

NEW YORK STATE WATERFOWL COUNT, JANUARY 1993

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The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Inc., held its 1993 winter Waterfowl Count from 16 through 24 Jan, with 17 Jan as the target date. All Regions completed their counts within the established dates.

THE WEATHER

Temperatures in New York were above normal once again to start off 1993. January's average temperature was 5.2°F above normal and 2° warmer than January 1992. Most weather stations around the state reported positive departures of at least 3°, while some locations recorded monthly averages that approached 7° warmer than normal.

Precipitation this month was 18% above normal for the state. This was about an inch wetter than January 1992. Long Island was the only region to report a significant negative departure at 72% of normal. Northern portions of the state tallied the largest positive departures.

A low pressure system over southern Lake Michigan and another low off the mid Atlantic coast brought a mix of winter weather on 13 Jan. Up to 10 inches of snow fell in the north, including 9 inches at Ray Brook and 9.5 inches at Malone. Freezing rain and sleet mixed with snow in the Hudson Valley while rain dampened western New York. As the two lows consolidated off the east coast, a northwest flow of colder air overspread the region, changing the precipitation to all snow. When the storm finally cleared out of the eastern part of the state on 14 Jan, western New York, the mid-Hudson Valley and the southern Catskills received 3 to 6 inches of snow. Although snowfall in the Southern Tier amounted to only 1 to 3 inches, central, eastern and northern parts of the state were buried under 7 to 14 inches.

Cloudy skies, cold temperatures and scattered snow showers continued on 15 Jan. Snow squalls dumped 8 to 14 inches south and east of Buffalo while the rest of western and central New York received only about an inch. Highs were near 30°F throughout much of New York on 16 Jan. There was variable cloud cover, with light snow in northern areas in the morning. Freezing drizzle glazed roads in western parts of the state early on 17 Jan. Later in the day, the leading edge of colder air brought light snow to most of the state. Northwest winds behind the front set the scene for lake-effect snow squalls overnight. The squalls continued in western New York on 18 Jan, but there was plenty of sunshine in eastern parts of the state. High temperatures ranged from the low teens in northern New York to the mid 30's on Long Island.

Table I. Regional totals for 1993 Waterfowl Count

Species \ Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Loon, Red-throated		6								29	35
Common		4	13		9	1		1		331	359
Grebe, Pied-billed	9	2	14		1		2		8	50	86
Horned		18	34		6					469	527
Red-necked		3			1					2	6
Cormorant, Great									22	553	575
Double-crested	3	14	1		34	2			1	289	344
Swan, Tundra		69	14							3	86
Mute	1	3	1		1			125	381	1,657	2,169
Goose, Snow	1		5					1	2	314	323
Brant										26,377	26,377
Canada	4,288	891	17,335	729	4,154	8	1,187	4,595	12,041	35,924	81,152
Wood Duck	1	1	2	1	3	1				4	13
Green-winged Teal		2			16					309	327
American Black Duck	306	666	2,000	106	377	48	98	1,022	562	18,031	23,216
Mallard	6,092	6,676	5,975	504	4,239	356	1,358	617	1,850	12,410	40,077
Mallard X Black Duck		20	4		2		1			145	172
N. Pintail	4		1		6			8		199	218
N. Shoveler		1							11	257	269
Gadwall	42	59	58		4	4			21	1,378	1,566
Wigeon, Eurasian										7	7
American	6	2				5			1	1,555	1,569

Canvasback	3,621	28	641		7			600	3,021	3,168	11,086
Redhead	194	953	3,763		21					76	5,007
Ring-necked Duck	14	19	31		20		6		347	423	860
Tufted Duck										5	5
Scaup, Greater	6,731	12,636	59		333	5				38,231	57,995
Lesser	82	90	158		8				126	530	994
species	75	10,679	83							8,095	18,932
Eider, Common										612	612
King										6	6
Harlequin Duck					1					11	12
Oldsquaw	1,655	257	6		8					2,554	4,480
Scoter, Black	3	1								183	187
Surf		1								3,905	3,906
White-winged	37	21								10,542	10,600
species		1				80				2,125	2,206
Goldeneye, Common	3,080	6,443	477	5	1,812	4,472	1,747	160	85	2,651	20,932
Barrow's							1			1	2
Bufflehead	306	766	268		156	95	6	10	59	7,917	9,583
Merganser, Hooded	23	10	58	2	35			4	245	806	1,183
Common	2,509	209	1,744	154	1,190	1,717	1,133	252	3,835	436	13,179
Red-breasted	331	1,380	95		83	31	5			5,752	7,677
Ruddy Duck									233	2,512	2,745
American Coot	58	46	435		1				57	361	958
unidentified	469	5,000	205							1	5,675
TOTAL	29,941	46,977	33,480	1,501	12,528	6,825	5,544	7,395	22,908	191,196	358,295

Table II. Comparison of 1993 with 1992 for all species totaling over 1000 individuals in 1993.

Species	1992	1993	% change from 1989
Mute Swan	2,293	2,169	-5.4
Brant	22,744	26,377	16.0
Canada Goose	138,010	81,152	-41.2
American Black Duck	27,078	23,216	-14.3
Mallard	60,527	40,077	-33.8
Gadwall	1,813	1,566	-13.6
American Wigeon	1,693	1,569	-7.3
Canvasback	11,152	11,086	-0.6
Redhead	7,481	5,007	-33.1
scaup (both species)	54,889	77,921	42.0
Oldsquaw	4,345	4,480	3.1
scoter (all species)	9,743	16,899	73.4
goldeneye (both species)	19,700	20,934	6.3
Bufflehead	9,077	9,583	5.6
Hooded Merganser	976	1,183	21.2
Common Merganser	9,340	13,179	41.1
Red-breasted Merganser	6,759	7,677	13.6
Ruddy Duck	2,962	2,745	-7.3
Total	390,582	346,820	-11.2

Table III. Comparison of 1993 count with 1973-1992 average for all species totaling over 1000 individuals in 1993.

Species	1993	Average	% change
Brant	26,377	13,494	95.5
Canada Goose	81,152	54,974	47.6
American Black Duck	23,216	20,069	15.7
Mallard	40,077	27,771	44.3
Canvasback	11,086	10,748	3.1
Redhead	5,007	6,633	-24.5
scaup (both species)	77,921	54,046	44.2
Oldsquaw	4,480	4,151	7.9
scoter (all species)	16,899	12,894	31.1
Common Goldeneye	20,934	11,633	80.0
Bufflehead	9,583	5,258	82.3
Common Merganser	13,179	12,595	4.6
Red-breasted Merganser	7,677	3,115	146.5
Total	337,589	237,381	42.2

Comparing 1993 to 1992 count figures (Table 2), the commoner species showed a 10-9 split in favor of decreases, although some different species changed as compared to 1992. When comparing 1993 count figures with the 1973-1992 twenty-year average (Table 3), there is a 12-1 split, strongly in favor of increases, as in 1992. The exception here, Redhead, is of concern. A one-third decrease in their numbers compared to 1992 was not helped by the fact that there was also a one-fourth decrease from the twenty-year average.

Because of changes in numbers of less abundant species, Tables 2, 4 and 5 have been altered as follows: scoter (all species) has been added to Tables 4 and 5; Hooded Merganser added and American Coot were dropped from Table 2.

**Table IV. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Aerial Count, 2-22 January 1993. All species of 1,000 individuals or more.**

Species	Upstate	Long Island	Total
Mute Swan	201	1,433	1,634
Brant		24,937	24,937
Canada Goose	74,332	16,509	90,841
American Black Duck	9,247	18,395	27,642
Mallard	28,808	2,193	31,001
Canvasback	11,087	1,422	12,509
Redhead	2,400		2,400
scaup (both species)	18,303	27,089	45,392
Oldsquaw	2,043	111	2,154
scoter (all species)		4,805	4,805
goldeneye (both species)	3,233	550	3,783
merganser (all species)	22,121	3,206	25,327
Total	171,775	100,650	272,425

**Table V. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
1992 and 1993 Aerial Counts compared, with percent change from 1992
for all species with 1,000 individuals or more in 1993.**

Species	1992	1993	% change
Mute Swan	1,616	1,634	1.1
Brant	22,321	24,937	11.7
Canada Goose	84,342	90,841	7.7
American Black Duck	22,775	27,642	21.4
Mallard	25,520	31,001	21.5
Canvasback	9,775	12,509	28.0
Redhead	7,864	2,400	-69.5
scaup (both species)	30,728	45,392	47.7
Oldsquaw	5,226	2,154	-58.8
scoter (all species)	2,195	4,805	118.9
goldeneye (both species)	4,125	3,783	-8.3
merganser (all species)	20,127	25,327	25.8
Total	236,614	272,425	15.1

After a chilly start on 19 Jan, with lows from 10°F below to 10°F above zero, the mercury rebounded to the teens and 20's under mostly sunny skies. There were a few bands of snow squalls, mainly over Monroe, Wayne, Niagara and Orleans Counties. Temperatures warmed into the 30's and 40's as high pressure built across New York on 20 Jan. Mostly cloudy skies were found over the St. Lawrence Valley, Adirondacks, Mohawk Valley, northern Catskills and eastern Finger Lakes. Mild temperatures continued on 21 Jan. However, the sunshine gave way to cloud cover as a front approached the state. Rain began in western New York in the afternoon and moved into eastern parts of the state by evening. In the lower Hudson Valley and central New York, freezing rain fell where there were still pockets of cold air at the surface. Freezing rain, sleet, snow and rain moved into northern New York on 22 Jan.

It was mostly cloudy and mild on the 23 Jan, with highs in the mid 30's to the mid 40's. The mercury reached the mid 50's in the lower Hudson Valley on 24 Jan, while the rest of the state had highs mainly in the 40's. Southwesterly winds of 20 to 40 mph brought even warmer air to New York on 24 Jan. Albany reached 50°F and Poughkeepsie topped out at 55°F before the clouds rolled in ahead of a strong cold front. Rain ahead of the front changed to snow after the front passed.

THE COUNT

The count grand total of 358,295 (Table 1) was down 9.5% from 1992 but 46.5% above the twenty-year (1973-1992) average of 244,607. Four of the five species showing downward trends last year have reversed themselves. The exception, Canvasback, continued its downward trend, although it is still slightly above its twenty-year average. However, eight species that had showed upward trends are, unfortunately, in a downward slide this year. They are Mute Swan, Canada Goose, American Black Duck, Mallard, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Redhead and Ruddy Duck. It was nice to record further increases for Brant, scaup, goldeneye and Bufflehead. Other increases noted were Tundra Swan, Ring-necked Duck, Common Eider and Hooded Merganser. This year Canada Goose experienced a 41.2% decline, a welcome word to those experiencing nuisance problems from the species.

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service midwinter waterfowl inventory showed all geese in the Atlantic Flyway (Maine to Florida) were down 23.6% from 1992, including a decrease in Canada Goose of 12.9%, and Atlantic Brant showed a 45.5% decrease. The dabbling ducks showed an increase of only 0.5% from 1992, after the 23.8% decrease recorded last year. Many species were down, with the exceptions of American Black Duck (up 5.3%), Gadwall (up 10.8%), American Wigeon (up 0.8%), Shoveler (up 84.7%) and Northern Pintail (up 24.7%). Diving ducks, including sea ducks, showed an overall increase of 21.5% compared to 1992. A few bright spots here were 4.4%, 40.3%, 58.4% and 110.3% increases over 1992 for Redhead, scaup, Ring-necked Duck and scoter respectively. American Coot also showed a 58.0% increase from 1992, but still showed a 32.3% decrease from the most recent ten-year average. Most American Coot again were wintering in the Carolinas, Georgia and Florida. In summary, waterfowl in the Atlantic Flyway were up only 1.5% from 1992, but 2.7% below the 1983-1992 average.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation 1993 aerial survey was conducted from 2-22 Jan 1993. The results are presented in Table 4. Table 5 compares the 1992 to 1993 aerial survey results. As in most years, the 1993 New York State Department of Environmental Conservation aerial count did not at all resemble the Federation's ground count total.

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. A special thanks also to the new coordinator for Region 1, Joseph A. DiDomenico, Jr. The Regional Compilers were:

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|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Region 1. Joseph DiDomenico | Region 6. Lee Chamberlaine |
| 2. Thomas Smith | 7. John Peterson |
| 3. Eric Donohue | 8. Paul Grattan |
| 4. Leslie Bemont | 9. Helen Manson |
| 5. Marge Rusk | 10. Stephen Dempsey |

The 1994 Federation Waterfowl Count dates are from 15 through 23 Jan, with Sunday, 16 Jan, the target date.

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