Jordan Lake, NC, Christmas Bird Count

**December 31, 2023**

**Compiler's Notes**

The Jordan Lake Christmas Bird Count was held on December 31, 2023, a typical winter day—28-45 °F, wind calm, clear skies, and no precipitation. We had only 43 observers in the field (well below our 10-year average of 58) in 24 parties. We found 94 species, an average number for this count. Our total number of individual birds reported was 35,243 (10-year average 37,339). Ring-billed Gull numbers were estimated at 11,000 individuals. This is below our 10-year average of about 22,000 and well below last year’s count of 47,000. Counting gulls from Vista Point on the west and Ebenezer Point on the east, Brian Bockhahn and Marc Ribaudo (respectively) each estimated a total of a bit more than 10,000 Ring-billed Gulls.

2023-24 has not been a large irruption year for invaders from the northern forests. We found 7 Purple Finches, 1 Pine Siskin, no Red Crossbills, no Evening Grosbeaks, and no Red-breasted Nuthatches.

Despite this, we did find several species that are not regularly found on our count:

* Virginia Rail—1 by Matt Spangler
* Osprey—1 by Todd Bishop and Bob Roth
* Fish Crow—8 by multiple parties (becoming more regular on our CBC)
* Blue-gray Gnatcatcher—1 by Josh Southern and Sterling Southern
* American Pipit—50 by Andy Upshaw, Mark Owens, Rouse Wilson, and Joe Zellers
* Common Yellowthroat—1 by Brian Bockhahn

We set a few high count records this year:

* Double-crested Cormorant—8,862 (previous high was 6,000 in the 2019-20 count)
* Blue-headed Vireo—10 (6 in 2002-03)
* Red-winged Blackbird—4,328 (3,252 in 2018-19)

Brian Bockhahn reported 65 species (Vista Point) while Matt Spangler (Olive Chapel area) reported 55 species. We had 43 birders in 24 parties. We put in 118 party hours (103 on foot, 15 by car), 178 party miles (86 on foot, 92 by car), and 4 hours and 4 miles nocturnal birding.

Several of our participants now keep track of their field records using the eBird app from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. This is particularly helpful this year, when North Carolina is in the midst of a 5-year bird atlas project. When those birders are signed into the NC Bird Atlas portal, their data feeds directly into the atlas. And if those birders combine their eBird checklists into summary eBird Trip Lists, they can share those lists with me—a very easy and helpful process for everyone.

Thank you all for counting.

Norm Budnitz, compiler