

Field Trip Report – Short-eared Owl Wild Card Trip

February 22, 2025

Leader: Don Burlett

A group of 13 birders came out on this cool and sunny day to enjoy some birding and to look for short-eared owls. The trip began with the group walking the trails at the Kosch-Headwaters Preserve at the corner of Ford Road and Prospect Road. Walking the snow-covered trails yielded 14 species of birds including Eastern Bluebird, Northern Flicker, White-throated Sparrow and our traditional White-breasted Nuthatch.



Eastern Bluebird (photo by Nathan Stouffer)

After this nice nature walk, we proceeded by car to tour along Vreeland Road, Gotfredson Road and Cheery Hill Road, looking for bird species. Along Gotfredson Road, we found a field of Horned Larks and Merlin hunting for lunch. He was very cooperative and came to a power pole to enjoy his catch, very near our group.



Horned Larks and Merlin with Horned Lark (photos by Nathan Stouffer)

We later came across several Merlin in the area along with American Kestrel, Red-tailed Hawk, Bald Eagle and Northern Harrier. The raptors on this outing were outstanding. We also saw thousands of Canada Goose and lots of Mallards working the farm fields late in the day. A couple of Trumpeter Swans flew overhead as were watching a couple of Harriers. Of course, the typical collection of winter birds were observed, as noted in our cumulative list at the end of this report.

The finale of the day was the anticipated emergence of the Short-eared Owls from a set of spruce on one farm along Gotfredson Road. While we were waiting, we spotted a distant Rough-legged hawk sitting on a tree top. He later started to hover in search of a late dinner. Finally, at about 6:30 PM, a group of 8 Short-eared Owls exploded from the spruce trees in the yard and began flying around before dispersal to hunt. It should be noted that one of our young birders on the trip spotted one of the owls in the trees using his infrared monocular and Jim Koppin was able to spot the bird with a scope before the explosion of birds. One sat in a tree, a couple on a storage building before we left for the day.



Short-eared Owl Watch and Owls on building (photos by Nathan Stouffer)

A very rewarding day to say the least. 31 species were seen in total covering a range of species. Can't think of a better way to enjoy a winter day than this.

31 [Species Observed](#)

[2 Checklists](#)

Species Observed

- 2357 [Canada Goose](#) Checklists2
- 2 [Trumpeter Swan](#) Checklists1
- 126 [Mallard](#) Checklists2
- 43 [Wild Turkey](#) Checklists1
- 4 [Mourning Dove](#) Checklists1
- 8 [Sandhill Crane](#) Checklists1
- 2 [Northern Harrier](#) Checklists1
- 2 [Bald Eagle](#) Checklists1
- 8 [Red-tailed Hawk](#) Checklists2
- 1 [Rough-legged Hawk](#) Checklists1
- 8 [Short-eared Owl](#) Checklists1
- 5 [Red-bellied Woodpecker](#) Checklists2
- 5 [Downy Woodpecker](#) Checklists2
- 1 [Hairy Woodpecker](#) Checklists1
- 1 [Northern Flicker](#) Checklists1
- 1 [American Kestrel](#) Checklists1
- 2 [Merlin](#) Checklists1
- 2 [American Crow](#) Checklists1
- 7 [Black-capped Chickadee](#) Checklists1
- 2 [Tufted Titmouse](#) Checklists1
- 110 [Horned Lark](#) Checklists1
- 2 [White-breasted Nuthatch](#) Checklists2
- 19 [European Starling](#) Checklists2
- 3 [Eastern Bluebird](#) Checklists1
- 11 [American Robin](#) Checklists2
- 2 [House Sparrow](#) Checklists1

- 8 [American Tree Sparrow](#) Checklists2
- 8 [Dark-eyed Junco](#) Checklists1
- 3 [White-throated Sparrow](#) Checklists1
- 1 [Swamp Sparrow](#) Checklists1
- 7 [Northern Cardinal](#) Checklists1