

WINTER WATERFOWL COUNT, JANUARY 2016

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A total of 352 volunteers went into the field 16-27 January 2016 and conducted the New York State Ornithological Association's January Waterfowl Count. The volunteers logged 973 hours and counted 502,336 waterfowl. Swift (2007) described the methodology of the count.

WEATHER CONDITIONS

Weather data from Buffalo, Ithaca, Plattsburgh, Kingston, and Islip showed that temperatures were generally mild and above freezing through December. During January, temperatures were more normal and below freezing. The first weekend of the count period, temperatures were above normal, but returned to normal through the rest of the count period. Still, shallow water was frozen for the count, but most moving water and lakes were open. December precipitation throughout the state was largely in the form of rain and only trace amounts of snow fell in January. The lack of freezing on the lakes and the lack of snow cover allowed larger numbers of geese to remain in the region through the count period.

RESULTS

In this summary, I will compare the 2016 numbers with those of the decade 2001-2010. The 2016 total count, mentioned above, was 118,630 more than the decade average of 383,706, which was well outside the standard deviation for that decade. The total was about 160,000 more than the 2015 count. Geese and swans accounted for the increases. Dabbling and diving ducks and non-Anseriformes waterfowl were all down from 2015 and all below the decade average, although within the decade's standard deviation.

Counts for 18 species were above the previous decade's average. Of these, Snow Goose, Brant, Trumpeter Swan, Tundra Swan, Ring-necked Duck, Harlequin Duck, Hooded Merganser, and Double-crested Cormorant were outside the standard deviation of the previous decade. The counts 138,682 Snow Geese, 4065 Tundra Swans, and 105 Harlequin Ducks were the highest since the count began in 1973.

Counts for 31 species were below the previous decade's average. Those outside the standard deviation of the previous decade were Mute Swan, American Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, Canvasback, Greater Scaup, and Ruddy Duck.

LONG-TERM TRENDS

The record number of Tundra Swans recorded in 2016 was the third record count for that species in four years, continuing the long-term trend of an increasing winter population in New York State. Following two consecutive years of increases since the record low count recorded in 2013, Canvasback numbers dropped to the second lowest count since 1973. Large fluctuations in Canvasback numbers has been the norm throughout the history of the count. Region 1 again hosted the vast majority and 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.

A comparison of averages for the periods 1973-2000, 2001-2010, and 2013-2016 might detect other possible long-term trends in New York State's winter waterfowl populations. Long-term increases may be indicated in this way for White-fronted Goose, Snow Goose, Brant, Tundra Swan, Gadwall, Eurasian Wigeon, Blue-winged Teal, Mallard, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Common Eider, Long-tailed Duck, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, and Double-crested Cormorant. Long-term decreases may be occurring for American Wigeon, American Black Duck, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Common Merganser, and Great Cormorant.

FUTURE COUNTS

You can help with the 2017 count by contacting your regional compiler.

Compiler contact information is available online at:

<http://nybirds.org/ProjWaterfowl.htm>

—where you can also view the historical data.

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:

2017 – January 14-22 (target date Sunday, January 15)

2018 – January 13-21 (target date Sunday, January 14)

Table 1. Regional totals for the 2016 January Waterfowl Count.

Species/Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Goose, White-fronted	0	0	2		0		0	0	3	0	5
Blue											
Snow	1	15,00	123,23	3	5		16	2	8	411	138,682
Ross's	0	0	0		0		0	0	0	0	0
Canada	8,124	28,84	25,716	4,98	1570	6,211	149	15,42	26,95	28,157	160,273
Cackling	1	9	0		0		0	0	1	0	11
Brant	0	0	0		0		0	0	868	22,951	23,819
Swan, Mute	4	118	1	1	16	10	0	4	114	776	1,044
Trumpeter	0	9	7		6	43	0	0	0	0	65
Tundra	719	17	2,744		508	77	0	0	0	0	4,065
Wood Duck	2	0	6		1		0	0	10	43	62
Gadwall	107	22	96		5	9	1	0	243	1,400	1,883
Wigeon, Eurasian	0	0	0		0		0	0	0	1	1
American	40	1	70	2	9	2	0	5	73	534	736
Am. Black Duck	189	520	1,184	245	197	194	413	119	412	6,072	9,545
Mallard	4,505	3,576	5,891	1,79	3365	709	2,862	1,722	5,075	7,193	36,690
Mallard X Black	1	10	7		0		2	0	1	43	64
Blue-winged Teal	0	0	0		0		0	0	0	5	5
Northern Shoveler	6	1	1	1	0		0	0	12	149	170
Northern Pintail	2	6	5	6	1		0	0	1	95	116
Green-winged Teal	0	0	2		1		0	0	0	136	139
Canvasback	4,158	29	31	2	2		14	2	244	32	4,514
Redhead	1,640	6,398	12,914	31	195	71	8	0	0	75	21,332
Ring-necked Duck	53	753	573	33	57	1	24	194	165	261	2,114
Tufted Duck	0	0	1		0		0	0	0	0	1
Scaup, Greater	3,341	1,532	100	5	55	255	13	0	735	6,699	12,735
Lesser	547	265	436	18	180	4	22	6	35	167	1,680
not to species	1	187	75		18	1	1,284	0	0	791	2,357
Eider, King	0	0	0		1		0	0	0	4	5
Common	0	0	0		0		0	0	0	149	149

Species/Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Harlequin Duck	2	0	0		0		0	0	0	103	105
Scoter, Surf	2	0	0		0		0	0	9	842	853
White-winged	141	242	4		14	2	19	0	25	6,259	6,706
Black	2	0	0		1		0	0	3	2,926	2,932
not to species	0	0	0		0		0	0	26	2,464	2,490
Long-tailed Duck	3,666	3,814	5		132	163	0	1	101	1,817	9,699
Bufflehead	2,266	145	283	37	91	108	119	5	427	5,233	8,714
Goldeneye, Common	4,312	2,417	778	104	860	2,086	6,118	443	233	712	18,063
Barrow's	1	1	0		0		2	0	0	1	5
Merganser, Hooded	193	74	43	262	120	12	23	48	313	1,230	2,318
Common	950	273	707	663	535	1,647	4,182	334	3,035	11	12,337
Red-breasted	733	2,055	303		858	961	16	0	141	1,602	6,669
not to species											
Ruddy Duck	22	37	3		8		0	0	75	1,029	1,174
Loon, Red-throated	0	14	0		1		0	0	7	112	134
Common	4	23	18	15	18	12	24	0	15	162	291
Yellow-billed											
not to species											
Grebe, Pied-billed	0	6	4		3	1	0	0	2	43	59
Horned	0	108	18		14		28	0	2	148	318
Red-necked	0	3	0		0	2	1	0	0	0	6
Eared	0	0	0		0		0	0	0	0	0
Cormorant, D.-	30	37	4		48		7	0	10	203	339
Great	0	0	0		0		0	0	29	38	67
not to species											
American Coot	36	221	795	60	38	1	4	0	16	99	1,270
Other/Unidentified	5,045	5	18		24	406	0	0	13	14	5,525
TOTAL OF ABOVE	40,84	66,76	176,08	8,26	2309	12,98	15,35	18,31	39,44	101,19	502,336

Table 2. Comparison of 2016 January Waterfowl Counts to Ten-year and Long Term averages.

Species	2016	Avg '01-'10	% Difference	Avg '73-'15	% Difference
Goose, White-fronted	5	6	-11	2	121
Blue	0	0		0	-100
Snow	138682	12,944	971	6,626	1993
Ross's	0	0	-100	0	-100
Canada	160273	143,674	12	91,904	74
Cackling	11			8	43
Brant	23819	16,519	44	15,593	53
Swan, Mute	1044	1,682	-38	1,317	-21
Trumpeter	65	42	57	12	424
Tundra	4065	857	375	467	770
Wood Duck	62	46	36	37	67
Gadwall	1883	1,520	24	1,156	63
Wigeon, Eurasian	1	4	-74	4	-72
American	736	1,319	-44	1,474	-50
Am. Black Duck	9545	12,141	-21	17,066	-44
Mallard	36690	39,594	-7	34,610	6
Mallard X Black	64	186	-65	85	-24
Blue-winged Teal	5	4	22	4	30
Northern Shoveler	170	451	-62	280	-39
Northern Pintail	116	149	-22	190	-39
Green-winged Teal	139	261	-47	264	-47
Canvasback	4514	14,722	-69	11,279	-60
Redhead	21332	15,601	37	11,319	88
Ring-necked Duck	2114	1,321	60	838	152
Tufted Duck	1	4	-77	2	-50
Scaup, Greater	12735	32,549	-61	27,534	-54
Lesser	1680	2,538	-34	1,584	6
not to species	2357	6,367	-63	16,875	-86
Eider, King	5	8	-33	7	-23
Common	149	1,183	-87	1,272	-88
Harlequin Duck	105	14	634	10	940

Species	2016	Avg '01-'10	% Difference	Avg '73-'15	% Difference
Scoter, Surf	853	6,028	-86	2,881	-70
White-winged	6706	5,502	22	7,117	-6
Black	2932	3,488	-16	1,335	120
not to species	2490	3,192	-22	2,265	10
Long-tailed Duck	9699	6,854	42	5,513	76
Bufflehead	8714	8,287	5	6,834	28
Goldeneye, Common	18063	15,701	15	13,354	35
Barrow's	5	18	-73	6	-15
Merganser, Hooded	2318	1,766	31	989	134
Common	12337	10,211	21	11,037	12
Red-breasted	6669	7,552	-12	5,495	21
not to species	0	0		0	-100
Ruddy Duck	1174	3,808	-69	2,371	-50
Loon, Red-throated	134	298	-55	111	21
Common	291	367	-21	220	32
Yellow-billed	0	0		0	-100
not to species	0	0		0	-100
Grebe, Pied-billed	59	82	-28	78	-25
Horned	318	479	-34	382	-17
Red-necked	6	8	-29	5	21
Eared	0	1	-100	0	-100
Cormorant, D.-crested	339	261	30	167	103
Great	67	130	-49	154	-56
not to species	0	0		1	-100
American Coot	1270	2,252	-44	2,001	-37
unidentified	5525	1,720	221	1,377	301
Total	502336	383,706	31	305,504	64
Total Geese	322645	173,143	86	114,131	183
Total Swans	5428	2,580	110	1,795	202
Total Ducks	166273	202,385	-18	185,083	-10
Dabbling ducks	55168	55,673	-1	55,636	-1
Diving ducks	111105	146,712	-24	129,447	-14
Loons, Grebes, Corms, Coot	2480	3,879	-36	3,119	-20

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to everyone who participated in the 2016 January Waterfowl Count. The many dedicated field observers volunteered many hours in the field. 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	Bill Ostrander
5	Bill Purcell	10	Ronald Borque

LITERATURE CITED

Swift, B. L. 2007. January waterfowl counts, 2005-2007, and some observations on long-term trends. *Kingbird* 57:198-213.

