

## NEW YORK STATE WATERFOWL COUNT, JANUARY 1994

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The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Inc., held its 1994 winter Waterfowl Count from 15 through 23 January, with 16 January as the target date. All Regions completed their counts within the established dates.

### THE WEATHER

The frigid weather that took hold of the northeastern United States in late December tightened its icy grip through the entire month of January. The relentless cold weather resulted in temperatures that averaged 3° to more than 12° below the monthly normal across New York State. The state overall averaged 8.3° colder than normal, making this the second coldest January in 100 years of record (coldest was 1918). January 1993 averaged 13.5° warmer than this January.

The coldest air of the season settled southward from 15 through 21 Jan. Daily average temperatures ranged from 20° to 30° below normal. The smallest monthly departures were found in Region 10 (-4.6°), while the largest departures were recorded in the northern valleys. The St. Lawrence Valley averaged 12.4° below normal and the Champlain Valley was 11.6° colder than the long-term mean.

Precipitation was above normal for the month. The state measured 146% of the normal precipitation, for the wettest January in the last 15 years. Monthly departures were quite consistent throughout, ranging from 121% of normal in the southern parts of Regions 1 and 3 to 166% for the Hudson Valley. Several storms dumped significant amounts of snow during the month. Monthly accumulations ranged from 7 inches in New York City to over 90 inches at Oswego, which in both cases were more than twice the monthly normal. A few locations scattered around the state reported over three times the normal January snowfall.

One of the northern Region coordinators best expressed the results of their surveys as: "The cold and snowstorms did us dirt. No open water to speak of and snowstorms on many days of that week. Waterfowl moved out of here and south."

Table I. Regional totals for 1991 Waterfowl Count

| Species \ Region     | 1     | 2     | 3      | 4   | 5     | 6  | 7     | 8   | 9     | 10     | Total  |
|----------------------|-------|-------|--------|-----|-------|----|-------|-----|-------|--------|--------|
| Loon, Red-throated   | 1     |       |        |     | 1     |    |       |     | 5     | 12     | 19     |
| Common               |       |       | 3      |     |       |    |       |     | 1     | 63     | 67     |
| Grebe, Pied-billed   | 6     |       | 4      |     |       |    |       |     | 8     | 30     | 48     |
| Horned               | 29    |       | 26     |     | 1     |    |       | 1   | 15    | 166    | 238    |
| Red-necked           | 1     |       | 3      |     |       |    |       |     |       |        | 4      |
| Cormorant, Great     |       |       |        |     |       |    |       |     | 31    | 173    | 204    |
| Double-crested       | 2     |       |        |     |       |    |       |     | 1     | 83     | 86     |
| Swan, Tundra         | 6     |       |        |     |       |    |       |     |       | 1      | 7      |
| Mute                 |       | 6     |        |     |       |    |       | 9   | 413   | 982    | 1,410  |
| Goose, Snow          |       |       |        |     |       |    |       |     | 2     | 296    | 298    |
| Brant                |       | 51    |        |     |       |    |       |     | 18    | 17,709 | 17,778 |
| Canada               | 817   | 237   | 31,024 | 248 | 302   |    |       | 3   | 4,360 | 35,596 | 72,587 |
| Wood Duck            | 4     | 1     | 2      |     | 1     |    |       |     |       | 7      | 15     |
| Green-winged Teal    |       |       |        |     | 1     |    |       |     |       | 106    | 107    |
| American Black Duck  | 201   | 513   | 2,383  | 113 | 230   | 4  | 95    | 331 | 726   | 12,360 | 16,956 |
| Mallard              | 4,662 | 5,299 | 15,845 | 995 | 3,209 | 16 | 1,052 | 615 | 2,395 | 10,575 | 44,663 |
| Mallard X Black Duck | 1     | 5     | 1      |     |       |    |       |     | 2     | 13     | 22     |
| N. Pintail           | 1     | 1     | 2      |     | 4     |    |       |     | 4     | 59     | 71     |
| N. Shoveler          |       |       |        |     |       |    |       |     |       | 45     | 45     |
| Gadwall              | 41    |       | 79     |     |       |    |       |     | 42    | 1,071  | 1,233  |
| Wigeon, Eurasian     |       |       |        |     |       |    |       |     |       | 5      | 5      |
| American             | 1     |       | 1      |     |       |    |       |     | 17    | 707    | 726    |

DECEMBER 1994

|                   |        |        |        |       |       |    |       |       |        |         |
|-------------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|-------|----|-------|-------|--------|---------|
| Canvasback        | 1,693  | 18     | 1,295  |       | 25    |    |       | 753   | 2,180  | 5,964   |
| Redhead           | 278    | 152    | 10,757 |       | 101   |    | 3     | 21    | 64     | 11,376  |
| Ring-necked Duck  | 5      | 6      | 53     |       | 1     |    |       | 1     | 259    | 315     |
| Tufted Duck       |        |        |        |       |       |    |       |       |        | 2       |
| Scaup, Greater    | 2,343  | 2,247  | 217    |       | 497   |    | 15    | 3,227 | 4,287  | 12,833  |
| Lesser            | 12     | 621    | 14     |       | 10    |    | 15    | 16    | 1,486  | 2,174   |
| species           |        |        | 2,127  |       |       |    | 81    |       | 8,266  | 10,474  |
| Eider, Common     |        |        |        |       |       |    |       |       | 95     | 95      |
| King              |        |        |        |       |       |    |       |       | 3      | 3       |
| Harlequin Duck    | 1      | 1      |        |       |       |    |       |       | 9      | 11      |
| Oldsquaw          | 281    | 1      |        |       | 1     |    |       | 26    | 1,055  | 1,364   |
| Scoter, Black     | 1      |        |        |       |       |    |       |       | 2,157  | 2,158   |
| Surf              |        |        |        |       |       |    |       |       | 7,549  | 7,549   |
| White-winged      | 5      | 3      |        |       | 1     |    |       |       | 14,047 | 14,056  |
| species           |        |        |        |       |       |    |       |       | 1,559  | 1,559   |
| Goldeneye, Common | 1,814  | 3,240  | 445    | 56    | 729   |    | 212   | 75    | 151    | 1,407   |
| Barrow's          |        |        |        |       |       |    | 1     |       |        | 1       |
| Bufflehead        | 918    | 198    | 309    | 2     | 157   |    | 9     |       | 371    | 5,388   |
| Merganser, Hooded | 23     | 5      | 60     | 9     | 8     |    | 1     |       | 78     | 543     |
| Common            | 1,130  | 364    | 455    | 226   | 1,630 |    | 235   | 83    | 333    | 350     |
| Red-breasted      | 119    | 278    | 8      |       | 55    |    | 8     |       | 63     | 3,515   |
| Ruddy Duck        |        |        |        |       |       |    |       |       | 265    | 1,527   |
| American Coot     | 75     | 34     | 376    |       |       |    |       |       | 222    | 272     |
| unidentified      |        | 6      |        |       |       | 28 |       |       | 3      | 8       |
| TOTAL             | 14,471 | 13,287 | 65,489 | 1,649 | 6,964 | 48 | 1,727 | 1,118 | 13,828 | 136,143 |
|                   |        |        |        |       |       |    |       |       |        | 254,724 |

**Table II. Comparison of 1994 with 1993 count for all species totaling over 1000 individuals in 1994.**

| Species                  | 1993    | 1994    | % change from 1989 |
|--------------------------|---------|---------|--------------------|
| Mute Swan                | 2,169   | 1,410   | -35.0              |
| Brant                    | 26,377  | 17,778  | -32.6              |
| Canada Goose             | 81,152  | 72,587  | -10.6              |
| American Black Duck      | 23,216  | 16,956  | -27.0              |
| Mallard                  | 40,077  | 44,663  | 11.4               |
| Gadwall                  | 1,566   | 1,233   | -21.3              |
| American Wigeon          | 1,569   | 726     | -53.7              |
| Canvasback               | 11,086  | 5,964   | -46.2              |
| Redhead                  | 5,007   | 11,376  | 127.2              |
| scaup (both species)     | 77,921  | 25,481  | -67.3              |
| Oldsquaw                 | 4,480   | 1,364   | -69.6              |
| scoter (all species)     | 16,899  | 25,322  | 49.8               |
| goldeneye (both species) | 20,934  | 8,130   | -61.2              |
| Bufflehead               | 9,583   | 7,352   | -23.3              |
| Hooded Merganser         | 1,183   | 727     | -38.5              |
| Common Merganser         | 13,179  | 4,806   | -63.5              |
| Red-breasted Merganser   | 7,677   | 4,046   | -47.3              |
| Ruddy Duck               | 2,745   | 1,792   | -34.7              |
| Total                    | 390,582 | 251,713 | -35.6              |

**Table III. Comparison of 1994 count with 1973-1993 average for all species totaling over 1000 individuals in 1994.**

| Species                | 1994    | Average | % change |
|------------------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Brant                  | 17,778  | 14,107  | 26.0     |
| Canada Goose           | 72,587  | 56,221  | 29.1     |
| American Black Duck    | 16,956  | 20,219  | -16.1    |
| Mallard                | 44,663  | 28,357  | 57.5     |
| Canvasback             | 5,964   | 10,764  | -44.6    |
| Redhead                | 11,376  | 6,556   | 73.5     |
| scaup (both species)   | 25,481  | 55,183  | -53.8    |
| Oldsquaw               | 1,364   | 4,167   | -67.3    |
| scoter (all species)   | 25,322  | 13,085  | 93.5     |
| Common Goldeneye       | 8,130   | 12,076  | -32.7    |
| Bufflehead             | 7,352   | 5,464   | 34.6     |
| Common Merganser       | 4,806   | 12,623  | -61.9    |
| Red-breasted Merganser | 4,046   | 3,332   | 21.4     |
| Total                  | 245,824 | 242,154 | 1.5      |

**Table IV. New York State Department of Environmental  
Conservation Aerial Count, 2 January - 7 February 1994, for all  
species of 1,000 individuals or more.**

| Species                  | Upstate | Long Island | Total   |
|--------------------------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Mute Swan                | 286     | 1,157       | 1,443   |
| Brant                    |         | 12,919      | 12,919  |
| Canada Goose             | 56,562  | 7,721       | 64,283  |
| American Black Duck      | 4,777   | 11,383      | 16,160  |
| Mallard                  | 14,591  | 1,468       | 16,059  |
| Canvasback               | 6,444   | 2,523       | 8,967   |
| Redhead                  | 10,197  |             | 10,197  |
| scaup (both species)     | 5,862   | 59,326      | 65,188  |
| Oldsquaw                 | 9,621   | 576         | 10,197  |
| scoter (all species)     | 120     | 11,720      | 11,840  |
| goldeneye (both species) | 2,960   | 1,251       | 4,211   |
| Bufflehead               | 188     | 1,181       | 1,369   |
| merganser (all species)  | 12,531  | 4,601       | 17,132  |
| Total                    | 124,139 | 115,829     | 239,968 |

**Table V. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation  
1993 and 1994 Aerial Counts compared, with percent change from 1993  
for all species with 1,000 individuals or more in 1994.**

| Species                  | 1993    | 1994    | % change |
|--------------------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Mute Swan                | 1,634   | 1,443   | -11.7    |
| Brant                    | 24,937  | 12,919  | -48.2    |
| Canada Goose             | 90,841  | 64,283  | -29.2    |
| American Black Duck      | 27,642  | 16,160  | -41.5    |
| Mallard                  | 31,001  | 16,059  | -48.2    |
| Canvasback               | 12,509  | 8,967   | -28.3    |
| Redhead                  | 2,400   | 10,197  | 324.9    |
| scaup (both species)     | 45,392  | 65,191  | 43.6     |
| Oldsquaw                 | 2,154   | 10,197  | 373.4    |
| scoter (all species)     | 4,805   | 11,840  | 146.4    |
| goldeneye (both species) | 3,783   | 4,211   | 11.3     |
| merganser (all species)  | 25,327  | 17,132  | -32.4    |
| Total                    | 272,425 | 238,599 | -12.4    |

## THE COUNT

The grand total of 254,724 (Table I) was down 28.9% from 1993, but only 1.9% above the 21-year (1973-1993) average of 250,020. All species showing gains last year reversed themselves with the exception of scoters which showed a gain of 49.8% over 1993, on top of a 1993 gain of 73.4% over 1992. Except for Mallard, Redhead and the scoters, all species listed in Table II showed declines. It is heartening to note a substantial increase in Redheads. The Department of Environmental Conservation aerial count echoed this as well. Was this a result of the vagaries of the weather, or some other factors? What will 1995 bring? With the exception of two or three species the downward trends for 1994 are quite substantial.

Comparing 1994 to 1993 count figures (Table II), the commoner species showed a 15-3 split heavily in favor of decreases. Both Mallard and Redhead reversed themselves, showing increases over 1993. Scoters, as a group, continued to increase. When comparing 1994 count figures with the 21-year (1973-1993) average (Table III), there is a 7-6 split in favor of increases. The overall total in Table III showed a 1.5% increase in 1994 over the 21-year average, down substantially from 1993 when the total was 42.2% above the long term average.

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service midwinter waterfowl inventory showed all geese in the Atlantic Flyway (Maine to Florida) increased by 25.0% from 1993, including increases in Canada Goose of 20.8%, and Atlantic Brant of 56.2%. The dabbling ducks showed an increase of 20.2% from 1993, after a meager 0.5% increase recorded last year. All species were up, with the exception of Northern Shoveler which was down 17.3%. Diving ducks, including sea ducks, showed an overall increase of 20.9% compared to 1993. A few bright spots here were 45.9%, 10.0%, 19.6%, 148.7% and 256.1% increases over 1993 for Redhead, scaup, goldeneye, scoter, and Oldsquaw, respectively. American Coot also showed a 32.2% increase from 1993, but still showed a 9.8% 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 22.5% from 1993, and 18.8% above the 1984-1993 average.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation 1994 aerial survey was conducted from 2 Jan to 7 Feb 1994. The results are presented in Table IV. Table V compares the 1993 to 1994 aerial survey results. As in most years, the 1994 New York State Department of Environmental Conservation aerial count did not, in a general sense, resemble the Federation's ground count.

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 compiler for Region 9, Michael Usai. The Regional Compilers were:

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

The 1995 Federation Waterfowl Count dates are from 14 through 22 Jan, with Sunday, 15 Jan, the target date.

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