



NEWSLETTER

November /December 2019

74th Annual Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, December 21, 2019

by Jacco Gelderloos

In recent years' CBC announcements, I have often mentioned the fact that I seem to be writing them on unseasonably warm days. Well, not so much this year! To say the weather during trick-or-treating last night was brutal would be an understatement—rain, wind, even snow buffeted the committed youngsters (and their equally committed parents) going door-to-door in our neighborhood. Could this be a sign of things to come in the next several months? Clearly, winter is on its way, but is this early cold snap a sign that we're in for an extra cold and snowy season? Only time will tell, but what is for sure is that we are closing in on that greatest of winter birding traditions, the Ann Arbor CBC, sponsored by the Washtenaw Audubon Society. So get your pencils out and jot down **Saturday, December 21st** as the day where we somewhat mad birders will be heading out and counting birds to play our part in this hemisphere-wide citizen science event. Of course, setting an alert on your smart phones will work, too.

Last year, the major talking point was, justifiably, the first record of Townsend's Solitaire for our count (and Washtenaw County, generally), found by Ben Hack and Sarah Toner—check out Lyle Hamilton's amazing shot of this at times elusive rarity. We can only speculate what this year's highlight will be, but be sure there will be a highlight, possibly several! Of course, that is just the more eye-catching aspect of the count—the event's real impact is made by the collective data points we gather. Over the years, and in conjunction with all the other CBCs across the continent, these data points paint a picture of population

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President's Letter

Finding a winter home

My year-round home is in Michigan, so I bird in every season, even the winter, in snow and ice and below freezing temps. If you are like me, you don't want to stay inside even on the coldest days. Today, after the Veteran's Day storm, I made it out to Vreeland and Gotfredson Roads, in Superior Township. "Winter wonderland" doesn't even come close to describing the scene, as a Short-eared Owl hunted the fields in daylight, and a Rough-legged Hawk patrolled nearby, a visitor from the tundra, fitting right in. A Wilson's Snipe walked down the side of the road, probably as perplexed as I was about this early November snow.

I am reminded how difficult it is for our feathered friends to find a winter home, to stay warm and find food. Recently a foursome of female Eastern Bluebirds explored all the housing opportunities in my backyard, going in and out of various nest boxes and woodpecker holes, searching for the comfiest roosting spot. They even brought bits of grass to make the cavities cozier. And, a Downy Woodpecker just completed a roosting hole in a snag in the yard. She spent hours each day, perfecting the space, while tossing out bits of unwanted wood. Yesterday, as the storm raged, I could see her little face peeking out of the hole, safer than she would have been, had she not prepared for winter.

Preparing for winter birding in Michigan means getting my gear in order. Making sure to have plenty of hand and toe warmers in the car, hauling out the snow boots, wool socks, and long johns. We have the Christmas Bird Count coming up on December 21, led by the inimitable Jacco Gelderloos. Before then, we have many opportunities to hone our winter birding skills. Join us for the annual birding trip to Belle Isle with Oakland Audubon, on November 24, or attend the Gull Trip to the Salem Landfill on December 14—registration is now open. You'll find all the trip details in this newsletter, on our website at www.washtenawaudubon.org, and on the WAS Facebook page.

Stay warm, my friends, but don't stay inside!

As always,

I am for the birds,

Juliet Berger



Eastern Bluebirds, Ann Arbor, Juliet Berger

Results of the Big Sit 2019

by Don Chalfant

A hearty thanks to everyone who skipped the U of M football game on TV to participate in this year's Big Sit at Independence Lake on Saturday, October 12. Without you, there would be no Big Sit. Eyes and ears younger and more finely tuned than mine were certainly in evidence, as the results indicate. I'll post our results to the national sponsor of the Big Sit, Bird Watcher's Digest; and the results of all Sits nationally will be included on their website.

The nine Big Sit participants saw or heard 57 species, which is slightly over the 22-year average of 53. We had one species not seen in the previous 21 sits: Winter Wren.

We had eight species I'd consider unusual for our Sits: Peregrine Falcon (2 previously), Pileated Woodpecker (2 previously), Swamp Sparrow (3 previously), Towhee (5 previously), Blue-winged Teal (3 previously), Black Duck (4 previously), Eastern Phoebe (5 previously).

Misses? Based on previous Sit results, the following might be considered misses: (Ring-necked Duck (seen on 11 of previous 21 Sits), Great Egret (8), Woodcock (7), Herring Gull (15), Bonaparte's Gull (10), Gray Catbird (9), Dark-eyed Junco (9), Brown-headed Cowbird (15).

Species seen (heard), not in taxonomic order (and with apologies for the lack of a table):

Pied-billed Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Mute Swan, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Bald Eagle, American Coot, Sandhill Crane, Black Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Peregrine, Killdeer, Ring-billed Gull, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Eastern Screech-Owl, Great Horned Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, American Crow, Cedar Waxwing, Eastern Bluebird, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, Eastern Phoebe, European Starling, Horned Lark, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, Winter Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Song Sparrow, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, American Goldfinch, House Finch, Eastern Towhee, Northern Cardinal, Rusty Blackbird, Common Grackle, Swamp Sparrow, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Yellow-rumped Warbler, White-throated Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird

Photo credit: Mike Sefton



74th Annual Christmas Bird Count

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trends and changes in distribution patterns for our feathered friends. Of course, our own circle's 70+ years of counting do so as well—several (too many) species show distinct downward trends or have disappeared altogether, whereas others have become decidedly more common. I, for one, am curious what the 2019 count will bring and I hope you will be joining me in putting together our piece of the puzzle on the 21st!

The event brings out both advanced, intermediate, and beginning birders, and it is a wonderful occasion for volunteers new to the area, or birding itself, to meet the local birding community and become part of the Ann Arbor area's extensive birding network. As a former newbie, I can attest to the warm and knowledgeable welcome WAS birders will and continue to give!

In keeping with general trends to make most, if not all, information available online, the National Audubon Society has been posting annual results on its website at <http://netapp.audubon.org/cbcobservation/>. This is an amazing resource, allowing you to check historical results for every count circle! In addition, you can sign up for NAS's citizen science publication American Birds, here: <https://action.audubon.org/signup/sign-citizen-science>; American Birds summarizes data not only for the Christmas Bird Count, but also the Great Backyard Bird Count, and other citizen science efforts.

If you're unfamiliar with the CBC format, a quick reminder of the nature of our count is in order. All CBCs are conducted during a 3-week period from December 14 to January 5, all over the western (and even a small and growing part of the eastern) hemisphere. Historically, the Ann Arbor count always takes place on the 3rd Saturday in December, to prevent scheduling conflicts with other nearby counts. Each count circle covers an area 15 miles in diameter; the Ann Arbor circle is centered on the Foster Road bridge, near the intersection of Maple Road and Huron River Drive and extends roughly from Dexter in the west to Dixboro in the east, and from Whitmore Lake in the north to the Ann Arbor Airport in the south—the map on page 6 shows the count circle in immaculate detail. Our objective is to identify all bird species present in this circle and count how many individuals of each species are present. In addition to the daylight bird census, several hardy observers will conduct a pre-dawn search for owls.

There are a number of ways to participate in this count, the main one of which is as a field observer. Given how well the online sign-up option has been working, I would like to ask you all to use that feature on the WAS CBC page. Doing so will allow you to sign up for the event, designate a preferred area in which you'd like to count, and even indicate which dish you plan on bringing to the potluck (see below). After you've signed up on that page, an alert is sent to me, which I will then forward to the area leader of your preferred count area. With the help of these alerts, I get a good idea of which area is in need of volunteers, and I can then direct counters with no area preference to where they are needed most. Of course, you can still email or call me (CBC Compiler Jacco Gelderloos) or your preferred area's leader—check out the detailed maps on the WAS website.

If you'd rather not brave the weather (whatever it may be like on count day), there is always the option of staying indoors and pitching in as a feeder watcher. If you have a feeder within the count circle, this is a fun and easy way to participate. (**Remember:** the feeder MUST be within the count circle, otherwise the data is invalid for our count—simply type your address into Google Maps to make sure, or check with me). Like field observers, you may sign up to participate for any length of time—from one hour to all day. Contact feeder watch coordinator Kurt Hagemeister for more information, to sign up, or to get feeder watch forms.



Townsend's Solitaire, Lyle Hamilton

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The Washtenaw Audubon Society is an active chapter of Michigan Audubon formed in the early 1950s. Monthly programs feature guest speakers on a wide variety of natural history and birding topics. We conduct field trips to places in Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, and beyond.

As always, the real fun and excitement, the highlight of the event really, happens at the end of the day at the potluck dinner, when the final results are tallied and announced after dessert. In recent years the potluck has been held at the main meeting room of the Matthaei Botanical Gardens—all participants are invited! Nancy French has taken on the role of potluck coordinator—let her know what your food contribution will be or do so when you sign up online—*please note that alcohol is not permitted on the MBG premises*. The MBG are located at 1800 N. Dixboro Rd., just about one mile south of Plymouth Rd. in Ann Arbor. The University of Michigan charges a \$1.20/hour fee at the Botanical Gardens. Area leaders can give directions if you need them; plan to gather there around 5:15 – 5:30 p.m.

Please remember that the CBC is run entirely by volunteers and can always use your help. Consider helping out with the potluck set-up and clean-up: it is exceedingly helpful to arrive early at the potluck site, lend a hand setting up tables and chairs, and help prepare for the arrival and arrangement of food. This may also entail getting supplies such as tablecloths, plates, etc. (costs will be reimbursed by WAS). After the supper, we will need to clean up as well. Remember: many hands make light work!

Information regarding the count will also be available on the Ann Arbor CBC web page where any updates will be posted as count day approaches. Please keep an eye on <http://www.washtenawaudubon.org/events/christmas-bird-count> for news and updates regarding the event.

Area	Leaders	Phone	E-mail
1	Andrew Pawuk	(740) 590-6596	andrewpawuk@gmail.com
2	Rob & Nancy French	(734) 994-8418	rwfrenchjr@comcast.net
3	Benjamin Hack	(734) 845-2634	bdhbirdman@gmail.com
4	Tim McKay	(734) 657-6401	tamckay@umich.edu
5	Jessica Adamczyk	(847) 308-4975	jessica.adamczyk13@gmail.com
6	Jacco Gelderloos	(734) 973-9422	jjgelderloos@yahoo.com
7	Kurt Hagemeister	(734) 663-9746	khagemeister@sbcglobal.net
8	Matt Spoor	(701) 610-1203	matthew.spoor@gmail.com

CBC Compiler: Jacco Gelderloos (734) 973-9422

Feeder Watch Coordinator:

Kurt Hagemeister (734) 663-9746

khagemeister@sbcglobal.net

Potluck Coordinator:

Nancy French

nfrench@umich.edu

Ann Arbor CBC Web Site:

<http://www.washtenawaudubon.org/annarborcbc.php>

National Audubon Society:

<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>

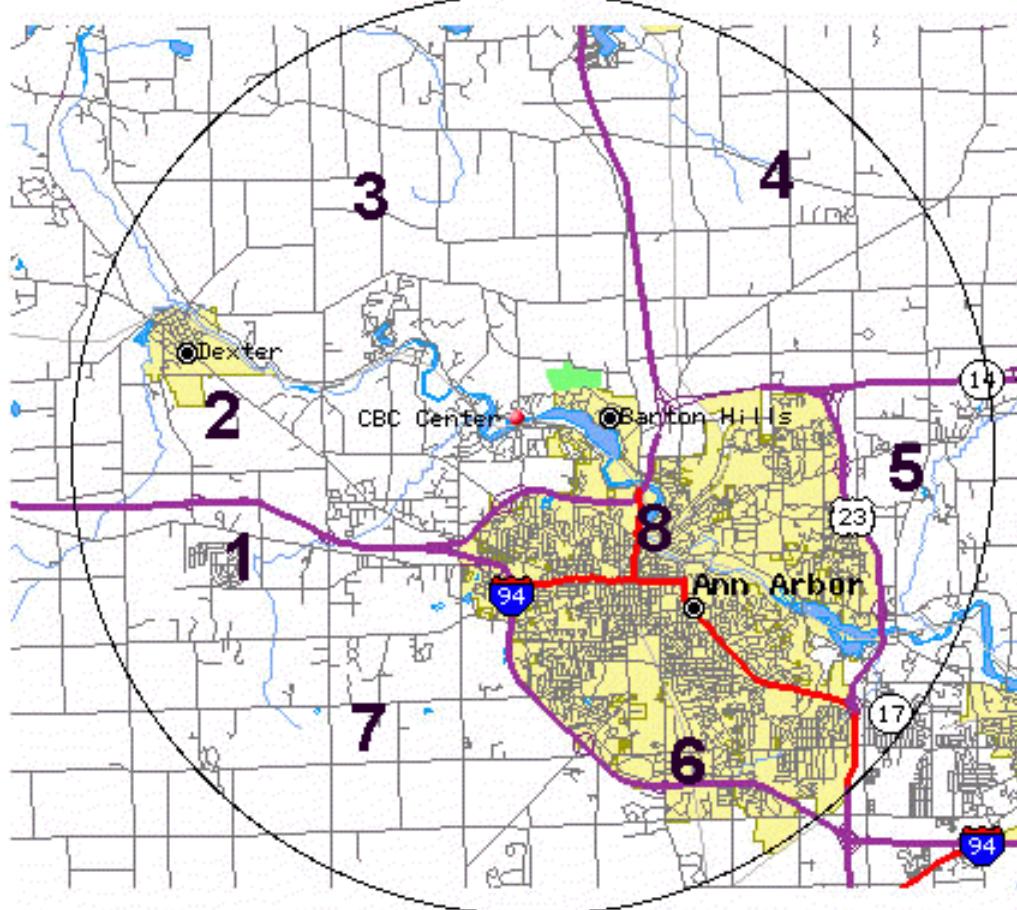
October Big Day Report 2019

by Matthew Spoor

We had a great October Big Day on October 19! Thank you to everyone who participated. Here are some highlights (and you can find the links on the WAS web site for more detail and context): 88 species were reported in Washtenaw County. This is fifteen more species than the 2018 October Big Day. 67 checklists were submitted for Washtenaw County. This is the highest number of checklists submitted by a county in Michigan.

There is one number I am most proud of. I love eBird and eBird thrives on a high number of location/habitat specific *completed* checklists. Michigan ranked 6th in the entire country for number of checklists submitted! Considering Michigan is the 10th most populous state in the union, we should feel pretty darn good about that. Thirty-three people submitted a checklist in Washtenaw County on Saturday. I know some of those checklists included other people who did not submit their own checklists, so I would estimate nearly 40 participants this year. A big shout out to Ottawa County, MI, for edging us out for total number of species with 91. See how the rest of the world fared for October Big Day at https://ebird.org/octoberbigday?yr=BIGDAY_2019b&m=.

Photo credit: Mike Sefton



CBC Area Map

Upcoming WAS Field Trips (Dec 2019 – Jan 2020)

Matthew Spoor, Co-Chair, Field Trip Coordinator (fieldtrips@washtenawaudubon.org)

Washtenaw Audubon field trips are free of charge and open to the public unless otherwise indicated. For trips with constraints on the number of participants, WAS members are sometimes given priority in registering (as indicated). We enthusiastically encourage and welcome people with no experience. We will always have extra binoculars for those that need them. Please check the WAS website or Facebook page for updates, additions, and directions. All trips are rain or shine unless otherwise noted.

Saturday, December 14, 2019, 8:30 a.m.

Gulls Galore at Salem Landfill

Leaders: Rob French and Mike Sefton

Join us for this unique opportunity to gain access to the Salem Landfill and enjoy learning and viewing a variety of gull species. This annual trip is a favorite among area “hard-core” birders. So, if you are looking to crack the mystery of gull identification, this might be a good trip to attend. Due to the restricted access, space is limited, registration is required, and we will all be driving in vans provided by WAS. Please visit the Events tab at the WAS web site for more details and to register.

Saturday, December 21, 2019

74th Annual Christmas Bird Count: See lead article in the newsletter for details.

Wednesday, January 1, 2020, 8:00 a.m.

New Year's Bird Walk at Ford Lake

Leaders: Juliet Berger & Matthew Spoor

Kick off the new year with a bang of birds! What better way to start 2020 than a brisk bird walk with friends of Washtenaw Audubon Society? Join us on a walk around Ford Lake as we enjoy winter birding for gulls, geese, and other waterfowl. Everyone is welcome and no experience is necessary. Navigate to the parking lot off of South Grove St., south of I-94, at the northeast corner of Ford Lake. Visit the WAS web site Events tab for a map.

Saturday, January 11, 2020

Mystery Trip

Leaders: Matthew Spoor & Special Mystery Guest

Where will we go? What will we see? Stay tuned as we wait to see how the birds shake out this winter. Perhaps an owl or three? We will see. Details will be announced Wed., January 8th. Check the WAS Web site for location, time, and details.

Tuesday, January 21, 2020, 7:00 p.m.

Tour: Museum of Zoology Bird Collection

Join us for a presentation and tour of the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology’s Bird Collection. The collection, comprised of 210,000 specimens, is the 5th largest in North America and the 2nd largest at a university. We are fortunate to have Dr. Ben Winger as our host for the evening. Dr. Winger is the Assistant Professor and Curator of Birds, Museum of Zoology and Department of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology. He will give a presentation followed by a tour. Due to the nature of the space, we will be limiting the tour to 30 people and to WAS members only. If there are any spaces available the week prior to the event, we will open them to non-members (<http://www.washtenawaudubon.org/give/become-a-member>).

To become a member of Washtenaw Audubon Society, please complete the form below (or a copy) and mail it with a check or money order payable to **Washtenaw Audubon Society—WAS Membership, P.O. Box 130923, Ann Arbor, MI 48113**.

Renewal New Member

Membership Dues

Additional Donation \$ Individual Household \$25 (online only \$20)

Name: Student \$15 (online only \$10)

Address: Senior \$15 (online only \$10)

Phone: Email: Patron \$50

We encourage you to join at a lower rate if the suggested rates would otherwise preclude your membership, or at a higher rate if you possess the means. **Note:** WAS will only use your email address to communicate with you about WAS programs, field trips, or matters of interest to you, such as membership renewal and emailed WAS newsletters (in color!). We will not give your email address to anyone else.

WAS Monthly Programs

WAS monthly events usually are held on the third Wednesday of the month. Programs begin at 7:30 p.m. at the U-M Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor. Free and open to the public. **Please note:** *The Matthaei Botanical Gardens charges for parking at the rate of \$1.20 an hour, enforced 7 days a week from 8am to 8pm. Members of the Matthaei Botanical Gardens and Nichols Arboretum park for free.*

December No formal Wednesday program in December

Please join us on Saturday, December 21, 2019, for the annual Ann Arbor Christmas Bird Count. See the lead story!

January 15 Birding Ecuador

Join April Campbell for a trip to bird-rich Ecuador. Ecuador has 1635 avian species, including such spectacular birds as the Andean Condor, Sunbittern, Hoatzin, and the Galapagos Penguin. A vibrant culture, influenced by Amerindians and Spanish colonists, along with beautiful landscapes, makes Ecuador a frequent destination for birders and other visitors.

February 19 Birding Northern California

Join Len Sander for a photographic tour of Northern California birding sites and birds. Northern California is home to many iconic birds, including Marbled Murrelet, Northern Spotted Owl, Hermit Warbler, and California Condor. Retired University of Michigan professor Len Sander is an avid birder, photographer, and world traveler.

March 18 Architectural Solutions to Reduce Bird Deaths

Join architect Nick Liadis for a program on the alarming number of birds killed in building strikes, and the solutions to the problem that he sees in architectural details and window treatments. Nick Liadis practices architecture in Pittsburgh, and is a certified bird bander, volunteering at the Powdermill Avian Research Center in Rector, PA.

Washtenaw Audubon Society

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