

NEW YORK STATE WATERFOWL COUNT, JANUARY 1986

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The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Inc., held the 1986 winter Waterfowl Count from 11 January through 19 January, with 12 January as the target date. All Regions completed their counts within the established dates. The count period this year again was mild and most bodies of water were open and occupied by waterfowl. Exceptions are frequently found at or near Lakes Erie and Ontario, where snowfall and/or icing conditions can be expected to the exclusion of virtually all other areas. None of the Regional coordinators felt that their reports were less than expected. In fact the reports were so large that the grand total count established a new high of 295,437 (Table I), up 23.3% over 1985, and up a terrific 43.7% over the thirteen year average (1973-1985) of 205,661.

Comparing 1986 to 1985 count figures (Table II), the commoner species showed increases for all listed species except Brant, scaup and Common Goldeneye. When comparing 1986 count figures with the 1973-1985 thirteen year average (Table III) we find the same three species showing decreases.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's midwinter inventory, all geese in the Atlantic Flyway (Maine to Florida) were down 3% from 1985. Even though Canada Geese were up 11%, this gain was offset by losses of Brant (-25%) and Snow Geese (-47%). There was an encouraging turn around for dabbling ducks, which had a 12.2% increase. American Wigeon on the Atlantic Flyway showed a gratifying increase of 19.4% over 1985, but is still at only 58.2% of the most recent ten year average (1976-1985). This species bears watching even though there has been an improvement. Diving ducks as a group almost held their own, and were down less than one percent from 1985 for the Atlantic Flyway. In contrast to the ducks, American Coot were down 26%, with 78.8% of the population wintering in the states of Georgia and Florida.

The Department of Environmental Conservation 1986 aerial survey was completed on schedule from 2 January through 15 January. Good weather and favorable flying conditions permitted the survey to be completed without a hitch for the first time since 1983. The results are presented in Table IV. Table V compares 1985 to 1986 aerial survey results. The figures from the Federation's ground count as compared

to NYSDEC's aerial count has all the appearance of not having been conducted at the same time or even in the same state! The so widely (wildly?) divergent figures and trends just point out the futility of trying to make meaningful comparisons of the two methods.

The 1987 Federation Waterfowl Count dates are from 10 through 18 January, with Sunday, 11 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. An extra special thanks to Alan Reckhow, coordinator for Region 1, who has retired. A warm welcome to Marie Wendling, the new Region 1 coordinator. The regional compilers were:

Region

1 Marie Wendling	6 Lee Chamberlaine
2 Warren Lloyd	7 John Peterson
3 Eric Donohue	8 Paul Grattan
4 Leslie Bemont	9 Edward Treacy
5 Fritz Scheider	10 Stephen Dempsey

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Table I. Regional totals for 1986 Waterfowl Count

Species	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5
Red-throated Loon		1			1
Common Loon		1	9		4
Pied-billed Grebe	12		9		3
Horned Grebe			18		24
Red-necked Grebe					4
Great Cormorant					
Double-cr. Cormorant		1			1
Tundra Swan					
Mute Swan		1	2		
Snow Goose			1		
Brant			1		
Canada Goose	478	18	29,986	2	1,934
Wood Duck		8	2		6
Green-winged Teal				2	
American Black Duck	339	84	669	125	683
Mallard	7,438	1,741	2,360	604	2,859
Mallard X Black Duck		4	14		4
Northern Pintail	1				12
Blue-winged Teal					
Northern Shoveler					1
Gadwall	2	8	53		8
Eurasian Wigeon					
American Wigeon	4		1	1	
Canvasback	1,710	65	1,663		36
Redhead	91	35	7,481		10
Ring-necked Duck	2	1	30		1
Tufted Duck					
Greater Scaup	1,850	1,709	352		1,901
Lesser Scaup	46	14	8		9
scaup, species			2,227		
Common Eider					
King Eider					1
Harlequin Duck					
Oldsquaw	1,739	878			133
Black Scoter					1
Surf Scoter	1				
White-winged Scoter	383	101	4		7
scoter, species					
Common Goldeneye	1,557	1,682	368	51	1,710
Barrow's Goldeneye		1			
Bufflehead	103	143	183	8	164
Hooded Merganser	8	3	46		27
Common Merganser	4,996	1,122	57	44	856
Red-br. Merganser	14	437			49
Ruddy Duck					
American Coot	37		753		
unidentified			23		
Total	20,811	8,058	46,320	837	10,449

Table I. Regional totals for 1986 Waterfowl Count

Species	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8	Region 9	Region 10	Total
Red-throated Loon					95	97
Common Loon		2			16	32
Pied-billed Grebe				2	16	42
Horned Grebe		1			251	294
Red-necked Grebe					10	14
Great Cormorant					200	200
Double-cr. Cormorant					84	86
Tundra Swan					2	2
Mute Swan			2	316	1,234	1,555
Snow Goose			1	1	40	43
Brant					7,602	7,603
Canada Goose		436	1,575	9,278	43,848	87,555
Wood Duck	2	1	1	1	6	27
Green-winged Teal					321	323
American Black Duck	124	346	1,578	427	18,113	22,488
Mallard	142	400	2,742	2,594	13,040	33,920
Mallard X Black Duck		1			28	51
Northern Pintail		3		2	385	403
Blue-winged Teal					1	1
Northern Shoveler					67	68
Gadwall				9	591	671
Eurasian Wigeon					4	4
American Wigeon			1	9	1,485	1,501
Canvasback		1	170	3,558	4,756	11,959
Redhead			2	1	221	7,841
Ring-necked Duck				76	100	210
Tufted Duck					1	1
Greater Scaup		5	22	50	27,556	33,445
Lesser Scaup				1	1,492	1,570
scaup, species			2	4	5,460	7,693
Common Eider					89	89
King Eider					1	2
Harlequin Duck	1	1			2	4
Oldsquaw	220				1,016	3,986
Black Scoter					366	367
Surf Scoter					192	193
White-winged Scoter					21,003	21,498
scoter, species					3,115	3,115
Common Goldeneye	2,600	1,385	75	55	1,512	10,995
Barrow's Goldeneye	1					2
Bufflehead	2	16		86	4,331	5,036
Hooded Merganser	1	1	3	13	459	561
Common Merganser	12,000	278	380	1,479	15	21,227
Red-br. Merganser	4		3		5,899	6,406
Ruddy Duck				36	560	596
American Coot				33	683	1,506
unidentified					132	155
Total	15,097	2,877	6,557	18,031	166,400	295,437

Table II. Comparison of 1986 with 1985 for all species totaling over 1,000 individuals in 1985.

Species	1986	1985	% change from 1985
Mute Swan	1,555	1,063	46.3
Brant	7,603	16,402	-53.6
Canada Goose	87,555	48,839	79.3
American Black Duck	22,488	18,624	20.7
Mallard	33,920	29,367	15.5
American Wigeon	1,501	1,519	-1.2
Canvasback	11,959	7,673	55.9
Redhead	7,841	4,358	79.9
scaup (both species)	42,708	52,815	-19.1
Oldsquaw	3,986	9,532	-58.2
scoter (all species)	25,173	8,730	188.4
goldeneye (both species)	10,997	12,233	-10.1
Bufflehead	5,036	5,290	-4.8
Common Merganser	21,227	13,612	55.9
Red-breasted Merganser	6,406	3,984	60.8
American Coot	1,506	1,159	29.9
Total	291,461	235,200	23.9

Table III. Comparison of 1986 count with 1973-1985 average for all species totaling over 1,000 individuals in 1986.

Species	1986	Average	% change
Brant	7,603	11,377	-33.2
Canada Goose	87,555	29,300	198.8
American Black Duck	22,488	18,476	21.7
Mallard	33,920	21,552	57.4
American Wigeon	1,501	2,152	-30.3
Canvasback	11,959	11,751	1.8
Redhead	7,841	6,405	22.4
scaup (both species)	42,708	61,305	-30.3
Oldsquaw	3,986	3,430	16.2
scoter (all species)	25,173	9,939	153.3
Common Goldeneye	10,995	11,776	-6.6
Bufflehead	5,036	4,424	13.8
Common Merganser	21,227	12,430	70.8
Red-breasted Merganser	6,406	1,617	296.2
American Coot	1,506	1,886	-20.1
Total	289,904	207,820	39.5

**Table IV. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Aerial Count, 2-15 January 1986. All species of 1,000 individuals or more.**

Species	Upstate	Long Island	Total
Mute Swan	108	1,114	1,222
Brant		4,503	4,503
Canada Goose	39,557	5,508	45,065
American Black Duck	2,768	11,930	14,698
Mallard	6,823	3,005	9,828
Canvasback	4,950	2,173	7,123
Redhead	3,774		3,774
scaup (both species)	5,565	10,652	16,217
Oldsquaw	2,527	2,320	4,847
goldeneye (both species)	4,237	852	5,089
merganser (all species)	18,510	4,282	22,792
Total	88,819	46,339	135,158

**Table V. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
1985 and 1986 Aerial Counts compared, with percent change from 1985
for all species with 1,000 individuals or more in 1985.**

Species	1986	1985	% change
Mute Swan	1,222	1,464	-16.5
Brant	4,503	8,715	-48.3
Canada Goose	45,065	52,565	-14.3
American Black Duck	14,698	21,691	-32.2
Mallard	9,828	13,294	-26.1
Canvasback	7,123	9,410	-24.3
Redhead	3,774	9,059	-58.3
scaup (both species)	16,217	39,704	-59.2
Oldsquaw	4,847	1,699	185.3
scoter (all species)	427	4,041	-89.4
goldeneye (both species)	5,089	13,739	-63.0
Bufflehead	927	1,421	-34.8
merganser (all species)	22,792	18,376	24.0
Total	136,512	195,178	-30.1