

New York State January Waterfowl Count Report – January 14, 2017

The 2017 Ulster County segment of the annual NYSOA New York State January Waterfowl Count was conducted on Saturday, 14 January 2017, under very pleasant conditions for a mid-winter census. Twenty participants in eight field parties encountered a total of **13,500 individuals** representing **11 species** during an 8-hour effort (8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.). This is by far the greatest number of waterfowl recorded on this count over the past two decades, eclipsing our previous high count of 8,874 (2012), and well-above our ten-year average of 5,350 birds/year. Diversity was good, but not exceptional for a year with substantial open water, ranking slightly below our ten-year average of 12.4 species/year and well-below our previous high count of 17 in 2016, 2013, and 2008.

The most noteworthy find was a single **Cackling Goose** discovered in one of two large flocks of **Canada Geese** totaling 2,090 individuals grazing in the horse pastures at Blue Chip Farm in Shawangunk. As is typical for this count, Canada Geese dominated our numbers again this year. A massive sprawling flock of 3,500 Canada Geese were observed foraging in a Farm Hub agricultural field between Rte 209 and Hurley Mountain Road in the Town of Hurley, another 815 were counted in the agricultural fields at Wallkill View Farm in New Paltz, and 800 were found associating with a very impressive mixed raft of 1,000 **American Black Ducks** and 1,700 **Mallards** in the Hudson River off the hamlet of Malden and Bristol Beach SP in the Town of Saugerties.

Stone Ridge Pond on Mill Dam Road hosted another 560 Canada Geese, 525 Mallards, a single **Snow Goose** and one **Gadwall**. **Common Mergansers** were scattered up and down the Hudson and Wallkill Rivers, with our greatest concentrations of 42 observed from Bristol Beach State Park in Saugerties and 35 from Mariner's Restaurant in Highland. Two large rafts of **Common Goldeneye** totaling 260 individuals were found in the Hudson River along River Road in the Town of Esopus, 150 from the fishing pull-off and another 110 from Esopus Meadows Lighthouse Park. Esopus Meadows was also the site hosting our only **Bufflehead** (5) on this day. **Hooded Mergansers** were observed at three locations, all on the Esopus Creek, at Leggs Mills Bridge in Lake Katrine (5), Esopus Bend Nature Preserve in Saugerties (4), and Dutch Village Walk in the Town of Ulster (3). **Mute Swans** continue to overwinter with the assistance of public feeding at two locations; a pair in the aerated pond at Lazy Swan Golf Course in Saugerties, and three in the pond at Buttermilk Inn and Spa, Milton.

New record high counts were established for three species, including 9,312 Canada Geese eclipsing our previous high of 8,177 from 2012, a staggering 1,013 American Black Ducks greatly exceeding the 207 recorded in 2012, and 2,594 Mallards surpassing our previous high count of 1,710 in 2006. Additional avian highlights include an incredible **56 Bald Eagles** (24 adults and 32 sub-adult immatures), including bonded pairs near known nest sites. Four **Belted Kingfishers** spread out over three territories, one **Great Blue Heron** subsisting in a tiny inflow surrounded by solid ice in the Sawyer Kill, and a **Yellow-rumped Warbler** at The Great Vly WMA.

Temperatures ranged from an early morning low of 21° to an afternoon high of 29° (F) under partly sunny to mostly cloudy skies with an occasional light breeze. The Hudson River was largely open with considerable floe ice covering roughly 10-50% of the surface area, depending on location and tide. The Wallkill River was frozen in slower moving areas but completely open along Lippincott Road where larger numbers of waterfowl typically congregate in winter. The Esopus and Rondout Creeks were mostly open and flowing moderately in their channels with shore ice and frozen backwaters. The upper basin of Ashokan Reservoir was 75% open, the lower basin 50-60% frozen. Kingston Reservoirs were 70-100 % frozen, Blue Mountain Reservoir in Saugerties was entirely open, and Stone Ridge Pond was 80% frozen, with open water restricted to the back inflow area. Most inland ponds, lakes, and marshes were entirely or mostly frozen, with the exception of seeps, inflows, and aerated sites utilizing pumps to maintain limited areas of open water. Area fields were entirely open with little in the way of snow or ice cover, serving as a major attraction for geese this year.

The following table summarizes the 2017 Ulster County results by area, followed by field party effort and area descriptions. Thanks to all of the participants for their time and effort documenting Ulster County winter waterfowl. Next year's Ulster County segment of the NYSOA NYS January Waterfowl Count is scheduled for **Saturday, January 13, 2018**.

New York State January Waterfowl Count
Ulster County Area Summary - January 14, 2017

Total	Species	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	M
2	Snow Goose	1							1
1	Cackling Goose					1			
9,312	Canada Goose	4,879	238	109	41	3,927	81		37
5	Mute Swan	2			3				
1	Gadwall	1							
1,013*	American Black Duck	656		1		10			1,001
2,594	Mallard	2,266	65	23	137	47	40	2	14
3	<i>Mallard X Black</i>			1		2			
5	Bufflehead			5					
279	Common Goldeneye	11	3	260		5			
12	Hooded Merganser	4	3				5		
273	Common Merganser	84	37	24	25	23	5	3	32
13,500	Total Individuals	7,904	346	423	246	4,015	131	5	1,085
11	Total Species	9	5	6	4	6	4	2	5

56	Bald Eagle (24 Adult /32 Sub-adult)	2A/2S	1A/1S	6A/19S	6A/3S	0	0	0	9A/7S
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***American Black Duck** total adjusted down to reflect reasonable duplication of 655 individuals recorded by group A in the morning and 1,000 individuals reported in the afternoon from a location just north of the first sighting.

Field Parties, Effort and Area Descriptions

Group A: Steve Chorvas, Alan Beebe (8:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.) 8.00 hours.

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); Lazy Swan GC; Blue Mountain Reservoir; Sawyer Kill at HITS; Lomontville cornfields and holding ponds; Stone Ridge Pond.

Group B: Mark DeDea, Jim Clinton, Peter Schoenberger (7:30 a.m.- 10:15 a.m.) 2.75 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.

Group C: Lin Fagan, Annie Mardiney, Roxie Newberry (9:15 a.m.- 2:05 p.m.) 5.00 hours.

Rondout Creek (Rosendale to Kingston waterfront, including East Strand); Sturgeon Pool; New Salem Lake; Hudson River (Sleightsburgh, Port Ewen Beach, Esopus Meadows).

Group D: Gerhard and Tracy Patsch, Tom Crepet, Jane Vecchione (8:30 a.m.- 1:30 p.m.) 7.00 hours / 87 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, Peter Schoenberger (10:40 a.m.- 1:40 p.m.) 3.00 hours.

Wallkill River (Wallkill north to Tillson); Shawangunk Creek; Watch Tower Farm, Old Fort Rd. pond, Wallkill Prison grounds, Blue Chip Farm; and area fields; Springtown and Libertyville Road agricultural fields in New Paltz.

Group F: Jessica Prockup, Wendy Tocci (10:00 a.m.- 03:21 p.m.) 5.25 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; Bennekill Pond; and area fields.

Group G: Dixon Onderdonk, Steven Schyuler (9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.) 3.50 hours.

Ashokan Reservoir (upper and lower basin, Esopus outflow); Kenozia Lake; Onteora Lake; Yankeetown Pond; Wilson SP.

Group M: Miscellaneous Reports – Deb Ferguson and Frank Murphy (Hudson River at Falling Waters Preserve - 1 hour);

Rich Guthrie (Hudson River at Bristol Beach SP); Dwight Wareham (Hudson River at Mount Community - 1 hour);

Kent Warner (Spring House Pond and Hellbrook, Mapleridge Community, Ulster Park - .25 hours). Total 2.25 hours.