

## Ulster County May Census – 2014

Six field parties participated in the spring 2014 annual *John Burroughs Natural History Society* Ulster County May Census (Century Day) on Saturday, 10 May, including a group of young birders from the Maple Ridge Community in Ulster Park. 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 one 24-hour time period. Collectively, we encountered **161 species** during one of our most productive counts in recent history, consistent with an extraordinarily good spring migration that started early in April with unprecedented numbers and variety of waterfowl and continued through most of the month of May with extraordinarily good neotropical bird diversity and abundance. Overall, we experienced a spring season more reminiscent of years past when waves of migrants were often encountered in large mixed flocks, and the migration window extended out over several weeks.

Nearly ideal migratory conditions persisted throughout most of the week leading up to count day, with southerly winds and an advancing warm front spurring good overnight movement in the form of frequent vocalizations heard from the night sky. Mostly cloudy and cool conditions effectively extended bird activity well into the mid-day period, with count day temperatures ranging from 59-78 degrees (F) under a mix of intermittent sunshine and afternoon thunderstorms that briefly produced some heavy rain in the mountainous terrain. Southerly winds were generally light at 5 mph with occasional gusts to 20 mph. A nearly full (82 %) moon was obscured by cloud cover during the overnight period.

The 2014 count featured many highlights, including a returning **Grasshopper Sparrow** at Shawangunk Grasslands NWR, one **Olive-sided Flycatcher** and a **Common Nighthawk** perched in the top of trees along Austin Brown Road near Rondout Reservoir, two **Green-winged Teal** on Onteora Lake, a very rare (for this census) **Dunlin** adjacent to the farm pond on Denniston Road, two **Semipalmated Plovers** (one on Denniston Road and one on Sawkill Reservoir), and **Common Gallinule** and **American Coot** at The Great Vly WMA. **Great Horned Owl**, often missed on this May census, was heard in the pre-dawn at Humpo Marsh, a **Merlin** was observed at Ashokan Reservoir, **Peregrine Falcons** were recorded on the cliffs at Mohonk and one on Maple Ridge Community lands in Ulster Park; and a very large accipiter identified as a **Northern Goshawk** was observed flying over Kingston.

**Red-headed Woodpeckers** continue to breed at the Weston Road marsh in New Paltz, two **Ruffed Grouse** were heard drumming again this year in Wilson State Park, **Eastern Whip-poor-will** were vocalizing along West Saugerties Road, an **Acadian Flycatcher** was once again detected on Dug Hill Road in Hurley, and a **Black-crowned Night-Heron** was present again at Kingston Point. **Hooded Merganser** was observed at Weston Road (both drake and hen) and one was seen on Onteora Lake. Another difficult species to detect in May, **Cedar Waxwings** were reliable at Kingston Point over an extended period this spring, and **Osprey** were attempting to nest on a channel marker in the Hudson River north of Kingston Point Beach for the first time in our recorded history. Three **terns** were also observed flying north from Kingston Point in the presence of several gulls, but did not provide enough opportunity to identify to species.

Mixed flocks of warblers were encountered at numerous locations, moving through the county in exceptionally good numbers with excellent diversity on count day. **Cerulean Warbler**, apparently breeding in the woodlands adjacent to a ball field in Rosendale, was the outstanding highlight. An early **Tennessee Warbler** was recorded on Maple Ridge Community lands, **Mourning Warbler** was found at Esopus Bend Nature Preserve, and **Hooded Warbler** was once again on their breeding territory near the Jenny Lane trailhead in the Shawangunks. **Wilson's Warbler**, **Cape May Warbler**, and **Bay-breasted Warbler** were detected in multiple locations, and the unusual duo of an early **Blackpoll Warbler** and a late **Palm Warbler** were observed together in an impressive mixed flock of warblers at the Great Vly WMA. We finished the day with a remarkable 29 species of warblers, missing only Golden-winged Warbler.

A few species were noteworthy by their absence. Waterfowl were generally not well represented this year, with American Black Duck and Pied-billed Grebe the most obvious. Sora and Least Bittern were not heard at traditional breeding sites, and Upland Sandpiper avoided detection at Blue Chip Farm and Shawangunk Grasslands. Typically late arriving Brant, Black-billed Cuckoo, and Alder Flycatcher were likely just starting to arrive in our area, filtering in during the days immediately following the census. Horned Lark and Bonaparte's Gull were absent or missed, and perhaps the most noteworthy miss was the total absence of Golden-crowned Kinglets at former breeding sites in lower elevations of the county.

A summary table of species found by group, and field party effort, is included below. My thanks go out to all of the participants for their time and effort documenting this year's extraordinary spring migration in Ulster County.

## 2014 Ulster County May Census Summary

Species	Group					
Canada Goose	A	B	C	D	E	F
Mute Swan	A	B	C	D	E	
Wood Duck	A	B	C	D		F
Mallard	A	B	C	D	E	F
Green-winged Teal		B		D		
Hooded Merganser	A	B	C	D		
Common Merganser	A	B	C	D		
Ruffed Grouse	A	B		D		
Wild Turkey	A	B	C	D		F
Common Loon	A	B	C			
Double-crested Cormorant	A	B	C	D		F
Great Blue Heron	A	B	C	D	E	F
Green Heron	A	B	C	D		F
Black-crowned Night-Heron		B				
Black Vulture	A	B	C	D	E	F
Turkey Vulture	A	B	C	D	E	F
Osprey	A	B	C	D	E	F
Bald Eagle	A	B	C	D		F
Northern Harrier						F
Cooper's Hawk	A		C	D		F
Northern Goshawk		B		D		F
Red-shouldered Hawk	A	B	C	D		F
Broad-winged Hawk	A	B				
Red-tailed Hawk	A	B	C	D	E	F
Virginia Rail	A	B				
Common Gallinule	A	B	C	D		
American Coot			C			
Semipalmated Plover		B	C	D		
Killdeer	A	B	C	D	E	F
Spotted Sandpiper	A	B	C	D		F
Solitary Sandpiper	A	B	C	D		F
Greater Yellowlegs	A	B	C	D		
Lesser Yellowlegs	A	B	C	D		
Dunlin		B		D		
Least Sandpiper	A	B	C	D		
Wilson's Snipe	A					F
American Woodcock	A	B	C			F
Ring-billed Gull	A	B	C	D		F
Herring Gull		B				
Great Black-backed Gull	A	B	C			F
<i>Tern species</i>	A					
Rock Pigeon	A	B	C	D	E	
Mourning Dove	A	B	C	D	E	F
Yellow-billed Cuckoo						F
Eastern Screech-Owl	A	B		D		
Great Horned Owl		B				F
Barred Owl	A	B	C			F
Common Nighthawk		B*	C			
Eastern Whip-poor-will		B				
Chimney Swift	A	B	C	D	E	F
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	A	B	C	D	E	F
Belted Kingfisher	A	B	C	D		F
Red-headed Woodpecker	A	B	C	D	E	

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

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Species	Group						Species	Group						
	A	B	C	D	E	F		A	B	C	D	E	F	
Ovenbird	A	B	C	D	E	F	Wilson's Warbler	A	B	C	D	E	F	
Worm-eating Warbler	A	B	C			F	Eastern Towhee	A	B	C	D	E	F	
Louisiana Waterthrush	A	B	C	D	E	F	Chipping Sparrow	A	B	C	D	E	F	
Northern Waterthrush	A	B	C			F	Field Sparrow	A	B	C		E	F	
Blue-winged Warbler	A	B	C	D		F	Savannah Sparrow	A	B				F	
Black-and-white Warbler	A	B	C	D	E	F	Grasshopper Sparrow		B	C	D			
Tennessee Warbler						F	Song Sparrow	A	B	C	D	E	F	
Nashville Warbler	A	B	C	D		F	Lincoln's Sparrow	A	B	C				
Mourning Warbler	A		C				Swamp Sparrow	A	B		D			
Common Yellowthroat	A	B	C	D	E	F	White-throated Sparrow	A	B	C	D	E	F	
Hooded Warbler		B	C				White-crowned Sparrow	A	B	C	D	E	F	
American Redstart	A	B	C	D	E	F	Dark-eyed Junco	A	B	C				
Cape May Warbler	A	B		D			Scarlet Tanager	A	B	C	D	E	F	
Cerulean Warbler		B		D			Northern Cardinal	A	B	C	D	E	F	
Northern Parula	A	B	C	D		F	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	A	B	C	D	E	F	
Magnolia Warbler	A	B	C	D		F	Indigo Bunting	A	B		D	E	F	
Bay-breasted Warbler	A	B	C				Bobolink	A	B	C	D	E	F	
Blackburnian Warbler	A	B	C	D	E	F	Red-winged Blackbird	A	B	C	D	E	F	
Yellow Warbler	A	B	C	D	E	F	Eastern Meadowlark	A	B	C	D	E		
Chestnut-sided Warbler	A	B	C	D		F	Common Grackle	A	B	C	D	E	F	
Blackpoll Warbler	A	B				F	Brown-headed Cowbird	A	B	C	D	E	F	
Black-throated Blue Warbler	A	B	C	D	E	F	Orchard Oriole	A	B	C				
Palm Warbler	A	B		D		F	Baltimore Oriole	A	B	C		E	F	
Pine Warbler	A	B	C	D			House Finch	A	B	C		E	F	
Yellow-rumped Warbler	A	B	C	D	E	F	Purple Finch	A	B	C				
Prairie Warbler	A	B	C	D			American Goldfinch	A	B	C	D	E	F	
Black-throated Green Warbler	A	B	C	D	E	F	House Sparrow	A	B	C	D	E	F	
Canada Warbler	A	B	C			F	<b>Totals: 161 Species</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>1</b>

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

### Field party effort:

**Group A** – Larry Alden, Steve Chorvas (2:15 a.m.– 9:00 p.m., 260 miles)

**Group B** – Mark DeDea, Peter Schoenberger (1:30 a.m.– 8:45 p.m., 312 miles)

**Group C** – Deb Ferguson, Frank Murphy (4:05 a.m.– 8:35 p.m., 167 miles)

**Group D** – Jessica Prockup, Wendy Tocci (5:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., 150 miles)

**Group E** – Allan and Lynn Bowdery (Walkkill Valley Rail Trail and New Paltz area)

**Group F** – Arnold Meier/Maple Ridge Community youth birders (Primarily Maple Ridge lands, Ulster Park)

**Group M** – Miscellaneous Reports (Tom Sarro – Mohonk Preserve)