Jordan Lake, NC, Christmas Bird Count

**January 5, 2025**

**Compiler's Notes**

The Jordan Lake Christmas Bird Count was held on January 5, 2025, a cold winter day—22-47 °F, wind calm, clear skies at dawn but quickly becoming overcast, and no precipitation. We had 60 observers in the field (above our 10-year average of 57) among 27 parties. We found 93 species, an average number for this count. Our total number of individual birds reported was 42,213 (10-year average 35,365). Ring-billed Gull numbers were estimated at 24,000 individuals, close to our 10-year average of about 20,000. Our estimate for Double-crested cormorants was 6,500, above our 10-year average of about 3,800, but less than our count from last year, which was about 8,900.

A word about the estimates of the numbers of gulls and cormorants: Both gulls and cormorants were seen in very large numbers in several locations around Jordan Lake. I had to make educated guesses as to when and where the birds were seen and then make a judgement about possible overlaps in counting. For example, if two parties estimated large numbers of cormorants from opposite sides of the lake, I used the larger estimate and considered the smaller estimate to be part of that larger number. Also, because the estimates for these two species are reported in the hundreds or even thousands, those numbers swamp out the small numbers reported by other parties. The small numbers should still be reported by those other parties for the record, but they get absorbed into the overall count estimate.

As is often the case from year to year, we reported several species that are not regularly found on our count and one that had never been reported before!

* Caspian Tern—first ever: 1 individual by Don Pelly and Rhonda Weiss
* Northern Pintail—1 by Matt Spangler (second report in the past 10 years)
* Green-winged Teal—1 by Matt Spangler (third report in the past 10 years)
* Long-tailed Duck—1 by Bob Lewis (last reported in the 2000-01 count)
* Orange-crowned Warbler—1 by Will Cook (last reported in the 2009-10 count)

We set a few high count records this year:

* Great Blue Heron—205 (almost double the previous high of 116 in the 2008-09 count)
* Brown-headed Cowbird—154 (more than double the previous high of 71 in the 2018-19 count; Jin Bai found a flock of 150)

We put in 129 party hours (111 on foot, 13 by car, 5 by motorized kayak), 167 party miles (86 on foot, 74 by car, 7 by motorized kayak), and 4 hours and 3 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