

Ulster County May Census – May 11, 2019

The annual *John Burroughs Natural History Society* Ulster County May Bird Census (a/k/a Century Day) was conducted on the traditional second Saturday of the month, May 11, 2019. This “Big Day” count is an effort to document bird diversity in Ulster County by identifying as many species of birds as possible during a single day. Seven field parties searched the county to find **156 species**, three species less than last year, but four species above our ten-year average.

Count day weather conditions were about as good as it gets for the participants, a welcome change from the decidedly inclement weather of recent past years. Clear sunny skies and a very comfortable temperature range of 50° to 67° (F) with little (5 mph) to no wind made for excellent viewing and audio conditions. Unfortunately, pleasant count day weather does not always translate to good migration conditions. The lack of favorable southerly winds apparently factored in reducing overnight movement of birds into our area, and frequent cool and wet weather leading up to count day may have delayed some traditionally late migrants from reaching our latitude in any significant numbers.

There were however, numerous highlights to this year’s count, including the presence of two Ulster County rarities that are remarkable in any season. A very vocal male **King Rail** was found at the Great Vly Wildlife Management Area in Saugerties, and a cooperative singing male **Clay-colored Sparrow** was found at Juniper Flats in the Town of Ulster. To the best of my knowledge, both represent first time ever occurrences on this long-standing historical census.

Three **Caspian Terns** and a **Common Tern** were seen on the jetty at Kingston Point, and three lingering female-type **Red-breasted Mergansers** continued off the Sleightsburg Spit. A remarkable three **Northern Goshawks** were reported from Juniper Flats, one adult flyover and two immature birds that elicited some discussion about their true identity. There were two separate reports of **Great Egrets**, one at the Great Vly and three additional birds observed flying over Maple Ridge Community land in Ulster Park, where a **Gray-cheeked Thrush** and a flock of 25 **American Pipits** were also recorded. A **Philadelphia Vireo** was seen and heard vocalizing at Esopus Meadows, and five **Pine Siskins** continued along West Saugerties Road.

Also noteworthy for this May count was a pair (drake and hen) of **Ring-necked Ducks** lingering at the Great Vly, **Common Gallinule** heard vocalizing from the Great Vly, a single **Bonaparte’s Gull** on the jetty at Kingston Point, and three different **Swainson’s Thrushes** encountered by three separate field parties. Reliable local breeding sites produced **Ruffed Grouse** drumming at Wilson State Park, **Eastern Whip-poor-will** singing from West Saugerties Road and a section of Route 28 in Kingston, **Grasshopper Sparrow** seen and heard singing at Shawangunk Grasslands NWR, and multiple reports from multiple locations of resident **Bald Eagles** and **Ospreys** by five of the seven field parties, highlighting the outstanding success of these once uncommon breeding birds in Ulster County.

Twenty-six species of Wood Warblers were found during the course of the count day, including **Tennessee, Hooded, Cape May, Cerulean, and Wilson’s Warbler**. Bay-breasted and Mourning Warbler were not detected. Migrant **Common Nighthawk** was observed by two field parties, but no group encountered any Brant. Also missing from the final tally was Hooded Merganser, Pied-billed Grebe, Great Black-backed Gull, Northern Harrier (reported the following day from SGNWR), Sharp-shinned Hawk, and Golden-crowned Kinglet.

A silent "Traill's" Flycatcher was seen by one field party, otherwise Willow, Alder, and Acadian Flycatcher went undetected, perhaps indicative of the relatively late spring. Six species of shorebirds is more or less typical for Ulster County at this time of the year, with Upland Sandpiper and Wilson’s Snipe eluding our efforts this year. Horned Lark is no longer reliable at Blue Chip Farm at this time of the year, and is now frequently missed on the May Census.

The following table summarizes species found by field party, followed by field party effort. For the record, and to emphasize the value of reporting restricted efforts, it is worth noting that our most productive field team over the past several years decided to take a break from a full-day, all out county-wide marathon this year. Nevertheless, field parties that limited their count to a partial day at just one or two locations contributed species to our final tally that were not encountered by any other field party, in addition to the remarkable rarities discovered at Juniper Flats.

Thanks to all of the participants for their time and outstanding effort. It is very nice to see that twenty-two students from the Maple Ridge Community were engaged in this year’s count!

Steve M. Chorvas – compiler

Field party effort:

- A** – Peter Schoenberger (14 hrs., 14.3 miles, West Saugerties Road yard patch on foot)
- B** – Jim Clinton, Jessica Prockup, Wendy Tocci (16.5 hrs., 223 miles)
- C** – Larry Alden, Jackie Bogardus, Steve Chorvas (18.5 hrs., 2:15 AM - 8:45 PM, 193 miles)
- D** – Arnold Meier, Susan Nelson, Dennis Trapnell, Dwight Wareham, and 22 Maple Ridge students (12 hrs., 6:00 AM - 6:00 PM, Maple Ridge Community, Ulster Park; Esopus Meadows; High Banks Preserve)
- E** – Mark DeDea (2 hrs., 1 mile, Juniper Flats)
- F** – Lynn Bowdery (2.25 hrs., 2.3 miles, Kleinekill Farm area, Mohonk Preserve)
- G** – Ariane Giudicelli (8 hrs., 5:35 AM - 1:23 PM, 3.4 miles, Lapla Road yard patch)

2019 Ulster County May Census Summary

Species	Group						
	A	B	C	D	E		
Canada Goose	A	B	C	D	E		
Mute Swan		B	C				
Wood Duck		B	C	D			
Mallard	A	B	C	D			
Ring-necked Duck			C				
Common Merganser		B	C				
Red-breasted Merganser			C				
Ruffed Grouse		B	C				
Wild Turkey	A	B		D			
Rock Pigeon		B	C				
Mourning Dove	A	B	C	D	E		G
Yellow-billed Cuckoo				D			
Black-billed Cuckoo			C				
Common Nighthawk		B		D			
Eastern Whip-poor-will	A	B	C				
Chimney Swift		B	C	D	E		
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	A	B	C	D			G
King Rail		B	C				
Virginia Rail		B	C				
Common Gallinule			C				
Killdeer		B	C	D			
Least Sandpiper		B	C				
American Woodcock	A		C	D			
Spotted Sandpiper	A	B	C				
Solitary Sandpiper	A	B	C	D	E		
Greater Yellowlegs		B	C				
Bonaparte's Gull		B					
Ring-billed Gull		B	C				
Herring Gull		B	C	D			
Caspian Tern		B					
Common Tern		B					
Common Loon	A	B	C				
Double-crested Cormorant	A	B	C	D			
Great Blue Heron	A	B	C	D	E		G
Great Egret		B		D			
Green Heron		B		D			
Black Vulture	A	B	C	D	E		
Turkey Vulture	A	B	C	D	E		G
Osprey	A	B	C	D	E		
Cooper's Hawk	A			D	E		
Northern Goshawk		B			E		
<i>Accipiter sp.</i>			C				
Bald Eagle	A	B	C	D	E		
Red-shouldered Hawk	A	B	C		E		G
Broad-winged Hawk	A	B	C	D	E		
Red-tailed Hawk	A	B	C	D	E		G
Eastern Screech-Owl			C				
Great Horned Owl			C				
Barred Owl	A	B		D			G

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

Species	Group						
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Belted Kingfisher	A	B	C				G
Red-headed Woodpecker		B	C				
Red-bellied Woodpecker	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker		B					
Pine Siskin	A	B					
American Goldfinch	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Eastern Towhee		B	C	D	E	F	
Chipping Sparrow	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Clay-colored Sparrow		B			E		
Field Sparrow		B	C	D	E	F	
Savannah Sparrow	A		C	D	E		
Grasshopper Sparrow		B	C				
Song Sparrow	A	B	C	D	E		G
Lincoln's Sparrow	A			D	E		
Swamp Sparrow	A	B	C				
White-throated Sparrow	A	B	C	D	E	F	
White-crowned Sparrow				D	E		
Dark-eyed Junco		B		D			
Bobolink		B	C	D			
Eastern Meadowlark		B	C	D			
Orchard Oriole		B	C	D			
Baltimore Oriole	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Red-winged Blackbird	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Brown-headed Cowbird	A	B	C	D	E		G
Common Grackle	A	B	C	D	E		G
Ovenbird	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Worm-eating Warbler		B	C	D			
Louisiana Waterthrush	A	B	C	D			G
Northern Waterthrush					E		
Blue-winged Warbler		B	C	D			

Species	Group						
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
House Sparrow		B	C	D	E		
American Pipit				D			
House Finch		B	C	D	E		
Purple Finch	A	B	C	D	E		
Black-and-white Warbler	A	B	C	D	E		G
Tennessee Warbler			C	D			
Nashville Warbler		B	C		E		G
Common Yellowthroat	A	B	C	D	E		G
Hooded Warbler		B					
American Redstart	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Cape May Warbler		B		D			
Cerulean Warbler						F	
Northern Parula	A	B	C	D	E		G
Magnolia Warbler		B	C	D	E		G
Blackburnian Warbler	A	B	C	D	E		
Yellow Warbler		B	C	D	E	F	
Chestnut-sided Warbler		B	C	D	E		G
Blackpoll Warbler			C				
Black-throated Blue Warbler	A	B	C	D			G
Pine Warbler	A	B	C	D			
Yellow-rumped Warbler	A	B	C	D	E		G
Prairie Warbler			C	D			
Black-throated Green Warbler	A	B	C	D	E		G
Canada Warbler							G
Wilson's Warbler					E		
Scarlet Tanager	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Northern Cardinal	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Indigo Bunting	A	B	C	D		F	
Totals: 156 Species	81	127	129	111	74	31	54