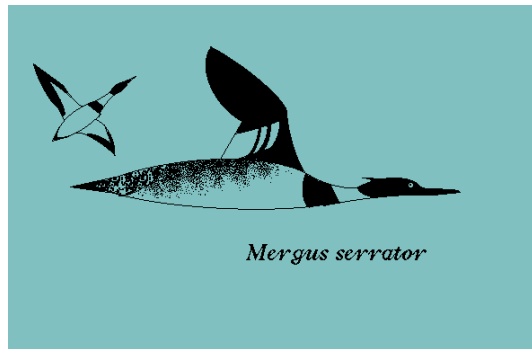


**CAPE COD LAKE & POND WATERFOWL SURVEY
1996 SUMMARY**



The 14th annual Cape Cod Lake and Pond Waterfowl Survey was conducted on the weekend of December 7-8, 1996. For the second year in a row, the weather preceding the count was colder than normal: November's temperatures were about 5°(F) below average. However, December began mild, and ice-free conditions prevailed during the survey weekend.

Thirty-nine observers censused 357 ponds - 3 more than last year's record high! A record-tying 29 species of waterfowl were found, but the total of 9,652 individuals is about 11% below the survey average.

SPECIES RESULTS:

Although numbers overall were down, two species, Ruddy Duck and American Coot, were found in record high numbers this year. On the other hand, four species established record low counts: Canada Goose; Green-winged Teal; Mallard; and Northern Pintail. Noteworthy totals were as follows:

Pied-billed Grebe: After six years of steady increase, culminating in last year's record high, numbers of this small grebe dropped precipitously this year - for no apparent reason.

Mute Swan: Numbers of this species have been declining for six years now, this year's total being the lowest since 1990. I am

baffled by this decline, as the breeding population seems to be flourishing.

Canada Goose: This species almost fell off the charts this year, establishing a record low by a wide margin: only 276 individuals were found! Though not unwelcome, their apparent paucity is baffling.

Green-winged Teal: A record low, though Cape Cod is at the northern limit of this small duck's wintering range and this survey has always recorded only modest numbers.

Mallard: Another puzzling record low - and another for which few tears will be shed!

Northern Pintail: A record low, resulting from the paltry sum of only three at Hallet's Mill Pond in Yarmouth, the traditional stronghold of this handsome species on Cape Cod (outside of Monomoy, that is).

Gadwall: Another species that dropped sharply following a record high last year.

Canvasback: One of the bright spots this year was the resurgence in this popular duck; the total of 506 birds was the best showing since 1990.

Red-breasted Merganser: This second highest total in the survey's history for this primarily saltwater duck.

Ruddy Duck: Not only a survey high, but three times the previous record!

American Coot: For the second consecutive year, a record high. Coot have rebounded strongly from their disturbingly low numbers of just 3-4 years ago.

Despite their below average numbers, scaup (both species combined) were the most numerous birds (2,041 birds), followed, as usual, by Bufflehead (1,926 birds), American Black Duck (1,049 birds), and Mallard (1,037 birds). These five species combined comprised about 63% of the overall total.

Among the more unusual species found this year were a Red-throated Loon in Dennis, a Horned Grebe in Falmouth, two Northern Shovelers in Barnstable, three Eurasian Wigeon at traditional sites in Chatham and Barnstable, three Common Eider on Long Pond in Harwich (only the second occurrence in the survey's history), the survey's first Black Scoter in Mashpee, and single White-winged Scoters in Mashpee and Harwich.

TOWN RESULTS:

Despite a drop of over a thousand birds from last year, Falmouth, as usual, out-distanced all other towns by a wide margin, with 3065 birds or 32% of the Capewide total. Barnstable was a distant second this year with 1142 (12%) birds, followed by Yarmouth at 1034 (11%). The best variety was found in Falmouth with 19 species, followed by Barnstable with 18 species and Yarmouth and Harwich with 17 species each. Wellfleet, with a paltry 12 birds of just 3 species, retained its perennial position at the bottom of the heap, though it was closely challenged by Truro with just 13 birds!

POND RESULTS:

Top pond this year in number of birds was once again Salt Pond in Falmouth, where 1295 birds of 9 species were counted; 1200 of these birds were scaup. Second again this year was Swan Pond in Dennis with 589 birds of 10 species, followed by Hinckley's Pond in Harwich with 458 birds of 11 species (the best variety on any pond).

PARTICIPATION:

Although participation was down somewhat from last year's record level, it was still above average; sincere thanks to each and every one of this year's 39 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 a couple off-Cape birders and we offer special thanks to 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, Michele Morris, 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, John Toole, Peter Trimble, and Dennis Wiehe

A town-by-town summary sheet is attached, as is a 13-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.**
