

**The 54th Nacogdoches, TX Christmas Bird Count
(December 17, 2023)
by David Wolf (compiler)**

It's hard to believe, but this was our **54th Nacogdoches Christmas Bird Count**, held on Sunday **December 17, 2023**. A big thank you goes to all who helped to make it a success! We had good participation, with 29 observers in the field in 13 parties plus 5 feeder-watchers. Our final **species total** was **111**, right on our average for the last 13 years. Almost all of the scarcer species were found in spite of the relatively low numbers of winter birds around. You counters are getting really good at tracking them down! The **weather was beautiful**, though a bit frosty at dawn. Temperatures warmed nicely through the day, skies were clear and the wind was calm. Overall conditions were still dry after the heat and drought of this summer, with lakes and ponds low and ephemeral marshes non-existent.

For weeks now it has been clear that most winter resident birds are so far present in relatively **low numbers**, everything from ducks and waterbirds to hawks and songbirds, and the count confirmed this. This isn't surprising given the warm temperatures over most of eastern and central North America prior to the count. The birds have not been pushed south yet! We have seen this pattern most of the last 15 years and I finally have to accept that this is "the new normal". The only species trending **higher in number** were some of the less hardy winter residents, including Eastern Phoebe, Blue-headed Vireo, House Wren, Lincoln's Sparrow and Orange-crowned Warbler. Most **resident species** were in good numbers and seemed to have survived the heat and drought of the summer as well as the continued loss of habitat to "exurbanization" and changing agricultural practices. A sad exception to this was the Eastern Bluebird, in the lowest numbers since 1977.

Several **rarities** were found, especially the the **Palm Warbler** seen by Aaron Bradley and the lone **Black-bellied Whistling-Duck** lingering at the sewage ponds (Rick Schaefer). Both were the first ever on count day. Other notable finds were American Bittern (Anne Tindell), Brewer's Blackbird (Robert Truss party) and Black-and-white Warbler (David Wolf). All were nicely documented with either photos or written descriptions. Almost every party found at least one exclusive and other scarce species seen included Mallard, Inca Dove, Greater Roadrunner, Common Gallinule, Greater Yellowlegs, Northern Harrier, White-eyed Vireo, Sedge and Marsh wrens, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Gray Catbird, Sprague's Pipit, Fox Sparrow, Rusty Blackbird and Common Yellowthroat. Completely **missed** were gulls and terns at Kurth Lake, Loggerhead Shrike for the 5th year in a row, Bewick's Wren (formerly more frequent), and Henslow's and Harris's sparrows. There were no significant "**northern invaders**" and Red-breasted Nuthatch and Purple Finch were completely absent and only one Pine Siskin was seen.

What does all of this mean? Well, find out more by visiting the **National Audubon Society website**. There is a wealth of information to be found there.

It was great to see all of you at our fun count-down dinner (what a great age span we had!) and thanks again for your participation. Keep those winter sightings coming in as the season develops -- David & Mimi Wolf, compilers (dewolfnac@gmail.com) phone: (936) 645-8894 or (936) 645-8870

Species List:

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck – 1; Wood Duck – 268; Northern Shoveler – 111; Gadwall – 44; American Wigeon – 29; Mallard – 2; Am. Green-winged Teal - 124; Canvasback – 238; Redhead – 157; Ring-necked Duck - 251; Lesser Scaup - 48; Bufflehead - 11; Hooded Merganser – 26; Ruddy Duck - 25; duck sp? – 58; Pied-billed Grebe – 27 (low); Horned Grebe – 1; Rock Pigeon - 161; Eurasian Collared-Dove – 8; Inca Dove – 9; Mourning Dove – 37 (low); Greater Roadrunner – 1; Common Gallinule - 1; American Coot - 7695; Killdeer - 78; American Woodcock – 4; Wilson's Snipe – 8; Greater Yellowlegs – 6; Common Loon - 3; Double-crested Cormorant - 151; American White Pelican – 8; **American Bittern – 1**; Great Blue Heron - 18; Great Egret - 5; Black Vulture – 304; Turkey Vulture - 159; Northern Harrier – 4; Sharp-shinned Hawk -2; Cooper's Hawk - 2; Bald Eagle – 5; Red-shouldered Hawk - 27; Red-tailed Hawk – 18; Eastern Screech-Owl - 6; Great Horned Owl - 6; Barred Owl - 11; Belted Kingfisher - 8; Red-headed Woodpecker - 5; Red-bellied Woodpecker - 165; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker - 54; Downy

Woodpecker - 40; Hairy Woodpecker – 10; Northern Flicker - 58; Pileated Woodpecker - 46; American Kestrel - 15; Eastern Phoebe – **171** (high); White-eyed Vireo – 2; Blue-headed Vireo - 24; Blue Jay – 253; American Crow - 501; Carolina Chickadee - 255; Tufted Titmouse - 248; White-breasted Nuthatch – 10; Brown-headed Nuthatch – 6; Brown Creeper – 4 (low); House Wren - 44; Winter Wren – 11; Sedge Wren – 2; Marsh Wren - 2; Carolina Wren – 214; Blue-gray Gnatcatcher – 3; Golden-crowned Kinglet – 36; Ruby-crowned Kinglet - 204; Eastern Bluebird – **119** (low); Hermit Thrush – 28 (low); American Robin – 306 (low); Cedar Waxwing – 266 (low); Gray Catbird – 3; Brown Thrasher – 16 (low); Northern Mockingbird - 47; European Starling - 146; American Pipit -8 (low); Sprague’s Pipit – 2; House Finch - 5; Pine Siskin – 1; American Goldfinch – 287; Le Conte’s Sparrow – 6; Chipping Sparrow - 354; Field Sparrow – 26; Fox Sparrow – 3; Dark-eyed (“Slate-colored”) Junco – 52 (low); White-crowned Sparrow - 2; White-throated Sparrow – 509; Vesper Sparrow – 7; Savannah Sparrow – 291; Song Sparrow – 161; Lincoln’s Sparrow – 11; Swamp Sparrow – 141; Eastern Towhee - 6; towhee sp? – 5; Red-winged Blackbird – 12,824; Eastern Meadowlark - 69; Rusty Blackbird – 42; Brewer’s Blackbird – 3; Common Grackle – 430; Brown-headed Cowbird – 1; blackbird sp? – 980; **Black-and-white Warbler – 1**; Orange-crowned Warbler - 50; Common Yellowthroat – 1; **Palm Warbler – 1**; Pine Warbler – 269; Yellow-rumped Warbler – 291 (low); Northern Cardinal – 316; House Sparrow – 20. **Total Species:**
111

29 Observers in 13 Field Parties: Jason Ballard; Abigail Bell, David Bell, Aaron Bradley, Kristin Bradley, Dane Dunn; Kathy Griffin, Taylor Hart, Tyson Hart, Gary Hunter, Toby Loo; David Magaret; Ryan Phelps; Josh Pierce; Tim Scallon, Maggie Schaefer, Rick Schaefer, Cliff Shackelford, Julie Shackelford, Dennis Stovall, Sarah Stovall, Ron Thill; Anne Tindell, Robert Truss, Ashley Wahlberg, Vickie Wallace, Carol Wells, David Wolf (compiler), Mimi Wolf (co-compiler) = **29 observers in 13 parties, plus 5 feeder-watchers** (Heinz Gaylord; Steve & Billie Kinnaird; Dave Richardson; Howard Williamson). **Compilers:** David & Mimi Wolf (936) 645-8894 or (936) 569-6531; e-mail: dewolfnac@gmail.com