

NEW YORK STATE WATERFOWL COUNT, JANUARY 1988

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The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Inc., held the 1988 winter Waterfowl Count from 9 January through 17 January, with 10 January as the target date. All regions completed their counts within the established dates.

The count period was about normal again this year. Most bodies of water that usually are open were open and available to waterfowl. Exceptions are frequently found at or near Lakes Erie and Ontario, where snowfall and/or icing conditions may occur exclusively to virtually all other areas. Regional compilers did not indicate any severe meteorological limitations in completing their counts. The grand total count of 282,973 (Table I), was up 9.6% over 1987, and 24.0% above the fifteen year average (1973-1987) of 215,150. It was nice to record gains this year for Redhead, scaup and goldeneye, but not so nice to see a continued downward trend for American Wigeon, Canvasback and American Coot. Surprising was the sharp drop in numbers of American Black Duck and Common Merganser. On the plus side Brant, Canada Goose, Bufflehead, Red-breasted Merganser and Mute Swan recorded gains as well as Mallard. The latter's gains may be at the expense of the American Black Duck. This phenomenon bears watching, and perhaps the development of waterfowl management strategy to help the American Black Duck. Overall, in 1988, for species listed in Table III, there was a 28.1% increase over the 1973-1987 average as well as a 10.9% increase from 1987 to 1988 (Table 2).

Comparing 1988 to 1987 count figures (Table 2), the commoner species showed a 10-5 split in favor of increases. When comparing 1988 count figures with the 1973-1987 fifteen year average (Table 3) we find an 8-6 split, again in favor of increases, and the Common Goldeneye within just seven birds of equaling that average!

There are "goodies" out there just waiting to be recorded. Region 3 came up with the first ever record of an Eared Grebe for the Waterfowl Count. And Region 10 came through with a Common Moorhen, the first in a number of years.

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service midwinter waterfowl inventory showed all geese in the Atlantic Flyway (Maine to Florida) were up 10.2% over 1987. The Canada Goose decline of 2.2% was greatly offset by increases of 18.6% and a whopping 92.7% over 1987 for Atlantic Brant and Snow Goose respectively. The dabbling ducks showed an overall increase of 12.2% over 1987 in contrast to the 11.4% decrease recorded last year. All species were up with the exceptions of Green-

winged Teal and Northern Pintail which were 8.0% and 2.2% below 1987 respectively. The Northern Pintail continues a downward trend and is now 36.8% below the most recent ten year average. Diving ducks, including sea ducks, showed an overall decline of just under 1% compared to 1987, but a significant 13.3% below their 1978-1987 average. American Coot, on the other hand, showed a 44.2% increase over 1987 and a huge 138.2% increase above the most recent ten year average. Most (94.4%) American Coot again were wintering in Georgia and Florida. Perhaps this trend explains their decreasing numbers in New York, as noted in Table 2. In summary, waterfowl in the Atlantic Flyway were up 12.8% over 1987, and 11.3% over the 1978-1987 average.

The Department of Environmental Conservation 1988 aerial survey was conducted from 31 December 1987 through 15 January 1988. The results are presented in Table IV. Table V compares 1987 to 1988 aerial survey results.

The 1989 Federation Waterfowl Count dates are from 14 January 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. Region 9 has a new compiler and longtime friend, Alice Jones. Pleased to have you aboard! The regional compilers were:

Region	1. Wavel Barber	Region	6. Lee Chamberlaine
	2. Warren Lloyd		7. John Peterson
	3. Eric Donohue		8. Paul Grattan
	4. Leslie Bemont		9. Alice Jones
	5. Fritz Scheider		10. Stephen Dempsey

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southern border of the Region; no evidence of late nestings was found and none were reported after 4 Jul.

Eight of the 11 Regional Breeding Bird Surveys were completed this year, the missing ones all uncovered over the past ten years. The number of species found on each route generally was slightly above average, and the number of individuals also tended to higher than average though more variably so. Sampling error makes year to year comparisons of individual routes dubious, but several species showed the same trend on virtually all routes and probably reflect real population changes. Mourning Dove, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-eyed Vireo and Common Yellowthroat totals were generally well above normal, and Red-winged Blackbird counts were alarmingly below normal. The trend for Mourning Dove is a continuation from past years, and American Crow and Black-capped Chickadee may have benefited from the mild winter; a count of 184 Black-capped Chickadee in northern Oswego County on 7 Aug suggests that the species had a good season there as well, but no other counts came close to that total. It is hard to suggest a cause for the change in population size of the other species.

Other notable records from the midsummer period include Gadwall, three Bald Eagle reports, a group of Sedge Wrens, the second summer **Kentucky Warbler** for the Region, and a small number of Henslow's and Grasshopper Sparrows. Black-backed Woodpecker, Gray Jay and Common Raven were reported from traditional Adirondack strongholds, and Double-crested Cormorant apparently nested on Oneida Lake again this summer. The only species surprisingly unreported was Virginia Rail, but less surprising misses included American Bittern, Northern Goshawk, Yellow-breasted Chat and Orchard Oriole. Few Ruffed Grouse broods were reported. Ring-necked Pheasant and the grassland sparrows continue scarce in the Region. Common Tern numbers were alarmingly low, but Black Terns seem to be holding on unchanged; only Caspian Terns did well in this Region, no doubt reflecting the successful colonies to our north on Lake Ontario. Common Nighthawks were found consistently only in downtown Syracuse, and both Chimney Swift and Barn Swallow were unusually scarce in Syracuse all summer, but variably up or down on Breeding Bird Surveys.

The fall migration began with shorebirds and Yellow Warblers in late June to early July, but never produced exceptional numbers. Both Sandy Pond and Delta Lake were fairly productive for shorebird variety but no sites produced numbers of birds. No unusual herons or phalaropes were reported. The most unusual shorebirds were Whimbrel and Hudson Godwit, and a Little Gull appeared at Sandy Pond at the season's end. The first jaeger flight produced 14 Parasitics at Derby Hill on 18 Aug. A few migrant Common Nighthawk were reported during the last week of August. Numbers of migrant swallows were generally low. Philadelphia Vireo returned early, Louisiana Waterthrush remained late, and there was only one report of Cape May Warbler for the season. A total of 186 species, and one hybrid, were reported during the season, somewhat below normal and a reflection of the general absence of rarities.

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Table 1. continued

Canvasback	1,511	204	1,684		16	1	5	3	1,034	1,929	6,387
Redhead	90	74	6,496		47	5				111	6,823
Ring-necked Duck			20	1	4				47	89	161
Tufted Duck											0
Scaup, Greater	1,504	1,074	153		1,600	800	2	1		45,394	50,528
Lesser	33	3	20		13					58	127
species		70	381			11	250	1		2,067	2,780
Eider, Common										12	12
King					2					3	5
Harlequin Duck	1									2	3
Oldsquaw	3,758	222			135	221				1,592	5,928
Scoter, Black	2	13			1					1,567	1,583
Surf					1					5,074	5,075
White-winged	1,212	1,867	1		5					19,440	22,525
species										1,636	1,636
Goldeneye, Common	3,672	1,943	462	36	1,479	85	1,342	49	11	2,348	11,427
Barrow's											0
Bufflehead	312	69	262		83		76	3	2	6,666	7,473
Merganser, Hooded	19		27	3	19			13	5	309	395
Common	1,976	1,371	33	52	1,395	28	1,556	172	1,004	30	7,617
Red-breasted	1,250	128	6		64	5	1			4,638	6,092
Ruddy Duck	1	1								1,140	1,142
Common Moorhen										1	1
American Coot	66	1	411		1		1		4	211	695
unidentified										6	6
TOTAL	22,713	11,582	45,459	1,024	11,162	1,870	5,453	3,777	7,291	172,642	282,973

**Table 2. Comparison of 1988 with 1987 for all species
totaling over 1,000 individuals in 1987**

Species	1988	1987	% change from 1987
Mute Swan	1,909	1,573	21.4
Brant	19,142	15,054	27.2
Canada Goose	67,301	63,152	6.6
American Black Duck	16,795	27,734	-39.4
Mallard	35,889	24,851	44.4
American Wigeon	941	1,913	-50.8
Canvasback	6,387	8,086	-21.0
Redhead	6,823	4,290	59.0
scaup (both species)	53,435	41,099	30.0
Oldsquaw	5,928	5,814	2.0
scoter (all species)	30,819	15,867	94.2
goldeneye (both species)	11,427	7,434	53.7
Bufflehead	7,473	5,713	30.8
Common Merganser	7,617	22,115	-65.6
Red-breasted Merganser	6,092	5,101	19.4
American Coot	695	1,424	-51.2
TOTAL	278,673	251,220	10.9

**Table 3. Comparison of 1988 count with 1973-1987 average for
all species totaling over 1,000 individuals in 1987 or 1988.**

Species	1988	Average	% change from 1987
Brant	19,142	11,370	68.4
Canada Goose	67,301	35,440	89.9
American Black Duck	16,795	19,361	-13.3
Mallard	35,889	22,624	58.6
American Wigeon	941	2,093	-55.0
Canvasback	6,387	11,521	-44.6
Redhead	6,823	6,360	7.3
scaup (both species)	53,435	58,718	-9.0
Oldsquaw	5,928	3,626	63.5
scoter (all species)	30,819	11,350	171.5
goldeneye (both species)	11,427	11,434	-0.1
Bufflehead	7,473	4,551	64.2
Common Merganser	7,617	13,662	-44.2
Red-breasted Merganser	6,092	2,168	181.0
American Coot	695	1,830	-62.0
TOTAL	276,764	216,108	28.1

**Table 4. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Aerial Count, 31 Dec 1987 - 15 Jan 1988.
All species of 1,000 individuals or more.**

Species	Upstate	Long Island	Total
Mute Swan	12	1,411	1,423
Brant		15,710	15,710
Canada Goose	34,577	15,094	49,671
American Black Duck	8,485	20,457	28,942
Mallard	13,099	1,289	14,388
Canvasback	9,545	3,846	13,391
Redhead	13,170		13,170
scaup (both species)	12,282	23,953	36,235
Oldsquaw	3,449	541	3,990
scoter (all species)	731	14,185	14,916
goldeneye (both species)	5,677	2,077	7,754
Bufflehead	70	1,363	1,433
merganser (all species)	29,693	9,836	39,529
TOTAL	130,790	109,762	240,552

**Table 5. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
1987 and 1988 Aerial Counts compared, with percent change from 1987,
for all species with at least 1,000 individuals in 1988.**

Species	1988	1987	% change
Mute Swan	1,423	1,344	5.9
Brant	15,710	16,144	-2.7
Canada Goose	49,671	76,907	-35.4
American Black Duck	28,942	12,655	128.7
Mallard	14,388	12,717	13.1
Canvasback	13,391	10,283	30.2
Redhead	13,170	7,110	85.2
scaup (both species)	36,235	27,295	32.8
Oldsquaw	3,990	3,619	10.3
scoter (all species)	14,916	5,225	185.5
goldeneye (both species)	7,754	6,829	13.5
merganser (all species)	39,529	16,444	140.4
TOTAL	239,119	196,572	21.6