

WVWA Birdathon 2003 Summary

Two weeks of generally cloudy skies with intermittent rain and cool temperatures preceded this year's Birdathon. To the south of us a parade of low fronts passed alternately choking off and releasing this year's migrating birds effectively stretching out their migration (These lows were responsible for a record spring tornado season in the Midwest). One result of this was evident in the continued presence of two winter residents, White-throated Sparrows in good numbers where typically only one or two are found and a lone Brown Creeper found by one team. Another very late migrant was a single Snow Goose keeping company of Canada Geese at Prophecy Creek Park, however it is more likely this bird was incapable of participating in migration for whatever reason.

Both days of the Birdathon were no different than the preceding weeks with clouds and very light drizzle on Friday afternoon and intermittent rain Saturday morning left over from a low that passed to the south Friday night. This low had pinched off many of the migrating birds Friday night leaving us without a fresh batch of birds for Saturday morning. As a result Friday afternoon was somewhat better for wood warblers than Saturday morning, the reverse of what we typically see.

Two species were most notable: White-crowned Sparrows, found at two locations by most teams, and a Prothonotary Warbler, found at the Four Mills Nature Reserve by two teams. One family, sandpipers, was notable for their low numbers. In particular only one team got a Lesser Yellowlegs and there were no reports of Greater Yellowlegs, typically all teams get at least one of these species. One totally missing species, although not migratory or native, was the Ring-necked Pheasant, but this is not surprising as their numbers have been declining for many years.

Seven new species were recorded: Snow Goose, Gadwall, Merlin, Purple Martin, Brown Creeper, Prothonotary Warbler and Lincoln's Sparrow. This brings our total number of recorded species to 165 since the 1998 Birdathon.

This year a total of 134 species were recorded by nine teams compared with 137 species last year, our all time high species count. The leading team by species count was the Falcons with 100 species followed closely by the Eagles with 97 and the Hawks with 95. All teams should be congratulated as the results show great improvement in species count for each team over the past couple of years.

All in all it was a very good year for the Birdathon although somewhat different than the previous years. However, it is precisely this variability that makes the Birdathon interesting and fun.