Jordan Lake, NC, Christmas Bird Count

**January 2, 2022**

**Compiler's Notes**

The Jordan Lake Christmas Bird Count was held on January 2, 2022—a gray, drizzly day (55-65 °F, wind calm to 10 mph) with intermittent showers in the morning. Only 51 people braved the elements, but in 26 parties, we were able to cover most of the count circle. We found 92 species, an average number for this count (but well below the 102 we reported last year).

As in past years, the number of individual birds reported was dominated by the number of Ring-billed Gulls. Our total individual bird count was 18,967, which included an estimated 5,000 Ring-billeds. The gull numbers have been declining in recent years from the high of 65,000 reported in January 2011, and down from the 11,000 we estimated last year. However, early morning fog made it difficult to count those gulls, so that could have influenced the numbers.

2022 was definitely not an irruption year for invaders from the northern forests. We found zero northern finches and zero Red-breasted Nuthatches. This is not at all surprising. Northern irruptions tend to be cyclical.

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

* Redhead—2 by Brian Bockhahn
* Red-necked Grebe—1 by Brian Bockhahn
* Merlin—1 by Jim Capel
* Common Raven—1 by Norm Budnitz and Vern Bothwell
* Blue-headed Vireo—1 by Roger Shaw and 1 by Chris Canfield and Kate Finlayson
* Blue-gray Gnatcatcher—2 by Roger Shaw
* Black-and-white Warbler—1 by Fleeta Wilkinson and Alan Avakian

And we set a number of high count records this year as well:

* Ruddy Duck—59 (previous high was 38 in the 1981-82 count)
* Common Loon—28 (22 in 1997-98)
* Carolina Chickadee—448 (421 in 2011-12)
* White-breasted Nuthatch—79 (66 in 2020-21)
* House Finch—162 (160 in 1998-99)
* Northern Cardinal—494 (423 in 2017-18)

One other species of note: Three parties found a total of 4 Fish Crows this year. This species has become quite common in our part of the Piedmont for most of the year, but generally seems to withdraw east toward the coast during the colder months of January and February. The fact that 3 parties found them this year is interesting. Especially since they are only distinguishable from American Crows by their calls.

Brian Bockhahn and Roger Shaw reported 58 and 56 species, respectively, this year—no mean feat in the dreary weather. We had 51 birders in 26 parties. We put in 125 party hours (104 on foot, 18 by car, 3 by canoe), 207 party miles (104 on foot, 97 by car, 6 by canoe), and 3 hours 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