

BirdWalk Newsletter

12.4.2016

Walk Conducted by: Perry Nugent

Newsletter Written by: Jayne J. Matney



Ring-necked Duck

Photo by Ray Swagerty

Ring-necked Ducks *Aythya collaris*

The Ring-necked Ducks are a curious lot around here. According to Ray Swagerty, “These are not the more prevalent ducks we will get at Magnolia. Not rare or uncommon by any means, but certainly always enough of a treat to take notice.” He adds that they may not be seen the next week. This was certainly true. These examples seen earlier, 11.13.2016, have not been seen here since! But, that is not to say we will not see more before the winter is over. Most references say that the numbers are considered stable at this time, mostly located in eastern Canada and northern New England. They do migrate however, in early fall. They are very similar to the Lesser Scaup, Greater Scaup, and the Tufted Duck with the black head region and the white sides. The Ring-necked Duck is a diver. They go all the way down under the water and

forage primarily for aquatic plant delicacies and insects. “Where they pop up again is up to them”, which is why they can sometimes be difficult to photograph. You won’t see them tip up their tails unless they are in very shallow waters. They are not only strong swimmers, but they are also strong fliers! Unlike most ducks that need a long runway to get up off the surface of the pond, Ring-necked Ducks are able to lift directly up out of the water- because of those strong wings. The males have a signature golden eye, but the rings on the neck are hardly ever visible! Peter Caswell has written an article proclaiming that the Ring-necked Duck should be renamed. In his article, “It’s Time to Rename the Ring-necked Duck- one birder’s impassioned plea to name the diver for a much more obvious -and useful- field mark” he makes his case. This can be found on the Audubon Website dated November 4, 2016. The female duck is the “egg-tender” for a month of usually 8-10 eggs which can be a variety of colors. The young, when they hatch, scramble directly into the water within 24 hours after hatching! At night they return to the nest which is a shallow pocket of sticks and debris close to the water’s edge. Nestling flight occurs within 50 days of hatching.

This Sunday, the gardens were “beaming” with at least 250 American Robin, 250 Yellow-rumped Warblers, Gray Catbird, Cedar Waxwing, and Carolina Wren.



**Northern Mocking
Bird**

**Photo by
Marina Coppedge**



“The Teal are Talking”

Photo by Chuck Fuhrman

The cross-dike and large pond were teeming with Gadwall, Blue-winged Teal, Green-winged Teal, Pied-billed Grebe, Anhinga, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron, and White Ibis.



**Great Blue Heron
scratching an Itch**

**Photo by
Jo Frkovich**

Finally our Common Moorhen and American Coot are really coming in! Perry estimated approximately 75 Moorhen and 60 American Coot. Now, the Bald Eagles have their favorite food source! Another happy sight was that the Bald Eagles (two adults) were seen on the nest! An Osprey made an appearance. On the Oak Grove Trail, 2 Cooper's Hawks and 4 Red-shouldered Hawks were spotted as well. Black Vulture and Turkey Vulture made the list. Laughing Gull and Ring-billed Gull were also accounted for. In the woodpecker family, the Red-bellied, Downy and Pileated made themselves known, while the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Northern Flicker made appearances. The Pine Warbler, Palm Warbler, and American Goldfinch were captured by the birdwatcher's eye. Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Northern Mockingbird, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, American Crow, Fish Crow, Blue Jay, Hermit Thrush, and Mourning Dove rounded out the field of 47 bird species for this week.



Fall Alligator getting the last of the sunning season Photo by Jo Frkovich