

NEW YORK STATE WATERFOWL COUNT, JANUARY 1992

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The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Inc., held its 1992 winter Waterfowl Count from 11 through 19 Jan, with 12 Jan as the target date. All Regions completed their counts within the established dates.

The Weather

January picked up where 1991 left off, with above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation. However, during the afternoon of 10 Jan a cold front entered New York and took most of the following day to finally exit the state. Lots of clouds and precipitation were over New York on 10 Jan and part of 11 Jan. A weak area of high pressure cleared skies later on 11 Jan and for part of 12 Jan. A warm front moved northward during 13 Jan. Snow, sleet and freezing rain returned with the approach of the front. Meanwhile, a storm from the Midwest strengthened significantly and was located near Buffalo on the morning of 14 Jan. Warm temperatures (50°F at Binghamton set a new record) and a sharp cold front produced severe thunderstorms in parts of New York. This large storm moved up the St. Lawrence Valley later that day. A surge of arctic air swept from Canada behind the storm, ending the above normal temperatures. Winter returned with lake-effect snows, subfreezing temperatures and a cold breeze on the 15 Jan. Maximum temperatures were 20°F to 40°F colder than on the previous day. Highs ranged from single numbers over the Adirondacks to the mid 20's on Long Island. Two weak storms from the Great Lakes crossed New York on 16 and 17 Jan. These two systems caused light to moderate amounts of snow. Three to six inch snows were common in upstate New York and up to two inches fell over Long Island. Behind these two storms, lake effect snow resumed with a vengeance on 18 Jan. Squalls struck southeast of both Lakes Erie and Ontario. Some of the snow bands drifted down the Mohawk Valley. Snow squalls moved northward and weakened during 19 Jan. In areas where lake snows did not fall, clear cold

weather prevailed. Many of the coldest temperatures of the period were set during the mornings of 19 and 20 Jan, as readings dropped below -20°F in the Adirondacks and into the teens on Long Island.

The Count

The count grand total of 396,110 (Table 1) was up an impressive 14.5% over 1991 and 57.4% above the nineteen year (1973-1991) average of 236,633. All four species showing downward trends last year have reversed themselves. However, five species that showed upward trends last year are, unfortunately, in a downward slide this year. They are Canvasback, Oldsquaw, scoter, Common Merganser and Red-breasted Merganser. It was nice to record further increases for Brant, scaup and goldeneye. Other increases noted were American Black Duck, Mallard, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Bufflehead, Ruddy Duck and American Coot. This year Canada Goose experienced a slight increase, a not so welcome word to those experiencing nuisance problems from the species.

Comparing 1992 to 1991 count figures (Table 2), the commoner species showed a 13-6 split in favor of increases, although some different species changed as compared to 1991. When comparing 1992 count figures with the 1973-1991 nineteen average (Table 3), there is a 11-2 split, strongly in favor of increases, the same as in 1991.

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service midwinter waterfowl inventory showed all geese in the Atlantic Flyway (Maine to Florida) were up 5.9% from 1991, including a decrease in Canada Goose of 7.3%. However, Atlantic Brant showed a 25.1% increase. The dabbling ducks also showed an overall decrease of 23.8% from 1991, after the 20.6% increase recorded last year. All species were down, with the exceptions of Gadwall (up 17.0%) and Wood Duck (up 142.3%). Diving ducks, including sea ducks, showed an overall decrease of 24.3% compared to 1991. The only bright spots here were 33.5% and 51.9% increases over 1991 for Canvasback and Ruddy Duck, respectively. American Coot also showed a 12.9% decrease from 1991 and a 58.3% decrease from 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 13.5% from 1991, and 4.2% below the 1982-1991 average.

Table I. Regional totals for 1992 Waterfowl Count

Species \ Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Loon, Red-throated										56	56
Common	3	1	12		13	1	2		1	241	274
Grebe, Pied-billed	7	1	22		3				3	39	75
Horned		25	21		15		18			465	544
Red-necked										2	2
Cormorant, Great										347	347
Double-crested	7				10					167	184
Swan, Tundra	5	3								6	14
Mute		2						196	248	1850	2,296
Goose, Snow	1			4					8	370	383
Brant		136								22638	22,774
Canada	2229	1603	54267	292	4980	125	469	12716	13598	47731	138,010
Wood Duck	2	35	3		1				5	62	108
Green-winged Teal			1		4				4	529	538
American Black Duck	383	727	3515	241	740	78	160	1112	776	19346	27,078
Mallard	6105	11261	19121	730	5607	220	2462	1586	2353	11082	60,527
Mallard X Black Duck		1			11					45	57
N. Pintail		2	4		4			41	3	297	351
N. Shoveler		3						1		339	343
Gadwall	14	42	46		2	20	2	6	167	1514	1,813
Wigeon, Eurasian			1							9	10
American	29	16	1					10	24	1613	1,693

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Canvasback	3273	51	690				2	2024	597	4515	11,152
Redhead	15	502	6811		88	6			1	58	7,481
Ring-necked Duck	65	18	9		31		5		162	257	547
Tufted Duck										1	1
Scaup, Greater	127	12773			3856		252			30142	47,150
Lesser	38	20	4		5	1		2	17	1107	1,194
species			1277							5268	6,545
Eider, Common										168	168
King										29	29
Harlequin Duck										11	11
Oldsquaw	2555	902			106	8				774	4,345
Scoter, Black		18								124	142
Surf		7								2620	2,627
White-winged	15	698			16					5577	6,306
species		50								618	668
Goldeneye, Common	2401	6518	311	41	4301	364	2417	114	8	3223	19,698
Barrow's										2	2
Bufflehead	209	359	269		174	193	27		86	7760	9,077
Merganser, Hooded	25	42	44	1	20		2	3	129	710	976
Common	2458	112	52	175	2728	76	1421	464	1738	116	9,340
Red-breasted	11	529	13		140					6063	6,756
species					12						12
Ruddy Duck		1							133	2828	2,962
American Coot	100	278	468		2	4			150	342	1,344
unidentified	13					55		15		17	100
TOTAL	20,090	36,736	86,962	1,484	22,869	1,151	7,239	18,290	20,211	181,078	396,110

Table II. Comparison of 1992 with 1991 for all species totaling over 1000 individuals in 1992.

Species	1991	1992	% change from 1991
Mute Swan	1,764	2,293	30.0
Brant	21,086	22,744	7.9
Canada Goose	129,248	138,010	6.8
American Black Duck	21,837	27,078	24.0
Mallard	46,049	60,527	31.4
Gadwall	783	1,813	131.5
American Wigeon	1,201	1,693	41.0
Canvasback	12,821	11,152	-13.0
Redhead	7,419	7,481	0.8
scaup (both species)	38,590	54,889	42.2
Oldsquaw	6,927	4,345	-37.3
scoter (all species)	11,395	9,743	-14.5
goldeneye (both species)	13,699	19,700	43.8
Bufflehead	6,777	9,077	33.9
Common Merganser	13,819	9,340	-32.4
Red-breasted Merganser	7,079	6,759	-4.5
Ruddy Duck	800	2,962	270.3
American Coot	641	1,344	109.7
Total	340,494	390,950	14.8

Table III. Comparison of 1992 count with 1973-1991 average for all species totaling over 1000 individuals in 1992.

Species	1992	Average	% change
Brant	22,744	13,007	74.9
Canada Goose	138,010	50,604	172.7
American Black Duck	27,078	19,700	37.5
Mallard	60,527	26,047	132.4
Canvasback	11,152	10,727	4.0
Redhead	7,481	6,588	13.6
scaup (both species)	54,889	54,002	1.6
Oldsquaw	4,345	4,141	4.9
scoter (all species)	9,743	13,060	-25.4
Common Goldeneye	19,698	11,208	75.7
Bufflehead	9,077	5,057	79.5
Common Merganser	9,340	12,766	-26.8
Red-breasted Merganser	6,756	2,923	131.1
Total	380,840	229,830	65.7

**Table IV. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Aerial Count, 2-8 January 1991. All species of 1,000 individuals or more.**

Species	Upstate	Long Island	Total
Mute Swan	174	1,442	1,616
Brant		22,321	22,321
Canada Goose	65,997	18,345	84,342
American Black Duck	10,454	12,321	22,775
Mallard	24,224	1,296	25,520
Canvasback	7,540	2,235	9,775
Redhead	7,864		7,864
scaup (both species)	10,860	19,686	30,546
Oldsquaw	5,106	120	5,226
goldeneye (both species)	3,059	1,066	4,125
merganser (all species)	16,407	3,720	16,407
Total	151,685	82,552	230,517

**Table V. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
1991 and 1992 Aerial Counts compared, with percent change from 1991
for all species with 1,000 individuals or more in 1992.**

Species	1991	1992	% change
Mute Swan	1,621	1,616	-0.3
Brant	21,925	22,321	1.8
Canada Goose	75,546	84,342	11.6
American Black Duck	23,709	22,775	-3.9
Mallard	22,289	25,520	14.5
Canvasback	12,818	9,775	-23.7
Redhead	2,065	7,864	280.8
scaup (both species)	44,642	30,728	-31.2
Oldsquaw	2,301	5,226	127.1
goldeneye (both species)	2,941	4,125	40.3
merganser (all species)	14,835	20,127	35.7
Total	225,941	234,419	3.8

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation 1992 aerial survey was conducted from 6-19 Jan 1992. The results are presented in Table 4. Table 5 compares the 1991 to 1992 aerial survey results. As in most years, the 1992 New York State Department of Environmental Conservation aerial count did not at all resemble the Federation's ground count total.

The 1993 Federation Waterfowl Count dates are from 16 through 24 Jan, with Sunday, 17 Jan, the target date.

I wish to thank the upwards of one hundred observers who participated this year. A special thanks to the Regional Compilers who coordinated all those volunteers. The Regional Compilers were:

Region 1. Wavel Barber

2. Thomas White

3. Eric Donohue

4. Leslie Bemont

5. Marge Rusk

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