

2013 Ulster County May Census Report

Eight hardy birders in four field parties participated in the 2013 annual *John Burroughs Natural History Society* Ulster County May Census (Century Day) on Saturday, 11 May. This Big Day county-wide count is an attempt to document bird diversity in the county by identifying as many species of birds as possible within Ulster County during the course of one day. Our collective total of **139 species** was recorded under inclement weather conditions and on the tail-end of one of the most unproductive and delayed spring migration periods in recent history. Not surprisingly, the 2013 total ranks on the low end of recent compilations: 155/2012, 149/2011, 154/2010, 139/2009, 143/2008, 154/2007, 144/2006, 133/2004.

Unfavorable migratory conditions persisted throughout most of the two week period leading up to count day, with high pressure and northwest winds the dominate weather pattern following a generally cold and late spring season in the Northeast. A late-week storm system finally shifted wind direction to a more desirable southerly source, bringing much-needed rain into our region and a minor, but noticeable, influx of migrant birds on Thursday and Friday.

Weather conditions on count day were somewhat challenging for both visual and audio detection, but fairly conducive to an extended period of bird activity. Intermittent rain showers persisted throughout the day under mostly cloudy skies with only occasional brief interludes of sunshine, most notably late day in the western mountain regions of the county. Winds were generally light from the southwest with temperatures very comfortable at 56-75 degrees (F). Dense cloud cover and a recent New Moon precluded any benefit from nocturnal moonlight.

Highlights include two singing **GRASSHOPPER SPARROWS** at Shawangunk Grasslands NWR and a vocalizing **ACADIAN FLYCATCHER** along Peekamoose Road, both initially detected by Mark, Peter, and Glen (the “Bearded Tyrants” field team). Mark also located a **PEREGRINE FALCON** flying over Kingston Point near dusk, and a high-flying **MERLIN** soaring over Greenville Road in Sundown.

One **GREEN-WINGED TEAL** lingered at Kingston Reservoir; two **BONAPARTE'S GULLS** were observed off Sleightsburg on the Rondout Lighthouse jetty; two **UPLAND SANDPIPERS** were found in the horse pastures at Blue Chip Farm; one **LEAST BITTERN** was heard vocalizing at Kingston Point; two **RUFFED GROUSE** were heard drumming (at Kenneth Wilson SP and another on Mill Road southeast of Peekamoose Road); and individual **RUBY-CROWNED KINGLETS** were encountered in at least three separate locations. **OSPREY** were found at Onteora SP and Kingston Reservoir, and Peter reported hearing three **EASTERN WHIP-POOR-WILLS** from West Saugerties Road shortly after dusk Saturday night.

Breeding **RED-HEADED WOODPECKERS** continue to be reliable in a beaver swamp on Weston Road along the New Paltz/Esopus town line. A respectable, but substantially fewer 19 species of warblers were encountered this year compared to 29 species in 2012, with a male **WILSON'S WARBLER** along Dave Elliott Road in Saugerties and several **WORM-EATING WARBLERS** from multiple locations making the most noteworthy list. Shorebirds were well-represented again this year, but Wilson's Snipe was not detected on count day.

Overall there were relatively few migrants (a recurring theme), and the majority of birds encountered were local breeders on territory. Great Horned Owl, Sora, Gallinule, Coot, Grebes, and Night-heron eluded detection or were not present. Cedar Waxwings have been few and far between for many months and remained undetected on count day. Typically late-arriving species (Brant, Common Nighthawk, Willow and Alder Flycatcher, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Blackpoll and Canada Warbler, and cuckoos) were also missed and were likely just starting to arrive in our area in any significant numbers.

Investing an entire day in the field often results in interesting and remarkable observations of both avian and non-avian activity and our 2013 Century Day was no exception. Deb and Frank observed a Bald Eagle fishing at the Ashokan Reservoir, carrying its catch low across the East basin in the direction of their nest where one or two chicks were being fed; a Virginia Rail calling and scurrying across a road; two American Kestrels copulating at the Shawangunk Grasslands; and three male Indigo Buntings singing at the top of a single tree! Peter, Mark, and Glen watched a Spotted Turtle crossing Martin Swedish Road. Larry and I watched and heard four Veeries simultaneously singing while engaged in a fast-paced chase; and we encountered a small Snapping Turtle out on the road at Kingston Point and another one remarkably crossing over the divided four-lane high-speed NYS Thruway using the overpass on West Camp Road in Saugerties!

A summary table of species found by group and field party effort is included below. My thanks to all of the participants for their fine effort, timely reports, and expertise in the field.

Steve M. Chorvas – compiler

2013 Ulster County May Census Summary

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

Species	Group						
		B					
Merlin		B					
Peregrine Falcon		B*	C				
Acadian Flycatcher	A	B					
Least Flycatcher	A	B	C				
Eastern Phoebe	A	B	C				
Great Crested Flycatcher	A	B	C				
Eastern Kingbird	A	B	C				
Yellow-throated Vireo	A	B	C				
Blue-headed Vireo	A	B	C				
Warbling Vireo	A	B	C				
Red-eyed Vireo	A	B	C				
Blue Jay	A	B	C				
American Crow	A	B	C				
Fish Crow	A	B	C				
Common Raven	A	B	C				
Purple Martin	A	B	C				
Tree Swallow	A	B	C	D			
No. Rough-winged Swallow	A	B	C				
Bank Swallow		B	C				
Cliff Swallow	A		C				
Barn Swallow	A	B	C	D			
Black-capped Chickadee	A	B	C				
Tufted Titmouse	A	B	C				
White-breasted Nuthatch	A	B	C				
Brown Creeper	A	B					
House Wren	A	B	C				
Winter Wren		B	C				
Marsh Wren	A	B	C				
Carolina Wren	A	B	C				
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	A	B	C				
Golden-crowned Kinglet	A						
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	A	B					
Eastern Bluebird	A	B	C				
Veery	A	B					
Hermit Thrush	A	B					
Wood Thrush	A	B	C	D			
American Robin	A	B	C	D			
Gray Catbird	A	B	C	D			
Northern Mockingbird	A	B	C				
Brown Thrasher	A		C				
European Starling	A	B	C	D			
Ovenbird	A	B	C				
Worm-eating Warbler	A	B					
Louisiana Waterthrush	A	B					
Northern Waterthrush	A						
Blue-winged Warbler	A	B	C				
Black-and-white Warbler	A	B	C				
Nashville Warbler			C				
Common Yellowthroat	A	B	C				
American Redstart	A	B	C	D			
Northern Parula	A	B	C				
Magnolia Warbler	A	B					
Blackburnian Warbler	A	B	C				

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Species	Group				Species	Group			
	A	B	C	D		A	B	C	D
Yellow Warbler	A	B	C	D	Dark-eyed Junco	A	B	C	D
Chestnut-sided Warbler		B	C		Scarlet Tanager	A	B	C	
Black-throated Blue Warbler	A	B	C		Northern Cardinal	A	B	C	D
Pine Warbler	A	B	C		Rose-breasted Grosbeak	A	B	C	
Yellow-rumped Warbler	A	B	C		Indigo Bunting	A	B	C	
Prairie Warbler	A	B	C		Bobolink	A	B	C	
Black-throated Green Warbler	A	B	C		Red-winged Blackbird	A	B	C	D
Wilson's Warbler	A				Eastern Meadowlark	A	B	C	
Eastern Towhee	A	B	C		Common Grackle	A	B	C	D
Chipping Sparrow	A	B	C	D	Brown-headed Cowbird	A	B	C	D
Field Sparrow	A	B	C		Orchard Oriole		B	C	
Savannah Sparrow	A	B	C		Baltimore Oriole	A	B	C	
Grasshopper Sparrow	A	B			Purple Finch	A			
Song Sparrow	A	B	C	D	House Finch	A	B	C	
Swamp Sparrow	A	B			American Goldfinch	A	B	C	
White-throated Sparrow	A	B			House Sparrow	A	B	C	D
White-crowned Sparrow	A	B		D	Totals: 139 Species	127	122	110	22

* Birds recorded separate from group effort, reflected in adjusted group totals.

Field party effort:

Group A – Larry Alden, Steve Chorvas (2:30 a.m.– 10:30 p.m., 280 miles)

Group B – Mark DeDea, Glenn Nystrup, Peter Schoenberger (2:00 a.m.– 7:45 p.m., 360 miles)

Group C – Deb Ferguson, Frank Murphy (7:30 a.m.– 9:00 p.m., 65 miles)

Group D – Wendy Tocci (Kingston Point and Esopus Meadows, 2.25 hours, 1 mile)



Virginia Rail crossing roadway – Photo by Steve Chorvas