

AUDUBON PARK BIRD COUNTS – DECEMBER 2014

The first chapter of the Birds of Audubon Park is now closed; I had hoped for 200 species but ended up on 199. I will try in 2015 to raise that figure to 230. For the month of December I saw/heard 105 species, a very respectable number.

Last year there was a sizeable flock of Hooded Mergansers but not so this year, I had wondered why. I now have a possible answer the Pied-billed Grebes. I had not realized just how pugnacious these little birds were. During this month I watched up to eight of them they would dive and come up underneath a luckless merganser giving it a poke with its beak. The merganser would jump up in fright and take off for what it hoped was a safer spot. On the 15th there was the first American Coot and it got the same treatment, I think it left within two hours no wonder some birds have been hard to find. Last year there were only two grebes and they kept out of sight.

An Eastern Whip-poor-will was around for much of the month. A Green Heron and a Sora have been present all month. On the 2nd there were 30 Northern Pintail, six Gadwall and an Indigo Bunting. To my surprise a Roseate Spoonbill flew to the north on the 4th. Then on the 6th there were two Herring Gulls and a Lesser Scaup the latter was a new species. There was also on that day a Painted Bunting with 244 Laughing Gulls flying to the south. There were nine American Wigeon on the 8th another new species. Also on the 8th there was a high count of 249 Yellow-rumped Warblers. There were 14 Northern Shoveler on the 9th the list kept growing. On the 9th there were also high counts of 282 Common Grackles and five Swamp Sparrows.

A Song Sparrow was present on the 12th this was the second record. Also on the 12th 35 Northern Pintails flew to the south, the highest count yet. The field trip on the 12th produced single Yellow-throated, Prairie and a Black-and-white Warblers. As I mentioned earlier the American Coot was on the 15th. On that day an immature Brown Pelican flew to the north-east and 15 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks circled the ponds. There were two House Finches on the 16th with on the 18th a high count of five Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers.

A Limpkin called from a site to the west on the 21st that was the last addition for the month. A Forster's Tern flew to the south on the 25th as did a Bonaparte's Gull on the 29th. Also on the 29th 22 American White Pelicans and 17 Wood Storks flew to the south these were both new high counts. Finally on the 30th a total of 2,040 American Robins seen; a new high count.

Harry Robinson