

## Not-so-Common Loons Birdathon 2022

In our sixth year of birdathoning, the Not-so-Common Loons covered 120+ miles in Western North Carolina during 15 hours of continuous birding. We worked from our successful 2021 route and ended up observing 125 species of birds on 11 May 2022.

The team, consisting of Casey Girard, John Koon, and Jay Wherley started out before sunrise in the Sandy Mush Gamelands along Bear Creek Road. The expected Eastern Whip-poor-wills were calling consistently. Casey soon picked out an unexpected Black-billed Cuckoo calling. As the sun rose we finally picked out a Yellow-breasted Chat vocalizing in the distance. By the time we left this location we had tallied 33 species – Good Start!

In the next-door Norco tract, we were greeting by a pair of American Kestrels sharing a meal. We could not find a single Blue-winged Warbler – possibly due to habitat changes there? John did pick out a drumming Ruffed Grouse, and we also got a few warblers and singing Blue Grosbeak.

On the drive to Beaver Lake Bird Sanctuary the Jarrett Farm Road provided Grasshopper Sparrow and Eastern Meadowlarks. Heading past the water treatment plant (Purple Martin colonies) Casey called out a perched hawk – Broad-winged! Many species were single observations for the day including this one. Ingles provided not only a bathroom stop – but the needed House Sparrow.

On to the Blue Ridge Parkway – with a relatively quick pickup of Cerulean Warbler just before Ox Creek Road. Most of the other high altitude birds fell into place – such as Least Flycatcher at Craggy Gardens Picnic area, Golden-crowned Kinglets at Walker Knob, and Peregrine Falcon near 128 intersection. At Bald Knob Ridge trailhead we had our first setback of the day, missing Brown Creeper and Winter Wren. We also repeated our annual miss of Red Crossbill.

On Curtis Creek Road we picked up our targets of Swainsons Warbler, Acadian Flycatcher, and Louisiana Warbler – though LOWA did not show until the very bottom of the road on the way out – phew!

The fields of Owen Park provided Bobolink and Jay found a Northern Waterthrush on the river trail. No Common Yellowthroat yet? We started to worry about this species.

We skipped Biltmore and headed straight to Lake Julian – picking up the “lock” Double-crested Cormorants and Egyptian Geese. On to Henderson County...

In Westfeldt park we finally had our Common Yellowthroat for the day, and the nesting Cliff Swallows. Could we score any birds at Hooper Lane? Yes – but only one new species, that being Savannah Sparrows.

I have to set the scene a bit for our next stop at Mills River Park. For some reason, we seem to pick up an unexpected species here most years. In the past we have had Least Sandpiper (2021) and Semipalmated Plover (2018) in pretty much the same exact location. After getting the expected Willow Flycatchers and Eurasian Collared Doves – John spotted this years bird-of-the-day: Scissor-tailed Flycatcher – in that same exact location! Not only a first bird-a-thon record, but a first Henderson County record.

Now sitting at 124 species, it didn't seem like we could crack our 2021 number of 127 species. We managed a flyover Wood Duck while searching for more species and that made our final total 125 species. Next years target again will be 130.

Main misses for the day were Palm Warbler, Winter Wren, Brown Creeper, and Osprey.

#### 125 Species:

Canada Goose  
Egyptian Goose  
Wood Duck  
Mallard  
Ruffed Grouse  
Wild Turkey  
Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon)  
Eurasian Collared-Dove  
Mourning Dove  
Black-billed Cuckoo  
Eastern Whip-poor-will  
Chimney Swift  
Ruby-throated Hummingbird  
American Coot  
Killdeer  
American Woodcock  
Spotted Sandpiper  
Solitary Sandpiper  
Double-crested Cormorant  
Great Blue Heron  
Great Egret  
Green Heron  
Black Vulture  
Bald Eagle  
Turkey Vulture  
Broad-winged Hawk  
Cooper's Hawk  
Red-shouldered Hawk  
Red-tailed Hawk  
Eastern Screech Owl  
Belted Kingfisher  
Red-bellied Woodpecker  
Downy Woodpecker  
Hairy Woodpecker  
Pileated Woodpecker  
Northern Flicker  
American Kestrel

Peregrine Falcon  
Eastern Wood-Pewee  
Acadian Flycatcher  
Willow Flycatcher  
Least Flycatcher  
Eastern Phoebe  
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher  
Great Crested Flycatcher  
Eastern Kingbird  
White-eyed Vireo  
Yellow-throated Vireo  
Blue-headed Vireo  
Red-eyed Vireo  
Blue Jay  
American Crow  
Fish Crow  
Common Raven  
Carolina Chickadee  
Tufted Titmouse  
Northern Rough-winged Swallow  
Purple Martin  
Tree Swallow  
Barn Swallow  
Cliff Swallow  
Golden-crowned Kinglet  
Red-breasted Nuthatch  
White-breasted Nuthatch  
Brown-headed Nuthatch  
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher  
House Wren  
Carolina Wren  
European Starling  
Gray Catbird  
Brown Thrasher  
Northern Mockingbird  
Eastern Bluebird  
Veery  
Swainson's Thrush  
Hermit Thrush  
Wood Thrush  
American Robin  
Cedar Waxwing  
House Sparrow  
House Finch  
American Goldfinch  
Grasshopper Sparrow  
Chipping Sparrow  
Field Sparrow  
Dark-eyed Junco  
Savannah Sparrow  
Song Sparrow  
Eastern Towhee  
Yellow-breasted Chat  
Eastern Meadowlark  
Orchard Oriole  
Baltimore Oriole  
Red-winged Blackbird

Brown-headed Cowbird  
Common Grackle  
Ovenbird  
Worm-eating Warbler  
Louisiana Waterthrush  
Northern Waterthrush  
Black-and-white Warbler  
Swainson's Warbler  
Kentucky Warbler  
Common Yellowthroat  
Orange-crowned Warbler  
Hooded Warbler  
American Redstart  
Cerulean Warbler  
Northern Parula  
Magnolia Warbler  
Blackburnian Warbler  
Chestnut-sided Warbler  
Blackpoll Warbler  
Black-throated Blue Warbler  
Pine Warbler  
Yellow-rumped Warbler  
Yellow-throated Warbler  
Prairie Warbler  
Black-throated Green Warbler  
Canada Warbler  
Scarlet Tanager  
Northern Cardinal  
Rose-breasted Grosbeak  
Blue Grosbeak  
Indigo Bunting