

2023 Christmas Bird Count Report

submitted by Elizabeth Link

The 2023 Greensboro Christmas Count took place on Saturday, December 16. The weather was pretty good for winter – the low temperature was 30 degrees, and the high was 57. Skies were partly cloudy, with light winds from the east. 52 birders participated in the count, logging 117 party hours, 68 miles on foot, 238.5 miles by car, and 4.5 miles by golf cart.

We counted 13,170 birds, of 90 species. The species count was average for us, the number of birds was higher than our average over time, probably helped along by the Cormorant population (see below). Highlights included 2 Long-tailed Ducks, which we have had on the count only 2 other times in the last 50 years, and each time we only had one duck, so this is a high count for us. Another was a Common Goldeneye, which we have found on the count 7 other times in 5 years. Both Long-tailed and Goldeneye were found on Lake Townsend by Matt Wangarin.

Some other notables included unusual high numbers, and some misses.

For high numbers: Double-crested Cormorant first showed up on our count in 1984, and appeared intermittently until 2000. Since then we've had them every year, in small numbers, usually less than 10. Then in 2020 we had 729, in 2021 had 320, and last year we had 1,737. This year the number was slightly lower – 1,661 - still much higher than in past years.

We also had a good year for Red-headed Woodpeckers, with a total of 53, the most we've had in the last 50 years. Over that time we have mostly had them in single digits, but the population seems to be on an upward trend, with the next largest number, 44, occurring in 2021.

We continued our trend of Baltimore Orioles turning up for the count. We've had them every year since 2016 – before that we'd only had 3 other occurrences, all in the 1970's. This year we had 5 Orioles, the largest number we've had yet.

Bald Eagles are holding steady, with 6 total found.

And the Black Vultures continue their gains on the Turkey Vultures, with almost 3 times the number of Black Vultures counted to Turkey Vultures.

Then there were the misses. No American Coots were found – only the 3rd time in 50 years that we've missed them. No American Kestrel, for the 3rd time in 50 years. No Common Grackles, for the 7th time in 50 years. And no Herring Gulls, for only the 4th time since they started regularly showing up, in 1983.

All these misses are due to aberrations in the birds' wintering locations, and despite the hard work of the folks who helped out with the count. Thanks to our intrepid volunteers:

Carolyn Allen, Lynn Allison, Alicia Bachman, Bruce Beal, Kathy Beal, Dennis Burnette, Lynn Burnette, Anna Craft, Angela Craven, Robert Craven, Doug Deneve, Pam DeNeve, Dan Dery, Patty Dery, Jim Eldrett, Scott Futrell, Tom Gaffney, Jim Gant, Lynn Gray, Kellie Heath, Carol Jones, Todd Kilb, Megan Kyle, Christina Leslie, Elizabeth Link, Henry Link, Clarence Mattocks, Linda Melendez-Kilb, David Millican, Lynn Moseley, Phil Moseley, Roberta Newton, Lane Oldham, Sandy Post, Anne Presnell, David Pretzsch, Wallace Sills, Lou Skrabec, Melanie Stadler, Ann Steighner, Linda Sumner, Paul Sumner, Gale Sykes, Emily Talbert, Ann Van Sant, Ann Walter-Fromson, Matt Wangerin, Stella Wear, Tom Wear, George Wheaton, Melissa Whitmire, and Caroline Wolfe-Merrit.

The count results list is below

Species Count

Common name	Number
Canada Goose	776
Wood Duck	10
Gadwall	26
American Wigeon	43
American Black Duck	2
Mallard	241
Northern Shoveler	20
Northern Pintail	3
Blue-winged Teal	1
Green-winged Teal	16
Ring-necked Duck	273
Lesser Scaup	1
Long-tailed Duck	2
Bufflehead	106
Common Goldeneye	1
Hooded Merganser	254
Red-breasted Merganser	8
Ruddy Duck	75
Wild Turkey	1
Pied-billed Grebe	26
Horned Grebe	28
Rock Pigeon	155
Mourning Dove	125
Killdeer	132
Wilson's Snipe	1
Bonaparte's Gull	134
Ring-billed Gull	1561
Dble-crested Cormorant	1661
Great Egret	6
Great Blue Heron	58
Black Vulture	173
Turkey Vulture	65
Bald Eagle	6
Northern Harrier	2
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2
Cooper's Hawk	6
Red-shouldered Hawk	32
Red-tailed Hawk	20
Great Horned Owl	1

Barred Owl	2
Belted Kingfisher	23
Red-headed Woodpecker	53
Red-bellied Woodpecker	140
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	51
Downy Woodpecker	91
Hairy Woodpecker	8
Northern Flicker	67
Pileated Woodpecker	6
Eastern Phoebe	7
Blue Jay	187
American Crow	746
Fish Crow	74
Common Raven	5
Carolina Chickadee	268
Tufted Titmouse	194
White-breasted Nuthatch	105
Brown-headed Nuthatch	36
Brown Creeper	10
Gray Catbird	4
House Wren	2
Winter Wren	9
Carolina Wren	206
Golden-crowned Kinglet	56
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	81
Eastern Bluebird	247
Hermit Thrush	43
American Robin	1095
Catbird	1
Brown Thrasher	30
Northern Mockingbird	75
European Starling	574
House Sparrow	26
American Pipit	77
Cedar Waxwing	282
House Finch	132
American Goldfinch	169
Pine Warbler	11
Yellow-rumped Warbler	210
Eastern Towhee	114

Chipping Sparrow	88
Field Sparrow	28
Savannah Sparrow	2
Fox Sparrow	9
Song Sparrow	148
Swamp Sparrow	10
White-throated Sparrow	591

Dark-eyed Junco	333
Northern Cardinal	241
Red-winged Blackbird	21
Eastern Meadowlark	46
Baltimore Oriole	5
Brown-headed Cowbird	80

Total Individual Birds: 13,170

Total Species: 90