

NEW YORK STATE WATERFOWL COUNT, JANUARY 1983

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The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Inc., Waterfowl Count for 1983 was conducted from 15 January through 23 January, with 16 January as the target date. Ninety per cent of the count parties were in the field within those dates. Nine per cent were in the field a week early, 9 January, unaware that 1983 was the year for adjusting the count so that it does not encroach upon the Christmas Count period. The remaining one per cent (one party) was in the field somewhat after the count period (they know who they are!).

The count period this year again experienced some, to put it mildly, bad or inclement weather, similar to the last two counts. The nine per cent who were in the field a week early were indeed fortunate, since the weather at that time was mild and ideal for counting waterfowl. The rest of us weren't so lucky. The count period experienced some of the worst weather of the winter, at least up until that time. All parties in the field during the count period should be congratulated on a job well done under trying conditions. Such comment as this was typical: "Heavy snow storm most all of the first weekend (if the traction wouldn't get you, the lack of visibility would). By the second weekend the intense cold had the rivers either frozen over or filled with floating ice that swept the ducks away. Only those who could get out during the week had any success at all." And, "I just hope the effort was more worthwhile elsewhere." Nevertheless, the total count for 1983 (Table I) was up a whopping 51.8% over 1982 to 262,696, and an impressive 34% above the 10-year average (1973-1982) of 195,975. This is undoubtedly the result of a very open winter.

Comparing 1983 to 1982 count figures (Table II) for the more common species reveals that all listed species had higher counts in 1983, some quite substantially so. Again this is related to the very open winter leading up to the waterfowl count.

More revealing is a comparison between 1983 figures and the 1973-1982 averages (Table III). Only three species of the fifteen in the table show that they were below the 10-year average. The other twelve were above the average with Common and Red-breasted Mergansers leading the way with increases of 182% and 143.3% respectively.

For the Atlantic Flyway (Maine to Florida inclusive), total federal and state waterfowl population counts showed decreases in the dabbling, diver and sea duck groups. American Black Duck declines continue but this year the mild winter undoubtedly allowed many to remain dispersed in areas that were not surveyed or areas where they were

(continued on page 14)

TABLE I

SPECIES	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	TOTAL
Loon, Red-throated		2								6	8
Common	1	7	8		6		6			46	74
Grebe, Pied-billed	4	4	4							27	39
Horned	2	13	26		7		23			195	266
Cormorant, Great										179	179
Double-crested	1									67	68
Swan, Tundra	7	9	2		3					7	28
Mute					1				78	703	782
Goose, Gr Wh-front									1		1
Snow										5	5
Brant		3								20,425	20,428
Canada	41	880	13,874		2,078	1,240	317	505	5,796	15,996	40,727
Wood Duck		2			3				4	22	31
Green-winged Teal	1							1		248	250
American Black Duck	340	327	1,100	105	539	65	333	1,524	483	14,719	19,535
Mallard	2,485	2,503	5,602	270	1,604	331	313	1,900	1,490	10,603	27,101
Northern Pintail	28		3			1		2		216	250
Northern Shoveler										209	209
Gadwall	67	19	19			13			22	643	783
Wigeon, Eurasian										4	4
American	82	4	4					3	1	2,279	2,373
Canvasback	2,372	261	804		17		2		470	7,161	11,087
Redhead	103	190	6,158		5					97	6,553

TABLE I

SPECIES	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	TOTAL
Ring-necked Duck		8	21		1				1	55	86
Tufted Duck										1	1
Scaup, Greater	2,647	9,006	216		1,735					31,184	44,788
Lesser	46	14	211		7					768	1,046
Unspecified			789			21				15,807	16,617
Eider, Common										14	14
King					1					1	2
Harlequin Duck										3	3
Oldsquaw	1,838	1,578	27		138	2	3			887	4,473
Scoter, Black		2								396	398
Surf		1								1,685	1,686
White-winged	2	1,699								3,735	5,436
Goldeneye, Common	2,442	4,309	915	7	1,179	718	663	19	11	2,013	12,276
Barrow's					2						2
Bufflehead	109	239	219		139	1	14		5	6,282	7,008
Merganser, Hooded	20	7	39		4		3		11	292	376
Common	21,913	258	245	11	1,728	3,411	879	99	1,194	71	29,809
Red-breasted	166	16	22		35	1				4,763	5,003
Ruddy Duck					1				201	671	873
Unidentified ducks									27	408	435
American Coot	38	110	690		2				75	591	1,506
TOTALS	34,755	21,471	31,022	393	9,236	5,804	2,557	4,053	9,870	1433,535	262,696

difficult to see. A less open winter for the survey should give a truer picture of the situation. Canvasbacks also declined while mergansers, Brant, Snow Geese, Canada Geese and swans increased.

The Department of Environmental Conservation aerial survey is shown in Table IV, without comment.

The 1984 Federation Waterfowl Count dates are from 14 through 22 January, with Sunday, 15 January, as the target date.

I wish to thank the upwards of one hundred observers who participate each year. A special thanks also to the regional compilers who coordinated all those volunteers. The regional compilers are:

Region 1 – Alan Reckhow	Region 6 – Lee Chamberlaine
Region 2 – Warren Lloyd	Region 7 – John Peterson
Region 3 – John Confer	Region 8 – Paul Grattan
Region 4 – Leslie Bemont	Region 9 – Edward Treacy
Region 5 – Fritz Scheider	Region 10 – Stephen Dempsey

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TABLE II

Comparison of 1983 with 1982, for all species totaling over 1,000 individuals in 1983, and showing the per cent change from 1982 to 1983.

Species	1983	1982	% change
Canada Goose	40,727	36,926	+ 10.3
Brant	20,428	10,717	+ 90.6
Mallard	27,101	19,054	+ 42.2
American Black Duck	19,535	17,315	+ 12.8
American Wigeon	2,373	1,497	+ 58.5
Redhead	6,553	5,962	+ 9.9
Canvasback	11,087	9,628	+ 15.2
Scaup (both)	62,451	39,316	+ 58.8
Goldeneye (both)	12,278	8,551	+ 43.6
Bufflehead	7,008	2,844	+ 146.4
Oldsquaw	4,473	2,747	+ 62.8
Scoter (all three)	7,520	3,763	+ 99.8
Common Merganser	29,809	7,851	+ 279.7
Red-breasted Merganser	5,003	2,383	+ 109.9
American Coot	1,506	916	+ 64.4
TOTALS	257,852	169,470	+ 52.2

TABLE III

Comparison of the 1983 count with the 1973-1982 average,
for the same species as in Table II, and showing
the per cent change from the average.

Species	1983	Average 1973-1982	% change
Canada Goose	40,727	24,377	+ 67.1
Brant	20,428	10,493	+ 94.7
Mallard	27,101	19,703	+ 37.5
American Black Duck	19,535	18,521	+ 5.5
American Wigeon	2,373	2,109	+ 12.5
Redhead	6,553	6,403	+ 2.4
Canvasback	11,087	11,826	- 6.3
Scaup (both)	62,451	61,084	+ 2.2
Goldeneye (both)	12,278	11,751	+ 4.5
Bufflehead	7,008	4,085	+ 71.6
Oldsquaw	4,473	2,827	+ 58.2
Scoter (all three)	7,520	11,084	- 32.2
Common Merganser	29,809	10,570	+ 182.0
Red-breasted Merganser	5,003	2,057	+ 143.3
American Coot	1,506	2,054	- 26.7
TOTALS	257,852	198,944	+ 29.2

TABLE IV

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION — AERIAL COUNT
January 3-13, 1983

All species of about 1,000 individuals and more

Species	Upstate	Long Island	Total
Mute Swan	19	958	977
Canada Goose	71,009	12,702	83,711
Brant		12,561	12,561
Mallard	31,099	4,189	35,288
American Black Duck	11,961	8,312	20,273
Redhead	4,075		4,075
Canvasback	4,080	4,025	8,105
Scaup (both)	9,289	20,399	29,688
Common Goldeneye	8,800	2,230	11,030
Bufflehead	40	1,091	1,131
Scoter (all three)		1,364	1,364
Merganser (all three)	21,202	6,745	27,947
TOTALS	161,574	74,576	236,150

Note: No American Wigeons, Oldsquaws, Ruddy Ducks, or American Coots were recorded.