



Citizen Science: The Big Sit, October 10, 2021

submitted by Lynne Gray, Circle Captain



Barred Owl by Ann Van Sant

The story of the 2021 Big Sit has to begin at the end. A Sunday reschedule because of Saturday’s rain seemed a little flat until 6:03 p.m. when the four remaining hearty pishers —Ann Vasant, Roberta Newton, Lyn McCoy, and Lynne Gray—were rewarded with an undeniable, unmistakable pair of hoots from one of the Bog Garden’s fabled Barred Owls. The day instantly became a huge success.

Those hoots were more exciting than ever because reports all day had indicated that the resident owls had moved away after an unsuccessful nest this year. Deep down, though, I know at least I—and I believe, truly all of us—never gave up hoping. In recent years the end time for PBC’s Big Sit has been defined as “when the owl hoots”, so as dusk began to settle in, the question in everyone’s mind was when would we know it was time to leave if there were no hoot. And then there it was.

From the beginning at 7:45 a.m., when Ann and Roberta arrived to set up the white board and began recording sightings and hearings, the day had been one of little excitement. Even Matt Wangerin could only scare up a Red-Shouldered Hawk and a Northern Flicker to add to the list. Jim Eldrett and Stella and Tom Wear, during their stint as captains, added two additional warblers—a Black-throated Blue and a Magnolia—to the tally, making a total of only four for the day.

It was a slow day for birds, but a good day for visiting, and a number of birding friends and walkers passed through and stayed to visit. Lynn Allison, Jim Eldrett, and Stella and Tom Wear spent time captaining and overseeing the white board. We had rescheduled from Saturday in hopes that Sunday would be rain free, and it was that, but the sun only peeked out occasionally and the weather was cool and humid. Still, the reputation of The Big Sit as a social occasion coupled with birding held true.

But no day spent outside in nature with birds and birding friends will ever be turned down. And then... those hoots turned the whole day around.

And even though our total species count was a somewhat disappointing thirty species, the 30th was the Barred Owl, our most unexpected visitor.

Species List		
Canada Goose	Barred Owl	Tufted Titmouse
Mallard	Belted Kingfisher	White-breasted Nuthatch
Mallard (Domestic)	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Carolina Wren
American Black Duck	Downy Woodpecker	Gray Catbird
Chimney Swift	Hairy Woodpecker	Swainson's Thrush
Great Blue Heron	Eastern Wood-Pewee	Song Sparrow
Turkey Vulture	Eastern Phoebe	Common Yellowthroat
Cooper's Hawk	Blue Jay	Magnolia Warbler
Red-shouldered Hawk	American Crow	Black-throated Blue Warbler
	Common Raven	Pine Warbler
	Carolina Chickadee	Northern Cardinal