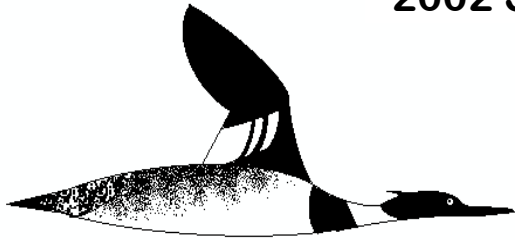


Cape Cod Lake & Pond Waterfowl Survey

2002 SUMMARY



The 20th annual Cape Cod Lake and Pond Waterfowl Survey was conducted on the weekend of December 7-8, 2002. In sharp contrast to recent years, the weather preceding the count was very cold (?? below normal in October and ?? below in November) and for the first time in recent memory, a majority (63%) of the area ponds were completely or mostly frozen. In addition, water levels remained very low following drought conditions for the past year or so, and some small, shallow ponds remained completely dry.

At least 54 observers censused 354 ponds, the lowest number of ponds since 1995, though still above average. Of these, only 130 were open. A meager 22 species of waterfowl were found, the poorest variety in the survey's history. However, the extensive icing had no obvious impact on the overall numbers, as the total of 10,981 individuals was very close to the 18-year average.

RESULTS BY SPECIES

Three species were found in record high numbers this year, while one species was in record low numbers and another totaled the second lowest ever.

Pied-billed Grebes, totaling just 32 birds, established a record low, some 64% below average. This continues a sharp five-year decline from their peak of 204 birds in 1998.

Gadwall, at just 94 individuals, were at their lowest level since 1992. This species has declined steadily since peaking in 1995.

For the second consecutive year, no **Eurasian Wigeon** were found, though the species was present on the Cape both before and after the survey.

American Wigeon, at just 71 birds, were 33% below the survey average.

American Black Ducks totaled 911 birds, 34% below average and the lowest since 1993.

Although **Canvasbacks** recovered very slightly from last year's near absence, the 39 bird total was still the second lowest yet, and 91% below average. During the first five years of this survey, this handsome duck averaged almost one thousand birds annually! Reasons for this decline remain a mystery, though it should be noted that prior to the 1970s, Canvasbacks were quite scarce throughout New England.

Ring-necked Ducks established a new high with 565 birds (159% above average) shattering the previous record of 374 birds in 1998.

Bufflehead continued a five-year decline, dropping to 1498 birds, the lowest total since 1989 and 16% below average.

Common Goldeneye is one of the hardiest of waterfowl and a species whose numbers on this survey generally have been highest during the coldest years. That tendency was evident again this year with a total of 314 birds being the most since 1995 and 42% above average.

Hooded Mergansers established yet another record high, with 1160 birds exceeding the 1999 peak of 1037, and continuing the species' steady increase over the past couple of decades.

Common Merganser is another cold-weather species and this year's total of 912 was a record, far surpassing the previous peak of 515 birds in 1991, and almost four times the norm.

For the second straight year, **American Coots** were almost non-existent, with a meager 10 birds some 93% below the survey average.

For the first time in several years, scaup (both species combined, 2062 birds) were the most numerous birds on the survey, followed by Mallard (1982 birds), Bufflehead (1498), Hooded Merganser (1160 birds) and American Black Duck (911). These six species comprised 69% of the overall total. The most widespread species were Mallard, occurring on 82 ponds (63% of the non-frozen ponds), Bufflehead on 64 (49%) ponds, and American Black Duck on 55 (42%) ponds.

RESULTS BY TOWN

As always, Falmouth out-distanced all other towns by a wide margin, with 3682 birds or 34% of the Capewide total. Barnstable was runner-up with 1246 birds (11%), followed by Harwich's 1135 birds (10%). The best variety was in Yarmouth where 18 species were found, followed by Barnstable with 17 species. Provincetown brought up the rear with 28 birds of two species, though there was virtually no open water there.



RESULTS BY POND

An average of 31 birds/pond was recorded. However, if the frozen ponds are eliminated, the average jumps to 84 birds/open pond. Of the 130 open ponds, 22 (17%) had no birds at all—these ponds must be especially unattractive to waterfowl! Salt Pond in Falmouth traditionally harbors a large flock of scaup and consequently takes top honors every year for the largest number of birds: This year 1698 individuals of nine species there included 1600 scaup. Second this year was Lake Wequaquet in Barnstable (555 birds), followed by Herring Pond in Eastham (448 birds). The best variety was on Lake Wequaquet with 12 species, followed by Pilgrim Lake in Orleans with 11, and Sider's Pond in Falmouth with 10 species.

PARTICIPATION

At least 54 people took part in this years survey. Many thanks to each and every one.

Participants

John & Elizabeth Berg, Carl Bergfors, Sally Branch, Keith Brunell, Frank Caruso, Kathleen Casey, Sally Clifton, Dick Comeau, Marlene Denessen, Mike Dettrey, Don Dyer, Nathan Dyer, Peter Flood, Juliana Foscaldi, Ed Foster, George & Judy Gove, Kevin Kelleher, Mary Kelleher, Kevin Harding, Seward Highley, Dick Jurkowski, Phil Kyle, Don Manchester, George Martin, Kathy & Rives McGinley, Stauffer Miller, Liz Moon, Blair Nikula, Tom Noonan, Bob O'Neil, Ginie Page, Alida Pellegrini-Toole, Alison Robb, Don Scott, Arky & Janet Silverio, Diane Silverstein, Dick Stacy, Barbara Stanton, Betsy Stepney, Sandy Sutherland, Jim Talin, Aurele Thomas, John Toole, Jeremiah Trimble, Peter Trimble, Lou Turner, Mark Tuttle, Bob Vander Pyl, and Dennis Wiehe, Ellie Winslow.

If you wish additional copies of this summary, send a large S.A.S.E. to the compiler: **Blair Nikula, 2 Gilbert Lane, Harwich Port, MA 02646.**

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Species	BOURNE	FALMOUTH	SANDWICH	MASHPEE	BARNSTABLE	YARMOUTH	DENNIS	BREWSTER	HARWICH	CHATHAM	ORLEANS	EASTHAM	WELLFLEET	TRURO	PROVINCETOWN	TOTAL	% OF TOTAL	# OF PONDS
Common Loon	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	3	0	0	8	0.1	7
Pied-billed Grebe	0	15	0	0	2	0	0	0	12	1	1	0	0	1	0	32	0.3	11
Canada Goose	0	105	123	21	295	40	32	3	30	26	14	47	5	1	0	742	6.8	41
Mute Swan	4	51	7	5	5	83	7	2	0	7	5	2	0	0	0	178	1.6	27
Wood Duck	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	6	0.1	3
Gadwall	0	19	7	0	0	65	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	94	0.9	7
American Wigeon	0	25	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	28	14	0	0	0	71	0.6	8
Black Duck	0	123	13	35	30	172	9	4	100	21	144	212	2	19	27	911	8.3	55
Mallard	0	535	122	122	430	225	86	16	56	66	136	167	0	20	1	1982	18	82
Northern Pintail	0	1	0	0	0	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	0.2	2
Green-winged Teal	0	0	31	0	0	6	0	0	0	9	1	0	0	0	0	47	0.4	4
Canvasback	0	12	0	0	0	1	0	0	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	39	0.4	4
Ring-necked Duck	0	78	199	72	59	17	0	0	0	0	43	87	10	0	0	565	5.1	19
Greater Scaup	0	1710	0	7	8	0	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1749	15.9	5
Lesser Scaup	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	10	0.1	4
scaup species	0	25	0	0	21	0	0	48	175	20	0	4	0	10	0	303	2.8	13
Bufflehead	0	291	5	403	69	248	83	26	96	11	207	50	4	5	0	1498	13.6	64
Common Goldeneye	0	9	3	170	12	7	0	15	88	0	1	9	0	0	0	314	2.9	20
Hooded Merganser	0	471	4	130	194	27	0	1	32	50	59	186	2	4	0	1160	10.6	46
Common Merganser	0	104	43	100	88	11	2	2	513	0	0	0	18	31	0	912	8.3	17
Red-breasted Merganser	0	85	0	40	31	5	1	2	0	0	27	4	0	0	0	195	1.8	20
Ruddy Duck	0	23	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	103	0	0	0	130	1.2	3
American Coot	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	6	2	1	0	0	0	0	10	0.1	5
TOTAL NUMBER	4	3682	557	1111	1246	938	244	127	1135	218	671	885	44	91	28	10981		118
% of Total	0	34	5	10	11	9	2	1	10	2	6	8	0	1	0			
Number of Species	1	17	11	13	14	16	8	13	12	12	15	12	7	8	2	25		
Number of Ponds Censused	13	56	18	16	50	29	19	28	24	29	29	11	14	10	8	354		
Birds per Pond	0	66	31	69	25	32	13	5	47	8	23	80	3	9	4	31 #		
Number of Observers	3	16	3	4	5	4	2	2	6	2	5	2	3	2	2	54		