

Esopus Bend Nature Preserve



2022 Annual Winter Bird Count Report



The 17th annual Esopus Bend Nature Preserve (EBNP) Winter Bird Count (WBC) was conducted on Saturday, January 08, 2022 under cold and clear conditions. One field party surveyed the 160-acre preserve from 5:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., recording a total of **602 birds** representing **45 species** during a 12.5 hour effort that included 2.5 hours of nocturnal "owling" (two hours pre-dawn, and one-half hour after dusk). This year's total abundance was in the average range for this survey. Species diversity was above average, tying our previous high count in 2020. Our ten-year average for this survey is 38 species/539 individuals, and our historical average is 37/552.

The winter season leading up to count day was trending mild with no snow and mostly open water, until seasonally cold air altered water conditions several days prior to the count. Some water-dependent species lingered, while others apparently departed. A record high three **Great Blue Herons**, present prior to the cold surge, appeared rather forlorn as they stood motionless side-by-side on a sun-drenched shoreline surrounded by iced-over water. At least one of two **Belted Kingfishers**, present for several weeks, was heard on count day. A small raft of nineteen **Mallards** remained loyal to the creek, foraging in a relatively small patch of open water, including one odd drake hybrid that was more than twice the size of his companions. Three **Common Mergansers**, twelve **Canada Geese**, and two **Ring-billed Gulls** were seen in flight, headed downstream towards the Hudson River. Roughly two dozen **Hooded Mergansers** observed during the count week were no longer present.

As is often the case with winter surveys, two species inflated our abundance number disproportional to the overall population. A conservative estimate of 114 **American Goldfinches**, predominantly observed foraging on an exceptionally large Eastern Hemlock cone crop, established a new record high count for a species that has averaged 18/count historically. Impossible to accurately tally all of the individuals foraging sight unseen high in the tops of tall dense conifers, we witnessed the remarkable sight and sound of cone fragments raining down to the forest floor.

White-throated Sparrows were also tallied in record high numbers, with 112 individuals surpassing our previous high count of 76 in 2020, well above our ten-year average 42/survey. Frequently observed feeding on Asiatic Bittersweet, one good-sized flock encountered in the extreme eastern part of the Preserve was focused on consuming Burning Bush berries (a/k/a Winged Euonymus). Undeniable examples of the numerous birds in EBNP taking advantage of alien invasive fruits. A total of three **Swamp Sparrows** eclipsed our previous counts of one or two individuals in years when they were present on count day.

Small groups of female-type **Red-winged Blackbirds** were scattered throughout the day, eventually flocking together in a tree top where we were able to obtain a single accurate count of 52 individuals. Only one **Wild Turkey** was located, roosting up high at first light. Three **Black Vultures** and one adult **Bald Eagle** were seen soaring in the blue sky over the Preserve. A male **Cooper's Hawk** hunting in the meadow perched low on an exposed tree branch for an extended period of time, providing a nice sunlit view that was none-the-less a difficult identification, given the similarities to it's close relative. One **Great Horned Owl** was heard hooting in pre-dawn darkness, and an apparent pair of **Barred Owls** silently flew in and perched overhead just after dusk. No new species were added to the count composite.

Hermit Thrush, a species significantly dependent on fruit mast, was not detected for the third consecutive year, following fifteen plus years of reliable wintering in the Preserve, at times in double-digit numbers. An increasingly apparent casualty associated with the extensive vandalism of wildlife resources in the Preserve.

Count day conditions were cold but highly conducive to counting, with temperatures ranging from an early morning low of 14°F to an afternoon high 27°F. No wind and brilliant sunlight combined for clear audio and visual acuity. Esopus Creek was largely iced over, with a few patches of open water in the upstream channel, the limited amount of exposed water appearing tranquil and not particularly turbid. The delta and beaver impoundment were entirely covered in a layer of ice. Roughly a quarter of an inch of recent snow covered most of the terrain, not inhibiting access to ground resources.

The following table summarizes the 2022 survey in comparison with our most recent nine-year history. Thanks to Alan Beebe, Allan and Lynn Bowdery, and Mark DeDea for assisting with this year's count.

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Esopus Creek Conservancy
Stewardship and Land Management



Esopus Bend Nature Preserve Environmental Conditions – January 08, 2022.

**Cover photos (top to bottom, left to right) –
Great Blue Heron, American Goldfinch, East Trail Beaver chew on Tulip Tree, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.**

Esopus Bend Nature Preserve Winter Bird Count Ten-Year Summary

Species	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Canada Goose	12	43	41	26			4	1		10
Mute Swan										
American Black Duck							10			
Mallard	19	124	86	31		49	18			6
Hooded Merganser		10	2	3		5				
Common Merganser	3	4	4	8		2	2			10
Wild Turkey	1		1		7	8	4	11		1
Great Blue Heron	3			1						1
Black Vulture	3	2		1						
Bald Eagle	1		2	1		1		1	1	
Northern Harrier										
Sharp-shinned Hawk										
Cooper's Hawk	1		1							1
Red-shouldered Hawk		1			1					
Red-tailed Hawk	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	3	2	1
Ring-billed Gull	2	3	10	21		6	4	1		12
Herring Gull										
Great Black-backed Gull										2
Rock Pigeon							16			2
Mourning Dove	1		8	4	8	2	5		4	1
Eastern Screech-Owl		1	1		1	1		1	1	1
Great Horned Owl	1						1	1		
Barred Owl	2		2							
Belted Kingfisher	1						1			
Red-bellied Woodpecker	10	8	12	10	12	4	8	10	8	14
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	8	3	4	2	2	3	1	8	3	1
Downy Woodpecker	12	12	11	13	18	10	15	28	10	24
Hairy Woodpecker	2	3	3	4	4	5	7	7		8
Northern Flicker	2		1	3	2	1	1		1	
Pileated Woodpecker	2	4	5	6	4	5	5	1	6	6
Peregrine Falcon							1			
Blue Jay	3	3	10	10	22	12	13	12	9	5
American Crow	6	7	6	9	12	8	6	6	16	19
Common Raven	1		5	2						
Black-capped Chickadee	43	80	24	42	44	62	57	94	44	79
Tufted Titmouse	35	34	28	18	51	34	36	66	38	49
Red-breasted Nuthatch										

Species	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
White-breasted Nuthatch	16	20	20	16	20	22	16	31	17	31
Brown Creeper	8	7	7	7	1	4	2	5	2	12
Winter Wren	4	3	5	8	2	1	4	8	2	6
Carolina Wren	16	21	19	22	17	10	8	16	14	14
Golden-crowned Kinglet	12		18		15	5		14	2	29
Ruby-crowned Kinglet					1					
Eastern Bluebird	6	8	8	8	4	20	4	58	4	6
Hermit Thrush				1	3	1	3	7	7	10
American Robin	14		2	12	74	1	68	10	78	2
Gray Catbird								2		
Northern Mockingbird	1	1	2	1	1			1		
European Starling			6	1	10	2	69		17	2
Bohemian Waxwing										
Cedar Waxwing	1		12				35		53	
Common Yellowthroat				1						
Yellow-rumped Warbler									2	
American Tree Sparrow	5	10	3	30	10	10	6	10	8	11
Field Sparrow	1	3	1	3				2		
Savannah Sparrow										
Song Sparrow	34	21	12	22	12	26	7	13	6	14
Swamp Sparrow	3		1	1	2	1		2		
White-throated Sparrow	112	56	76	59	56	38	34	30	16	15
Dark-eyed Junco	18	34	34	60	16	28	38	51	30	23
Northern Cardinal	5	6	12	21	20	15	16	31	18	22
Red-winged Blackbird	52	64	5	56			34			
Common Grackle	3		1							
House Finch	1	4	29	21	4	5	16	10	22	2
Purple Finch										
White-winged Crossbill										
Common Redpoll								1		
Pine Siskin								4		
American Goldfinch	114	4	40	4	15	45	24	51	3	2
House Sparrow		11	14	12	4	43	12	5	4	2
<i>Unidentified passerines</i>										40
Total Individuals	602	616	596	583	477	497	612	613	448	496
Total Species (Hist.= 70)	45	34	45	42	35	37	40	38	32	38