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Louisiana 116th CBC Summary

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During the 2015-16 (116th) Christmas Bird Count, 206 parties volunteered 1,627 party-hours across 27 counts. Three counts were resurrected this year including Red River NWR, Lake Charles, and Thibodaux. A huge congratulations and thank you to those compilers and counters who made these happen! A total of 263 species was tallied (including feral Canada Goose, Monk Parakeet, and Scaly-breasted Munia not on the official state list), 9 better than last year. And 6,393,475 individual birds were counted with Red-winged Blackbird (3,913,113), Brown-headed Cowbird (1,080,304), and Snow Goose (636,503) as top three most abundant.

The top five counts this year were southwest Louisiana circles. Top prize went to Lacassine NWR-Thornwell with 161 species, just squeaking out Sabine NWR with 160. Sweet Lake-Cameron Prairie took third with 151, followed by White Lake and Creole with 143 each. Baton Rouge ended up with a very respectable 140, just topping New Orleans with 138. Five north Louisiana counts topped the 100 species mark: Pine Prairie (115), Red River NWR (109), Shreveport (102), Claiborne (101), and Natchitoches (100).

In terms of species, the big highlight this winter was the first state record **Pyrrhuloxia** found on the Lacassine NWR-Thornwell CBC by Dan O'Malley. Many birders were able to relocate the bird for several weeks following the count, too. Ten additional LBRC "review list" rarities were also found: **Burrowing Owl** (1), **Ruff** (1), **Great Black-backed Gull** (1), **Broad-billed Hummingbird** (1), a presumed returning **Couch's Kingbird** (1), **"Tropical/Couch's" Kingbird** (1), **Brown-crested Flycatcher** (1), **Great Kiskadee** (4), **Say's Phoebe** (5), **Cordilleran Flycatcher** (1), and **Bullock's Oriole** (1).

There weren't any huge surprises in the winter holdover category. A fairly typical 13 species of warbler made the list, including **Black-and-white Warbler** (10), **Black-throated Green Warbler** (4), **Prairie Warbler** (3), **Yellow-throated Warbler** (2), **American Redstart** (2), **Ovenbird** (2), **Yellow Warbler** (1), and **Northern Parula** (1). **Wilson's Warblers** were in better-than-average numbers with 35 tallied across 15 counts, including essentially all south Louisiana circles. Other birds of note included **Fulvous Whistling-Duck** (3), **Least Bittern** (7), **Sandwich Tern** (2), **Magnificent Frigatebird** (2), **Chuck-will's-widow** (3), **Eastern Whip-poor-will** (1), **Wood Thrush** (1), **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** (1), and **Summer Tanager** (5).

Although 2015-16 was generally a good fall and winter for **Groove-billed Ani**, only a group of 4 was found during counts, plus one additional count week bird. Southwestern species seemed reasonably well represented this winter and seemed to be straying further than normal to other mid-western and southeastern states, perhaps related to the continuing El Niño. In addition to a few species mentioned

above, Louisiana CBCs picked up **Ash-throated Flycatcher** (9), **Vermilion Flycatcher** (55), and **Bewick's Wren** (2).

Three reintroduced **Whooping Cranes** were found, and with hope these will continue to reestablish and spread, and once again becoming a permanent member of Louisiana's bird community. This also serves a reminder that Christmas Bird Counts provide a long-term perspective on how North American bird communities continue to shift and change. I am thankful to all the compilers that ensure this legacy continues and to all the volunteers that spend their holiday season with the birds.