

## New York State January Waterfowl Count – January 18, 2014

Fourteen observers in six field parties participated in the 2014 Ulster County segment of the annual NYSOA New York State January Waterfowl Count on Saturday, 18 January, encountering a total of **3,822 individuals of 11 species** during an 8-hour effort. The final tally was well shy of last year's exceptionally productive 17 species/7,176 individuals, and well below our ten-year average abundance (5,704). Diversity remained fairly consistent, only slightly below our ten-year average of 12.7 species/year.

Persistently cold arctic air characterized the season leading up to count day, resulting in widespread areas of frozen water, a thin layer of snow cover on most area fields, and a general scarcity of waterfowl throughout the region. Count day temperatures moderated somewhat, ranging from 28 – 34° (F) under cloudy skies with heavy early morning snowfall that significantly reduced or eliminated visibility, hampering some of our effort and presenting challenging count conditions. Winds were calm throughout most of the Hudson River Valley.

Moving rivers and creeks were mostly open with shore ice; smaller ponds, marshes, lakes, and reservoirs ranged from partially open to completely frozen. The Hudson River was open in the main channel but choked with ice floes along the periphery. Wallkill River and Rondout Creek were both flowing swiftly with significant areas of ice. Esopus Creek was raging over Glerie falls and rapids, but placid and open downstream in the channel. Backwater coves and the large delta off Saugerties Beach were frozen solid.

Expansive Ashokan Reservoir was 99% frozen, with only a small area of open water below the dividing weir. Rondout Reservoir was 80% open and hosted a few American Black Ducks and one Common Merganser. Stone Ridge Pond on Mill Dam Road was approximately 80% frozen, hosting only a relatively small number of Mallards (90), one Mute Swan, and a mere six Canada Geese. One apparent adult Snow Goose has resided on this pond with such consistency that the bird was recorded as domestic this year and not included in the count results. There no longer appears to be public feeding of waterfowl at this site, or any of several additional sites where feeding concentrated birds in the past. Historically productive grazing pastures at Blue Chip Farm in southern Ulster County were once again devoid of waterfowl and covered by a thin layer of snow.

Highlights were hard to come by, but three **Greater Scaup** were observed in the Rondout Creek from James Street in Rosendale, representing our first record in ten years, and a lone drake **Long-tailed Duck** was associating with 17 Common Goldeneyes in the Hudson River off Glasco Riverfront Park in Saugerties.

Canada Geese typically account for a very high percentage of all waterfowl recorded on this count and this year was no exception with 3,238 individuals representing 85% of our total count. The Wallkill River floodplain south of Rte. 299 in New Paltz attracted a large flock of 1,065 Canada Geese and one Snow Goose, grazing on a green agricultural cover crop. Cornfields off Brigham Lane in Lake Katrine hosted a large flock of 923 Canada Geese, and relatively smaller flocks of geese were encountered at Watchtower Farms (230), Rondout Creek in Rosendale (225), and on the Wallkill Prison grounds in Wallkill (145). No flocks of geese in flight were reported.

Seventeen Bald Eagles (13 adults, 4 juveniles) were encountered during the waterfowl count. One Belted Kingfisher was seen fishing along The Great Vly outflow in Saugerties, and one Great Blue Heron was observed standing motionless on Stone Ridge Pond. Mark DeDea reported a non-avian highlight from the Blue Chip Farm horse pastures where he observed two Red Foxes engaged in mating rituals until a third individual intervened, resulting in a rare show of three foxes yelping, posturing, and cavorting. No unusual gulls were observed, and no banded waterfowl were reported.

The following table summarizes the Ulster County effort by territory, followed by field party effort and area descriptions. Thanks to all of the participants for their time and effort documenting Ulster County winter waterfowl under this year's very challenging winter weather conditions. Next year's Ulster County segment of the NYS January Waterfowl Count is scheduled for **Saturday, January 17, 2015**.

Steve M. Chorvas – compiler

***New York State January Waterfowl Count***  
**Ulster County Area Summary - January 18, 2014**

Total	Species	A	B	C	D	E	F	M
2	Snow Goose		1	1				
3,238	Canada Goose	12	1,006	1,069	39	885	227	
13	Mute Swan	7			4	2		
35	American Black Duck	19	2			12	2	
365	Mallard	138	60	27	89	33	18	
3	Greater Scaup			3				
1	Long-tailed Duck	1						
1	Bufflehead		1					
64	Common Goldeneye	17		42		5		
2	Hooded Merganser				2			
98	Common Merganser	66		4	1	22	5	
<b>3,822</b>	<b>Total Individuals</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>1,070</b>	<b>1,146</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>959</b>	<b>252</b>	
<b>11</b>	<b>Total Species</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	

<b>17</b>	<b>Bald Eagle (13 Adult / 4 Juvenile)</b>	<b>5A</b>	<b>1A/2J</b>	<b>2A/1J</b>	<b>3A/1J</b>	<b>2A</b>	<b>0</b>	
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**Field Parties, Effort and Area Descriptions** (sector leaders are listed first)

**Group A:** Steve Chorvas, Alan Beebe (river watch) (9:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.) 8.00 hours / 84 miles.

The Great Vly WMA; Hudson River (Bristol Beach State Park, Malden Park, Latham Circle, Saugerties Lighthouse, Glasco Park); Esopus Creek (Glenerie Falls to confluence with Hudson River and Fording Place at Hurley); Lomontville cornfields and holding ponds; Stone Ridge Pond; Ashokan Reservoir (upper and lower basin, Esopus outflow); Sawerkill at HITS; Kenozia Lake; Onteora Lake; Blue Mtn. Reservoir.

**Group B:** Lin Fagan, David Arner, Roxie Newberry (11:00 a.m.- 4:25 p.m.) 5.50 hours.

Hudson River (Ulster Landing County Park, Rider Park, Post Park, East Kingston, Kingston Point); Esopus Creek (Town of Ulster and Kingston); Interstate 587 pond; Brigham Road cornfield; Potter Hill Road marsh.

**Group C:** Lynn and Allan Bowdery, Mark Carabetta (8:50 a.m.- 1:30 p.m.) 4.75 hours.

Rondout Creek (Rosendale to Kingston waterfront, including East Strand); Sturgeon Pool; Hudson River (Sleightsburgh, Port Ewen Beach, Esopus Meadows); Springtown and Libertyville Road agricultural fields in New Paltz.

**Group D:** Gerhard Patsch, Tracy Patsch, Tom Crepet (9:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.) 8.00 hours / 82 miles.

Hudson River- Lamont Landing (Esopus), Black Creek confluence (Winding Brook Road), Mariner's Restaurant (Highland), Dock Street (Marlboro); Black Creek, Humpo Marsh, Harcourt Wildlife Sanctuary, Weston Road Swamp (New Paltz); Chodikey Lake, Lily Lake (Highland); and area ponds. (Some frozen sites visited and confirmed on 01/19.)

**Group E:** Mark DeDea (7:50 a.m.-1:10 p.m.) 5.50 hours.

Rondout Creek (Rosendale and Napanoch); Wallkill River (Wallkill north to Tillson); Shawangunk Creek; Watch Tower Farm, Old Fort Rd. pond, Wallkill Prison grounds, Blue Chip Farm; Rondout Reservoir; Kripplebush CR 2 pond; and area fields.

**Group F:** Evelyn & Bob Rifenburg (8:50 a.m.- 3:35 p.m.) 4.75 hours.

Cooper Lake, Spring Lake, Binnewater Lake, Williams Lake; Rondout Creek (Accord to High Falls); Sawkill Creek (Zena to Lake Katrine); Esopus Creek (Leggs Mills Rd bridge, Lake Katrine); Kingston Reservoirs #1 and #4; Bennekil Pond; and area fields.

**M:** Miscellaneous Reports (not covered by an organized group).