

2017 Winter Bird Count – Esopus Bend Nature Preserve, Saugerties, NY

The 12th annual Esopus Bend Nature Preserve (EBNP) Winter Bird Count (WBC) was conducted on Saturday, January 07, 2017 under fairly favorable conditions. One field party surveyed the 160-acre preserve from 5:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., recording a total of **497 individuals** representing **37 species** during a twelve-hour effort that included 2.5 hours of nocturnal “owling” (two hours pre-dawn, one-half hour post-dusk).

Total diversity was just one species above our historical average of 36 species/year, while abundance was slightly below our average of 551 individuals, ranking mid-range overall (five previous counts were higher, five were lower, and one was nearly identical in a typical range of 361 – 679 total individuals). No new species were encountered this year, maintaining our 12-year EBNP WBC historical cumulative at 66 species.

Two species of waterfowl, greatly influenced by the presence or lack of open water, were found in record high numbers: **Mallard** (49 compared to 36 in 2007 with a 12.5 avg.) and **Hooded Merganser** (5 compared to 2 in 2012 and 2006, recorded for only the fourth time on this count). A few passerines were especially well-represented this year, establishing second-highest counts: **American Goldfinch** (45, including a single flock of 20+ birds, well above our 16.5 avg.), **Eastern Bluebird** (20, twice our 9.8 avg.), and **Song Sparrow** (26, two times the 13.5 avg.). **House Sparrows** also established a new record high (43), essentially due to a large concentration of 36 birds assembling in a favorite forsythia bush just prior to dusk.

Despite a typical abundance of Asiatic Bittersweet fruit and Multiflora Rose hips, several fruit-eating species largely dependant on these winter staples were noteworthy by their absence, or near absence. The single **Hermit Thrush** we found represented a new low count, well below our 7.8 WBC average, and quite remarkable for a species that is typically found in double-digit numbers in the Preserve during the winter months. We also heard only one **American Robin** and encountered no **Cedar Waxwings**. Half-hardy species that overwinter in the preserve in some years, but were not detected this year, include Gray Catbird and Field Sparrow.

Also noteworthy was a relative scarcity of two typically abundant species of woodpeckers, tying their previous record low counts. **Red-bellied Woodpecker** (4, well below our average of 10/year and our high count of 19 in 2009) and **Downy Woodpecker** (10, also well below our average of 21.6/year) were inexplicably few in numbers while **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** (3), **Hairy Woodpecker** (5), **Northern Flicker** (1), and **Pileated Woodpecker** (5) were found in near or above average numbers.

Consistent with regional reports, no irruptive winter finches were encountered in the Preserve this year, and we failed to detect any Belted Kingfishers or Great Blue Herons. Photos of the interior of several Wood Duck nest boxes revealed no signs of roosting owls, however one **Eastern Screech-owl** was heard vocalizing pre-dawn, and a single immature **Bald Eagle** was briefly observed flying down creek mid-morning.

Environmental conditions were relatively good for a mid-winter bird survey. Overnight skies were overcast with no moonlight and calm winds resulting in excellent audio conditions for detection of owls. Dreary dark gray skies persisted throughout the count day with mostly calm winds, resulting in ideal audio conditions but somewhat challenging viewing conditions. Temperatures ranged from a rather frigid early morning low of 19° (F) to an afternoon high of 29° (F). Ground cover was limited to occasional areas of hard crusty compacted snow and ice on shaded sections of trails, with off-trail ground conditions largely free of snow and ice cover.

Esopus Creek was entirely open and flowing moderately in the channel, but frozen solid in the large delta and smaller coves. Inflows and ground seeps were flowing freely, but did not attract any discernable bird activity. The presence of ice-fishing activities out on the delta did not attract the attention of any significant numbers of gulls during our survey time. The beaver impoundment was completely frozen adjacent to the boardwalk, but liquid in the spring and seep-fed western end, attracting a very large concentration of foraging Song Sparrows and our only Swamp Sparrow.

The following table summarizes the 2017 survey in comparison with the most recent ten-year history of this winter bird count. Thanks to Alan Beebe, Mark DeDea, Linda Trummer-Napolitano and Mike Napolitano for their time and effort assisting with this year’s count. The 2018 EBNP WBC is scheduled for January 06, 2018.

Esopus Bend Nature Preserve Winter Bird Count Ten-Year Summary

| Species | 2017 | 2016 | 2015 | 2014 | 2013 | 2012 | 2011 | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 |
|--------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Canada Goose | | 4 | 1 | | 10 | 10 | 24 | | 35 | |
| Mute Swan | | | | | | | | | | |
| American Black Duck | | 10 | | | | | | | | |
| Mallard | 49 | 18 | | | 6 | 22 | 19 | 2 | | |
| Hooded Merganser | 5 | | | | | 2 | | | | |
| Common Merganser | 2 | 2 | | | 10 | 2 | | | | |
| Wild Turkey | 8 | 4 | 11 | | 1 | 14 | | 8 | 14 | 3 |
| Great Blue Heron | | | | | 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 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 | | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Ring-billed Gull | 6 | 4 | 1 | | 12 | 33 | | 7 | 12 | 5 |
| Herring Gull | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | |
| Great Black-backed Gull | | | | | 2 | | | | | |
| Rock Pigeon | | 16 | | | 2 | | | | | |
| Mourning Dove | 2 | 5 | | 4 | 1 | 28 | 5 | 7 | 10 | 17 |
| Eastern Screech-Owl | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | |
| Great Horned Owl | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Belted Kingfisher | | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Red-bellied Woodpecker | 4 | 8 | 10 | 8 | 14 | 7 | 8 | 12 | 19 | 8 |
| Yellow-bellied Sapsucker | 3 | 1 | 8 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 12 | 3 | 8 | 1 |
| Downy Woodpecker | 10 | 15 | 28 | 10 | 24 | 11 | 11 | 18 | 34 | 29 |
| Hairy Woodpecker | 5 | 7 | 7 | | 8 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 9 | 5 |
| Northern Flicker | 1 | 1 | | 1 | | | 2 | | 1 | |
| Pileated Woodpecker | 5 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| Peregrine Falcon | | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Blue Jay | 12 | 13 | 12 | 9 | 5 | 10 | 15 | 19 | 25 | 18 |
| American Crow | 8 | 6 | 6 | 16 | 19 | 14 | 22 | 19 | 15 | 22 |
| Black-capped Chickadee | 62 | 57 | 94 | 44 | 79 | 49 | 66 | 66 | 111 | 124 |
| Tufted Titmouse | 34 | 36 | 66 | 38 | 49 | 26 | 28 | 55 | 58 | 29 |
| Red-breasted Nuthatch | | | | | | | | | 4 | |
| White-breasted Nuthatch | 22 | 16 | 31 | 17 | 31 | 8 | 11 | 22 | 21 | 26 |

| Species | 2017 | 2016 | 2015 | 2014 | 2013 | 2012 | 2011 | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Brown Creeper | 4 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 12 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Winter Wren | 1 | 4 | 8 | 2 | 6 | | 1 | | 6 | 3 |
| Carolina Wren | 10 | 8 | 16 | 14 | 14 | 8 | 14 | 7 | 8 | 8 |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet | 5 | | 14 | 2 | 29 | | 6 | 32 | 12 | 9 |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet | | | | | | 1 | | | | |
| Eastern Bluebird | 20 | 4 | 58 | 4 | 6 | 3 | | 1 | | 17 |
| Hermit Thrush | 1 | 3 | 7 | 7 | 10 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 14 | 13 |
| American Robin | 1 | 68 | 10 | 78 | 2 | 12 | 20 | 2 | 11 | 3 |
| Gray Catbird | | | 2 | | | | | | | |
| Northern Mockingbird | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| European Starling | 2 | 69 | | 17 | 2 | | 1 | | 5 | 2 |
| Bohemian Waxwing | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Cedar Waxwing | | 35 | | 53 | | | 1 | 58 | 60 | 15 |
| Common Yellowthroat | | | | | | 1 | | | | |
| Yellow-rumped Warbler | | | | 2 | | | | | | |
| American Tree Sparrow | 10 | 6 | 10 | 8 | 11 | 8 | 9 | 2 | 4 | 10 |
| Field Sparrow | | | 2 | | | | 1 | 3 | 2 | |
| Savannah Sparrow | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Song Sparrow | 26 | 7 | 13 | 6 | 14 | 10 | 8 | 10 | 39 | 13 |
| Swamp Sparrow | 1 | | 2 | | | | 1 | | 2 | |
| White-throated Sparrow | 38 | 34 | 30 | 16 | 15 | 44 | 28 | 42 | 44 | 8 |
| Dark-eyed Junco | 28 | 38 | 51 | 30 | 23 | 42 | 4 | 16 | 13 | 51 |
| Northern Cardinal | 15 | 16 | 31 | 18 | 22 | 16 | 16 | 40 | 18 | 22 |
| Red-winged Blackbird | | 34 | | | | | | | | |
| House Finch | 5 | 16 | 10 | 22 | 2 | 6 | | 12 | 2 | |
| Purple Finch | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | |
| White-winged Crossbill | | | | | | | | | 3 | |
| Common Redpoll | | | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Pine Siskin | | | 4 | | | | | | | 24 |
| American Goldfinch | 45 | 24 | 51 | 3 | 2 | 39 | 8 | 15 | 13 | 7 |
| House Sparrow | 43 | 12 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 6 | | 4 | 12 | |
| <i>Unidentified passerines</i> | | | | | 40 | | | | | |
| Total Individuals | 497 | 612 | 613 | 448 | 496 | 456 | 361 | 502 | 679 | 478 |
| Total Species (66) | 37 | 40 | 38 | 32 | 38 | 35 | 34 | 35 | 40 | 32 |