

OCAS OFFICERS

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Howard Malone: Treasurer
Ed Brown: Field Trip Chairman
Nancy Donald: CBC Coordinator
Ruth Ann Rosamond: Refreshments Coordinator
Pam Burns: Program Coordinator
Daniel Burns: Newsletter Editor

Okatibbee Creek Audubon Society

March 2009

Meetings are held at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Meridian every second Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. Trinity is located at 4223 Poplar Springs Drive.

Please use the SOUTH driveway on the church property (the one nearer downtown Meridian) and proceed around through the parking lot to the back, where you may enter the building through the double doors.

Next meeting: March 8, 2009

***Be like the bird, who halting in his flight /
On limb too slight, / Feels it give way
beneath him, yet sings / Knowing he has
wings.***

--Victor Hugo, writer (1802-1885)

--contributed by Nancy Donald

Read OCAS' newsletter online at
<http://home.comcast.net/~ocas/>

Opinions in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Mississippi Audubon or of National Audubon but of individual writers. We view it as important to provide a forum for discussion and therefore we include articles from diverse sources where we can.

Christmas Bird Count 2009 Report

by
Nancy Donald

The OCAS Christmas Bird Count was conducted January 2, 2010. We had a great group of 21 people in the field who counted a total of 90 species and 14,182 individuals, including 2 count week species, Barn owl and White-breasted nuthatch. New species to the count were Red-breasted merganser identified by Pullen Watkins, joining us from the Jackson Audubon Society; Herring gull turned in by Van McWhorter; a White-eye vireo spotted by Cecelia Gordon; and the Barn owl that was reported on Miss Bird by a trucking birder and took two trips to Marion in the wee hours to get by yours truly, Nancy Donald. The four Herring gull were at the reservoir and spotted by two parties, the Johnson's and the McWhorter's, with confirmation by Van. Herring gull were all over the state in other counts as were the Red-breasted mergansers which were on the fish ponds on Hillview Drive. White-eyed vireo is common here although not usually during the winter months. It was identified by its white eye ring and call that is reminiscent of Chuck will's widow call. It also showed up on various counts around the state, mostly coastal areas, but also on the Natchez count.

Our highest number of an individual species recorded was the American crow with 3,585. Two parties reported huge numbers of crows in two different parts of the count circle. Observations of the large numbers of crow described the crows as continuously streaming in flocks of 100 to 200 individuals until several thousand birds had passed overhead. The consensus of opinion is that these birds were coming off the roost and heading toward a favorite feeding ground--pecan orchards or possibly the landfill. No shows were duck species--just not here despite the cold, wet weather. We started our day at 28 degrees and topped out at 40. A disappointing solitary American white pelican was reported despite 70 of the species being seen a few weeks earlier. Wading species were down more than half this year, undoubtedly because of higher water. Even our reliable Great blue heron numbers were way down with some parties reporting none: 48 this year, 78 last year. Not unexpectedly, there was no bobwhite reported. This species has been reported on CBC for our area only 3 times in the past, the last time in 2005. Raptor numbers were about even with last year except there were no Bald eagles reported this year. There have not been many reports of the Bald eagle at Okatibbee Reservoir this year, with a few from Dalewood Lake which is

outside the CBC area. Only one American coot was counted which may also explain the absence of eagles as this is one of their favorite foods. Cooper's hawk was a miss at the tally meeting, with two being added when Daniel Burns turned in his results. Not as much variety of warbler and sparrow species as in years past but fairly good numbers of the ones that were seen. It was disappointing that no Orange-crowned warblers were reported. Blackbird species numbers were good with 30 Rusty counted. Eastern meadowlark numbers were up from last year's number of 54 to 137. One Purple finch was observed at Timber Lake. Unbelievably, the invasive species were down with only 16 House sparrow, 81 Rock pigeon, 22 Eurasian collared dove and 327 European starling. Are we just ignoring these species?

A special thanks to the people who came from out of town to help with the count, Van and Debbie McWhorter, Sheila, Lauren and Deanna Thead, and Pullen Watkins. Also the locals who helped out Lauri Hoyt, John Williams, and Mark and Aimee Tramontana. Cold weather and a long day out doors make for a great bird count. For a complete report of all species and effort, please go to the Christmas Bird Count website <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/index.html> Our count circle is MSLC or Lauderdale County, Mississippi.

Hey all. I want to formally apologize for the newsletter problems. I lost the format and the old e-mail list because of computer issues and just now have retrieved it. From here on, our newsletters will be sent out at regular times. Thank you for your tolerance.

The next meeting is this Monday and our program will be done by N.R.C.S. We will be learning about an invasive plant species and about services that this organization provides. Hope to see you all there.