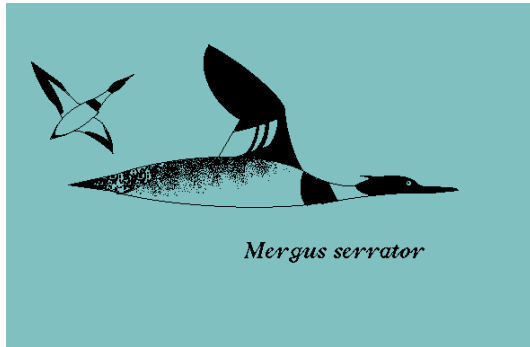

**CAPE COD LAKE & POND WATERFOWL SURVEY
1995 SUMMARY**



The 13th annual Cape Cod Lake and Pond Waterfowl Survey was conducted on the weekend of December 2-3, 1995. For the first time in several years, the weather preceding the count was colder than normal: November's temperatures were more than 3°(F) below average.

Forty-seven observers (more than ever!) censused 354 ponds - 11 more than last year's record high! A record-tying twenty-nine species of waterfowl were found, totaling 12,186 individuals. This total is about 13% above the survey average.

SPECIES RESULTS:

Remarkably, *nine* species were found in record high numbers this year: Pied-billed Grebe, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, and American Coot. Two additional species, Green-winged Teal and Ruddy Duck, fell just shy of last year's record levels. No species established record lows, but noticeably down were Mute Swan, Canvasback, and scaup. Noteworthy totals were as follows:

Pied-billed Grebe: This year's record of 179 birds is almost double last year's total, and 2½ times the 10-year average. This species has been increasing steadily since its 1989 low.

Mute Swan: A sharp, inexplicable - but not entirely unwelcome - decline for a species

that has been increasing steadily throughout the survey's history.

Northern Shoveler: Although a fairly common bird on the ponds of South Monomoy Island (not covered on this survey), shovelers are a rare bird elsewhere on Cape Cod. This is the first year more than one bird has been found.

Gadwall: Yet another record high - and by a wide margin - for this rapidly increasing species. As usual, the vast majority (84%) were in the mid-Cape and over a third on just one pond: Swan Pond in Dennis.

American Wigeon: A record high and more than double the survey average. Virtually all were in Barnstable and Chatham.

Canvasback: Sadly, another poor showing for this handsome duck, the fifth consecutive year of depressed numbers.

Ring-necked Duck: A new high, more than double the survey average.

Common Goldeneye: The second highest count for this late arriving species, perhaps reflecting the colder weather.

Bufflehead: Numbers of this appealing little anatid are heading off the charts. This year's total is 600 birds more than the previous high, and about three times the numbers recorded in the first two years of the survey!

Hooded Merganser: Yet another record for this lovely bird; numbers have increased eight-fold over 12 years! As is typical, the bulk were in Falmouth, but Muddy Pond in Eastham hosted what must have been a stunning flock of 125 birds.

Ruddy Duck: Just a few birds below last year's record, and three times the survey average.

American Coot: A record-shattering total of 296, concluding a remarkable rebound from a decline almost to the point of non-existence just three years ago.

For the first time in the history of the survey, Bufflehead (2784 birds) topped the list of most common species - and by a wide margin. Scaup (both species combined = 2144 birds) were a distant second, followed by Mallard (1619) and American Black Duck (1067). These five species combined comprised about 62% of the overall total.

Among the more unusual species found this year were a Red-throated Loon in Sandwich, two Horned Grebes in Mashpee, a Blue-winged Teal in Barnstable, three Eurasian Wigeon at traditional sites in Chatham and Barnstable, and a solitary Surf Scoter in Falmouth.

TOWN RESULTS:

Falmouth, the perennial leader, as usual out-distanced all other towns by a wide margin, with 4081 birds or 33% of the Capewide total. Yarmouth was second again this year with 1623 (13%) birds, followed by Barnstable at 1446 (12%) and Dennis at 1042 (9%). Barnstable's 24 species was by far the best variety, followed by Yarmouth and Falmouth with 18 species each. Wellfleet, with 34 birds total, regained its position at the bottom of the heap, after losing that cherished position to Bourne last year!

POND RESULTS:

As always, those ponds with the highest totals were those with the highest numbers of scaup. Top pond this year - both in number and variety - was one of the perennial best, Salt Pond in Falmouth, where 1295 birds of 13 species were counted. Second this year was Swan Pond in Dennis with 938 birds of 10 species. Twelve species were present on Wequaquet Lake in Barnstable, while Upper Shawme Pond in Sandwich and Sider's Pond in Falmouth both hosted 11 species.

PARTICIPATION:

As noted above, participation in this worthwhile endeavor established another new record; sincere thanks to each and every one of this year's 47 birders, most of whom have been loyal participants for several years now, and some since the very first year. Peter Trimble again took the time to organize the four Upper Cape towns, to the great relief of this compiler! We were joined once again by several off-Cape birders and we offer special thanks to Steve Arena, Tom Aversa, Dennis Oliver, and Polly Stevens.

Participants:

Elizabeth & John Berg, Carl Bergfors, Frank Caruso, Kathleen Casey, Mary Chestnut, Sally Clifton, Dick Comeau, Ruth Connaughton, Don Dyer, Dick Forster, Green Brier Nature Center, Seward Highley, Ron Hindman, Kyle Jones, Phil Kyle, George Martin, Kathy & Rives McGinley, Blair Nikula, Tom Noonan, Dennis Oliver, Stu Parsons, Alida Pellegrini-Toole, Barbara Perryclear, Bob Prescott, John Redfern, Diane Reynolds, Carol & Don Scott, Betsy Stepney, Polly Stevens, Jim Talin, Aurele Thomas, Charlie & Susan Thompson, Peter Trimble, and Dennis Wiehe

A town-by-town summary sheet is attached, as is a 12-year summary. Anyone wishing additional copies should send a S.A.S.E. to the compiler: **Blair Nikula, 2 Gilbert Lane, Harwich Port, MA 02646.**

