

Poynette Christmas Bird Count

The 44th 2016 Poynette Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was conducted on December 31, 2016. Twelve feeder counters and 35 field counters searched 16 hours and 11 miles on foot, and 46 hours and 540 miles by car to find 59 species and 8,743 individuals. The weather was blustery in the morning and it cleared off and was calm at the end of the day. Usually about 60 species are found and overall this was an average count. No new species or and no record high numbers were found.

Twelve year old Andy Smith and his grandmother, Janet Hollander accompanied two long-time, seasoned bird observers (names not mentioned) who will not forget pointing out a flock of 34 mourning doves to the newest members of the team. Andy said, “They do not look like mourning doves” and instead recognized them as Eurasian-collared doves, the only ones found on the count!

The Shea party of three found 42 species. They began at 6:00 a.m. calling owls without a tape by using their mouths to call and heard four species, including a northern saw-wet owl and long-eared owls, respond. Gail spotted a peregrine falcon, only seen twice before on this CBC. Not long after that they called in five Virginia rails. Later, Al saw a flock of turkeys in the distance and said “it looks like our first turkeys”, and driving closer saw that they were looking at 17 bald eagles in a field feeding on a deer carcass.

Interesting species found included six northern pintails, one great blue heron, 62 bald eagles, one sharp-shinned hawk, two belted kingfishers, 83 American robins, and 1,257 dark-eyed juncos. Missing from the count this year were Eastern bluebirds, Lapland longspurs, snow buntings and pine siskins. Only one horned lark was found. Mark Martin added the fifth owl species, a short-eared owl, his last and personal best bird of the 2016 count at 5:13 p.m. when he saw the moth-like flight of this bird in his headlights on Kampen Road, north of Goose Pond.

In addition to Andy Smith we were glad to have Logan Bahr, a high school sophomore from Poynette, and Caleb Lang, a senior from Rio join in this year’s count. Their “young eyes and enthusiasm” were welcomed additions to the count that is dominated mostly by birders over 65 years old.

The count was coordinated by Mark and Sue Foote-Martin, Madison Audubon Society Goose Pond Sanctuary.