

## 2019 EMAS Birdathon Team Reports

### Not-so-Common Loons, 104 Species

In our fourth year of birdathoning, the Not-so-Common Loons covered 200 miles in Western North Carolina over 16 hours of birding. Using a completely different route this year, we observed 104 species of birds on 13 May 2019.

The team, consisting of John Koon, Alan Lenk, Bob Butler and Jay Wherley, spotted a House Sparrow before 5am at our meeting spot on the way to the bottom of Green River Cove Road. The reliable Chuck-wills-widow and Whip-poor-wills were calling clearly in the pre-dawn hours. At nearby Lake Adger and bridge we started with our first warblers of the day:

Prothonotary, Swainson's, Louisiana Waterthrush, Common Yellowthroat, and Northern Parula. Another nice pick-up here was Cliff Swallows. Heading back up Green River Cove Road got us Yellow and Kentucky Warblers, and several vireo species.

Our new route next took us to the Park at Flat Rock for the ongoing Virginia

Rail along with our first raptors of the day (Sharp-Shinned and Red-tailed Hawk). At this point our luck started running out. On our arrival at Hooper Lane, we just missed a handful of species of shorebirds. We settled for Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, and Willow Flycatcher. We did find one shorebird (Lesser Yellowlegs) at Schoolhouse Road location. We were unable to find a Eurasian Collared Dove at the usually reliable Mills River Ingles spot.



*L to r: Jay Wherley, Alan Lenk, Bob Butler, John Koon*

Hearing less than hour old reports of \*Connecticut\* and \*Wilson's\* Warblers being observed at the Brevard Hospital fields got us pumped up, but spending 30+ minutes on foot left us with no new warblers there. We did find a Great Egret at Ecusta Pond before heading up to the parkway. A couple of warblers (Blackburnian, Black-and-white) were spotted at the Pink Beds area. At Black Balsam we did add some high-altitude species (Canada Warbler, Hermit Thrush, Winter Wren and Dark-eyed Junco) but Devil's Courthouse provided no new species.

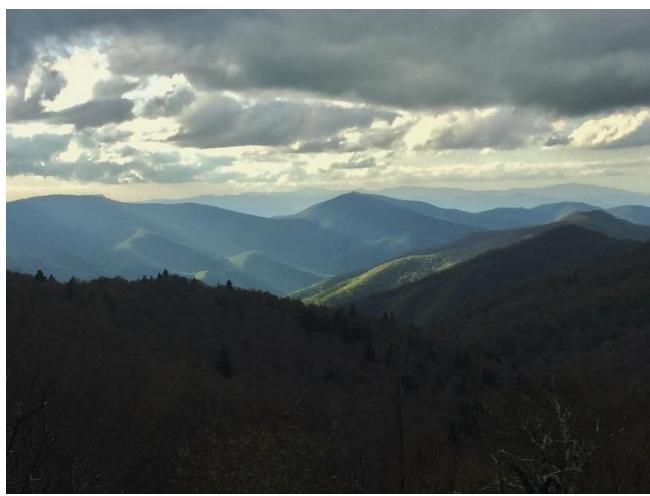
It was now heading towards 5pm, and while we picked up Rose-Breasted Grosbeak and Baltimore Oriole on the drive to Lake Junaluska, we still had not broken past 100 species. At Junaluska, we finally were able to pass that mark with Eastern Kingbird, Green Heron, and possibly the surprise bird of the day, our namesake Common Loon. Arriving at Beaver Lake in early evening, we were happy to add our last two species for the day: Swainson's Thrush and Brown-headed Nuthatch. A surprising miss for the day was Red-shouldered Hawk.

Despite the long day, we all had an enjoyable birding experience and are already thinking about improving strategies to better our count for next year. Congratulations to the other excellent teams and their strong efforts.

## Beaver Lake Bluebirds, 118 species

The Beaver Lake Bluebirds were determined to make a good showing for the 2019 Birdathon—and to raise money for conservation. Our team this year was Jamie Harrelson, Marianne Mooney, Tom Tribble, with Nancy Casey birding in the morning and Joe Sasfy taking over in the afternoon. We were all geared up for this year's birding marathon. Waking at an ungodly hour and meeting at 5 a.m., we began birding in the dark and kept it going until 10 p.m. From swamp lands to spruce forests, we searched for birds, logging 230 car miles, walking 8 miles, and gaining 5,000' in elevation. It was a whirlwind tour of Western NC's scenic spots, but we had little time to enjoy the view. We were on a birding mission!

Our first birds were tallied when we heard Chuck-will's-widow and Whippoorwills calling in the darkness. We all agreed that was a team highlight! After that, we had a great time ticking off many species singing at dawn down in the Green River Cove. Our list grew rapidly in the first few hours of daylight and then it became a daylong search for individual species. We ultimately were short on some key species including shorebirds and hawks but managed to get 27 species of warblers, which always makes up for some misses. Ending up on the Parkway, with our best weather ever, we enjoyed the high elevation species and a beautiful sunset.



*Black Balsam looking west*

bird nerds) who are as thrilled as I am to find and admire birds. We excitedly celebrated each and every new bird species we saw and heard... from Tufted Titmouse to Tennessee Warbler! What a fun day! Plus I'm really proud of the funds EMAS raises for bird conservation and the UNCA scholarship. EMAS members and supporters have been very generous over the years... we (and the birds!) thank you!



*I to r: Nancy, Jamie, Joe, Tom & Marianne*

Jamie Harrelson feels that "it's difficult to choose a favorite moment from a day filled with memorable birds and fun experiences with friends. The moment I'll remember most fondly, though, occurred during a short break. As we snacked and chatted about birds, I glanced over at Tom, who had a huge grin on his face. His expression of enjoyment summed up what I love most about Birdathon: spending a whirlwind day out in nature with birder friends who love the "hobby" just as much as I do! From Nancy Casey: There's nothing better than spending a day with good friends (fellow

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## The Peregrines: 136 species!

The Peregrines decided (well, maybe it had something to do with available time!) to run their Birdathon in mid-May. With Emilie Travis now in Florida, and Clifton Avery taking care of his son, Banks, the team comprised of Aaron Steed, Kevin Burke, Michael Plauche and Simon Thompson (who was surprisingly in town). The guys started pre-dawn to get some of those night-birds, such as Whip-poor-will and Chuck-will's-widow, but owls seemed to be absent this year. The lower elevations added some of those "tough" birds, such as Blue Grosbeak and Summer Tanager, but our stake-out Red-headed Woodpeckers failed to appear. Some local mud-flats had both Spotted and Solitary

Sandpipers and a handful of Least Sandpipers – one of the only other shorebirds seen that day. While meandering around our Henderson County hotspots, we received the text that 2 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were at Biltmore – what a nice gift! Willow Flycatcher, Grasshopper Sparrow and Yellow Warbler were added in the fields, and a real surprise was a single Baird's Sandpiper that was in a muddy muddle along Highway 191. Finding a single Bobolink at Biltmore was a relief, but the Warbling Vireos were strangely silent. A late Osprey was leaving one of the lakes and the obligatory Egyptian Geese, along with a very out-of-season female Black Duck (yes, it was very Black!!) were gracing Lake Julian. The higher reaches of the Blue Ridge were very good to us as we found a singing male Cerulean Warbler south along the Blue Ridge Parkway, along with Blackburnian, Canada and all of the rest of the expected species. An American Woodcock sitting alongside the Parkway was almost a casualty, but thankfully it flew out of the way in time!



I to r: Simon, Kevin, Aaron & Michael



We finished with 136 species, which may be a high count for us, and a nice total of 26 warblers. We didn't get a single species of owl and our shorebirds were paltry! The decision to do a count later than normal may have cost us some species, but that's a tough decision to make.

Thanks to everyone who helped us along the way and especially to those who sponsored the Birdathon. See you next year.

*See the Peregrine's full checklist below:*

**Full list (taxonomic) – 136 species**

1. Black-bellied Whistling-Duck
2. Canada Goose
3. Egyptian Goose
4. Wood Duck
5. Mallard
6. American Black Duck
7. Wild Turkey
8. Rock Pigeon
9. Eurasian Collared-Dove
10. Mourning Dove
11. Yellow-billed Cuckoo
12. Eastern Whip-poor-will
13. Chuck-will's Widow
14. Chimney Swift
15. Ruby-throated Hummingbird
16. Virginia Rail
17. American Coot
18. Killdeer
19. Baird's Sandpiper
20. Least Sandpiper
21. American Woodcock
22. Spotted Sandpiper
23. Solitary Sandpiper
24. Double-crested Cormorant
25. Great Blue Heron
26. Great Egret
27. Green Heron
28. Black Vulture
29. Turkey Vulture
30. Osprey
31. Coopers Hawk
32. Bald Eagle
33. Red-shouldered Hawk
34. Broad-winged Hawk
35. Red-tailed Hawk
36. Belted Kingfisher
37. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
38. Red-bellied Woodpecker
39. Downy Woodpecker
40. Hairy Woodpecker
41. Northern Flicker
42. Pileated Woodpecker
43. Eastern Wood-Pewee
44. Acadian Flycatcher
45. Alder Flycatcher
46. Willow Flycatcher
47. Least Flycatcher
48. Eastern Phoebe
49. Great Crested Flycatcher
50. Eastern Kingbird
51. White-eyed Vireo
52. Yellow-throated Vireo
53. Blue-headed Vireo
54. Red-eyed Vireo
55. Blue Jay
56. American Crow
57. Fish Crow
58. Common Raven
59. Northern Rough-winged Swallow
60. Purple Martin
61. Tree Swallow
62. Barn Swallow
63. Cliff Swallow
64. Carolina Chickadee
65. Black-capped Chickadee
66. Tufted Titmouse
67. Red-breasted Nuthatch
68. White-breasted Nuthatch
69. Brown-headed Nuthatch
70. Brown Creeper
71. House Wren
72. Winter Wren
73. Carolina Wren
74. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
75. Golden-crowned Kinglet
76. Eastern Bluebird
77. Veery
78. Swainson's Thrush
79. Hermit Thrush
80. Wood Thrush
81. American Robin
82. Gray Catbird
83. Brown Thrasher
84. Northern Mockingbird
85. European Starling
86. Cedar Waxwing
87. House Finch

- 88. American Goldfinch
- 89. Grasshopper Sparrow
- 90. Chipping Sparrow
- 91. Field Sparrow
- 92. Dark-eyed Junco
- 93. White-throated Sparrow
- 94. Song Sparrow
- 95. Eastern Towhee
- 96. Yellow-breasted Chat
- 97. Bobolink
- 98. Eastern Meadowlark
- 99. Orchard Oriole
- 100. Baltimore Oriole
- 101. Red-winged Blackbird
- 102. Brown-headed Cowbird
- 103. Common Grackle
- 104. Ovenbird
- 105. Worm-eating Warbler
- 106. Louisiana Waterthrush
- 107. Northern Waterthrush
- 108. Black-and-white Warbler
- 109. Prothonotary Warbler
- 110. Swainson's Warbler
- 111. Kentucky Warbler
- 112. Common Yellowthroat
- 113. Hooded Warbler
- 114. American Redstart
- 115. Cape May Warbler
- 116. Cerulean Warbler
- 117. Northern Parula
- 118. Bay-breasted Warbler
- 119. Blackburnian Warbler
- 120. Yellow Warbler
- 121. Chestnut-sided Warbler
- 122. Blackpoll Warbler
- 123. Black-throated Blue Warbler
- 124. Pine Warbler
- 125. Yellow-rumped Warbler
- 126. Yellow-throated Warbler
- 127. Prairie Warbler
- 128. Black-throated Green Warbler
- 129. Canada Warbler
- 130. Summer Tanager
- 131. Scarlet Tanager
- 132. Northern Cardinal
- 133. Rose-breasted Grosbeak
- 134. Blue Grosbeak
- 135. Indigo Bunting
- 136. House Sparrow