

## 2015 Winter Bird Count Esopus Bend Nature Preserve, Saugerties, NY

The tenth annual Esopus Bend Nature Preserve (EBNP) Winter Bird Count (WBC) was conducted on Saturday, January 10, 2015, under relatively good count conditions. Four field observers in one field party surveyed the 160-acre preserve from 5:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., recording a total of **613 individuals** representing **38 species** during a ten-hour effort that included 1.5 hours of pre-dawn nocturnal "owling".

Compared to previous counts conducted on the second weekend in January, this year's diversity and abundance ranked above the nine-year average of 35 species, 537 individuals/year, and well above last year's count of 32 species and 448 individuals. **Great Horned Owl** and **Common Redpoll** were first-time additions to this annual count, advancing the ten-year historical composite to 65 species.

Additional highlights include two overwintering **Gray Catbirds** (initially observed in the preserve several weeks earlier in December by Alan Beebe), two **Field Sparrows** (also present for at least two weeks), two **Swamp Sparrows**, 7 **Hermit Thrushes**, 8 **Winter Wrens**, 16 **Carolina Wrens**, 66 **Tufted Titmice** (second highest count compared to 71 in 2007), and a remarkable 58 **Eastern Bluebirds**, far exceeding our previous high count of 17 in 2008. Many of our stationary point counts drew in a flock of bluebirds this year. **American Goldfinch** (51) was present in record-high numbers and **Pine Siskin** (4) was recorded for only the second time on this count.

One adult **Bald Eagle** was observed soaring overhead against a perfect clear blue sky. Nine **Wild Turkeys** stood out at dawn, roosting high up (50'+) in thin canopy branches of tall deciduous trees, their large dark silhouettes in stark contrast to the first light of daybreak. We later observed what we presumed were the same flock of 11 turkeys foraging under the Kalina/Edgewood feeders. Few other birds were present at the feeders, resulting in a total miss on Mourning Dove and European Starling this year.

One **Eastern Screech-Owl** responded during the pre-dawn survey, vocalizing from the same general area where one has wintered in past years. Highly nomadic and sporadic Cedar Waxwings have been locally scarce this winter, and none were encountered during the day-long count, despite this year's abundant food resources that often attract flocks of waxwings to the Preserve during the winter months.

Environmental conditions were very conducive to a mid-winter bird survey, with bright sunny skies, no precipitation, and no wind throughout the count day. Temperatures were tolerable, if on the cold end of the scale, ranging from an early morning low of 10° (F) to an afternoon high of 23° (F). Nocturnal illumination was excellent, aided by clear skies, bright moonlight from a 72% waning gibbous, and highly reflective snow cover.

Esopus Creek and the wetland beaver impoundment were entirely frozen, effectively precluding waterfowl, gulls, herons, and kingfishers from the 2015 count, with the exception of a flyover goose and Ring-billed Gull. Inflows and ground seeps were open and flowing freely, but did not attract any discernable bird activity. Ground conditions consisted of an average 2" depth of fresh powdery snow, extensively covering nearly 100% of the terrain, with only small occasional patches of exposed ground.

Asiatic Bittersweet fruits were abundant, fairly widespread, and particularly concentrated in large quantities in the meadow and wetlands complex, where several species of fruit-eaters were observed taking advantage of this year's copious crop. Multiflora Rose hips appeared below average, but were also consumed by some of the numerous bluebirds we observed during the count. Eastern Hemlock cones were sparse again this year, and none of the crabapples scattered about the preserve retained any edible fruit. Weed seeds were generally accessible above light snow cover and a source of concentrated sparrow activity in the meadow area.

The following table summarizes the 2015 survey in comparison with the previous nine-year history of this winter bird count. Thanks to Mark DeDea, David Grover, and Ted Suttmeier for their time and effort in assisting with this year's count.

## Esopus Bend Nature Preserve Winter Bird Count Summary

Species	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Canada Goose	1		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	11		1	14		8	14	3	14	
Great Blue Heron			1						1	
Black Vulture						3				
Bald Eagle	1	1								1
Northern Harrier					1					
Sharp-shinned Hawk								1		
Cooper's Hawk			1	1	1	1				
Red-tailed Hawk	3	2	1		2	2	1	1	2	
Ring-billed Gull	1		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		1	
Great Horned Owl	1									
Belted Kingfisher									1	
Red-bellied Woodpecker	10	8	14	7	8	12	19	8	12	4
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	8	3	1	3	12	3	8	1	1	
Downy Woodpecker	28	10	24	11	11	18	34	29	38	20
Hairy Woodpecker	7		8	6	5	4	9	5	7	3
Northern Flicker		1			2		1		1	1
Pileated Woodpecker	1	6	6	3	5	1	4	3		1
Blue Jay	12	9	5	10	15	19	25	18	24	22
American Crow	6	16	19	14	22	19	15	22	44	10
Black-capped Chickadee	94	44	79	49	66	66	111	124	184	86
Tufted Titmouse	66	38	49	26	28	55	58	29	71	23
Red-breasted Nuthatch							4			6
White-breasted Nuthatch	31	17	31	8	11	22	21	26	54	26

Species	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Brown Creeper	5	2	12	1	2	2	3	3	9	1
Winter Wren	8	2	6		1		6	3	5	
Carolina Wren	16	14	14	8	14	7	8	8	27	12
Golden-crowned Kinglet	14	2	29		6	32	12	9	5	12
Ruby-crowned Kinglet				1						
Eastern Bluebird	58	4	6	3		1		17	14	1
Hermit Thrush	7	7	10	8	3	5	14	13	7	9
American Robin	10	78	2	12	20	2	11	3	5	
Gray Catbird	2									2
Northern Mockingbird	1			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	10	8	11	8	9	2	4	10	8	16
Field Sparrow	2				1	3	2			
Savannah Sparrow							1			
Song Sparrow	13	6	14	10	8	10	39	13	17	11
Swamp Sparrow	2				1		2			
White-throated Sparrow	30	16	15	44	28	42	44	8	22	68
Dark-eyed Junco	51	30	23	42	4	16	13	51	81	24
Northern Cardinal	31	18	22	16	16	40	18	22	42	14
Red-winged Blackbird									100	
House Finch	10	22	2	6		12	2		4	14
Purple Finch						1	1			
White-winged Crossbill							3			
Common Redpoll	1									
Pine Siskin	4						24			
American Goldfinch	51	3	2	39	8	15	13	7	13	6
House Sparrow	5	4	2	6		4	12			
<i>Unidentified passerines</i>			40							
<b>Total Individuals</b>	<b>613</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 (65)</b>	<b>38</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>