

WINTER WATERFOWL COUNT, JANUARY 2015

Bill Ostrander

80 Westmont Avenue
Elmira, New York 14905
browncreeper@gmail.com

A total of 344 volunteers went into the field 17-25 January 2015 and conducted the New York State Ornithological Association's January Waterfowl Count. The volunteers logged 861 hours and counted 340,517 waterfowl. The methodology of the count was described in detail by B. L. Swift (2007: January waterfowl counts, 2005-2007, and some observations on long-term trends. *The Kingbird* 57:198-213).

WEATHER CONDITIONS

Weather data from Buffalo, Ithaca, Plattsburgh, Kingston, and Islip showed that temperatures were generally mild through December. During January, overnight temperatures throughout the state fell to single digits on several evenings before the start of the count period. In the central and northern part of the state, overnight temperatures fell well below 0° F. Consequently still and slow-moving water was frozen through much of the state during the count period.

RESULTS

In this summary, I will compare this year's numbers with those of the decade, 2001-2010. The 2015 total count, mentioned above, was less than the decade average of 383,706. Nevertheless, it was well within the standard deviation for that decade. The total was about 40,000 less than the 2014 count. The counts of geese, diving ducks, and non-Anseriformes waterfowl were below the decade average, but within that decade's standard deviation. The swan and dabbling duck counts were significantly above the decade average.

Counts for 15 species were above the previous decade's average. Of these, White-fronted Goose, Tundra Swan, Gadwall, Green-winged Teal, Redhead, and Common Eider were outside the standard deviation of the previous decade. The count of 2724 Tundra Swans was the highest since the count began in 1973.

Counts for 24 species were below the previous decade's average. Those outside the standard deviation of the previous decade were Mute Swan, Wood Duck, American Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, Surf Scoter, Common Goldeneye, Ruddy Duck, and Pied-billed Grebe.

LONG-TERM TRENDS

The record number of Tundra Swans recorded in 2015 was the second record count for that species in three years. This seems to reinforce that the species continues to have a long-term trend of an increasing winter population in New

York State. The increase has not been a steady one, however. Early snow cover and freezing of shallow waters can mask the overall upward trend in some years by forcing Tundra Swans to leave the State.

Canvasback continued to rebound from the record low count recorded in 2013. The 2015 count was still below the decade average for 2001-2010. Region 1 reported the vast majority. The species continued to decline in Region 10.

Hooded Mergansers were increasing through 2008. Since then the numbers have fluctuated. The 2015 count was well below the average for 2001-2010, but well above the overall average for 1973-2015.

By comparing 2001-2010 averages with 1973-2015 averages one might detect other long-term trends in New York State’s winter waterfowl populations. Some of this year’s counts seem to support trends indicated in this way. Long-term increases may be indicated for Gadwall, Mallard, Redhead, Tufted Duck, Long-tailed Duck, Bufflehead, and Red-breasted Merganser. Long-term decreases may be occurring for American Wigeon, American Black Duck, scaup (sp), White-winged Scoter, and Great Cormorant.

FUTURE COUNTS

You can help with the 2016 count by contacting your regional compiler. Compiler contact information and historical data are available online at:
<http://nybirds.org/ProjWaterfowl.htm>

For planning purposes, the January Waterfowl Count is conducted in a period that begins the Saturday before Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (the third Monday in January). The next two count periods will be:

- 2016 – January 16-24 (target date Sunday, January 17)
- 2017 – January 14-22 (target date Sunday, January 15)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to everyone who participated in the 2015 January Waterfowl Count. The field observers again endured some very cold temperatures during the count period. Regional and local compilers and coordinators deserve special thanks for making sure that the state had good coverage and for compiling the data in a timely manner. The regional compilers, this year, were:

Region	Compiler	Region	Compiler
1	Jim Landau	6	Jerry LeTendre
2	Robert Spahn	7	Gary Lee
3	Thomas Bell	8	Bryan Swift
4	Gail Kirch	9	Tracey Shimer
5	Bill Purcell	10	Ronald Borque

Table 1. Regional totals for the 2014 January Waterfowl Count.

Species/Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Goose, White-fronted	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	15	19
Blue	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Snow	0	0	24	0	4	0	0	0	150	21	199
Ross's	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Canada	4,325	5,730	30,486	2,900	6380	273	1,321	752	27,189	38,979	118,335
Cackling	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	10
Brant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	208	15,942	16,150
Swan, Mute	10	108	17	1	21	14	0	0	191	969	1,331
Trumpeter	1	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Tundra	557	8	2,117	0	0	42	0	0	0	0	2,724
Wood Duck	1	1	0	0	3	0	2	2	0	6	15
Gadwall	30	43	90	9	16	14	0	0	194	1,681	2,077
Wigeon, Eurasian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	426	3	429
American	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	53	517	576
Am. Black Duck	210	372	1,912	411	333	189	100	129	587	6,557	10,800
Mallard	3,975	4,080	8,979	2,363	2953	385	2,377	2,321	5,646	7,820	40,899
Mallard X Black	8	1	8	1	0	1	0	1	17	81	118
Blue-winged Teal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3
Northern Shoveler	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	231	234
Northern Pintail	3	3	10	18	0	0	1	0	11	88	134
Green-winged Teal	1	0	5	0	0	2	0	0	2	444	454
Canvasback	12,712	11	553	0	23	0	0	0	154	119	13,572
Redhead	1,151	147	27,379	4	468	2	0	0	1	52	29,204
Ring-necked Duck	44	2	552	7	32	0	16	0	160	395	1,208
Tufted Duck	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	15
Scaup, Greater	7,729	110	534	0	113	34	0	4	2,932	12,496	23,952
Lesser	245	38	1,095	0	16	1	0	1	37	1,178	2,611
not to species	378	40	153	0	5	0	6	0	0	1,869	2,451
Eider, King	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Common	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10,802	10,802

Species/Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Harlequin Duck	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	9	10
Scoter, Surf	3	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	65	920	993
White-winged	97	40	7	1	4	7	0	0	37	2,212	2,405
Black	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	800	801
not to species	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	190	3,369	3,559
Long-tailed Duck	1,307	1,928	4	0	62	40	0	0	189	5,095	8,625
Bufflehead	3,454	75	324	2	104	66	94	0	658	5,714	10,491
Goldeneye, Common	3,223	1,295	1,330	54	919	1,725	814	105	201	1,381	11,047
Barrow's	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	4
Merganser, Hooded	97	13	93	150	163	3	7	33	152	898	1,609
Common	2,703	364	1,659	417	1884	1,323	546	131	1,185	175	10,387
Red-breasted	1,897	2,169	271	1	400	417	5	1	123	2,341	7,625
not to species	0	0		0	0	0	0	0		0	0
Ruddy Duck	5	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	45	1,385	1,445
Loon, Red-throated	0	5	0	0	1	0	4	0	39	108	157
Common	0	0	8	0	1	0	0	0	14	257	280
Yellow-billed	0	0		0	0	0	0	0		0	0
not to species	0	0		0	0	0	0	0		0	0
Grebe, Pied-billed	4	2	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	17	26
Horned	2	12	12	0	4	0	10	0	17	316	373
Red-necked	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	6	11
Eared	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Cormorant, D.-crested	128	1	5	0	10	0	0	0	1	80	225
Great	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	41	73
not to species	0	0		0	0	0	0	0		0	0
American Coot	87	32	1,123	49	29	1	0	0	64	276	1,661
Other/Unidentified	28	4	188	0	0	74	0	0	49	33	376
TOTAL OF ABOVE	44,417	16,652	78,963	6,389	13,953	4,614	5,303	3,480	41,027	125,719	340,517

Table 2. Comparison of 2014 January Waterfowl Counts to Ten-year and Long Term averages.

Species	2015	Avg '01-'10	% Difference	Avg '73-'15	% Difference
Goose, White-fronted	19	6	239	2	766
Blue	0	0		0	
Snow	199	12944	-98	3405	-94
Ross's	0	0	-100	0	-100
Canada	118335	143674	-18	90236	31
Cackling	10			6	67
Brant	16150	16519	-2	15392	5
Swan, Mute	1331	1682	-21	1323	1
Trumpeter	8	42	-81	11	-28
Tundra	2724	857	218	380	617
Wood Duck	15	46	-67	37	-59
Gadwall	2077	1520	37	1138	83
Wigeon, Eurasian	3	4	-23	4	-16
American	576	1319	-56	1492	-61
Am. Black Duck	10800	12141	-11	17249	-37
Mallard	41325	39594	4	34559	20
Mallard X Black	118	186	-36	85	39
Blue-winged Teal	3	4	-27	4	-22
Northern Shoveler	234	451	-48	283	-17
Northern Pintail	134	149	-10	192	-30
Green-winged Teal	454	261	74	267	70
Canvasback	13572	14722	-8	11444	19
Redhead	29204	15601	87	11074	164
Ring-necked Duck	1208	1321	-9	807	50
Tufted Duck	15	4	249	2	641
Scaup, Greater	23952	32549	-26	27895	-14
Lesser	2611	2538	3	1582	65
not to species	2451	6367	-62	17229	-86
Eider, King	2	8	-73	7	-69
Common	10802	1183	813	1300	731
Harlequin Duck	10	14	-30	8	29

Species	2015	Avg '01-'10	% Difference	Avg '73-'15	% Difference
Scoter, Surf	993	6028	-84	2931	-66
White-winged	2405	5502	-56	7127	-66
Black	801	3488	-77	1296	-38
not to species	3559	3192	11	2259	58
Long-tailed Duck	8625	6854	26	5411	59
Bufflehead	10491	8287	27	6788	55
Goldeneye, Common	11047	15701	-30	13239	-17
Barrow's	4	18	-78	6	-33
Merganser, Hooded	1609	1766	-9	956	68
Common	10387	10211	2	11006	-6
Red-breasted	7625	7552	1	5466	39
not to species	0	0		0	
Ruddy Duck	1445	3808	-62	2400	-40
Loon, Red-throated	157	298	-47	110	42
Common	280	367	-24	218	28
Yellow-billed	0	0		0	-100
not to species	0	0		0	-100
Grebe, Pied-billed	26	82	-68	79	-67
Horned	373	479	-22	383	-3
Red-necked	11	8	31	5	123
Eared	2	1	67	0	413
Cormorant, D.-crested	225	261	-14	163	38
Great	73	130	-44	156	-53
not to species	0	0		1	-100
American Coot	1661	2252	-26	2018	-18
unidentified	376	1720	-78	1276	-71
Total	340517	383706	-11	300704	13
Total Geese	135073	173143	-22	109045	24
Total Swans	3734	2580	45	1706	119
Total Ducks	198532	202385	-2	185542	7
Dabbling ducks	69615	55673	25	55648	25
Diving ducks	128917	146712	-12	129895	-1
Loons, Grebes, Corms, Coot	2802	3879	-28	3135	-11