

Thirty years of the Rockwood Christmas Bird Count, 1975-2004

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Introduction

The first Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was held in 1900, and this early-winter bird census has since grown to nearly 2,000 individual counts across the Western Hemisphere with over 50,000 participants (Dunn et al. 2005). CBCs tally all birds located within a 24.1 km (15 mile) diameter circle on a single day in early winter around Christmas; dates have now been set during the period 14 December through 5 January. CBCs are sponsored by the National Audubon Society (NAS), which acts as a central repository for results. These have been published in a quarterly magazine that has gone by a number of different names over time: *Audubon Field Notes*, *American Birds*, and *Field Notes*, and are now also available on the Internet (see NAS 2002).

The Rockwood, Michigan count circle is centered on the intersection of South Huron River Drive and Fort Street in Rockwood, Wayne County, MI (~42°03'35"N, 83°14'15"W) (Figure 1), and it covers parts of Wayne and Monroe counties, MI and Essex County, Ontario. Approximate boundaries are Sibley Road (north), Amherstburg, Ontario (east), DTE Energy's Fermi 2 Power Plant near Estral Beach (south) and Carleton (west). Included in the count circle are:

- Oakwoods Metropark, Lake Erie Metropark, and part of Willow Metropark, units of the Huron-Clinton Metropark Authority (Wayne Co. MI)
- part of Grosse Ile (Wayne Co., MI)
- Elizabeth Park, Trenton (Wayne Co., MI)
- the Humbug Marsh Unit of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (Wayne Co., MI)
- Pointe Mouillee State Game Area (Monroe Co., MI)
- DTE Energy's Fermi 2 Power Plant (Monroe Co., MI)
- part of the Huron River (Wayne and Monroe counties, MI)
- the lower Detroit River (Wayne and Monroe counties, MI and Essex County, Ontario)
- the western edge of Amherstburg (Essex Co., ON)

The Rockwood CBC was founded in 1974, considered a test year in which data was not submitted to NAS. Since 1975, the count has taken place annually, and the data have been submitted to NAS and is available for analysis.

This document summarizes the Rockwood CBC for the thirty year period 1975 to 2004, examines count trends for some species of interest, and provides recommendations for improving the count methods to more accurately survey bird populations within the count circle.

This compilation of Rockwood CBC data, evaluation of trends, and the development of recommendations was undertaken in direct response to the Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. Specifically, the Comprehensive Conservation Plan calls for establishing partnerships to monitor wildlife populations in support of comprehensive management. This work was funded by a coastal grant from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, East Lansing Field Office.