

NEW YORK STATE FEDERATION WATERFOWL COUNT JANUARY 2001

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Abstract

The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs' annual midwinter waterfowl count (FWC) was held January 13-21, 2001 with the target date of Sunday, January 14. The FWC includes loons, grebes, cormorants and coot, in addition to true waterfowl (ducks, geese and swans). The entire state was covered by approximately 250 observers, with all Regions completing counts on time.

Weather conditions were generally favorable and a total of 397,764 birds (46 species) was documented. The total count was an all-time high, up 4% from 2000, and 48% above the 28-year (1973-2000) average. The top 10 species, accounting for 87% of the total, were: Canada Goose, Greater Scaup, Mallard, Canvasback, Redhead, Common Goldeneye, American Black Duck, White-winged Scoter, Surf Scoter, and Bufflehead. High counts of many diving duck species contributed to the record total count.

The Weather

Official weather data for January 2001 were not readily available for all areas of the state. However, Regional compilers reported generally favorable conditions during the counts, with fair weather, temperatures in the 30s (colder up north, warmer on Long Island) and calm or light winds on most days. The count period was preceded by several weeks of relatively stable weather, with little precipitation and temperatures well below freezing at night. Snowfall during January was light in most areas, but snow cover from storms in December remained in many areas through the count period. As a result of this weather pattern, many smaller inland waters were frozen, whereas larger lakes and coastal bays remained open to waterfowl use.

The Count

A total of 397,764 birds, comprising 46 species, was counted in 2001 (Table 1). This established a new record high count since the FWC began in 1955. The 2001 total was 4% above 2000 and 48% above the 28-year (1973-2000) average of 268,763. In general, counts of geese were down from a year ago, counts of most dabbling ducks were similar, and counts of most diving duck species increased dramatically (Table 2). Record high counts were reported for Canvasback, Redhead, Surf Scoter, Bufflehead and Red-breasted Merganser.

Comparison of 2001 counts with 28-year (1973-2000) averages shows 10 of 13 major species or taxa above average, led by Mallard, various diving

ducks, and Canada Geese (Table 3). Brant, Black Duck and Common Merganser were all below average. Total waterfowl numbers in the Atlantic Flyway (Maine to Florida) were up 5% from 2000, and were 10% above the 10-year (1991-2000) average (Serie and Raftovich 2001). Flyway counts indicated that most species were within $\pm 10\%$ of their 10-year averages, except Bufflehead (+14%), scaup (-15%), eiders (-35%), scoters (-58%), Long-tailed Duck (-45%), mergansers (-14%) and Canada Goose (+45%). The unusually high counts of diving ducks in New York were not observed throughout the Atlantic Flyway, suggesting that high FWC counts were due in part to short-term distributional shifts rather than population increases.

Highlights of Regional reports included unprecedented numbers of Canvasback, Greater Scaup, Long-tailed Duck and Red-breasted Mergansers on the Niagara River and Lake Erie near Buffalo (Region 1), Barrow's Goldeneye on the Oneida River (Region 5) and on Long Island Sound near Oak Neck (Region 10), and two Harlequin Ducks near Staten Island (Region 10).

Future Counts

The FWC is especially important now that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has discontinued aerial surveys of waterfowl wintering in New York. DEC concluded that the FWC provides comparable or better data for monitoring long-term population trends (Swift and Hess 1999), so they now rely on the FWC as its standard survey. It is essential that member clubs and individuals maintain complete and consistent coverage of areas surveyed in the past to ensure that results are comparable from year-to-year and over the long-term.

Literature Cited

- Serie, J. R. and R. V. Raftovich, Jr. 2001. Atlantic Flyway Midwinter Waterfowl Survey 2001 - Final Report. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Migratory Bird Management, Laurel, MD. 3 p.
- Swift, B. L. and P. J. Hess. 1999. A comparison of winter waterfowl surveys in New York. *Northeast Wildlife* 54:85-92.

For more information about the FWC, visit the Federations's web site at:
http://www.birds.cornell.edu/fnysbc/wfc_compilers.htm

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<u>Region</u>	<u>Compiler</u>	<u>Region</u>	<u>Compiler</u>
1	William Burch	6	Jerry LeTendre
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3	Eric Donohue	8	Bryan Swift
4	Les Bemont	9	Michael Usai
5	Marge Rusk	10	Ronald & Jean Bourque

Table 1. Regional totals for January 2001 Federation Waterfowl Count.

Species/Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Loon, Red-throated		2							14	174	190
Common	4		1		4		9		3	404	425
Yellow-billed											0
Grebe, Pied-billed	7	2	22		5				1	41	78
Horned	28	283	7	1	20		1		12	387	739
Red-necked							1			3	4
Eared										1	1
Cormorant, D.-crested	65	1	2		1					168	237
Great									33	266	299
Goose, White-fronted											0
Snow			6					1		21	28
Canada	1,292	2,953	64,364	910	2,463	25	14	528	8,630	41,044	122,223
Brant									205	7,833	8,038
Swan, Mute	6	98	9	6	5		2	99	350	1,109	1,684
Trumpeter		2									2
Tundra	144	2	107								253
Wood Duck	39	3	1		6	1		2	1	19	72
Gadwall	38		93		13		2	1	78	1,292	1,517
Wigeon, Eurasian										1	1
American	7	11	18		1				172	1,518	1,727
Am. Black Duck	178	272	2,286	89	332	74	314	226	871	12,714	17,356
Mallard	7,199	6,479	9,324	414	4,041	233	2,000	1,678	4,590	11,164	47,122
Mallard X Black		6	6		1		2		5	69	89
Blue-winged Teal	1									1	2
Northern Shoveler			12						2	224	238

Northern Pintail	3	1	4	4					6	77	95
Green-winged Teal	3		1						6	318	328
Canvasback	22,612	56	270						83	1,563	24,584
Redhead	1,056	2,086	15,979	4	681					109	19,915
Ring-necked Duck	5	8	106	1	17		9	10	52	359	567
Tufted Duck											0
Scaup, Greater	20,957	2,261	734		619	30		2	69	30,016	54,688
Lesser	76	80	27		19	2	2		6	376	588
not to species			174		220					182	576
Eider, King											0
Common										4	4
Harlequin Duck						1				2	3
Scoter, Surf	1									13,748	13,749
White-winged	528	227			63					15,777	16,595
Black	1									290	291
not to species										117	117
Long-tailed Duck	5,692	971	5		515	200			33	744	8,160
Bufflehead	673	235	281		168	14	141		444	8,069	10,025
Goldeneye, Common	3,129	4,435	1,924	4	2,828	1,232	3,105	186	194	2,602	19,639
Barrow's					1					1	2
Merganser, Hooded	46	6	26	5	43	14	45		105	1,134	1,424
Common	2,671	1,124	770	178	1,588	1,257	995	130	587	164	9,464
Red-breasted	4,202	196	56		135	2	1		121	3,345	8,058
Ruddy Duck	2	1	3						113	2,371	2,490
American Coot	136	134	1,924	35	9		2		83	685	3,008
Unidentified	1,000	15				10				44	1,069
TOTAL OF ABOVE	71,801	21,950	98,542	1,651	13,798	3,095	6,645	2,863	16,869	160,550	397,764

Table 2. Comparison of the January 2001 and January 2000 counts for selected waterfowl species.

Species	2000	2001	% Change
Snow Goose	937	30	-97%
Canada Goose	163,000	122,223	-25%
Brant	10,687	8,038	-25%
Mute Swan	1,706	1,684	-1%
Gadwall	1,425	1,517	6%
American Wigeon	1,667	1,727	4%
American Black Duck	17,907	17,356	-3%
Mallard	49,514	47,122	-5%
Canvasback	11,414	24,584	115%
Redhead	12,088	19,915	65%
Ring-necked Duck	1,215	567	-53%
Greater Scaup	29,806	54,688	83%
scoters (all species)	13,666	30,752	125%
Long-tailed Duck	7,299	8,160	12%
Bufflehead	8,580	10,025	17%
Common Goldeneye	15,544	19,639	26%
Hooded Merganser	1,812	1,424	-21%
Common Merganser	10,488	9,464	-10%
Red-breasted Merganser	5,121	8,058	57%
Ruddy Duck	5,154	2,490	-52%
American Coot	3,703	3,008	-19%
TOTAL of all species	382,516	397,764	4%



Table 3. Comparison of the January 2001 count with 1973-2000 average for all species averaging over 1,000 individuals annually.

Species	Average	2001	% Change
Canada Goose	69,459	122,223	76%
Brant	15,109	8,038	-47%
American Black Duck	19,826	17,356	-12%
Mallard	32,376	47,122	46%
Canvasback	10,652	24,584	131%
Redhead	7,437	19,915	168%
scaup (both species)	50,222	55,852	11%
scoters (all species)	12,373	30,752	149%
Long-tailed Duck	4,386	8,160	86%
Bufflehead	6,077	10,025	65%
Common Goldeneye	12,292	19,639	60%
Common Merganser	11,461	9,464	-17%
Red-breasted Merganser	4,282	8,058	88%
TOTAL of all species	268,763	397,764	48%

