

# Esopus Bend Nature Preserve



## Annual Winter Bird Count Report 2020

**Esopus Creek Conservancy, Inc., PO Box 589, Saugerties, New York, 12477**

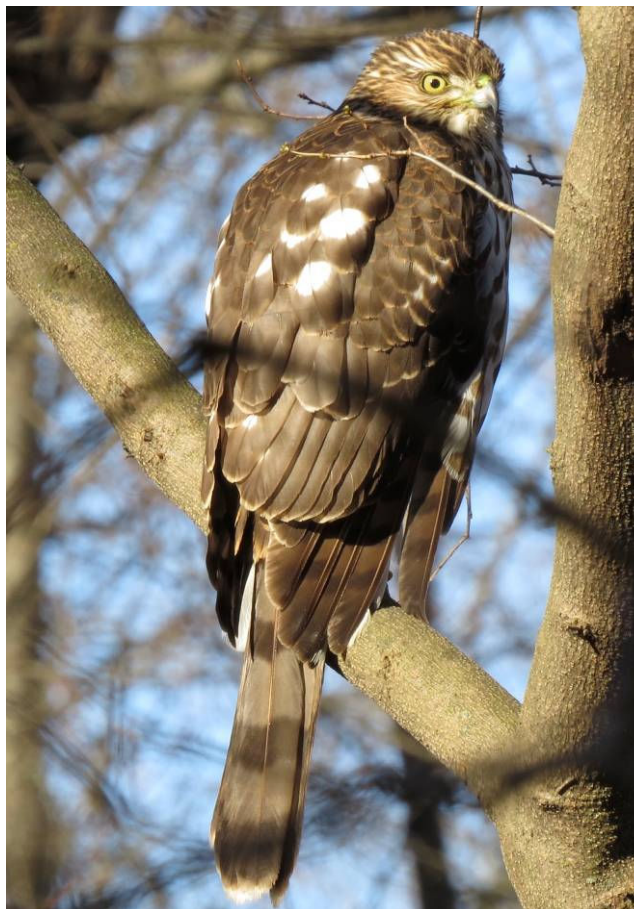
## 2020 Winter Bird Count Esopus Bend Nature Preserve, Saugerties, New York

The 15<sup>th</sup> annual Esopus Bend Nature Preserve (EBNP) Winter Bird Count (WBC) was conducted on Saturday, January 11, 2020 under very spring-like conditions. One field party surveyed the 160-acre preserve from 5:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., recording a total of **45 species** and **596 individual birds** during a 12.5 hour effort that included 2.5 hours of nocturnal “owling” (two hours pre-dawn, one-half hour after dusk). This year’s count produced three more species and just thirteen more individuals compared to last year’s tally. Our ten-year average is 37 species/505 individuals, and our historical average is 36 species/544 individuals.

Exceptionally mild air temperatures (48° early morning rising to an afternoon high of 67° F!) with only occasional gusts of wind made for very pleasant survey conditions and good audio detection. Visual conditions were somewhat less than ideal under dark cloudy skies most of the day, with only an occasional brief break of sunshine. Nonetheless, frequent backlit silhouetting did not limit or obscure our ability to detect or identify birds visually.

Overall diversity and abundance was remarkably typical for this annual January survey, with a few notable exceptions, including the presence of two fairly common species not previously encountered during this effort. A single flyover **Common Grackle** and two **Barred Owls** were new additions to the count composite, advancing our historical cumulative to 70 species and contributing to a new record high count, surpassing last year’s 42 species.

A conspiracy of five **Common Ravens** flew over at once, setting a new record high for a species that had eluded us on this survey for thirteen years. An immature **Cooper’s Hawk** quickly passed overhead and was found and photographed perched in a tree in sunlight the following day. Consistent with this winter’s regional Christmas Bird Counts, **White-throated Sparrows** were encountered in record high numbers with a total of 76 surpassing our previous high counts of 68 in 2006 and 59 last year, more than double our historical average of 36/year.



Immature Cooper's Hawk, January 12, 2020 – Alan Beebe

A large flock of **House Finches** intermixed with **American Goldfinches** foraged in the tops of deciduous trees in sufficient numbers to set a new record high count of 29, eclipsing 22 in 2014 and 21 last year, more than three times our historical average of 8.4/year. Two **Northern Mockingbirds** constitute a new record high for a species previously encountered as singletons in just five of the previous fourteen years.

**Brown Creepers** (7), **Winter Wrens** (5), **Carolina Wrens** (19), and **Golden-crowned Kinglets** (18) were well-represented in above average numbers, and a single wintering **Field Sparrow** is always a nice discovery in January. Predominantly open water influenced an above average number of waterfowl, consisting largely of **Mallards** (86) and **Canada Geese** (41), with a few **Common Mergansers** (4) and **Hooded Mergansers** (2) for diversity. Two **Bald Eagles**, one adult and one first-year juvenile, soared over the preserve.

On the downside, **Black-capped Chickadees** were found in record low numbers (24) compared to our previous low of 42 last year and an average of 79/year, continuing a multi-year winter decline consistent with local Christmas Bird Count results. **Hermit Thrush** was not detected in the preserve for the first time in the 15 years we have conducted this Winter Bird Count, when we typically record at least one individual, with a single-year high count of 10 and an average of 6.5/year. **Northern Cardinals** were also encountered in record low numbers (12), compared to an average of 22.2/year, and a small group of only three **American Tree Sparrows** loyal to a dense stand of Phragmites was consistent with their region-wide scarcity this winter. We failed to detect any **Great Blue Herons** or **Belted Kingfishers**, both water-dependant species that were present earlier in the week and had likely dispersed to nearby areas of abundant open water.



**White-throated Sparrow**, January 12, 2020 – Steve Chorvas  
Present in record high numbers, consistent with local CBCs.



**Black-capped Chickadee**, January 12, 2020 – Steve Chorvas  
Found in record low numbers, continuing a multi-year winter decline.

Esopus Creek was atypically tranquil and entirely open with the exception of a small area of thin ice covering part of the delta. Ground conditions were exposed, free of ice and snow and predominantly free of frost. Oriental Bittersweet berry production continues to be less than earlier years, but still represents a primary winter food resource attracting multiple species of birds feeding on the female fruit-bearing vines.

On a personal note, the highlight of the count came very late in the day during the final minutes of waning daylight. In an attempt to document Barred Owl, Alan Beebe and I were destined for a section of the preserve where a pair have successfully bred over the past several seasons. A large dark bird the size of a turkey flew out of the top of a tall deciduous tree, but the light was too dim to make an identification. Turkeys will respond to the call of a Barred Owl, so we imitated an owl vocalization, immediately eliciting a gobble response from our only turkey for the day while simultaneously attracting a Barred Owl that flew in and silently perched directly overhead. After approximately one minute of staring at each other, a second Barred Owl called from the area we were headed to. The overhead owl responded by flying directly towards the second bird, where they exchanged a classic series of loud barks and hoots!

The following table summarizes the 2020 survey in comparison with our most recent nine-year history. Thanks to Marilyn Abend, Alan Beebe, Eileen Cunningham, Nick Martin, Judy Mletzko, Jim Peppler, and Beth Safford for assisting with this year's count.

Steve M. Chorvas  
Count Coordinator  
Esopus Creek Conservancy  
Stewardship and Land Management

Cover photo: Esopus Bend Nature Preserve Environmental Conditions – January 11, 2020, Steve Chorvas

## Esopus Bend Nature Preserve Winter Bird Count Ten-Year Summary

Species	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Canada Goose	41	26			4	1		10	10	24
Mute Swan										
American Black Duck					10					
Mallard	86	31		49	18			6	22	19
Hooded Merganser	2	3		5					2	
Common Merganser	4	8		2	2			10	2	
Wild Turkey	1		7	8	4	11		1	14	
Great Blue Heron		1						1		
Black Vulture		1								
Bald Eagle	2	1		1		1	1			
Northern Harrier										1
Sharp-shinned Hawk										
Cooper's Hawk	1							1	1	1
Red-shouldered Hawk			1							
Red-tailed Hawk	2	2	2	2	1	3	2	1		2
Ring-billed Gull	10	21		6	4	1		12	33	
Herring Gull									1	
Great Black-backed Gull								2		
Rock Pigeon					16			2		
Mourning Dove	8	4	8	2	5		4	1	28	5
Eastern Screech-Owl	1		1	1		1	1	1		1
Great Horned Owl					1	1				
Barred Owl	2									
Belted Kingfisher					1					
Red-bellied Woodpecker	12	10	12	4	8	10	8	14	7	8
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	4	2	2	3	1	8	3	1	3	12
Downy Woodpecker	11	13	18	10	15	28	10	24	11	11
Hairy Woodpecker	3	4	4	5	7	7		8	6	5
Northern Flicker	1	3	2	1	1		1			2
Pileated Woodpecker	5	6	4	5	5	1	6	6	3	5
Peregrine Falcon					1					
Blue Jay	10	10	22	12	13	12	9	5	10	15
American Crow	6	9	12	8	6	6	16	19	14	22
Common Raven	5	2								
Black-capped Chickadee	24	42	44	62	57	94	44	79	49	66
Tufted Titmouse	28	18	51	34	36	66	38	49	26	28
Red-breasted Nuthatch										

Species	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
White-breasted Nuthatch	20	16	20	22	16	31	17	31	8	11
Brown Creeper	7	7	1	4	2	5	2	12	1	2
Winter Wren	5	8	2	1	4	8	2	6		1
Carolina Wren	19	22	17	10	8	16	14	14	8	14
Golden-crowned Kinglet	18		15	5		14	2	29		6
Ruby-crowned Kinglet			1						1	
Eastern Bluebird	8	8	4	20	4	58	4	6	3	
Hermit Thrush		1	3	1	3	7	7	10	8	3
American Robin	2	12	74	1	68	10	78	2	12	20
Gray Catbird						2				
Northern Mockingbird	2	1	1			1			1	
European Starling	6	1	10	2	69		17	2		1
Bohemian Waxwing										
Cedar Waxwing	12				35		53			1
Common Yellowthroat		1							1	
Yellow-rumped Warbler							2			
American Tree Sparrow	3	30	10	10	6	10	8	11	8	9
Field Sparrow	1	3				2				1
Savannah Sparrow										
Song Sparrow	12	22	12	26	7	13	6	14	10	8
Swamp Sparrow	1	1	2	1		2				1
White-throated Sparrow	76	59	56	38	34	30	16	15	44	28
Dark-eyed Junco	34	60	16	28	38	51	30	23	42	4
Northern Cardinal	12	21	20	15	16	31	18	22	16	16
Red-winged Blackbird	5	56			34					
Common Grackle	1									
House Finch	29	21	4	5	16	10	22	2	6	
Purple Finch										
White-winged Crossbill										
Common Redpoll						1				
Pine Siskin						4				
American Goldfinch	40	4	15	45	24	51	3	2	39	8
House Sparrow	14	12	4	43	12	5	4	2	6	
<i>Unidentified passerines</i>								40		
<b>Total Individuals</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>583</b>	<b>477</b>	<b>497</b>	<b>612</b>	<b>613</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>456</b>	<b>361</b>
<b>Total Species (Hist.= 70)</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>34</b>