

Net Results

WINTER –
SPRING 2008

Breeding Bird Atlas field work complete

The goal of a Breeding Bird Atlas is to map the distribution of each species that nests in a region. The field work for the first Michigan Breeding Bird Atlas took place in 1983-1988. In 2002, the state embarked on a new project to document changes in Michigan's bird life over the last twenty years.

The Rouge River Bird Observatory acted as county coordinator for field work that took place in Wayne County. Field workers visited assigned atlas "blocks," or quarter-townships, of 3 miles square. There are 65 whole and 10 partial blocks in Wayne County. The goal is to verify the highest level of breeding evidence for every species in each block. Levels are possible, probable, and confirmed. Actually finding a nest is not required to confirm breeding, as other evidence such as nest building, adults carrying food, etc. qualifies as "confirmed."

Over 40 volunteers submitted nearly 10,000 records during field seasons 2002-2007. The

data has been proofed and compiled, and here are some highlights:

- ◆ 135 species were recorded in Wayne County.
- ◆ 114 were "confirmed" (although it does not mean all were successful).
- ◆ Just 4 species (Cattle Egret, Sharpshinned Hawk, Chestnut-sided Warbler, and Western Meadowlark) only reached the level of "possible."
- ◆ 17 species only reached the level of "probable." Most of these species likely nested, at least rarely, in the county. These 17 species are: American Bittern, American Coot, Upland Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, Black-billed Cuckoo, Barred Owl, Least Flycatcher, White-eyed Vireo, Bell's Vireo, Veery, Prothonotary Warbler, Ovenbird, Mourning Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Vesper Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow, and Pine Siskin.
- ◆ 22 species were found in over 90% of

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More about our logo on page 4

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Black-capped Chickadees are a constant on the Winter Bird Population Survey.

Hoary Redpoll (observed in a flock of Common Redpolls in 2007-2008). The latter was also a new species for Dearborn! The average number of species counted each year is 37.

Twenty-one have been recorded every year (Table, next page), but only two of those species — Black-capped Chickadee and

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Keeping count of resident birds

Since winter 1992-1993, RRBO has been conducting a formal Winter Bird Population Survey (WBPS) on campus, which allows us to examine the population dynamics of wintering birds. The WBPS takes place between 20 December and 20 February. The Natural Area is visited a minimum of eight times (average is 13), with each visit being completed before noon and averaging 2.25 hours. During each visit, all species and individuals encountered are recorded. An annual summary calculates both average number of each species per visit, as well as the frequency of occurrence for each species.

A total of 63 species have been recorded. The newest editions to our winter bird list were Snow Bunting (seen twice in 2007-2008 as flyovers) and

Atlas summary, continued

(Continued from page 1)

the blocks: Killdeer, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Chimney Swift, Eastern Kingbird, Barn Swallow, House Wren, American Robin, Gray Catbird, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, Chipping Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Baltimore Oriole, House Finch, American Goldfinch, House Finch, and House Sparrow.

- ◆ All blocks in the county received coverage, and there were at least 10 species found in every block. 87% of the blocks had at least 30 species, and over 70% had at least 20 confirmed species. Given the extremely urban make-up of most of the county, these numbers are impressive!
- ◆ 33% of the blocks had at least 60 species, and 17% had at least 40 species confirmed. The blocks with the most species were found in the southwestern part of the county, and the block with the most species (110, with 81 confirmed) was the block that contains Crosswinds Marsh, in Sumpter Township.

What's next? Unfortunately, due to budgetary and other circumstances, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources has run out of funding to complete the statewide project as originally planned. However, the Rouge River Bird Observatory is making plans to assemble the Wayne County data, along with historical records and information compiled through RRBO's research, into a downloadable publication. Check the RRBO web site at www.rrbo.org for the latest developments.

RRBO would like to thank the James A. and Faith Knight Foundation, the University of Michigan's Office of the Vice President of Research, UM-Dearborn's Office of Sponsored Research, and many private donors for support of field work during the project.

Winter Birds, continued

(Continued from page 1)

Northern Cardinal — have also occurred on 95% of all visits.

The WBPS also lets us look at long-term changes in numbers. It has tracked the dramatic decline of crows since West Nile Virus came to town. The mean number of crows counted annually on the WBPS in the 10 years prior to WNV was 139. Since 2003, it has been only 8. Tufted Titmouse was found on every single visit in 8 of the 9 initial years of the Survey, but since then has only been seen on every visit one of the last 7 years. Meanwhile, White-throated Sparrows and Hairy Woodpeckers are becoming more regular and numerous. The increase in Hairy Woodpeckers seems to be coincident with the occurrence of the Emerald Ash Borer, which began attacking ash trees here in 2002.

There's a lot to learn about the birds that rely on the campus Natural Area during the winter months, and the WBPS is a valuable tool to help us understand how disease, invasive species, climate events, and other phenomena impact these familiar species.

Species Recorded Every Year on the WBPS, 1993-2008

Canada Goose	Northern Flicker	European Starling
Mallard	Blue Jay	American Tree Sparrow
Red-tailed Hawk	American Crow	Dark-eyed Junco
Mourning Dove	Black-capped Chickadee	Northern Cardinal
Red-bellied Woodpecker	White-breasted Nuthatch	House Finch
Downy Woodpecker	Brown Creeper	American Goldfinch
Hairy Woodpecker	American Robin	House Sparrow

Summary of Birds Banded by RRBO fall 1992 through fall 2007

Sharp-shinned Hawk	11
Cooper's Hawk	1
Virginia Rail	1
Killdeer	1
American Woodcock	10
Mourning Dove	24
Black-billed Cuckoo	7
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	1
Eastern Screech-owl	8
Northern Saw-whet Owl	34
Common Nighthawk	1
Red-headed Woodpecker	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	3
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	3
Downy Woodpecker	171
Hairy Woodpecker	27
Yellow-shafted Flicker	114
Eastern Wood-Pewee	13
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	51
"Traill's" Flycatcher	288
Least Flycatcher	196
Eastern Phoebe	16
Great Crested Flycatcher	22
Eastern Kingbird	28
Northern Shrike	1
White-eyed Vireo	6
Blue-headed Vireo	17
Yellow-throated Vireo	3
Warbling Vireo	117
Philadelphia Vireo	74
Red-eyed Vireo	390
Blue Jay	189
Barn Swallow	1
Black-capped Chickadee	377
Tufted Titmouse	57
Red-breasted Nuthatch	10
White-breasted Nuthatch	15
Brown Creeper	24
Carolina Wren	65
House Wren	386
Winter Wren	37
Marsh Wren	1
Golden-crowned Kinglet	251
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	492
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	11
Eastern Bluebird	1
Veery	134
Gray-cheeked Thrush	246
Swainson's Thrush	1441
Hermit Thrush	829
Wood Thrush	172
American Robin	2983
Gray Catbird	3189
Northern Mockingbird	2
Brown Thrasher	41
Cedar Waxwing	310
European Starling	46
Blue-winged Warbler	21
Golden-winged Warbler	9
"Brewster's" Warbler	4

"Lawrence's" Warbler	1
Tennessee Warbler	233
Orange-crowned Warbler	142
Nashville Warbler	663
Virginia's Warbler	1
Northern Parula	7
Yellow Warbler	306
Chestnut-sided Warbler	161
Magnolia Warbler	789
Cape May Warbler	25
Black-throated Blue Warbler	161
Yellow-rumped Warbler	1110
Black-thr. Green Warbler	70
Blackburnian Warbler	21
Palm Warbler	250
Bay-breasted Warbler	60
Blackpoll Warbler	361
Black-and-white Warbler	142
American Redstart	551
Prothonotary Warbler	1
Ovenbird	381
Northern Waterthrush	208
Louisiana Waterthrush	1
Kentucky Warbler	1
Connecticut Warbler	28
Mourning Warbler	85
Common Yellowthroat	427
Hooded Warbler	2
Wilson's Warbler	294
Canada Warbler	104
Yellow-breasted Chat	7
Summer Tanager	2
Scarlet Tanager	18
Eastern Towhee	14
American Tree Sparrow	97
Chipping Sparrow	82
Clay-colored Sparrow	5
Field Sparrow	62
Savannah Sparrow	24
Grasshopper Sparrow	1
Fox Sparrow	117
Song Sparrow	1100
Lincoln's Sparrow	297
Swamp Sparrow	399
White-throated Sparrow	1773
White-crowned Sparrow	652
Dark-eyed Junco	665
Northern Cardinal	513
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	73
Indigo Bunting	242
Red-winged Blackbird	223
Rusty Blackbird	3
Common Grackle	198
Brown-headed Cowbird	97
Orchard Oriole	2
Baltimore Oriole	122
Purple Finch	43
House Finch	174
Common Redpoll	1
Pine Siskin	4
American Goldfinch	2352
House Sparrow	57

Total: 28,979

139 species

RRBO continues work for the USFWS

Since 2004, RRBO has been partnering with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), doing bird surveys and analyzing historical data focusing on the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge on the lower Detroit River. We have recently branched out to other flying objects. In the summer of 2007, RRBO was awarded a grant to complete baseline surveys for dragonflies and damselflies (Odonata) at the Humbug Marsh unit of the Refuge. Not only will this survey aid in the development of the Unit's habitat management plan, the numbers and species composition of these insects, which rely on both aquatic and upland habitats, provide information on environmental conditions and habitat quality.

Both adults and larvae were surveyed, and a total of 34 species were recorded. There were several notable and exciting discoveries. One was a large population of Russet-tipped Clubtails, a state special concern species; this population may be the largest recorded in the upper Midwest. Another close relative that is also listed as special concern, the Elusive Clubtail, was also recorded.



Little has been published about the ecology and needs of the Russet-tipped Clubtail (*Stylurus plagiatus*). RRBO discovered a large population at the Humbug Marsh Unit of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge while working on a grant from the USFWS. Photo by Julie Craves.

Two Band-winged Dragonlets were found on the last survey of the season, and they represented a first state record, as well as the furthest north this species has ever been recorded! They may have ventured north due to the drought in the southeast, where they are normally found.

RRBO is proposing further work with Odonata on the Refuge, including additional surveys at Humbug to monitor impacts of habitat restoration, as well as a Refuge-wide search for more populations of Russet-tipped Clubtails, and an ecological study of their habitat requirements.

Rouge River Bird Observatory

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About our Logo

The University of Michigan-Dearborn is located on property that was once the home of Henry Ford. Ford was not only an industrial leader, but a great nature and bird lover -- he was instrumental in convincing Congress to pass the Migratory Bird Treaty in 1913.

Throughout Ford's estate, Fair Lane, there are carvings and other representations of birds. The bird in our logo is taken from the copper ventilator covers in the powerhouse at Fair Lane. Our logo reflects the historical nature of our location.

The Birds of Dearborn: An Annotated Checklist

New from the Rouge River Bird Observatory is *The Birds of Dearborn*. This book provides the most intensive modern study of birds ever compiled for southeastern Michigan, and is a complete revision of *The Birds of Southeast Michigan: Dearborn*, which was published in 1996. The Rouge River Bird Observatory analyzed over 65,000 bird records spanning over 30 years for this annotated checklist. Introductory material includes birding locations in Dearborn and on the campus of the University of Michigan-Dearborn, with maps. **Much of the data is applicable to the entire metropolitan Detroit region.**

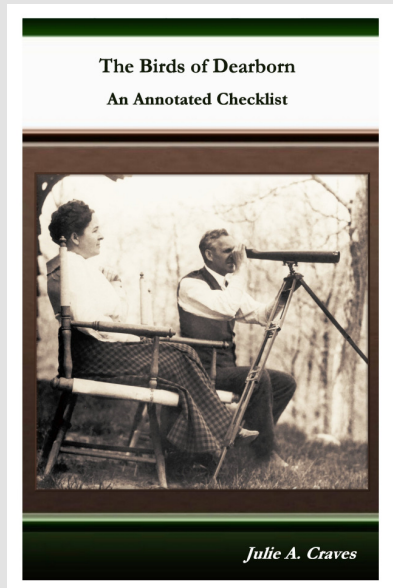
The Birds of Dearborn provides information on 250 species of local birds, including residency status and relative abundance; seasonal occurrence, including record (extreme) and average arrival and departure dates for many species; detailed information on rarities; historical records; interesting supplemental information from the 50,000+ birds banded in Dearborn, including longevity, recapture, and out-of-state recovery records; reprints of articles on Dearborn birds; and a complete Dearborn bird checklist.

128 pages, including black-and-white photographs. You can order it online now!

Paperback \$9.96 or
 Download (PDF) \$5.00
 From Lulu Publishing:

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(link also available on the RRBO web site,
www.rrbo.org)



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