

2007 Wissahickon Birdathon Summary Statement

The 2007 Wissahickon Birdathon was held on May 10th & 11th with near perfect spring weather, if a bit warmer than usual, with highs in the upper 70's to low 80's. Occasional showers, especially overnight on the 10th, helped to keep the migrant numbers up for both days.

This year eight teams recorded 128 species, just shy of our average of 130 species. Overall the teams averaged 90 species per team. This average has steadily increased from 80 species per team in 2000 to 85 in 2003, reflecting the corresponding improvement in birding abilities of all teams involved. Two new species for the birdathon include a Red-headed Woodpecker, found by the Falcons at Militia Hill and a Blue-winged Warbler found by the Hawks and Snow Geese also at Militia Hill and Upper Gwynedd's Parkside Park respectively..

A cooperative Black-crowned Night-Heron was found at the Wissahickon Waterfowl Preserve by all teams but one, where typically only one or two teams record it. Also recorded by all teams but one were Black Vultures. This reflects their increased population in this area due to the northward expansion of their range. In the 1930's they were only known to breed south of central Virginia. The first nest in Pennsylvania was recorded 1952 and they are now becoming more common in New York and Connecticut. No teams recorded an Osprey, Bald Eagle or Northern Harrier, which is very unusual but does not indicate a trend for any of these species. Locally the American Kestrel is becoming very difficult to find with most teams not recording them for the past three years while five years ago most every team could record them. This reflects the steady decrease in their population in southern New England, probably due to development of farm lands, while populations in the mid-west are increasing. The overall population of American Kestrels in the U.S. is relatively stable. The population of Wild Turkeys is steadily increasing in our area as shown by the fact that in 1999 and 2000 none were recorded followed by steady increases up through this year when all teams but one recorded them. Belted Kingfishers disappointed most teams this year but this does not indicate a trend at this point as the numbers recorded do fluctuate over the past eight years.

The winning team this year, as judged by species count, was Team Snow Goose with 103 species, just edging out the Falcons, the winner for the four previous years, who had 102 species. Third place goes to the Hawks with 96 species.

