

Vol. 7(1), May 1977

Summary of Mississippi Christmas Bird Counts, 1976-77

Compiled by Wayne C. Weber

Department of Zoology, Mississippi State University
Mississippi State, MS 39762

In the last issue of the Mississippi Kite, a request for compilers of Christmas Bird Counts (CBC's) to send us their results was tucked inside the Note to Contributors in the Birds Around the State section. Considering that this is our first attempt at this summary, the response was encouraging; at press time we had heard from compilers of all established CBC's in the state except Natchez. Ben Coffey writes us that the Moon Lake CBC was cancelled because of poor weather. However, at least 8 CBC's were carried out last winter; one was new and 5 of the other 7 posted record highs in number of species.

We will not include complete results of CBC's here; these are published in the July (formerly the April) issue of American Birds, which usually appears about September. However, we hope this summary will be of interest to MOS members who do not receive American Birds, or who tire of waiting until September to see results from other counts in the state.

The information is incomplete for this year's summary, because some compilers did not keep copies of their complete results. In future, we request all compilers to send us a complete photocopy of the form they send to American Birds, including field descriptions of any unusual bird species reported. Such descriptions are required for acceptance by American Birds, but most compilers did not send them to us. We decided to include all unusual birds reported in this summary, without "editing", but it should be understood that adequate field notes for some species (e.g. the Green-tailed Towhee on the Jackson Co. CBC, which would be new for the state) are necessary before the record can be considered fully acceptable.

Table 1. Data for Mississippi Christmas Bird Counts, 1976-77

Count	Date	Species	Indiv.	Observers	Parties
Sardis L.	22 Dec.	87	27,495	9	5
Grenada	27 Dec.	74	6,217	2	2
Noxubee NWR	18 Dec.	91	13,935	13	6
Washington Co. S.	2 Jan.	81	558,390	25	NR
Jackson	1 Jan.	101	66,008	13	5
Hattiesburg	31 Dec.	100	13,732	NR	NR
Hancock Co.	29 Dec.	140	6,781	16	6
Jackson Co.	18 Dec.	145	NR	NR	NR

NR = not reported

Table 1 includes important data for each CBC (date, number of species, total number of individuals, number of observers, number of parties). Other information (hours afield, weather, party-hours, and party-miles, and highlights of the more interesting observations) are given in a separate paragraph for each count.

Our sincere thanks go to all CBC compilers and observers, and with your help, we hope to produce an even better summary next year.

Sardis Lake (W. Marvin Davis, compiler) - Dec. 22; 06:40 to 17:15. Partly cloudy all day; temp. 15° to 38°; wind SW, 5-15 mph. Reservoir quite low, little ice. Total party-hours, 39 (18 on foot, 21 by car); total party-miles, 167 (16 on foot, 151 by car).

On this count, first held in 1975, 87 species were recorded by 9 observers this year, compared with 79 by 1 observer last year. Highlights included an Eared Grebe, a Surf Scoter, and 3 Black Scoters (scoters present since early Nov.; distant but recognizable photos obtained - Marvin Davis). Other good birds were a Bewick's Wren, an Orange-crowned Warbler, and an impressive 7 Le Conte's Sparrows.

Grenada (W. Marvin Davis, compiler) - Dec. 27; 06:15 to 17:15. Mostly clear A.M., partly cloudy P.M.; temp. 31° to 63°; wind WNW, 15-25 mph. Reservoir quite low. Total party-hours, 20 (15 on foot, 5 by car); total party-miles, 133 (13 on foot, 120 by car).

No very unusual species seen; however, Common Goldeneye (7) was new to the count, and a Le Conte's Sparrow on the count and Orange-crowned Warbler in count week are worth noting.

Noxubee NWR (Jerome A. Jackson, compiler) - Dec. 18; 06:00 to 18:00. Clear all day; temp. 40° to 67°; wind variable, 0-2 mph. Total party-hours, 41.5 (25 on foot, 13.8 by car, 2.7 by aircraft); total party-miles, 138.5 plus (17.5 on foot, 121 by car, undetermined by aircraft).

This year's 91 species was the highest since this count was started in 1970. Four species were new to the count: Golden Eagle (1 imm.), Least Sandpiper (2), Bonaparte's Gull (1), and Solitary Vireo (1). Two other species, Le Conte's Sparrow (2) and White-crowned Sparrow (8), were seen for only the second time in 7 years. A White-fronted Goose and an imm. Whistling Swan were also seen during count week.

Washington Co., south (G. Edward Alexander, Jr., compiler) - Jan. 2; dawn to dusk. Cloudy all day, with intermittent rain and sleet; temp. about 24°; wind N, 15 mph. Total party-hours and party-miles not reported.

Although foul weather cut the species total to 81, Washington Co. had quantity if not quality. The total of 558,390 birds was nearly 4 times the combined total of the other 7 counts! This must have been one of few counts in the U.S. to list 4 species each numbering over 100,000 (Mallard, 118,478; Starling, 102,093; Red-winged Blackbird, 178,438; Common Grackle, 145,393). The Mallard count was 10 times last year's; other high waterfowl

counts were 2252 American Wigeon (112 last year) and 1600 Canvasbacks (5 last year). Unusual species included 11 White-fronted Geese, a House Wren, and 4 Pine Warblers (rare in the Delta).

Jackson (William Turcotte, compiler) - Jan. 1; 04:30 to 17:30. Mostly clear A.M., partly cloudy P.M.; temp. 17° to 36°; wind NW, 5-10 mph; fresh water partly frozen. Total party-hours, 54 (38 on foot, 16 by car); total party-miles, 271 (26 on foot, 245 by car).

Jackson posted a record high of 101 species this year - barely edging out Hattiesburg's 100 for the highest-ever inland CBC in the state. Jackson observers logged an Oldsquaw, 12 (!) Bald Eagles, an Osprey, a King Rail, and 2 Lincoln's Sparrows. High counts of commoner species included 348 Canvasbacks, 2075 Ruddy Ducks, an impressive 19 Barred Owls, 13 Orange-crowned Warblers (down from 21 last year, but still high), and 72 Pine Warblers.

Hattiesburg (Larry Gates, compiler) - Dec. 31. No details on weather, coverage, or number of observers.

The gem of Hattiesburg's list of 100 species was a male Vermilion Flycatcher, found at Johnson State Park by Cile Waite, Jean Freeman, and Nell Powers. (A scurrilous rumor is circulating that this bird was kidnapped from Washington Co., which had 3 Vermilions on Dec. 26, but could not find one on their count Jan. 2!) Several unusual species, including Eared Grebe (3), Blue-winged Teal (1), and Spotted Sandpiper (2), have been seen often enough in winter at Hattiesburg that they should probably be considered regular. Other Hattiesburg goodies were a Peregrine Falcon, a Franklin's Gull, 2 Ground Doves, 2 Bewick's Wrens, a Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher, and 2 Grasshopper Sparrows.

Hancock Co. (Judith Toups, compiler) - Dec. 29; 05:30 to 18:30. Clear, temp. about 40° to 70°. Total party-hours and party-miles not reported.

Congratulations are due the Hancock Co. group who found 140 species on their first count, highest count for the state except for the 145 species seen in Jackson Co. 11 days earlier. This high count was made despite missing several expected species (e.g., Semipalmated Plover, Least Sandpiper, dowitchers, Black Skimmer, Brewer's Blackbird). Best birds were probably a Magnolia Warbler (Larry Gates) and a Lincoln's Sparrow (Judith Toups); other highlights were an Osprey, 2 Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, 2 White-breasted Nuthatches, and a whopping 1462 Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warblers.

Jackson Co. (Larry Gates, compiler) - Dec. 18. No details on weather, coverage, or number of observers.

The total of 145 species, up 12 from last year, is a record for Mississippi, and not far from Alabama's high of 156 species on Dauphin I. in 1965. However, it could have been 147; a pond which had Redheads and Ring-necked Ducks the day before was visited on count day by a motorcyclist who frightened off all the ducks before observers could get there!

The count highlight was a Green-tailed Towhee reported from Bellefontaine Point by John Izral and Steve Peterson; as this species would be new for the state, we hope adequate details were recorded. Three unusual warblers were reported: Prothonotary (John Steen party), Yellow (Warren Garrott) and Magnolia (Cile Waite, Jean Freeman). Other noteworthy species were Anhinga, Osprey, Pectoral Sandpiper, American Avocet, Rough-winged and Barn Swallows, and a Dickcissel. Larry Gates also reported a Sprague's Pipit during count week.

Birds Around the State - Winter 1976-77

Compiled by Jerome A. Jackson and Wayne C. Weber

The following is a summary of noteworthy bird sightings in Mississippi (and some in immediately adjacent areas) by MOS members and friends for the period 1 December 1976 to 28 February 1977. These sightings include records of unusual species in the state, unusual numbers, and arrival and departure dates. A key to observers' names follows the list. Nearly all localities mentioned have been previously identified in the Mississippi Kite (6(1):19 and 6(2):54).

Note - The following abbreviations are used below: m = male; f = female; imm = immature; CBC = Christmas Bird Count.

- EARED GREBE -- 1, 22 Dec., Sardis L. CBC, WMD; 3, 31 Dec., Hattiesburg sewage ponds (Hattiesburg CBC), LG, JI.
- DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT -- 1, 18 Dec., Noxubee CBC, JAJ (lowest CBC count ever; no more than 1 seen at any time during winter).
- ANHINGA -- 1, 18 Dec., Jackson Co. CBC, LG.
- WHISTLING SWAN -- 1 imm., about 16 Dec. - 22 Jan., Noxubee NWR JAJ, JAS.
- CANADA GOOSE -- 1200, first half of Feb., Noxubee NWR, JAJ; 600, 27 Feb., Yazoo NWR, GEA & GA.
- WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE -- 1, 19 Dec., Noxubee NWR, WCW; 11, 2 Jan., Yazoo NWR (Washington Co. CBC).
- MALLARD -- 118,478, 2 Jan., Washington Co. CBC (nearly all on Yazoo NWR).
- BLACK DUCK -- 63, 22 Dec., Sardis L. CBC; 50 plus, 21 Jan., Oktibbeha Co. L., WCW; 50, 23 Jan., Sardis L., WMD, BBC & LC, WCW et al.
- MOTTLED DUCK -- 2, 29 Dec., Hancock Co. CBC.
- BLUE-WINGED TEAL -- 1, 31 Dec., Hattiesburg sewage ponds (Hattiesburg CBC), LG, JI; 2, 27 Feb. (early migrants?), 10 mi. s. of Greenville, GEA & GA.
- AMERICAN WIGEON -- 2252, 2 Jan., Washington Co. CBC.
- CANVASBACK -- 348, 1 Jan., Jackson CBC; 1600 (in one raft), 2 Jan., L. Washington (Washington Co. CBC); 150, 22 Jan., Noxubee NWR, WCW; 400, 23 Jan., Sardis L., WMD, BBC & LC, WCW et al.
- COMMON GOLDENEYE -- 7, 27 Dec., Grenada CBC (new to count); 18 (10 m, 8 f), 23 Jan., Sardis L., WMD, BBC & LC, WCW et al.