

2023 Spring Bird Count Results

By Joe Suchecki, Spring Count Compiler

I think that the expectations of many birders who participated in the Spring Bird Count (SBC) on May 6 were low considering the relatively poor migration up to that time. I myself thought that we would have a below-average count based on the birds we were counting in the morning at Springbrook Prairie. Well, there is a reason that we go out into the field every year to document the birds that are present in DuPage County on the first weekend in May. Some times our perceptions or expectations do not reflect reality, and our collective efforts to go out and look for birds reveal what is actually present in the County. This year is a great example of that since all of your efforts resulted in relatively high numbers of species and numbers of birds on the 2023 SBC.

First, thank you and congratulations to all of you who participated in the 2023 SBC. DuPage Birders continue to come out in force for the SBC, and this year there were 148 participants – an all-time record high. Combined, we spent 372 party-hours in the field, walked 325 miles, drove 280 miles, and searched for birds from 3:30 a.m. in the morning to 8:50 p.m. in the evening. That is a tremendous level of effort and demonstrates that interest and enthusiasm for birding in DuPage County remains high. All your efforts resulted in finding 171 species and 30,416 birds on the SBC. Those numbers are considerably above the average of 155 species and 21,430 individuals over the 51-year history of the DuPage SBC. We did not challenge the record of 188 species set in 2018, but 171 species is among the highest species counts over the many years of completing the SBC. We did not add any new species to the count this year, and nothing exceptionally rare or unusual was reported on this year's SBC. Among the more interesting birds seen were a Trumpeter Swan at Fermi Lab, a late Golden-crowned Kinglet, two Winter Wrens, and a Whip-poor-will at Hidden Lake. The top five birds reported according to abundance remained the same as last year – Red-winged Blackbird (4934), American Robin (3220), Canada Goose (1276), Yellow-rumped Warbler (1139), and Tree Swallow (1050). Good information for your next bird trivia game!

Several species were recorded in record high numbers on the count including Common Merganser (4), Solitary Sandpiper (257), Double-crested Cormorant (405), Great Egret (152), Osprey (24), Pileated Woodpecker (12), American Pipit (10), Brown-headed Cowbird (882), and Northern Cardinal (861). The first Pileated Woodpecker ever observed on the SBC occurred at Waterfall Glen Forest Preserve in 2008, and there has been a steady increase in their numbers ever since. The complete results of the 2023 SBC are shown below. In addition, there is more historical information on the DBC website including a table showing the results of all SBCs since the first SBC was conducted in 1973. You can explore the data on your own to look at long-term trends in our DuPage County spring birds: <https://dupagebirding.org/bird-counts/>.

So, thank you again to all those who participated in this year's SBC and made this a record year for the number of participants in DuPage County. We continue to have the second highest participation rate in the state—only Cook County has more people in the field.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the Area Captains who do the all work to organize and assure coverage of all the birding areas in the county for the SBC. They are Dave Hodge, Kyle Wiktor, Nancy Allured, Dave Yeager, Mike Kalscheur, Urs Geiser, Eric Secker, Jeff Reiter, Glenn Perricone, Jim Huebler, Peter Kasper, Stephanie Lyons-Olsen and Chuck Olsen, Susan Kaley, Linda Radtke, Joe Suchecki, Mike Madsen, and Jim Green. I very much appreciate all of their efforts and prompt reporting which makes my job as complier much easier.

Not too early to plan for next year's count—keep open Saturday May 4th for the 2024 Spring Bird Count. Let's try and break our new record for the number of participants by having even more people help out next year and go for that 188 species record from 2018. Who knows, you may be the birder to find the next new species to add to our list.