

2016 Winter Bird Count – Esopus Bend Nature Preserve, Saugerties, NY

The 11th annual Esopus Bend Nature Preserve (EBNP) Winter Bird Count (WBC) was conducted on Saturday, January 09, 2016. One field party surveyed the 160-acre preserve from 5:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., recording a total of **612 individuals** representing **40 species** during a twelve-hour effort that included 2 hours of pre-dawn and 1 hour of post-dusk nocturnal “owling”.

Compared to previous surveys conducted on the second weekend in January, this year’s count was remarkably similar to last year’s 38 species/613 individuals. Our total diversity matched our previous high count tallied in 2009, and was 12.5% above our ten-year average of 35 species/year. Total abundance ranked slightly above the ten-year average of 545 individuals/year, and was nearly identical to last year’s tally.

A **Peregrine Falcon** was spotted by Mark DeDea, perched high up in a deciduous tree on the opposite side of Esopus Creek. The bird eventually flew out over the creek, headed east towards the Hudson River. The falcon was a first-time addition to this annual count, advancing our 11-year cumulative total to 66 species, and the first confirmed record for EBNP in any season.

Additional highlights this year were relatively minor, with no new record high counts for any species. A flyover flock of ten **American Black Ducks** was unexpected on this count that typically features solid frozen creek water, and only the second time this species has been recorded on this count since two individuals were observed in the first year (2006) of this survey. One **Great Horned Owl** vocalizing pre-dawn represents our second record, following last year’s initial record, and one **Belted Kingfisher** also represents a second record and is another species greatly influenced by the presence or lack of open creek water.

Roving flocks of **American Robins** (68*), **Cedar Waxwings** (35*), and **Red-winged Blackbirds** (34*) were active throughout the day in the meadow and wetlands complex. Conservative totals (*), adjusted down to lessen the likelihood of duplication, resulted in our second-highest count for American Robins (compared to 78 in 2014) and only our second WBC record for Red-winged Blackbirds, following a single large flyover flock of 100 birds in January of 2007.

Half-hardy species that overwinter in the preserve in some years, but were not detected this year, include Gray Catbird and Field Sparrow. Three Hermit Thrushes and four Eastern Bluebirds were relatively low in number, and Golden-crowned Kinglets were absent for only the second time in 11 years. No irruptive winter finches were encountered in the preserve, though we did hear a Purple Finch vocalizing from the opposite side of the creek, outside of the EBNP count area. Despite three hours of nocturnal effort, no Eastern Screech-owls were detected, and a photo-check of the interior of several Wood Duck nest boxes revealed no signs of roosting owls.

Environmental conditions were exceptionally pleasant for a mid-winter bird survey. Overnight skies were mostly overcast with a few occasional flurries; winds were calm resulting in excellent audio conditions for detection of owls. Daytime skies remained overcast throughout the day with mostly calm winds and a light mist of rain developing by late afternoon. Temperatures ranged from an early morning low of 33° (F) to an afternoon high of 43° (F). A complete lack of snow or ice cover made for exceptionally hospitable ground conditions for both wildlife and survey participants.

The lower (northern) section of Esopus Creek, including the delta and beaver impoundment, were entirely frozen, effectively precluding waterfowl that were present a week earlier. Upper parts of the creek were largely open, including roughly a 500-meter section adjacent to the preserve. Despite this presence of open water, we did not observe any waterfowl in Esopus Creek. With the exception of four gulls out on the solid ice, all of our water-associated species were flyovers between the open rapids to our south and the Hudson River to our east. Inflows and ground seeps were flowing freely, but did not attract any discernable bird activity.

The following table summarizes the 2016 survey in comparison with the most recent ten-year history of this winter bird count. Thanks to Alan Beebe, Mark DeDea, and David Grover for their time and effort helping with this year’s count.

Esopus Bend Nature Preserve Winter Bird Count Ten-Year Summary

| Species | 2016 | 2015 | 2014 | 2013 | 2012 | 2011 | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 |
|--------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Canada Goose | 4 | 1 | | 10 | 10 | 24 | | 35 | | 8 |
| Mute Swan | | | | | | | | | | 3 |
| American Black Duck | 10 | | | | | | | | | |
| Mallard | 18 | | | 6 | 22 | 19 | 2 | | | 36 |
| Hooded Merganser | | | | | 2 | | | | | 1 |
| Common Merganser | 2 | | | 10 | 2 | | | | | 2 |
| Wild Turkey | 4 | 11 | | 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 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 | | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Ring-billed Gull | 4 | 1 | | 12 | 33 | | 7 | 12 | 5 | 30 |
| Herring Gull | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | |
| Great Black-backed Gull | | | | 2 | | | | | | |
| Rock Pigeon | 16 | | | 2 | | | | | | |
| Mourning Dove | 5 | | 4 | 1 | 28 | 5 | 7 | 10 | 17 | 22 |
| Eastern Screech-Owl | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | | 1 |
| Great Horned Owl | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Belted Kingfisher | 1 | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Red-bellied Woodpecker | 8 | 10 | 8 | 14 | 7 | 8 | 12 | 19 | 8 | 12 |
| Yellow-bellied Sapsucker | 1 | 8 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 12 | 3 | 8 | 1 | 1 |
| Downy Woodpecker | 15 | 28 | 10 | 24 | 11 | 11 | 18 | 34 | 29 | 38 |
| Hairy Woodpecker | 7 | 7 | | 8 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 9 | 5 | 7 |
| Northern Flicker | 1 | | 1 | | | 2 | | 1 | | 1 |
| Pileated Woodpecker | 5 | 1 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 3 | |
| Peregrine Falcon | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| Blue Jay | 13 | 12 | 9 | 5 | 10 | 15 | 19 | 25 | 18 | 24 |
| American Crow | 6 | 6 | 16 | 19 | 14 | 22 | 19 | 15 | 22 | 44 |
| Black-capped Chickadee | 57 | 94 | 44 | 79 | 49 | 66 | 66 | 111 | 124 | 184 |
| Tufted Titmouse | 36 | 66 | 38 | 49 | 26 | 28 | 55 | 58 | 29 | 71 |
| Red-breasted Nuthatch | | | | | | | | 4 | | |
| White-breasted Nuthatch | 16 | 31 | 17 | 31 | 8 | 11 | 22 | 21 | 26 | 54 |

| Species | 2016 | 2015 | 2014 | 2013 | 2012 | 2011 | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Brown Creeper | 2 | 5 | 2 | 12 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 9 |
| Winter Wren | 4 | 8 | 2 | 6 | | 1 | | 6 | 3 | 5 |
| Carolina Wren | 8 | 16 | 14 | 14 | 8 | 14 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 27 |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet | | 14 | 2 | 29 | | 6 | 32 | 12 | 9 | 5 |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet | | | | | 1 | | | | | |
| Eastern Bluebird | 4 | 58 | 4 | 6 | 3 | | 1 | | 17 | 14 |
| Hermit Thrush | 3 | 7 | 7 | 10 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 14 | 13 | 7 |
| American Robin | 68 | 10 | 78 | 2 | 12 | 20 | 2 | 11 | 3 | 5 |
| Gray Catbird | | 2 | | | | | | | | |
| Northern Mockingbird | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| European Starling | 69 | | 17 | 2 | | 1 | | 5 | 2 | 50 |
| Bohemian Waxwing | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Cedar Waxwing | 35 | | 53 | | | 1 | 58 | 60 | 15 | |
| Common Yellowthroat | | | | | 1 | | | | | |
| Yellow-rumped Warbler | | | 2 | | | | | | | |
| American Tree Sparrow | 6 | 10 | 8 | 11 | 8 | 9 | 2 | 4 | 10 | 8 |
| Field Sparrow | | 2 | | | | 1 | 3 | 2 | | |
| Savannah Sparrow | | | | | | | | 1 | | |
| Song Sparrow | 7 | 13 | 6 | 14 | 10 | 8 | 10 | 39 | 13 | 17 |
| Swamp Sparrow | | 2 | | | | 1 | | 2 | | |
| White-throated Sparrow | 34 | 30 | 16 | 15 | 44 | 28 | 42 | 44 | 8 | 22 |
| Dark-eyed Junco | 38 | 51 | 30 | 23 | 42 | 4 | 16 | 13 | 51 | 81 |
| Northern Cardinal | 16 | 31 | 18 | 22 | 16 | 16 | 40 | 18 | 22 | 42 |
| Red-winged Blackbird | 34 | | | | | | | | | 100 |
| House Finch | 16 | 10 | 22 | 2 | 6 | | 12 | 2 | | 4 |
| Purple Finch | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | |
| White-winged Crossbill | | | | | | | | 3 | | |
| Common Redpoll | | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Pine Siskin | | 4 | | | | | | 24 | | |
| American Goldfinch | 24 | 51 | 3 | 2 | 39 | 8 | 15 | 13 | 7 | 13 |
| House Sparrow | 12 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 6 | | 4 | 12 | | |
| <i>Unidentified passerines</i> | | | | 40 | | | | | | |
| Total Individuals | 612 | 613 | 448 | 496 | 456 | 361 | 502 | 679 | 478 | 966 |
| Total Species (66) | 40 | 38 | 32 | 38 | 35 | 34 | 35 | 40 | 32 | 38 |