

To all Birdathon Participants:

Thank you again to all that participated in the St. Louis County Birdathon with proceeds benefiting the education and research programs of Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory. This year we decided to revert back to the original St. Louis County Birdathon. We felt we could better focus our efforts on one county, especially in recruiting more participants for this fun citizen-science event. We also decided to partner with Duluth Audubon Society, Hartley Nature Center, and Boulder Lake Environmental Learning Center to hold the first annual “Spring Migration Celebration”. Events were held throughout the week to celebrate the spring migration of birds. A highlight of the event was the Friday night kick-off, in which Dave Benson and Mike Hendrickson shared entertaining stories and tips about the Birdathon and birding hotspots in St. Louis County. Peter Hawkins also joined us to sign posters for “Loon Appreciation Week”, which displayed his winning photograph.

Blustery winds, flurries of snow, and some sunshine were all part of a not so atypical May Birdathon in St. Louis County. With weather like this, it’s not surprising there were only 8 teams that decided to brave the weather. The birds even appeared to cower away and head back south when they encountered below freezing temperatures and snow. As Jim Lind mentioned in his Minnesota Birding report, “heavy reverse migration” was witnessed at spots along the shore of Lake Superior. Dave Benson's team, “Little or No Accumulation” saw thousands of warblers, swallows, and shorebirds flying southwest at Stoney Point in Duluth Township. They saw 24 warbler species at this location, including multiple Black-throated Blue Warblers and Connecticut Warblers.

Two teams competed in the new “Township” category. We thought this was fitting, since St. Louis County has 73 townships and is the largest county in MN and east of the Mississippi (size of CT, DE, RI combined!). Team “Three BDs and Me”, comprised of Molly Thompson and her 3 black dogs came up with 32 species in Normanna Township. Team “Township Duluth Tweeters”, comprised of Jan and John Green came up with 61 species in Duluth Township to win the prize.

One very ambitious team (or should I say person) rode the wind on his bike for 5 hours to compete in the “Non-motorized” category. Team “Pedal Pisher” comprised of Terry Wiens counted 37 species. Lance Armstrong would be proud.

The remaining 5 teams competed in the “St. Louis County Big Day” category. The “Seat-belted Kingfishers” won the most creative team name, while staying safely buckled and warm in their vehicle. The team comprised of Barb Akre and Cindy/Chris Edwardson came up with 97 species. Charlie Greenman, Bonnie Mulligan, Dick Sandve, and Bill Marengo counted 114 species and we’ll call their team “the censor”, since their actual team name came from a citizen who doesn’t like birders much. You’ll have to ask them for the whole story. ☺ In third place, the “Spectacled Flower-Piercers” comprised of Don Kienholz, Paul Egeland, and Esther Gesick, counted 120 species. In second place was team “Dave and the Diaperless Duo”. Dave Grosshuesch and Jim/Sharon Lind counted 133 species, including the first-ever recorded Blue-gray Gnatcatcher for the Birdathon.

Team “Little or No Accumulation” continues to defend their first place title for the third year in a row! Dave Benson, Lars Benson, John Ellis and Jesse Ellis counted 150 species and received the new traveling trophy (thanks to creative efforts of Dave & Sarah Grosshuesch). The new trophy also displayed the only owl seen at this Birdathon event. This was the first year no owls were seen or heard on the Big Day.

Finally, new subcategories were also part of the event changes. Team “Spectacled Flower-Piercers won the “Waterfowl” subcategory with 14 species. Team “Dave and the Diaperless Duo” won the “Shorebird” subcategory with 16 species. Team “Little or No Accumulation” won the “Warbler” subcategory with 25 species.

In all, a grand total of 179 species were counted. This beat the 2008 total by 1 species, but is still below the 23-year average of 192 species. Congratulations again to all that participated!

**Highlights:** Long-tailed Duck, Ruddy Duck, Hudsonian Godwit, Marbled Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Yellow Rail, Wilson's Phalarope, Marsh Wren, Piping Plover, and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (first-ever for the SLC Birdathon)

A big THANKS goes out to the prize sponsors. Thank you to Wild Birds Unlimited and Eagle Optics for donating gift certificates and merchandise, Kollath-Stensaas publishing for donating Northwoods field guides, Lake Superior Garden Center for feeders, Kim Eckert for donating his Birder’s Guide to MN books, and to Mike Hendrickson for donating a Sax-Zim sweatshirt and set of children’s nature books/DVD’s. The winning prize for the “Most \$\$ Raised” category is still to be awarded to the person that raised the most pledges, so get your pledges in!

A very special thanks also goes out to **Dave Benson** for serving as the compilation emcee and to **Debbie Waters and Dave/Sarah Grosshuesch** for helping with the compilation brunch, prizes, and list totals.

Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory sincerely thanks all of the participants, pledge donors, and sponsors for your support in making this event possible and for believing in the mission and programs of Hawk Ridge. We hope to see you all again soon. **Thank you!**

Sincerely,

Janelle Long  
Executive Director

**P.S.** If you have remaining pledges, please have your donors **send pledges to: Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory, P.O. Box 3006, Duluth, MN 55803.** Checks should be made payable to the **Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory**, and **please note** in the Memo section **“Birdathon”**. Pledges should be received **no later than June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009.**