

Christmas Bird Count 2013 at Heritage Oaks

by Frances and Peter Rice

Every year across North America, the Audubon Society conducts Christmas Bird Counts (CBC). The Sarasota chapter of the Audubon Society coordinates this effort in northern Sarasota County. On Saturday, January 5, 2013, we performed a "backyard" Christmas Bird Count here at Heritage Oaks Golf & Country Club. The following is a summary of our bird count and further below is the complete list of the bird species we observed.

We counted a total of 44 species. We saw two Red-headed Woodpeckers, which we have not seen previously on CBCs at Heritage Oaks. Among the birds we counted were nine Roseate Spoonbills, 264 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks and six Limpkins—all the highest numbers we have seen of these species during CBCs at HOGCC.

Not found were the usual Rock Pigeons, nor the House Sparrows that normally congregate around one home near the north end of Chase Oaks Drive.

Our local rare birds are the White-winged Doves. Heritage Oaks is the only place where they can be reliably seen in Sarasota County. These birds are seen usually at dusk and dawn during the winter. They perch together along Bee Ridge Road Extension, on the wires or in a tree, often about 200 yards/meters south of the main entrance to HOGCC. For the rest of the year, they spread out and some have been seen several miles away. In previous years, we have counted as many as 38, this year we saw 14.

Here is our complete list of bird species seen: 8 Pied-billed Grebes; 2 American White Pelicans; 49 Double-crested Cormorants; 19 Anhingas; 3 Great Blue Herons; 9 Great Egrets; 2 Tricolored Herons; 3 Little Blue Heron; 7 Snowy Egrets; 1 Black-crowned Night-Heron; 2 Wood Storks; 27 White Ibis; 55 Glossy Ibis; 9 Roseate Spoonbills; 264 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks; 15 Green-winged Teals; 13 Mottled Ducks; 17 Blue-winged Teals; 14 Hooded Mergansers; 2 Black Vultures; 2 Turkey Vultures; 1 Osprey; 2 Red-shouldered Hawks; 11 Sandhill Cranes; 6 Limpkins; 11 Common Gallinules (formerly Common Moorhen); 3 American Coots; 1 Killdeer; 1 Laughing Gull; 5 Mourning Doves; 14 White-winged Doves; 1 Belted Kingfisher; 1 Great Horned Owl; 5 Gray Catbirds; 6 Northern Mockingbirds; 2 Loggerhead Shrikes; 1 American Crow; 25 Yellow-rumped Warblers; 33 Palm Warblers; 1 Northern Cardinal; 41 Boat-tailed Grackles; 10 Common Grackles; 250+ Brown-headed Cowbird; and 2 Red-headed Woodpeckers.

For more information about the Sarasota Audubon Society chapter visit their website at: <http://www.sarasotaaudubon.org/> . For Sarasota (SRQ) area rare bird alert Emails, visit the website at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SRQbirdAlerts/> to sign up for the SRQ rare bird alerts Emails moderated by Peter Rice, or contact him at RiceRFPF@msn.com

Christmas Bird Count 2011 at Heritage Oaks

by Frances and Peter Rice

Every year near the end of December, Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) are conducted across North America. In northern Sarasota County this is coordinated by the Sarasota chapter of the Audubon Society. As part of this effort, we performed a "backyard" Christmas Bird Count here at Heritage Oaks Golf & Country Club. Further below is the complete list of the bird species we observed.

This year, we noticed fewer species and a smaller number of birds. We surmise that this lower bird count was due to milder weather for much of North America during the autumn and winter, prior to early January. This mild weather up North likely resulted in many birds delaying their migration south. Not found were a couple of Limpkins that we have spotted from time to time along the shores of our ponds. Also, for the first time, we did not find the usual House Sparrows congregating around one home near the north end of Chase Oaks Drive. An interesting bird we did see is a Great Horned Owl. Notably, during October and November, two of them spent many nights on top of our house, loudly hooting.

Our local specialty are the White-winged Doves. They usually are seen at dusk and dawn during the winter perched together in large numbers along Bee Ridge Road Extension on the wires or in a tree. For the rest of the year, they spread out, and some have been seen several miles away. In previous years, we have counted as many as 38, but this year we saw 20.

Here is our complete list of bird species seen: Sandhill Crane 4, Mottled Duck 4, Tree Swallow 23, Double-crested Cormorant 8, Wood Stork 1, Anhinga 17, Pied-billed Grebe 3, Little Blue Heron 4, Tricolored Heron 5, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck 20, Hooded Merganser 11, Snowy Egret 2, Northern Mockingbird 6, White Ibis 17, Osprey 5, Northern Cardinal 3, Palm Warbler 7, Common Gallinule (formerly Common Moorhen) 10, Turkey Vulture 1, Great Blue Heron 5, American Crow 1, Glossy Ibis 2, Black Vulture 3, Green-winged Teal 3, Great Egret 1, Spotted Sandpiper 1, Mourning Dove 3, Belted Kingfisher 1, Yellow-rumped Warbler 2, Pileated Woodpecker 1, Red-bellied Woodpecker 2, Boat-tailed Grackle 1, Great Horned Owl 1, Pine Warbler 2, Red-shouldered Hawk 1, Mallard 9, and White-winged Dove 20.

For more information about the Sarasota Audubon Society chapter visit <http://www.sarasotaudubon.org/> and for SRQ area rare bird alert Emails visit <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SRQbirdAlerts/>

Christmas Bird Count 2009 for Heritage Oaks

Frances & Peter Rice

The Audubon Society's 2009 Christmas Bird Count (CBC) for Heritage Oaks was conducted on Saturday, January 2, 2010. This was a cold (for here) and windy day, conditions that likely caused almost all small birds to stay hidden deeply in the bush for warmth. Not found during this CBC are the approximate 35 to 40 white-winged doves that are seen typically between Mahogany Run and Bee Ridge Road Extension, but not elsewhere in Sarasota County. A rare sighting were two limpkins. They are shore-feeding birds with a straight bill and muted brown colors, similar in size to white ibis. Those who are interested in seeing a limpkin, may find one that is occasionally seen in the marsh just inside our main gate. The other limpkin can be seen either in the marsh off Samoset Drive across from the mound of the eight tee, or along the edge of the long pond adjacent to the second hole.

More information about birds and bird watching in Sarasota County is available from the Sarasota Audubon Society at:

<http://www.SarasotaAudubon.org><<http://www.sarasotaaudubon.org/>> and SRQ Rare Bird Alerts at:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SRQbirdAlerts/><<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SRQbirdAlerts/>>

To receive the SRQ Rare Bird Alert Emails please send an Email to: SRQbirdAlerts-subscribe@Yahooogroups.com<<mailto:SRQbirdAlerts-subscribe@Yahooogroups.com>>

While not part of the CBC at Heritage Oaks, a visit to Rothenbach Park on Sunday, January 3rd, resulted in discovering about 25 killdeers in the grass and 100 American robins perched in the trees along Bee Ridge Road Extension.

Below are the numbers of the species of birds seen on the CBC at Heritage Oaks.

1 Least Grebe
37 Double-crested Cormorant
11 Anhinga
8 Great Blue Heron
7 Great Egret
4 Tricolored Heron
5 Little Blue Heron
6 Snowy Egret
2 Black-crowned Night-Heron
3 Wood Stork
16 White Ibis
3 Glossy Ibis
8 Mottled Duck
5 Blue-winged Teal
27 Hooded Merganser
1 Black Vulture
11 Turkey Vulture
3 Osprey

1 Bald Eagle
2 Red-shouldered Hawk
10 Sandhill Crane
2 Limpkin
20 Common Moorhen
31 American Coot
1 Mourning Dove
1 Belted Kingfisher
1 Red-bellied Woodpecker
200 Tree Swallow
1 Gray Catbird
2 Northern Mockingbird
3 Palm Warbler
10 Savannah Sparrow
1 Northern Cardinal
32 Boat-tailed Grackle
35 Common Grackle

Christmas Bird Count 2007 at Heritage Oaks

by Peter & Frances Rice

The 2007 Christmas Bird Count came to Heritage Oaks on Saturday, January 5, 2008. We saw the species and numbers of birds listed below. This count is part of a North America wide effort to track the population of birds and learn more about changes in their numbers.

The **twenty White-winged Doves** were seen at 5:15 PM on the wires and in three trees along Bee Ridge Road Extension about 1,000 feet north of Coash Lane. These White-winged Doves seem to be the only representatives of their species in Sarasota County. They seem to come together in this spot late in the day, only during the winter. During the rest of the year we only occasionally see one or two.

Almost all of the Red-wing Blackbirds were together in two large trees next to the Coash Lane gate. This year unlike in past years, we saw no gulls, terns, nor shorebirds (other than for the Killdeer). There were likely many more Yellow-rumped Warblers than we counted. Until about a month ago we typically had fifty to hundred Black-bellied Whistling Ducks on the compound during the day (they all seemed to leave shortly after sunset each day flying off toward the south-east), but we saw none today nor recently.

I maintain the **SRQ Rare Bird Alerts** E-mails that one may subscribe to by sending an E-mail to **SRQbirdAlerts@YahooGroups.com** and learn more about by visiting: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SRQbirdAlerts/>

More information about the Sarasota Audubon Society may be found at:
<http://www.SarasotaAudubon.org>

Least Grebe - 1
Double-crested Cormorant - 47
Anhinga - 15
Great Blue Heron - 9
Great Egret - 10
Tricolored Heron - 6
Little Blue Heron - 4
Snowy Egret - 3
Black-crowned Night-Heron - 5
Wood Stork - 5
White Ibis - 34
Glossy Ibis - 25
Mottled Duck - 23
Blue-winged Teal - 115
Hooded Merganser - 8
Black Vulture - 1
Turkey Vulture - 1
Osprey - 1
Red-shouldered Hawk - 1
Sandhill Crane - 9
Common Moorhen - 107
American Coot - 3
Killdeer - 2
Rock Dove - 1
Eurasian Collared-Dove - 3
Mourning Dove - 42
White-winged Dove - 20
Belted Kingfisher - 4
Red-bellied Woodpecker - 3
Tree Swallow - 100
Gray Catbird - 3
Northern Mockingbird - 8
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - 1
Loggerhead Shrike - 1
Blue Jay - 2
Yellow-rumped Warbler - 80
Palm Warbler - 26
Black-and-white Warbler - 8
Red-winged Blackbird - 96
Boat-tailed Grackle - 21