



Middlefork Audubon Society

a chapter of the Illinois Audubon Society

The Audubonite

January-February 2019

News and Upcoming Events

Greetings to all and a Happy New Year!

It is barely one week since ringing in the new year with the Middlefork winter bird count, and with 50 degrees temperatures outside I am beginning to wonder where winter has gone. To be sure, the forecast indicates we are not quite finished with winter yet, so keep those feeders filled folks!

The winter bird counts were again a success and everyone was grateful for the warmer temperatures on count days. Thanks to all the counters and compilers for all their efforts to tally the birds in the count circles while hiking, driving, or observing feeders and yards from residential homes. The Vermilion County count circle areas for the Forest Glen and Middlefork counts included diverse habitats including residential areas, lakes, rivers, golf courses, Vermilion County Conservation District sites, nature preserves, and even reclaimed coal mine slag pile grasslands. In this newsletter you will find some interesting results and comparisons showing trends for some of the species found. Besides the joy of being in the field observing all the birds and enjoying the company of birding buddies, the results and trends are what these counts are all about.

This information is gathered and sent to the National Society <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count> where it is recorded and used to monitor trends that are used to inform biologists and policy makers of significant changes that may need to be addressed or, to celebrate the recovery of endangered or threatened species. For example, we are pleased to see Bald Eagles on most, if not all, of our bird counts now. This species was removed from the Federal endangered species list on August 9, 2007, thanks, in part, to policy changes and natural area management that were the result of census data. Today, this species nests along our local river corridors and interstates and is fledging young! A great success story.

Don't worry if you missed out on the winter bird counts though because there are other opportunities around the corner. From February 15 to 19 the 22nd Great Backyard Bird Count will take place. Consider joining in this global day of birding! Unlike the Christmas bird count that has designated areas, the GBBC has no boundaries. As it says on their website, Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from your backyard, or anywhere in the world. Check out the website and consider counting for a day, possibly with a friend! <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/about-great-backyard-bird-count>

And if you can't make the GBBC, spring is just around the corner....right?! The next spring bird count will be Saturday, May 4. Mark your calendars and join the fun! It will be here before we know it.

Happy New Year!
Suzanne Smith

Middlefork Winter Bird Count a Success

The following is the count data as well as extrapolated data from this year's Middlefork winter bird count:

Canada Goose 721
Mute Swan 3
American Black Duck 15
Mallard 180
Common Goldeneye (count high)
Hooded Merganser 16
Common Merganser 58 (count high)
Red-breasted Merganser 2
Ring-necked Pheasant 1
Wild Turkey 58
Pied-billed Grebe 2
Horned Grebe 1
Great Blue Heron 7
Bald Eagle 13 (5ad, 5 imm, 3unk)
Northern Harrier 8
Cooper's Hawk 7
Red-shouldered Hawk 12
Red-tailed Hawk 56
Rough-legged Hawk 1
American Kestrel 16
American Coot 1
Sandhill Crane 2 (tied for count high)
Ring-billed Gull 363
Herring Gull 4
Rock Pigeon 54
Eurasian Collared-Dove 2
Mourning Dove 302
Eastern Screech Owl 1
Great Horned Owl 2
Barred Owl 8
Long-eared Owl 5
Northern Saw-whet Owl 1
Belted Kingfisher 19
Red-headed Woodpecker 59
Red-bellied Woodpecker 124 (count high)
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 2
Downy Woodpecker 75
Hairy Woodpecker 20
Northern Flicker 30
Pileated Woodpecker 32 (count high)
Northern Shrike 1
Blue Jay 441
American Crow 51500
Horned Lark 2
Carolina Chickadee 101

Tufted Titmouse 156
Red-breasted Nuthatch 1
White-breasted Nuthatch 91
Brown Creeper 7
Carolina Wren 39
Winter Wren 1
Marsh Wren *
Golden-crowned Kinglet 4
Eastern Bluebird 63
Hermit Thrush 5
American Robin 389
Cedar Waxwing 173
European Starling 1937
Yellow-rumped Warbler 8
Northern Cardinal 109
Eastern Towhee 12
American Tree Sparrow 154
Fox Sparrow 1
Song Sparrow 34
Swamp Sparrow 14
White-throated Sparrow 87
Dark-eyed Junco 299
Lapland Longspur 125
Red-winged Blackbird 4
Eastern Meadowlark 4
Common Grackle 3
Brown-headed Cowbird 2
Purple Finch 47
House Finch 23
American goldfinch 45
House Sparrow 782

Total species 76

Individual birds 58014

25 observers (count high) with 11 parties
34.25 party foot hours, 22 by car for a total 56.25
Party foot miles 31.4 and by car 291 for a total of
322.4
2.5 owling hours
Cloudy day with no snow cover and light rain in
the pm no wind and a temp range of 33 to 35
All water was open. Start time was 5:55 and end
time was 4:25

Thank you to each one of you, and those of you
that brought help who's contact information I do
not have, please forward my gratitude on to them
as well.

-Jessica Runner



Compilation party at Connie Cunningham's cabin after Middle Fork CBC

January Gathering

In lieu of a program for this month we are going to enjoy getting to know our members and friends a bit better over some good Mexican food. Check the calendar for details. Bring pictures or birding adventures if you like, or just come as you are. We will talk about our upcoming treks to the beautiful nature preserves of Vermilion County and would love to get your input for future programs and events. I am looking forward to a great year outdoors birding with you all.

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Immature Bald Eagle sighted during Middlefork CBC.

Credit: Rob Kanter



Calendar		
Date & Time	Location	Event
Thursday, January 24 @ 6:30 PM	El Toro restaurant in Danville	January Gathering
January 26 & 27	Starved Rock State Park	Bald Eagle Watch Weekend
Thursday, February 28 @ 7:00 PM	Danville Public Library	Program TBA
Saturday, May 4	-	Spring Bird Count



Thanks to Berry's Garden Center in Danville, IL for hosting our annual Bird Seed Sale.

www.berrysgarden.com • (217)-446-3076