

JANUARY WATERFOWL COUNT 2017

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At least 374 volunteers went into the field 14-23 January 2017 and conducted the New York State Ornithological Association's January Waterfowl Count (JWC). The volunteers logged 943.3 party-hours and counted 456,976 waterfowl. Swift (2007) described the methodology of the count.

WEATHER CONDITIONS

Weather data from Buffalo, Ithaca, Plattsburgh, Poughkeepsie, and Islip showed that temperatures were cold in mid-December, but generally at or above freezing in the latter half of the month. During the week before the beginning of the JWC, temperatures began well below freezing, but warmed well above freezing for two to three days prior to the start of the count. The first weekend of the count period, temperatures hovered around freezing then dropped to well below freezing then returned to hover around the freezing level for the remainder of the count. As a result, still, shallow water was frozen for the count, but most moving water and lakes were open. Snow fell frequently around the State, but mostly in small, non-persistent amounts. Buffalo did have up to 13 inches in December and Islip recorded up to 10 inches in early January. These accumulations only lasted a few days. No significant accumulations were recorded at Ithaca, Plattsburgh, or Poughkeepsie in either December or January. The periods of warm weather and the lack of snow allowed above average numbers of waterfowl, especially of geese, to remain in the State through the count period.

RESULTS

In this summary, I will compare the 2017 numbers with those of the decade, 2001-2010. The 2017 total count, mentioned above, was 73,271 more than the decade average of 383,706. That difference, however, was the standard deviation for that decade. The total was 45,359 less than the 2016 count. Geese and swans, particularly Snow Geese, accounted both for the increase over the 2001-2010 decade and the decrease from 2016. The Snow Goose count was the third highest of the JWC, but was, nevertheless far below the 2016 count. Mute Swans were below the decade average but up from 2016. The 2017 count of Tundra Swans was less than half the 2016 count, but still well above the average of the previous decade. Dabbling and diving ducks continued to be below the

previous decade's average, but continued to be within the decade's standard deviation. From 2016, dabbling duck numbers were down, but diving duck numbers were up. Most of the dabbling decrease was due to a decrease of about 3000 Mallards. American Black Ducks were up by about 1000. The increase in diving ducks from 2016 was due primarily to an increase in Canvasbacks, Redheads, scaup, scoters, and Buffleheads. Non-anseriformes waterfowl numbers were below the previous decade's, mostly because of lower American Coot numbers. Loon, American Coot, and Great Cormorant counts accounted for the increase of the non-anseriformes numbers over 2016.

Counts for 17 species were above the previous decade's average. Of these, Snow Goose, Trumpeter Swan, Tundra Swan, Wood Duck, Redhead, and Bufflehead were outside the standard deviation of the previous decade. The counts of 1072 Tundra Swans and 12,441 Buffleheads were the highest since the count began in 1973.

Counts for 28 species were below the previous decade's average. Those outside the standard deviation of the previous decade were Mute Swan, American Wigeon, Mallard, Green-winged Teal, Greater Scaup, Surf Scoter, Common Merganser, and Ruddy Duck.

LONG-TERM TRENDS

The count of Tundra Swans in 2017 was sharply down from the record high count in 2016. It was only the fourth highest count of the last six years, but it was also the fourth highest count since 1973. It is too soon to say that the long-term upward trend of wintering Tundra Swans has leveled or reversed.

Canvasback numbers rebounded nicely from the very low count of 2016. The count was still less than the average for 2001-2010, but higher than the average for 1973-2000. Region 1 again hosted the vast majority. Canvasbacks had a modest increase in Region 10 where they have been declining for many years.

By comparing the averages for the periods 1973-2000, 2001-2010, and 2013-2017 possible long-term trends in New York State's winter waterfowl populations can be identified. Long-term increases are indicated in this way for White-fronted Goose, Snow Goose, Brant, Trumpeter Swan, Tundra Swan, Gadwall, Eurasian Wigeon, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Common Eider, Harlequin Duck, 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, Surf Scoter, Common Merganser, and Great Cormorant.

FUTURE COUNTS

You can help with the 2018 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:

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

2019 – January 19-27 (target date Sunday, January 15)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to everyone who participated in the 2017 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.

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Table 1. Regional totals for the 2017 January Waterfowl Count.

Species/Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Goose, White-fr.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Snow	1	2,500	74,881	1	1561	0	11	2	7	6	78,970
Ross's	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Canada	8,151	14,106	25,234	4,615	16308	273	275	5,305	27,296	53,177	154,740
Cackling	0	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	3	1	9
Brant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	474	17,550	18,024
Swan, Mute	15	108	24	0	68	14	0	17	96	979	1,321
Trumpeter	0	60	1,000	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	1,072
Tundra	908	106	343	0	44	42	0	0	0	0	1,443
not to species	0	25	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	41
Wood Duck	3	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	99	106
Gadwall	26	7	93	1	6	14	0	0	293	1,449	1,889
Wigeon, Eurasian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
American	35	1	14	0	0	0	0	0	99	605	754
Am. Black Duck	63	231	925	219	91	189	185	1,446	1,630	5,593	10,572
Mallard	2,996	3,154	4,654	1,583	2683	385	1,323	2,615	5,268	9,029	33,690
Mallard X Black	3	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	11	21	37
Blue-winged Teal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Northern Shoveler	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	564	565
Northern Pintail	6	0	1	3	2	0	1	2	5	84	104
Green-winged Teal	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	122	125
Canvasback	10,889	9	428	0	0	0	0	1	5	90	11,422
Redhead	4,303	1,619	22,823	72	373	2	0	0	1	12	29,205
Ring-necked Duck	31	1,096	196	12	38	0	0	2	16	331	1,722
Tufted Duck	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Scaup, Greater	3,697	704	140	0	79	34	0	0	155	4,051	8,860

Species/Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Lesser	228	60	1,795	0	17	1	14	0	15	550	2,680
not to species	3,906	6	139	0	12	0	0	0	0	1,853	5,916
Eider, King	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Common	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,142	1,142
Harlequin Duck	7	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	11
Scoter, Surf	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	424	439
White-winged	243	195	3	0	126	7	0	0	248	5,831	6,653
Black	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	1	4,843	4,849
not to species	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	9,122	9,155
Long-tailed Duck	635	1,490	0	0	729	40	0	0	158	3,381	6,433
Bufflehead	6,428	127	167	3	64	66	124	0	408	5,057	12,444
Goldeneye, C.	6,949	1,770	998	68	990	1,725	2,242	103	433	1,109	16,387
Barrow's	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	3
Merganser, Hood.	170	25	39	153	54	3	59	16	246	1,143	1,908
Common	774	62	552	379	1943	1,323	237	440	1,277	42	7,029
Red-breasted	1,021	2,380	409	0	1640	417	2	0	96	2,953	8,918
Ruddy Duck	7	23	14	0	0	0	0	0	11	1,204	1,259
Loon, Red-throated	47	8	0	0	1	0	0	0	87	279	422
Common	11	1	2	5	11	0	15	0	21	431	497
Grebe, Pied-billed	4	7	6	1	1	0	0	0	2	22	43
Horned	8	17	19	0	7	0	10	0	6	197	264
Red-necked	4	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	6
Eared	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cormorant, D.-cr.	16	3	0	0	65	0	3	0	1	134	222
Great	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	35	70	105
American Coot	112	109	718	73	70	1	0	0	10	218	1,311
Other/Unidentified	12,259	6	1,508	11	0	74	0	0	0	344	14,202
TOTALS	63,959	30,020	137,129	7,201	27,021	4,614	4,504	9,950	38,462	134,116	456,976