

New York State January Waterfowl Count – January 17, 2015

Fourteen observers in seven field parties participated in the 2015 Ulster County segment of the annual NYSOA New York State January Waterfowl Count on Saturday, 17 January, encountering a total of **4,351 individuals** of **8 species** during an 8-hour effort. Waterfowl were generally scarce and in low numbers, relative to this mid-winter count that often presents challenges to locating open water and ducks, geese, or swans. The final tally tied our 2011 effort for the lowest number of species recorded over the past ten years, and individual abundance was well below our ten-year average of 5,515 birds/year, and less than half our high count of 8,874 in 2012.

All of our field parties reported extensive areas of frozen water and a general lack of waterfowl, with the stand-out exception of the Wallkill River in the southern part of the county where a nice diversity and abundance of birds was encountered in several locations. The Wallkill Valley sector, including Blue Chip Farm, produced our greatest diversity and more individuals than all of our other sectors combined, emphasizing just how scarce waterfowl were throughout the rest of the county.

Count day visibility was excellent, with bright sunny skies, no precipitation and no wind. Below freezing temperatures (11-24 degrees F) and significant areas of frozen water resulted in virtually no fog or heat wave interference, but also significantly reduced the amount of viable waterfowl habitat and limited open water in the Hudson River to a very narrow channel, where a combination of Coast Guard and barge activity, distance, and large blocks of obstructing ice made detection of waterfowl ineffective.

The Wallkill River retained significant areas of open water along Lippencott Road, River Road, and at the confluence of Shawangunk Creek, hosting a nice variety of waterfowl. The Rondout Creek was largely frozen with only occasional small areas of open water. The Esopus Creek was flowing swiftly over Glenerie falls and open for a stretch immediately below the falls, and just south of Fording Place in Lomontville, but otherwise frozen solid downstream to the Hudson River. Smaller ponds, marshes, lakes, and reservoirs were predominantly frozen over with only occasional small pockets of water associated with ground seeps and warm inflows. Stone Ridge Pond on Mill Dam Road was 90% frozen, hosting approximately 300 Mallards in a limited area of open water along the far back end, but no Canada Geese were present during the visit.

Despite this general lack of waterfowl and challenging field conditions, there were some noteworthy highlights from the 2015 effort. One drake **Northern Pintail** was observed in the Wallkill River from Lippencott Road. Three adult **Mute Swans** continued to subsist in the aerated pump pond at Lazy Swan Golf Course in Saugerties, likely with the aid of frequent hand-outs. One additional Mute Swan was observed off Kingston Point, and two more were found in a small pond at Buttermilk Inn and Spa in Milton. In comparison to our most recent ten year history, we collectively recorded second-highest and above average numbers of **American Black Ducks** (103, compared to a high of 207 in 2012 and an average of 67/year) and **Hooded Merganser** (17, compared to a high of 14 in 2009 and an average of 7/year).

Twelve **Bald Eagles** (5 adults, 7 juveniles) were noted during the waterfowl count. One **Belted Kingfisher** was observed in the Sawerkill outflow of The Great Vly Wildlife Management Area, a female that appeared very unhappy with her circumstances. Mark DeDea reported a small flock of **Pine Siskins** in the spruces at Ulster Landing Park, and a quick moving **Gray Fox** in East Kingston. Lynn and Allan Bowdery had a fine look at a **Red-shouldered Hawk** near Million Dollar Farm on Springtown Road in New Paltz, and Jessica Prockup and Wendy Tocci found one **Yellow-rumped Warbler** during the course of their count. No Great Blue Herons or unusual species of gulls were reported during the count, and this year's total number of **Common Goldeneye** (27) represents our second-lowest count over the past ten years (11 in 2011), and was well below the ten-year average of 289 birds/year.

The following table summarizes the 2015 Ulster County results by territory, followed by field party effort and area descriptions. Thanks to all of the participants for their time and dedication to documenting Ulster County winter waterfowl under less than desirable field conditions. Next year's Ulster County segment of the NYS January Waterfowl Count is scheduled for **Saturday, January 16, 2016**.

<i>New York State January Waterfowl Count</i>								
Ulster County Area Summary - January 17, 2015								
Total	Species	A	B	C	D	E	F	M
3,089	Canada Goose	52	300	23	2	1,998	714	
6	Mute Swan	3	1		2			
103	American Black Duck	11			2	63	13	14
962	Mallard	322	1	109	120	204	199	7
1	<i>Mallard X Black</i>		1					
1	Northern Pintail					1		
27	Common Goldeneye		3	4		20		
17	Hooded Merganser	1		5		11		
129	Common Merganser	2	31	33	12	28	11	12
16	<i>Other/Unidentified</i>			15	1			
4,351	Total Individuals	391	337	189	139	2,325	937	33
8	Total Species	6	5	5	5	7	4	3
12	Bald Eagle (5 Adult / 7 Juvenile)	0	0	1A/1J	1A/5J	0	2A	1A/1J

Field Parties, Effort and Area Descriptions (sector leaders are listed first)

Group A: Steve Chorvas (8:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.) 8.00 hours / 72 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, Mark DeDea, Peter Schoenberger (7:40 a.m.- 10:25 p.m.) 3.00 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 (10:30 a.m.- 3:05 p.m.) 3.50 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 and Tracy Patsch (9:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.) 7.00 hours / 95 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); Chodikee Lake, Lily Lake (Highland); and area ponds.

Group E: Mark DeDea, Kyla Haber (9:45 a.m.-2:10 p.m.) 4.50 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; and area fields.

Group F: Jessica Prockup, Wendy Tocci (8:00 a.m.- 12:10 p.m.) 4.25 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.

Group M: Arnold Meier and two sons (.5 a.m. / 1.5 p.m.) 2.00 hours.

Hell Brook - Mapleridge Community, Hudson River - Mount Community.