



Field Trip: Greensboro Lakes for Winter Waterfowl, January 15, 2022

Submitted by Matt Wangerin, Field Trip Leader

Eighteen birders from the Piedmont Bird Club and the T. Gilbert Pearson Audubon Society chapter made a circuitous trek around Greensboro on Saturday, January 15, to "hunt" for wintering waterfowl. Scouting earlier in the week revealed a relative dearth of exciting birds on Lake Brandt and Lake Townsend, but did identify some "target" bird species to attempt to find.

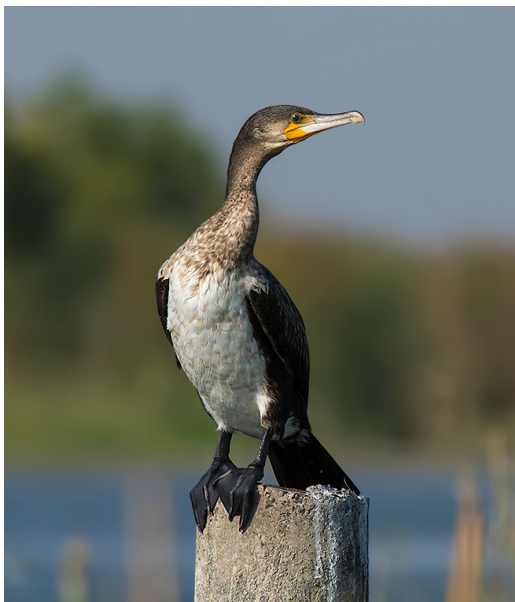
To wit, the start at the Lake Brandt Marina revealed only a few Mallards and some very distant Buffleheads, as far as ducks go, and ubiquitous Canada Geese. However, vast numbers of Double-crested Cormorants and Ring-billed Gulls were observed successfully foraging for fish, along with a few Bonaparte's Gulls and Pied-billed Grebes. Many participants' favorite sighting was likely a young Bald Eagle, which first stirred up the flock of gulls, then perched in a pine above the crew boathouse for awhile. Other species included Great Blue Heron and a chattering Red-bellied Woodpecker.

The group then shuttled to the west to the Lake Higgins Marina. There, a pair of American Coots were cooperative, quite close to the dock. From the end of the dock, we were able to scope a raft of Bufflehead, as well as four Redheads diving in the middle of the lake. That duck species was new to many in the group, and we lamented a lack of sunshine, which would have enhanced the beautiful head color of the drakes. Again, cormorants were cavorting near the dam, and some Bonaparte's Gulls dazzled in front of the spillway, while another great Blue Heron flew across the lake.

The caravan doubled back east to Plainfield Road to a beaver-formed marsh along Long Branch Trail to search for some dabbling ducks. Some Northern Pintails continued relatively close to the road with some Mallards and Canada Geese. The handsome drakes outnumbered the hens 8:2 during this observation. Further scanning through the reeds and bushes in the marsh revealed some Ring-necked Ducks and striking Northern Shovelers as well. A Belted Kingfisher dashed across the marsh, and some Carolina Chickadees and a couple of Red-headed Woodpeckers chattered above the observers.



American Coot by Dan Dery



Great Cormorant by Pankaj Maheria

The next stop on the Yanceyville Causeway provided expansive views of Lake Townsend. However, there was little to find there that day, except for the continuing rarity Great Cormorant! This typically ocean-side bird has spent a couple of months alternatively perching at the Lake Townsend Marina and the powerline supports rising out of the lake west of the Yanceyville Causeway. On this day, the Great Cormorant was seen foraging close to the causeway before circling around the lake and landing on the structure, allowing for scope views for the participants.

One last stop was just a bit further south at Buffalo Lake. There we observed a great many diving Ruddy Ducks, more Buffleheads, and Ring-necked Ducks. Scanning along the lake edges revealed more Northern Shovelers, Mallards, and Canada Geese, and we added a pair each of Gadwall and Wood Ducks. Seven species of ducks at that lake and nine overall were identified. Also seen at Buffalo Lake were more Ring-billed Gulls, Double-crested Cormorants, and Pied-billed Grebes. We also spotted a handful of Eastern Phoebes, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Song Sparrows, and Fish Crows.