

JANUARY WATERFOWL COUNT 2020

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More than 337 volunteers went into the field 17-26 January 2020 and conducted the New York State Ornithological Association's January Waterfowl Count. The volunteers logged 872.5 party-hours and counted 380,513 waterfowl. Swift (2007) described the methodology of the count.

WEATHER CONDITIONS

The weather in January leading up to the count period was warmer than usual throughout the State. Temperatures suddenly dropped into a more seasonable (colder) range on the day before the count began. There were predictions of bad weather conditions on both weekends of the count, but little snow fell either weekend. None of the field workers seemed deterred.

RESULTS

In this summary, I will compare the 2020 numbers with the average annual numbers from the decade, 2001-2010. The total number of waterfowl counted this year, 380,513, was just 3,193 (1%) less than the average for the 2001-2010 decade. Geese, particularly Canada Goose and Brant, compensated for the lower numbers of swans, dabbling ducks, diving ducks, and all other waterfowl.

Some species had higher counts than the 2001-2010 decade average: Canada Goose, Brant, Mute Swan, Wood Duck, Gadwall, Eurasian Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Common Eider, Long-tailed Duck, Hooded Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, and Common Loon. The counts of 121 Wood Ducks, 18 Eurasian Wigeon, 951 Northern Shovelers, and 3,227 Hooded Mergansers were the highest counts ever. These are all less hardy species that apparently benefited from the warmer than normal conditions leading up to the count period. No species count was the lowest ever.

LONG-TERM TRENDS

We have been watching for many years the long-term trend of increasing numbers of Tundra Swans wintering in New York State, the number peaking at 4,065 in

Table 1. Regional totals for the 2020 January Waterfowl Count.

Species/Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Snow Goose	0	2	3	2	43	0	0	0	30	813	893
Ross's Goose	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gr. White-fr. Goose	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	4
Brant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	396	25274	25,670
Cackling Goose	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	6
Canada Goose	6,655	20,750	36,391	5,924	7,515	2,890	47	7,112	29,562	51,484	168,330
Mute Swan	12	259	23	0	81	27	0	3	225	1107	1,737
Trumpeter Swan	0	10	4	0	11	5	0	0	0	0	30
Tundra Swan	47	3	250	0	267	0	0	0	0	1	568
swan species	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wood Duck	2	0	0	2	5	2	0	0	10	100	121
Blue-winged Teal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Northern Shoveler	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	951	951
Gadwall	17	36	75	2	4	3	0	0	125	2,044	2,306
Eurasian Wigeon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	18
Am. Wigeon	0	2	6	2	1	0	0	0	26	634	671
Mallard	2,726	3,817	8,937	1,598	1,765	890	1,777	2,001	5,712	8,800	38,023
Am. Black Duck	52	434	879	280	136	34	129	145	919	6,612	9,620
Mallard X Black Duck	1	9	2	10	4	1	1	0	4	31	63
Northern Pintail	0	5	6	1	0	7	0	0	6	92	117
Green-winged Teal	0	0	6	5	1	0	1	5	1	184	203
Canvasback	694	10	4,163	0	0	0	0	0	46	301	5,214
Redhead	823	11,604	13,612	7	1,247	733	0	0	2	83	28,111
Ring-necked Duck	33	222	564	28	7	0	0	3	1,858	775	3,490
Tufted Duck	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Greater Scaup	1,336	1,978	470	0	406	420	5	0	1,080	12,502	18,197

Species/Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Lesser Scaup	28	192	603	0	6	2	1	1	91	2,176	3,100
scaup species	298	161	364	0	230	0	2	1	0	3,670	4,726
King Eider	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Common Eider	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,492	2,492
Harlequin Duck	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	12	13
Surf Scoter	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	385	388
White-winged Scoter	1,550	255	21	0	98	105	0	0	3	1,400	3,432
Black Scoter	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	786	790
scoter species	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,189	1,189
Long-tailed Duck	910	2,875	4	1	887	445	0	0	213	4,179	9,514
Bufflehead	508	22	162	28	115	90	22	1	465	5,748	7,161
Com. Goldeneye	2,249	1,693	2,162	115	1,068	2,283	1,144	262	371	1,095	12,442
Barrow's Goldeneye	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	9	10
Hooded Merganser	83	14	19	278	41	9	44	56	763	1,920	3,227
Com. Merganser	1,305	678	548	641	1,218	1,818	562	292	2,604	177	9,843
Red-br. Merganser	1,482	4,560	299	0	540	782	8	1	66	2,440	10,178
Ruddy Duck	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	2,321	2,340
Pied-billed Grebe	2	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	2	30	39
Horned Grebe	14	1	4	0	0	0	1	0	32	148	200
Red-necked Grebe	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	5
Eared Grebe	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Am. Coot	7	36	251	6	27	0	0	0	59	144	530
Red-throated Loon	87	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	10	159	258
Common Loon	0	6	1	0	2	2	10	0	21	377	419
Dbl.-cr. Cormorant	33	13	0	0	30	0	1	0	1	133	211
Great Cormorant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	29	94	123
Other/Unidentified	3,207	0	168	0	1	107	0	0	15	40	3,538
TOTALS	24,162	49,654	69,999	8,932	15,762	10,658	3,755	9,883	44,770	142,938	380,513

2016. That number dropped to 1,443 in 2017 and to 655 in 2018. The number rebounded somewhat in the 2019 count to 1,317, but dropped to only 568 in 2020.

By comparing the averages for the periods 1973-2000, 2001-2010, and 2013-2020 possible long-term trends in New York State's winter waterfowl populations can be identified. Possible long-term increases can thus be seen for Snow Goose, Brant, Trumpeter Swan, Tundra Swan, Wood Duck, Gadwall, Eurasian Wigeon, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Common Eider, Harlequin Duck, Long-tailed Duck, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, and Red-breasted Merganser. Long-term decreases may be happening to American Wigeon, American Black Duck, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, scaup (sp.), White-winged Scoter, Common Merganser and Great Cormorant.

FUTURE COUNTS

You can help with the 2021 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:

2021 – January 16-24 (target date Sunday, January 17)

2022 – January 15-23 (target date Sunday, January 16)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to everyone who participated in the 2020 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	Debbie Suggs	6	Jeff Bolsinger
2	Robert Spahn	7	Gary Lee
3	Thomas Bell	8	Bryan Swift
4	Gail Kirch	9	Bill Ostrander
5	Bill Purcell	10	Clifford Hagen

LITERATURE CITED

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