STATE of the STRAIT

State Of The Strait
Monitoring For Sound Management






A Binational Conference on the Detroit River Ecosystem

Convened December 2004 by Great Lakes Institute for Environmental Research, University of Windsor, The Greater Detroit American Heritage River Initiative of Metropolitan Affairs Coalition, The Detroit River Canadian Cleanup, The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, The Detroit Water and Sewerage Department, and other organizations.

Cover photos: photos left and center (upper and lower): Recreational fishing in the Huron-Erie Corridor (lower center photo by Kurt Byers, Michigan Sea Grant Extension, courtesy of United States Environmental Protection Agency, Great Lakes National Program Office; other photos courtesy of OMNR); upper right: Scientist sampling water, benthic invertebrates and sediment in Lake Erie (photo courtesy of Environment Canada and University of Windsor); lower right: Longear sunfish (*Lepomis megalotis*) (photo courtesy of Nicolas Lapointe)

STATE OF THE STRAIT

MONITORING FOR SOUND MANAGEMENT

2004 Conference Proceedings

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6.19. Making Christmas Count

A Poster about DTE Energy's Monroe Power Plant and Its Participation in the Christmas Bird Count
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Introduction

The National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count was established in 1900 and has become an annual global event attracting more than 50,000 observers in nearly 2,000 separate events. The primary objective of the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is to monitor the status and distribution of bird populations across the Western Hemisphere. The CBC takes place between mid-December and early January. During the specified weeks, birding organizations around the world conduct similar day-long (24-hour) counts. The count period is referred to as "early winter," because many birds at this time are still in the late stages of their southward migration.

History

In the late 1890s, sportsmen engaged in a holiday tradition of competitive team hunts known as the Christmas "Side Hunt." The winning team was the one that brought in the biggest pile of dead birds and other animals. The spirit of conservation was just being born, and many observers and scientists were concerned about declining bird populations. Beginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank Chapman, an early officer in the Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition that would count birds instead of hunting them. This count was originally called the "Christmas Bird Census" and later became known as the Christmas Bird Count. The first CBC involved 27 dedicated birders taking part in 25 different events in New England and as far away as Toronto, Ontario, and Pacific Grove, California.

The Monroe Power Plant Christmas Bird Count

The Monroe Power Plant has been participating in the Christmas Bird Count since 1978. The count is sponsored by the National Audubon Society and coordinated locally by the Erie Shores Birding Association and employees from Detroit Edison's Monroe Power Plant. The Monroe Power Plant is located near the intersection of the Atlantic and Mississippi flyways of the North American flyway system, which makes it an excellent location for observing migrating birds. The Monroe regional count focuses on a 11.3 km (seven-mile) radius around the point where Woodchuck Creek meets Lake Erie on the plant's property.

Past counts at the Monroe Power Plant have identified a colony (more than one nest) of bald eagles in the area (Table 1). Also, rare birds such as the Arctic gull and ivory gull have been observed during the count. On average, more than three dozen different species of birds have been counted at the Monroe Power Plant. Complete bird count data for 1998 to 2002 CBCs is given in Table 1. The plant is also home to many other species of animals and plants and has been certified as a wildlife site by the Wildlife Habitat Council since 1999.

Value of the Christmas Bird Count

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is "citizen science" in action. The results of the counts are compiled into the longest-running database in ornithology, representing over a century of continuous data. This information can be used to reveal trends in early-winter bird populations across the Western Hemisphere. By combining the CBC data with other surveys such as the Breeding Bird Survey, scientists can begin to see a clearer picture of how the continent's bird populations have moved and changed over the past hundred years. The information is also vital for conservation efforts. For example, local trends in bird populations can indicate habitat fragmentation or signal an immediate environmental threat, such as groundwater contamination or poisoning from improper use of pesticides.

The Monroe Power Plant and other CBCs will continue to provide important data to contribute to our understanding of our natural environment and early-winter bird populations. For more information, please visit the DTE Energy and National Audubon websites at www.dteenergy.com and www.audobom.org/birg/cbc.

Table 1. Monroe Power Plant Christmas Bird Count Observations (1998 to 2002).

		Year of observation:				
Species	**Scientific name**	**1998**	**1999**	**2000**	**2001**	**2002**
Double-crested Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax auritus*	29	30	35	32	84
Great Blue Heron	*Ardea herodias fannini*	1	131	100	36	48
Tundra Swan	*Cygnus columbianus*					26
Canada Goose	*Branta canadensis occidentalis*	2		13	50	199
American Black Duck	*Anas rubripes*	2		10		16
Mallard	*Anas platyrynchos*	22		14	4	12
Common Goldeneye	*Bucephala clangula*		25	27		
Bufflehead	*Bucephala albeola*					2
Hooded Merganser	*Lophodytes cucullatus*					6
Common Merganser	*Mergus merganser*		100	150		40
Red-breasted Merganser	*Mergus serrator*	55	100	5200		236
Northern Harrier	*Circus cyaneus*			1		
Red-tailed Hawk	*Buteo jamaicensis*		2	7	3	3
American Kestrel	*Falco sparverius*			2	1	1
Peregrin Falcon	*Falco peregrinus*		1		1	2
Bald Eagle	*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*			13	3	25
Ring-necked Pheasant	*Phasianus colchicus*			2		
American Coot	*Fulica americana*			4		
Bonaparte's Gull	*Larus philadelphia*	6	25			
Ring-billed Gull	*Larus delawarensis*	228	75			160
Herring Gull	*Larus argentatus*	703	1200	875	139	1950
Greater Black-backed Gull	*Larus marinus*	30	50	51	58	3
Rock Dove	*Columba livia*	43	100	103	74	387
Mourning Dove	*Zenaida macroura*			1	1	4
Belted Kingfisher	*Ceyrle alcyon*		1	3	1	1

Downy Woodpecker	*Picoides pubescens*	3	2		3	5
Blue Jay	*Cyanocitta cristata*				1	4
Black-capped Chickadee	*Poecile atricapillus*				5	5
Red-breasted Nuthatch	*Sitta canadensis*		1			
Golden-Crowned Kinglet	*Regulus satrapa*					2
American Robin	*Zenaida macroura*				1	2
European Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	8	5	40	37	96
Northern Cardinal	*Cardinalis cardinalis*	3	2	14	11	15
American Tree Sparrow	*Spizella arborea*	42	2	7	59	10
Song Sparrow	*Melospiza melodia*			3	18	
Dark-eyed Junco	*Junco hyemalis*			4	5	30
Red-winged Blackbird	*Agelaius phoeniceus*				2	
Common Grackle	*Quiscalus quiscula*		2			
American Goldfinch	*Carduelis tristis*			7		2
House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*				6	
Scaup sp.	*Aythya sp.*			15		
Total Number of Birds		***1177***	***1854***	***6686***	***551***	***3376***
Total Number of Species		***15***	***19***	***25***	***24***	***30***