

2012 Ulster County May Census Report

Thirteen individuals in five field parties participated in the 2012 annual *John Burroughs Natural History Society* Ulster County May Census (a/k/a “Century Day”) on 12 May. This “Big Day” county-wide count is an attempt to document bird diversity by identifying as many species of birds within Ulster County during the course of one day. This year’s total of **155 species** was above average and eclipsed our recent high counts of 154 species in 2010 and 2007 (149/2011, 154/2010, 139/2009, 143/2008, 154/2007, 144/2006, 133/2004).

Mostly sunny daytime skies, a clear night sky with partial moonlight (last quarter), and temperatures ranging from 38°-80° (F) with only occasional light westerly winds made for a very pleasant day of birding, but were not the anticipated weather conditions that result in a big overnight movement of migrants and large flocks of foraging birds at daybreak. On a seasonal basis, we once again experienced an early migration season that was somewhat more protracted this year in comparison to recent past years. Following months of record-breaking mild winter weather and an extremely mild and dry early spring, southerly winds and associated storm fronts pushed large numbers of migrants through the area during the two weeks immediately preceding the count, but stabilized by count day. As would be expected with long-term mild conditions, leaf-out was two to three weeks (or more for some species) ahead of what would be considered typical.

This year’s count will be remembered for the diversity of species, including a very respectable 29 species of wood warblers along with good numbers of individuals for some of the warbler species that are often missed entirely on this spring census. The outstanding highlights were a singing **Golden-winged Warbler** that was heard along Shults Rd. in Saugerties, and a very elusive count day adult **Northern Goshawk** flying low over Yankeetown Pond in Wittenberg.

Ruffed Grouse was once again heard drumming in the early morning hour at Wilson SP in Wittenberg, a **Common Gallinule** and **Pied-billed Grebe** were found in The Great Vly WMA in Saugerties, two **Horned Grebes** were observed along the West Hurley dike on the Ashokan Reservoir, two **Hooded Mergansers** were observed in the Sawkill at Kingston Reservoir, **Least Bittern** and **Black-crowned Night-Heron** were heard from Kingston Point, a **Bonaparte’s Gull** in breeding plumage was scoped at a great distance in the lower basin of Ashokan Reservoir, one **Osprey** was observed flying over the Hudson River from East Kingston, a vocalizing **Great Horned Owl** was heard from Humpo Marsh in New Paltz, and **Eastern Whip-poor-will** was heard singing at Oteora SP in Kingston.

One **Acadian Flycatcher** was heard on Dug Hill Rd. in Hurley, an **Alder Flycatcher** was found by one field party, **Willow Flycatcher** was detected at Harcourt Wildlife Sanctuary in New Paltz, **Swainson’s Thrush** was heard singing briefly along Mill Dam Rd. in Stone Ridge, **Tennessee Warblers** were detected by three field parties, including three individuals in Esopus Bend Nature Preserve (EBNP) in Saugerties, where a singing **Mourning Warbler** was also encountered. **Hooded Warbler** was found in the laurel thickets at the Jenny Lane parking area in the Shawangunks, **Cape May Warblers** were encountered at multiple locations and in extraordinary numbers, including the intersection of Sawkill/Zena Rd in the Town of Woodstock, Lauren Tice Rd. in Saugerties, and five (!) individuals in a single spruce tree at the Meadow Rd. entrance to EBNP. **Cerulean, Bay-breasted, and Blackpoll Warblers** were also encountered on count day by at least one field party.

Red-headed Woodpeckers continue to be reliable in a beaver swamp on Weston Road in New Paltz, a **Sharp-shinned hawk** (declining significantly and increasingly difficult to find in our area) was observed perched along Shults Rd. in Saugerties, an impressive colony of 100+ **Bank Swallows** was reported from the Mill Dam Rd. area of Stone Ridge, **Wilson’s Warblers** and **Northern Waterthrush** were present this year in exceptionally good numbers with multiple individuals detected on count day from several locations, and **Worm-eating Warbler, Orchard Oriole, Purple Finch, Lincoln’s Sparrow, and White-crowned Sparrows** all made the list this year. **Purple Martins** were back at traditional colonial nesting sites in New Paltz and Rosendale, and several impressive flocks of **Brant** (1,500-2,000 total) were observed migrating up the Hudson River at dusk to finish out a remarkably good day of spring birding in Ulster County.

Shorebirds were well represented but largely limited, by the lack of flooded habitat, to the farm pond on Denniston Road in Shawangunk. There were no unusual species of waterfowl detected in the county on count day, and we missed Sora, American Coot, Wilson’s Snipe, Great Black-backed Gull, both species of Cuckoo, **Common Nighthawk, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Golden-crowned Kinglet**, and the three grassland species of sparrows (Vesper, Grasshopper, and Henslow’s) that were once local breeders in the southern part of the county but are apparently now extirpated.

A summary table of species found by group, and field party effort, is included below. Thanks to all of the participants for their effort and reports.

Steve M. Chorvas – compiler

2012 Ulster County May Census Summary

Species	Group					
	A	B	C	D	E	
Brant						
Canada Goose	A	B	C		E	
Mute Swan	A	B	C		E	
Wood Duck	A	B	C		E	
American Black Duck			C			
Mallard	A	B	C	D	E	
Hooded Merganser	A					
Common Merganser	A	B	C			
Ruffed Grouse		B	C			
Wild Turkey	A	B	C			
Common Loon		B				
Pied-billed Grebe	A	B	C			
Horned Grebe	A		C			
Double-crested Cormorant	A	B	C			
Least Bittern			C			
Great Blue Heron	A	B	C		E	
Green Heron	A	B	C		E	
Black-crowned Night-Heron			C			
Black Vulture		B	C		E	
Turkey Vulture	A	B	C			
Osprey			C			
Bald Eagle	A	B	C			
Northern Harrier			C			
Sharp-shinned Hawk	A	B				
Cooper's Hawk	A	B	C			
Northern Goshawk		B				
Red-shouldered Hawk	A	B				
Broad-winged Hawk		B				
Red-tailed Hawk	A	B	C		E	
American Kestrel			C			
Virginia Rail		B	C			
Common Gallinule		B				
Killdeer	A	B	C			
Spotted Sandpiper	A	B	C			
Solitary Sandpiper	A	B	C			
Greater Yellowlegs	A	B	C			
Lesser Yellowlegs	A	B	C			
Upland Sandpiper		B				
Least Sandpiper	A	B	C			
American Woodcock		B	C			
Bonaparte's Gull	A	B	C			
Ring-billed Gull	A	B	C			
Herring Gull	A		C			
Rock Pigeon	A	B	C			
Mourning Dove	A	B	C	D	E	
Eastern Screech-Owl	A	B	C			
Great Horned Owl		B				
Barred Owl	A	B	C		E	
Eastern Whip-poor-will		B	C			
Chimney Swift	A	B	C			
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	A	B	C			
Belted Kingfisher	A	B	C		E	
Red-headed Woodpecker		B	C			

Species	Group					
	A	B	C	D	E	
Red-bellied Woodpecker	A	B	C	D	E	
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	A	B	C			
Downy Woodpecker	A	B	C	D	E	
Hairy Woodpecker	A	B	C			
Northern Flicker	A	B	C	D	E	
Pileated Woodpecker	A	B	C		E	
Eastern Wood-Pewee		B			E	
Acadian Flycatcher		B				
Alder Flycatcher		B				
Willow Flycatcher					E	
Least Flycatcher		B	C		E	
Eastern Phoebe	A	B	C	D	E	
Great Crested Flycatcher	A	B	C		E	
Eastern Kingbird	A	B	C		E	
Yellow-throated Vireo	A	B	C			
Blue-headed Vireo		B	C			
Warbling Vireo	A	B	C		E	
Red-eyed Vireo	A	B	C	D	E	
Blue Jay	A	B	C	D	E	
American Crow	A	B	C	D		
Fish Crow	A	B	C			
Common Raven		B				
Purple Martin		B	C			
Tree Swallow	A	B	C		E	
No. Rough-winged Swallow	A	B	C			
Bank Swallow	A	B	C			
Cliff Swallow	A	B	C			
Barn Swallow	A	B	C		E	
Black-capped Chickadee	A	B	C	D	E	
Tufted Titmouse	A	B	C	D	E	
White-breasted Nuthatch	A	B	C		E	
Brown Creeper	A	B	C			
Carolina Wren	A	B	C	D	E	
House Wren	A	B	C	D	E	
Winter Wren	A	B	C			
Marsh Wren	A	B	C			
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	A	B	C			
Ruby-crowned Kinglet		B				
Eastern Bluebird	A	B	C		E	
Veery	A	B	C			
Swainson's Thrush	A					
Hermit Thrush		B	C			
Wood Thrush	A	B	C		E	
American Robin	A	B	C	D	E	
Gray Catbird	A	B	C	D	E	
Northern Mockingbird	A	B	C	D	E	
Brown Thrasher		B	C		E	
European Starling	A	B	C	D	E	
Cedar Waxwing	A	B	C			
Ovenbird	A	B	C			
Worm-eating Warbler	A	B	C			
Louisiana Waterthrush	A	B	C			
Northern Waterthrush	A	B	C		E	

2012 Ulster County May Census Summary

Species	Group				
Golden-winged Warbler	A				
Blue-winged Warbler		B	C		E
Black-and-white Warbler	A	B	C	D	
Tennessee Warbler	A	B	C		
Nashville Warbler	A		C		
Mourning Warbler	A		C		
Common Yellowthroat	A	B	C		E
Hooded Warbler		B			
American Redstart	A	B	C		E
Cape May Warbler		B	C		
Cerulean Warbler		B			
Northern Parula		B	C		E
Magnolia Warbler	A	B	C		
Bay-breasted Warbler		B			
Blackburnian Warbler	A	B	C		E
Yellow Warbler	A	B	C		E
Chestnut-sided Warbler	A	B	C		
Blackpoll Warbler		B	C		
Black-throated Blue Warbler	A	B	C		E
Pine Warbler	A	B	C		
Yellow-rumped Warbler	A	B	C		E
Prairie Warbler	A	B	C		E
Black-throated Green Warbler	A	B	C	D	E
Canada Warbler		B	C		E
Wilson's Warbler	A	B	C		
Eastern Towhee	A	B	C		E

Species	Group				
Chipping Sparrow	A	B	C	D	E
Field Sparrow	A	B	C		E
Savannah Sparrow	A	B	C		
Song Sparrow	A	B	C	D	E
Lincoln's Sparrow		B	C		
Swamp Sparrow	A	B	C		
White-throated Sparrow	A	B	C		E
White-crowned Sparrow		B	C		
Dark-eyed Junco	A	B			
Scarlet Tanager	A	B	C		E
Northern Cardinal	A	B	C	D	E
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	A	B	C		E
Indigo Bunting	A	B	C		E
Bobolink	A	B	C		E
Red-winged Blackbird	A	B	C		E
Eastern Meadowlark		B	C		E
Common Grackle	A	B	C		E
Brown-headed Cowbird	A	B	C		E
Orchard Oriole	A	B			
Baltimore Oriole	A	B	C		E
Purple Finch	A				
House Finch	A	B	C	D	
American Goldfinch	A	B	C	D	E
House Sparrow	A	B	C	D	
Totals: 155 Species	115	141	133	25	66

Field party effort:

Group A – Deb Ferguson, Frank Murphy (5:30 a.m.– 8:30 p.m.)

Group B – Mark DeDea, Glenn Nystrup, Peter Schoenberger (1:30 a.m.– 8:45 p.m., 300 miles)

Group C – Larry Alden, Jackie Bogardus, Steve Chorvas (2:45 a.m.– 8:45 p.m., 200+ miles)

Group D – Charlotte Adamis (6:45 a.m.– 8:00 a.m., section of Linderman Ave. Kingston)

Group E – Combined reports from three field parties surveying Walkkill Valley Land Trust easements.

Lynn Bowdery (Abels, Walkkill Valley Land Trust easement)

Mira Bowin, Matt Corsaro (Walkkill Valley Rail Trail and Harcourt Wildlife Sanctuary)

Nancy McBride (Woodland Pond easement)