

## 2014 Winter Bird Count Esopus Bend Nature Preserve, Saugerties, NY

The ninth annual Esopus Bend Nature Preserve (EBNP) Winter Bird Count (WBC) was conducted on Sunday January 12, 2014, under relatively mild and dry conditions. Three field observers in one field party surveyed the 160-acre preserve from 5:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., recording a total of **448 individuals** representing **32 species** during a ten-hour effort that included 1.5 hours of pre-dawn nocturnal "owling".

This year's diversity and abundance was low by historical analysis, three species below our average of 35 species/year and near the low end of our 30-40 species/year range. Abundance was well below the eight-year average of 549 individuals/year, yet comparable to six of eight previous surveys when our two most exceptional years are discounted: 361, 451, 456, 478, 496, 502 = 457 average.

Environmental conditions were pleasant for this typically frigid mid-winter bird survey. Temperatures ranged from an early morning low of 40° (F) to an afternoon high of 43° (F) under overcast skies early, followed by partly sunny skies during the afternoon period. Winds were mostly calm throughout the count day, with only an occasional 5-10 mph cool breeze. Illumination from a nearly full moon phase was completely obscured by cloud cover during the nocturnal prowl.

Esopus Creek was largely frozen, exposing only small areas of open water along the shoreline and in isolated pockets. Water level was very high and turbid. Shallow coves and the large delta were entirely frozen, and the beaver impoundment was completely iced over with the exception of inflows and ground seeps. All of the Preserve's tributaries were free of ice and flowing high and/or swiftly. Ground conditions were predominantly open with only sporadic areas of thin ice or minimal snow cover.

Highlights include two **Yellow-rumped Warblers**, representing a new WBC species not previously detected on this count, advancing the nine-year historical composite to 63 species. One adult **Bald Eagle** was observed flying low over Esopus Creek, six **Pileated Woodpeckers** tied our previous high count from last year, 78 **American Robins** represents a new high count, 53 **Cedar Waxwings** constitutes a good presence for this nomadic and inconsistent species, and 22 **House Finches** was a surprising new high count for a species in decline.

Conspicuous by their absence, no **Hairy Woodpeckers** were detected during the survey for the first time in the history of this count, especially noteworthy in the context of extensive woodland habitat heavily infested with Emerald Ash Borer larvae. Ten **Downy Woodpeckers** and 44 **Black-capped Chickadees** represent new record lows, with the chickadee number remarkably below our high count of 184 in 2007. No waterfowl, gulls, kingfisher, or Great Blue Heron were detected, their absence attributable to a lack of open water during the two week period preceding the count.

Also atypical of recent counts, we did not observe a **Cooper's Hawk** near the Edgewood bird feeders, which appeared empty and devoid of bird activity, resulting in few Mourning Doves and no Wild Turkeys. We did encounter frequent turkey sign in the form of fresh scat and tracks throughout the Preserve, but were not able to detect any birds this year. One **Eastern Screech-Owl** responded to audio playback during the pre-dawn survey, from the same general area where one has wintered in recent past years. Winter finches, blackbirds, and Red-breasted Nuthatch have been regionally scarce this winter, and none were encountered in the Preserve during the count.

Multiflora Rose hips and Asiatic Bittersweet were available in near average quantities, Eastern Hemlock cones appeared sparse again this year, and most of a very copious fall crab apple production was depleted. Weed seeds were accessible with little or no snow/ice cover, however conditions varied considerably during the weeks leading up to count day.

The following table summarizes the 2014 survey in comparison with the previous eight-year history of this winter bird count. Thanks to Alan Beebe and David Grover for their effort in assisting with this year's count. Data collected from this annual January survey is incorporated into the Preserve's biodiversity database and provides guidance for future land management and stewardship decisions. Next year's EBNP Winter Bird Count is scheduled for Saturday, January 10, 2015.

## Esopus Bend Nature Preserve Winter Bird Count Summary

Species	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Canada Goose		10	10	24		35		8	
Mute Swan								3	
American Black Duck									6
Mallard		6	22	19	2			36	34
Hooded Merganser			2					1	2
Common Merganser		10	2					2	
Wild Turkey		1	14		8	14	3	14	
Great Blue Heron		1						1	
Black Vulture					3				
Bald Eagle	1								1
Northern Harrier				1					
Sharp-shinned Hawk							1		
Cooper's Hawk		1	1	1	1				
Red-tailed Hawk	2	1		2	2	1	1	2	
Ring-billed Gull		12	33		7	12	5	30	15
Herring Gull			1		1				1
Great Black-backed Gull		2							
Rock Pigeon		2							
Mourning Dove	4	1	28	5	7	10	17	22	
Eastern Screech-Owl	1	1		1		1		1	
Belted Kingfisher								1	
Red-bellied Woodpecker	8	14	7	8	12	19	8	12	4
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	3	1	3	12	3	8	1	1	
Downy Woodpecker	10	24	11	11	18	34	29	38	20
Hairy Woodpecker		8	6	5	4	9	5	7	3
Northern Flicker	1			2		1		1	1
Pileated Woodpecker	6	6	3	5	1	4	3		1
Blue Jay	9	5	10	15	19	25	18	24	22
American Crow	16	19	14	22	19	15	22	44	10
Black-capped Chickadee	44	79	49	66	66	111	124	184	86
Tufted Titmouse	38	49	26	28	55	58	29	71	23
Red-breasted Nuthatch						4			6
White-breasted Nuthatch	17	31	8	11	22	21	26	54	26

Species	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Brown Creeper	2	12	1	2	2	3	3	9	1
Winter Wren	2	6		1		6	3	5	
Carolina Wren	14	14	8	14	7	8	8	27	12
Golden-crowned Kinglet	2	29		6	32	12	9	5	12
Ruby-crowned Kinglet			1						
Eastern Bluebird	4	6	3		1		17	14	1
Hermit Thrush	7	10	8	3	5	14	13	7	9
American Robin	78	2	12	20	2	11	3	5	
Gray Catbird									2
Northern Mockingbird			1				1		
European Starling	17	2		1		5	2	50	
Bohemian Waxwing							1		
Cedar Waxwing	53			1	58	60	15		
Common Yellowthroat			1						
Yellow-rumped Warbler	2								
American Tree Sparrow	8	11	8	9	2	4	10	8	16
Field Sparrow				1	3	2			
Savannah Sparrow						1			
Song Sparrow	6	14	10	8	10	39	13	17	11
Swamp Sparrow				1		2			
White-throated Sparrow	16	15	44	28	42	44	8	22	68
Dark-eyed Junco	30	23	42	4	16	13	51	81	24
Northern Cardinal	18	22	16	16	40	18	22	42	14
Red-winged Blackbird								100	
House Finch	22	2	6		12	2		4	14
Purple Finch					1	1			
White-winged Crossbill						3			
Pine Siskin						24			
American Goldfinch	3	2	39	8	15	13	7	13	6
House Sparrow	4	2	6		4	12			
Unidentified passerines		40							
<b>Total Individuals</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>456</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>679</b>	<b>478</b>	<b>966</b>	<b>451</b>
<b>Total Species (63)</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>30</b>