was a great experience for the Oakland Owlets to practice the work of citizen scientists by participating in this globally initiative. To learn more about the GBBC visit – [Great Backyard Bird Count](#)

A special thank you to Cass Arsenault and Kathleen Sexton for sharing their time and expertise with the Oakland Owlets. Thank you as well to Manny Salas for permission to use his photos from Beaudette Park.



Photo Credits: Kathleen Dougherty, Emmanuel Salas & OAS Photo Gallery