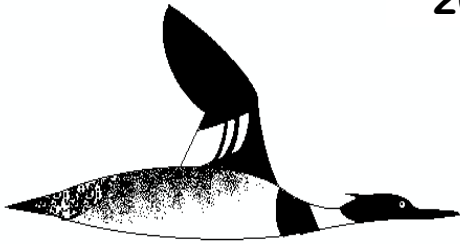


Cape Cod Lake & Pond Waterfowl Survey

2005 SUMMARY



The 23rd annual Cape Cod Lake and Pond Waterfowl Survey was conducted by members of the Cape Cod Bird Club on the weekend of December 3-4, 2005. Like last year, the weather leading up to this year's survey was mild, November temperatures being somewhat above normal. The weather on the survey weekend was good on Saturday, but poor on Sunday. Icing of the ponds was not a problem.

Thirty-nine observers surveyed 367 ponds, both about average totals. However, only 6,782 ducks were found, by far the lowest total in the surveys' history and only half of the 13,637 peak in 1998! The declines were almost across the board: Fourteen species were recorded in numbers that were 10% or more below average, while only three species (Hooded Merganser, Ruddy Duck, and American Coot) appeared in numbers that were 10% or more above average. Curiously, the variety, 31 species, was the best ever!

Why totals were so greatly depressed this year is a mystery, though the mild weather may have played a role. Totals on this survey have often fallen below average in mild years, presumably because many ducks remain farther north and/or inland until frozen out, at which point they move to warmer climes to the south or along the coast. However, numbers were so low this year that it seems that other factors must have been involved. In fact, totals have declined for three straight years now. At this point, all we can do is speculate and wait to see what the next couple of years bring.

SELECTED SPECIES RESULTS

Pied-billed Grebes, at 59 individuals, rebounded from three straight years of depressed totals, but were still 26% below average.

Canada Geese numbered just 344 birds, the second lowest total since 1984 and 61% below average. Totals for this species have fluctuated sharply over the survey's history. However, most geese winter in tidal habitats, so the numbers on this survey may not accurately reflect the overall population.

Mute Swans totaled just 120 birds, the lowest level since 1986, continuing a steady decline over the past several years. Reasons for this decline are unknown.

American Black Ducks dropped to just 831 birds, 37% below average. However, like Canada Goose, this species inhabits primarily tidal environments so probably is not adequately sampled in this survey.

Mallards totaled just 1085 birds, the second lowest in the survey's history and 36% below average — another puzzling decline.

American Green-winged Teal, although seldom numerous, totaled just 7 birds, the second lowest in the survey's history.

No **Canvasbacks** were found, the first time this species has been missed during this survey, though only two were found last year and just one the year before. 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 195 being 20% below normal.

Scaup (both species combined) numbered just 1094 birds, the second lowest total in 21 years and 53% below average.

Buffleheads were at the lowest total since 1985, 35% 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 95 (-56%) is not surprising.

Ruddy Duck totals have fluctuated rather wildly over the past two decades but seem to be on a upswing now; this years 199 bird total was 139% above average.

American Coots, following four straight years of very low numbers, rebounded strongly with 270 birds, 128% above average; this is another species whose totals have been very erratic.

Bufflehead, despite being 35% below average (1129 birds), was the most common species. Scaup (both species combined) were second with 1094 birds, while Mallard dropped to third place (1085 birds). These three species comprised about 44% of the overall total. The most widespread species once again was Mallard, which was found on 107 (29%) of the ponds, followed by Bufflehead (87 ponds) and Hooded Merganser (64 ponds). However, for all three species these totals represent substantial declines over last year; in other words, all three species were not only less numerous but less widespread this year.



RESULTS BY TOWN

As always, Falmouth out-distanced all other towns, this year with 1904 birds or 28% of the Capewide total. No other town recorded more than 800 birds. Falmouth and Barnstable once again tied for best variety with 19 species each, followed by Yarmouth with 16 species.

RESULTS BY POND

An average of just 18 birds/pond was recorded, by far the lowest ever; this compares with a peak of 48 birds/pond in 1987. Of the 367 ponds surveyed, 160 (44%) had no birds at all. Sider's Pond in Falmouth hosted the largest number of birds (746), 95% of which were scaup.

Mill Pond in West Barnstable (Maple St.) had the best variety with a remarkable 12 species, followed by Coonamesset Pond in Falmouth with nine species.

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 39 people took part in this year's survey. Many thanks to each and every one!

Participants:

Ron Ayotte, John Berg, Peter Bono, Frank Caruso, Kathleen Casey, Dave & Fran Clapp, Molly Cornell, Mike Dettrey, Ted Fitzelle, Peter Flood, Dick Henshall, Dick Jurkowski, Mary Keleher, Carolyn Kennedy, Torben Lorenzen, Kathy & Rives McGinley, April Merriam, Blair Nikula, Tom Noonan, Ginie Page, Jane Parhiala, Alida Pellegrini-Toole, John Redfern, Alison Robb, Don Scott, Janet Silverio, Diane Silverstein, Dick Stacey, Betsy Stepney, Sandy Sutherland, Jim Talin, Bill Telfer, Aurele Thomas, John Toole, Peter Trimble, Mark Tuttle, and Ellie Winslow.

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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
Red-throated Loon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1
Common Loon	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0.1	3
Pied-billed Grebe	2	15	6	4	2	9	0	6	5	3	0	4	0	3	0	59	0.9	32
Canada Goose	5	43	135	0	97	20	1	10	0	0	33	0	0	0	0	344	5.1	24
Brant	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1
Tundra Swan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Mute Swan	1	32	6	5	21	22	15	1	2	8	5	0	0	2	0	120	1.8	41
Wood Duck	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	2
Gadwall	0	0	7	0	19	35	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	94	1.4	7
Eurasian Wigeon	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
American Wigeon	0	16	0	0	72	0	0	0	0	9	4	4	0	0	0	105	1.5	10
Black Duck	17	74	6	40	23	186	60	1	11	93	222	53	0	25	20	831	12.3	54
Mallard	11	226	50	44	137	279	53	15	18	92	113	37	6	4	0	1085	16	107
Blue-winged Teal	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0.1	1
Northern Shoveler	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	2
Northern Pintail	0	0	0	0	3	17	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	21	0.3	3
Green-winged Teal	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	7	0.1	3
Redhead	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	8	0.1	2
Ring-necked Duck	40	61	0	0	30	0	0	44	14	0	0	0	4	2	0	195	2.9	20
Greater Scaup	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	158	0	0	0	0	0	0	170	2.5	3
Lesser Scaup	0	16	0	1	36	1	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	59	0.9	7
scaup species	0	785	0	0	35	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	40	0	865	12.8	9
Common Eider	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Surf Scoter	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	2
White-winged Scoter	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Bufflehead	18	356	87	128	138	199	33	21	56	12	11	49	13	4	4	1129	16.6	87
Common Goldeneye	0	16	3	46	0	3	0	9	17	0	0	0	0	1	0	95	1.4	12
Hooded Merganser	28	140	25	113	120	44	2	8	21	78	58	138	1	0	0	776	11.4	64
Common Merganser	0	1	88	18	6	0	0	0	84	1	0	0	0	60	0	258	3.8	9
Red-breasted Merganser	0	45	0	0	0	2	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	62	0.9	10
Ruddy Duck	0	21	0	4	16	8	0	27	25	0	2	94	0	2	0	199	2.9	15
American Coot	1	48	3	19	24	15	0	2	28	4	0	122	0	4	0	270	4	28
TOTAL NUMBER	123	1904	419	423	790	843	215	162	446	305	449	507	24	148	24	6782		207
% of Total	2	28	6	6	12	12	3	2	7	4	7	7	0	2	0			
Number of Species	9	19	13	12	19	16	10	15	13	11	9	9	4	12	2	31		
Number of Ponds Censused	13	54	19	18	49	29	20	29	27	29	30	11	17	8	14	367		
Birds per Pond	9	35	22	24	16	29	11	6	17	11	15	46	1	19	2	18		
Number of Observers	3	10	4	1	4	3	2	2	4	2	3	1	1	2	1	39		