

# The Crane

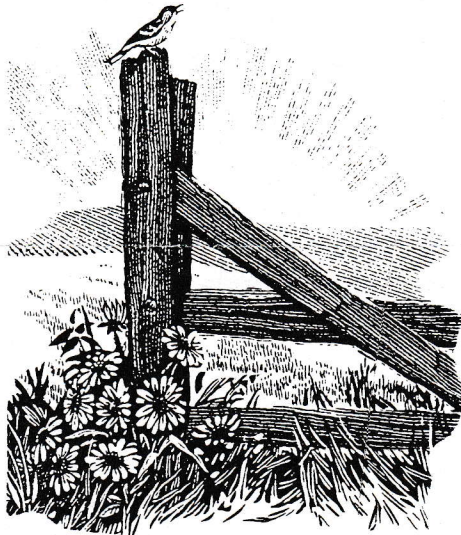
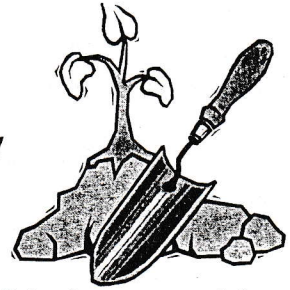
*Alachua Audubon Society*

*Volume 40 Number 6, January 1999*

**Saturday, January 23, 2:00 p.m.**

**Claudia Larsen of the Native Plant Society**

## ***"Planting Your Yard for Wildlife"***



It's that time of year. Redbuds and wild plums are blooming, the dogwood's pale green flower-buttons are bursting open, the woods are scented by the light fragrance of yellow jessamine. And you — you find yourself turning in at garden shops and gazing dreamily around the yard, and your hands itch to plant something. Well, if that's the case, come on down to this month's program meeting: after Claudia Larsen gets done with you, you'll be even worse! Claudia will show slides of the beautiful trees, shrubs, and wildflowers she's chosen to make her own yard more wildlife friendly, and she'll have plenty of suggestions for your property as well, be

it large or small. She will tell you how to select plants for the berries, nectar, seeds, or nuts they produce, and will explain why native species are the most beneficial as well as the hardiest for the Gainesville area. Come join us for this informative hour. It's your only hope of a cure! Refreshments served.

***Millhopper Branch - Alachua County Library - 3145 NW 43rd St.***

**You're invited to come on these guided field trips:**

**Saturday/Sunday, January 9/10**

**St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge**

CALL REX ROWAN AT (352) 371-9296 IF YOU ARE GOING ON THIS TRIP. Alachua Audubon kicks off each new year with a trip to St. Marks. Its dikes and impoundments are a great place to see a wide variety of birds in a relatively small area, particularly waterbirds such as Common Loon, Horned Grebe, and such rare (to us) ducks as Common Goldeneye, American Black Duck, Greater Scaup, Canvasback, and Redhead. Other interest-

ing species we hope to find include Saltmarsh and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows, Seaside Sparrow, Vermilion Flycatcher, and American Bittern. And there's always a chance for a rarity, such as Groove-billed Ani, Greater White-fronted Goose, Rusty Blackbird, or Tundra Swan. Side trips to Wakulla Springs State Park and St. George Island State Park are a possibility on Sunday. Admission to St. Marks is about \$5 per car, and to the state parks \$2.75 per car.

***See next page for details of Jan. 16 & 30 trips!***



**January field trips continued:**

**Saturday, January 16, 7:30 a.m.**  
**Chapmans Pond, Post Office Pond**  
**and other retention ponds**

Meet in the parking lot of the Red Lobster just east of I-75 on Newberry Road. We'll visit five man-made waterholes that can be very popular with ducks and shorebirds. We should see Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, Lesser Scaup, Hooded Merganser, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, and Common Snipe, and if we're lucky Long-billed Dowitcher, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, and Ruddy Duck.

**Saturday, January 30, 6:00 a.m.**  
**Wards Bank and Ft. Clinch State Park**

Meet in the parking lot of Publix at NW 13<sup>th</sup> Street and NW 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The two best birding spots on the northeast coast have very different things to offer. The fishing pier at Ft. Clinch (admission \$2.75 per car) parallels the south jetty of the St. Marys River, and it's possible to look directly down on Purple Sandpipers foraging on the rocks. Northern Gannets are a fair bet, and jaegers and scoters have been seen. Going south on Amelia Island, we'll scope for Red-throated Loons from the beach, then continue to Wards Bank (admission 50 cents per person), where shorebirds, gulls, and terns congregate in a large bay of Ft. George Inlet. Reddish Egret, Piping Plover, Great Black-backed Gull, and Long-billed Curlew are often among the interesting finds at this location.

**January board meeting:**

**Wednesday, January 13, 6:30 p.m.**

Florida Museum of Natural History conference room.  
Members and public invited.

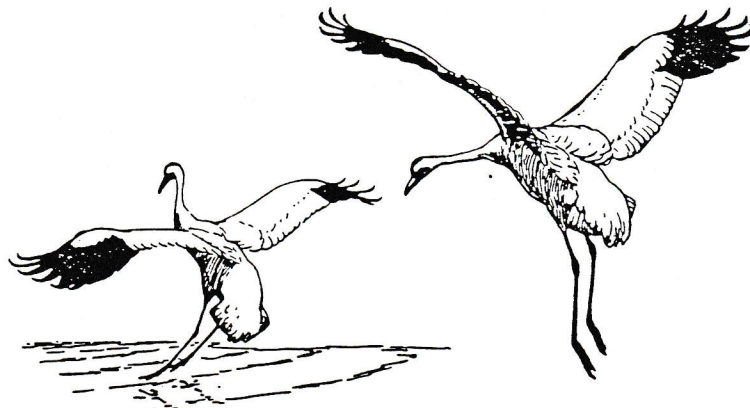
**Visit AAS Web Site:**

**<http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/aud/aud.htm>**

*The Crane* is published monthly throughout the year except June and July. Content of *The Crane* is the sole responsibility of the editor and fulfills stated objectives and goals of Alachua Audubon Society. Annual subscription to *The Crane* is included in AAS dues. Non-Audubon members may subscribe to *The Crane* for \$8 annually. Submissions to *The Crane* are welcomed, can be e-mailed or on disk or hard copy and must be received by **January 22** to be included in the February issue. Please limit each article to no more than two pages. Mail or bring your disk or hard copy to Evelyn Perry, **The Branch Office, 519 NW 60th St., Suite A, G-ville 32607.**

Or fax to 331-2585. Or e-mail [evperry@aol.com](mailto:evperry@aol.com)

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*You are invited to attend  
a Special Seminar....*

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**"Crane Conservation  
Worldwide"**

Dr. George Archibald  
Director, International Crane Foundation  
Baraboo, Wisconsin

**5 p.m. - January 26, 1999**  
282 Reitz Union  
University of Florida  
(Reception following presentation)

One of the world's leading authorities on cranes, Dr. Archibald co-founded the International Crane Foundation in 1973. The Foundation now houses the world's most complete crane collections and is credited with the first captive breeding of two endangered crane species. Dr. Archibald's extensive international program has helped conserve more than 10 million acres of wetlands in Asia and other crane habitat throughout the world.

**Welcome to New AAS Members**

Mason Alexander	Jon Anderson	Denise Bonilla
Deeann Borth	Corey Brooks	Glen Brown
Jessie Caldwell	Amy Croft	Ben Davis
Diane Ehlert	Mary Fleming	Chad Hanson
John Haught	Evelyn Hemp	Toby Larsen
Forrest Lisle	Laurence Morel	Theresa Parisi
A. C. Parsons	Marilyn Preston	Ken Reed
Judy Rice	Charles Spitzner, Jr.	
Karen Walby	Lionel Worthy.	



## Around the County...

by Mike Manetz

I love birding in the winter. It is the least predictable of the seasons, and for that reason one goes out in the morning with the feeling that anything is within the realm of possibility. It's the time of year when any weedy field could be harboring an unusual sparrow, and any retention pond could be temporarily attractive to a rare wader or waterfowl. If the weather has been unseasonably mild, there is no telling what lingering warbler or flycatcher you might discover, and if it has been extremely cold, you might go out in the morning with fantastic visions of finding a Winter Wren or a Brown Creeper. Adding to the unpredictability of winter is the chance of an "irruption." This occurs when the food supply of a normally northern species is disrupted in some way and the birds begin to wander, usually south, in search of better feeding areas. For instance, northern birds that depend on tree seeds in winter, such as Purple Finch and Pine Siskin, may suddenly show up in the deep south if there is a weak crop in a given year. Likewise, Short-eared Owl and Rough-legged Hawk, dependent on the population cycle of small mammals, can show up as far south as Florida looking for prey. (In fact, Short-eared Owls have been reported already this winter from south Georgia and extreme north Florida.) Every December dawn is loaded with wondrous possibilities for those with optimism, persistence, and at least a modicum of skill.

The mild first half of December kept several late lingering warblers in our area. Judy Bryan found a **Hooded Warbler** at Newnan's Lake on Dec. 13. Andy Kratter reported a **Black-throated Green Warbler** Dec. 8 from the Rail Trail. Adam Kent found what was likely the same bird again on Dec. 15. Last winter I had an immature male **American Redstart** hanging around my yard all winter. That was the first ever recorded Redstart in the county for the months of January and February. On Nov. 29 of this year another (or the same?) Redstart, this time an adult male, appeared in my yard, and I have seen it several times since then.

Dave Beatty keeps a close eye on his several feeders, birdbaths, and misters, and so far this winter he has attracted, in addition to the usual feeder birds, a **Dark-eyed Junco** and a **hummingbird** species. The hummer is either a female or immature (or both) and has not been identified to species at the time of this writing. Ironically, Evelyn Perry has the exact same unusual bird combination in her yard — a hummingbird and a **Dark-eyed Junco**! The junco was first spotted on Thanksgiving Day, and the hummingbird has been around since Nov. 5.

With birding spots like Zellwood and the old

Occidental pits north of White Springs loaded with ducks, one might think we would have only a paltry few hanging out here, but this has not been the case. Chapman's Pond has still offered good looks at hundreds of teal and samplings of a few other species, including **Gadwall**, **American Wigeon**, **Lesser Scaup**, and, though briefly, a hen **Mallard**. An Alachua Audubon field trip to Cone's Dike Dec. 5 got a distant look at hundreds of airborne ducks, but they were too far out to identify with certainty. Mary Landsman continued to report large numbers of **Ring-necked Ducks** as well as a **Horned Grebe** at Bivens Arm Lake, and the Post Office pond on SW 34th Street still sheltered two each of **Ruddy Duck**, **Common Goldeneye**, and **Bufflehead**. The latter two species are considered fairly uncommon in our area. Rex

R o w a n  
c h e c k e d

Tusawilla Prairie  
Dec. 15 and  
found a flock  
of as many  
as 22

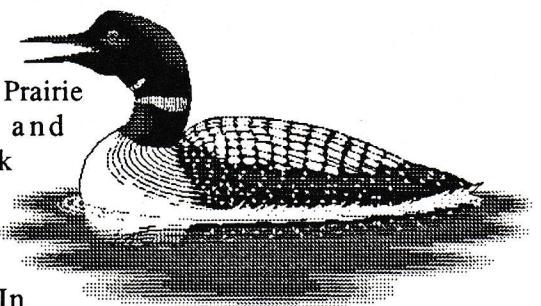
**Northern**

**Pintails.** In  
addition, Linda

Fitzgerald and Cathy Reno found a **Common Loon** Nov. 19 on Newnan's Lake.

Gulls began arriving in numbers by early December, but on Nov. 29, Rex reported what he believed may have been 3 **Franklin's Gulls** at Newnans. That was during a week when Franklin's Gulls were making appearances at several locations around the state. Ed Bonahue was scanning the Prairie basin Nov. 14 and saw distantly a flock of 20 **White Pelicans**. This species has been wintering in Florida in increasing numbers, but they are still rarely seen in Alachua County. Carmine Lanciani was scouting out Tusawilla Prairie in preparation for the Christmas Count when he noticed a small bird on a fencepost near Hwy. 441. Careful examination showed it to be a **Vermillion Flycatcher**. This is another pretty rare bird for our county, and hopefully it will still be around for the Christmas Count.

Thanks to those who shared their sightings through December 15, 1998.



### For Year-Round 24-hour AAS Information:

**Call** SunDial Bird Line: 335-3500, ext. BIRD  
(2473) for information on field trips, programs, where to  
see birds, and what's happening in AAS.



# How to Have a Good Christmas Count

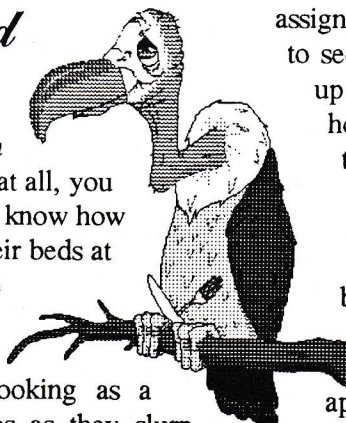
by Rex Rowan

If you've read any birding books at all, you know about the Christmas Count. You know how the lion-hearted Counters rise from their beds at four in the morning, drive through the darkness to an IHOP or a Waffle House, and congregate at a back table, as scruffy and disreputable-looking as a bunch of bikers. They rub their eyes as they slurp coffee and tuck away plates of pancakes or ham and eggs, and talk strategy in low, urgent tones. "Where we gonna get Vesper this year, John?" Then, steeling themselves against the cold and the fog, they disappear into the bowels of the wilderness, trucks bumping along, cassette tapes of owls and rails at the ready. They're a hardy lot, these Counters. Nothing short of heroic.

Well I'm going to spill the beans. I'm going to tell you what the Christmas Bird Count is *really* like, and when the birdseed hits the fan, there will be Senate hearings, the binoculars market will plummet, and great piles of field guides will be burned in the public square. To protect myself, I have entered the Federal Witness Protection Program, and am living an altogether new life as actor Will Smith, star of *Men in Black* (oh, what a giveaway...).

First off, there's none of this pre-dawn nonsense. I don't know a birder who gets out of bed before eight in the morning on Count day. Why would they? Give it a moment's thought: *you can't see in the dark! How are you going to find birds if you can't see them?* Oh, I know there's a lot of claptrap written about "birding by ear," but it's the purest twaddle. The fact of the matter is, I've been out with people who were "birding by ear," and every single sound was assigned to some animal or another in an exceedingly deep and authoritative voice ("Listen! It's The Giant Barking Spider! And Over There! An Ornate Colon Frog!") that disguised the absolute randomness with which the identification was made. I have listened to the *beep-beep-beep* of a garbage truck backing out of a driveway, and heard some birder-by-ear call out, "Virginia Rail!" It's all a hoax, believe me. Birds don't even *make* sounds. It's an auditory illusion caused by dust in the atmosphere.

One part of the myth is literally true, however, and that's the breakfast gathering. Here, over a leisurely meal that commences around ten, each team plans its rendezvous in order to make a convincing entrance at the Count supper that evening. A few minutes are spent sketching out the general results they will report (was it a good day, or bad? are duck numbers up, or down?) and getting their story straight. Occasional rare bird reports are



assigned by the team leader ("Mike, I think we're going to see a Wilson's Warbler today. Could you write one up for me?"), and the documentation form is taken home so a convincing description can be cobbled together from the appropriate field guides.

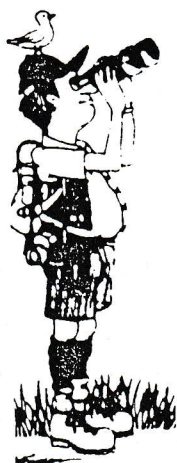
After breakfast, the team splits up. Some head home to nap or watch football, some go shopping at the mall, while others dawdle over the birding-book shelves at the bookstore or public library.

As the appointed time nears, each team member dons his or her Christmas Count apparel. These clothes have lain out in the back yard since the last Count, and have been used during that time to wipe down the barbecue grill and wrap the base of a sapling in freezing weather. When the team convenes at the rendezvous, they *are* as scruffy and disreputable-looking as bikers. Sick, wet bikers. In this condition they carpool to the Count supper at the Civitan Blood Bank and trudge into the back room, casting their caps down on the table to display their carefully-mussed hair, and sighing wearily.

Have you ever seen the Count teams sitting around the tables in the evening, murmuring secretively among themselves as they chow down on pizza and beer? *They're trying to decide what to put on their lists! They're making it all up!* They're saying things like, "John, do you suppose we would have seen any Vespers out there today, I mean if we had gone birding?" And John is saying, "No, the Prairie's flooded, and Vesper is a dry-land bird." The team leader calls out the likely birds for their territory, and, going around the group, first one and then another will volunteer a number. "Anhinga," says the leader. "How about ... 52?" says Don, swilling another beer.

The beer is necessary to the process, serving as a lubricant of the imagination. But one shouldn't over-indulge: it's well-known that the wildest reports — the "best birds," as they are termed with droll humor — come from the drunkest birders. For instance, this year Adam Kent downed about ten cans of Busch before reporting — and let me see if I can write this with a straight face — *a LeConte's Sparrow, two Fox Sparrows, and seven Henslow's Sparrows, all in one place!* Any one of these birds would be a startling find, but to claim to have seen all of them in a single spot was a ridiculous impossibility, and Adam's team knew it. They lunged at him as he began the recital and scuffled with him ineffectually, trying to keep him from embarrassing himself and them. Faces around the table grew red with suppressed laughter. Everyone knew Adam's reputation would take a major hit on this one, and that for the next year he'd be forced to write up all his good finds as penance ("This is Adam. I saw a Blue Jay." "Sure you did. Write it up."). It was almost as entertaining as the "field sketch" of a





Henslow's that Andy Kratter circulated to oohs and aahs several years ago, and which several early arrivals at the Blood Bank had found him tracing from the Peterson guide on a sunlit window.

Actually I have no proof that other teams are engaged in this kind of Christmas Count fakery. But it's the way I've been doing it for years.

## **National Audubon Society and Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology Invite Your Participation**

The Second Annual Great Backyard Bird Count will be held February 19 through 22. The goal this year is to multiply participation many times over. This year's data will allow Audubon and Cornell scientists to begin to look for trends and population shifts. The increased efforts of citizen scientists will help to define the status of birds at the close of the millennium, allow a comparison of the effects of El Niño on migration one year later, and create unmatched educational opportunities. "The Great Backyard Bird Count is a wonderful way to engage school children, some of whom are already involved in *Audubon Adventures* and *FeederWatch* classrooms. See next month's issue of *The Crane* for all the details so you can be actively involved.

Alachua Audubon Society  
Officers and Chairpersons  
of Standing Committees, 1998-99  
President.....Rex Rowan 371-9296  
Vice-President.....Tom Webber 392-1721  
Secretary.....David Wahl 336-6206  
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Education.....Susan Sommerville 378-2808  
Conservation Chair.....John Winn 468-1669  
Birding Classes.....Ike Fromberg 375-2246  
*The Crane* Editor.....Evelyn Perry 331-2223 or 371-2917  
*The Crane* Circulation.....Margaret Green 378-3314  
Assisting in circulation duties of *The Crane* are:  
Jean Dorney, Alice Tyler, Pat Burns, Nancy Oakes.

## **CBC Results**

by Barbara P. Muschlitz

I'm always pleased when we list 140 or more species; this year our 54 observers listed 142, including 3 new species and 9 record highs. This is the first time in my memory that much of Paynes Prairie was covered with water for the Count. Some of the places usually visited were just inaccessible. Jim Weimer and Don Morrow used an air boat to cover some of the basin; others had

to manage around the edges. I talked two of my team members into joining me in donning knee-high boots, hoping to walk out to the platform from Bolen Bluff, an unrealistic hope. Not too surprising, five of our new high records were for birds expected near water.

New species were as follows. Two Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, seen by Don and Jim from the airboat, were sitting on the shore on the edge of Alachua Sink. The species, first reported here in May of 1997, appeared in numbers this May at Chapman Pond and elsewhere and stayed around for awhile. Stilt Sandpiper was found at Chapman's Pond by Bryant Roberts. Several years ago, he had found one there in January, so he was not too surprised. The Louisiana Waterthrush was found along the shore of Newnans Lake by Judy Bryan, accompanied by Lynn Mosura-Bliss and Eric Marzoff in the boat supplied by Water & Air Research.

The previous weekend, when Carmine Lanciani was scouting the Micanopy area, he discovered an imm. male Vermilion Flycatcher, not far from US 441 near Tuscahulla Lake. It stayed around to be counted and may well stay for the winter. Greg McDermott found another Vermilion at the Williamson's Farm where he had found an imm. female 2 years ago. Adam Kent, Scott Flamand, Tom Workman, and Kelly McPherson had fun finding cooperative sparrows at Persimmon Point including 7 Henslow's, 1 LeConte's, and 2 Fox. Carmine found another Henslow's in the Micanopy area for an incredible count of 8. Other birds not usually found were Peregrine Falcon and Rusty Blackbird in the Micanopy area, Dunlin at Chapman Pond, Summer Tanager at Newnans Lake.

Species seen 3 days before or 3 days after the count may be listed as Count Week Birds. Three found in the 3 days before the count were American Redstart, which Mike Manetz has had in his yard for weeks, White-crowned Sparrow, and Brewer's Blackbird. Tuesday after the count, a Grasshopper Sparrow was located at Persimmon Point. On a sad note, Northern Bobwhite was missed for the first time since 1968.

As usual, our Count-Up was held at Civitan. It is a facility that provides us with lots of space, and we are very grateful. Griselda Forbes, once again with help from son Ethan and husband David, arranged for all the food and beverage. Bob Knight heroically coped with my archaic laptop and data base, entering numbers for each species provided by the 11 teams. His son Scott manned the adding machine for immediate totals. I am most grateful for their assistance. Having the totals from the adding machine permits me a double check on the totals spewed out by the computer.

(See listing of participants and count results on Page 6.)



# Christmas Bird Count, Gainesville, Florida

## 20 December 1998

Observers (Team leaders in bold face): **Howard Adams**, John Hintermister, Bob Knight, Scott Knight, Don Morrow, Jim Weimer, Brad Williams, **Tom Workman**, Scott Flamand, Adam Kent, Kelly McPherson, **Mike Manetz**, Ed Bonahue, Sam Cole, John Martin, David O'Neill, **Barbara Muschlitz**, Alice Farkash, Dale Henderson, Mary Landsman, Greg McDermott, **Brian McNab**, Grace Kiltie, Carmine Lanciani, Roan McNab, Bo Page, **Craig Parenteau**, Ria Leonard, Dan Pearson, Ken Scott, **Rex Rowan**, Sara Cimbaro, **Tom Webber** and **Bryant Roberts**, Renee Burns, Wes Corbett, Charlie Lane, Paul Sindelar, Joan Stephens, Terry Taylor, **Martha King**, Pat Burns, Lyla Lundeen, Alice Tyler, **Dave Beatty**, Justin Gude, Patty Hernandez, Michael Meisenberg, Katie Sieving, **Judy Bryan**, Ruth Ernsberger, Eric Marzoff, Lynn Mosura-Bliss, Frank Mead.

Bold-faced Species are new to the count. Bold-faced numbers are new high records

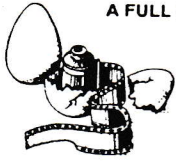
Pied-billed Grebe	155	Greater Yellowlegs	32	Loggerhead Shrike	46
Dbl-cr Cormorant	383	Lesser Yellowlegs	23	European Starling	265
Anhinga	<b>613</b>	Least Sandpiper	13	White-eyed Vireo	89
American Bittern	8	Dunlin	1	Blue-headed Vireo	70
Great Blue Heron	212	<b>Stilt Sandpiper</b>	1	Orange-crnd Warbler	41
Great Egret	307	Long-bill Dowitcher	25	Northern Parula	1
Snowy Egret	<b>139</b>	Common Snipe	308	Ylw-rumped Warbler	3139
Little Blue Heron	153	American Woodcock	2	Ylw-throated Warbler	34
Tricolored Heron	27	Bonaparte's Gull	10	Pine Warbler	167
Cattle Egret	41	Ring-billed Gull	1051	Prairie Warbler	2
Green Heron	23	Herring Gull	4	Palm Warbler	269
Blk-cr Night-Heron	88	Forster's Tern	6	Black-and-white Warbler	50
White Ibis	746	Rock Dove	129	Ovenbird	5
Glossy Ibis	<b>290</b>	Eur. Collared Dove	33	Common Yellowthroat	199
Wood Stork	207	Mourning Dove	454	<b>Louisiana Waterthrush</b>	1
<b>Blk-bellied Whistlg Duck</b>	2	Common Ground Dove	2	Summer Tanager	1
Wood Duck	868	Eastern Screech Owl	26	Northern Cardinal	322
Green-winged Teal	210	Great Horned Owl	19	Eastern Towhee	140
Mottled Duck	34	Barred Owl	28	Chipping Sparrow	85
Mallard	46	Whip-Poor-Will	1	Field Sparrow	6
Northern Pintail	32	Hummingbird, sp.	2	Vesper Sparrow	5
Blue-winged Teal	364	Belted Kingfisher	70	Savannah Sparrow	47
Northern Shoveler	5	Red-headed Woodpecker	19	Henslow's Sparrow	8
Gadwall	6	Red-bellied Woodpecker	157	Le Conte's Sparrow	1
American Wigeon	16	Ylw-bellied Sapsucker	45	Fox Sparrow	2
Ring-necked Duck	140	Downy Woodpecker	<b>94</b>	Song Sparrow	42
Lesser Scaup	69	Northern Flicker	91	Swamp Sparrow	112
Common Goldeneye	2	Pileated Woodpecker	85	Wht-throated Sparrow	44
Bufflehead	2	Eastern Phoebe	237	Dark-eyed Junco	1
Hooded Merganser	135	Vermilion Flycatcher	2	Red-winged Blackbird	3695
Ruddy Duck	13	Tree Swallow	226	Eastern Meadowlark	241
Black Vulture	161	Blue Jay	166	Rusty Blackbird	4
Turkey Vulture	839	American Crow	433	Boat-tailed Grackle	1630
Osprey	9	Fish Crow	104	Common Grackle	1103
Bald Eagle	40	Crow, sp.	146	Brown-headed Cowbird	200
Northern Harrier	21	Carolina Chickadee	89	Baltimore Oriole	9
Sharp-shinned Hawk	7	Tufted Titmouse	236	House Finch	21
Cooper's Hawk	2	Brown-headed Nuthatch	1	American Goldfinch	372
Red-shouldered Hawk	62	Carolina Wren	<b>269</b>	House Sparrow	64
Red-tailed Hawk	43	House Wren	113		
American Kestrel	56	Sedge Wren	24	Total number of species	142
Peregrine	1	Marsh Wren	14	Total individuals	30735
Wild Turkey	23	Ruby-crnd Kinglet	382		
King Rail	10	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	244		
Virginia Rail	5	Eastern Bluebird	150		
Sora	55	Hermit Thrush	61		
Purple Gallinule	5	American Robin	497		
Common Moorhen	434	Gray Catbird	83		
American Coot	2640	Northern Mockingbird	144		
Limpkin	2	Brown Thrasher	26		
Sandhill Crane	1361	American Pipit	110		
Killdeer	245	Cedar Waxwing	348		



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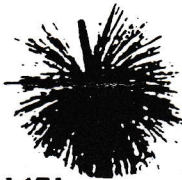
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January 1999



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