

Poynette CBC - Saturday December 30, 2023

By the numbers I just added a weather comment in the first paragraph.

With the help of 43 field counters and 9 feeder counts, we were able to cover 448 miles (421 by car, 27 by foot) in 67 hours (45 by car, 32 on foot) to reach a grand total of 8,829 birds from 68 different species during the 2023 Poynette Christmas Bird Count. An additional effort of 1.6 hours and 29 miles were spent searching for owls. Weather conditions were milder than normal with 33 degrees, light winds, 0 to 1 inch of snow on the ground, and mostly open water.

It is not easy to break high counts for species or add new species during a count that began 53 years ago. However, with Brenna's help, we were able to break the high count of 31 field counters set in 1986. Brenna sent out a request on social media for additional help, allowing us to reach 39 field observers at the beginning of the day. We increased our field counter total to 41 after recruiting a couple 'eBirding' in the Browne Prairie at Goose Pond.

High counts included 12 Pileated Woodpeckers, 2 Common Ravens, 4 White-crowned Sparrows, and 25 counters gathering for lunch. The first time a Common Raven was reported on the Poynette CBC was in 2019 at DNR MacKenzie Center. This year, a raven was found at the MacKenzie Center by Fred Dike and Jeff Lang and also at Rocky Run State Natural Area by Curt and Arlys Caslavka. Our count area is in the southernmost portion of the Common Raven's breeding range from Pennsylvania to Wyoming.

Other exceptional numbers include 15 Swamp Sparrows along open water at the Mud Lake State Wildlife Area, 12 Brown Creepers, and a Yellow-rumped Warbler, a species we do not expect to find this time of year.

One of our goals at Goose Pond Sanctuary is to provide habitat for birds migrating, nesting, and wintering at the sanctuary. This winter we have bird feeders at three residents, three food plots with corn, and a four-acre field dominated by foxtail and sorghum to provide food and cover for winter birds. Winter birds found at Goose Pond Sanctuary during the 2023 Poynette CBC included 66 Ring-necked Pheasants, 1 Cooper's Hawk, 4 Northern Harriers, 2 American Kestrels, 50 Mourning Doves, 1 Short-eared Owl, 302 American Tree Sparrows (out of 512 found on the entire count), 4 White-crowned Sparrows, 1 Field Sparrow, 3 Snow Buntings, 57 Dark-eyed Juncos, and 36 American Goldfinches.

Thanks to everyone that participated.

Mark Martin and [Susan Foote-Martin](#), compilers