

NEW YORK STATE WATERFOWL COUNT, JANUARY 1989

WALTON B. SABIN

The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Inc., held the 1989 winter Waterfowl Count from 14 through 22 Jan, with 15 Jan as the target date. All Regions completed their counts within the established dates.

The weather during the count period was about normal again this year. Most bodies of water were open and available to waterfowl. Very few exceptions were reported due to the rather open winter which prevailed at this time. One or two Regional compilers indicated that a few areas were not covered but that they thought that their counts were not significantly affected. The grand total count of 273,100 (Table 1) was down 3.5% from 1988, and 24.5% above the sixteen year average (1973-1988) of 219,389. Without exception, all species showing downward trends last year have reversed themselves. However, seven species that showed upwards trends last year unfortunately are in a downward slide this year. Some of the more surprising declines were seen in scaup, goldeneye and Red-breasted Mergansers. It was nice to record increases for the American Black Duck, American Wigeon, Canvasback and Redhead. The Canada Goose continues to increase, supposedly because fewer numbers are migrating to states south of New York. Region 10 reported a hybrid Greater White-fronted/Canada Goose!

Comparing the 1989 to the 1988 count figures (Table 2), the commoner species showed a 9-6 split in favor of increases. When comparing the 1989 count figures with the 1973-1988 sixteen year average (Table 3) we find again a 9-6 split, also in favor of increases.

The United States Fish & Wildlife Service midwinter waterfowl inventory showed all geese in the Atlantic Flyway (Maine to Florida) were down 8% from 1988, including a Canada Goose decline of 10%. However, Brant showed a 5% increase. The dabbling ducks again showed an overall increase of 16% over 1988 compared to the 12.2% increase recorded last year. All species were up with the exceptions of American Wigeon and Wood Duck, which were 67% and 58% below 1988 respectively. The milder weather more than likely caused the counters to miss Wood Duck wintering in impenetrable wooded wetlands that normally would be frozen. Diving ducks, including sea ducks, showed an overall increase of 14% compared to 1988. A 27% increase in diving ducks, mainly scaup, Redhead and goldeneye, was offset by a 34% decrease in all sea ducks. American Coot showed a 20%

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
Loon, Red-throated					1					19	20
Common		4	14		2					292	312
Grebe, Pied-billed	3		14		2					37	56
Horned		3	12		2		8			321	346
Red-necked		1	1							2	4
Cormorant, Great										193	193
Double-crested					2				1	67	70
Swan, Tundra			4								4
Mute	1		1					54	275	1,039	1,370
Goose, Snow	1								22	1,033	1,056
Brant			1							20,563	20,564
Canada	1,405	1,294	41,070	116	2,165	65	326	5,444	12,538	29,583	94,006
Wood Duck	2	44			5				1	25	77
Green-winged Teal				4	9			1		283	297
American Black Duck	507	1,150	2,322	186	686	113	289	1,174	580	15,372	22,379
Mallard	4,522	4,381	4,043	397	3,769	238	810	1,159	1,064	7,849	28,232
Mallard X Black Duck					1	1		2		39	43
N. Pintail	13	3	5		2		2	6	6	172	209
N. Shoveler										216	216
Gadwall	40	2	75		11			1		582	711
Wigeon, Eurasian										1	1
American	18								1	1,056	1,075

Canvasback	1,277	75	1,189		1			1,121	763	2,838	7,264
Redhead	136	26	7,094		29					137	7,422
Ring-necked Duck		1	35		18			4	50	42	150
Tufted Duck										1	1
Scaup, Greater	2,417	2,548	463		1,229		2		1	12,389	19,049
Lesser	52	2	132		4		6	1		542	739
species			714		532	1				492	1,739
Eider, King	1									4	5
Harlequin Duck										10	10
Oldsquaw	4,528	2,289	7		62	102				689	7,677
Scoter, Black										1,769	1,769
Surf		3								10,903	10,906
White-winged	43	2,139			1					7,804	9,987
species		88								2,749	2,837
Goldeneye, Common	1,911	1,793	488	39	1,220	438	478	60	7	1,350	7,784
Barrow's										1	1
Bufflehead	233	143	183		176	12	45	1	29	5,646	6,468
Merganser, Hooded	15		37		8	90		1	9	477	637
Common	2,150	977	53	29	1,599	698	465	300	1,439	48	7,758
Red-breasted	29	139	4		21	5	2	3		4,380	4,583
Ruddy Duck									1	1,882	1,883
American Coot	62	4	716		2		1		3	211	999
unidentified	85		1,720		8	7				371	2,191
TOTAL	19,451	17,109	60,397	771	11,567	1,770	2,434	9,332	16,790	133,479	273,100

Table II. Comparison of 1986 with 1985 for all species totaling over 998 individuals in 1989.

Species	1988	1989	% change from 1988
Mute Swan	1,909	1,370	-28.2
Brant	19,142	20,564	7.4
Canada Goose	67,301	94,006	39.7
American Black Duck	16,795	22,379	33.2
Mallard	35,889	28,232	-21.3
American Wigeon	941	1,075	14.2
Canvasback	6,387	7,264	13.7
Redhead	6,823	7,422	8.8
scaup (both species)	53,435	21,527	-59.7
Oldsquaw	5,928	7,677	29.5
scoter (all species)	30,819	25,499	-17.3
goldeneye (both species)	11,427	7,785	-31.9
Bufflehead	7,473	6,468	-13.4
Common Merganser	7,617	7,758	1.9
Red-breasted Merganser	6,092	4,583	-24.8
Ruddy Duck	1,142	1,883	64.9
American Coot	695	999	43.7
Total	279,815	266,491	-4.8

Table III. Comparison of 1989 count with 1973-1988 average for all species totaling over 998 individuals in 1989.

Species	1986	Average	% change
Brant	20,564	11,945	72.2
Canada Goose	94,006	37,431	151.1
American Black Duck	22,379	19,212	16.5
Mallard	28,232	23,453	20.4
American Wigeon	1,075	2,021	-46.8
Canvasback	7,264	11,200	-35.1
Redhead	7,422	6,389	16.2
scaup (both species)	21,527	58,388	-63.1
Oldsquaw	7,677	3,770	103.6
scoter (all species)	25,499	12,567	102.9
Common Goldeneye	7,785	11,434	-31.9
Bufflehead	6,468	4,734	36.6
Common Merganser	7,758	13,284	-41.6
Red-breasted Merganser	4,583	2,413	89.9
American Coot	999	1,759	-43.2
Total	263,238	220,000	19.7

**Table IV. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Aerial Count, 5-14 January 1989. All species of 1,000 individuals or more.**

Species	Upstate	Long Island	Total
Mute Swan	106	1,729	1,835
Brant		10,873	10,873
Canada Goose	105,505	10,069	115,574
American Black Duck	11,972	17,634	29,606
Mallard	23,295	2,655	25,950
Canvasback	6,847	3,403	10,250
Redhead	6,377		6,377
scaup (both species)	6,065	26,642	32,707
Oldsquaw	2,018	351	2,369
scoter (all species)	57	9,299	9,356
goldeneye (both species)	5,325	605	5,930
merganser (all species)	19,166	1,893	21,059
Total	186,733	85,153	271,886

**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	1989	1988	% change
Mute Swan	1,835	1,423	29.0
Brant	10,873	15,710	-30.8
Canada Goose	115,574	49,671	132.7
American Black Duck	29,606	28,942	2.3
Mallard	25,950	14,388	80.4
Canvasback	10,250	13,391	-23.5
Redhead	6,377	13,170	-51.6
scaup (both species)	32,707	36,235	-9.7
Oldsquaw	2,369	3,990	-40.6
scoter (all species)	9,356	14,916	-37.3
goldeneye (both species)	5,930	7,754	-23.5
merganser (all species)	21,059	39,529	-46.7
Total	271,886	239,119	13.7

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decrease over 1988, but still was at a 69% increase above the most recent ten year average. Most American Coot again were wintering in Georgia and Florida. In summary, waterfowl in the Atlantic Flyway were down 1% from 1988, but up 9% over the 1979-1988 average.

The Department of Environmental Conservation 1989 aerial survey was conducted from 5-14 January 1989. The results are presented in Table 4. Table 5 compares 1988 to 1989 aerial survey results. It might be noted that the NYSDEC total aerial count matched very closely the Federation's ground count total.

The 1990 Federation Waterfowl Count dates are from 13 January through 21 January with Sunday, 14 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 5 has a new compiler and longtime friend, Marge Rusk. Pleased to have you aboard! Also, a special thanks to Helen Manson who substituted for Alice Jones. The Regional Compilers were:

- Region 1. Wavel Barber
2. Warren Lloyd
3. Eric Donohue
4. Leslie Bemont
5. Marge Rusk

- Region 6. Lee Chamberlaine
7. John Peterson
8. Paul Grattan
9. Alice Jones
10. Stephen Dempsey

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