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Louisiana 115th CBC Summary

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During the 115th CBC, 190 parties put in 1,630 party-hours and participated in 24 Louisiana Christmas Bird Counts. Counters found 254 species (including Monk Parakeet and feral Canada Goose, which are not on the official state list), six fewer than last year, but equal to the 113th CBC. The two most abundant birds were icterids: Red-winged Blackbird (4,862,306) and Brown-headed Cowbird (4,609,272), both of which were primarily found at the mega-roost in the Pine Prairie CBC that reported 72% and 98%, respectively, of all individuals. Snow Goose (429,995) and European Starling (420,862) were the next two most abundant birds, with the Sweet Lake-Cameron Prairie CBC reporting 70% of all Snow Geese and again Pine Prairie CBC reporting 95% of all European Starlings.

In general, species totals this winter were below average. The Lacassine NWR-Thornwell CBC squeaked out the highest species count with 157, just topping the Sabine NWR CBC, which reached 156, a relatively low count for that circle, especially compared to the 179 it reached last year. The Sweet Lake-Cameron Prairie NWR CBC didn't quite get to the magic 150 mark, with 148 species reported, and White Lake CBC wasn't far behind with 143 species reported. Among north Louisiana counts, Natchitoches CBC reported the top species count with 116, followed closely by Shreveport with 114, and Pine Prairie with 113.

Winter birding in Louisiana is often highlighted by western vagrants and the odd bird that didn't make the trek to Central or South America, and a total of 15 Louisiana "review list" species were found. In the western-vagrant category, a stake-out (apparently overwintering) third state record **Lucy's Warbler** on the Grand Isle CBC was an excellent addition to Louisiana's CBC list. A dark-morph **Ferruginous Hawk** was also a real treat for several Lacassine NWR-Thornwell CBC participants. This bird eventually moved on and remarkably was relocated a couple weeks later 20 miles away to the WSW. Other more typical western vagrants included a **Cinnamon Teal** on the Sweet Lake-Cameron Prairie NWR CBC, **Swainson's Hawk** on the Johnson's Bayou CBC, **Burrowing Owl** on the Grand Isle CBC, two **Say's Phoebes** on the Lacassine NWR-Thornwell CBC and one more one the Sweet Lake-Cameron Prairie NWR CBC, two **Brown-crested Flycatchers** and four **Ash-throated Flycatchers** across four different counts, **Couch's Kingbird** on two counts (Red River and White Lake CBCs), **Bell's Vireo** on the Sweet Lake-Cameron Prairie NWR CBC, a **Lark Bunting** on the Natchitoches CBC, two **Western Tanagers** on the Grand Isle CBC, and **Bullock's Oriole** on the Venice CBC.

One of the most remarkable winter holdovers was a well photographed **Swainson's Thrush** on the Sabine NWR CBC. Other interesting wintering birds included a group of 70 **Fulvous Whistling-Ducks** on the White Lake CBC, four **Broad-winged Hawks** from three counts, two **Solitary Sandpipers** from the

Creole and Venice CBCs, four **Franklin's Gulls** from three counts including two from the Shreveport CBC, a total of eight **Common Terns** from two counts on opposite sides of the coast (Sabine NWR and Grand Isle CBCs), two **Chuck-will's-widow** from the Creole and Grand Isle CBCs, a **Least Flycatcher** from the Lacassine NWR-Thornwell CBC, a **Yellow-breasted Chat** from the Reserve-Bonnet Carre Spillway CBC, three **Dickcissels** from the Lacassine NWR-Thornwell and Sweet Lake-Cameron Prairie NWR CBC, and three **Baltimore Orioles** from the Baton Rouge and St. Tammany-Northshore CBCs. Only 12 species of warbler were turned up this winter, obviously punctuated by the aforementioned Lucy's Warbler, but also an **Ovenbird** and **American Redstart** on the Grand Isle CBC, seven **Black-and-white Warblers** from five counts including the relatively northern Cheneyville-Lecompte CBC, and three **Prairie Warblers** from the New Orleans and Venice CBCs. **Wilson's Warblers** were a little more apparent this winter compared to last with 13 reported from six different counts. Other unusual species included a **Glaucous Gull** from the Sabine NWR CBC, four **Smith's Longspurs** on the Shreveport CBC, and for the second winter in a row, four **Brown Boobies** on Lake Pontchartrain reported during the St. Tammany-Northshore CBC.

It was a relatively poor season for wintering hummingbirds, and counts were particularly low in Baton Rouge (hummingbird central) at least partially because the hummingbird counting team's usual leader was ill. Only 98 individuals of the 5 most typical species were found in the following order from most to least common: Rufous, Ruby-throated, Black-chinned, Buff-bellied, and Calliope. Perhaps the most exciting report was a photographed adult male **Calliope Hummingbird** from the Pine Prairie CBC. It was also an especially low year for American Goldfinch (2,044), the lowest count adjusting for effort since 1998-99, and the third lowest count since 1967-68. On the other hand Purple Finch numbers were reasonably high, being the third highest count in the last 10 years.

Several other species with relatively good counts included **White-tailed Kite** (21). This species appears to have gone through multi-year increase peaking about 15 years ago followed by a decreasing trend dropping to a low in 2005-06, and has since again climbed back, perhaps again peaking in the last couple years. The previous high annual count for **Yellow Rail** was four in 1996-97 and this count was annihilated by observers at the Lacassine NWR-Thornwell CBC who were rewarded with 19 individuals this year. They were able to watch an unusually late-season harvest of rice, which is known for turning up this species in good numbers in fall. The **Sandhill Crane** count was the second highest of all-time, totaling 3,752 individuals, 91% of which reported from the Sweet Lake-Cameron Prairie NWR CBC. With 11 individuals, this is the first year where **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** broke the double-digit mark. First reported in 1993-94, **Crested Caracara** counts did not exceed five birds until 2009-10 when they first reached double-digits; this year, 128 birds more than doubled any previous year's count. Six counts reported this species, and 104 were reported from the Sweet Lake-Cameron Prairie NWR CBC.

Thanks to all who participated in counts and submitted data. Your hard work provides valuable insights into population trends for many species that would otherwise go unnoticed and undocumented.