

## Ulster County May Census – May 09, 2020

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 09, 2020. 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 participated on a deplorable count day, finding a total of **130 species**. One additional field party conducted their count on Friday (08 May) under better weather conditions, adding seven additional species for a combined total of **137 species**.

Count day weather conditions were abysmal, about as bad as it gets for a day in May short of a constant heavy rainfall. Air temperatures were more winter-like, starting out early in the day below freezing at 31° F, slowly rising to a despicable “high” of 46° F. Combined with 20-30 mph winds throughout the day and an occasional snow squall with blizzard-like conditions rendering zero visibility, it is no great surprise that detecting bird activity was very challenging and the weather was a major influence on this year’s count results.

This year’s count was also conducted at the early end of the count date range (May 08-14) and influenced to some extent by the unprecedented social conditions imposed by the Corvid-19 coronavirus pandemic. Some of the field parties decided to go it alone this year and restrict their birding to a smaller area and shorter day, but nonetheless contributed unique species to the count total that were missed by the “Big Day” efforts. All of the field parties reported atypically quiet conditions, low diversity, and noticeably few numbers of the birds that they did encounter.

Despite the limitations of uncooperative weather and abbreviated count efforts, there were a few highlights worth mentioning. A lone count-day **Ring-necked Duck** and **Pied-billed Grebe** lingered at the Great Vly Wildlife Management Area in Saugerties. We occasionally find one or two lingering **Bufflehead** during the count, but this year Yankeetown Pond in Woodstock hosted a remarkable fourteen (14!) mixed hens and drakes. One **American Bittern** was discovered at the Great Vly, a **Merlin** and a **Peregrine Falcon** was found on the Mapleridge Community land in Ulster Park, and **Red-headed Woodpecker** was found in three locations outside of their traditional Weston Road breeding area.

Several remarkable additions were found on Friday, 08 May, including two **Red-necked Grebes** and a **Red-throated Loon** on Ashokan Reservoir, and another **Red-necked Grebe** on Cooper Lake in Woodstock. Three **Bonaparte’s Gulls** were also found at Ashokan Reservoir. Both locations were visited on count day, but high wind and white caps on the water made for very inhospitable conditions if any of the birds stayed. A **Sora** and a late **Palm Warbler** were found at the Great Vly, and a **Grasshopper Sparrow** was observed on the capped landfill on West Saugerties Road. The sparrow was a very fortuitous find given the almost total lack of bird activity at the grasslands on count day. I don’t recall ever visiting SGNWR in May and not hearing or seeing any grassland species.

A total of nineteen species of warblers (18 on count day) were detected, with Magnolia and Prairie the most glaring misses. Individual reports of **Common Nighthawk** and **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** were noteworthy considering the relatively early date and the weather conditions. Northern Harrier and Dark-eyed Junco are typically recorded on this census, but not on this year’s effort.

The following table summarizes the list of species found by field party, followed by field party effort. Once again this year, many additional students from the Maple Ridge Community participated in the count at various times throughout the day. Thanks to everyone for your effort!

Steve M. Chorvas – compiler

## 2020 Ulster County May Census Summary

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

Species	Group							
			C	D				
American Kestrel			C	D				
Merlin				D				
Peregrine Falcon				D				
Great Crested Flycatcher	A		C	D	E			
Eastern Kingbird	A	B	C	D	E			H
Least Flycatcher	A			D		F		
Eastern Phoebe	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
Yellow-throated Vireo	A			D	E			
Blue-headed Vireo	A	B	C	D				G
Warbling Vireo	A	B	C	D	E			
Red-eyed Vireo	A				E			
Blue Jay	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
American Crow	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Fish Crow		B	C	D	E			
Common Raven	A		C	D	E			H
Bank Swallow			C					
Tree Swallow	A	B	C	D	E			H
No. Rough-winged Swallow	A	B	C	D	E			
Purple Martin			C					
Barn Swallow	A	B	C	D	E			
Cliff Swallow			C		E			
Black-capped Chickadee	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
Tufted Titmouse	A	B	C	D	E			G
Red-breasted Nuthatch	A	B	C					
White-breasted Nuthatch	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Brown Creeper	A			D				
House Wren	A	B	C	D	E			
Winter Wren			C	D				G
Marsh Wren	A		C					
Carolina Wren	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	A	B	C	D				G
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	A	B	C	D		F	G	
Eastern Bluebird	A	B	C	D				G
Veery		B	C	D				
Hermit Thrush		B	C					
Wood Thrush	A		C	D	E	F		
American Robin	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Gray Catbird	A	B	C	D	E			H
Brown Thrasher	A	B	C	D				
Northern Mockingbird			C	D	E			
European Starling	A	B	C	D	E			H
Cedar Waxwing				D				
House Sparrow	A	B	C	D	E			H
House Finch		B	C	D	E			H
American Goldfinch	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Grasshopper Sparrow	A							
Chipping Sparrow	A	B	C	D	E	F		H
Field Sparrow	A	B	C	D				H
White-crowned Sparrow	A			D	E			
White-throated Sparrow	A	B	C	D	E	F		
Savannah Sparrow	A		C	D				
Song Sparrow	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Swamp Sparrow	A	B	C	D	E	F		

Species	Group							
Eastern Towhee	A				E			
Bobolink	A	B	C					
Eastern Meadowlark	A	B	C					
Orchard Oriole	A		C	D	E			H
Baltimore Oriole	A	B	C	D	E	F		
Red-winged Blackbird	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Brown-headed Cowbird	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
Common Grackle	A	B	C	D	E	F		H
Ovenbird	A	B	C	D				
Worm-eating Warbler			C	D				
Louisiana Waterthrush	A	B	C	D	E			
Northern Waterthrush	A			D				
Blue-winged Warbler				D				
Black-and-white Warbler			C	D	E			
Tennessee Warbler		B						
Nashville Warbler	A			D	E			

Species	Group							
Common Yellowthroat	A		C	D	E			
American Redstart	A		C	D	E	F		
Northern Parula					E			
Blackburnian Warbler	A		C					
Yellow Warbler	A	B	C	D	E			
Chestnut-sided Warbler	A		C	D	E			
Black-throated Blue Warbler	A			D	E			
Palm Warbler	A							
Pine Warbler	A	B	C	D	E			
Yellow-rumped Warbler	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
Black-throated Green Warbler	A	B	C	D				
Scarlet Tanager			C	D	E			
Northern Cardinal	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	A	B	C	D	E	F		
Indigo Bunting				D				
<b>Totals: 137 Species</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>

Field party effort:

- A** – Peter Schoenberger (05/08, 11 hrs., 5:30 AM - 4:30 PM, 9 miles foot, car N/R, Woodstock to Saugerties, and Kingston and Ashokan Reservoirs)
- B** – Jessica Prockup, Wendy Tocci, Michael Cukrovany (10.75 hrs., 50 miles)
- C** – Larry Alden, Steve Chorvas (17.75 hrs., 2:15 AM - 8:00 PM, 196 miles)
- D** – Arnie Meier, Joel Meier, Susan Nelson, Dennis Trapnell, Dwight Wareham, Toby Warner, and Maple Ridge Community students. (12 hrs., 6:00 AM - 6:00 PM, Maple Ridge Community property)
- E** – Mark DeDea (12 hrs., 2:45 AM - 2:45 PM, 78 miles car, 7 miles foot, Kingston area)
- F** – Dixon Onderdonk – (3.5 hrs., 3.25 miles, Wilson SP and Jockey Hill area)
- G** – Ariane Giudicelli (8.25 hrs., 5:45 AM - 2:00 PM, 2.25 miles, Lapla Road yard and property)
- H** – Kelly Macaluso (3 hrs., 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM, stationary, Happiness Day Spa)

Accounts from participants in this year’s JBNHS May Census:

Really scary to be able to count the number of individuals on most species (if I tried I could have for all), it was that quiet. I don't recall ever being at Kingston Point in the wee hours in May and not be able to muster a single Marsh Wren! I spent some time in the Wilbur section of Kingston, also a little north of our neighborhood, and walked the O&W trail near the Esopus but never encountered one mixed foraging flock. Despite getting an early start and having cooperative moonlight I couldn't find a single owl or rail. – Mark DeDea

Probably the worst big day I've had in 15 years. There are a number of birds I see/hear every day in the yard but they were nowhere to be found today! Very cold, extremely windy, snow flurries. Have had better weather for Christmas bird counts. – Ariane Giudicelli

Wow another May count day completed. What fun!!!! To try and work within the confines of social distancing each of the people listed on my submitted sheet ran their own bird count with some children from their families being involved. I am submitting only one master list that I pulled together from all involved, the one condition being that they had to bird within Maple Ridge’s property lines. I also vetted all bird submissions. I was pretty happy with our turnout considering the cold windy day we had to work with. – Arnie Meier

**Ashokan Reservoir on count day, May 09, 2020.**  
 White-capped waves, snow-covered Catskill Mountain high peaks in the back ground, 25-30 mph winds, and an air temperature around 38 degrees Fahrenheit. – Larry Alden photo

