

Choctawhatchee Bay 2025 Christmas Bird Count Summary

Legend:

'cw' (count week) means the species was sighted three days before or after count day, but not on count day.

Red background species were seen at least five times in the last 10 counts, but not in this year's count.

Blue background species were unusual sightings in 2025.

The CBCs column is the number of Christmas Bird Counts in the last ten years that recorded the species. The data is filtered to show species that were sighted this year, and species not sighted this year that were seen in at least 5 of the last 10 years.

The year 2025 column color is the number of standard deviations (StdDev, not shown) that our 2025 count differs from the average of the last 10 CBC's. StdDev is a statistical term for variability; if we see roughly the same number of a particular species every year, the StdDev for that species will be near zero. Example for Double-crested Cormorant: The average is 1185 and the standard deviation is 700. We only saw 153 DCCO's this year, which is $(1185 - 153) / 700 = 1.5$ standard deviations less than the average.

< -1.5 -1.5 to -0.5 -0.5 to 0.5 0.5 to 1.5 > 1.5

The trend column is the percentage change per year from the 10 year average, not including 2025. Example for Great Egret: The 10-year average is 35.1 birds/year, and the trend is +11%. In this case, 11% of 35.1 is 3.9. We are seeing an increase of about 4 Great Egrets per year over the last 10 years. Trends are shown for species with an average yearly count of 10 or more. Yellow indicates a negative trend, and green indicates a positive trend.

< 0.0 > 0.0

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	CBCs	10-year Avg	2025	Trend
Participants	45	42	43	28	38	31	40	33	39	28		34		
Hours	130	122	119	82	103	81	91	82	80	84		71		
Total Species	135	126	133	131	125	125	122	120	130	120		127	120	
Canada Goose	0	0	60	1	79	60	44	40	60	74	8	41.8	1	16%
Muscovy Duck	8	6	20	2	16	4	7	15	1	0	9	7.9	14	
Wood Duck	0	2	2	12	6	2	2	4	0	0	7	3.0	1	
Gadwall	8	11	14	10	1	0	0	0	1	1	7	4.6	0	
American Black Duck	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0		cw
Mallard	42	104	49	82	111	18	23	9	6	37	10	48.1	40	-15%
Blue-winged Teal	0	6	15	2	0	1	1	18	0	3	7	4.6	0	
Green-winged Teal	62	0	18	0	0	0	2	16	17	19	6	13.4	0	-12%
Canvasback	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.3	1	
Redhead	49	26	19	30	1	6	4	12	0	5	9	15.2	0	-27%
Ring-necked Duck	47	54	51	cw	23	0	19	12	7	2	8	21.5	18	-28%
Greater Scaup	0	0	88	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	3	9.3	1	
Lesser Scaup	181	3	250	75	17	128	90	66	230	52	10	109.2	40	-2%
Black Scoter	60	6	6	28	0	1	0	cw	7	11	7	11.9	0	-27%
Bufflehead	576	400	436	300	162	143	190	370	200	104	10	288.1	126	-13%
Hooded Merganser	88	118	87	45	16	26	74	65	56	33	10	60.8	107	-9%
Red-breasted Merganser	173	168	185	108	36	47	86	23	110	44	10	98.0	23	-15%
Wild Turkey	0	3	0	0	0	11	0	4	0	3	4	2.1	8	
Common Loon	376	220	138	450	98	82	157	132	166	62	10	188.1	95	-13%
Pied-billed Grebe	92	80	92	56	56	49	42	43	53	48	10	61.1	59	-9%
Horned Grebe	200	34	32	31	6	12	6	14	29	29	10	39.3	18	-27%
Sooty Shearwater	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0		cw
Northern Gannet	10	8	16	9	28	18	4	2	47	5	10	14.7		cw 5%
Double-crested Cormorant	1300	1200	730	2700	1520	630	1100	1700	825	147	10	1185.2	153	-7%
Anhinga	1	0	0	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	5	0.6	3	
American White Pelican	320	1	19	1	425	15	0	0	0	0	6	78.1	50	-26%
Brown Pelican	750	780	340	1100	325	245	435	535	600	488	10	559.8	630	-5%
Great Blue Heron	113	103	122	118	125	89	104	110	113	100	10	109.7	71	-1%
Great Egret	22	21	22	12	37	55	35	48	58	41	10	35.1	59	11%
Snowy Egret	11	2	4	3	1	3	3	4	10	2	10	4.3	24	
Green Heron	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	4	3	5	1.1	0	

Species	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	CBCs	Avg	2025	Trend
Black-crowned Night-Heron	20	9	11	0	9	8	5	12	15	12	9	10.1	11	-1%
White Ibis	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	cw	
Black Vulture	54	81	30	9	6	6	59	79	5	0	9	32.9	4	-11%
Turkey Vulture	225	114	61	25	32	29	165	160	65	53	10	92.9	38	-6%
Osprey	44	36	52	41	36	31	48	37	40	51	10	41.6	44	0%
Northern Harrier	5	3	1	4	2	3	0	3	2	1	9	2.4	cw	
Cooper's Hawk	11	3	7	8	9	3	7	4	10	2	10	6.4	cw	
Bald Eagle	20	28	15	19	7	9	3	11	9	9	10	13.0	5	-14%
Red-shouldered Hawk	23	9	19	27	10	23	21	26	29	16	10	20.3	20	3%
Red-tailed Hawk	19	10	6	9	4	5	1	3	1	5	10	6.3	4	
King Rail	2	0	0	0	4	0	0	1	2	1	5	1.0	1	
Virginia Rail	4	2	1	4	3	1	1	3	5	0	9	2.4	2	
Sora	6	3	6	11	9	2	3	4	7	4	10	5.5	1	
Common Gallinule	1	0	1	16	2	3	4	0	2	1	8	3.0	2	
American Coot	235	114	146	150	137	57	250	76	135	88	10	138.8	36	-6%
Black-bellied Plover	4	6	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	4	5	1.9	4	
Snowy Plover	12	9	5	8	5	7	0	11	10	9	9	7.6	13	
Killdeer	40	108	33	38	41	45	0	33	14	10	9	36.2	82	-17%
Spotted Sandpiper	0	0	2	2	3	1	2	0	4	2	7	1.6	1	
Greater Yellowlegs	9	16	0	2	2	1	11	15	17	cw	8	7.3	13	
Willet	24	8	7	7	5	5	0	21	49	12	9	13.8	4	10%
Ruddy Turnstone	5	7	5	1	2	10	9	27	24	22	10	11.2	7	22%
Sanderling	210	200	100	119	101	140	142	127	327	201	10	166.7	263	4%
Dunlin	1	0	2	3	1	1	2	0	9	1	8	2.0	cw	
Least Sandpiper	53	36	0	105	45	93	88	93	70	111	9	69.4	150	11%
Short-/Long-billed Dowitcher	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	2	
Wilson's Snipe	35	13	38	1	2	3	8	35	10	1	10	14.6	1	-13%
Bonaparte's Gull	40	134	80	72	5	37	11	350	185	88	10	100.2	431	12%
Laughing Gull	1300	720	525	580	475	375	320	500	350	583	10	572.8	249	-11%
Ring-billed Gull	300	200	250	115	97	55	49	36	70	85	10	125.7	120	-20%
American Herring Gull	150	6	79	28	38	20	45	12	72	23	10	47.3	5	-13%
Forster's Tern	48	120	54	26	9	47	34	43	105	47	10	53.3	8	-1%
Royal Tern	17	8	31	11	52	34	49	37	47	44	10	33.0	37	12%
Sandwich Tern	5	2	2	0	5	0	7	6	4	1	8	3.2	2	
Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon)	215	250	400	240	350	100	166	180	209	63	10	217.3	129	-9%
Eurasian Collared-Dove	275	150	250	24	37	21	9	13	25	18	10	82.2	15	-33%
White-winged Dove	32	7	64	8	11	3	2	3	4	6	10	14.0	19	-25%
Mourning Dove	1000	550	800	320	350	100	221	130	444	261	10	417.6	193	-16%
Eastern Screech-Owl	2	0	3	1	0	2	3	0	2	3	7	1.6	3	
Great Horned Owl	7	1	4	4	3	2	3	4	0	1	9	2.9	5	
Barred Owl	1	1	3	2	1	1	4	2	0	1	9	1.6	0	
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	1	2	0	5	0.7	1	
Rufous Hummingbird	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0.2	1	
Belted Kingfisher	33	27	17	19	20	9	23	23	23	16	10	21.0	25	-4%
Red-headed Woodpecker	6	4	0	6	0	0	2	0	1	0	5	1.9	2	
Red-bellied Woodpecker	87	52	54	58	51	14	41	59	77	27	10	52.0	50	-5%
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	17	4	6	13	6	3	3	2	5	4	10	6.3	5	
Downy Woodpecker	32	26	30	18	28	29	26	36	37	27	10	28.9	32	2%
Red Cockaded Woodpecker	5	4	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	4	1.3	1	
Northern Flicker	17	14	6	7	3	1	4	3	2	4	10	6.1	5	
Pileated Woodpecker	1	7	1	2	3	4	2	5	3	1	10	2.9	4	
American Kestrel	33	25	20	18	16	17	17	13	12	8	10	17.9	9	-12%
Merlin	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	cw	5	0.5	0	
Eastern Phoebe	86	43	61	65	61	41	49	39	48	47	10	54.0	47	-6%
Vermilion Flycatcher	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	5	0.6	1	
Western Kingbird	2	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	2	0	4	0.7	1	
Loggerhead Shrike	7	6	6	3	2	3	7	4	2	5	10	4.5	2	
White-eyed Vireo	3	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	3	6	1.0	0	

Species	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	CBCs	Avg	2025	Trend
Blue-headed Vireo	4	8	9	3	4	5	2	0	5	5	9	4.5	1	
Blue Jay	300	115	200	205	77	65	75	127	147	59	10	137.0	105	-12%
American Crow	59	74	230	50	47	51	54	103	94	19	10	78.1	20	-7%
Fish Crow	8	5	53	12	5	3	5	8	1	9	10	10.9	34	-15%
Tree Swallow	0	0	35	17	3	97	63	0	1	3	7	21.9	5	3%
Carolina Chickadee	157	107	179	117	106	145	138	125	162	106	10	134.2	101	-1%
Tufted Titmouse	88	29	73	55	43	42	40	31	62	32	10	49.5	37	-6%
Red-breasted Nuthatch	0	4	0	7	0	4	1	0	0	4	5	2.0	0	
Brown-headed Nuthatch	46	28	26	35	19	19	18	15	18	22	10	24.6	31	-10%
Northern House Wren	20	6	16	18	6	9	7	10	4	3	10	9.9	4	
Sedge Wren	1	0	2	5	0	0	4	2	1	0	6	1.5	0	
Marsh Wren	14	3	15	6	6	4	4	7	5	1	10	6.5	6	
Carolina Wren	84	150	92	50	49	65	60	48	100	41	10	73.9	58	-7%
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	8	3	9	5	10	10	19	17	16	18	10	11.5	7	14%
Golden-crowned Kinglet	4	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	2	10	5	2.0	3	
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	94	41	65	36	28	20	38	51	59	79	10	51.1	35	-1%
Eastern Bluebird	200	178	196	220	166	213	215	202	275	92	10	195.7	120	-1%
Hermit Thrush	13	9	12	14	8	5	2	2	10	11	10	8.6	8	
American Robin	215	1300	145	1500	69	211	5	12	83	44	10	358.4	11	-25%
Gray Catbird	13	12	40	28	29	16	25	19	20	25	10	22.7	20	1%
Brown Thrasher	24	1	32	4	7	14	8	9	28	8	10	13.5	6	-2%
Northern Mockingbird	270	107	200	131	117	59	55	58	71	36	10	110.4	75	-18%
European Starling	1300	1110	675	1800	850	177	850	350	271	326	10	770.9	110	-16%
American Pipit	8	30	0	20	25	0	0	35	1	cw	6	11.9	1	-5%
Cedar Waxwing	220	16	42	131	128	25	52	160	61	25	10	86.0	76	-8%
Black-and-white Warbler	0	2	1	2	1	0	1	3	0	3	7	1.3	5	
Orange-crowned Warbler	9	7	14	8	12	16	9	6	13	11	10	10.5	13	2%
Common Yellowthroat	5	2	4	7	4	1	13	9	11	3	10	5.9	11	
Palm Warbler	140	25	114	45	51	82	39	66	60	14	10	63.6	60	-11%
Pine Warbler	280	235	115	111	250	81	65	61	51	27	10	127.6	20	-20%
Yellow-rumped Warbler	700	1050	1400	600	650	300	260	550	450	260	10	622.0	328	-13%
Yellow-throated Warbler	1	2	3	0	1	2	0	1	2	2	8	1.4	1	
Grasshopper Sparrow	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	4	0.7	4	
Chipping Sparrow	420	212	350	150	290	70	70	285	273	28	10	214.8	9	-11%
Field Sparrow	16	3	7	0	24	0	1	0	0	0	5	5.1	cw	
White-crowned Sparrow	7	5	7	18	0	1	1	0	0	0	6	3.9	12	
White-throated Sparrow	34	4	5	6	5	2	2	4	18	17	10	9.7	2	
Vesper Sparrow	72	39	38	14	11	1	17	5	11	6	10	21.4	7	-27%
Savannah Sparrow	87	43	167	74	128	42	32	48	22	55	10	69.8	25	-11%
Song Sparrow	50	18	44	23	37	41	25	37	14	14	10	30.3	16	-8%
Swamp Sparrow	27	12	26	7	24	7	15	6	16	9	10	14.9	24	-9%
Eastern Towhee	37	12	32	20	16	28	37	10	16	27	10	23.5	11	-3%
Northern Cardinal	0	117	230	140	101	106	86	88	194	66	9	112.8	81	1%
Red-winged Blackbird	215	43	125	141	225	66	92	41	106	74	10	112.8	48	-8%
Eastern Meadowlark	75	52	9	41	60	65	26	42	44	17	10	43.1	69	-6%
Rusty Blackbird	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.9	1	
Common Grackle	5	40	1	6	13	4	7	0	4	3	9	8.3	64	
Brown-headed Cowbird	13	25	64	1	77	1	109	12	3	7	10	31.2	67	-4%
House Finch	120	33	60	100	150	105	106	33	67	25	10	79.9	67	-6%
American Goldfinch	17	4	35	128	16	16	5	13	20	2	10	25.6	12	-12%
House Sparrow	31	38	94	15	57	70	45	33	90	58	10	53.1	44	5%

Notes:

This year we fielded 21 teams of one to five persons, with a total of 34 participants. This was a large improvement over last year (16 teams, 28 participants). There were 9 'paper' checklists and 80 eBird checklists submitted for the Christmas Bird Count (CBC). The 120 species we recorded on count day was the same total as last year, and at the low end of the numbers we've recorded in the last 10 years (120 to 135). We did well on common species for our area, and had three unusual sightings, defined as fewer than three records in the last 10 counts. These were Canvasback (last counted in 2018), Rufous Hummingbird (2020), and Rusty Blackbird (2015). We also had some very unusual sightings during the count week, which runs from three days before to three days after the count day. These included American Black Duck, last observed in the 1982 count, and Sooty Shearwater, which had never been seen before during our count. Our teams covered all of the count circle regions, with limited coverage only in area 9 (Niceville north), which was better than last year.

There were several species that I hoped to record this year, after we missed them in last year's count. This year we found Wood Duck, Black Vulture, Red-headed Woodpecker, and White-crowned Sparrow. We missed again on Sedge Wren and Field Sparrow. Field Sparrow was a count-week bird, and Sedge Wren was seen a week prior to the count. The only species recorded on the last 10 CBC's that was not sighted on count day this year was Northern Gannet. There was a Gannet sighting during the count week.

Other notes and observations:

- The averages and trends in the chart above were not adjusted for 'effort', that is the number of teams we had, and how much time they spent in the field. More teams = bigger count numbers expected. We were missing a couple of our regular counters this year, but added many new people as well. Our hours in the field were down a little, likely because more of the time data came from eBird checklists than paper checklists this year. Overall our effort this year was better than the last five years, but less than we had ten years ago.
- The trend for most species is negative. Some of this is doubtless due to habitat loss within our 15 mile circle, especially in Destin. Warmer-than-normal weather also reduces the need for many migratory species to fly all the way down to the Gulf coast for the winter. For our count, the numbers of ducks, grebes, loons, and mergansers in particular are declining. The exception to this rule was Hooded Merganser, which was present in much higher numbers than the 10-year average. About a third of the Hooded Mergansers were found in the FWB North area, which we haven't covered very well in recent years. This demonstrates that while 'effort' (time in the field) is needed to find birds, 'looking in the right place' is equally important.
- Our numbers for shorebirds were generally average or better than average again this year. Sanderling and Least Sandpiper numbers were particularly strong, and shorebird trends were also mostly positive. Many shorebirds migrate very far south (for example, there are Sanderlings in southern Argentina this month), so perhaps more are stopping here to enjoy a mild Florida winter.
- Species with very low counts relative to the 10-year average were Great Blue Heron, Sora, American Coot, Eastern Bluebird, and Chipping Sparrow. All of these have a "Least Concern" conservation status. For most of these species, I don't have enough detailed data from previous counts to identify where they have gone missing in our count circle. One exception is American Coot; we had 42 at the Okaloosa Landfill last year and none this year. The pond at the landfill has been decreasing in size for a few years, and was just a muddy spot during this year's count.
- The Vermilion Flycatcher at the FWB Rec Center was recorded for the sixth time. Since he first appeared as an adult in 2019, he must be at least 7.5 years old now (I am boldly assuming this is the same bird coming back year after year). According to 'Birds of the World,' only one Vermilion Flycatcher has ever been banded and later recovered; that bird was 5.5 years old when recaptured.

Thank-you to everyone who participated this year, and I hope to see you back next year! Please read on below to see photographs from our count.

Jim Anderton
Choctawhatchee Bay Christmas Count Compiler

Holding ponds (Jim Anderton except as noted)

American Pipit



Brown-headed Cowbird



Song Sparrow



Grasshopper Sparrow



White-crowned Sparrow (Roger Cook)



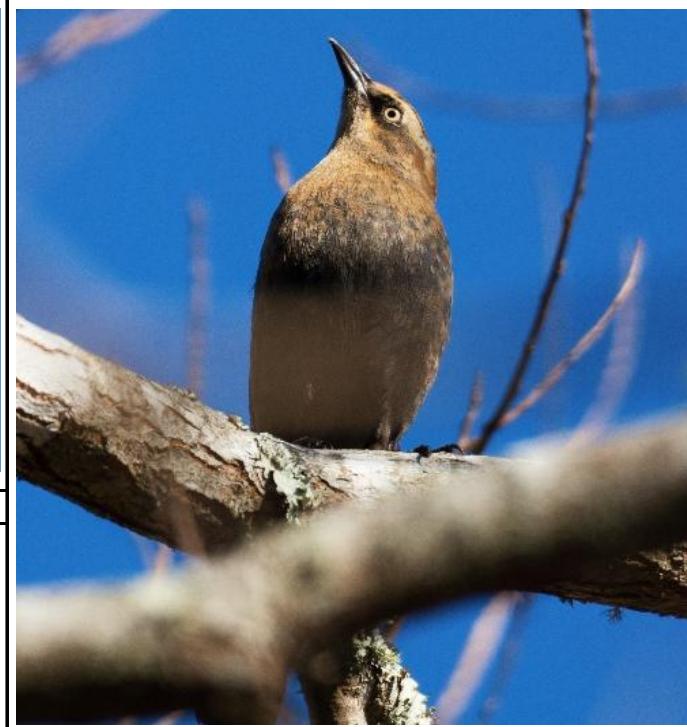
Savannah Sparrow



Eglin Range Red-headed Woodpecker (Jim Anderton)



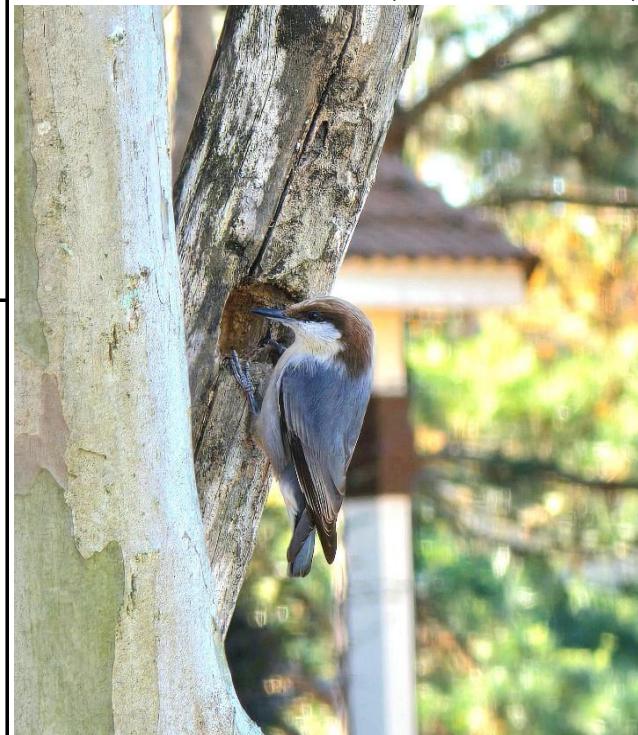
FWB North Rusty Blackbird (Chelsea Rollins)



Okaloosa Island Sanderlings (Jordan Wingate)



Destin Brown-headed Nuthatch (Kevin van der Leest)



Shalimar (Carol Porch)

Hooded Merganser



Northern Cardinal



Snowy Egret



Red-winged Blackbird



Horned Grebe



Duck hunter with decoys



Niceville Hummingbirds (Roger Cook)

Ruby-throated



Rufous/Allen's



Swift Creek Rufous Hummingbird (Jim Anderton)



East Jetty Canvasback (Bruce Purdy)



Okaloosa Landfill (Doug Adkisson)
American Kestrel



Eastern Phoebe



Eastern Meadowlark



Wilson's Snipe



Okaloosa Holding Ponds Western Kingbird



West Jetty Snowy Plover (Adam Pickos)



Bluewater Bay / White Point (Jill Smith)

Eastern Bluebird



Jill Smith @ Nature Made Photography

Pileated Woodpecker



Jill Smith @ Nature Made Photography

Yellow-rumped Warbler



Jill Smith @ Nature Made Photography

Eastern Phoebe



Jill Smith @ Nature Made Photography

Common Loon



Jill Smith @ Nature Made Photography

Palm Warbler



Jill Smith @ Nature Made Photography