

NEW YORK STATE WATERFOWL COUNT, JANUARY 1987

WALTON B. SABIN

The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Inc., held the 1987 winter Waterfowl Count from 10 January through 18 January, with 11 January as the target date. All regions completed their counts within the established dates.

The count period this year was back to normal. Most bodies of water that usually are open were open and available to waterfowl. Exceptions are frequently at or near Lakes Erie and Ontario, where snowfall and/or icing conditions may occur to the exclusion of virtually all other areas. A couple of the Regional compilers felt that their reports were less than expected because of weather conditions such as snowing or other visibility limitations. The grand total count of 258,210 (Table I), was down 13.8% from 1986, but still 21.8% above the fourteen year average (1973-1986) of 212,074. Even though decreases from 1986 to 1987 seem of concern, these are partially ameliorated by the fact that only the diving ducks (Canvasback, Redhead, scaup and goldeneye) plus American Wigeon and American Coot showed decreases from the 1973-1986 averages. Overall in 1987, for species listed in Table III, there was a 16.8% increase over the 1973-1986 average even though there was a 13.8% decrease from 1986 to 1987.

Comparing 1987 to 1986 count figures (Table II), the commoner species showed a 9-7 split in favor of decreases. When comparing 1987 count figures with the 1973-1986 fourteen year average (Table III) we find a 9-6 split but this time in favor of increases.

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service midwinter waterfowl inventory showed all geese in the Atlantic Flyway (Maine to Florida) were down 14.2%. The Canada Goose decline of 17.7% greatly offset the increases of 0.2% and 2.3% for Atlantic Brant and Snow Goose respectively. The dabbling ducks showed an overall decrease of 11.4%, in contrast to the 12.2% increase of a year ago. All species were down with the exceptions of Wood Duck, which was the same as in 1986, and the American Wigeon, which was up a respectable 15.1% even though it is still 16.1% below the most recent 10-year average. Diving ducks, including sea ducks, showed an overall decline of just under 1% compared to 1986, but a significant 15.1% decrease below their 1977-1986 average. American Coot, on the other hand, showed a 107.3% increase over 1986 and a 70.9% increase above the most recent 10-year average. Most American Coot, 86.6%, again were wintering in Georgia and Florida. In summary, waterfowl in the Atlantic Flyway were up 3.3% over 1986, but down 3.7% from the 1977-1986 average.

The Department of Environmental Conservation 1987 aerial survey was conducted from 4 January through 27 January. Unfavorable flying conditions delayed completion of the survey on time. The results are presented in Table IV. Table V compares 1986 to 1987 aerial survey results.

The 1988 Federation Waterfowl Count dates are from 9 January through 17 January, with Sunday, 10 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. Region 1 again has a new compiler, Wavel Barber. Pleased to have you aboard! The Region 9 compiler, Ed Treacy, has retired after 29 years of service. At this time we are looking for a new compiler to fill his shoes. The regional compilers were:

Region 1 - Wavel Barber

2 - Warren Lloyd

3 - Eric Donohue

4 - Leslie Bemont

5 - Fritz Scheider

Region 6 - Lee Chamberlaine

7 - John Peterson

8 - Paul Grattan

9 - —

10 - Stephen Dempsey

652 Kenwood Avenue, Slingerlands, New York 12159-0044

Table I. Regional totals for 1987 Waterfowl Count

Species	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8	Region 9	Region 10	Total
Red-throated Loon										4	4
Common Loon	1	5	13		4		1			75	99
Pied-billed Grebe	6		6	1						33	46
Horned Grebe		1	8		9		3		1	182	204
Red-necked Grebe				1	4		2			2	9
Great Cormorant										263	263
Double-cr. Cormorant		1			1				2	202	206
Tundra Swan		3	22								25
Mute Swan								9	247	1,317	1,573
Snow Goose	1		2					1		143	147
Brant										15,054	15,054
Canada Goose	2,284	355	11,450	62	424	3,244	334	1,048	5,234	38,717	63,152
Wood Duck		8	3				2		1	7	21
Green-winged Teal					2	1			3	305	311
American Black Duck	460	218	1,526	45	354	59	119	1,392	669	22,892	27,734
Mallard	5,107	2,451	3,369	300	2,469	173	504	810	1,787	7,881	24,851
Mallard X Black Duck	6	1	2		1	6	2			28	46
Northern Pintail	2		1		1			6	2	230	242
Blue-winged Teal					1						1
Northern Shoveler					1					308	309
Gadwall	11	11	14		33				9	862	940
Eurasian Wigeon										3	3
American Wigeon	37		4						3	1,869	1,913

Table I. Regional totals for 1987 Waterfowl Count

Canvasback	56	18	1,457		16			201	2,079	4,259	8,086
Redhead	78	40	3,861		10	200		4		97	4,290
Ring-necked Duck	2	5	24						192	318	541
Tufted Duck											0
Greater Scaup	1,809	1,091	156		1,892	330			11	29,770	35,059
Lesser Scaup	151	2			9				670	906	1,738
scaup, species	43	596	1,478			155		1		2,029	4,302
Common Eider										48	48
King Eider	1									9	10
Harlequin Duck										9	9
Oldsquaw	5,029	63			60	154			1	507	5,814
Black Scoter										612	612
Surf Scoter	2									209	211
White-winged Scoter	423	50			1	41	2			11,527	12,044
scoter, species										3,000	3,000
Common Goldeneye	2,228	897	301	2	835	925	821	40	63	1319	7,431
Barrow's Goldeneye	3										3
Bufflehead	267	89	272		59	6	18	1	71	4,930	5,713
Hooded Merganser	4	15	20		18		1	6	12	352	428
Common Merganser	13,357	223	623	42	2,162	481	270	282	4,635	40	22,115
Red-br. Merganser	105	127	12		13	4	3		6	4,831	5,101
Ruddy Duck	1								582	1,937	2,520
American Coot	34	2	614						109	665	1,424
unidentified			86						102	370	558
Total	31,508	6,272	25,324	453	8,379	5,779	2,082	3,801	16,491	158,121	258,210

Table II. Comparison of 1987 with 1986 for all species
totaling over 1,000 individuals in 1986.

Species	1987	1986	% change from 1985
Mute Swan	1,573	1,555	1.2
Brant	15,054	7,603	98.0
Canada Goose	63,152	87,555	-27.9
American Black Duck	27,734	22,488	23.3
Mallard	24,851	33,920	-26.7
American Wigeon	1,913	1,501	27.4
Canvasback	8,086	11,959	-32.4
Redhead	4,290	7,841	-45.3
scaup (both species)	41,099	42,708	-3.8
Oldsquaw	5,814	3,986	45.9
scoter (all species)	15,867	25,173	-37.0
goldeneye (both species)	7,434	10,997	-32.4
Bufflehead	5,713	5,036	13.4
Common Merganser	22,115	21,227	4.2
Red-breasted Merganser	5,101	6,406	-20.4
American Coot	1,424	1,506	-5.4
Total	251,220	291,461	-13.8

Table III. Comparison of 1987 count with 1973-1986 average for all species totaling over 1,000 individuals in 1987.

Species	1987	Average	% change
Brant	15,054	11,107	35.5
Canada Goose	63,152	33,461	88.7
American Black Duck	27,734	18,763	47.8
Mallard	24,851	22,465	10.6
American Wigeon	1,913	2,106	-9.2
Canvasback	8,086	11,766	-31.3
Redhead	4,290	6,508	-34.1
scaup (both species)	41,099	59,977	-31.5
Oldsquaw	5,814	3,470	67.6
scoter (all species)	15,867	11,027	43.9
Common Goldeneye	7,431	11,720	-36.6
Bufflehead	5,713	4,468	27.9
Common Merganser	22,115	13,058	69.4
Red-breasted Merganser	5,101	1,959	160.4
American Coot	1,424	1,859	-23.4
Total	249,644	213,714	16.8

**Table IV. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Aerial Count, 4-27 January 1987. All species of 1,000 individuals or more.**

Species	Upstate	Long Island	Total
Mute Swan	73	1,271	1,344
Brant		16,144	16,144
Canada Goose	69,447	7,460	76,907
American Black Duck	4,521	8,134	12,655
Mallard	10,930	1,787	12,717
Canvasback	6,021	4,262	10,283
Redhead	7,110		7,110
scaup (both species)	11,443	15,852	27,295
Oldsquaw	3,136	483	3,619
scoter (all species)	75	5,150	5,225
goldeneye (both species)	6,059	770	6,829
merganser (all species)	15,029	1,415	16,444
Ruddy Duck		1,601	1,601
Total	133,844	64,329	198,173

**Table V. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
1986 and 1987 Aerial Counts compared, with percent change from 1986
for all species with 1,000 individuals or more in 1987.**

Species	1987	1986	% change
Mute Swan	1,344	1,222	10.0
Brant	16,144	4,503	258.5
Canada Goose	76,907	45,065	70.7
American Black Duck	12,655	14,698	-13.9
Mallard	12,717	9,828	29.4
Canvasback	10,283	7,123	44.4
Redhead	7,110	3,774	88.4
scaup (both species)	27,295	16,217	68.3
Oldsquaw	3,619	4,847	-25.3
scoter (all species)	5225	427	1123.7
goldeneye (both species)	6,829	5,089	34.2
merganser (all species)	16,444	22,792	-27.9
Total	196,572	135,585	45.0