

# **2017 Spring Migration Counts in North Carolina**

---

**Marilyn Westphal**  
*P.O. Box 1427*  
*Hendersonville, NC 28793*  
[mjwestph@ret.unca.edu](mailto:mjwestph@ret.unca.edu)

Twenty count areas completed surveys in 2017, one less than the previous year. Although Onslow County discontinued its count, Brunswick County picked up the slack to represent the coastal area. Also, the Grandfather Mountain count ran into some very inclement weather and could not complete the count this year, but intends to pick it up again next year.

Total species (239) was slightly lower than the past few years, but about average overall for the past dozen years. Total individual bird numbers (88,747) was also about average for that period. Although species and individual totals were average, participation (458 participants) bounced back to actually slightly above average in 2017 from a low 429 in 2016. The additional number of participants did not result in additional hours in the field, though. In fact, the field hours (1069.10) were well off the average of 1274.38 over the past dozen years.

A few of the rarities located included a Surf Scoter on the Kerr Lake count, a Common Merganser on the Pilot Mountain count, an Arctic Tern on the Falls Lake count, an Evening Grosbeak on the Rockingham County count, and a Wilson's Warbler and a Dickcissel on the Chapel Hill count. Many of the other species found on only one count were late departing winter residents. Some other unusual species located in two count areas included Mississippi Kite on the Rockingham and Brunswick counts, Warbling Vireo on the Pilot Mountain and Forsyth counts, Sedge Wren on the Mecklenburg and Chapel Hill counts, and Blue-winged Warbler on the Mecklenburg and Forsyth counts. Of course as the only coastal count, Brunswick County racked up a fantastic 34 species exclusive to that count. Perhaps it's time for another coastal area to give them some competition!

Most common (over 2000 individuals found) and widespread (reported on every count) species included Northern Cardinal (3852), American Crow (2928), Tufted Titmouse (2334), and Carolina Wren (2035). There were 22 species found on every count. The only warbler found on every count was Common Yellowthroat.

Details of individual counts including names of compilers and participants as well as count highlights and a list of species found exclusively on that count follow.

## **Mountains**

**Transylvania County** – Count date May 3rd, 124 species, 3695 individuals, 19 participants, 64.70 party-hours. Elevation ranges from 2100 to 5600 ft.

Weather: Clear, calm and warm. Temperature 45-75°F, cooler at higher elevations.

Compiler: Michael Plauché (captainbluegill@gmail.com)

Participants: Marvin Barg, Michele Barg, Susan Causey, Ray Dunkelberg, Jerry Griggs, Gary Harris, Kathy Harris, Claire Herzog, Elizabeth Galloway, Tim Lee, Joan McDonald, Malcolm McDonald, Michael Plauché, Marcus Simpson, Norma Siebenheller, Martine Stolk, Charlie Threatte, Linda Threatte, and Marilyn Westphal.

Exclusives: None

Notes: The 2017 Transylvania County Spring Bird Count was a great success thanks to the participants. One hundred and twenty-four species were logged, which matches the previous high count from 2013. It seems the great weather and eager volunteers united for this fantastic outcome. The day was calm and clear, starting off cool (in the forties), and warming to a perfectly pleasant afternoon with temperatures in the mid-seventies.

Nineteen volunteer observers logged 65 hours and nearly 160 miles. We turned up 25 species of warbler, four species of vireo, both Summer and Scarlet Tanager, Bald Eagle, Osprey, an American Woodcock, Swainson's, Hermit, and Wood Thrushes, Veery, Blue Grosbeak, Great Egret and many other great birds. The Ecusta Great Blue Heron colony continues to grow. Seventy-three individuals were recorded this year.

The spring bird count creates a valuable picture of bird populations and migratory trends from year to year. We all should be proud of our contribution in continuing this great tradition.

Michael Plauché

**Pisgah Ridge, Great Balsam and Plott Balsam Mountains IBA** – Count dates spanned from May 18-22 with teams selecting one of those days to do their section, 74 species, 3304 individuals, 24 participants in 11 parties, 71.20 party-hours. Elevation ranges for this count run from 3500 to 6100 feet.

Weather: Mostly cloudy to clear, temperatures from 45 to 65°F and winds from 5 to 15mph.

Compiler: Marilyn Westphal ([mjwestph@ret.unca.edu](mailto:mjwestph@ret.unca.edu))

Participants: Seth Buddy, Tim Carstens, Nancy Casey, Savannah Clark, Robert Emmott, Tom Flagg, Kirk Gardner, Robert Johnson, Stacy Johnson, Gail Lankford, Charlie Lankford, Andrew Laughlin, Nora Murdock, Michael Plauché, Catherine Reid, Barbara Reynolds, Russell Roe, Mark Simpson, Simon Thompson, Tom Tribble, Lou Weber, Marilyn Westphal, Connie Wulcowicz and Stan Wulcowicz

Exclusives: None

Notes: Although there were more individual birds found this year, the total species count was lower than average. No swallows, bluebirds, or Peregrine Falcons were seen, and for the first time since the count began

there were no Pine Siskins found. First time for the count was a Summer Tanager. It was a good year for Alder and Least Flycatcher with 36 each.

Chestnut-sided Warbler took back the top spot again as most common species (300) after playing second fiddle the previous couple of years. Dark-eyed Junco returned to second (290) followed by Eastern Towhee (229), Black-throated Green Warbler (202), Golden-crowned Kinglet (191), Blue-headed Vireo (136), Canada Warbler (166), Black-throated Blue Warbler (141), Veery (136), and American Robin (116). Good sized flocks of Red Crossbills were present in the area and Northern Saw-whet Owls were nesting at known locations once again making them an easy find.

As always the participants made this count a success. Many thanks for all they do.

Marilyn Westphal

**Henderson County** – Count date period from May 13<sup>th</sup> to May 16<sup>th</sup> (teams select which date to do their count), 104 species, 2291 individuals, 22 participants in ten areas, 40.90 party-hours.

Weather: Variable

Compiler: Jim Neal (jlbjneal@gmail.com)

Participants: Phil Brown, Ruth Brown, Vickie Burke, Doug Carle, Muriel Carle, Barrie Cliff, Paulette Cliff, Liz Fitts, Cathy Ford, Joyce Gray, Liz Honnold, Michael McCurdy, Richard Meltzer, Barbara Neal, Jim Neal, Carol Palmer, Don Palmer, Nicole Salzman, Mark Simpson, Aaron Steed, Linda Wallace, and Marilyn Westphal

Exclusives: None

Notes: The 2017 Spring Migration Count for Henderson County was conducted over a four-day period from May 13 through 16, 2017. Twenty-two (22) people counted 10 areas within the county and found 104 species and 2291 individual birds. The 104 species is near the midpoint of our low of 95 species set in 2015 and our high of 120 species found in 2006. The 2291 total birds are well below the midpoint between our low of 1612 in 2014 and the high of 3904 in 2012.

There were six species with more than 100 individuals including Cliff Swallow (150), followed by Song Sparrow (139), American Crow (132), Northern Cardinal (122) and Eastern Towhee and European Starling tied at 115.

Normally we get around 20 species of warblers and this year we found 21. The Black-throated Green (28) was most prevalent, followed closely by Ovenbird (25), Common Yellowthroat (20) and four with 17, including Northern Parula, Black and White Warbler, American Redstart and Hooded Warbler.

Other really good birds found included Black-bellied Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Solitary Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Whip-poor-will, Acadian Flycatcher, Willow Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, Grasshopper Sparrow and Bobolink. I want to thank all

those who helped with the count, particularly the several new people, for an excellent job.

Jim Neal

**Buncombe County** – Count dates ran from May 13-15 with each group selecting the date for their section, 113 species, 4024 individuals, 20 participants in nine parties, 60.90 party-hours.

Weather: Cool and fair, partly sunny over the period.

Compiler: Tom Tribble (ttribble@gmail.com)

Participants: Tom Bush, Nancy Casey, K. Hillegas, Doug Johnston, K Kelly, Herman Lankford, D. Liberatori, R. Liberatori, D. McFatter, Janie Owens, Liz Payne, Kitti Reynolds, J Rittenburg, Russell Roe, Mark Simpson, Vin Stanton, Tom Tribble, Marilyn Westphal, Jay Wherley, and Steve Yurkovich

Exclusives: Cerulean Warbler

Notes: Some comparisons from the last few years include:

2014 – 120 species, 5421 individuals

2015 – 112 species, 4902 individuals

2016 – 109 species, 4913 individuals

2017 – 113 species, 4024 individuals

Birds reported this year, but not reported the last few years include Gray-cheeked Thrush, Black-billed Cuckoo (two in different sections, but interestingly not at Beaver Lake Bird Sanctuary), and Common Nighthawk.

Most common birds included American Robin (220), European Starling and Cedar Waxwing (179), and American Crow (176).

There were 22 species of warbler, the same total as the last two years. No Pine Warbler found last year, and no Kentucky Warbler this year.

Tom Tribble

**Black Mountains IBA** – Count period ran from May 25<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> with teams selecting one of those days to complete their section, 61 species, 2168 individuals, 14 participants in 14 parties with some teams covering a second section on a different day, 41.85 party-hours.

Weather: Enough pleasant weather during the count period that everyone could find a decent day to do their section. Elevation range for this count is 3000 to 6684 ft. with most of the count area above 4000 feet. This count has been conducted since 2006 with 2008 missed because of road closures.

Compiler: Marilyn Westphal (mjwestph@ret.unca.edu)

Participants: Seth Buddy, Miles Buddy, Bob Knight, Charlie Lankford, Gail Lankford, Andrew Laughlin, Nora Murdock, Michael Plauché, Barbara Reynolds, Debbie Segal, Aaron Steed, Mark Simpson, Simon Thompson, and Marilyn Westphal

Exclusives: None

Notes: It was a fairly typical spring count with average numbers of species and individuals and no unexpected species found with most species exhibiting typical numbers. Black-and-white Warbler, Ovenbird, Hooded Warbler, and Black-throated Blue Warbler numbers were higher than usual, but this probably was largely the result of better coverage at some of the middle elevations where these species are more common. It will take more years of counts to determine if any middle elevation species might be moving a little higher to breed. Higher elevation species showed no particular differences with previous years. However, Red Crossbill numbers were very good this year with some good sized flocks seen.

Much of the area covered in this count is high elevation spruce/fir habitat, and the most frequently found species are those common to that habitat. This year, as usual, the top ten species were largely dominated by spruce/fir specialists and included Dark-eyed Junco (256), Black-throated Green Warbler (189), Golden-crowned Kinglet (155), Blue-headed Vireo (135), Black-throated Blue Warbler (127), Canada Warbler (112), Red-breasted Nuthatch (87), Blackburnian Warbler (82), Ovenbird (75), and Eastern Towhee (73).

No Swainson's Thrushes were found this year and numbers have been declining for the past few years over the spring/summer season, so perhaps the small population that has been present over the past several years was not large enough to sustain itself over the long term. Also, since no nocturnal birding was carried out and no Northern Saw-whet Owls were found nesting in the area this year, the only owl species found was a Barred Owl.

Many thanks once again to all the participants. This count requires some significant hiking over sometimes steep and/or rocky trails, so their efforts are always greatly appreciated.

Marilyn Westphal

**Hanging Rock State Park IBA** – Count date May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 92 species, 1258 individuals, 14 participants in six parties, 20.00 party-hours. Elevation range 1200-2400 feet.

Weather: No report.

Compiler: Jean Chamberlain (jchamberlain1@windstream.net)

Participants: Farida Abbas, Gayathri Baliga, Brian Bockhahn, Jean Chamberlain, Nita Colvin, Allison Gagnon, John Harris, Derek Hudgins, Don Kautz, Kyle Kittelberger, Ron Morris, Laura Phail, Cara Woods and Tony Woods.

Exclusives: None

Notes: None

## **Piedmont**

**Iredell County** – Count date April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 79 species, 1118 individuals, seven participants, 10.00 party-hours.

Weather: Rain, temperature ranged from 44-46°F; totally miserable weather.

Count area: Circle centered on South Yadkin River Bridge - Chipley Ford Road in Northern Iredell County.

Compiler: Ron Underwood ([rongto@gmail.com](mailto:rongto@gmail.com))

Participants: Debbie Birnley, Cynthia Dickerson, Bill English, Larry Marlin, Jason Thiele, Garnet Underwood and Ron Underwood

Exclusives: Purple Finch, Vesper Sparrow

Notes: Totally dismal conditions prevailed on count day. Thanks to those who were able to come out or who were able to send in feeder reports. In spite of the conditions we had 79 species and 1118 individuals.

Ron Underwood

**Mecklenberg County** – count date April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 135 species, 6982 individuals, 35 participants, 86.15 party-hours.

Weather: No data

Compiler: Jeff Lemons ([birdsallot@gmail.com](mailto:birdsallot@gmail.com))

Participants: Leigh Ann Carter, Bill Duston, Shep Foley, Jan Fowler, Noreen George, Robert Gilson, Jennifer Guyton, Jill Guyton, Jim Guyton, Chris Hanna, John Hanna, Greg Hays, Matt Janson, Dennis Kent, Malia Kline, Alan Kneidel, Ken Kneidel, Lenny Lampel, Dennis Lankford, Jeff Lemons, Joclyn MacLaughlin, Pat MacLaughlin, Kevin Metcalf, Roger Moyer, Jill Palmer, Taylor Piephoff, Lucy Quintilliano, Barry Rowan, Tammy Sanders, Tom Sanders, John Scavetto, Don Seriff, Will Stuart, Rob VanEpps, Judy Walker

Exclusives: Pectoral Sandpiper, Lincoln's Sparrow, Rusty Blackbird

Notes: None

**Pilot Mountain State Park** – Count date May 4<sup>th</sup>, 111 species, 1936 individuals, nine participants, five teams, 30.75 party-hours. Surry County - Pilot Mountain is the count center.

Weather: No data

Compiler: Jesse Anderson ([jesse.anderson@ncparks.gov](mailto:jesse.anderson@ncparks.gov))

Participants: Jean Aldrich, Jesse Anderson, Brian Bockhahn, Jean Chamberlain, Don Kautz, Kyle Kittelberger, Ron Morris, Cara Woods, Tony Woods

Exclusives: Common Merganser

Notes: A small, but mighty crew counted 111 species, covering mostly park land, but unable to cover the entire count circle. The total was up from

109 last year, which was the first year of the count. Birding records in Surry County still have some potential, so quite a few county records were added.

Interesting contributions included county records of four Common Mergansers, likely the same two adult male/female pair seen by two parties at different locations on the Yadkin River, new to both Yadkin and Surry Counties according to NC Bird Records on the CBC website, a high count of 15 Broad-winged Hawks in Yadkin County, a Northern Harrier, a small group of Bobolinks and Grasshopper Sparrows (also Surry County records), and 21 species of warbler.

Jesse Anderson

**Forsyth County** – Count date May 6<sup>th</sup>, 124 species, 5660 individuals, 52 participants in 12 teams, 82.00 party-hours.

Weather: cloudy, temperature 55-65°F, wind 10 mph and gusty

Compiler: Ron Morris (ronmorris@triad.rr.com)

Participants: Mary Franklin Blackburn, Kim Brand, Malcolm Brown, Jean Chamberlain, David Collins, Nita Colvin, Donovan Conway, Mike Conway, Phil Crisp, Carol Cunningham, Doug Demerest, David Disher, Susan Disher, Cynthia Donaldson, Kerry Eckhardt, Karyl Gabriel, Allison Gagnon, Nathan Gatto, Carol Gearhart, Bill Gifford, Elnora Gore, John Haire, Roper Halverson, Hop Hopkins, Royce Hough, Derek Hudgins, Bill Jackson, Don Kautz, Don Lendle, Jim Martin, Craig McCleary, Jane McCleary, Heather Moir, Ron Morris, Ann Newsome, Laura Phail, Jeremy Reiskind, Nancy Russo, Lee Salisbury, Gene Schepker, Lois Schneider, David Shuford, Philip Stewart, Ron Story, Bill Sugg, Chuck Thompson, Cindy Thompson, Katherine Thorington, Andrew Thornton, Gray Tuttle, Jay Wilhelmi, and Lucia Zinzow.

Exclusives: None

Notes: It turned out to be a pretty average year despite the unpleasant weather. The average over 26 years is 126.2 species and 5658.2 individuals. This year 52 stalwart birders identified 124 species and counted 5660 individuals. We missed Louisiana Waterthrush, but we average only one or two each year and miss them altogether not infrequently. This is the second year in a row that we found no Prairie Warblers. The most disappointing was the absence of Yellow-crowned Night Heron. This is the second year in a row that we found none, but they have been in steady decline since the high count of 13 in 2003. Last year we had none, in 2015 we had two, and in 2014 we had one.

Good finds this year included a Great Egret near Tanglewood, the first in seven years and only the sixth in 26 years. Another excellent find was a Caspian Tern at Salem Lake, the first in four years and only the sixth in 26 years including three in 2013. Finally, a Blue-winged Warbler was found at Washington Park, the third in four years and just the fourth in 18 years.

Many thanks to all participants, especially the team leaders who organized coverage of their areas and got their teams' data to me promptly.

Ron Morris

**Rockingham County** – Count date May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 106 species, 1144 individuals, five participants in three parties, 15.75 party-hours.

Weather: Mostly clear skies and moderate winds, temperature 57-76°F.

Compiler: Brian Bockhahn ([birdranger248@gmail.com](mailto:birdranger248@gmail.com))

Participants: Penny Barham, Brian Bockhahn, Kyle Kittelberger, Cara Woods and Tony Woods.

Exclusives: American Bittern, Evening Grosbeak

Notes: The Fifth Rockingham County Spring Bird Count was held on Tuesday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, under mostly clear skies and moderate winds and temperature. The five observers tallied 106 species (average 108) and 1144 individuals (average 1632).

First count records include a surprise dawn flyover American Bittern over Mayo River Road, two Cliff Swallows seen over Groogan Lake, and a singing and seen Ruby-crowned Kinglet on Mayo River Road. But the female Evening Grosbeak continuing at a feeder in Mayodan was incredible!

Other goodies for the count records included our third Green Heron at May Park Ponds, a second Peregrine Falcon over Cedar Mountain, a pair of third record flyover American Woodcocks over Mayo River Road, a second Blackburnian Warbler, and a third record Cape May Warbler.

Misses included all three owl species normally found because of pre-dawn winds, Belted Kingfisher, Eastern Kingbird, Swainson's Thrush, Black-and-white Prothonotary, and Worm-eating Warblers, and, possibly another that may be blamed on wind, a Grasshopper Sparrow.

Many thanks to everyone who volunteered to count!

Brian Bockhahn

**Greensboro** – Count date April 29<sup>th</sup>, 121 species, 9038 individuals, 34 participants, 98.35 party-hours.

Weather: The weather was warm for the time of year, with a low of 72 and a high of 86. Skies were partly to mostly cloudy and winds were light, averaging 10 mph with an occasional gust to 20 mph. There was no precipitation.

Compiler: Elizabeth Link ([elzlink@yahoo.com](mailto:elzlink@yahoo.com))

Participants: Nancy Adamson, Carolyn Allen, Bruce Billings, Jim Buchanan, Dennis Burnette, Lynn Burnette, Sue Cole, Scott DePue, Jim Eldrett, Lynne Gray, Craig Lawrence, Jane Lawrence, Elizabeth Link, Henry Link, Clarence Mattocks, Lyn McCoy, Lynn Moseley, Jean Murdick, Lauren Murdick, Roberta Newton, Lane Oldham, Ann Presnell, Danny Royster, Tripti Sawal, Wallace Sills, Lou Skrabec, Ann Steighner, Jim Strickland, Emily Tyler, Ann VanSant, Ann Walter-Fromson, Matt Wangarin, Stella Wear, and Melissa Whitmire

Exclusives: None



Notes: The Spring Count in Greensboro was held on April 29. Thirty-four counters took part in the count, a few more than our average of 30 over the last 20 years. Those counters put in 98.25 party hours, slightly lower than our average of 103.

For this year's count, we had a total of 121 species, which is slightly lower than our average of 125, plus six count week birds. For the last 20 years, our highest species count was 136 in 2005, and lowest was 110 in 2010.

The number of individual birds counted was 9038. This was well above our 20-year average of 7221. I went back to 1995 for a year in which a larger number of birds (9625) were counted.

Notables included a Greater Scaup, found on an office park retention pond, the first occurrence of a Greater Scaup in the 50 years of our available records; and a Black-billed Cuckoo, which has turned up on our count only five times in the last 50 years.

Elizabeth Link

**Southern Pines** – Count date May 7th, 127 species, 5288 individuals, 28 participants in 11 teams, 69.95 party-hours.

Weather: Quite good for a change! Dry with light winds, temperature 43-71°, altogether a very pleasant day!

Compiler: Susan Campbell ([susan@ncaves.com](mailto:susan@ncaves.com))

Participants: Jennifer Archambault, Rex Badgett, Doreen Blanchette, Carol Bowman, Susan Campbell, Jay Carter, Bob Ganis, Tina Ganis, Gabriella Garrison, Ryan Garrison, Scott Hartley, Yvette Haughney, Tom Howard, Charlie Jones, Linda Jones, Sheila Klein, Marjorie Ludwig, Jeff Marcus, Bill Mullin, Jon Rouse, Bruce Sorrie, Mike Stewart, Rick Studenmund, Michelle Wilcox, Dave Williams, Nancy Williams, Darryl Young and Shelly Young

Exclusives: Lark Sparrow

Notes: Count day was, again, later in the spring due to the conflict with the Carolina Bird Club Spring Meeting. A number of regular participants had conflicts, and so we had minimal to no coverage in some areas of the circle. Furthermore, Lake Surf was still mostly drained as a result of issues with safety of the dam and spillway. Loss of the largest body of water in the area affected our count, as it did during the Christmas Bird Count in December. Although we had a few species of shorebird there, it did not make up for the loss of diversity that has been typical of the lake area in the past.

We did have several species new to the count that were not unanticipated for our region, but were nice to see and helped bolster numbers given our deficits in certain areas. Little Blue Heron, Anhinga, and Mississippi Kites were all very nice surprises.

Some surprising misses included Eastern Screech-Owl and Field Sparrow. Sadly, we had no interesting warblers or thrushes. Bobolink and

Baltimore Oriole are fairly unusual finds, but they also never turned up during the day.

Regardless of what were lackluster results for the most part, participants all seemed to have had an enjoyable day. In spite of what seemed to be more challenges for our seasonal count, folks are enthusiastic about continuing the tradition into the future.

Susan Campbell

**Chapel Hill** – Count date May 13<sup>th</sup>, 130 species, 8381 individuals, 48 field observers and three feeder watchers, 127.7 party hours.

Weather: Low 53°F, high 65°F; wind variable 0-5mph, mostly cloudy, no rain.

Compiler: Will Cook ([cwcook@duke.edu](mailto:cwcook@duke.edu))

Participants: Julie Angerman, Todd Bishop, Brian Bockhahn, Richard Brown, Narm Budnitz, Jim Capel, Tait Chandler, Bob Chase, Laura Clifford, Will Cook, Deb Copeland, Maria deBruyn, Tom Driscoll, Cynthia Fox, Jill Froning, Tim Gerla, Vicki Glower, Mark Goodwin, Steve Graves, Beth Gregory, Lynda Haake, Bobbie Hahn, Jan Hansen, Karyn Hede, Gene Kingsley, Geraldine Kingsley, Mark Kosiewski, Ken Lundstrom, Mary McLelland, Adair McNear, David Murdock, Jane Oliver, Jeff Phippen, Jelma Poelski, Margaret Scott, Julia Shields, David Smith, Judy Smith, Paule Taille, Edith Tatum, Ginger Travis, Margaret Wainwright, Bill Ward and Zoe

Exclusives: Wilson's Warbler, Dickcissel

Notes: We had an excellent Chapel Hill spring count on Saturday, May 13, 2017 with the second highest species count in the last 30 years, though for numbers of individual birds it was quite average. The calm, cool overcast conditions made for very pleasant counting and no doubt helped the count by keeping the birds active throughout the day. The species total of 130 is nine above the ten-year average of 121, though the total number of birds, 8381, is close to the average of 8433. Effort on the count was average with 127.7 party-hours (average 128.2) as was the number of birds per party hour (63.6, average 65.9).

We had an absolutely incredible three species new to the count this year. Short-billed Dowitcher, Willow Flycatcher, and Dickcissel. I'm not sure when that last occurred, but it was probably decades ago. The Chapel Hill count has been going on continuously since 1957, so it isn't easy to add new species! The Short-billed Dowitcher was spotted by Jan Hansen on the rocky bank near the dam at University Lake. Jan also scored a Dickcissel at Maple View Farm and got a nice photograph. Mark Kosiewski found the Willow Flycatcher on the Briar Chapel trail. It cooperated nicely for photos, but couldn't be identified for sure without hearing its call. Fortunately, it responded to a tape of Willow by sounding off the fitz-bew call. Other goodies included Common Gallinule (Jill Froning, 4<sup>th</sup> count record), Semipalmated Plover (Hansen), Black-billed Cuckoo (Mark Goodwin, first since

1975), Hermit Thrush (Karyn Hede), Blackburnian Warbler (Brian Bockhahn), Palm Warbler (Kosiewski), both Canada and Wilson's Warblers at Mason Farm (Will Cook), and a count week King Rail (Ginger Travis, who couldn't get to Cub Creek on count day).

We set a good number of record highs this year: Spotted Sandpiper (97, average 16), N. Rough-winged Swallow (254, average 68), Cliff Swallow (62, average seven), Magnolia Warbler (14, average two). This is the second record-setting year in a row for Rough-winged Swallow and Magnolia Warbler. Also with unusually high numbers: Solitary Sandpiper (20, average 10), Eastern Wood Pewee (67, average 32), Acadian Flycatcher (81, average 59), Barn Swallow (179, average 74), Veery (11 is highest since 1978, average three), Louisiana Waterthrush (31 is highest since 1976, average 14), Yellow Warbler (15, average eight), Chestnut-sided Warbler (six, average one), and Black-throated Green Warbler (three, average one).

The one big miss was Blue-headed Vireo, the first miss of this local breeding bird since 1985. Remarkably scarce this year: Eastern Kingbird (15 is lowest since 1974, average 26), Purple Martin (19, average 53), Wood Thrush (38, average 60), White-throated Sparrow (one ties record low, average 17), and House Sparrow (13 ties record low set last year, average 47).

Team honors: Jan Hansen, covering both the University Lake and Dairyland Road areas, recorded an outstanding 97 species and 819 individual birds, the highest for both. Tom Driscoll got the highest individual count with 910.

Thanks to the 48-field counters and 2 feeder watchers for your help.

Charles W. "Will" Cook

**Jordan Lake** – Count date May 7<sup>th</sup>, 112 species, 7,532 individuals, 47 participants in 23 parties, 136.12 party-hours.

Weather: The temperature ranged from 43°F in the morning to 65°F in the afternoon. Winds were variable to about 10 mph and the sky was clear to partly cloudy.

Compiler: Norm Budnitz ([nbudnitz@gmail.com](mailto:nbudnitz@gmail.com))

Participants: Patsy Bailey, Barbara Beaman, Eliabeth Bishop, Todd Bishop, Brian Bockhahn, Vern Bothwell, Richard Brown, Norm Budnitz, Chris Canfield, Carol Chelette, Barbara Coffman, Patrick Coin, Will Cook, Joe Donahue, Tom Driscoll, Perry Haaland, Russell Herman, Loren Hintz, Bo Howes, Gene Kingsley, Terry Korab, Tom Krakauer, Susan Lyons, Kerry MacPherson, Trish MacPherson, Jennifer Maher, Beth Mancuso, Marty McClelland, Kyle Mills, Frank McKeever, Eddie Owens, Mark Owens, Rick Payne, Doug Pratt, Tommy Richey, Michael Ryan, Beverly Scalise, Roger Shaw, Josh Southern, Sterling Southern, Pam Timmons, Chris Tomazic, Ginger Travis, Andy Upshaw, Margaret Vimmerstedt, Rouse Wilson, and Joe Zellers

Exclusives: None

Notes: May 7, 2017, was a beautiful day for birding. The temperature ranged from 43°F in the morning to 65°F in the afternoon. Winds were variable to about 10 mph and the sky was clear to partly cloudy.

Forty-seven observers in 23 parties participated (our ten-year averages are 45 and 21, respectively). We tallied 7532 individual birds (avg. 8099) and 112 species (avg. 121) in 136 party hours (avg. 127). With more observers in more parties counting for more hours, we counted fewer species and fewer individual birds. Hmmm!

For the first year since I can remember, we did not report any record high numbers for any particular species for the count. Hmmm!

We also had some notable 'misses,' birds we usually see at least one or two of each spring: Solitary Sandpiper, Belted Kingfisher, Veery, Chestnut-sided Warbler, and Northern Waterthrush. Hmmm!

There was plenty of competition in the area with a bicycle race, a swimming race, and a motorcycle rally. One party counted an astounding 349 motorcycles thundering past. Hmmm!

Okay everyone, hmmm along with me. Is any of this meaningful in the grander scheme of things? Probably not, but maybe so. Let's see how things develop over the next few years. Organizations such as the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology report seeing overall decreases in Neotropical migrants during the past several decades. We need to keep a watchful eye. Will Cook, working the Shearon Harris area, and Jennifer Maher and Roger Shaw, covering Big Woods Road, both reported 76 species. Brian Bockhahn reported five species of nocturnal birds: Eastern Screech-Owl, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Chuck-will's-widow, and Eastern Whip-poor-will. It pays to get up early! Josh Southern, Sterling Southern, and Doug Pratt found two juvenile Great Horned Owls in an old Bald eagle nest. Roger Shaw turned up a Blue-winged Teal first thing in the morning and heard two Northern Bobwhites during the count period, though not on count day.

Norm Budnitz

**Durham** – Count date April 30<sup>th</sup>, 107 species, 3360 individuals, 13 participants in 7 parties, 41.60 party-hours.

Weather: Cloudy, light winds, temperature 71°-87°F.

Compiler: Brian Bockhahn ([birdranger248@gmail.com](mailto:birdranger248@gmail.com))

Participants: Patsy Bailey, Brian Bockhahn, Norm Budnitz, Will Cook, Ruben Dario, Elizabeth Keating, Gene Kingsley, Mark Kosiewski, Tom Krakauer, Eddie Owen, Isabel Reddy, Lynn Richardson, and Jenny Stanley

Exclusives: None

Notes: The Durham Spring Bird Count was held on Sunday, April 30, 2017. Total species tallied was 107 (average 112), and total individuals was 3360 (average 4717).

Unlisted species included a pair of Mute Swans that were seen at Quail Roost. Tom Krakauer said it may be the last time he is able to count in this

area. We will miss his years of dedicated service and nice to see one more rare bird contribution! A total of nine Bonaparte's Gulls were seen from Hickory Hill, probably should be more regular, but they are lingering this spring in good numbers.

Other goodies include a flyover Common Loon over Knapp of Reeds Creek, two parties reporting Bobolink at Brickhouse Road and Lake Michie, and a male Baltimore Oriole in alternate plumage at Brickhouse Road.

Misses include Sharp-shinned Hawk, Solitary Sandpiper, Caspian Tern, Great Horned Owl, Belted Kingfisher, and Northern Waterthrush.

Many thanks to everyone who volunteered.

Brian Bockhahn

**Falls Lake** – Count date April 25<sup>th</sup>, 108 species, 2648 individuals, 15 participants in eight parties, 50.30 party-hours.

Weather: Heavy rains with clearing skies later in the day, temperature 61-73°F.

Compiler: Brian Bockhahn ([birdranger248@gmail.com](mailto:birdranger248@gmail.com))

Participants: Herb Amyx, Pat Amyx, Sebastian Bloc, Lucas Bobay, Brian Bockhahn, Todd Bishop, Norm Budnitz, Lena Gallitano, Kyle Kittelberger, Deborah Robertson, Mike Schultz, Deck Stapleton, Patty Tice, Pat Tyndall, and Russ Tyndall

Exclusives: Arctic Tern

Notes: The 14<sup>th</sup> Falls Lake Spring Bird Count was held on April 25<sup>th</sup> under heavy rains and increasing lake levels.

Most numerous birds were 397 Cliff Swallows followed distantly by 135 Double-crested Cormorants and 129 Northern Cardinals.

First records included an absolutely mind-blowing Artic Tern at Sandling Beach seen and photographed and even chased by a few local birders. Not only a new to the spring count species, but new to the Falls Lake checklist, which now stands at a whopping 319 species! Another first count record was a Semipalmated Plover at Rollingview.

Other goodies included our fourth Least Sandpiper and our fifth Laughing Gull at Rollingview, our fifth Common Tern at Sandling Beach, our second Forster's Tern at lake's center, and our fifth Bank Swallow at lake's center.

With the rain and floods misses were many and included Sharp-shinned Hawk for the third time, Solitary Sandpiper for the fourth time, Eastern Screech-Owl for the fifth time as well as Whip-poor-will (first miss), Chuck-wills-widow (second miss), Eastern Wood Pewee (fourth miss), Acadian Flycatcher (second miss), Yellow Warbler (first miss), Northern Waterthrush (fifth miss), and Rose-breasted Grosbeak (fourth miss).

Many thanks to everyone who volunteered for the count!

Brian Bockhahn

**Kerr Lake** – Count date April 27<sup>th</sup>, 117 species, 4307 individuals, 14 participants in seven parties, 45.90 party-hours.

Weather: Clear skies, moderate winds, mild temperatures (63°-77°F).

Compiler: Brian Bockhahn (birdranger248@gmail.com)

Participants: Jeff Blalock, Brian Bockhahn, Ann Brice, Adam D’Onofrio, Paul Glass, Bill Lindemuth, Joyce Lindemuth, Fred Lobdell, Carol Mauzey, Grace McCrowell, David Spears, Evan Spears, Deck Stapleton and Clyde Wilson.

Exclusives: Surf Scoter

Notes: The 14<sup>th</sup> Kerr Lake Spring Bird Count was held on April 27<sup>th</sup> under clear skies, moderate winds, mild temperatures, and increasing lake level. Most common species found were Double-crested Cormorant (406), Black Vulture (259), American Crow (178), and Turkey Vulture (172).

New to the spring check list were Least Bittern heard calling for 15 minutes at Dick Cross! Also, a wayward female Surf Scoter was seen above the dam with a flock of mergansers before taking flight.

Other goodies included a second record Dunlin, seen and photographed above the dam in the rising waters, a third record Horned Lark for the second year at the same site near Bullocksville, a fourth record American Kestrel at Dick Cross, a fourth record Red-breasted Nuthatch at Henderson Point, and fifth record Herring Gull above the dam and Broad-winged Hawk around Bullocksville.

Nothing was missed off the A-list, but misses include Acadian Flycatcher for the second time, Ruby-crowned Kinglet for the fourth time, Black-throated Green Warbler for the third time, Savannah Sparrow for the second time, and Baltimore Oriole for the fourth time.

Many thanks to everyone who volunteered to count.

Brian Bockhahn

**Raven Rock State Park** – Count date April 29<sup>th</sup>, 111 species, 4078 individuals, 17 participants in 11 teams, 73.15 party-hours.

Weather: Temperature - 72-92° F; wind SSW at 0-20 mph; water open. AM sunny, PM sunny. Count circle center at junction of NC210 and SR 1434.

Compiler: Erik R. Thomas (erthomas@ncsu.edu)

Participants: John Bartlett, Steve Buscynski, Charles Byrd, David DuMond, Martha Fisk, Michael Fisk, Molly Fullwood, Paul Hart, Tom Howard, Prudence Mainor, Tim McGreal, Jeff Mielke, Kevin Rease, Mitch Reese, Mary Stevens, Erik Thomas and Amber Williams

Exclusives: None

Notes: Our total of 111 species was the lowest in several years. In general, we found the species that occur regularly in the circle at this time of year, but came up short on irregularly occurring species such as Worm-eating and Yellow Warblers. We also missed certain lingering winter species such as Savannah Sparrow. Among the highlights, Bobolinks

seemed to be at the height of their migration, with five different parties finding them. Two parties (Michael and Martha Fisk; Kevin and Mitch Reese) reported Swainson's Warblers. Other good finds were two Northern Bobwhites by Tim McGreal, two American Woodcocks by Tom Howard and Chuck Byrd, and a Wilson's Snipe by David DuMond.

Erik R. Thomas

## **Coast**

**Brunswick County** – Count date April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 158 species, 10,535 individuals, 21 participants, 63.00 party-hours.

Weather: Overcast skies, scattered light to heavy showers, wind NE from 5-15mph, temperature 59-71°F.

Compiler: Dave Weesner ([david.weesner@yahoo.com](mailto:david.weesner@yahoo.com)) and Sam Cooper (dmcooper2@juno.net)

Participants: Jamie Adams, Ann Bobeck, Kathleen Bowman, Sam Cooper, Ed Corey, Shun Endo, Dalton Jackson, Mark Jones, Amanda Kiel, Sherry Lane, Pat PcPherson, Mary Lynn Meister, Ann Orsillo, Joanne Parker, Harry Sell, Hugh and Deborah Shaw, Bruce Smithson, Jerzy Smykla, Dave Weesner, Carson Wood

Exclusives: Lesser Scaup, Black Scoter, Horned Grebe, Clapper Rail, American Oystercatcher, Wilson's Plover, Piping Plover, Whimbrel, Marbled Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, Sanderling, Western Sandpiper, Willet, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Least Tern, Gull-billed Tern, Royal Tern, Sandwich Tern, Black Skimmer, Common Loon, Northern Gannet, Brown Pelican, Snowy Egret, Tricolored Heron, Cattle Egret, Black-crowned Night Heron, White Ibis, Swallow-tailed Kite, Merlin, Seaside Sparrow, Boat-tailed Grackle, Painted Bunting

Notes: Spring counts were conducted years ago in the Wilmington Christmas Bird Count circle, which contains portions of Brunswick and New Hanover Counties, and a Spring North American Migration Count (NAMC) was conducted in Brunswick County in 1996, 1997, and 1998. The NAMC counts conducted in Brunswick County during the 1990s yielded 138 to 146 species during the dates of 9 and 11 May and participants ranged from 13 to 22. The count in 2017 was conducted on 23 April and yielded 158 species from the effort of 21 participants.

Brunswick County is the fourth-largest county in North Carolina and occupies over 1050 square miles, including over 40 miles of ocean-beach shoreline, portions of the Cape Fear, Brunswick, Waccamaw, and Lockwood Folly Rivers, and the southern half of the Green Swamp. Twenty-one observers in eight groups concentrated on some of the birding hotspots, including the beaches of Sunset, Ocean Isle, Oak Island, Bald Head, the southern portion of Ft. Fisher, the Green Swamp, Southport area, Orton Pond, Brunswick Nature Park, EV Henwood, and Indian Creek by boat (the only area covered by boat). Eagle Island and areas associated with the old Orton Plantation property were not surveyed due to access restrictions.

The count was hampered by some inclement weather, including scattered heavy downpours and cool, breezy NE winds. A small-craft advisory prevented boat coverage in areas that will hopefully be covered in future counts, including Battery Island, where over 10,000 White Ibis nests were surveyed this spring (including a few Glossy Ibis, which were missed). The count date was conducted a little early for some summer residents and some common birds were missed (i.e., Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Eastern Wood Pewee). Despite any setbacks, the count was a success and produced a respectable list including some lingering winter species and a good representation of water and shore birds. No crazy off-course birds and best sightings included three Swallow-tailed Kites just south of Leland, a good number of lingering Black Scoters, a horned grebe, and a variety of species that are present but not always easy to find like Black-throated Green Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, Least Bittern, Wood Stork, Sedge Wren, and Whip-poor-will. One of the resident Monk Parakeets was found in the town of Northwest where a pair has been present for the past several years. Although they have built nests, no young have been reported, and the current status for species on the North Carolina list is "not established."

A count date in late April with more coverage (people and boats) and better weather could certainly yield even higher counts in the future.

Dave Weesner and Sam Cooper

## **Appendix**

To view the Appendix detailing species identified on each count, click in the box below: