

# The Chat

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# THE CHAT

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# Breeding Status of the Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) in the Piedmont of the Upper Pee Dee Region of the Carolinas

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The Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) breeds throughout most of the Piedmont physiographic province of North Carolina. Its breeding status is still poorly defined in the extreme southeast where the birds would be confined to partly open brushy areas with shrubs, hedges, and grasses within cities and towns (Sykes 1966, Seriff 2018, LeGrand et al. 2019). The current breeding range of the Song Sparrow in the upper Pee Dee region within the Piedmont of the Carolinas is unclear because evidence of long-term occupancy during the breeding season is lacking.

LeGrand et al. (2019) state that Song Sparrows breed in every county in the southeastern Piedmont of North Carolina, but Seriff (2018) did not document any breeding records east of Charlotte or southeast of Salisbury, Rowan County. Further east and southeast, Song Sparrows are apparently established along the Wilgrove Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) route (present 12 of 19 years since 2001; 63%). Single Song Sparrows were reported during two years each on two other BBS routes east of Wilgrove (Uwharrie, now inactive: 1993, 1997; Oakboro: 2005–2006). No Song Sparrows were reported along the Biscoe route, which passes near but not within Troy, Montgomery County (Pardieck et al. 2018). Near the North Carolina border in South Carolina, Song Sparrows have nested no further east than western Lancaster County at a park in Lancaster in 1984 and 1992 (LeGrand 1993, Cely 2003, Seriff 2018).

The purpose of this note is to document the current breeding status of the Song Sparrow in this region. This note includes unpublished breeding evidence of Song Sparrows at Troy, Montgomery County, NC, in 1994.

## Methods

I covered the same geographic area of the upper Pee Dee region in the Carolinas for Song Sparrow in 2018 as I did for the House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*; McNair 2019). The upper Pee Dee region as defined herein includes six counties or portions thereof in two states, and a total of 29 cities and towns ranging in human population size from 110 in McFarlan, NC to 9080 in Rockingham, NC. In 2019, I obtained additional data on Song Sparrows at Troy, NC. Troy (elevation 202 m) includes a commercial district centered along two main highways and mature residential communities that are heavily vegetated with old trees. All neighborhoods have been stable with few habitat changes having occurred over the last 25 years. Most residential dwellings are detached single units over 50 years old. Each residence is typically fronted by a dense lawn, bordered by ornamental shrubs and backed by lawns, shrubs, gardens, or play areas. Railroad tracks pass through the center of town.

I conducted a complete census of singing male Song Sparrows at Troy over 13 days from 9 April to 6 May. A total of 20 hours was devoted to this effort, 57% before noon (mostly mid-morning) and 43% after noon (mostly early evening). I used the spot-mapping method to delineate their territories. A minimum of 2 registrations of singing males at the same site recorded at least 10 days apart were required for designation as established breeding territories. Singing males that did not meet this criterion were considered “floaters”, i.e., not on established territories. I also recorded any additional breeding evidence (e.g., females present) during the 2019 census.

I calculated the density of singing male Song Sparrows on established territories (ignoring floaters) by connecting the perimeter of the outermost territories by straight lines and dividing this area by the total number of male territories. The location of one established territory was an outlier, so I also calculated the density of singing male Song Sparrows on established territories at Troy by ignoring this outlier.

I compared these two density measurements of Song Sparrows at Troy to other density measurements based on the spot-mapping method that are available from Breeding Bird Censuses (BBC) conducted in residential or commercial areas of eastern North America where Song Sparrows have been present (Aldrich 1984, Arcese et al. 2002). I extracted these studies through 2009, the last year results were published after an earlier hiatus from 1997–2000 (Gardali and Lowe 2006, Lowe and DeSante 2012) and from other available literature that used the spot-mapping method. Censuses from these missing years and after 2009 are not accessible (Hochachka 2019).

Many confounding variables can affect analyses of BBC data, including plot size, so except for results from two plots of 6.1 ha that were available from a very detailed study (Beissinger and Osborne 1982) and a larger plot from The White House (Evenden and Pyle 1972, Evenden 1979), all other plots were a minimum of the recommended 8.1 ha (Engstrom 1981, Engstrom and James 1984). Most extracted BBC studies were conducted in one or two years, but longer studies were available from Massachusetts (3 years) and at Carey, Ohio (5 years).

I excluded censuses conducted in areas such as cemeteries or arboretums, suburban or urban parks, or wooded ravines in suburban areas. These censuses did not contain or rarely contained residential and commercial buildings so would not be comparable to Troy, NC or other censuses cited herein.

I grouped all census plots into five categories: mature residential, recent residential, residential, suburban development in pine-oak forest, residential and commercial. Categories are based on detailed descriptions of habitat characteristics such as the presence and number of tall trees and age and extent of residential housing.

## **Results**

I only found singing male Song Sparrows on territory at Troy. Eight singing males (plus two females) were detected during surveys on 14 May 1994, whereas six singing males were detected on 19 May 2018.

In 2019, I documented 34 singing male Song Sparrows on established territories (plus at least 6 females) during a complete census of the entire town and settled outlying areas adjacent to the town boundary (Figure 1). I also documented four floaters, three of which were located outside the perimeter of the established territories.

Birds on established territories were located in residential yards or in vegetated commercial areas including three males present in ruderal habitat in lumber yards, two beside yarn plants, and two along a railroad track through the center of town. Only five territories (15%) contained streams, although intermittent running water was available on territories at many other sites (e.g., fountains at the town hall, swimming pools and water baths at residences, sprinkling systems and outside faucets in all areas).

The breeding density of territorial male Song Sparrows at Troy in 2019 was 0.10 males/ha or 1 male per 10.05 ha based on an area of 341.69 ha. If one outlier of an established male territory is removed, the breeding density was 0.14 males/ha or 1 male per 7.03 ha based on an area of 231.9 ha (Figure 1).

The low breeding densities of singing male Song Sparrows at Troy are comparable to four BBC plots in eastern North America categorized as residential and commercial areas (Table 1). All breeding densities on BBC plots were low ( $\leq 0.3$  males/ha) except for higher densities on four of the six plots conducted in mature residential areas (Table 1). Breeding densities were not associated with plot area (Figure 2) (Spearman's  $r = -0.26$ ,  $n = 14$ ,  $P = 0.38$ ). Troy was excluded because of large plot size. The highest breeding density at Oxford, Ohio was an outlier.

## **Discussion**

This study documents that territorial Song Sparrows are established at Troy, NC, but Song Sparrows were not breeding in early successional habitat at any other location in the upper Pee Dee region of the Carolinas. Troy (3,414) is the largest town in Montgomery County, but Song Sparrows do not breed in the larger town of Wadesboro (5,467) in Anson County, NC (U.S. Census Bureau 2018). Wadesboro is closer than Troy (75 km compared to 87 km) and east-southeast of established breeding populations at Charlotte, NC. This suggests that Song Sparrows arrived at Troy from a west-northwesterly direction, perhaps from Statesville (via Salisbury and Albemarle) where breeding was first confirmed in the Piedmont in 1933 (Sykes 1966, Seriff 2018).

The low breeding densities of Song Sparrows at Troy, which is at the limit of its southeasterly breeding range, were similar to similarly categorized communities in eastern North America (Aldrich 1984, Arcese et al. 2002, this study). The highest breeding densities in mature residential plots at Oxford, Ohio (Beissinger and Osborne 1982), an outlier, further supports the conclusion that inclusion of small plot sizes can lead to spurious, unsupported, or unreliable results (Engstrom 1981, Engstrom and James 1984).

The future expansion of the Song Sparrow along the breeding range front in the upper Pee Dee region of the Carolinas where habitat is not a limiting factor is difficult to predict. Single unmated male Song Sparrows singing on territories for more than one day have been documented slightly further east of Troy at Biscoe, Montgomery County (4 May–16 June 2018; McNair, unpubl.) and nearby in the Sandhills of Moore County at Southern Pines (3–7 June 1999; Davis 2000, LeGrand 2019) and at Pinehurst (21 May–8 June 2018; McNair, unpubl.). The spread of this species to cities and towns such as Troy at the limit of its breeding range is not detrimental because a new species has been added to the otherwise limited avifauna in these environments where habitat is not ephemeral. A firm population estimate is now available from Troy, NC, where suitable Song Sparrow habitat and nest strata are probably not saturated. However, unlike the House Wren

(McNair 2019), the breeding status of the Song Sparrow has remained static in the upper Pee Dee region for over 25 years.

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I thank M. Lutmerding for providing me with a portion of the BBS Biscoe route map, W. Hochachka (Cornell Lab of Ornithology) for answering one query about BBC data, B. Norling for preparing Figure 1, P. Arcese for reviewing a penultimate version of the manuscript, and B. Sharp and an anonymous individual for reviewing the submitted manuscript. I also appreciate the tolerance of the Troy Police Department during the 2019 census effort.

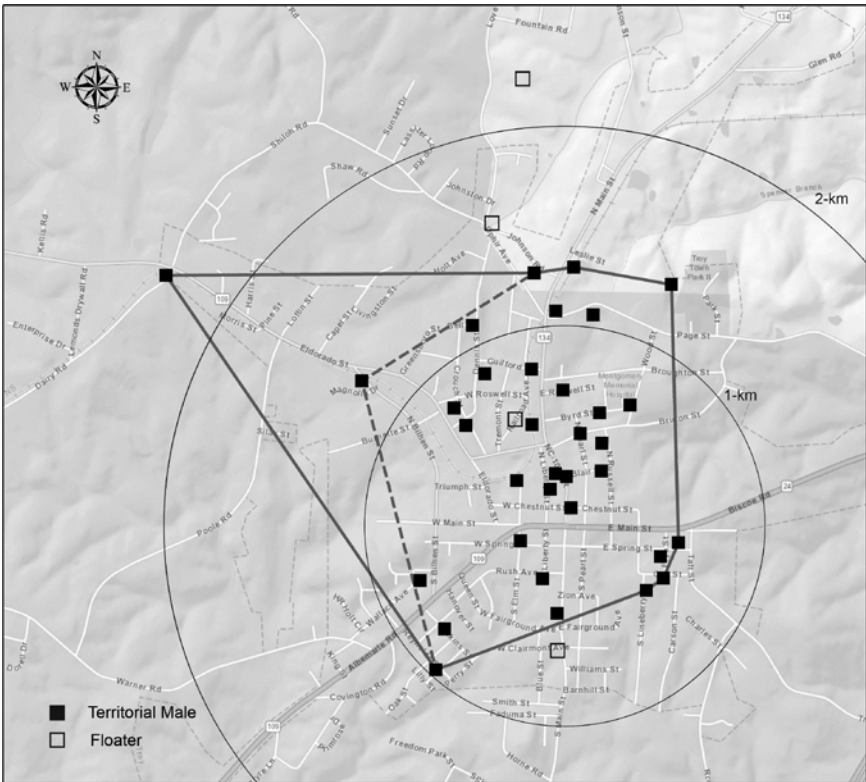


Figure 1. The location of 34 established breeding territories and 4 floaters of singing male Song Sparrows at Troy, NC, in 2019. Filled squares represent established territories, whereas open squares represent floaters. The thick solid dark gray line connects the perimeter of the established territories, whereas the inner thick segmented dark gray line that connects to the solid dark gray line excludes one established breeding territory (an outlier, based on its relative isolation compared to all other established territories). The two thin black lines represent concentric rings of 1-km and 2-km distances from the center of Troy (intersection of NC Highways 27 and 134).

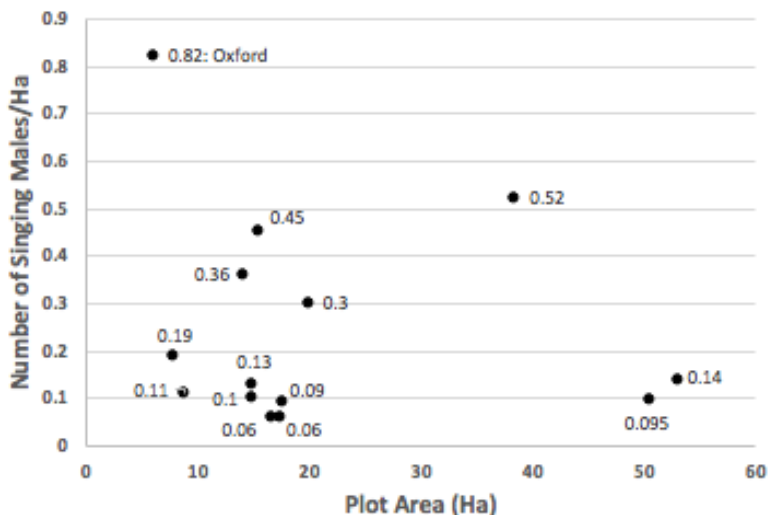


Figure 2. Breeding densities of singing male Song Sparrows in relationship to plot area on 14 BBC censuses in eastern North America. Breeding densities for seven sites with two measurements were collapsed into one measurement per site by taking the mean of both measurements. For sites with more than two measurements, breeding density was collapsed into one measurement by taking the mean of the range of measurements.

Table 1. Breeding densities of Song Sparrows at Troy, NC, compared to other breeding densities obtained from Breeding Bird Census (BBC) plots in residential or commercial areas of eastern North America.

State or Province	Locality	Year	Plot Area (ha)	Density (singing males/ha)	Reference
<b>Mature Residential</b>					
Ohio	Toledo	1971	17.6	0.09	Tramer 1971
Ohio	Oxford: 2 Sites	1976	6.1	0.66, 0.98	Beissinger and Osborne 1982
Ohio	Carey	1976–1977, 1979–1981	12.1–16.19	0.15–0.56	Claugus 1977–1978, 1980–1982

State or Province	Locality	Year	Plot Area (ha)	Density (singing males/ha)	Reference
New York	Ithaca	1965	15.4	0.45	Simmers 1965
New Jersey	Prospect Park	1976	8.9	0.11	de Wall Malefyt 1977
Virginia	Fairfax County	1979	38.5	0.52	Aldrich and Coffin 1980
<b>Recent Residential</b>					
Ontario	Ottawa	1976	53	0.14	Erskine 1977
New Jersey	Bernardsville	1995	20	0.3	Fantina 1996
<b>Residential</b>					
Washington, DC	The White House	1972, 1978	7.9	0.25, 0.13	Evenden and Pyle 1972; Evenden 1979
<b>Suburban Development in Pine-Oak Forest</b>					
Massachusetts	Plymouth County	1979–1980, 1982	15	0.03–0.17	Smith 1983
<b>Residential and Commercial</b>					
Manitoba	Swan River	1972	17.5	0.06	Erskine 1972
Québec	Senneterre	1969	15	0.13	Erskine 1970
New Brunswick	Sackville	1979, 1981	50.5	0.07, 0.12	Erskine 1980, 1982
Ohio	Carey	1982–1983	13.76, 19.4	0.07, 0.05	Claugus 1983, 1984
North Carolina	Troy <sup>1</sup>	2019	341.69, 231.9	0.10, 0.14	This study

<sup>1</sup>Includes two calculations for two areas: 1) for all established territories within the plot, and 2) excludes one established territory (an outlier compared to the locations of all other established territories).



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# 2019 Spring Migration Counts in North Carolina

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Twenty-one count areas provided data for the 2019 Spring Count, one less than the previous year. The Southern Pines Count was not conducted because the dates interfered with the Carolina Bird Club meeting at that location. There were comments from around the state about the spring count being unusual this year, and the data seem to suggest those intuitive impressions were correct. Total species (223) for the North Carolina Spring Count was well below the average of 237 for the previous ten years. Total individual birds (74,718) was well below the previous ten-year average of 89,663 and lower than any count in the previous ten years, although the number of participants (446) was average and total team-hours (1261.83) was only very slightly below the average of 1297.55. Birds per team hour (59.21) were also well below the average of 69.37 and lower than any in the previous ten years. This number represents the amount of effort taken to find the average number of individual birds. It is difficult to speculate about the reasons for the odd results, but birds passing through North Carolina or leaving the state to breed farther north might be at least one factor. Table 1 compares number of species found this year for various families of birds compared to the past five years.

Table 1: Number of species in various bird families found on spring counts.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b># species of</b>						
Waterfowl	17	16	15	13	16	12
Shorebirds	21	23	24	24	25	21
Gulls/Terns	13	14	13	14	14	11
Warblers	33	34	33	30	32	33
Sparrows	15	14	16	15	13	11

It's possible that many of the birds in these categories migrated earlier than in an average year. Weather patterns may be a factor. Although total warbler species found was typical, the numbers of individuals of many species typically found passing through the Piedmont/Coast count areas during spring migration were also lower than average in most cases (Table 2). One major exception was Cape May Warbler. Only Piedmont and coastal counts were used in this table because some of these species remain to breed in

the mountains. Also, since Southern Pines did not participate in the 2019 count, the data for that count were subtracted from the Piedmont totals for 2014 to 2018.

Table 2: Total numbers of more common warbler species found passing through the Piedmont/Coast region in spring during the 2019 spring count compared to the previous five years.

<b>Piedmont/Coast</b>						
<b># warblers</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Northern Waterthrush	54	42	58	38	27	27
Blue-winged	9	33	11	5	3	4
Cape May	18	13	78	29	67	108
Magnolia	27	9	29	24	14	8
Chestnut-sided	18	8	27	19	19	4
Blackpoll	29	3	30	19	24	16
Black-throated Blue	414	134	421	270	181	158
Black-throated Green	86	31	46	20	13	12

To understand whether this trend applies to only migratory warblers continuing farther north or also to migratory warblers arriving to breed in the North Carolina Piedmont and coast, Table 3 compares totals for some of those species. As with Table 2, the Southern Pines counts for 2014-2018 were eliminated so that numbers were comparable with 2019.

Table 3: Total numbers of some warbler species that migrate to and breed in the Piedmont/Coast region in 2019 compared to the previous five years.

<b>Piedmont/Coast</b>						
<b># warblers</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Ovenbird	678	575	621	531	521	431
Black-and-white	227	254	321	164	170	146
Common Yellowthroat	675	556	702	502	447	466
Hooded	268	233	235	200	230	218
Northern Parula	707	561	657	546	610	581

# warblers	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Prairie	370	400	273	231	234	244
Pine	817	873	761	610	692	716

Of course, all of these species also include individuals who continue to fly farther north than North Carolina, so this is an imperfect measure. Some species show little difference and others are lower in 2019. Table 3 also shows Pine Warbler numbers, a permanent resident, and those numbers show little difference. Table 4 shows two species that commonly winter in North Carolina and leave in spring. If lower migrant numbers are the result of earlier migration these two species might also be an indicator of earlier movement. Results for these two species suggest generally lower numbers in 2019, but can vary greatly from year to year.

Table 4: Piedmont/Coast Common Winter Residents

<b>Piedmont/Coast</b>						
winter residents	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
White-throated Sparrow	961	1413	564	162	639	317
Yellow-rumped Warbler	1275	1711	1123	871	1108	539

Finally, Table 5 shows 2019 warbler migrant numbers in the mountains compared to the previous five years. This table only includes the five counts that consistently reported since 2014 including Transylvania, Buncombe, and Henderson Counties and the two higher elevation Important Bird Areas (IBA) of the Pisgah Ridge/Balsam Mountains and the Black Mountains. This table includes three species mostly found at lower to middle elevations that also breed in the piedmont including Ovenbird, Black-and-white Warbler, and Hooded Warbler. The other five species are largely middle to higher elevation mountain breeders in North Carolina.

Table 5: Mountain Warbler Migrants

<b>Mountain</b>						
# warblers	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Ovenbird	401	335	348	294	320	234
Black-and-white	180	197	199	189	227	130
Hooded	261	208	255	179	230	207
Chestnut-sided	394	407	402	406	369	462

Blackburnian	179	174	182	178	252	221
<b># warblers</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Black-throated Blue	298	465	361	380	345	354
Black-throated Green	376	529	529	476	526	501
Canada	226	414	325	349	299	360

Interestingly, the lower elevation warbler species generally show similarly lower numbers in 2019 as they do in the Piedmont, but the higher elevation species show virtually no significant differences. This might actually result from the dates the mountain counts are conducted. The two higher elevation counts are conducted late in May, largely after most migrants have passed through the area and only breeding birds remain. The other three counts are usually conducted earlier in May and, although the other three counts do have some high elevation areas in their counts, those areas represent only a small portion of the total count. The two high elevation counts are in areas almost entirely above 4500 feet. Thus, while species like Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Green and Black-throated Blue Warblers show very low numbers of individuals passing through the piedmont in 2019, numbers of these species in the mountains, which represents largely birds that have completed their migration rather than those passing through, show 2019 to be more typical of previous years.

It does appear possible that migration may have started earlier in 2019 resulting in fewer migrants found during the late April/early May counts. Whether this becomes a trend over the long term with climate change may only become apparent with additional years of data.

In 2019 there were fewer atypical species found than usual, but there were some that deserve mentioning. Possibly most unusual were six American White Pelicans found on the Pilot Mountain count. That count also produced a Wilson's Warbler. Although winter waterfowl was in relative short supply as most had departed, the Grandfather Mountain count found a Greater Scaup and the Mecklenburg count a Lesser Scaup. Kites were represented by one Swallow-tailed Kite on the Brunswick count, two Mississippi Kites on the Jordan Lake count, and one Mississippi each on the Kerr Lake and Raven Rock counts. One American Bittern was found on the Rockingham count, another on the Jordan Lake count, and an amazing ten found on the Durham count. One Horned Lark appeared on the Rockingham count with a good count of 12 on the Raven Rock count. There were two late Purple Finches found, one on the Iredell count and the other on the Falls Lake count. There were a few unusual warblers found besides the Wilson's on Pilot Mountain count. These included Tennessee on the Watauga count, an Orange-crowned on the Raven Rock count, and a Bay-breasted on Pisgah/Balsams and Grandfather Mountain counts. A nice count of five Golden-winged Warblers was found on the Watauga count, with none found anywhere else in the state. Marsh Wrens were very scarce with only one on the Mecklenburg count and one on the Brunswick count. Red

Crossbills arrived late this year, so were found only on the Black Mountains count in late May.

Most abundant birds found in the mountains were Eastern Towhee, American Robin, Red-eyed Vireo, American Crow, and Song Sparrow. Most abundant species in the Piedmont were Northern Cardinal, Carolina Wren, Canada Goose, American Robin, and Red-eyed Vireo. On the coastal count the most abundant birds, Royal Tern, Short-billed Dowitcher, Laughing Gull, Red Knot, and Semipalmated Plover, were all from flocks on or near the shore.

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

## **Mountains**

**Transylvania County** – Count date May 5<sup>th</sup>, 119 species, 3271 individuals, 22 participants, 77.58 party-hours. Elevation ranges from 2100 to 5600 ft. Weather: Pleasant, clear, calm and mild weather.

Compiler: Michael Plauché ([captainbluegill@gmail.com](mailto:captainbluegill@gmail.com))

Participants: Nathaniel Axtell, Marvin Barg, Michele Barg, Joe Bartusis, George Dunkelberg, Ray Dunkelberg, Elizabeth Galloway, Susan Goldworthy, Jennifer Harper, Gary Harris, Kathy Harris, Joan McDonald, Malcolm McDonald, Janie Owens, Michael Plauché, Frank Porter, Marcus Simpson, Norma Siebenheller, Martine Stolk, Charlie Threatte, Linda Threatte, and Marilyn Westphal.

Exclusives: None

Notes: Weather was quite pleasant for the Transylvania Spring Count on May 5<sup>th</sup>. Twenty-two participants counted 119 species. Although there were fewer participants than in previous years, thus less time and fewer miles, the species count was on the high end. However, individual numbers were down. Hopefully this is solely the result of less effort and not indicative of a general decline.

Notable misses included Great Egret, American Kestrel, Barred and Eastern-Screech Owl, Peregrine Falcon, Purple Martin, Blue Grosbeak, and Baltimore Oriole. A Horned Grebe was a good find as a late bird, and the Great Blue Heron rookery at Ecusta Pond continues to grow.

Michael Plauché

**Pisgah Ridge, Great Balsam and Plott Balsam Mountains IBA** – count dates spanned from May 16-21 with teams selecting one of those days to do their section, 81 species, 3035 individuals, 22 participants in 12 parties, 67.25 party-hours. Elevation ranges for this count run from 3500 to 6100 feet. Weather: Excellent over most of the count period with one morning of intermittent rain. Temperature 45-75°F.

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

Participants: Tim Carstens, Nancy Casey, Robert Emmott, Tom Flagg, Robert Johnson, Stacy Johnson, Gail Lankford, Charlie Lankford, Jeff Lemons, Marianne Mooney, Nora Murdock, Naomi Otterness, Catherine Reid, Russell Roe, Joe Sasfy, Steve Semanchuk, Marcus Simpson, Liz Skiles, Lou Weber, Marilyn Westphal, Connie Wulcovicz and Stan Wulcovicz

Exclusives: None

Notes: We had some unusually fine weather throughout the count period, which made for great fun birding in this beautiful area. Unlike last year's cold and wet spring, this spring returned to normal weather conditions and normal migration arrival dates. This count has been conducted since 2006 and since the date for the count is relatively late in May for most migrants and the count period is always over the third weekend in May, the total species show little variation from one year to the next and this year was no different. Average total species is 80 and this year it was 81. Average total individual birds is 3078, and this year the total was 3035. The number of participants (22) and party-hours (67.25) was also average.

Although the total number of species was average, there are always some surprises. This year there a few late migrants were seen including Bay-breasted, Blackpoll and Palm as well as a Cerulean Warbler, which may or may not have been a late migrant. Yellow-rumped Warblers also continued to be present and singing along Black Balsam Road as they have for several years in a row now. Another big surprise was a Northern Bobwhite in the Mount Pisgah area. Notable absences were Pine Siskin, which have been scarce in the area this year, and Red Crossbill, which arrived unusually late this year and after the count period.

There were also a few record high and low counts for some species. Anecdotal evidence of large numbers of Canada Warblers in the area this year proved to be true on the count with a total of 177 compared to the average of 120. Black-throated Green and Black-throated Blue Warbler and Common Yellowthroat numbers were also at records of 204, 147 and 68. Other species with record highs included Red-eyed Vireo (150) and Northern Parula (45) (one wonders if these species may be expanding their elevational range), and Least Flycatcher with a surprising 52 compared to the average 22.

Anecdotal evidence of abnormally low numbers of American Robins in this area also proved to be the case with only 106 compared to the average of 149. One of the most surprisingly absent bird was Ruffed Grouse with only one found compared to the average six. Fewer chickadees were also found with only a total of 30 compared to the average 59. It is always difficult to label many of these chickadees as Black-capped, Carolina or hybrid as many, if not most, sing the Black-capped song and often look more like Black-capped than Carolina. The most surprising low numbers were for Dark-eyed Junco with only 209 found compared to the average 325.

Once again the most abundant species found was Chestnut-sided Warbler (329) followed by Dark-eyed Junco (209), Black-throated Green Warbler (204), Eastern Towhee (181), Canada Warbler (177), Blue-headed Vireo (170), Red-eyed Vireo (150), Black-throated Blue Warbler (147), Veery (134), and Golden-crowned Kinglet (124).

Thanks again to all the participants who make this Important Bird Area count possible. Thirty, forty, or fifty years from now, considering our changing climate, these data could provide some important comparisons.

Marilyn Westphal

**Henderson County** – count date period from May 9<sup>th</sup> to May 14<sup>th</sup> (teams select which date to do their count), 103 species, 2218 individuals, 17 participants in eight areas, 34.25 party-hours. Weather: Variable during count period.

Compiler: Jim Neal ([jlbjneal@gmail.com](mailto:jlbjneal@gmail.com))



Participants: Vickie Burke, Doug Carle, Muriel Carle, Robert Emmott, Liz Fitts, Liz Honnold, Richard Jackson, Mike Judd, Barbara Neal, Jim Neal, Nora Murdock, Carol Palmer, Don Palmer, Cherie Pittillo, Marcia Poyor, Marcus Simpson, and Marilyn Westphal

Exclusives: None

Notes: The 2019 Spring Migration Count for Henderson County was conducted over a 6-day period. The 103 species found is at the midpoint between our lowest count of 95 in 2015 and highest count of 120 in 2006. The 2218 individuals are below the midpoint of a low of 1612 in 2014 and a high of 3904 in 2012.

There were only four species with totals greater than 100 individuals. They included European Starling (131), Eastern Towhee (122), Northern Cardinal (104), and Cliff Swallow (103). There was a misunderstanding regarding coverage of Jackson Park, so the area was not covered this year for the first time in the 22 history of this count. This might have reduced both the number of species and total birds as Jackson Park often produces some species not found in other areas.

There were eighteen species of warbler found, which was just below our normal of 20. Other really good birds included Double-crested Cormorant, Bald Eagle, Semipalmated Plover, Solitary Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Barred Owl, Acadian Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, Willow Flycatcher, Great-crested Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, Fish Crow, Blue Grosbeak, and Bobolink.

Thanks to all those who helped with the count for an excellent job.

Jim Neal

**Buncombe County** – Count period ran May 10-13 with each group selecting the day it could do their section, 108 species, 4131 individuals, 22 participants in 10 parties, 60.32 party-hours. Weather: Variable over count period, cloudy, foggy, cool and windy to mostly sunny and relatively calm and cool.

Compiler: Tom Tribble ([tntribble@gmail.com](mailto:tntribble@gmail.com))

Participants: Nancy Casey, Nancy Cowal, Robert Emmott, K. Hillegas, K. Johnson, Doug Johnston, Gail Lankford, Herman Lankford, D. Liberatori, R. Liberatori, Nora Murdock, Janie Owens, Liz Payne, Kitti Reynolds, Russell Roe, Steve Semanchuk, Marcus Simpson, Liz Skiles, Tom Tribble, Marilyn Westphal, Jay Wherley, and Steve Yurkovich

Exclusives: None

Notes: None

**Black Mountains IBA** – Count period ran from May 23-28 with teams selecting one of those days to complete their section, 62 species, 1787 individuals, 16 participants in 12 parties with some teams covering a second section on a different day, 50.01 party-hours. Weather: Mostly pleasant conditions although quite foggy some mornings and often overcast. Temperature 40-75° F. Elevation range for this count is 3000 to 6684 feet 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](mailto:mjwestph@ret.unca.edu))

Participants: Robert Emmott, MaryEllen Flowers, Tedd Greenwald, Jamie Harrelson, Chris Jaquette, Bob Knight, Charlie Lankford, Gail Lankford, Nora Murdock,

Michael Plauché, Debbie Segal, Steve Semanchuk, Marcus Simpson, Liz Skiles, Simon Thompson, and Marilyn Westphal

Exclusives: Red Crossbill

Notes: Weather was favorable this year, so all teams were able to complete their sections with relative ease. However, two areas usually covered, Forest Roads 472 and 2074, were closed and were only partially covered. Total species (62) was one above average, and total birds (1787) was only slightly higher than the average 1734, but lower than the previous three years, probably because the forest roads weren't covered.

There were a couple of surprises on the count including a Swainson's Warbler, both heard and seen, in the Toe River watershed, a first for Yancey County during the breeding season. Although this species is fairly common on the other side of the high ridge in the Catawba River watershed, it has never been found breeding on the other side of the divide in this area, so if it does breed in this area it would be a range extension. Another surprise was a Swainson's Thrush along the Bald Knob Ridge trail. Swainson's Thrushes had been found in the Black Mountains during the breeding season for several years, but the population dwindled and they had not been found the last couple of years. Perhaps this was a late migrant, or possibly a remnant of the former population.

There were a couple of high-count records for the count including 101 Blackburnian Warblers (average is 62), and 78 Winter Wrens (average is 56). A record low 135 Dark-eyed Juncos were counted (average 216). A record low number was also found on the Pisgah/Balsam Mountains count along the Parkway south of Asheville. The reason for the unusually low numbers of Juncos this year in the southern mountains is unknown. Most abundant species found on the count were Black-throated Green Warbler (187), Golden-crowned Kinglet (145), Dark-eyed Junco (135), Blue-headed Vireo (131), Blackburnian Warbler (101), Canada Warbler (90), Winter Wren (78), Black-throated Blue Warbler (76), Veery (71), and Red-breasted Nuthatch (60).

Although one or two Alder Flycatchers are usually found in this area, there were four this year all in different locations. Also, although Pine Siskins and Red Crossbills were notably absent from the Pisgah/Balsam Mountains count a week earlier, they were present in good numbers on this count with 20 Pine Siskins and 27 Red Crossbills. Pine Siskins are fairly reliably present every year here, but Red Crossbills are always unpredictable and this year they returned shortly before the count period, which was much later than usual. Yellow-rumped Warblers were also present once again this year as they have been for the past several years during the breeding season.

Thanks again to all the participants. This can be a challenging area to cover because of unpredictable weather and sometimes steep and rocky trails, so their efforts are always greatly appreciated.

Marilyn Westphal

**Grandfather Mountain** – Count date May 17<sup>th</sup>, 56 species, 498 individuals, six participants in four parties, 17.25 party-hours. Weather: Mostly cloudy and breezy with winds gusting to 40 mph at higher elevations. Temperature in the mid 50's to mid-60's.

Compiler: Amy Renfranz ([amy@grandfather.com](mailto:amy@grandfather.com))

Participants: Bob Cherry, Amy Renfranz, Judi Sawyer, Emily Treadwell and two others.

Exclusives: Greater Scaup

Notes: The Grandfather Spring Bird Count began in May 2011. This represents the eighth year of the count as the weather prohibited the count in 2017. This year the weather was breezy, but cooperative at lower elevation sites. Birding was completed by ear and sight at these sites. However, wind speeds along the Grandfather Trail were consistently in the mid 40-45 mph, and I was unable to hear song over the noise of the wind.

Previous counts had about six participants to cover four routes. In 2018 we had 10 participants involved in the count to cover five routes. In 2019, as a result of unforeseen circumstances, two of our typical route leaders were unable to participate. We had to revert to six participants covering four routes. Route leaders included Judi Sawyer, Bob Cherry, and me. Although I was happy to help under the circumstances, I am an amateur at best. Unfortunately it is reflected in the numbers, as there were certainly birds that were present, but I that was unable to identify.

Time spent on each route varied. Over seven hours were committed to the Profile Trail, while 6.25 hours were spent on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Far fewer hours were spent on the Grandfather Trail and 105 Corridor. This was a shift from previous years when seven plus hours were spent in those two areas alone.

We collectively logged 17.25 hours on this year's count versus the count average of 33.90 hours for the years 2011 to 2018. This marked the lowest recorded species abundance since the count began in 2011 with just 56 species. The high count of 77 was achieved in 2012 (90 party-hours), and the lowest count until this year was 61 in 2016 (15.5 party-hours).

Three new species were counted this year including Pied-billed Grebe, Black-billed Cuckoo, and Greater Scaup. The two Black-billed Cuckoos were particularly exciting to find by Blue Ridge Parkway birders. They noted: "We did not get photos of the Black-billed Cuckoos, but did get good looks at one from 50 feet. Bird was first seen when it was about 30 feet from us and was flying into crown of a tree. I noticed the long tail, dark back, and white belly. Bird flew to another tree about 50 feet from us and was perched on a branch slightly above eye level. We both had good looks at the bill in good lighting and neither of us saw any yellow on the bill. The bird was dark on back and on the head from the eye up. Light on belly/chest and on face below eye. Only had fleeting glimpses of the tail, but did not notice white spots. Both birds flew to another tree about 70 feet away and we could tell they were cuckoos from the overall color, long bill, and long tail. A few seconds later we heard three cuckoo calls that were repeated about 30 seconds later."

A pair of Bald Eagles successfully nested along the Highway 105 Corridor. This highway runs parallel to the Watauga River. Since 2017 a breeding pair of Bald Eagles used a nesting site near the Hound Ears Country Club on Shull's Mill Road and other eagles have been spotted in the same vicinity. The adult birds were not seen, however the two juveniles were observed jumping from branch to branch around their nest.

Many of our numbers were affected this year by the decreased participation and lack of expertise. Significant decreases were seen in the number of Mourning Doves, Red-eyed Vireos, and Dark-eyed Juncos. Hopefully, we will be back on track in 2020!  
Amy Refranz

**Watauga County** – Count date May 4<sup>th</sup>, 102 species, 1965 individuals, 20 participants in 13 teams, 50.40 party-hours. Weather: Mostly cloudy, afternoon thunderstorms, mild to warm temperatures.

Compiler: Guy McGrane ([badgerboy@wilkes.net](mailto:badgerboy@wilkes.net))

Participants: Meredith Boothe, Carol Burdick, Anita Clemmer, Martha Cutler, Ricky Davis, Kimberlie Dewey, Steve Dowlan, Margaret Dunson, Pat Geiger, Merrill Lynch, Guy McGrane, Betsy Murrelle, Janet Paulette, Richard Paulette, Will Pratt, Debbie Shetterly, Jimmie Shetterly, Riley Visser, Janie Wey, Evan Wunder.

Exclusives: Bufflehead, Golden-winged Warbler, Tennessee Warbler

Notes: Good finds were a Tennessee Warbler, tough to find in spring; a Black-billed Cuckoo at Chestnut Knob; three White-eyed Vireos that can be elusive in the mountains; and a couple Great-crested Flycatchers which come through sparingly in spring and rarely stick around long when they do; and a very high count of 64 Red-eyed Vireos.

Missed were the Bald Eagles we know are nesting at River Pointe; most any waterfowl (other than Canada Geese, Mallards, Wood Duck, and a single Bufflehead) as we missed our lake coverage, any kinglets, Swainson's Thrush which often can be found in May, and most any migrating warblers besides the Tennessee and a very few Yellow-rumps. We had just 17 warbler species this year compared to 23 last year.

Guy McGrane

**Hanging Rock State Park IBA** – Count date May 8<sup>th</sup>, 102 species 1079 individuals, ten participants in five parties, 21.00 party-hours. Elevation range 1200-2400 feet. Weather: Clear, dry, temperature 62-71°F.

Compiler: Jean Chamberlain ([jchamberlain1@windstream.net](mailto:jchamberlain1@windstream.net))

Participants: Brian Bockhahn, Jean Chamberlain, Kerry Eckhardt, Allison Gagnon, Ron Morris, Virginia Perry, Sue Rupp, Nancy Russo, Cara Woods, and Tony Woods.

Exclusives: None

Notes: None

## **Piedmont**

**Iredell County** – count date April 28<sup>th</sup>, 90 species, 1623 individuals, 10 participants in three parties, 27.00 party-hours. Weather: Partly cloudy, wind calm, temperature ranged from 58-82°F. Count circle is centered on the South Yadkin River Bridge on Chipley Ford Road in northern Iredell County.

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

Participants: Debbie Birnley, Evie Caldwell, Cynthia Dickerson, Bill English, Larry Marlin, Caroline Martin, Janice Powell, Garnet Underwood, Ron Underwood and Mark Whitaker

Exclusives: None

Notes: none

**Mecklenburg County** – Count date April 27<sup>th</sup>, 132 species, 6497 individuals, 40 participants, 99.42 party-hours. Weather: Sunny with light winds.

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

Participants: Chris Bolling, Diane Coggin, Steve Coggin, Wayne Covington, Jennifer Daggy, Jan Fowler, Phil Fowler, Noreen George, Jim Guyton, Chris Hanna, John Hanna, Greg Hays, Katherine Higgins, Christy Hill, Matt Janson, Dennis Kent, Ken Kneidel, Sandy Arthur Kohn, Dennis Lankford, Jeff Lemons, Joclyn McLaughlin, Rich McCracken, Christine McCluskey, Kevin Metcalf, Martina Nordstrand, Shannon O'Connor, Suzanne O'Donoghue, Elle O'Neill, Taylor Piephoff, Lucy Quintilliano, Tammy Sanders, Tom Sanders, John Scavetto, Jill Shoemaker, Lisbeth Stockman, Steve Tracy, Rob VanEpps, Judy Walker, Bob Wood, and Rachel Wood.

Exclusives: Green-winged Teal, Lesser Scaup, American Coot, Wilson's Snipe

Notes: The Charlotte/Mecklenburg Spring Bird Count was held on Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup> with 38 participants in thirteen groups and 116 eBird checklists submitted reporting 132 species on count day. The ten-year species average is 130. The weather was nice with mainly sunny skies and light winds. The evening before count day a strong, fast moving storm blew through the area. Participants thought some of the birds that had been around a few days before the count seemed to have moved, with notable decrease in species diversity at locations like Latta Park.

Notable birds for the count included some late waterfowl including Gadwall, Green-winged Teal and Lesser Scaup. Chuck-will's-widow continue to hold on along Dixie River Road with three birds calling before sunrise. A late Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was reported. Caspian Tern was seen along the river for the first time in three years, but no gulls were reported for the second year in a row. Twenty-one species of warblers (22 with Yellow-breasted Chat) were seen including a Kentucky Warbler at Berryhill NP. This is one more than the average of 21 for this count. One Great Egret and one Marsh Wren were reported. Eurasian-collared Dove was reported for the second year in a row.

Notable misses included Pine Siskin, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Purple Finch that had been present most of the winter and were being seen with some regularity just a few weeks before the count. Seventeen Pine Siskins were reported from a feeder the day before the count, and one bird returned to the feeder the day after the count. Yellow-crowned Night-Herons were missed at multiple traditional nesting locations for the first time in the last ten years. Blue-winged Warbler, American Pipit and American Woodcock were also missed. Blue-winged Warbler was seen in Latta Park the day after the count for a Count Week bird. Searches were made for Peregrine Falcon and Common Nighthawk downtown, but both were missed for the count.

Thanks to all the counters that helped again this year and for again submitting 100% of the count data into eBird. We have a great group of people for the count and I look forward to doing it again next year.

Jeff Lemons

**Pilot Mountain State Park** – Count date May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 105 species, 1361 individuals, 11 participants in 5 teams, 23.50 party-hours. Surry County - Pilot Mountain is the count center. Weather: Temperature 64-84°F, mostly clear and sunny with clouds increasing in the evening.

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

Participants: Jesse Anderson, Brian Bockhahn, Jean Chamberlain, Kerry Eckhart, Brent Gearhart, Carol Gearhart, Abby Knepp, Lilly Knepp, Shelley Rutkin, Cara Woods, and Tony Woods.

Exclusives: American White Pelican, Wilson's Warbler

Notes: The best birds of the count were a group of six American White Pelicans (a Surry and Yadkin County record), a continuing Cerulean Warbler, and a female Wilson's Warbler both found and observed well by the group at the mountain, and a Swainson's Warbler found at the river section.

The five most abundant birds for count day were Cliff Swallow (295), Red-eyed Vireo (78), European Starling (63), Northern Cardinal (48), and Barn Swallow (44). An unusually high number of Veeries (14) were found, twelve in the mountain section alone, potentially signifying a fallout the prior night. We collectively found 25 species of warbler on count day.

This year we only found one Chuck-will's-widow, two Common Nighthawks, and one Great Horned Owl. More volunteers would be needed during the nighttime hours to increase diversity of nocturnal species.

Jesse Anderson

**Forsyth County** – Count date May 4<sup>th</sup>, 121 species, 4829 individuals, 59 participants, 146.50 party-hours. Weather: Partly cloudy, rain in the evening, temperature 68-83°F.

Compiler: Nathan Gatto ([ndgatto72@gmail.com](mailto:ndgatto72@gmail.com))

Participants: Jesse Anderson, Mary Franklin Blackburn, Kim Brant, Malcolm Brown, Bernie Carr, Tommie Castleman, Jean Chamberlain, Harvey Clodfelter, David Collins, Mike Conway, Carol Cunningham, Doug Demarest, David Disher, Susan Disher, Cynthia Donaldson, Kerry Eckhardt, Nathan Gatto, Sarah Gatto, Brent Gearhart, Carol Gearhart, Bill Gifford, Lucy Gifford, John Haire, Roper Halverson, Elaine Hammond, John Hammond, Deirdre Herrington, Wendy Hawkins, Royce Hough, Laura Krebs, Don Lendel, Travis Marceron, Craig McCleary, Jane McCleary, Ana Clara Melo, Chris Meseke, Heather Moir, Ron Morris, Ann Newsome, Sven Newsome, Virginia Perry, Wayne Petel, Laura Phail, Jeremy Reiskind, Rob Rogers, Nancy Russo, Shelly Rutkin, Ann Sargent, John Sargent, Danny Steinhelfer, Philip Steward, Mark Thomas, Chuck Thompson, Cindy Thompson, Katherine Thorington, Jana Trevaskis, Gray Tuttle, Catherine Wanddell, and Jay Wilhelmi

Exclusives: None

Notes: Overall it was an odd spring migration. The weather seemed to work against us. I don't remember having any great days this year. Despite the slow start to spring migration, we were able to find 121 species and 4829 individuals this year.

The best sighting of the count was a pair of Red-breasted Mergansers on a small pond near Brookberry Farm. Other highlights included several White-crowned Sparrows, Yellow-crowned Night Herons, a Kentucky Warbler, and a group of Bobolinks.

The five most common birds for count day were Northern Cardinal (324), American Robin (261), American Goldfinch (210), Carolina Wren (175), and Barn Swallow (170). Unlike previous years, European Starlings did not make the top five for numbers (sixth

place with 168). We had low numbers of warblers this year, but collectively found 22 species on count day.

This year we only found one Chuck-will's-widow, a few Common Nighthawks, and we missed Eastern Whip-poor-will. I hope this family of birds starts doing better in our region. Other misses were Double-crested Cormorant and Eastern Screech-Owl.

For the count week, which is three days before and after count day, we added a few other species including Double-crested Cormorant, Red-headed Woodpecker, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Blue-winged Warbler, Blue-winged Teal, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Swamp Sparrow, and Pine Siskin.

Thanks to all of the participants that helped with the count this year! We would also like to thank Nancy and Lucia for hosting the count dinner.

Nathan Gatto

**Rockingham County** – Count date May 1<sup>st</sup>, 114 species, 2109 individuals, six participants in four parties, 34.25 party-hours. Weather: Clear skies, temperature 55-83°F.

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

Participants: Penny Barham, Brian Bockhahn, David Pennebaker, Martin Wall, Cara Woods, and Tony Woods.

Exclusives: None

Notes: The seventh Rockingham County Spring Bird Count was held on Wednesday May 1, 2019 under clear skies and temperatures from 55-83°F. Six observers in four parties tallied our third highest total with 114 species (average 110) and 2109 birds (average 1808). Totals were led by 112 Red-eyed Vireos, 95 Canada Geese and 85 European Starlings. Additional bird seen during count week included Green Heron, Greater Yellowlegs, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow, Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided and Worm-eating Warblers.

First count records: Two Red-breasted Nuthatches were reported in the Anglin Mill section, a good place for a lingering migrant. Another long awaited first was a Bald Eagle seen along the Mayo River by Avalon Dam.

Second count records: Least Sandpiper from Stoneville section, American Bittern dawn flyover at Mayo River Road, Warbling Vireo at Mayo Mountain access, Horned Lark on Mayo River Road, three Bobolinks in the Dan River/Airport region, and 5 Pine Siskins in the Anglin Mill section.

Misses: Sharp-shinned Hawk (3<sup>rd</sup> miss), Great Horned Owl (3<sup>rd</sup>) and Belted Kingfisher (3<sup>rd</sup> miss).

Many thanks to everyone who volunteered to count!

Brian Bockhahn

**Greensboro** – Count date April 28<sup>th</sup>, 114 species, 5920 individuals, 30 participants, 85.00 party-hours. Weather: A very pleasant day, temperature 45-75°F, light westerly winds, no rain.

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

Participants: Nancy Adamson, Carolyn Allen, Lynn Allison, Frank Cashwell, Sue Cole, Scott DePue, Jim Eldrett, Lynne Gray, Chris Groh, Mary Hankins, Megan Hankins, Elizabeth Link, Henry Link, Clarence Mattocks, Scott Mortenson, Lynn Moseley, Jean

Murdick, Roberta Newton, Lane Oldham, Sandy Post, Wallace Sills, Lou Skrabec, Melanie Stadler, Emily Talbert, Emily Tyler, Ann VanSant, Marty Wall, Ann Walter-Fromson, Matt Wangarin, and Melissa Whitmire.

Exclusives: None

Notes: The Spring Bird Count for Greensboro was held on Saturday, April 28<sup>th</sup>. In a spring with a lot of rain we lucked out on the weather. A total of 114 species were counted with an additional 13 species found during the count week.

Out of the last 35 years, there have been only two other years when we had 114 or fewer species, and only seven years when we had fewer than 120 species. During that same 35-year period there were only seven years when we had fewer individual birds than on this year's count. Our average individual count for that period is 7212.

Notable absences included a number of warbler species including Chestnut-sided, Magnolia and Blackpoll Warblers, found on count week, and others such as Canada and Yellow Warbler, which are usually seen, weren't found at all during the count period. This is only the third time since 1967 that we haven't found Yellow Warbler on the count. Waterfowl were also missing, as they had largely left the area before the count. Among the few species seen were two Gadwall, which we have had on only one other count since 1967.

On the other hand, there were several Red-breasted Nuthatches on count day, something that has only happened on six other counts in the last 35 years.

Many thanks to the counters who gave their time to help continue to gather data for the spring migration.

Elizabeth Link

**Chapel Hill** – count date May 12<sup>th</sup>, 109 species, 6576 individuals, 29 field observers in 15 teams and one feeder watcher, 97.10 party hours. Weather: Low 66°F, high 75°F; wind SW 10-15 mph; cloudy, no rain.

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

Participants: David Anderson, Brian Bockhahn, Norm Budnitz, Jim Capel, Fleeta Chauvigne, Will Cook, Maria de Bruyn, Nan DeWire, Judith Ferster, Kent Fiala, Jill Froning, Susan Gaca, Steve Graves, Gene Kingsley, David Murdock, Candace Owens, Marc Ribaud, Suzanne Roberts, Linda Robinson, Margaret Scott, Roger Shaw, David Smith, Judy Smith, Richard Snow, Andy Sullivan, Shelley Theye, Ginger Travis, and Bruce Young

Exclusives: None

Notes: The Chapel Hill spring count on Sunday, May 12, 2019, recorded a very low 109 species, our lowest in 45 years! The weather was cloudy, which is normally good for a count, but also very windy all day, which may have kept the birds down and made it more difficult for counters to hear singing birds.

This year's species total of 109 is 11 below the 10-year average of 120. This is the lowest since 1974, before the filling of Jordan Lake, when we also had 109 species. The total number of birds, 6576, is well below the average of 7947. Effort on the count was also quite low, with 97.1 party hours (average 121.5). However, the number of birds per party hour, 67.7, is surprisingly close to the average of 65.7. Perhaps the low count was



more related to fewer teams of birders counting, though the wind certainly did not help and prevented boat-accessible areas from being counted.

We found no rare birds on this count, for the first time in many years. Some less common goodies included Great Egret at Sandy Creek Park in Durham (Kent Fiala's team), Sharp-shinned Hawk (Steve Graves's team), Blue-winged Warbler (Jill Froning), Black-throated Green Warbler (Will Cook), Bobolink (Roger Shaw), Baltimore Oriole (Brian Bockhahn), and lingering Pine Siskins (Norm Budnitz's team and Will Cook).

There were no record highs, but we did have "good" numbers of one species: European Starling (232, average 160, highest since 2005).

We had three big misses - Belted Kingfisher (first miss ever in the 63-year history of the count), Blackpoll Warbler (first miss since 2000), and White-throated Sparrow (second miss, first miss was last year). We also set a record low for Wood Thrush, 30 (average is 51), which has been in a steep decline for the past decade. Other lowlights: Hairy Woodpecker (7, average 11, lowest since 1996), Tufted Titmouse (280, average 347, lowest since 1999), Ovenbird (56, average 105, lowest since 1996), Black-and-white Warbler (3, average 20, lowest since 1971), Common Yellowthroat (56, average 100, second lowest since 1969), Northern Parula (68, average 93, lowest since 2000), and Field Sparrow (6, average 12).

Team honors: Brian Bockhahn and Bruce Young both had 79 species in separate areas at Jordan Lake. Roger Shaw, covering the Dairyland Road area, counted the most individual birds, with 645.

We had 29 field counters in 15 parties (average 39 in 19 parties), with 1 feeder watcher. Thanks to all counters for their efforts, despite the less-than-stellar day!  
Charles W. "Will" Cook

**Jordan Lake** – Count date May 5<sup>th</sup>, 117 species, 8472 individuals, 45 participants in 23 parties, 122.35 party-hours. Weather: Mild with temperatures ranging from 66°F in the morning to 75°F in the afternoon. Winds calm to light and variable, sky overcast in the morning and partly cloudy in the afternoon with intermittent scattered showers throughout the day.

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

Participants: Steve Backus, Patsy Bailey, Barbara Beaman, Elizabeth Bishop, Todd Bishop, Brian Bockhahn, Norman Budnitz, Sebastian Burgess, Chris Canfield, Jonathan Cantrell, Jim Capel, Barbara Coffman, Patrick Coin, Will Cook, Mike DeMatties, Joe Donahue, Tom Driscoll, Sam Flake, Loren Hintz, Bo Howes, Allen Hurlbert, Elizabeth Keating, Gene Kingsley, Kerry MacPherson, Jennifer Maher, Frank McKeever, Steve McMurray, Mark Owens, Jill Paul, Rick Payne, Marc Ribauda, Tommy Richey, Kathleen Rogers, Beverly Scalise, Roger Shaw, Josh Southern, Sterling Southern, Jenny Stanley, Pam Timmons, Andy Upshaw, Margaret Vimmerstedt, Catherine Ward, Fleeta Wilkinson, Rouse Wilson, and Joe Zellers.

Exclusives: Hooded Merganser

Notes: Forty-six observers in 23 parties participated (our 10-year averages are 45 observers in 21 parties). We tallied 8472 individual birds (average 8007) and 117 species (average 120) in 122 party hours (average 122).

Although we recorded most of the usual suspects, we did miss several species that we normally expect to see including Green Heron, Bonaparte's Gull, Palm Warbler, Swamp Sparrow, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Bobolink. We found very few waterfowl (ducks) and very few passage migrants (Neotropical migrants that pass through our area, but don't stop to breed here). For example, we had the usual cast of our breeding warblers including Ovenbird, Northern Parula, Yellow-throated Warbler, etc., but no Bay-breasted or Cape May Warblers, and only one Blackpoll Warbler. Even Black-throated Blue Warblers were half the usual number. It's hard to say if there is any significance to that conservation-wise, or whether it was just a matter of timing in that we simply counted on a day when those birds were not on the move through our area. I prefer to think it was the latter, but worry that it might have been the former. We had a similar situation last year.

We did have several new record high counts. We reported:

- 89 Rock Pigeons (our previous high was 71 in 1995)
- 88 Eastern Phoebes (73 in 1993)
- 130 Fish Crows (64 in 2015)
- 299 Chipping Sparrows (282 in 2012)
- 69 Ospreys (ties our previous high count of 69 in 2012)

The Ospreys, of course, are doing well at Jordan Lake. The other species are all ones that generally do well in habitats created by humans.

Our parties did turn up a few species that are unusual on our spring counts:

- Hooded Merganser: one found by Brian Bockhahn
- Ruddy Duck: one found by Norm Budnitz, Allen Hurlbert, and Pam Timmons
- American Bittern: one found by Brian Bockhahn
- Mississippi Kites: one found by Joe Donahue and Bo Howes, and one found by Mark Owens, Andy Upshaw, Rouse Wilson, and Joe Zellers
- Common Raven: one found by Norm Budnitz, Allen Hurlbert, and Pam Timmons (This species may become more regular. It was found near a rock quarry in the Moncure area and has been seen on several recent counts.)
- Pine Siskins: three found by Jennifer Maher and Roger Shaw, four found by Frank McKeever, Kathleen Rogers, and Beverly Scalise

Brian Bockhahn reported 82 species of birds in the Vista Point area, while Will Cook found 75 species in the eastern part of the Harris Lake area.

If you would like to see a spreadsheet of this count and a cumulative spreadsheet of all our counts, please visit the Bird Counts page on the New Hope Audubon website at: <http://www.newhopeaudubon.org/get-outdoors/bird-counts/>  
Norm Budnitz

**Durham** – Count date April 28<sup>th</sup>, 113 species, 2296 individuals, 10 participants in six parties, one feeder watcher, 32.60 party-hours. Weather: Partly cloudy skies, light winds, spotty showers all morning, temperature 54°-75°F.

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

Participants: Patsey Bailey, Brian Bockhahn, Norm Budnitz, Tom Driscoll, Elizabeth Keating, Gene Kingsley, Thomas Krakauer, Marcia Mandel, Roger Shaw, and Deck Stapleton.

Exclusives: None

Notes: The Durham Spring Bird Count was held on Sunday April 28, 2019 under partly cloudy skies, light winds, spotty showers all morning and mild temperatures 54-75. Ten observers in six parties and one at feeder tallied 113 species (average 112) and 2296 total birds (average 3578) led by 143 Northern Cardinal, 109 Double-crested Cormorant and 99 Blue-gray Gnatcatchers.

Highlights were many, including two species not on our checklist, a pair of Cape May Warblers seen and photographed at Flat River, and a single Pine Siskin at a feeder in Croasdaile, way to go Tom!

Not seen in the last ten counts: one Red-breasted Merganser south of Hickory Hill, one Little Blue Heron at Patterson Place Wetland, one Yellow-crowned Night-Heron dawn flyover along Panther Creek, Broad-winged Hawk at Duke Forest, Greater Yellowlegs at Patterson Place Wetland, Chuck-wills-widow on Falls Lake Game Lands.

Other goodies include ten American Bitterns at Flat River and Brickhouse Road, Herring Gull at Hickory Hill, two American Woodcock at Flat River, one Rose-breasted Grosbeak at Hickory Hill and one Baltimore Oriole at Flat River.

Misses: Misses were somewhat disturbing and all first time “A-list” species: Rock Pigeon, Black-throated Green Warbler, American Redstart, Kentucky Warbler, Savannah and Grasshopper Sparrow!

Many thanks to everyone who volunteered to count!

Brian Bockhahn

**Falls Lake** – Count date April 29<sup>th</sup>, 116 species, 3338 individuals, 15 participants in nine parties, 49.95 party-hours. Weather: Cloudy skies, light wind, mild temperature 54-67°F.

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

Participants: Herb Amyx, Pat Amyx, Brian Bockhahn, Norm Budnitz, Sebastian Burgess, Amy Corbally, Edward Landis, Done Pelly, A. Roach, Deborah Robertson, Jeri Smart, Josh Southern, Deck Stapleton, Patty Tice, and M. Walker.

Exclusives: None

Notes: The 16th Falls Lake Spring Bird Count was held on April 29, 2019 under cloudy skies, light wind and mild temperatures ranging from 54-67° F. Fifteen observers in nine parties tallied 116 species (average 113) and 3338 total birds (average 3894). Most numerous birds were again Cliff Swallow at 292, 150 Northern Cardinal and 134 Chipping Sparrow.

First Records: Having a major fallout this season, two parties found Cape May Warbler along the Mountains to Sea Trail (MST) near Yorkshire and at Sandling Beach. A count week Cerulean Warbler was seen during the Blue Jay Point Songbird Festival.

Other Goodies: Our second Merlin at area 18 MST, a flock of five Least Sandpipers

at Sandling Beach, two parties with Veery at Durant Nature Park and the MST in area 18, which also had a single second count record Purple Finch and a Baltimore Oriole! A Chestnut-sided Warbler was seen at the north end of Beaverdam Lake section, and three parties found Pine Siskin.

Misses: Nothing off "A-list" but we missed Great Egret, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Screech and Great Horned Owl, all the goatsuckers, Acadian Flycatcher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Cedar Waxwing.

Many thanks to everyone who volunteered to count!

Brian Bockhahn

**Kerr Lake** – Count date April 30<sup>th</sup>, 118 species, 3767 individuals, 12 participants in seven parties, 50.10 party-hours. Weather: Clear skies, temperatures (52°-84°F).

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

Participants: Jeff Blalock, Brian Bockhahn, Ann Brice, Adam D'Onofrio, Jackie Evrard, Mark Evrard, Paul Glass, Fred Lobdell, Grace McCrowell, Evan Spears, Deck Stapleton, and A. Williford.

Exclusives: Red-throated Loon

Notes: The 16th Kerr Lake Spring Bird Count was held on April 30, 2019 under clear skies and mild temperatures 52-84° F. Twelve observers in seven parties tallied 118 species (average 118) and 3767 birds (average 3875) led by 485 Double-crested Cormorants, 160 Red-eyed Vireos and 159 Chipping Sparrows.

First Records: A lunch-time flyover Mississippi Kite at North Bend was a nice surprise and may be new to the lake checklist.

Other Goodies: The back page was well marked with Red-breasted Merganser at Eagle Point; breeding plumage Red-throated Loon (fourth) and Horned Grebe (fifth) above the dam; Green Heron at Dick Cross; Merlin (fourth) and American Woodcock (fourth) at Eagle Point; Bullocksville and Henderson Point each had a single late Hermit Thrush (third); Eagle Point and Dick Cross each had a single Veery; 18 Bobolinks were near Bullocksville; and three late Pine Siskins were found at Satterwhite.

Misses: Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawk, Caspian Tern, Northern Flicker (first miss), House Wren, Cedar Waxwing, Black-throated Green Warbler and Palm Warbler. Song Sparrow was not among the seven sparrow species we had! We put in 42 hours and 17 miles by foot, eight hours and 90 miles by car and 2.75 hours and three miles owling.

Many thanks to everyone who volunteered to count!

Brian Bockhahn

**Raven Rock State Park** – Count date April 27<sup>th</sup>, 117 species, 3900 individuals, 18 participants in 11 parties, 68.25 party-hours. Weather: Sunny, wind SW 3-12mph, temperature 46-79° F. Count circle center at junction of NC210 and SR 1434.

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

Participants: John Bartlett, Charles Byrd, Peter Cashwell, Lisa Cook, Michael Fisk, Molly Fullwood, Paul Hart, Tom Howard, Prudence Mainor, Tim McGreal, Jeff Mielke,

Richard Mielke, Jeannine Rease, Mitch Rease, Mary Stevens, Sarah Stevens, Erik Thomas, and Amber Williams.

Exclusives: Orange-crowned Warbler

Notes: Our total of 117 species was an improvement over the past three years' counts, although our count of 3900 individuals was the lowest in many years. Our biggest misses were probably Great Horned Owl and Kentucky Warbler, but three other species that have been fairly regular for stretches of years in the past, Eurasian Collared Dove, Anhinga, and Grasshopper Sparrow, also failed to appear. Among the highlights were a Mississippi Kite by Amber Williams and Prudence Mainor, a Baltimore Oriole by Tom Howard and Chuck Byrd, two Swainson's Warblers by Michael Fisk, two Northern Bobwhites by David Brown, and a late Ruddy Duck by Erik Thomas.

Erik R. Thomas

### **Coast**

**Brunswick County** – Count date April 28<sup>th</sup>, 138 species, 6050 individuals, 28 field observers, 47.75 party-hours. Weather: Temperatures ranged from 55 to 79° F with mostly clear to partly cloudy skies; winds from the S to SW at 5-12 mph.

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

Participants: Jamie Adams, Lynn Eria Beegle, Kathleen Bowman, Richard Cooper, Sam Cooper, Gordon Curlew, Deb Dough, Marjorie Foote, George Harrington, Joan Herrett, Laurie Jelinek, Marjorie Jones, Amanda Kiel, Sherry Lane, Pat MacPherson, Cheryl Manger, Mary Lynn Meissner, Robin Myers, Ann Orsillo, Joanne Parker, Jeanne Pavero, Hugh Shaw, Jeri Smart, Charlie Spencer, Dave Weesner, Lori White, and David Wilson.

Exclusives: Clapper Rail, Common Gallinule, American Oystercatcher, Black-bellied Plover, Wilson's Plover, Whimbrel, Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, Sanderling, Dunlin, Western Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Willet, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Least Tern, Common Tern, Forster's Tern, Royal Tern, Sandwich Tern, Black Skimmer, Northern Gannet, Anhinga, Brown Pelican, Snowy Egret, Tricolored Heron, Cattle Egret, Black-crowned Night Heron, White Ibis, Swallow-tailed Kite, Bachman's Sparrow, Boat-tailed Grackle, Painted Bunting

Notes: The 2019 spring count was conducted on 28 April and yielded 138 species and 6050 individuals from the effort of 28 participants. Thanks to the efforts of birders in the St. James area, the count had more participants this year than in the past, but even with more participants there were fewer overall party-hours. Many expected and regularly occurring species were missed, and the results were 20 species less than the previous two years. With more and better coverage the count could certainly yield a much higher species list. Areas covered were primarily in the vicinity of Sunset Beach, Ocean Isle Beach, Oak Island, Southport and St. James area, Governor's Road, EV Henwood, and a portion of the Green Swamp.

Dave Weesner and Sam Cooper

## BRIEFS FOR THE FILES

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(All dates Winter 2019-2020, unless otherwise noted)

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*Briefs for the Files is a seasonal collection of uncommon-to-rare or unusual North and South Carolina bird sightings and events which do not necessarily require a more detailed Field Note or article. Reports of your sightings are due the 20th of the month after the end of the previous season.*

<i>Winter</i>	<i>December 1–February 28</i>	<i>due March 20</i>
<i>Spring</i>	<i>March 1–May 31</i>	<i>due June 20</i>
<i>Summer</i>	<i>June 1–July 31</i>	<i>due August 20</i>
<i>Fall</i>	<i>August 1–November 30</i>	<i>due December 20</i>

*Reports may be submitted in any format, but I prefer that you use email, list multiple sightings in taxonomic order (rather than by date or location), and type your report directly into the body of the email. If your sightings are in a file, please copy-and-paste the text into the body of the email, rather than sending an attachment.*

*Suitable reports for the Briefs include any sightings you feel are unusual, rare, noteworthy, or just plain interesting to you in any way! It is my responsibility to decide which reports merit inclusion in the Briefs.*

*Please be sure to include details of any rare or hard-to-identify birds.*

*I rely in part on sightings reported in Carolinabirds. Please don't, however, rely on me to pick up your sightings from Carolinabirds. Instead, please also send your sightings directly to me as described above.*

*If I feel that your sighting warrants a Field Note, I will contact either you or the appropriate state Field Notes editor. You may, of course, submit your Field Note directly to the editor without going through me.*

Abbreviations: **BRC** – Bird Records Committee, **CBC** – Christmas Bird Count, **et al.** – and others, **Ft** – Fort, **m. obs.** – multiple observers, **Mt** – Mount, **NC** – North Carolina, **NWR** – National Wildlife Refuge, **Rd** – Road, **SC** – South Carolina, **SP** – State Park, **WMA** – Wildlife Management Area, **WTP** – Water Treatment Plant

*All italicized place names are counties.*

**Ross's Goose:** Sightings were made at about a dozen sites across the region. Eight around exit 548 on US-64 in *Washington NC* 18 Dec (Lucas Bobay) was a good count. Several were seen in the Pungo Unit of Pocosin Lake NWR *Hyde* and *Washington NC* intermittently throughout the winter, with a high count of six made 1 Feb (Ed Corey). Individuals around Hendersonville *Henderson NC* 4-15 Dec (Wayne Forsythe, m. obs.), around Owen Park *Buncombe NC* 8-29 Dec (Denise Hargrove, m. obs.), and, possibly the same individual, on Lake Eden *Buncombe NC* 19 Dec through 14 Feb (Steve Yurkovich, m. obs.) were good finds for the mountain region. Individuals photographed on ponds in King *Stokes NC* 5 Dec (Thomas Gray, m. obs.), along Bostick Rd in *Allendale SC* 6 Dec (Cherrie Sneed), and along Buffalo Church Rd in *Cleveland NC* 25 Jan (Bill Hooker) were possible firsts for those counties.

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** Several flocks were seen at sites around Asheville including three at Biltmore Estate *Buncombe NC* 8-21 Dec (Denise Hargrove, m. obs.), nine at Owen Park *Buncombe NC* 22 Jan through 11 Feb (Alan Lenk, m. obs.), and up to 24 at the Mills River WTP *Henderson NC* 25-28 Jan (m. obs.). Individuals around Mid-Pines Rd in *Wake NC* 26 Nov through 15 Feb (Ray Kimsey, m. obs.), in western Winston Salem *Forsyth NC* 3 Feb through 1 Mar (John Haire, m. obs.), and at Pinewood Lake Park *Richland SC* 8-11 Feb (m. obs.) were locally unusual.

**Brant:** One at Lake Lynn *Wake NC* 6-8 Dec (Erla Beegle, m. obs.) was very unusual for an inland site. Pending review by the SC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent Brant at Yawkey Wildlife Center *Georgetown SC* 19 Dec (Chris Hill, et al.). 20 at the southern end of the Core Sound near Morgan Island *Carteret NC* 17 Feb (Trevor Sleight) was a notable count for that area.



*Cackling Goose with Canada Geese,  
11 Feb 2020, Haywood Co, NC.  
Photo by Jay Wherley*

**Cackling Goose:** Up to twenty were reported along US-64 just east of Creswell, near the border of *Tyrrell* and *Washington NC*, 25 Jan through 27 Feb (m. obs.). Individuals at Old Kernersville Lake Park *Forsyth NC* 9 Jan into spring (Nathaniel Watkins, m. obs.) and on Lake Junaluska *Haywood NC* 11 Jan (Stan & Connie Wulkowicz, Bob Olthoff, Paul Super, m. obs.) were locally

unusual. Pending review by the SC BRC is the report of four at the south end of Lake Robinson *Greenville SC* 19 Dec (Michael Robertson, Gary Harbour).

**Trumpeter Swan:** One was heard calling and then photographed in the Pungo Unit of Pocosin Lakes NWR *Hyde* and *Washington* NC 1 Jan (Martina Nordstrand, Baxter Beamer) and again heard calling there 3 Jan (Erla Beegle, et al.), 6 Jan (Nordstrand, Beamer), 19 Jan (Angie Davis, et al.), and 27 Feb (Steven Howell).

**Tundra Swan:** Four photographed in a field along Jane Shaw Rd in *Scotland* NC 17 Nov 2019 (Whit Newton) and 120 seen in eastern *Bladen* NC 30 Jan (Ben Nickley, Alexander Worm) were possible firsts for those counties.

**Tundra Swan (Bewick's Swan):** A Eurasian race bird was seen among Tundra Swans in a field along NC-42 just southeast of *Conetoe Edgecombe* NC 23 Feb (Wayne Hoffman) was almost certainly the same individual seen at that site 2-8 February 2019.



*Tundra Swan considered to be of the Bewick's Race. This race nests in the Western Palearctic. 6 Feb 2019, Edgecombe Co, NC. Photo by Michael Cheves*

**Cinnamon Teal:** From the Winter 2019-2020 period, a drake was photographed on a pond in *Salter Path Carteret* NC 15 Jan (Michelle Mulchi). The drake first seen at *Santee Coastal Reserve Charleston* SC 9 Nov remained through 9 Jan (Michael Adams). Another drake was seen along *Bennetts Point Rd in Colleton* SC 19 Jan (Jean Cook Potter, et al.).

**Eurasian Wigeon:** Two were seen at *Mattamuskeet NWR Hyde* NC 6 Dec (Fleeta Chauvigne, et al.) and 18 Jan (David Anderson, et al.). Individual drakes were seen on *North Pond Pea Island NWR Dare* NC from fall through 17 Feb (m. obs.), on *Pungo Lake Hyde* NC 27 Dec (Ed Corey, Nathan Tarr), at *Bear Island WMA Colleton* SC 29 Dec (Russell & Lacy Johnson), and at *Donnelley WMA Colleton* SC 5 Feb (Peggy Blair) and 9 Feb (m. obs.).

**Green-winged Teal:** 33,678 at *Mattamuskeet NWR Hyde* NC during its CBC 29 Dec (*fide* Susan Campbell) was an amazing total.

**Green-winged Teal (Common Teal):** A Eurasian race Green-winged Teal was seen by many on *North Pond Pea Island NWR Dare* NC 2 Jan (Martina Nordstrand, Baxter Beamer) into early March.

**King Eider:** Two hens were seen off *Jennette's Pier Dare* NC 7 Jan (Baxter Beamer, Martina Nordstrand, m. obs.) and 28 Jan through 10 Feb (m. obs.).

**Common Eider:** Eiders didn't venture as far down the coast as they did last winter. Sightings made in NC included a hen off the *Oregon Inlet Fishing Center Dare* 29 Nov



(Alan MacEachren), a first-winter drake off Coquina Beach *Dare* 8 Dec (Sheila Bremer, m. obs.), up to two at Masonboro Inlet *New Hanover* 9 Dec through 27 Feb (Howard Ferguson, m. obs.), a hen at the Cedar Island Ferry Terminal *Carteret* 1 Jan (Bob Powell), a first-winter drake at the Cedar Island Ferry Terminal 25 Jan and 2 Feb (Steven Howell, m. obs.), and up to four off Jennette's Pier *Dare* throughout the period (m. obs.). One at Murrells Inlet *Georgetown* SC 30 Nov through 12 Dec (Pam Ford, Craig Watson, m. obs.) and 13-16 Jan (Ritch Lilly, m. obs.) was the only sighting made in SC.

**Harlequin Duck:** Pending review by the SC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent drake Harlequin Duck at Murrells Inlet *Georgetown* SC 4-18 Dec (Steve Rhodes, m. obs.).



*Surf Scoters,  
8 Dec 2019,  
Haywood Co, NC.  
Photo by Jay  
Wherley*

**Surf Scoter:** 20 on Falls Lake *Durham* NC 19 Dec (Kyle Kittelberger) was an amazing count for an inland site. Six, including an adult drake, on Beaver Lake *Buncombe* NC

8 Dec (Jay Wherley, m. obs.) was a notable count for the mountain region. Individuals at Cane Creek Park *Union* NC 19 Dec (Martina Nordstrand, et al.) and at Bishopville WTP *Lee* SC 29 Feb through 9 Mar (Mac Williams, m. obs.) were also good finds inland.

**White-winged Scoter:** Individuals on Lake Hickory *Alexander* NC 8-11 Dec (Dwayne Martin) and on Kings Mountain Reservoir *Cleveland* NC 20 Dec (Kade Lockhart) and 21 Dec (Marbry Hopkins) were good finds for those inland sites.

**Black Scoter:** 1750 in northbound flocks off Oceanana Pier *Carteret* NC 1 Dec (John Fussell) was an impressive count. Two hens on Lake Townsend *Guilford* NC 11 Dec (Ian Davies, m. obs.) were unusual for an inland lake.

**Long-tailed Duck:** Five, two drakes and three hens, on Lake Townsend *Guilford* NC 7-8 Dec (Henry Link, et al.) and one on Belews Lake *Rockingham* NC 19 Dec (Marty Wall) were notable for the Piedmont. Two hens on Seabrook Island *Charleston* SC 1 Dec (Aija Konrad, et al.) with one continuing there through 15 Dec (m. obs.) was the southernmost sighting made along the coast.

**Common Merganser:** 840 on the north side of Lake Phelps *Washington* NC 1 Feb (Ed Corey) was a notable count for this traditional wintering site for the species.

**Red-breasted Merganser:** 739 on Lake Phelps *Washington* NC during the Pettigrew SP CBC 27 Dec (*vide* Ed Corey) was an unusually high count for that lake.

**Wild Turkey:** A count of 133 in a field along NC-101 near Harlowe *Carteret* NC 10 Feb (Peggy Blair) was indicative of how common the species has become in that area.

**Red-necked Grebe:** Individuals were seen on Lake Randleman *Randolph* NC 5 Feb (Andrew Thornton) and on Lake Townsend *Guilford* NC 14-16 Feb (Matt Wangerin, m. obs.).

**Eared Grebe:** Individuals were seen at the Savannah Spoil Site (restricted access) *Jasper* SC 14 Nov, 27 Nov, and 16 Dec (Robin Armetta, Steve Calver), off Bulls Island Cape Romain NWR *Charleston* SC 17 Dec (David McLean, et al.), and off the beach just west of Cape Point *Dare* NC 19 Feb (Megan Baker, Michael Gosselin).

**Western Grebe:** Individuals were seen off Bulls Island Cape Romain NWR *Charleston* SC, where photographed, during the Charleston CBC 5 Jan (Starr Hazard, David McLean) and off Jennette's Pier *Dare* NC 22 Feb (Robert Meehan, m. obs.).

**White-winged Dove:** Individuals were photographed along the entrance road to the Bodie Island Lighthouse *Dare* NC 6 Dec (David & Susan Disher), at a feeder just south of Wilmington *New Hanover* NC 12 Dec (Wanda King), and on Sullivan's Island *Charleston* SC 14-16 Dec (Elizabeth Anderegg).

**Mourning Dove:** 2000 in agricultural fields around the Greenville WTP *Pitt* NC 4 Jan (Howard Vainright, et al.) was a remarkable count.

**Chuck-will's-widow:** One seen at the Frisco Campground *Dare* NC during the Cape Hatteras CBC 27 Dec (John Fussell) was a good find for winter.

**Swift sp.:** Pending review by the SC BRC is the report with photograph of an apparent swift species found in Columbia *Richland* SC 4 Feb (Christina Partin-Jones). Theoretically, a Vaux's Swift would be just as likely as a Chimney Swift in winter.

**Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** Unusual far from the coast in winter was a female visiting a feeder in West Columbia *Lexington* SC throughout the period (Allison Smith), a female in Durham visiting a feeder in Durham *Durham* NC throughout the period (*vide* Susan Campbell), a second-year male visiting a feeder in southern *Mecklenburg* NC 29 Dec through 12 Jan (Natasha Goins) and banded 9 Jan (Susan Campbell), and a first-year male visiting a feeder in northwestern *Union* NC and banded 9 Jan (Campbell). 18+ visiting feeders in a yard in Buxton *Dare* NC throughout the winter (Ann Maddock) was a notable concentration.

**Rufous Hummingbird:** Visiting feeders this winter was an adult female returning to a yard in Mars Hill *Madison* NC 13 Nov and remaining into winter (Lisa Sears), an adult male in northwestern *Henderson* NC 8 Dec through 19 Jan (Vicky Burke, m. obs.), an adult female in Charlotte *Mecklenburg* NC 19 Dec into January (Carl King) banded 9 Jan (Susan Campbell), a second-year male in southern *Mecklenburg* NC banded 9 Jan (Campbell, Natasha Goins), a second-year female in western *Wake* NC in late January and February (Kerry & Trish MacPherson) banded 25 Jan (Campbell), and a male near Forest Lake *Florence* SC 8-22 Feb (Janet Elvington).

**Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird:** Birds not identified to species, though most likely Rufous Hummingbirds, visited feeders in Silk Hope *Chatham* NC mid-November into winter (Ursel Staudinger), in *Charleston* SC throughout the winter (Russell & Lacy Johnson), in southern *Buncombe* NC 3 Dec (Vicky Burke), in southern *Mecklenburg* NC in mid-December (Deborah Roy), and in West Columbia *Lexington* SC mid-February into March (*vide* Jerry Griggs).

**Yellow Rail:** Three were reported in *Dare* NC during the Bodie-Pea Islands CBC 28 Dec—two flushed at the north end of Pea Island NWR (Guy McGrane) and another heard responding to playback (*vide* Al Hooks).

**King Rail:** One heard calling along the American Tobacco Trail in New Hill *Wake* NC 19 Jan into spring (Eddie Owens, m. obs.) was unusual for the Piedmont in winter.

**Virginia Rail:** One seen and heard along Howerton Rd in *Guilford* NC 11 Dec into March (Jeffrey Greco, m. obs.) was a possible first for that county.

**Sora:** One seen at Renaissance Park *Mecklenburg* NC during the Charlotte CBC 28 Dec (Greg Hays, Taylor Piephoff) was a good find for the Piedmont in winter. 17 in the Williston Creek impoundment at North River Preserve *Carteret* NC 5 Jan (John Fussell, et al.) was a notable concentration.

**Purple Gallinule:** A juvenile bird seen and photographed at Donnelley WMA *Colleton* SC 1 Jan (Pam Ford, Craig Watson) 19 Jan (Elizabeth & Jonathan Anderegg) was unusual for the Carolinas in mid-winter.

**Limpkin:** Sightings included two continuing at the north end of Goose Creek Reservoir *Berkeley* SC throughout the winter (m. obs.), one at Hidden Cypress Golf Club *Beaufort* SC 28 Dec through 3 Feb (Steven Guy, m. obs.), one at Lake Hickory *Catawba* NC 5 Feb (Nathan Morin), and one on the Yadkin River near High Rock Lake *Rowan* NC 8 Feb (Rena Long). The reports from NC are pending review by the NC BRC.

**Sandhill Crane:** Some of the higher counts this winter were 39 in a field along NC-33 just east of Whitakers *Edgecombe* NC 1-23 Dec (Ann Brice, m. obs.), 82 in the Bluff Unit of Santee NWR *Clarendon* SC during the Santee NWR CBC 21 Dec (Brad Dalton, Roger Smith), 16 along NC-33 just south of Bethel *Pitt* NC 15 Jan (Mark Alt), 19 in southern *Halifax* NC 18 Jan (Howard Vainright), and 38 at Dobbins Farm *Anderson* SC

12 Feb (Imitaz Haque). A small flock was seen in the Pungo Unit of Pocosin Lake NWR *Hyde* and *Washington* NC throughout the period, starting with four on 30 Nov (Ricky Davis), growing to seven 27 Dec (Ed Corey, Nathan Tarr), and then eight 9 Feb (David Schroder). The pair that have wintered around the airport in Beaufort *Carteret* NC in recent years returned 27 Nov (John Fussell), were joined by a third bird 14 Dec (Marty Wall) through 29 Feb (Dawn & Sean Leahy), and remained through 12 Mar (Fussell).

**Piping Plover:** 40 in *Beaufort* SC during the Lowcountry CBC 14 Dec (*vide* Buddy Campbell) was a record number for that count

**Wilson's Plover:** 36 in *Beaufort* SC during the Lowcountry CBC 14 Dec (*vide* Buddy Campbell) was a great count for SC in winter, while six on East Shackleford Banks *Carteret* NC 26 Jan (Jamie Adams) was great count for NC in winter.

**Long-billed Curlew:** Individuals were seen at the mouth of Big Bay Creek in Edisto Beach *Charleston* SC 26 Jan (Matt Johnson) and 8 Feb (Elizabeth & Jonathan Anderegg) and at East Shackleford Banks *Carteret* NC 9 Feb (John Fussell, et al.) and 2 Mar (Steven Howell).

**Bar-tailed Godwit:** The individual that has wintered on East Shackleford Banks *Carteret* NC since Fall 2016 was seen 24 Jan (Steven Howell) and 11 Mar (Dave Fischer).

**Ruddy Turnstone:** 468 on Hilton Head Island *Beaufort* SC during its CBC 16 Dec (*vide* Susan Murphy) was the highest count made on any Audubon CBC this year.

**Least Sandpiper:** 58 at the McAlpine WTP *Mecklenburg* NC during the Charlotte CBC 28 Dec (Baxter Beamer, et al.) was a good count for the Piedmont.

**Spotted Sandpiper:** Late for sites in the Piedmont were two at Falls Lake *Durham* NC 15 Dec (Brian Bockhahn), one at a pond in *Cleveland* NC 13 Dec (Bill Hooker), one at McAlpine WTP *Mecklenburg* NC 28 Dec (Baxter Beamer, et al.), and one in Columbia *Richland* SC 21 Dec intermittently through 14 Feb (Tre Bray, m. obs.). Individuals just below the dam on High Rock Lake *Rowan* NC 27 Feb (Jeff Souther) and at Dobbins Farm *Anderson* SC 29 Feb (Todd Arcos) may have been early spring migrants.

**Red Phalarope:** One on Harris Lake *Wake* NC 2 Jan (Duncan Fraser) and 3 Jan (Eddie Owens) was very unusual for an inland site and the first ever reported at an inland site in January.

**Wilson's Phalarope:** One seen on a pond in the River Dunes subdivision in *Pamlico* NC 7 Dec (Al Gamache) was extremely late.

**Great Skua:** Individuals were seen on pelagic trips out of Hatteras *Dare* NC 16 Feb, 17 Feb & 23 Feb (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).

**Dovekie:** This small alcid was well-seen on pelagic trips out of Hatteras *Dare* NC in mid-February, with 272 seen 16 Feb and an astounding count of 731 seen on 17 Feb (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.). Also, one or two were seen off Jeannette's Pier *Dare* NC 31 Jan through 22 Feb (m. obs.).

**Common Murre:** On pelagic trips out of Hatteras *Dare* NC, two were seen 16 Feb and four were seen 23 Feb (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).

**Razorbill:** Razorbills began moving down the Outer Banks in good numbers in late January, with numbers peaking in mid-February. Counts from Jennette's Pier *Dare* NC

included 265 on 31 Jan (Ed Corey), 1000 on 16 Feb (David Fischer), 680 on 18 Feb (Bob Butler, Michael Plauché), and 375 on 23 Feb (Ricky Davis). Good counts were also made on pelagic trips out of Hatteras *Dare* NC in mid-to-late February, with 729 seen 16 Feb, 230 seen 17 Feb, and 408 seen 23 Feb (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.). Only a few sightings were made south of *Dare* this winter, including 203 off North Topsail Beach Fishing Pier *Onslow* NC 30 Jan (Caleb Stand) and 64 off Johnnie Mercer's Pier *New Hanover* NC 6 Feb (Jamie Adams).

**Black Guillemot:** Two reports were made this winter, both pending review by the respective state BRCs—one photographed along the jetty at Murrells Inlet *Georgetown* SC during a Carolina Bird Club field trip 18 Jan (m. obs.) and the other seen off Jeannette's Pier *Dare* NC 9 Feb (Bruce Young, Ricky Davis, m. obs.).

**Atlantic Puffin:** One was collected by a wildlife rehabilitator after being found ashore away from the ocean in Buxton *Dare* NC in early January (*vide* Brian Patteson). An amazing count of 91 was made on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras *Dare* NC 16 Feb (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.), providing a new record high count for NC. Interestingly, only three were seen on a pelagic trip the following day, 17 Feb, possibly due to rough seas. 13 were seen on a pelagic trip 23 Feb (Patteson, Sutherland, et al.).

**Black-legged Kittiwake:** A first-winter bird was photographed on the beach in Kitty Hawk *Dare* NC 3 Dec (Jim Gould).

**Black-headed Gull:** Four were reported this winter—an adult at Mason Inlet *New Hanover* NC 8 Dec (Roger Shaw) intermittently through 9 Feb (Jamie Adams), a first-winter bird at Carolina Beach Lake *New Hanover* NC 28 Dec (Wayne Hoffman) through 1 Mar (m. obs.), a first-winter bird photographed at Cape Point *Dare* NC 8 Jan (Megan Baker, Michael Gosselin), and a first-winter bird off Johnnie Mercer's Pier *New Hanover* NC 29 Jan (Adams)

**Little Gull:** Sightings, all made in February in *Dare* NC, included two adults off Jennette's Pier 9 Feb (Ricky Davis), two adults on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras 16 Feb (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.), and an adult photographed in Hatteras village 21 Feb (Sutherland).

**Iceland Gull:** About a dozen were reported this winter. Along the NC coast, immature individuals were seen on the beach in Nags Head *Dare* 5 Dec (David & Susan Disher), off Holden Beach *Brunswick* 27 Dec (Maria Smith, David Weber), off Pea Island NWR *Dare* 19 Jan (Rick Payne, m. obs.), at Ft Fisher *New Hanover* 6 Feb (Ann Stinely, m. obs.) and on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras *Dare* 17 Feb (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.). An adult bird was seen off Jennette's Pier *Dare* NC 25 Jan (Michael Plauché, Noah Reid). At Cape Point *Dare* NC, after a first-winter bird was first seen 1 Jan (Nathan & Sarah Gatto), three immature birds were seen 31 Jan (Kate Sutherland) and 4 Feb (Megan Baker, Michael Gosselin), and up to two continued 9 Feb (Ricky Davis) into March (m. obs.). One seen at the South Wake County Landfill *Wake* NC 24 Jan (Brian Bockhahn, et al.) may have been the same individual seen at nearby Jordan Lake

*Chatham* NC 12 Dec through 10 Jan (Jonathan Cantrell, m. obs.). A first-winter bird at the Horry County Landfill *Horry* SC 17 Dec through 28 Jan (Chris Hill, m. obs.) was the only report from SC.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** 424 at Buckhorn Reservoir *Wilson* NC 2 Feb (Ricky Davis) was a truly amazing count for a site away from the coast. 24 on Lake Townsend *Guilford*



*Lesser Black-backed Gull with Ring-billed Gulls, 11 Feb 2020, Catawba Co, NC.  
Photo by Dwayne Martin*

NC 30 Jan (Henry Link, et al.) was a notable count for the Triad area. County firsts included three in a field near Clarkton *Bladen* NC 30 Dec (Amy Padgett), seven at the Rockingham County Landfill *Rockingham* NC 30 Jan (Marty Wall), three on Lake Randleman *Randolph* NC 5 Feb (Andrew Thornton), and eight at the Alamance County Landfill *Alamance* NC 12 Feb (David

Pennebaker). Farthest inland this winter was a first-winter bird on Lake Hickory *Alexander* and *Catawba* NC 11-25 Feb (Dwayne Martin, Lori Owenby, m. obs.).

**Glaucous Gull:** Sightings, all made in NC, included an immature at Pea Island NWR *Dare* 11 Jan (Jamie Adams, Jeff Lewis), an immature on Ocracoke Island *Hyde* during its CBC 29 Dec (Hal Broadfoot), an immature at Cape Point *Dare* 3 Jan (Baxter Beamer, Martina Nordstrand) intermittently into March (m. obs.), two immatures at Cape Point 31

Jan (Kate Sutherland), and a third-winter bird on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras *Dare* 16 Feb and 17 Feb (Brian Patteson, Sutherland, et al.).

**Great Black-backed Gull:** Three seen in central *Dorchester* SC during the Four Holes Swamp CBC 16 Dec (Dave Eslinger, David McLean) were a first for that count and possibly also that county.

**Caspian Tern:** One at Pea Island NWR *Dare* NC 3-31 Jan (Baxter Beamer, Martina Nordstrand, m. obs.) was unusual for a site so far north in mid-winter.

**Royal Tern:** One photographed on Lake Marion at Santee SP *Orangeburg* SC during the Santee NWR CBC 21 Dec (Irvin Pitts) was unusual for a site away from the coast.

**Red-throated Loon:** One on Roanoke Rapids Lake *Halifax* NC 24 Feb (Merrill Lynch) was a good find for an inland lake.

**Pacific Loon:** One was seen on Kerr Lake *Vance* NC during its CBC 2 Jan (Ann Brice, Fred Lobdell). After one was photographed off Johnnie Mercer's Pier *New Hanover* NC 2 Feb (Jamie Adams), two were photographed together there 11 Feb (Adams). Pending review by the SC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent Pacific Loon on Lake Jocassee at Devil's Fork SP *Oconee* SC 28 Feb (Jay Mager, Nina Schoch, et al.).

**Northern Fulmar:** One seen on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras *Dare* NC 16 Feb (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.) was the only one reported this winter.

**Manx Shearwater:** There was a noticeable movement along the Outer Banks 28 Jan through 23 Feb, with the highest counts being 17 off Coquina Beach *Dare* NC 29 Jan (Megan Baker, Michael Gosselin) and 20 off Jennette's Pier *Dare* NC 7 Feb (Ed Corey, et al.).

**Wood Stork:** Sightings were made at sites farther north in NC than is typical in winter, in January and February though strangely not in December, including two at Lake Auman *Moore* in early January (*fide* Susan Campbell), five photographed in flight over Alligator River NWR *Dare* 7 Jan (Michael Gosselin, et al.), one in Pine Knoll Shores *Carteret* 9 Jan (John Fussell), one in New Bern *Craven* 19 Jan through 3 Feb (Michael Cheves, m. obs.), one in Nags Head *Dare* 25 Jan through 6 Feb (m. obs.), two in Sneads Ferry *Onslow* 30 Jan and 10 Feb (Gilbert Grant), one in Emerald Isle *Carteret* 1 Feb (Kathleen Johnston), and one along Ware Creek *Carteret* 18 Feb (Bill Kirby-Smith). A second-year individual photographed along a small creek near the Little Tennessee River in *Macon* NC 15 Jan (Barbara McRae) was totally unprecedented for the mountain region in winter.

**Northern Gannet:** 1000 off the south end of Litchfield Beach *Georgetown* SC during a Carolina Bird Club field trip 17 Jan (Brad Dalton, et al.) was a notable count for SC. 150 at the Cedar Island Ferry Terminal *Carteret* NC 8 Jan (Amy Padgett) was a notable count for a site away from the ocean.

**Great Cormorant:** The individual found just below the dam on Lake Thurmond *McCormick* SC 15 Nov (Milton Hobbs) was seen throughout the winter (m. obs.). This species was well-reported at two sites on the NC coast—at Beaufort Inlet *Carteret* where up to five were seen 15 Dec into March (m. obs.) and at Masonboro Inlet *New Hanover* where up to six were seen 16 Nov into March (Sam Cooper, m. obs.).

**Anhinga:** One photographed just below Tuckertown Dam *Montgomery* and *Stanly* NC 19-20 Jan and 2 Feb (Allen Wolford) was the inland-most sighting made this winter.

**American White Pelican:** Sightings made outside of the coastal plain included one at Chris Taylor Memorial Park *Anderson* SC 11 Dec (Steve Patterson, m. obs.), one on Jordan Lake *Chatham* NC 10-11 Jan (Matt Spangler, m. obs.), and seven on Jordan Lake 10 Feb (Vern Bothwell, Don Pelly). The annual late winter congregation just below High Rock Dam *Davidson* and *Rowan* NC began with six on 19 Jan (Allen Wolford), grew to 61 by 21 Feb (Steve Coggin), and peaked at 96 on 3 Mar (Steven Fasciana).

**Reddish Egret:** One lingered on Bulls Island Cape Romain NWR *Charleston* SC through 30 Jan (David McLean).

**Green Heron:** A moribund bird found along NC-12 a mile south of Whalebone Junction *Dare* NC (Jeff Beane, Ed Corey, et al.) was unusual for a site so far north in winter. One photographed at Camp T.N. Spencer Park *Cabarrus* NC 27 Dec (David Hebert) was unusual for a site so far from the coast in winter.

**Black-crowned Night-Heron:** An adult photographed at Beaver Lake *Buncombe* NC 18-19 Dec (Tom Bush, Jay Wherley, m. obs.) was extremely unusual for a site in the mountain region during the winter.

**White Ibis:** A juvenile at Lake Conestee Nature Preserve *Greenville* SC 2-7 Dec (JoAnne Keasler, m. obs.) was very unusual for a site in the Piedmont during the winter.

**Golden Eagle:** Sightings included an immature photographed by a trail camera in *Stokes* NC 2 Dec (*vide* Ed Corey), an adult in flight over northern *Watauga* NC 16 Dec (Merrill Lynch), an adult at Alligator River NWR *Dare* NC 16 Dec (Kevin O’Kane) intermittently through 2 Feb (Stacy Barbour, Jeff Blalock), an adult in the Lake Landing area of Mattamuskeet NWR *Hyde* NC during its CBC 29 Dec (Steve Shultz), an adult at the Savannah River Site *Barnwell* SC 14 Jan (Matt Malin), and an adult photographed in the Pungo Unit of Pocosin Lakes NWR *Hyde* and *Washington* NC in late January (Mike Dunn).

**Snail Kite:** Already accepted by the NC BRC was the report with photographs of a juvenile bird in flight a few miles north of Oregon Inlet *Dare* NC 4 Dec (Chance Hines). The report provided NC with its second record, the first being a moribund bird found in *Columbus* NC in Apr 2009.



**Rough-legged Hawk:** One was seen throughout much of the winter at Alligator River NWR *Dare* NC, 7 Dec through 23 Feb (m. obs.).

**Long-eared Owl:** Pending review by the SC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent Long-eared Owl perched on a signpost on the beach at Huntington Beach SP *Georgetown* SC 3 Dec (Ashley Miller, Mike Walker). If accepted, the report would provide SC with its first official record in five years.

**Northern Saw-whet Owl:** One was heard calling along the entrance road to the Bodie Island Lighthouse *Dare* NC 9 Feb into early March (Allen Bryan, m. obs.).

**Ash-throated Flycatcher:** This species was extremely well-reported this winter. Individuals were seen on the south side of Oregon Inlet *Dare* NC 7 Dec (Jonathan Cooley, m. obs.) through 29 Dec (Trevor Sleight), on private land in *Calhoun* SC during the Congaree Swamp CBC 15 Dec (Carl Miller, et al.), along Swindell Rd in *Beaufort*



*Ash-throated Flycatcher,*  
11 Jan 2020, Carteret Co, NC.  
Photo by Rich Boyd

NC 18 Dec (Kevin O’Kane), at Yawkey Wildlife Center *Georgetown* SC during the Winyah Bay CBC 19 Dec (John Hutchens, Felicia Sanders), along the Moccasin Trail at Pettigrew SP *Washington* NC during its CBC 27 Dec (Randy Basnett, Brian Bockhahn), on Hilton Head Island *Beaufort* SC 23 Dec (William Wise), on private land in *Sampson* NC 1 Jan (Sharon Funderburk), at North River Preserve *Carteret*

NC 11 Jan (Rich & Susan Boyd) through 2 Feb (John Fussell, et al.), near the 1921 Monument at Ft Fisher *New Hanover* NC 15 Jan (Jamie

Adams), at Alligator River NWR *Dare* NC 20 Jan (Joe Donahue, et al.) through 2 Mar (Karen Lebing), in the Cox Ferry Recreation Area at Waccamaw NWR *Horry* SC 26 Jan (Steve Coggin, et al.), presumably the same individual at the Grand Strand WTP along Jackson Bluff Rd in *Horry* SC, 27 Jan (Chris Hill) through 15 Feb (Ritch Lilly), at Watermark Lake in Mt Pleasant *Charleston* SC 23 Jan (Starr Hazard) through 7 Mar (Brad Sale), at Sea Pines Forest Preserve on Hilton Head Island, presumably the same bird first seen on the island 23 Dec, 30 Jan (Mary Alice Tartler) through 9 Mar (Steven Guy), and along Alder Branch Rd in *Camden* NC 9 Feb (Elisa & Nick Flanders). By early February it became evident that there were actually two Ash-throated Flycatchers at Alligator River NWR, as individuals were seen at sites over two miles apart on 3 Feb

(Jim Gould). One wonders how long both individuals were present at the refuge. As this species is still on the review list in SC, all reports from that state are pending review by its BRC.

**Western Kingbird:** One seen and photographed along Tuttle Rd in *Stokes* NC 27-31 Dec (Tony & Cara Woods, m. obs.) was very unusual for the Piedmont region. In the coastal plain, where the species is more expected, individuals were photographed perched on powerlines in *Washington* NC 15 Dec (Steve Shultz, et al.) and in *Wanchese Dare* NC during the Bodie/Pea Island CBC 28 Dec (Brian Bockhahn, Kyle Kittelberger).

**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher:** One seen and photographed along Jenkins Farm Rd on Johns Island *Charleston* SC 19 Jan (Pam Ford, Aaron Given, m. obs.) was extremely unusual for the winter period.

**Common Raven:** Near the southeast limit of the species' range were two in flight over NC-109 in northwestern *Richmond* NC 10 Jan (David Williams) and two around where US-1 crosses the Deep River *Chatham* and *Lee* NC intermittently throughout the winter (Jimmy Randolph).

**Northern Rough-winged Swallow:** One photographed at Ecusta Pond *Transylvania* NC 11 Dec (Michael Plauché, et al.) was quite late to depart.

**Sedge Wren:** One photographed at Ninety Six National Historic Site *Greenwood* SC 28 Dec and 4 Jan (Chris Contakos) was a good find for the Piedmont in winter.

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:** One at Mills River Park *Henderson* NC 31 Dec (John Campbell) was unusual for the mountain region in winter.

**Pine Siskin:** 160+ on Roan Mountain *Mitchell* NC 2 Jan (Rick Knight) was a notable count outside a major irruption year.

**Lapland Longspur:** Individuals were seen or heard along Mid-Pines Rd in *Wake* NC 6 Dec (Cathy Sue Harvey) and 25-31 Dec (Harry LeGrand, m. obs.) and along Hooper Lane in *Henderson* NC 4 Jan (Mike Resch) and 10 Feb (Kevin Burke).

**Snow Bunting:** One was seen in the parking lot at Coquina Beach *Dare* NC 5-8 Dec (David & Susan Disher, m. obs.). Up to two were seen on the south side of Murrells Inlet *Georgetown* SC 9-21 Dec (Linda Montgomery, m. obs.). 12 at Currituck NWR *Currituck* NC 17 Dec (Jonathan Cooley) was a notable count.

**Grasshopper Sparrow:** One photographed along Piedmont Dairy Rd in *Spartanburg* SC 1 Feb (Michael Robertson) was a good find for the Piedmont in winter.

**Lark Sparrow:** Up to six visited a yard with feeders along Alder Branch Rd in *Camden* NC throughout the winter (James Harrison). Two were seen at Pee Dee NWR *Anson* NC

during its CBC 4 Jan (Judy Walker, et al.). Individuals were seen in northeastern *New Hanover* NC 15 Dec (Derb Carter) through 22 Feb (Sam Cooper), at Veterans Park just south of Wilmington *New Hanover* NC 4 Jan (Jamie Adams), and at Ezell Farm Community Park *Mecklenburg* NC 11 Jan (Taylor Piephoff, et al.) through 17 Mar (Matt Janson).

**Savannah Sparrow (Ipswich Sparrow):** Nine in a flock on the beach at Ft Macon SP *Carteret* NC 16 Feb (Harry LeGrand, Will Cook) and twelve in a flock there 26 Feb (Marty Wall) were a notable concentration of this subspecies of Savannah Sparrow.

**Clay-colored Sparrow:** This species was reported at six sites in the NC coastal plain this winter, with one along Leggett Rd in *Edgecombe* NC 12 Jan (Ricky Davis) through 19 Jan (David Williams) being the farthest from the coast.

**LeConte's Sparrow:** One was photographed on a private farm in *Nash* NC during the Rocky Mount CBC 20 Dec (Ann Brice, et al.). One photographed just outside Brevard *Transylvania* NC 14 Feb (Bob Butler, Michael Plauché) was especially unusual for the mountain region.

**Henslow's Sparrow:** One seen and photographed at Latta Plantation Nature Preserve *Mecklenburg* NC 29 Feb (Chris Bolling, Patty Masten, et al.) and 1 Mar (m. obs.) was very unusual for a site in the Piedmont.

**Lincoln's Sparrow:** Two in northern *Dorchester* SC during the Four Holes Swamp CBC 16 Dec (Matt Johnson, Kristen Oliver, Jake Zadik) was this winter's high count. One photographed at Leicester Patch *Buncombe* NC 26 Dec (Doug Johnston) was unusual for the mountain region in winter.

**Yellow-breasted Chat:** Chats were found at ten sites in the NC coastal plain this winter, with one visiting a suet feeder in Greenville *Pitt* 9 Feb (John Daughtry) being the farthest inland.

**Yellow-headed Blackbird:** An adult male photographed at a feeder in Morrisville *Wake* NC 31 Jan (Myra Murphy) was the only one reported this winter.

**Bobolink:** One seen in *Gaston* NC during the Gastonia CBC 14 Dec (Taylor Piephoff) was extremely late. In fact, this Bobolink was only the third ever found in the Carolinas during the winter.

**Orchard Oriole:** A female photographed at a feeder in Mt Pleasant *Charleston* SC 16-17 Dec (Connie Fowler) was incredibly late.

**Bullock's Oriole:** Adult males visited feeders at two sites in SC this winter—in Bluffton *Beaufort* 20 Dec through 4 Jan (Kevin Brady, m. obs.) and on the northwestern shore of Lake Moultrie *Berkeley* 15 Jan through 8 Mar (Bob & Monica Bradley, m. obs.).



*Apparent Bronzed Cowbird (with Brown-headed Cowbird and Red-winged Blackbird), 28 Feb 2020, Carteret Co, NC. Photo by Dave Fischer*

**Bronzed Cowbird:** Pending review by the NC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent Bronzed Cowbird visiting a feeder in Morehead City *Carteret* NC 11 Feb (Carol Reigle, m. obs.) through 29 Feb (Sean Leahy, Dawn Lloyd). If accepted, the report would become the first record of this species in NC.

**Brewer's Blackbird:** 24 east of Pendleton *Anderson* SC during the Clemson CBC 19 Dec (Drew Lanham, et al.) and 32 in the Cuddo Unit of Santee NWR *Clarendon* SC during its CBC 21 Dec (John Grego) were good counts. One seen

along County Rd near Lake Junaluska *Haywood* NC 21 Dec (Stan & Connie Wulkowicz) was locally unusual.

**Ovenbird:** Nine in *Dare* NC during the Cape Hatteras CBC 27 Dec (*vide* Karen Lebing) was a notable count for winter. Individuals in Charlotte *Mecklenburg* NC 8 Dec (Jeffrey Turner), in Seven Oaks *Lexington* SC 30-31 Dec (Carl Osborne), and in Durham *Durham* NC 8-10 Jan (Ryland Bowman) were notable for sites away from the coast in winter.

**Northern Waterthrush:** At least six were found in the SC coastal plain this winter, including one at Caw Caw Interpretive Center *Charleston* throughout the period (m. obs.) and two at that site 27 Dec (Marc Regnier) and 1 Feb (Keith McCullough, et al.).

**Black-and-white Warbler:** This species was well-reported across the coastal plain and Piedmont this winter, with record counts made on multiple CBCs.

**Tennessee Warbler:** One photographed in a yard in Cary *Wake* NC 20 Jan (David Ley) was extremely unusual for mid-winter.

**Orange-crowned Warbler:** 27 at Mattamuskeet NWR *Hyde* NC during its CBC 29 Dec (*vide* Susan Campbell) was a notable count.

**Nashville Warbler:** Three were reported this winter—individuals at Mattamuskeet NWR *Hyde* NC during its CBC 29 Dec (Allen Bryan, Marc Ribaud), at a feeder in West Ashley *Charleston* SC where photographed 12 Jan (Marc Regnier), and at Botany Bay Plantation WMA *Charleston* SC 26 Jan (Matt Johnson).

**Common Yellowthroat:** One visiting a feeder near Beaver Lake *Buncombe* NC 8 Dec through 7 Jan (Diane Lombardi) was unusual for the mountain region in winter.

**American Redstart:** Three were reported this winter—female/immature-plumaged individuals at Santee Coastal Reserve *Charleston* SC 21 Dec (Mandy & Mark Johnson), just east of New Holland *Hyde* NC during the Mattamuskeet NWR CBC 29 Dec (Allen Bryan, Marc Ribaud), and along Wildlife Drive at Mattamuskeet NWR *Hyde* NC 18 Jan (Robert Meehan, et al.).

**Northern Parula:** About half a dozen were reported this winter. Individuals along Brickhouse Rd in *Durham* NC 8 Dec (Jim Capel), at Saluda Shoals Park *Lexington* SC 28 Dec (Jerry Griggs, Irvin Pitts) and 8 Jan (Pitts), and at a feeder in north Raleigh *Wake* NC 30 Dec through 31 Jan (Erla Beegle) were especially unusual for sites away from the coast.

**Yellow Warbler:** One at Carolina Beach Lake *New Hanover* NC 1 Jan (Ryan Justice) through 26 Jan (Matt Wangerin) was a good find for winter.

**Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's Warbler):** A western race Yellow-rumped Warbler was seen in Sanderling *Dare* NC 19 Jan (Jeff Lewis).

**Yellow-throated Warbler:** 17 in *Beaufort* SC during the Lowcountry CBC 14 Dec (*vide* Buddy Campbell) was a record number for that count. Two along N Lake Rd in *Hyde* NC 28 Dec (Allen Bryan) was a good count for a site so far north. One visiting a suet feeder in *Greenville* SC 31 Dec and 23 Jan (Simon Harvey) was unusual for upstate SC in mid-winter.

**Prairie Warbler:** One at Clark's Creek Nature Preserve *Mecklenburg* NC 15 Dec (Jeff Lemons, et al.) through 26 Jan (Taylor Piephoff) was unusual for the Piedmont in winter.

**Wilson's Warbler:** Individuals in the Bluff Unit of Santee NWR *Clarendon* SC 4 Dec (Dennis Forsythe) and at Savannah NWR *Jasper* SC 28 Feb (Bob Friedrichs) were good finds for winter.

**Summer Tanager:** Individuals were seen in a yard in eastern *Brunswick* NC 15 Nov through 10 Mar (Greg Massey), in a yard in Hillsborough *Orange* NC 1 Dec through 18 Mar (Carol Tuskey), visiting a feeder near Varnamtown *Brunswick* NC 3-11 Dec (Scott Stokley), in Myrtle Beach *Horry* SC 1 Jan (Ritch Lilly), in a yard on Hilton Head Island *Beaufort* SC 20 Jan through 17 Mar (Liz Cieszynski), and visiting a suet feeder in Manteo *Dare* NC in late January (*vide* Jeff Lewis).

**Western Tanager:** This species was well-reported again this winter. Individuals visited feeders in Raleigh *Wake* NC for the second year in a row 25 Nov through 25 Mar (Sam Jolly, m. obs.), in southern *Horry* SC 30 Nov through 1 Dec (Jordan Matejcek), in Salvo *Dare* NC 20 Dec (Connie Meekins), in Burlington *Alamance* NC 3 Jan through 10 Feb (Joe Donahue, m. obs.), in Charlotte *Mecklenburg* NC 11 Jan through 23 Feb (m. obs.), in

Trent Woods *Craven* NC for the second year in a row 18 Jan through 5 Mar (Lee Rouse), on James Island *Charleston* SC for the second year in a row 19 Jan through 17 Feb (Barbara Spence), in Mt Pleasant *Charleston* SC for the second year in a row 22 Jan through 19 Mar (Elizabeth Anderegg, m. obs.), in western *Johnston* NC for a second year in a row 23 Jan (Mary Ann Booth) through 22 Feb (David Williams), in northwestern *Charleston* *Charleston* SC 23 Jan through 16 Feb (Jennifer Marshall, m. obs.), in Winston Salem *Forsyth* NC 12-29 Feb (m. obs.), and in northeastern *New Hanover* NC 22 Feb (Sam Cooper). Two individuals were banded in the yard in Mt Pleasant 15 Feb (Lex Glover), and, amazingly, a third un-banded bird was reported there 17 Feb (Anderegg).



*Western Tanager, 4 Feb 2020, Alamance Co, NC. Photo by Dave Fischer*

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** Individuals photographed at feeders in Providence *Orangeburg* SC, a male, 27 Jan (Harold Donnelly) and in Waves *Dare* NC, a female, 15-17 Feb (Karen Lebing) were very unusual for winter.

**Painted Bunting:** Farthest inland this winter were individual adult males visiting feeders in Clayton *Johnston* NC 26 Jan (Ava Strickland), in Winston Salem *Forsyth* NC 15-16 Feb (*fide* John Haire), and on the southern shore of Lake Murray *Lexington* SC 24 Feb through 5 Mar (Irvin Pitts).

**Dickcissel:** Eleven were reported this winter, most at sites along the coast but also at four sites in NC Piedmont. Individuals photographed along US-264 just east of New Holland *Hyde* NC during the Mattamuskeet NWR CBC 29 Dec (Allen Bryan, Marc Ribaud) and on Wadmalaw Island *Charleston* SC during the Sea Islands CBC 3 Jan (Dave Eslinger) were firsts for those counts.

# CAROLINA BIRD CLUB

[www.carolinabirdclub.org](http://www.carolinabirdclub.org)

The Carolina Bird Club is a non-profit organization which represents and supports the birding community in the Carolinas through its official website, publications, meetings, workshops, trips, and partnerships, whose mission is

- To promote the observation, enjoyment, and study of birds.
- To provide opportunities for birders to become acquainted, and to share information and experience.
- To maintain well-documented records of birds in the Carolinas.
- To support the protection and conservation of birds and their habitats and foster an appreciation and respect of natural resources.
- To promote educational opportunities in bird and nature study.
- To support research on birds of the Carolinas and their habitats.

Membership is open to all persons interested in the conservation, natural history, and study of wildlife with particular emphasis on birds. Dues, contributions, and bequests to the Club may be deductible from state and federal income and estate taxes to the extent allowable. Pay dues or make donations at <https://carolinabirdclub.org/dues>. Make change of address at <https://www.carolinabirdclub.org/members/profile>. Send correspondence regarding membership matters to the Headquarters Secretary. Answers to questions about the club might be found at <https://carolinabirdclub.org/about.html>.

## ANNUAL DUES

Individual or non-profit.....	\$30.00
Family.....	\$35.00
Student.....	\$15.00
Sustaining and businesses.....	\$30.00
Patron.....	\$50.00 and up
Life Membership (payable in four consecutive \$100 installments) .....	\$500.00
Associate Life Membership (in same household as life member).....	\$100.00

## ELECTED OFFICERS

President	Lewis Burke, Columbia SC	<a href="mailto:lewisburkej@yahoo.com">lewisburkej@yahoo.com</a>
NC Vice-Presidents	Guy McCrane, Deep Gap NC Martina Nordstrand, Indian Trail NC	
SC Vice-President	Craig Watson, Mount Pleasant SC	
Secretary	Jill Midgett, Charleston SC	
Treasurer	Paul Dayer, Durham NC	
NC Members-at-Large	Lester Coble, Ernul NC Karyl Gabriel, High Point NC Marilyn Westphal, Hendersonville NC Vacant Position	
SC Members-at-Large	Ed Blicht, Charleston SC Mac Williams, Hartsville SC	

## EX-OFFICIO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chat Editor	Steve Shultz, Apex, NC	<a href="mailto:chat@carolinabirdclub.org">chat@carolinabirdclub.org</a>
Newsletter Editor	Deborah McDougall Roy	<a href="mailto:newsletter@carolinabirdclub.org">newsletter@carolinabirdclub.org</a>
Website Editor	Kent Fiala, Hillsborough, NC	<a href="mailto:webeditor@carolinabirdclub.org">webeditor@carolinabirdclub.org</a>
Immediate Past President	Christine Stoughton Root, Merritt NC	

## HEADQUARTERS SECRETARY

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