

New York State January Waterfowl Count Report – 2019

The Ulster County segment of the annual NYSOA New York State January Waterfowl Count was conducted on January 19, 2019. Twenty-three participants in seven field parties tallied **8,007 individuals** representing **13 species** of waterfowl. Our ten-year average for this countywide effort is 11.7 species and 5,759 individuals. A total of **44 Bald Eagles** (22 adults and 22 sub-adults) were observed during the course of the waterfowl count.

Mild air temperatures and open water with no snow cover was the predominant theme through early winter until consistently sub-freezing air temperatures solidified a substantial amount of water during the first half of January, forcing some waterfowl to move. Apparently displaced by freezing conditions to our immediate north, a noticeable influx of waterfowl appeared in the county and were still present during the week leading up to count day, but few were found during our day-long survey. The most notable misses include a rare Greater White-fronted Goose seen in the Wallkill River, larger numbers of Canvasbacks (139) in the Hudson River, Ring-necked Ducks in Esopus Creek, and Horned Grebes (22) and Common Loons (4) on Ashokan Reservoir.

Count day temperatures ranged from a morning high of 33° (F) to an afternoon low of 23° (F). Winds were generally calm with overcast skies throughout the day; the only precipitation coming very late in the afternoon in the form of snow flurries ahead of a major winter storm. Most of the Hudson River was covered in ice along the outer banks but open in the channel with ice floes. The Wallkill River, Rondout Creek, and Esopus Creek ranged from mostly frozen to mostly open, depending on the location and flow rate. Ashokan Reservoir was only about 10% open but hosted a few ducks. Rondout Reservoir was completely open but devoid of waterfowl. Most ponds were frozen, with a few exceptions, including those with aeration pumps or underground inflows. The marsh at the Great Vly WMA and the lagoon at Kingston Point were entirely frozen.

A few noteworthy observations from this year's count include **three Cackling Geese** (two grazing in a pasture at Blue Chip Farm, one in a cornfield on the Hurley Flats), a raft of **75 Canvasbacks** in the Hudson River at Esopus Meadows, and a single drake **Wood Duck** and a drake **Northern Pintail** on Stone Ridge Pond. An interesting goose that appeared to be a **Barnacle x Canada hybrid** was also found and photographed in the Mill Dam Road pond, where an apparent leucistic Canada Goose was also found mingling with a large group of geese and Mallards. As is typical for this mid-winter survey, these two pervasive species accounted for 92% of our total abundance (**Canada Goose** - 69% and **Mallard** - 23%).

Late in the count day I experienced an impressive roosting event on a Hurley Mountain Road cornfield. We had just finished the time-consuming tally of numerous Canada Geese and Mallards on Stone Ridge Pond when Dixon Onderdonk alerted me to the presence of a large congregation of geese on the Hurley Flats. I had checked the Flats just prior to arriving at the pond, finding no geese at that time, and I was intrigued by the thought of large numbers of geese simultaneously at the pond and the Flats. Obligated to go back for a count, I returned to the Flats and found a mixed flock of geese and Mallards foraging in cornfield stubble.

Standing on the roof of my truck I was able to get a rough count of visible birds, but some remained hidden in a swale. Over the next hour, I watched staggered flocks of geese arrive from the south, joining the birds on the ground. Most of the flocks consisted of 50-75 birds, a few flocks were larger, with much larger numbers of Mallards arriving less often. In the fading light of dusk, one of the last flocks to arrive included a white leucistic bird that was most likely the goose from the Stone Ridge Pond cohort.

Conservatively, more than 2,500 geese and over a thousand Mallards came in to roost on a relatively small patch of ground and remained there as total darkness and snowfall from the impending storm descended over the cornfield. Assuming the birds did not take flight overnight under such inclement conditions, it would have been interesting to see this large concentration at daybreak and determine if the birds ultimately departed as a massive flock or in smaller groups, similar to the way they had arrived.

The following table summarizes the 2019 Ulster County results by area, followed by field party effort and area descriptions. Thanks to all of the field observers for providing extensive coverage of the county. Next year's Ulster County segment of the NYSOA NYS January Waterfowl Count is scheduled for **Saturday, January 18, 2020**.

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New York State January Waterfowl Count
Ulster County Area Summary - January 19, 2019

Total	Species	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	M
1	Snow Goose					1				
5,494	Canada Goose	2,769	146	160	842	1,398	105		74	
3	Cackling Goose	1				2				
6	Mute Swan	2		1	2		1			
1	Wood Duck	1								
41	American Black Duck	3	1	1	2	13	3	18		
1,837	Mallard	1,373	30	106	96	2	164	4	62	
1	Northern Pintail	1								
75	Canvasback									75
8	Bufflehead			8						
265	Common Goldeneye	33	87	104				16	1	24
5	Hooded Merganser	2	2	1						
269	Common Merganser	31	88	69	59	13		5	4	
1	<i>Other/Unidentified</i>	1								
8,007	Total Individuals	4,217	354	450	1,001	1,429	273	43	141	99
13	Total Species	11	6	8	5	6	4	4	4	2

44	Bald Eagle (22 Adult /22 Sub-ad.)	5A/6S	6A/5S	3S	2A/6S	1A	3A/1S	2A		3A/1S
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Field Parties, Effort and Area Descriptions

Group A: Steve Chorvas, Zura Capelli, Victor Capelli (7:00 a.m.- 4:45 p.m.) 9.75 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 Town of Hurley, including Fording Place); Lazy Swan pond; Blue Mountain Reservoir; Sawyer Kill at HITS; Hurley Flats cornfields and holding ponds; Stone Ridge Pond.

Group B: Mark DeDea, Peter Schoenberger (8:00 a.m.- 10:30 a.m.) 2.5 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, Lynn Bowdery (9:00 a.m.- 1:10 p.m.) 4.25 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: Dave Hayes, Nick Martin, Tom O'Dowd, Dan Porter, Deb Weltsch (9:30 a.m.- 1:15 p.m.) 3.75 hours

Hudson River (Lamont Landing, Black Creek Preserve, Highland Landing Park, Oakes Road, Milton Station Park); Black Creek, Chodikee Lake, Lily Lake, Harcourt Wildlife Sanctuary, Humpo Marsh, Weston Road Swamp, and area ponds; Springtown Road agricultural fields in New Paltz.

Group E: Mark DeDea, Kyla Haber, Peter Schoenberger (11:40 a.m.- 2:30 p.m.) 2.75 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.

Group F: Jessica Prockup, Wendy Tocci (9:12 a.m.- 12:38 p.m.) 3.50 hours.

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

Group G: Loren Quinby, Dan Spencer (8:20 a.m. - 12:25 p.m.) 4.00 hours.

Ashokan Reservoir (upper and lower basin, Esopus outflow); Kenozia Lake; Onteora Lake; Yankeetown Pond; Wilson State Park.; Esopus Creek (Mt. Tremper and Phoenicia, including Catskill Interpretive Center); and area ponds.

Group H: Pat Dechon, John Unverzagt, Josh Jacobs, John McCombs, Dan Gorr (8:00 a.m. – 1:45 p.m.) 5.75 hours.

Ellenville area ponds and creeks (Beerkill and Sandburg); Rondout Reservoir; Minnewaska Lake.

Group M: Miscellaneous Reports – Jessica Prockup, Wendy Tocci (2:00 p.m. – 2:44 p.m.) .75 hours; and Jim Yates .50 hours (Esopus Meadows additions).