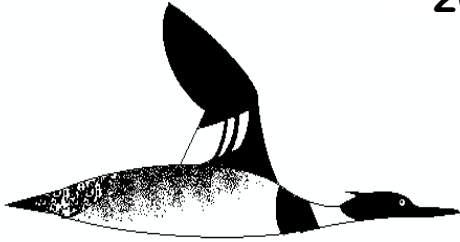


CAPE COD BIRD CLUB

Cape Cod Lake & Pond Waterfowl Survey

2004 SUMMARY



The 22nd annual Cape Cod Lake and Pond Waterfowl Survey was conducted by members of the Cape Cod Bird Club on the weekend of December 4-5, 2004. Unlike last year, the weather leading up to this year's survey was mild, November temperatures being very close to normal. Moreover, the weather on the survey weekend was very pleasant — in sharp contrast to last year's near blizzard conditions — and icing of the ponds was not a problem.

At least 54 observers surveyed 356 ponds, both well above average totals. However, only 8,078 ducks were found, the lowest total in the surveys' 22 years. The declines were across the board: Eighteen species were recorded in numbers that were 10% or more below average, while only one species (Hooded Merganser) appeared in numbers that were 10% or more above average.

The mild weather may at least partially be responsible for the low totals this year. Some species regularly linger to the north as late as possible until they are frozen out and forced to continue southward. Such 'cold weather' species were, indeed, scarce this year. However, many other species, particularly the dabbling ducks, are less hardy and their appearance less weather dependent, so their scarcity is more puzzling. We have experienced many other mild falls over the past two decades without such depressed numbers. As usual, the reasons remain elusive!

SELECTED SPECIES RESULTS

Pied-billed Grebes, at 26 individuals, were 68% below average. This continues a sharp decline from their peak of 204 birds in 1998.

Gadwall totaled 55 individuals, or 47% below average. This species has declined steadily since peaking in 1995.

Northern Pintail numbered just 21 birds, 33% below the 20-year average.

American Green-winged Teal were 70% below average, with just 18 individuals found this year.

Only two **Canvasbacks** were found, one more than last year's record low. This handsome duck wintered by the hundreds on the Cape when this survey began, though historically was quite rare in the region.

Ring-necked Ducks typically are recorded in low numbers when the weather preceding the count is mild and that held true this year, the total of 216 being 12% below normal.

Scaup (both species combined) numbered just 1109 birds, the second lowest total in 21 years, and 54% below average.

Common Goldeneye is another species that does not arrive in numbers until the weather turns really cold, so this year's low total of 150 (-31%) is not surprising.

Hooded Merganser was the only species to be recorded in numbers substantially above the 20-year average, though the total of 795 birds was still well below the peak of 1160 in 1992.

Common Merganser is another cold weather species, so the low total of 204 birds (-27%) this year was not unexpected.

Red-breasted Mergansers numbered just 141 individuals (-38%), though this species winters primarily on larger bodies of salt water (most on this survey are found on the salt ponds on Falmouth's south shore), so the small numbers recorded this year are unlikely to reflect overall populations in the area.

Ruddy Duck totals have fluctuated rather wildly over the past two decades; this year's 55 bird total was 35% below the average.

For the fourth straight year, **American Coots** were almost non-existent, with a paltry 3 birds (-95%) tying the record low established in 1992.

Mallard (1549 birds), despite being 9% below average, was the most common species, due largely to a dramatic drop in scaup numbers. Bufflehead (1407) was second and American Black Duck (1384) third. These three species comprised almost 54% of the overall total. The most widespread species — by a wide margin — was Mallard, which was found on 146 (41%) of the ponds, followed by Bufflehead (110 ponds) and Hooded Merganser (80 ponds).

RESULTS BY TOWN

As always, Falmouth out-distanced all other towns, this year with 2124 birds or 26% of the Capewide total. No other town recorded more than a thousand birds. Falmouth and Barnstable tied for best variety with 16 species each, followed by Sandwich with 14 species.



RESULTS BY POND

An average of 23 birds/pond was recorded, which is 34% below normal. Of the 356 ponds surveyed, 115 (32%) had no birds at all. As usual, Salt Pond in Falmouth hosted the largest number of birds (908), 88% of which were scaup. Upper Mill Pond in Brewster came in a distant second with 235 birds.

Four ponds had the best variety with eight species each: Salt Pond in Falmouth, Mill Pond (Maple St.) in West Barnstable, Shoal Pond in Orleans, and Great Pond in Eastham.

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

PARTICIPATION

At least 54 people took part in this year's survey, the second highest number of participants ever. Many thanks to each and every one!

Participants:

Ron Ayotte, John Berg, Sally Branch, Keith Brunell, Frank Caruso, Kathleen Casey, Dave & Fran Clapp, Molly Cornell, Mike Dettrey, Linda & Ken Duffy, Peter Flood, Ed Foster, Dan Furbish, George Gove, Seward Highley, Dick & Sylvia Jurkowski, Mary Keleher, Phil Kyle, Sally Leighton, Marie Malo, George Martin, Kathy & Rives McGinley, Stauffer Miller, Olga Mitchell, Liz Moor, Barbara Murphy, Blair Nikula, Tom Noonan, Ginie Page, Alida Pellegrini-Toole, Jim Talin, John Toole, John Redfern, Alison Robb, Don Scott, Arky & Janet Silverio, Dick Stacey, Betsy Stepney, Beth Schwartzman, Sandy Sutherland, Jim Talin, Aurele Thomas, Jeremiah Trimble, Peter Trimble, Lee & Lou Turner, Bob Vanderpyl, Dennis Wiehe, and Ellie Winslow.

2004 Cape Cod Lake and Pond Waterfowl Survey

Species	BOURNE	FALMOUTH	SANDWICH	MASHPEE	BARNSTABLE	YARMOUTH	DENNIS	BREWSTER	HARWICH	CHATHAM	ORLEANS	EASTHAM	WELLFLEET	TRURO	PROVINCETOWN	TOTAL	% OF TOTAL	# OF PONDS
Red-throated Loon	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	2
Common Loon	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	3
Pied-billed Grebe	1	3	1	1	2	2	0	5	2	8	1	0	0	0	0	26	0.3	18
Canada Goose	6	98	148	16	181	51	33	62	6	42	32	4	10	0	0	689	8.5	44
Mute Swan	4	31	7	7	8	29	53	4	10	5	6	0	0	0	0	164	2	35
Wood Duck	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Gadwall	2	0	0	0	34	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	55	0.7	6
American Wigeon	6	15	0	0	60	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	84	1	7
Black Duck	22	185	9	34	7	211	162	1	7	92	231	77	11	0	335	1384	17.1	68
Mallard	25	254	177	36	163	311	131	43	82	49	177	80	1	4	16	1549	19.2	146
Northern Pintail	0	9	0	0	3	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	21	0.3	6
Green-winged Teal	0	0	0	0	4	0	8	0	1	0	1	0	0	4	0	18	0.2	5
Canvasback	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1
Ring-necked Duck	35	44	6	5	73	14	0	14	9	0	3	2	0	11	0	216	2.7	23
Greater Scaup	0	800	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	811	10	2
Lesser Scaup	0	2	0	4	8	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	0.2	5
scaup species	0	11	0	0	0	0	8	199	65	0	0	0	0	0	0	283	3.5	7
Bufflehead	17	300	91	310	140	229	84	38	57	11	74	33	4	14	5	1407	17.4	110
Common Goldeneye	0	14	4	39	1	4	0	11	72	0	0	5	0	0	0	150	1.9	15
Hooded Merganser	42	207	21	87	94	32	0	6	61	6	59	158	1	18	3	795	9.8	80
Common Merganser	0	0	105	33	5	2	0	13	43	0	0	2	1	0	0	204	2.5	12
Red-breasted Merganser	0	121	3	4	0	0	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	141	1.7	16
Ruddy Duck	0	28	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	23	0	0	0	55	0.7	4
American Coot	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	3	0	2
TOTAL NUMBER	160	2124	572	579	784	912	492	412	415	213	587	388	28	51	361	8078		241
% of Total	2	26	7	7	10	11	6	5	5	3	7	5	0	1	4			
Number of Species	10	16	14	11	16	13	8	13	12	7	10	12	6	5	6	23		
Number of Ponds Censused	13	56	18	17	42	29	20	29	26	28	30	11	18	7	12	356		
Birds per Pond	12	38	32	34	19	31	25	14	16	8	20	35	2	7	30	23		
Number of Observers	3	18	4	2	3	3	1	3	6	2	4	2	4	4	1	54		