

NEW YORK STATE WATERFOWL COUNT, JANUARY 1979

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This year's Federation Waterfowl Count period, from January 6 to January 14, 1979, was about as cold as 1978 but with extremes of warmth in the week preceding the period and of cold toward the end of the period. The earlier part of the count period was the best for counting waterfowl provided there was no snowstorm to interfere. As usual many, if not most, of the smaller inland lakes, ponds and streams were frozen over. Lake Erie again was frozen except for Dunkirk Harbor and an occasional open lead through loose ice. By contrast there was very little ice along the Lake Ontario shore west of Fair Haven. The larger Finger Lakes were also open. The total count this year was up 39.4% over 1978 to 181,116.

The Department of Environmental Conservation mid-winter aerial waterfowl survey was conducted between January 4 and January 19, 1979 with a total count of 110,276, or a 20.8% decrease from 1978, and 42.7% below the long term average. The marked decrease is attributed to low numbers for Black Ducks and scaup, and to a lesser extent, Common Goldeneyes and Redheads. These decreases were offset only slightly by higher counts for Canada Geese and scoters.

Unlike 1978, the 1979 counts show little similarity. In twelve of the fourteen species listed in the first table the ground count showed significantly higher totals than the aerial count by at least 33.3% in the case of Black Ducks, up to 498.3% for coots. Only two species groups showed up less on the ground count compared to the aerial count. These were the scoters and the mergansers. This deviation may possibly be explained by the capability of the aircraft to locate scoters on Long Island Sound or the Atlantic Ocean, beyond the range of shore-based ground observers, or mergansers between Niagara Falls and Lake Erie. Only in the case of Mallards, American Wigeon, Oldsquaw and scoters do we find population trends moving in the same direction in the two counts. The one species trending downwards, Oldsquaw, showed a decline of around 60% from 1978. The other three species, Mallard, American Wigeon and scoters, show increases over 1978 but not in very close agreement between counts. All other species show opposing trends between counts. It is not clear why there are so many discrepancies between the results of the two counts.

In checking federal figures for the Atlantic Flyway, which extends from Maine to Florida, total waterfowl numbers were 4.7% above last year. Diving ducks, sea ducks (scoters, eiders and Oldsquaws), geese and swans all showed increases over 1978, except for Redheads (36.6% decrease) and Buffleheads (20.5% decrease). Dabbling ducks, with the exception of Gadwalls, showed a 6.2% decrease, as a group, over 1978. Black Ducks decreased 12.3% from last year, when the flyway population was very close to the 10-year average.

A listing of the most abundant species, by ground count and aerial survey, comparing 1978 with 1979, and giving the percent change between the two years for each count, is given below.

	<u>UP STATE</u>			
	<u>AERIAL</u>		<u>GROUND</u>	
	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>
Canada Goose	8,911	9,946	5,458	22,581
Brant	0	0	0	0
Mallard	2,173	2,940	11,183	11,298
Black Duck	4,178	2,731	2,410	3,228
American Wigeon	0	60	22	79
Redhead	1,830	1,827	5,788	3,939
Canvasback	2,890	2,154	2,919	3,606
Scaup (both)	10,981	7,858	6,329	6,152
Com. Goldeneye	6,730	2,352	11,284	10,593
Bufflehead	64	182	1,033	990
Oldsquaw	1,119	498	3,469	225
Scoters (all 3)	146	0	27	109
Mergansers (all 3)	30,742	14,896	7,609	9,523
American Coot	<u>249</u>	<u>85</u>	<u>1,194</u>	<u>119</u>
TOTALS	70,013	45,529	58,725	72,442

LONG ISLAND

	<u>AERIAL</u>		<u>GROUND</u>	
	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>
Canada Goose	5,587	4,139	8,482	9,792
Brant	8,936	8,211	3,218	17,677
Mallard	2,433	3,478	5,704	8,194
Black Duck	14,637	10,314	8,680	14,159
American Wigeon	116	784	1,970	2,299
Redhead	0	60	89	209
Canvasback	1,920	2,071	3,615	4,251
Scaup (both)	25,730	14,918	25,316	27,026
Com. Goldeneye	1,459	1,418	1,040	1,637
Bufflehead	2,025	1,115	2,156	3,274
Oldsquaw	493	185	532	1,273
Scoters (all 3)	1,440	14,365	3,951	8,629
Mergansers (all 3)	3,774	2,828	3,448	2,104
American Coot	<u>46</u>	<u>153</u>	<u>141</u>	<u>1,305</u>
TOTALS	68,596	64,039	68,342	101,829

TOTALS

	<u>AERIAL</u>		<u>% change</u>	<u>GROUND</u>		<u>% change</u>
	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>from 1978</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>from 1978</u>
Canada Goose	14,498	14,085	-- 2.8	13,940	32,373	+132.2
Brant	8,936	8,211	-- 8.1	3,218	17,677	+449.3
Mallard	4,606	6,418	+ 39.3	16,887	19,492	+ 15.4
Black Duck	18,815	13,045	-- 30.7	11,090	17,387	+ 56.8
American Wigeon	116	844	+627.6	1,992	2,378	+ 19.4
Redhead	1,830	1,887	+ 3.1	5,877	4,148	-- 29.4
Canvasback	4,810	4,225	-- 12.1	6,534	7,857	+ 20.2
Scaup (both)	36,711	22,776	-- 38.0	31,645	33,178	+ 4.8
Com. Goldeneye	8,189	3,770	-- 54.0	12,324	12,230	-- 0.8
Bufflehead	2,089	1,297	-- 37.9	3,189	4,264	+ 33.7
Oldsquaw	1,612	683	-- 57.6	4,001	1,498	-- 62.6
Scoters (all 3)	1,586	14,365	+805.7	3,978	8,738	+119.7
Mergansers (all 3)	34,516	17,724	-- 48.6	11,057	11,627	+ 5.2
American Coot	<u>295</u>	<u>238</u>	<u>-- 19.3</u>	<u>1,335</u>	<u>1,424</u>	<u>+ 6.7</u>
TOTALS	138,609	109,568	-- 21.0	127,067	174,271	+ 37.1

GROUND SURVEY BY REGIONS—JANUARY 1979

FEDERATION OF NEW YORK STATE BIRD CLUBS

Species	REGION										TOTAL
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	
Common Loon	1		6		5		1			117	130
Red-throated Loon										15	15
Red-necked Grebe							2			1	3
Horned Grebe		2	30		13		4			221	270
Pied-billed Grebe	2		6		3				2	57	70
Great Cormorant										74	74
Double-crested Cormorant										27	27
Mute Swan		1							49	815	865
Whistling Swan		1								5	6
Canada Goose	2,339		18,927		391	2	128	10	756	9,820	32,373
Brant										17,677	17,677
Snow Goose									1	11	12
Mallard	4,045	2,020	2,015	104	1,258	53	52	442	1,211	8,292	19,492
Black Duck	632	68	777	3	190	89	180	230	563	14,655	17,387
Gadwall	18		44		28				3	433	526
Common Pintail	14		2		1					220	237
Green-winged Teal		1	1		1					138	141
Eurasian Wigeon										1	1
American Wigeon	67		3		1		1		2	2,304	2,378
Northern Shoveler										109	109
Wood Duck	4		5		2				4	29	44
Redhead	51	1	3,838		46	3				209	4,148
Ring-necked Duck			3		1					64	68
Canvasback	1,038		758		87	1	15		60	5,898	7,857

GROUND SURVEY BY REGIONS—JANUARY 1979

FEDERATION OF NEW YORK STATE BIRD CLUBS

REGION

Species	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	TOTAL
Greater Scaup	1,783	83	4		1,053		1			238	3,162
Lesser Scaup		1			1		3			332	337
Scaup Duck, sp.			1,387	1						31,790	33,178
Common Goldeneye	4,755	2,489	526	8	1,613	520	487	1	20	1,811	12,230
Barrow's Goldeneye	1						1			1	3
Bufflehead	301	92	242		95		12		3	3,519	4,264
Oldsquaw	13	113			98					1,274	1,498
Harlequin Duck										1	1
Common Eider										76	76
King Eider										2	2
White-winged Scoter	3	102			3					3,381	3,489
Surf Scoter					1					967	968
Black Scoter										1,740	1,740
Ruddy Duck					2				44	286	332
Hooded Merganser	4		78		3				33	278	396
Common Merganser	4,835	2,148	117	76	710	1,020	163	43	233	1	9,346
Red-breasted Merganser	16	3	17		8					1,841	1,885
American Coot	7	2	99		2				9	1,305	1,424
Mallard x Black Duck			15		1					10	26
Duck, sp.			201		106						307
Scoter, sp.										2,541	2,541
Common Gallinule										1	1
TOTALS	19,929	7,127	29,101	192	5,723	1,688	1,050	726	2,993	112,587	181,116

**TABLE SHOWING % DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN SURVEYS—1979**

	<u>Aerial Survey</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Numerical Difference</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Ground Survey</u>
Canada Goose	14,085	--56.5	18,288	+129.8	32,373
Brant	8,211	--53.5	9,466	+115.3	17,677
Mallard	6,418	--67.1	13,074	+203.7	19,492
Black Duck	13,045	--25.0	4,342	+ 33.3	17,387
American Wigeon	844	--64.5	1,534	+181.8	2,378
Redhead	1,887	--54.5	2,261	+119.8	4,148
Canvasback	4,225	--46.2	3,632	+ 86.0	7,857
Scaup (both)	22,776	--31.4	10,402	+ 45.7	33,178
Common Goldeneye	3,770	--69.2	8,460	+224.4	12,230
Bufflehead	1,297	--69.6	2,967	+228.8	4,264
Oldsquaw	683	--54.4	815	+119.3	1,498
Scoters (all 3)	14,365	+64.4	5,627	-- 39.2	8,738
Mergansers (all 3)	17,724	+52.4	6,097	-- 34.4	11,627
American Coot	238	--83.3	1,186	+498.3	1,424
TOTALS	109,568	--37.1	64,703	+ 59.1	174,271

AERIAL SURVEY—JANUARY 1979
STATE OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

	<u>Upstate</u>	<u>Long Island*</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Mute Swan	107	471	578
Whistling Swan	4	0	4
Canada Goose	9,946	4,139	14,085
Brant	0	8,211 (1,176)	8,211
Black Duck	2,731	10,314 (239)	13,045
Mallard	2,940	3,478 (73)	6,418
Gadwall	0	1 (1)	1
Pintail	0	35 (35)	35
Green-winged Teal	0	90	90
American Wigeon	60	784 (74)	844
Redhead	1,827	60	1,887
Canvasback	2,154	2,071 (81)	4,225
Scaup (both)	7,858	14,918 (1,398)	22,776
Common Goldeneye	2,352	1,418 (5)	3,770
Bufflehead	182	1,115 (156)	1,297
Oldsquaw	498	185	683
Scoters (all 3)	0	14,365	14,365
Mergansers (all 3)	14,896	2,828 (3)	17,724
American Coot	85	153 (3)	238
TOTALS	45,640	64,636 (3,244)	110,276

* Includes Staten Island.

Figures in () = ground survey figures for Jamaica Bay, included in totals.

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The 1980 waterfowl count period will be from January 5 through January 13, 1980 with January 6th as the target date.

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