Jordan Lake, NC, Christmas Bird Count

**January 1, 2023**

**Compiler's Notes**

The Jordan Lake Christmas Bird Count was held on January 1, 2023, a mild winter day—53-61 °F, wind calm, overcast with a little fog in the morning, partly cloudy in the afternoon, and no precipitation. We had 56 people in the field in 25 parties. We found 95 species, an average number for this count. But our total number of individual birds reported was a whopping 65,372. Some 47,000 of those birds were Ring-billed Gulls.

Counting gulls from Vista Point on the west and Ebenezer Point on the east, Brian Bockhahn and Marc Ribaudo (respectively) estimated a total of 47,000 Ring-billed Gulls. This is not a trivial exercise. Brian counted the gulls that were roosting overnight on the water near Vista as soon as it was light enough to see them, while Marc counted gulls as they flew east up Beaver Creek heading toward the South Wake County Landfill. In the past four years, the gull numbers have been quite a bit lower, averaging about 10,000. The last time we had a similarly high number of gulls (35,000) was during the 2017-18 Christmas Count.

2023 was not a large irruption year for invaders from the northern forests. We found 10 Purple Finches, 2 Pine Siskins, 1 Red Crossbill, and 4 Red-breasted Nuthatches. Although a few Evening Grosbeaks were reported in the North Carolina Piedmont in mid-December, none were found on our count.

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

* Northern Pintail—3 by Brian Bockhahn
* Canvasback—1 by Alan Avakian, Mark Montazer, and Fleeta Wilkinson
* Northern Bobwhite—1 by Brian Bockhahn
* Loggerhead Shrike—1 by Tom Driscoll, Steve Foster, Laura Lipps, Suzy Lawrence, and Brianna Jeanine Atkinson
* Red Crossbill—1 by Brian Bockhahn

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

* Horned Grebe—300 (previous high was 213 in the 2014-15 count)
* Bonaparte’s Gull—1,149 (820 in 1993-94)
* Bald Eagle—75 (69 in 2019-20)
* Yellow-bellied Sapsucker—100 (77 in 2017-18)
* Red-headed Woodpecker—76 (73 in 2018-19)
* Brown Creeper—34 (31 in 1983-84)

Brian Bockhahn reported 67 species (Vista Point) while two other parties reported 64 species—Roger Shaw, Noah Rokoske, Carolyn Mcallaster, and Matthew Moskwik (Big Woods Rd.) and Jonathan Cantrell (Shearon Harris). We had 56 birders in 25 parties. We put in 125 party hours (111 on foot, 14 by car), 164 party miles (83 on foot, 81 by car)), and 6 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