

THE JANUARY WATERFOWL COUNT: III

GERALD R. RISING

Intense cold, snow clogged roads, bitter winds, excessive ice on all up-state waters, rolling clouds of steam and what Tom Lesperance calls "frost devils" made the results of this year's Federation waterfowl inventory less satisfactory than those of 1955 and 1956. A penciled note on the back of Ed Whelen's check list spoke for many: "Phooey! This is a lousy count. Who picks these dates?"

It is a credit to over two hundred hardy individuals that the totals are as

SPECIES TOTAL BY REGIONS

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VIII	IX	X	Totals
Common Loon			1	2		1			66	70
Red-throated Loon									40	40
Red-necked Grebe									3	3
Horned Grebe		2	5	56		14			942	1019
Pied-billed Grebe		6	16	10	4	10		1	75	122
Mute Swan								2	357	359
Canada Goose				24					1931	1955
Brant									8610	8610
Snow Goose									4	4
Mallard	503	162	327	401	136	3	30	150	2941	4653
Black Duck	1389	204	477	73	425	202	450	893	18452	22565
Gadwall	1								142	143
Pintail	12	1	1						104	118
Green-winged Teal		1		1					99	101
Cinnamon Teal									1	1
European Widgeon									2	2
Baldpate				3					4510	4513
Shoveller									80	80
Wood Duck				1	6				1	8
Redhead	77	30	1807		295	400		6	20	2635
Ring-necked Duck	1		5		2			365	127	500
Canvasback	8594	830	1346		751	1508		63	8257	21349
Greater Scaup Duck*	3872	746	2744		4096	2056		1	67687	81202
Lesser Scaup Duck					44				91	135
American Golden-eye	4084	1138	306	33	1567	943	114	130	5611	13926
Barrow's Golden-eye							1			1
Buffle-head	304	21	7		52				1223	1607
Old-Squaw	2860	128			101				1737	4826
Common Eider									1	1
King Eider	12	5								17
White-winged Scoter	13	41							7283	7337
Surf Scoter	2								1003	1005
American Scoter		1							92	93
Ruddy Duck	2	5	4					50	437	498
Hooded Merganser	3	8	5					9	98	123
American Merganser	4553	811	54	319	6413	229	60	1372	701	14512
Red-breasted Merganser	159	40	5		144	14	1		2189	2552
Coot	9	5	336		8			21	1163	1542
Unidentified	2836	11	34		204	28		3	3166	6282
TOTALS	29294	4210	7554	831	14269	5383	657	3065	139246	204509

*Unspecified scaup grouped under Greater Scaup. No Region VII records.

high as they are. More groups than usual spent their entire time in the field without recording a single duck. Even on Long Island, Gilbert Raynor covered an entire area without success. Scheider tells of a Syracuse party making the trip to Oswego Harbor on the target date only to find it "bathed in acres of fog. When patches of fog were blown away, you could see thousands of ducks in every scrap of open water . . ." They had to return the following weekend over drifted roads to repeat the count. Observations could not be made on Lake Champlain during the entire count period.

A brief summary of the results of the three years tells the story:

Year	Species	Totals	Observers	Party hours	Weather
1955	36	189234	213	550	Fair to excellent
1956	39	222408	268	655	Fair to poor
1957	38	204509	220	524	Extremely poor

One new species was added to the census rolls, the Cinnamon Teal, a bird observed first by Maynard A. Nichols, later by an impressive list of Long Island birders including LeRoy Wilcox, Don Eckelberry and Edwin Way Teale. John Elliott found some difficulty in keeping observers in their own areas after this discovery (shades of the Spring Count!) A Barrow's Golden-eye again appeared in Region 8, within six miles of the location of last year's report. Guy Bartlett notes that the bird, as last year a male, was consorting with a group of seven male and 16 female American Golden-eyes. Possibly the most interesting record is that of 17 King Eiders, *all upstate* in Regions 1 and 2, this after no reports of these birds from upstate areas in 1955 and 1956.

Where did the Federation fall short? The ground count this year fell over five per cent behind the New York State Conservation Department aerial count. The most notable deficiency in the Federation count is in the Finger Lakes region where about 7500 ducks were tabulated against the aerial 35,448. Personnel failures here, partly caused by the fact that the census dates, January 12-20 in 1957, fell just before mid-year exams at Cornell, partly caused by poor driving conditions, have beset the count each year. More attention will be paid to this problem in 1958.

A check was instituted to discover the reason for the striking decline in numbers of Canvasback in the Niagara River. The number there dropped from 15196 in 1956 to 8594 this year. Art Schaffner, group leader of the party checking this area, says that the build-up in numbers came later this year due to the good weather up to Christmas time. Many of the birds were still to be found along the north shore of Ontario until after the census period.