

2012 Winter Bird Count Esopus Bend Nature Preserve, Saugerties, NY

The seventh annual Esopus Bend Nature Preserve (EBNP) Winter Bird Count (WBC) was conducted on Saturday, January 07, 2012, under extraordinary mild conditions for this typically cold mid-winter census. Seven field observers surveyed the 160-acre preserve during a ten-hour effort that included 1.5 hours of pre-dawn "owling", recording a total of **456 individuals** of **35 species**. This year's count was consistent with the seven-year average of 35 species/year, and slightly more productive than last year's 34 species/361 individuals. Total number of individuals was on the historically lower end, but not exceptionally so during a winter characterized by region-wide reports of low numbers of birds in the field and at feeders.

Temperatures ranged from an early morning low of 26° (F) to an incredible afternoon high of 60° (F) under clear night skies and brilliant morning sunshine, followed by partly cloudy skies during the afternoon session. Winds were calm throughout the count day, resulting in ideal audio conditions. Esopus Creek was open and flowing freely in the channel, with relatively high water levels and extremely turbid water quality. The shallow delta was approximately 50% frozen, and the beaver impoundment was completely frozen. All of the preserve's tributaries were free of ice and flowing moderately. Ground conditions were very hospitable with no snow cover and little to no ground frost. A receding full moon provided little benefit to the nocturnal prowler, having set below the horizon just prior to the start of the survey.

Two new species highlighted this year's count. A lingering male **Common Yellowthroat** that has been present since early December was observed on several occasions throughout the count day, and a lone **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** represented a first record for the WBC, advancing the cumulative seven-year total to 60 species. Additional highlights from this year's count include a very cooperative adult **Cooper's Hawk** that perched in a tree over the trail for an extended period of time, 8 Hermit Thrushes, a flock of 14 Wild Turkeys, and one Northern Mockingbird, a species that is unusual in EBNP.

Golden-crowned Kinglets were absent for the first time in this count's seven-year history, Belted Kingfisher and Great Blue Heron were not detected despite their presence in the preceding week and an abundance of open water, Northern Flicker was an unexpected miss, and two Gray Catbirds overwintering in the Preserve since early December appear to have moved on. No owls were detected during this year's nocturnal effort. New high counts were recorded for Ring-billed Gull (33), Mourning Dove (28), and American Goldfinch (39). Record low counts were documented for Blue Jay (10), Black-capped Chickadee (49), and White-breasted Nuthatch (8). Downy Woodpeckers equaled their previous low-count of 11 from last year.

Multiflora Rose hips and Asiatic Bittersweet were abundant and widespread, attracting several species of birds that were observed feeding on the fleshy seeds. Eastern hemlock cones appeared sparse again this year, and most mast crops were moderate to poor following last year's bumper crop. Weed seed crops appeared average and entirely accessible due to the lack of snow or ice cover.

The following table summarizes the 2012 survey in comparison with the previous six-year history of this winter bird count. Thanks to Alan Beebe, Deb Ferguson, Henry Halama, Frank Murphy, Donna Seymour, and Laura Steadman for their effort in conducting this year's count. Data collected from this annual January survey provides a basis for monitoring future winter bird population dynamics in Esopus Bend Nature Preserve and guidance for current and future land management and stewardship decisions. Next year's WBC will be conducted on Saturday, January 12, 2013.

Steve M. Chorvas
Compiler
Saugerties, NY

Esopus Bend Nature Preserve Winter Bird Count Summary

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

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