

La Crosse 2002 Christmas Bird Count - A Summary

Saturday, December 14, 2002

Pre-dawn until Dusk and Beyond

Rick Kinzie again was our Christmas Bird Count organizer/compiler this year. The final tally shows a total of 58 species and 7,373 individual birds counted, well under the usual count for the past twenty years or so. This was probably caused by a combination of the early cold weather (the Mississippi River is almost solid ice), which limited waterfowl and gull species, the total lack of snow and the warm weather for the count day itself, which spread the birds out rather than concentrating them conveniently for counting, and the absence of winter finches (only one female Purple Finch).

The new species for this year were the juvenile Trumpeter Swan, seen by Fred Lesher, Mike Houle and Kurt Brownell near French Island and the Ross' Goose and Chipping Sparrow seen by Matt Paulson and his group northeast of the city.

American Robins again were seen in many of the count areas, making their annual every-other-year appearance. This has been a "tradition" for them for almost a dozen years now (see the American Robin chart).

Mike Furr and Laura Johnson again hosted the potluck party after the day's counting. The following pictures were taken after we had feasted and were getting ready to tally the count.



Mike Furr, Laura Johnson and their daughter Lara discuss both the joys and frustrations of this year's La Crosse Christmas Bird Count with Coulee Region Audubon Society's president Fred Lesher.



Pat and Bobbie Wilson and Matt Paulson entertain two of Matt's friends, Robby Cooper and Erin Morrison who helped him cover his count area.



CRAS members Todd Huffman, Jolene Leshner, Mary Sullivan, Pat Caffery, Peg Zappen and Artis Aasen listen as Mike and Marilyn Houle and Kurt Brownell discuss the Trumpeter Swan they saw.

Be sure to join us for next year's count.

Check out an amusing "sighting" below.

A Bird Wanting to be Counted

By Lennie Lichter

On the morning of Saturday, December 14, 2002, while I was participating in the La Crosse CBC I stopped my truck on the side of the road along the edge of a field of corn stubble. I almost immediately spotted a Ring-necked Pheasant rooster about 30 yards away. When I got out to make sure there were no others, and to look and listen for whatever else might be around, he hunkered down among the stubble trying to be as inconspicuous as possible.

The next time I looked in that direction however, he was half way to me and headed my way. I returned to scanning the distant bluffs and fields and figured he must have been a released bird. When he ended up on the roadside at my feet I thought I'd better get a picture of him as proof of what I saw. He was very cooperative and posed eagerly, all the while making sounds that were much more dove-like than pheasant-like.



Then, when I went to lean across the seat to put the camera back into the truck, I felt him jump onto the back of my leg as if he was attempting to enter the truck with me. I instinctively shook him off and managed to get into the cab - alone.

As I drove off he was down next to the truck doing a roadrunner imitation for the first 50 yards or so alongside. He finally veered off into the field to avoid another approaching truck.

Turns out that he was not only a very tame bird, but had also probably been imprinted on humans, though now he was living in very typical pheasant habitat.

Needless to say, Fred Leshner and Rick Kinzie, organizers of the La Crosse CBC, did not let me "officially" count him.