

Volunteers conduct annual Christmas Bird Count

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It would appear that yellow rumped warblers like the Rainbow Springs area. The tally of the birds was the highest – at 74 – in Monday’s Christmas Bird Count in that area of Marion County.

According to John Schaefer, vice president of the Marion Audubon Society, volunteers counted 62 species for a total of 727 birds in that region. Counts also were held in other areas of the county.

“The Rainbow Springs area was covered by three teams, which covered the Rainbow River by boat, the Rainbow State Park and campground, and Rainbow Springs and Rainbow Lakes Estates. The team leaders were Sandra Marraffino, Fred Hileman and Donna Schromm, respectively,” Schaefer noted in an email recap of the day.

He said 17 volunteers from the Marion and Citrus Audubon societies started at 7:30 a.m. and completed their count in that area by 11:30 a.m.

“Overall in Marion County today, there were a total of 11 team leaders and bird counts in the Marion Christmas Bird Count Circle. Final tabulation for Marion County will be completed by Dec. 30 and then forwarded to national Audubon. After this final tabulation, data will be available for comparison in Marion County and nationwide,” Schaefer noted.

The www.augudon.org/field-guide states about the yellow rumped warbler: “Flashing its trademark yellow rump patch as it flies away, calling check for confirmation, this is one of our best-known warblers. While most of its relatives migrate to the tropics in fall, the yellow-rump, able to live on berries, commonly remains as far north as New England and Seattle; it is the main winter warbler in North America.”

The species tallies provided by Schaefer showed that the next highest counts in the Rainbow Springs area were:

- + Anhinga, 55
- + Black vulture, 53
- + American crow, 36
- + Fish crow, 35
- + Pied-billed grebe, 30

He said the annual counts are important because “scientists will be able to measure comparable bird census across the United States, during the same time each year, which includes weather conditions at the time of each bird count.”