

NEW YORK STATE FEDERATION WATERFOWL COUNT JANUARY 2000

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ABSTRACT

The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs' annual midwinter waterfowl count (FWC) was held 15-23 Jan 2000 with the target date being 16 Jan. The entire state was covered by approximately 280 observers, with all Regions completing their counts in the allotted time.

Of the 44 species counted, 23 exceeded 1,000 individuals, and nine exceeded 10,000 each. Those top nine species, in order of abundance, were: Canada Goose, Mallard, Greater Scaup, American Black Duck, Common Goldeneye, Redhead, Canvasback, Brant and Common Merganser. Of the nine, three species showed >10% decreases and two showed >10% increases since 1999. The grand total of 382,516 individuals was up 3.0 percent from 1999, and 45.1 percent above the 27-year (1973-1999) average of 263,480.

THE WEATHER

January 2000 began with two weeks of above normal temperatures across the state, with high temperatures in the 40s and 50s through 12 Jan. Cold weather hit with a vengeance on the 13th, with temperatures during the count period generally below freezing, including several days with highs in the single digits. The one mild day was the target date of 16 Jan with highs in the 30s and 40s. As result of this weather pattern, many small inland waters were frozen, whereas larger lakes and coastal bays remained open to waterfowl use. Snowfall during January was meager except in the usual snow belt areas downwind of Lakes Erie and Ontario through the middle of the count period, when considerable amounts fell in most areas around 20 Jan.

THE COUNT

The grand total of 382,516 (Table 1) was up 3.0 percent from 1999, and 45.1 percent above the 27-year (1973-1999) average of 263,480. Counts of all species listed in Table 2 showed losses versus gains over 1999 to be 16 to 5.

Comparing 2000 to 1999 FWC figures (Table 2), the top ten species showed a 7 to 3 split in favor of decreases. Canada Goose(+51%) and Common Merganser(+26%) showed large increases, while Brant (-60%), and scaup (both species, -36%), Long-tailed Duck(-44%), and Ruddy Duck(-42%) showed large declines.

When comparing 2000 FWC figures with the 27-year (1973-1999) average (Table 3), there is a 9 to 4 split in favor of decreases. The overall total in Table 3 shows a large percentage increase over the long-term average with Canada Goose contributing hugely to this. It is encouraging that Common Merganser numbers have shown an increase over 1999, while on the other hand, it was not encouraging that scaup numbers have decreased.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service midwinter waterfowl inventory report (Serie and Raftovich 2000) showed total waterfowl numbers in the Atlantic Flyway (Maine to Florida) down 11.9% from 1999, but 5.9% above the 10-year (1990-1999) average. Flyway counts indicated substantial declines from 1999 for many species, including Canada Goose (-16%), Mute Swan (-17%) Am. Black Duck (-18%), Mallard (-17%), Canvasback (-15%), scoters (-23%), Long-tailed Duck (-60%), Common Goldeneye (-26%), mergansers (-27%) and Ruddy Duck (-17%), whereas Snow Goose (+24%), Redhead (+17%), Ring-necked Duck (+53%), and Bufflehead (+19%) increased substantially. However, most of these species were within $\pm 15\%$ of their 10-year averages, except Snow Goose (+70%). Canada Goose (+20%) scaup (-28%), scoters (-64%), Bufflehead (+33%), and Ruddy Duck (+70%). Concern about declines in scaup and sea duck populations have resulted in more restrictive bag limits for hunters in recent years.

FUTURE OF THE WINTER FWC COUNT

The FWC will be more important than ever in the coming years. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) plans to terminate their aerial survey of waterfowl wintering in New York State, after comparing results of the two surveys and concluding that the FWC provided comparable (and for some species, better) data for monitoring long-term population trends (Swift and Hess 1999).

NYSDEC will rely on the Federation count as its standard survey, and they have already become actively involved in compiling and reporting the annual data. It is essential now that member clubs and individuals maintain complete and consistent coverage of areas that they have surveyed in the past to ensure that results are comparable from year-to-year and over the long-term.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We wish to thank all of the approximately 280 observers who participated this year. A special thanks to the Regional Compilers who coordinated all those volunteers. 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	Bryan Swift
4	Leslie Bemont	9	Michael Usai
5	Marge Rusk	10	Stephen Dempsey

NEXT YEAR

The 2001 Federation Waterfowl Count (FWC) dates are from 13 through 21 Jan, with Sunday, 14 Jan, as the target date.

LITERATURE CITED

Serie, J. R. and R. V. Raftovich, Jr. 2000. Atlantic Flyway Midwinter Waterfowl Survey 2000 - Final Report. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Migratory Bird Management, Laurel, MD 20708. 3 p.

Swift, B. L. and P. J. Hess. 1999. A comparison of winter waterfowl surveys in New York. Northeast Wildlife 54:85-92.



Table 1. Regional totals for January 2000 waterfowl count.

Species/Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Loon, Red-throated	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24	246	270
Common	0	0	5	0	4	1	0	0	5	249	264
Grebe, Pied-billed	8	4	34	0	2	0	0	0	16	113	177
Horned	0	7	21	0	0	0	4	0	8	142	182
Red-necked	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Cormorant, D.-crested	41	1	1	0	8	0	0	0	0	159	210
Great	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	43	169	214
Goose, Snow	0	0	120	0	0	0	606	10	1	200	937
Canada	4,169	4,603	33,765	4,281	11,830	4,971	3,708	34,721	15,004	45,948	163,000
Brant	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10,682	10,687
Swan, Mute	0	110	1	1	2	0	2	117	287	1,186	1,706
Trumpeter	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Tundra	139	4	139	0	0	8	0	0	0	4	294
Wood Duck	5	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	9	13	31
Gadwall	47	31	81	0	14	10	0	0	34	1,208	1,425
Wigeon, Eurasian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3
American	35	6	25	1	3	0	1	0	154	1,442	1,667
Am. Black Duck	122	838	1,234	201	193	289	478	722	1,246	12,584	17,907
Mallard	6,897	8,941	6,999	1,779	3,235	1,029	2,774	1,872	3,645	12,343	49,514
Mallard X Black	0	5	0	1	0	0	2	0	12	41	61
Blue-winged Teal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Northern Shoveler	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	520	538
Northern Pintail	0	0	4	0	4	1	0	0	9	264	282
Green-winged Teal	0	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	10	597	614

Canvasback	7,420	48	659	1	0	0	0	1,000	780	1,506	11,414
Redhead	445	5,125	6,095	0	87	300	0	0	1	35	12,088
Ring-necked Duck	25	41	176	1	127	0	8	3	345	489	1,215
Tufted Duck	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Scaup, Greater	11,965	1,111	160	0	1,906	2,764	75	0	4,849	6,976	29,806
Lesser	61	166	541	0	30	0	3	0	1,285	671	2,757
scaup species	0	1	91	0	0	16	300	1	0	88	497
Eider, King	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Common	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	411	412
Harlequin Duck	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	10
Scoter, Surf	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,034	4,036
White-winged	1,591	87	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	6,456	8,136
Black	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	371	373
scoter species	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,121	1,121
Long-tailed Duck	3,021	827	4	0	17	383	0	0	33	3,014	7,299
Bufflehead	833	176	315	0	98	132	106	0	875	6,045	8,580
Goldeneye, Common	2,065	4,838	1,820	12	1,103	2,044	1,311	401	187	1,763	15,544
Barrow's	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Merganser, Hooded	29	37	22	10	26	6	47	41	261	1,333	1,812
Common	4,034	1,349	249	159	747	326	1,553	588	1,414	69	10,488
Red-breasted	264	59	17	0	31	5	3	1	187	4,554	5,121
Ruddy Duck	2	2	2	0	6	0	0	0	1,143	3,999	5,154
American Coot	89	532	1,342	60	27	0	4	0	423	1,226	3,703
Unidentified	299	24	30	0	0	290	0	0	2,304	16	2,963
TOTAL OF ABOVE	43,607	28,988	53,962	6,508	19,502	12,575	10,985	39,477	34,613	132,299	382,516

Table 2. Comparison of 2000 count with 1999 count for all species totaling over 1,000 individuals in 1999 or 2000, or both.

Species	1999	2000	% Change from 1999
Snow Goose	1,544	937	-39.3
Canada Goose	108,029	163,000	50.9
Brant	26,700	10,687	-60.0
Mute Swan	1,871	1,706	-8.8
Gadwall	1,842	1,425	-22.6
American Wigeon	1,867	1,667	-10.7
American Black Duck	20,176	17,907	-11.2
Mallard	47,872	49,514	3.4
Canvasback	11,960	11,414	-4.6
Redhead	12,768	12,088	-0.5
Ring-necked Duck	1,407	1,215	-13.6
scaup (both species)	51,695	33,060	-36.0
scoter (all species)	13,951	13,666	-2.0
Long-tailed Duck	13,071	7,299	-44.2
Bufflehead	9,371	8,580	-8.4
goldeneye (both species)	15,890	15,545	-2.2
Hooded Merganser	1,446	1,812	25.3
Common Merganser	8,338	10,488	25.8
Red-breasted Merganser	5,030	5,121	1.8
Ruddy Duck	8,834	5,154	-41.7
American Coot	3,779	3,703	-2.0
TOTAL	367,441	375,988	2.3

Table 3. Comparison of 2000 count with 1973-1999 average for all species consistently totaling over 1,000 individuals annually.

Species	Average	2000	% Change
Canada Goose	64,192	163,000	253.93
Brant	15,305	10,687	-30.2
American Black Duck	19,899	17,907	-10.0
Mallard	31,715	49,514	56.1
Canvasback	10,744	11,414	6.2
Redhead	7,543	12,088	60.3
scaup (both species)	50,146	33,060	-34.1
scoter (all species)	12,551	13,666	8.9
Long-tailed Duck	4,426	7,299	64.9
Bufflehead	6,004	8,580	42.9
Common Goldeneye	12,247	15,544	26.9
Common Merganser	11,441	10,488	-8.3
Red-breasted Merganser	3,774	5,121	35.7
TOTAL	249,986	358,360	43.4