

The Goss Hawk

Waukesha Christmas Bird Count

The Waukesha Christmas Bird Count has been a staple of the Goss Bird Club calendar for decades. Data for the CBC can be found in our historical archives going back to the 1930s. Additionally, by pulling data from Audubon’s CBC website, it’s possible to find data from as early as 1916. So we know this count has been running for at least 109

years! There are some gaps in the data where records aren’t available, and some years are incomplete, but we do have consecutive reports going back to 1946. This consistent database allows for an inter-

esting deep dive into the sightings and reports from past years, providing some interesting comparisons to the current status of birds in Waukesha County.

The highest tally for the count was 67 species three times - 2012, 2020, and 2023. In 1975 65 birds were reported, and 64 species were tallied in four years, the latest being 2024. Going back to the early days of the count, there were far fewer species reported. It wasn’t until 1954 that we found more than 50 species, and while the numbers trended up after that, we didn’t report 60+ birds until 1969. This could be for a variety of reasons - perhaps there were fewer participants, or maybe the habitat and conditions weren’t conducive to hosting a variety of species.

Over the decades, in the Waukesha CBC, we have seen a total of 121 species. This includes some rather unexpected entries of

Monk Parakeet in 1982 (likely from the Chicago population of survivors of the pet trade), a Black-backed Woodpecker in 1987, Northern Bobwhites, which are mostly extirpated from Wisconsin in recent years, a count-week Ruffed Grouse in 1974, 21 years of Gray Partridge sightings from the mid-to-late 20th century, Varied Thrush in 1969 and 2023, and several reports of the Oregon race of the Dark-eyed Junco, a subspecies that could potentially split to be its own species someday.



Tufted Titmouse - Beth McGrath

The latest edition of the Waukesha CBC was on December 14, 2024. Conditions were mostly pleasant despite some minor winds, but 28 birders still managed to find 64 species. There were very few misses of expected species; species like Rough-legged Hawk, Trumpeter Swans, Barred & No. Saw-whet Owls, and Horned Lark could not be found. Alternatively, we did find Snow Bunting, last seen in 2013, Ruddy Duck for only the 6th time, and a brand new addition for 2024 - Turkey Vulture. Twenty Turkey Vultures were seen during the Waukesha CBC for the first time ever.

Jasonn Weber has been our CBC compiler for much of the last decade. Thank you Jasonn for preparing, compiling, and reporting all of the information for our Christmas Bird Count. Thank you also for coordinating a meeting place for our compilation/holiday dinner! The birds, the food, and the comradery make this one of the highlights of the year for many bird club members!



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Upcoming Goss Club Events

- Feb 16 - Club Meeting at Retzer
- Mar 16 - Club Meeting at Retzer
- April 13 - Club Meeting at Retzer
- May 10 - Waukesha May Count



Would you like to become a Bluebird Landlord? There is an excellent opportunity for a new volunteer who wants to manage a local nest box trail at the UW Field Station in Oconomowoc.

Anne Moretti and Ellen Krzyston have managed the trail for 30 years, and would like to pass it on to another generation.

There are 12 boxes, which usually host a mix of Eastern Bluebirds, House Wrens and Tree Swallows. All are located on the UW property which they share with the Wildlife in Need Center on Waterville Road, south of Hwy 18.

If you are interested, they are happy to guide you around the trail this spring.



Tracking the Phantoms A Red-shouldered Hawk Telemetry Study

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Fall Report for 2024 - December 10, 2024

John Jacobs, Gene Jacobs, Matthew Hanneman

We have completed seven seasons on this project, 2018 through fall 2024. Trackers/loggers/transmitters have been deployed on 26 hawks, 15 females, 11 males. We have summer breeding ranges on 25 hawks, we have complete migration data on 13 hawks (two of which remained on or near their summer breeding range all winter) and partial migration data on three other hawks, one of these we hope to get complete migration data by next spring. We have eight active CTT Trackers, six are on hawks and two have not been deployed yet. Any of these six hawks could give us migration data but three of them have low batteries.

Overall Migration Fall 2024

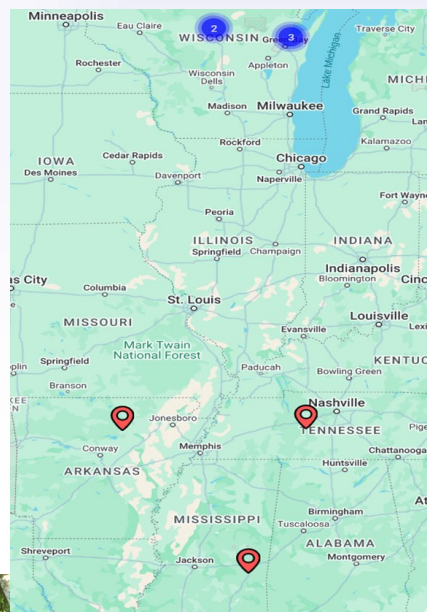
We have recent fall migration data for three hawks, all males (see map below). One of these hawks returned to the same wintering area he used last year (2023). The other two males were deployed this summer. All these hawks are fitted with CTT Tracker type transmitters and report their locations via cell towers and internet so we can track them on our computers as they migrate if their solar batteries remain above 3.7 volts.

Central Wisconsin Update

We have fall 2024 migration data for two male hawks from Central Wisconsin. One returned to the same wintering area he used in 2023, north central Arkansas. The other was deployed this summer and so far (Dec. 10) has migrated to central Tennessee (see map below).

Northeast Wisconsin Update

Male captured at Brown County Reforestation Camp in late May 2024 has migrated to east central Mississippi (see map and photo).



Fall 2024
Fall/Winter
Red-shouldered
Hawk
Locations



Male Red-shouldered Hawk at nest, Reforestation Camp, Brown County, June 24, 2024. The young have fledged but will return to the nest for food.

Donor List

Northeastern Wisconsin Bird Alliance (formerly Northeastern Wisconsin Audubon Society) remains the sponsoring agency. All donations are tax exempt and coordinated through its treasurer. We thank all our donors for their generous contributions to this project.

- *Major Sponsor \$2500- \$10,000*
Northeastern Wisconsin Bird Alliance, Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance (formerly Madison Audubon Society), Aldo Leopold Audubon Chapter of Stevens Point, American Wildlife Conservation Foundation, Brown County Conservation Alliance, Ed Smith, Milsar Inc., Wisconsin Audubon Council.
- *Sponsor \$1,000 - <\$2,500*
University of Wisconsin- Stevens Point Graduate Program, Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, Wisconsin Natural Resources Foundation, Paul and Annie Mueller, Erik and Sharra Brockman, Dianne and Rick Leyerie, Lucy Nitz and Brent Brye, Fritz Hildebrand, Richard Hansen, Raptor Inc.- Jeff Hayes, Bird City Green Bay, and Jane Wood.
- *Research Partner*
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources-Natural Heritage Conservation, Raptor Services-LLC, Brown County of Wisconsin Parks, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point Graduate Program.
- *Donor Less than \$1000*
Karen Dostal, Matt Hanneman, Brad Zinda, John and Brenda Warren, Wausau Bird Club, Beth Aschenbrenner, Dennis Malueg, and Ron Widi.

Programs 2024

One in-person program was given in February, and a Zoom program was given in November.

Planning 2025

- Wrap up telemetry on adult Red-shouldered Hawks this spring
- Publish an article in The Journal of Raptor Research
- Recapture some adults to remove or examine their loggers
- Give presentations through Zoom and in-person to the general public and present posters and papers at wildlife conferences
- Post social media articles, like Meta and Twitter, to share information about this project
- Deploy loggers on nestlings as a start on Phase 2, Tracking Young Phantoms
- Get graduate students involved in Phase 2

**All banding, marking, telemetry, and sampling is being conducted under federally authorized Bird Banding Permits, issued by the U.S. Geological Survey's Bird Banding Lab and state permits issued by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. All birds are immediately released to the wild after processing.*

Oconomowoc CBC

A New Program for Goss Bird Club

The Goss Bird Club has historically owned the Waukesha Christmas Bird Count. Data goes back well into the early 20th century, with some data as far back as 1916! But there's another CBC that club members have been involved with during our history. As of 2023, our club members have taken ownership of the Oconomowoc CBC to ensure it continues into the future, carrying on the traditions of the disbanded S. Paul Jones Bird Club. Paula Stich is the lead compiler, with assistance from Tim Hahn.

Centered around the intersection of Hwy 67 and Lac LaBelle Dr, just north of downtown Oconomowoc, the count circle encompasses parts of Waukesha, Jefferson and Dodge Counties. Much of Lake Country is within the circle, as well as the city of Oconomowoc, towns of Ashippun, Ixonia, and Concord, and many square miles of open agricultural land.

According to Audubon's CBC historical data, we have information for Oconomowoc CBC reports as far back as 1954, with only a handful of years of data missing. This data gives us a decent picture of what species can currently be found in the area, and perhaps more importantly, what birds were and were not present in the past, and how that compares to what we can find today.

Some basic data sorting can show us high counts, rare birds, trends, and other cool tidbits about the Oconomowoc CBC. The highest species count for the count was in 2016 when 62 species were reported. 61 species were found in 2020, a number hadn't been tallied since 1975. In 2015, 60 species were found, and 59 were reported in 2021 and 2022. Going back to the early days of the count, there were far fewer species reported. It wasn't until 1966 that we found more than 50 species, and while the numbers trended up after that, we didn't report 60+ birds until the mid 70s. This could be for a variety of reasons - perhaps there were fewer participants, or maybe the habitat and conditions weren't condu-

cive to hosting a variety of species.

You may be wondering which species, if any, have been reported on all 64 Oconomowoc CBCs. Well, we have this data! Seven species have been reported every single year for which we have data – *Red-tailed Hawk, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, European Starling, House Sparrow, and American Tree Sparrow*. Another handful of birds have been seen all but one year – *Mourning Dove, Downy & Hairy Woodpeckers, American Kestrel, and Dark-eyed Junco*. How did we miss these birds any year? you may ask. Who can say?

Other interesting notable reports include Gray

Partridge being reported on and off from the 60s-80s.

Norther Bobwhite were reported a couple times in 1996 and 2022. And Long-eared Owl have been reported seven times, with two birds being seen four of those years!

The 2024 version of the

Oconomowoc CBC proved to be a difficult one due to wintery conditions making for some dicey driving conditions. Some folks only managed a few hours in their sections, and thus found fewer birds. Others were able to stay out all day and as a result, we still managed to tally 53 species! We could easily have had very low numbers, but we got a boost from some open water that hosted a variety of duck species we don't often get.

Two birds - Blue Jay and Northern Cardinal - were found in all 12 sections, while 13 species were only seen in a single section. Notable birds include a couple lingering Cackling Geese (4th record), Green-winged Teal (2nd record), Pileated Woodpecker (6th record), Winter Wren (4th record), Fox Sparrow (12th record) seen by one of our feeder watchers, two Yellow-rumped Warblers (7th record). We also recorded 23 Sandhill Cranes, the most ever for the Oconomowoc CBC.

Thanks to all who participated, and we look forward to another great count in 2025!



American Tree Sparrow - Beth McGrath