

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Over 3,600 Birds Counted On St. Croix In 2015

VIC News / **Published On January 09, 2016 12:46 PM /**

Staff **January 09, 2016**



ST. CROIX -- The 116th annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was completed here on Sunday, December 27th, 2015, and a total of 3,615 birds were counted, with 75 different species sighted around the island, according to a press release issued by CBC on Friday. The annual count's latest tally has been submitted to the Audubon Society, and the results also revealed that 75 different species were sighted on the island in 2015.

"Our count teams increased our total numbers by more than 900 birds from last year," said CBC organizer Bill Boyton. He mentioned that previous newspaper articles attracted 10 new volunteers to sign up for this year's event. "More people in more areas equals more birds in the census count, plus we had near perfect weather for CBC Sunday!" he added.

Bird watchers spread out to golf courses, ponds, wetlands, coastal shorelines, and countrysides across the island with tally sheets and bird identification books in hand. The 30 volunteers traveled a total of 226 vehicle miles, walked 32 miles, and spent 122 “people-hours” counting St. Croix’s winter bird population, according to the release.

But Mr. Boyton also mentioned that the compiled data shows the impact that the 2015 drought has had on the birds. Volunteers who covered the east end of the island found many ponds dried up or grown over with vegetation, and this year the group did not travel over to Buck Island. As a result, almost 850 fewer birds were counted on the east end this year than last, the release revealed.

“The good rains we had this fall provided ample water to refill the ponds and wetlands all across the central and west end portions of the island, and the bird count in those areas showed a significant increase,” Mr. Boyton said. “In these areas, bird watchers counted almost 1,800 more birds than last year. But the east end drought continues to cause concern about the island’s bird population.”

This year’s CBC participants have agreed that they will be back again next December for the 117th observance of the event. In the meantime, people who would like to become bird watchers can attend events planned throughout the year by the St. Croix Environmental Association that help inform people about the birds of the island and their identification (go to www.stxenvironmental.org).

Detailed information about this year’s Christmas Bird Count and the results will be available online at www.audubon.org which also maintains a historical record of all past bird counts.

Feature Image: Birds from left to right: American Widgeon, Great Egret and Gray Kingbird.

Image Credit: CBC.