

NEW YORK STATE WATERFOWL COUNT, JANUARY 1997

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ABSTRACT — The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs' annual midwinter waterfowl count was held 11-19 January 1997. The entire state was covered by about 130 observers. Of the 43 species counted, 22 exceeded 1,000 individuals, and 8 of these exceeded 10,000 each. Those top 8 species, in order of abundance, were: Canada Goose, Mallard, Greater Scaup, American Black Duck, Common Eider, Brant, Canvasback and Common Goldeneye. Of those 8, 3 declined and 5 increased since 1996. The grand total of 342,837 individuals was up 38.7% from 1996 and 33.8% above the 24-year (1973-1996) average of 256,297.

INTRODUCTION

The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Inc., held its 1997 midwinter Waterfowl Count from 11 through 19 January, with 12 January as the target date. All Regions completed their counts by 19 January. Counts from Jamaica Bay and Keuka Lake were conducted after the official count period, so could not be included.

THE WEATHER

After a warm December, almost 7 degrees above normal, January came in like the proverbial lamb! Most areas were ice and snow free except for the areas downwind of the Great Lakes and in higher terrain. This respite was short-lived, however. A record setting lake effect snow battered the Great Lakes region from 10 January through 14 January. Lewis County set a national record measuring 77 inches of snowfall in a 24-hour period from Saturday night through Sunday morning, 11-12 January. These areas obviously held off counting until the storm had passed and roads became passable once again. The rest of the state had very few problems. A statewide cold snap occurred 17-19 January, but apparently did not impact on the count inasmuch as there was no significant precipitation.

THE COUNT

The grand total of 342,837 (Table 1) was up 38.7% from 1996, and 33.8% above the 24-year (1973-1996) average of 256,297. Counts of all species listed in Table 2 showed gains versus losses over 1996 to be 11 to 9. Some diving ducks accounted for most of the losses.

Comparing 1997 to 1996 count figures (Table 2), excluding Common Eider, the top 7 species showed a 4 to 3 split in favor of increases. Canvasback

continued to increase over 1996, while Redhead decreased, reversing the 1996 trend. When comparing 1997 count figures with the 24-year (1973-1996) average (Table 3), there is an 8 to 5 split in favor of decreases. The overall total in Table 3 showed a 26.8% increase in 1997 over the 24-year average, up significantly from 1996. A large part of this is because of the explosion of Canada Goose numbers. Common Eider are also up significantly.

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service midwinter waterfowl inventory (Serie 1997) showed all geese in the Atlantic Flyway (Maine to Florida) increased by 15.8% from 1996, with 14.7%, 44.4%, and 6.6% increases in Brant, Snow Goose and Canada Goose numbers, respectively. The dabbling ducks showed a continued decrease of 6.6% from 1996, after a 14.1% decrease recorded last year. American Black Duck, Gadwall, American Wigeon and Teal were all down, while Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, and Wood Duck numbers were up. Diving ducks, including mergansers and sea ducks, showed an overall decrease of 5.9% compared to 1996. Two bright spots here were 54.6% and 19.8% increases over 1996 for Redhead and Ruddy Duck respectively. American Coot showed a 4.5% decrease from 1996. Most American Coot again were wintering in the Carolinas, Georgia and Florida. In summary, waterfowl in the Atlantic Flyway was up 1.6% from 1996, but 2.0% below the 10-year (1987-1996) average.

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) did not conduct its traditional aerial survey this year, so the usual comparisons were not possible. DEC hopes to discontinue that survey and use the Federation counts as their official count in the future. Although there have often been large differences on a year-to-year basis, mean annual Federation counts for most species are similar to or higher than DEC's (because of more extensive coverage) and long-term trends for most species are similar on the two surveys. DEC will be working with the Federation in the coming years to help compile counts in a timely manner and ensure consistent coverage of all areas.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank the upwards of 130 observers who participated this year. A special thanks to the Regional Compilers who coordinated all those volunteers. The Regional Compilers were:

<u>Region</u>	<u>Compiler</u>	<u>Region</u>	<u>Compiler</u>
1	William Burch	6	Lee Chamberlaine
2	Gregory Hartenstein	7	John Peterson
3	Eric Donohue	8	Paul Grattan
4	Leslie Bemont	9	Michael Usai
5	Marge Rusk	10	Stephen Dempsey

Table 1. Regional totals for 1997 Waterfowl Count

Species \ Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Loon, Red-throated	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	41	43
Common	-	-	4	-	-	1	5	-	-	83	93
Grebe, Pied-billed	5	3	4	1	6	-	-	-	3	72	94
Horned	-	2	1	-	-	-	52	-	7	65	127
Red-necked	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	-	1	2	7
Cormorant, Great	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	90	120
Double-crested	7	2	1	-	33	-	1	-	2	146	192
Swan, Tundra	24	40	30	-	17	-	-	-	-	3	114
Mute	-	58	2	-	4	-	-	77	245	1,068	1,454
Goose, Snow	1	28	26	-	-	-	-	2	154	26	237
Brant	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	12,922	12,936
Goose, Canada	3,608	5,201	49,333	5,230	5,389	298	1,666	4,934	19,787	42,200	137,646
Duck, Wood	14	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	4	2	23
Teal, Green-winged	-	1	-	-	7	-	-	1	5	377	391
Duck, American Black	127	426	2,038	77	365	83	197	883	815	12,856	17,867
Mallard	5,580	9,649	10,614	862	2,344	518	2,121	1,250	2,015	10,157	45,110
Mallard X Black Duck	1	14	1	-	1	-	1	1	1	25	45
Pintail, Northern	7	11	17	-	1	-	-	-	6	121	163
Teal, Blue-winged	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Shoveler, Northern	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	169	171
Gadwall	21	35	11	-	30	43	-	-	38	996	1,174
Wigeon, Eurasian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	4
American	1	11	5	-	-	-	-	-	73	1,522	1,612

Species \ Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Canvasback	5,974	447	1,029	9	9	-	4	144	117	3,483	11,216
Redhead	178	2,769	6,384	-	360	-	1	-	3	55	9,750
Duck, Ring-necked	-	14	9	4	6	-	3	-	224	482	742
Tufted	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
Scaup, Greater	4,520	11,458	178	2	108	26	480	7	1,608	18,539	36,926
Lesser	29	144	101	1	3	-	22	-	3	519	822
scaup sp.	4	636	61	-	421	-	-	-	-	620	1,742
Eider, Common	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18,095	18,095
King	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2
Duck, Harlequin	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	8
Oldsquaw	459	37	-	-	38	-	6	2	35	1,323	1,900
Scoter, Black	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,086	1,087
Surf	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,917	1,920
White-winged	-	57	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,601	2,658
scoter sp.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	15
Goldeneye, Common	1,969	2,759	264	3	613	1,063	2,207	193	148	1,762	10,981
Barrow's	-	-	-	-	-	1	6	-	-	-	7
Bufflehead	160	256	203	1	87	38	66	1	246	5,281	6,339
Merganser, Hooded	15	42	32	48	10	3	35	7	89	809	1,090
Common	1,154	751	126	266	4,945	497	542	324	376	157	9,138
Red-breasted	133	102	41	6	9	19	2	-	75	2,971	3,358
Duck, Ruddy	-	1	1	-	2	-	-	-	110	1,912	2,026
Coot, American	91	557	696	46	2	-	-	-	229	1,027	2,648
Unknown	110	20	504	7	3	-	-	-	-	95	739
TOTAL	24,194	35,538	71,717	6,566	14,815	2,590	7,419	7,826	26,466	145,706	342,837

Table 2. Comparison of 1997 count with 1996 count for all species totalling over 1,000 individuals in 1996 or 1997 or both.

Species	1996	1997	% change from 1996
Mute Swan	1,353	1,454	7.5
Brant	12,791	12,936	1.1
Canada Goose	58,162	137,646	136.7
American Black Duck	19,141	17,867	- 6.7
Mallard	45,528	45,110	- 0.9
Gadwall	941	1,174	24.8
American Wigeon	484	1,612	233.1
Canvasback	9,584	11,216	17.0
Redhead	10,670	9,750	- 8.6
scaup (both species)	25,932	39,490	52.3
Common Eider	7,071	18,095	155.9
Oldsquaw	5,386	1,900	- 64.7
scoter (all species)	7,239	5,680	- 21.5
goldeneye (both species)	11,995	10,988	- 8.4
Bufflehead	8,468	6,339	- 25.1
Hooded Merganser	892	1,090	22.2
Common Merganser	7,056	9,138	29.5
Red-breasted Merganser	6,231	3,358	- 46.1
Ruddy Duck	2,782	2,026	- 27.2
American Coot	1,945	2,648	36.1
Total	242,759	339,517	39.9

NEXT YEAR

The 1998 Federation Waterfowl Count dates are from 10 through 18 January, with Sunday, 11 January, as the target date.

LITERATURE CITED

Serie JR 1997. Atlantic Flyway Midwinter Waterfowl Survey - 1997. Final Report. US Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Migratory Bird Management, Laurel, MD 20708. p 1-6.

Table 3. Comparison of 1997 count with 1973-1996 average for all species consistently totalling over 1,000 individuals annually.

Species	Average	1997	% change
Brant	14,272	12,936	- 9.4
Canada Goose	57,065	137,646	141.2
American Black Duck	19,994	17,867	- 10.6
Mallard	30,467	45,110	48.1
Canvasback	10,466	11,216	7.2
Redhead	7,099	9,750	37.3
scaup (both species)	51,508	39,490	- 23.3
Oldsquaw	4,152	1,900	- 54.2
scoter (all species)	13,108	5,680	- 56.7
Common Goldeneye	11,905	10,981	- 23.3
Bufflehead	5,793	6,339	9.4
Common Merganser	11,833	9,138	- 22.8
Red-breasted Merganser	3,603	3,358	- 6.8
Total	241,143	305,731	26.8

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