# 2026 Johnson County Spring Migration Count

**Chris Caster**

This year's Spring Migration Count was held on the 9th of May. It was a perfect morning to be birding – at sunrise the temperature was 49 degrees, it was sunny, and there was little wind. At about 10 a.m. the wind picked up and blew pretty steadily for the rest of the day at 15 to 20 mph. When flushed, birds were more likely to duck into cover than sit in the open. It was still great to be out and it never got above 75 degrees. We met for lunch at the North Liberty Community Center at 1 p.m. rather than the usual noon. Lengthening our morning is something we will probably do again. But those birding in the afternoon added much to our species totals, and we had one of our better days. Our species count was 169. We have averaged closer to 160 in recent years. We had 11 species of waterfowl, 19 shorebirds, and 23 warblers.

We had three species never recorded on the Spring Count: a Ross's Goose was still enjoying the pond at North Ridge Park in Coralville; six Black-bellied Whistling Ducks were at the pond next to the new UIHC clinic on Forevergreen Road; and a Nelson's Sparrow was found at a prairie pothole project along Swan Lake Road at Hawkeye Wildlife Area (HWA). This last location is well west of Round Pond, just before the corner that turns north, along the south side of the road. Many Sora, a Swamp Sparrow, and two Marsh Wrens were also found there. Northern Bobwhite, Bobolink, and Savannah Sparrows were nearby. This location often has Sedge Wrens. I do not know if a name has been given to it, but it is usually a productive stop.

There were a number of other seldom-found birds. A Virginia Rail was at Cedar River Crossing. A White-faced Ibis, a Trumpeter Swan, and a Snow Goose were found at HWA along Amana Road. A Merlin was at Hickory Hill Park (HHP). A Kentucky Warbler and Red-breasted Nuthatch were also at HHP, as was a flyover American Golden-Plover. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was at the Oakdale Field Campus.

American Woodcock, Wilson's Snipe, and Eastern Screech-Owl were at the Gun Club Ponds. Bank Swallows were at Waterworks Park. A White-eyed Vireo was along the Sugar Bottom bike trail. Six Bell's Vireos were found including two along the path to Mallard Pond at HWA. A Yellow-breasted Chat was also there, and other chats were found at Terry Trueblood and Cedar River Crossing. A Louisiana Waterthrush was at Cangleska Wakan, a.k.a. the Celebration Barn area. Prothonotary Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Acadian Flycatcher were at Squire Point. Other Prothonotaries were along Swan Lake Road in western HWA where the river floods to the road, and at Cedar River Crossing. Yellow-throated Warblers were at the Coralville Dam West Overlook, Lake Macbride State Park, and Sugar Bottom Recreation Area. Blue Grosbeaks were at the Riverwalk Trail below the Coralville Dam, along Babcock Access Road, at Cedar River Crossing, and at Terry Trueblood. A Vesper Sparrow was along the Hoover Nature Trail.

Black-necked Stilts had been seen from Amana Road recently but could not be located. Neither Northern Mockingbird nor Loggerhead Shrike could be found. Hooded Merganser, Cerulean Warbler, Henslow's Sparrow, and Summer Tanager were also missed.

Participants (24): Elizabeth Aubrey, Kyle and Lauren Belcher, Tom Bootsmiller, Mark Brown, Chris Caster, Karen Disbrow, Chris Edwards, Laura Harwood, Jenny and Rick Hollis, James Huntington, Alisa Kandel, Ken Lowder, Mark Madsen, Jamie McCoy, Ramona McGurk, Jason Paulios, Linda Quinn, Mark Reagan, Kevin Ripka, Chris Ruge, Jim Wiese, Eliza Willis.

## SPECIES LIST

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| Black-bellied Whistling Duck | 6 |
| Snow Goose | 1 |
| Ross's Goose | 1 |
| Canada Goose | 248 |
| Trumpeter Swan | 1 |
| Wood Duck | 48 |
| Blue-winged Teal | 91 |
| Northern Shoveler | 20 |
| Gadwall | 2 |
| Mallard | 25 |
| Lesser Scaup | 2 |
| Northern Bobwhite | 1 |
| Wild Turkey | 6 |
| Ring-necked Pheasant | 19 |
| Pied-billed Grebe | 10 |
| Rock Pigeon | 24 |
| Eurasian Collared-Dove | 2 |
| Mourning Dove | 55 |
| Chimney Swift | 4 |
| Ruby-throated Hummingbird | 3 |
| Virginia Rail | 1 |
| Sora | 9 |
| American Coot | 29 |
| Sandhill Crane | 4 |
| Black-bellied Plover | 2 |
| American Golden-Plover | 1 |
| Killdeer | 24 |
| Semipalmated Plover | 29 |
| Stilt Sandpiper | 2 |
| Dunlin | 10 |
| Least Sandpiper | 147 |
| White-rumped Sandpiper | 1 |
| Pectoral Sandpiper | 1150 |
| Semipalmated Sandpiper | 1 |
| Short-billed Dowitcher | 5 |
| Long-billed Dowitcher | 5 |
| American Woodcock | 2 |
| Wilson's Snipe | 2 |
| Spotted Sandpiper | 21 |
| Solitary Sandpiper | 1 |
| Lesser Yellowlegs | 635 |
| Greater Yellowlegs | 3 |
| Wilson's Phalarope | 8 |
| Franklin's Gull | 42 |
| Ring-billed Gull | 71 |
| Black Tern | 9 |
| Forster's Tern | 9 |
| Double-crested Cormorant | 24 |
| American White Pelican | 350 |
| Great Blue Heron | 16 |
| Great Egret | 12 |
| Green Heron | 1 |
| White-faced Ibis | 1 |
| Turkey Vulture | 116 |
| Osprey | 4 |
| Cooper's Hawk | 4 |
| Bald Eagle | 28 |
| Broad-winged Hawk | 2 |
| Red-tailed Hawk | 7 |
| Eastern Screech-Owl | 2 |
| Great Horned Owl | 2 |
| Barred Owl | 10 |
| Belted Kingfisher | 3 |
| Red-headed Woodpecker | 45 |
| Red-bellied Woodpecker | 44 |
| Yellow-bellied Sapsucker | 1 |
| Downy Woodpecker | 36 |
| Hairy Woodpecker | 14 |
| Northern Flicker | 6 |
| Pileated Woodpecker | 7 |
| American Kestrel | 4 |
| Merlin | 1 |
| Peregrine Falcon | 1 |
| Great Crested Flycatcher | 40 |
| Eastern Kingbird | 24 |
| Eastern Wood-Pewee | 4 |
| Acadian Flycatcher | 1 |
| Willow Flycatcher | 1 |
| Least Flycatcher | 7 |
| Eastern Phoebe | 12 |
| White-eyed Vireo | 1 |
| Bell's Vireo | 6 |
| Yellow-throated Vireo | 20 |
| Blue-headed Vireo | 6 |
| Eastern Warbling Vireo | 40 |
| Red-eyed Vireo | 16 |
| Blue Jay | 89 |
| American Crow | 46 |
| Black-capped Chickadee | 52 |
| Tufted Titmouse | 27 |
| Horned Lark | 7 |
| Bank Swallow | 6 |
| Tree Swallow | 82 |
| N. Rough-winged Swallow | 11 |
| Purple Martin | 75 |
| Barn Swallow | 50 |
| Cliff Swallow | 18 |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet | 4 |
| Cedar Waxwing | 18 |
| Red-breasted Nuthatch | 1 |
| White-breasted Nuthatch | 46 |
| Blue-gray Gnatcatcher | 39 |
| Carolina Wren | 5 |
| Northern House Wren | 156 |
| Sedge Wren | 1 |
| Marsh Wren | 6 |
| Gray Catbird | 120 |
| Brown Thrasher | 9 |
| European Starling | 97 |
| Eastern Bluebird | 28 |
| Gray-cheeked Thrush | 2 |
| Swainson's Thrush | 16 |
| Wood Thrush | 10 |
| American Robin | 210 |
| House Sparrow | 120 |
| Eurasian Tree Sparrow | 41 |
| House Finch | 23 |
| American Goldfinch | 184 |
| Grasshopper Sparrow | 3 |
| Lark Sparrow | 5 |
| Chipping Sparrow | 25 |
| Field Sparrow | 32 |
| White-crowned Sparrow | 32 |
| White-throated Sparrow | 15 |
| Vesper Sparrow | 1 |
| Nelson's Sparrow | 1 |
| Savannah Sparrow | 15 |
| Song Sparrow | 48 |
| Lincoln's Sparrow | 1 |
| Swamp Sparrow | 2 |
| Eastern Towhee | 33 |
| Yellow-breasted Chat | 4 |
| Bobolink | 3 |
| Eastern Meadowlark | 32 |
| Western Meadowlark | 1 |
| Orchard Oriole | 19 |
| Baltimore Oriole | 145 |
| Red-winged Blackbird | 496 |
| Brown-headed Cowbird | 81 |
| Common Grackle | 42 |
| Ovenbird | 3 |
| Louisiana Waterthrush | 2 |
| Northern Waterthrush | 4 |
| Golden-winged Warbler | 2 |
| Blue-winged Warbler | 4 |
| Black-and-white Warbler | 2 |
| Prothonotary Warbler | 3 |
| Tennessee Warbler | 20 |
| Orange-crowned Warbler | 2 |
| Nashville Warbler | 29 |
| Kentucky Warbler | 1 |
| Common Yellowthroat | 109 |
| American Redstart | 101 |
| Northern Parula | 7 |
| Magnolia Warbler | 1 |
| Blackburnian Warbler | 2 |
| Northern Yellow Warbler | 53 |
| Chestnut-sided Warbler | 4 |
| Palm Warbler | 8 |
| Yellow-rumped Warbler | 28 |
| Yellow-throated Warbler | 6 |
| Black-throated Green Warbler | 1 |
| Wilson's Warbler | 2 |
| Scarlet Tanager | 10 |
| Northern Cardinal | 170 |
| Rose-breasted Grosbeak | 86 |
| Blue Grosbeak | 5 |
| Indigo Bunting | 29 |
| Dickcissel | 11 |