

# SWANS, GEESE AND DUCKS

## MUTE SWAN

*Cygnus olor*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

This introduced species has enjoyed a population explosion in Rockland County since 1960. In his Bear Mountain-Harriman Park checklist in 1940, William H. Carr did not even mention this species, and John C. Orth 20 years later noted it only as "occasional rare visitant on the Hudson River," with one summer record for Iona Island on July 27, 1958 (Mr. and Mrs. Orth) and a few fall and winter records ranging from Nov. 9, 1952 to Jan. 21, 1954, all at Iona Island.

I will never forget my own first mute swan in the wild. It was on the Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Count of 1934, when the count area included a strip of the Hudson's west bank from Piermont Pier to Alpine, NJ. (a contrivance to add at least the tufted titmouse, and perhaps the Carolina Wren to the list). As darkness fell, we were far out in the Piermont marsh, which was frozen firmly enough for walking, when the swan, with its impressive wingspread, flew ghostlike past us a couple of hundred feet away.

Characteristically, of all our party it was Roger Peterson who first called its name almost before any of the rest of us had fully grasped the fact that the bird was there.

At that time, and for another 25 years, the mute swan in the feral state was confined to Long Island and, in the Hudson Valley, to the Rhinebeck area and a couple of other places where estate-raised birds had escaped to the wild. One such place was Lake Lucille, on South Mountain Road, New City, where from 1947 to 1959 the one to three birds living wild graced the Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count except in three years. Since 1961, the species has not been missed on this Count.

Meanwhile, in the spring of 1956 a pair appeared on Congers Lake, where their number rose to five birds in early April, 1958. On Mar. 17, 1959, a pair built a nest only 75 feet from a main highway; they incubated eggs through April

and produced seven young by May 19 (Ruth Steffens). In 1960 the Congers Lake pair had six young, and a pair also nested on nearby Swartwout Lake. Rockland Lake thereafter became the favored one of the group of lakes near Congers, and a Rockland Audubon Society field trip counted 21 birds there on Dec. 11, 1960. On Christmas Counts, an early peak was 39 birds in 1961; the all-time high on the society's 29 Counts was 69 swans in 1964.

The species has been recorded only three times on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts:

Jan. 2, 1972, seven; Dec. 30, 1972, one; Dec. 30, 1973, nine.

The highest counts are generally in early December, before the lakes freeze. Examples: 68 swans on the three lakes near Congers on Dec. 1, 1963 (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens) and more than 110 on Rockland Lake alone on Dec. 12, 1964 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper). In spring, a typical high count is 71 on May 13, 1965 (Eugene R. Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed).

Status, 1976: very common resident.



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## TUNDRA SWAN [WHISTLING SWAN]

*Olor columbianus*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

A casual fall and winter visitant, apparently increasing in the past 15 or 20 years as more southbound migrants veer toward the coast from their inland routes. Mearns noted only one date for the Hudson Highlands, on Oct. 21, 1880; Chapman in 1898 called this swan a rare transient visitant; Griscom in 1923 called it casual, Nov. 5 to Jan. 1. "Bird.-Lore" for May-June, 1932, Vol. 34, No. 3 (page 206) cited three birds on the Hudson at Croton Point, across from Haverstraw, from Mar. 11, 1932 (P. Kessler, John and Richard Kuerzi) to Mar. 29, 1932 (Gillespie). And Cruickshank's 1942 book lists a record off Nyack in the winter of 1939-40 (Lester Walsh).

The Rockland Audubon Society's five records all date from 1958 or later, and three of them are in the Nyack area:

Sept. 6, 1958, one swimming close to shore at Hook Mountain but acting wary, perhaps an injured bird (Eugene R. Brown, Joseph Rotoli). Seen again at dusk on Sept. 18, (Katherine Dienemann).

Nov. 2 to Nov. 9, 1959, five adults and two immatures at the Hook (Dienemann, Brow, and others).

Nov. 14, 1969: eleven birds on Lake Tiorati (John C. Orth).

Dec. 10, 1970: one on the Hudson off Nyack (Alma Polhemus).

Nov. 2, 1971: a flock of 64 on the Hudson at Cornwall (Al and Barbara Merritt)

## CANADA GOOSE

*Branta canadensis*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	"large flocks in autumn until bays are frozen"
1878-82	Mearns	abundant transient visitant
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant
1898	Fisher	fairly common transient visitant
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	uncommon transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon transient visitant
1940	Carr	regular transient, rarely alighting
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon transient inland
1960	Orth	regular common transient, occasional uncommon winter visitant; mostly observed flying overhead
1976	Current status	very common to very abundant migrant and winter visitant, fairly common breeder

Until 20 years ago, sightings of this bird were note-worthy enough to be reported. In my own 172 field trips within the area in 1935, for example, I saw none; my first Canada goose in Rockland County was on Sept. 20, 1936, and in

that year I totaled 88 birds. Prior to 1956, our spring date ranged from Apr. 4, 1939 (John Kenney) to May 20, 1950 (Eugene R. Brown, Robert F. Deed), and we had only three winter dates: Dec. 12, 1948 (Deed), Jan. 27, 1950

(John C. Orth), and Feb. 8, 1950 (Brown).

In 1956 we had more reports than in all previous years combined, culminating on Nov. 26 with a flock estimated well up in the thousands, flying south over the Tappan Zee that it had to rise to clear the cause-way of the then-new Tappan Zee Bridge (Maude McC. Brown, Mrs. Jack Anderson). All or part of the same flock had been observed earlier in the day by the Trailside Museum staff at Bear Mountain, with an estimate of "more than 1,000 birds."

Besides the recently increased numbers of migrants, we have a growing resident—and breeding—population at all the Rockland County lakes (though not the Park lakes in the Highlands) and along the Hudson River. A

typical spring count was an exact 425 on Rockland Lake on Mar. 30, 1975 (Eugene R. Brown).

This goose has been recorded on 12 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts and five of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts. It first appeared on the RAS count in 1964, with 62 birds, and continued with 173 birds in 1965, 81 in 1966, 154 in 1967, 101 in 1968, 122 in 1969, 128 in 1970, 339 in 1971, 359 in 1972, 400 in 1973, 552 in 1974, and 564 in 1975. The Bear Mountain count had one isolated record of 12 birds in 1950, followed by 23 birds in 1965, 71 in 1971, 33 in 1972, and 80 in 1973.



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## BRANT

### *Branta bernicla*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	"in great numbers on coast," October to December and April-May
1878-82	Mearns	transient visitant
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant in April, May, October
1898	Fisher	accidental visitant
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	one shot at Ossining in November, 1920
1927	Kuerzi	rare transient
1940	Carr	no modern records
1942	Cruickshank	practically unknown away from ocean
1960	Orth	a recent regular abundant spring transient and irregular common fall transient
1976	Current status	very abundant spring transient and casual fall transient

Few species have had a more checkered career than this one. Around 1930, the Atlantic flyway population was in dire peril because of the eel grass blight. Although the numbers of brant slowly rebuilt along the coast, no bird of this species is known to have occurred in our area during this century until May 24, 1950, when

John C. Orth saw a flock of more than 200 over Bear Mountain, with one double-crested cormorant among them. Numbers on the Hudson Valley spring migration route quickly soared into the thousands of birds. Some of the high counts: May 20-21, 1955, several thousand each day at Bear Mountain (Orth); May 17,

1958, between 3,000 and 4,000 (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens, Edward D. Treacy, A. Deignan); May 17, 1960, more than 5,000 in 15 flocks in the evening at Fort Montgomery (Mr. and Mrs. Orth); May 25, 1960, more than 2,900 in eight flocks in the evening at Fort Montgomery (the Orths) and more than 3,400 in 13 flocks the same evening at Haverstraw (the Steffenses); May 18, 1961, flocks of 500 and 2,000 at evening in the Congers area (Eugene R. Brown, Robert F. Deed); May 15, 1966, several thousand over Nyack at 6 p.m. (Deed); May 22, 1967, about 4,500 at Highland Falls (Treacy); May 19, 1968, about 6,100 at Cornwall from 7:15 p.m. to dark (Treacy). Spring dates range from May 11, 1955, a flock of 75 over Nyack (Deed) to May 26, 1973, more than 500 over Nyack in evening (the Deeds).

Obviously the time to see the great migrant flocks is around sunset on a date after mid-May. In strange contrast, we have only five fall records ranging from Oct. 10 to Oct. 31: Oct. 10, 1960 (Edwin Gamble); Oct. 16, 1959, one brant with a flock of coots on Rockland Lake (Ruth Steffens); Oct. 24, 1952 (Orth); Oct. 25, 1969, one with Canada geese at Rockland Lake (RAS field trip); Oct. 31, 1954, flocks of 50 and 150 (Orth).

**1983 Addenda** -- Our first summer record, an immature at Piermont Pier on Aug. 17, 1980 (Dr. Victor Schwartz); also another but later August record, Aug. 29, 1981 at Iona Island. Our first November records: Nov. 4, 1978, a flock of 40 at Cornwall Bay, and Nov. 25, 1981, one at Piermont Pier (Deed).



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE

*Anser albifrons*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

An accidental, with a record of four birds, including an adult male, on Hudson River ice

floes at Piermont Pier in February, 1970, carefully studied by Anthony F. Amos.

## SNOW GOOSE

*Chen hyperborea*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	not very abundant on the coast of this state
1878-82	Mearns	once
1898	Chapman	transient visitant, irregular
1898	Fisher	accidental visitant in April
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	casual; several hundred at Ossining on Apr. 8, 1882
1927	Kuerzi	two specimens, plus one sight record in 1926
1940	Carr	no current records
1942	Cruickshank	few records away from the coast; the blue goose "an extremely rare visitant"
1960	Orth	very rare transient; two recent records
1976	Current status	very common migrant, spring and fall, casual in winter; blue goose a casual migrant

Like the Canada goose and the brant, this species (but not the blue goose, which the A.C.U. in 1973 reduced to the status of a morph of the snow goose) has flourished in our region since the mid-1950s. Our first modern record

was on Apr 18, 1954, when Mrs. John M. Price saw a flock of eight flying low over the New City area. Since then the species has been recorded virtually every year. Flocks tend to be much smaller than those of Canada geese or brant,

but one exceptional record was made by the Hook Mountain Hawk Watch on Apr. 7, 1973: between 2,600 and 3,000 birds in 13 flocks. Most flocks, either spring or fall, range between 75 and 250 birds.

**Spring:** Apr. 5, 1959, about 125 birds, with one blue goose, over Suffern (John LeMaire) to May 27, 1967, a flock of 125 over Nyack in the evening (Robert F. Deed).

**Fall:** Oct. 4, 1963, about 130 birds high over the Blauvelt area (Mr. and Mrs. Deed) to Dec. 1, 1964, one at Rockland Lake (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens) that remained to at least Feb. 6, 1965 (Eugene R. Brown).

**Winter:** Single birds on three Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts--1957, 1964 (the Rockland Lake bird), and 1965. Also Dec. 5,

1956 at Cornwall (Paul .Jeheber); Dec. 28, 1957, an immature going into adult plumage, at the Haverstraw boat basin (Edward D. Treacy, John C. Orth, John Kenney) and remaining to at least Jan. 12, 1958 (Steffens); Jan. 16, 1966 at Rockland Lake (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, . Alma Polhemus).

**Blue Goose:** Apr. 5 1959 (LeMaire); Feb. 25, 192 at Jones Point (the Deeds); Apr. 7, 1973 (Hook Mountain Hawk Watch).

**1983 Addenda** -- Our seventh winter date: Jan. 14, 1979, at Rockland Lake (Edward D. Treacy, Lawrence Holland, Robert F. Deed), and two dates for summer stragglers: June 9, 1980, one with Canada Geese at Vic Schwartz's near Congers and June 14, 1981, one under the Tappan Zee Bridge, Grand View (Peter Derven).



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## MALLARD

*Anas platyrhynchos*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	common on lakes and seacoast
1878-82	Mearns	transient visitant
1898	Chapman	irregular transient visitant
1898	Fisher	rare transient visitant, October to March
1908	Brownell	fairly common transient visitant
1923	Griscom	uncommon
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon transient visitant
1940	Carr	regular transient, August-May; more numerous in fall; a few winter in the Hudson
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common-non transient, uncommon in winter
1960	Orth	common spring and fall transient, uncommon winter visitant, rare permanent resident; may nest at Iona Island
1976	Current status	very common resident

Like the Canada goose, this species has a booming population of resident birds that nest in the wild but are semi-tame. At the Rockland Lake fishing station, for example, both species

wander fearlessly among human visitors on the lawn. But the rise in abundance during the past 40 years is real enough. In 1935, I had a total of 12 mallards; in 1936, a total of 14. Nowadays,

except in summer when the birds retire to nest, it is not difficult to count 100 or more in a day at a single point such as Rockland Lake, Piermont Pier, Sparkill Creek, or the reservoirs.

In the course of 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, numbers ranged from 3 to 43 on the first ten counts, hit 100 on the 11<sup>th</sup> count (1957), jumped to 322 in 1962 and 552 in 1965,

leaped again to 733 in 1971 and set the all-time high of 860 in 1971.

On 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, the mallard has been recorded 21 times, usually from 3 to 25 birds. A count of 61 in 1963 was exceptional until the 1964 count when 64 were recorded.



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## BLACK DUCK

*Anas rubripes*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	very abundant; breeds
1878-82	Mearns	very abundant transient, fairly common, resident
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant, fairly common winter visitant
1898	Fisher	fairly common summer resident, Mar. 6 to Nov. 13
1908	Brownell	common winter visitant
1923	Griscom	abundant transient, fairly common on Hudson in winter, common summer resident near Ossining
1927	Kuerzi	common transient visitant, Aug 16 to May 15, a few later
1940	Carr	abundant, breeds, observed during every month
1942	Cruickshank	common to abundant in winter, common in summer
1960	Orth	fairly common permanent resident, very common transient
1976	Current status	common transient and winter visitant, uncommon breeder

This species, under no suspicion as to its wildness, has been on a course opposite from that of the mallard during the past 40 years. In 1935, I recorded 2,352; in 1936 1,307. Christmas Counts best tell the story of wintering

populations:

In the Piermont-Alpine area of the Bronx County Bird Club count, 1934 through 1941, the numbers for black duck were 100-50-30-55-5-5,

and there were no mallards. Very much the same territory on the 1975 Rockland Audubon Society count yielded 11 black ducks, compared with 213 mallards. In the first ten years of the RAS count, black ducks ranged from 41 to 258 while the high for mallards was 43. In the next decade, the black duck had peaks of 353 in 1958, 370 in 1961, and the all-time high of 493 in 1962. The five most recent counts (1971-75) were 107-90-158-53-55.

However, Bear Mountain Christmas Counts

show the black duck still generally dominant over the mallard in the Highlands. The black duck has been recorded on all 28 counts from 1946 to 1973, and its numbers have been exceeded by those of the mallard only twice: in 1971 by 64 to 11 and in 1972 by 25 to 24. Still, the black duck in that area is by no means as abundant in winter as the earliest Bear Mountain counts indicate: 400-plus in 1946, 153 in 1948, and 174 in 1949. On the most recent Bear Mountain count, in 1973, the number was 23.



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## GADWALL

### *Anas strepera*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	rather rare; breeds
1878-82	Mearns	spring and fall transient
1898	Chapman	very rare transient visitant
1898	Fisher	no mention
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	casual visitant
1927	Kuerzi	no mention
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon to rare transient, purely casual in winter
1960	Orth	sporadic very rare fall transient; no spring records
1976	Current status	uncommon to fairly common migrant, very rare winter visitant

In keeping with its general increase along the Atlantic coast, this duck has increased considerably in numbers during the past 30 years. Our first record for the area in modern times was John C. Orth's observation of a bird at Queensboro Lake, near Bear Mountain, on Oct. 24, 1948. A bird was seen at Piermont on Oct. 9,

1949 (Stephen J. Collins) and trio on the Hudson near Haverstraw on Mar. 30, 1952 (Eugene Eisenmann, Mrs. Kathleen Skelton). Jack Orth also saw two at Iona Island on Oct. 27, 1957.

**Spring:** Mar. 5, 1975, ten on Rockland Lake

(Eugene R. Brown) to Mar. 30, 1952  
(Eisenmann, Skelton).

**Fall:** Oct. 2, 1975, four at Piermont Pier  
(Anthony F. Amos) to Nov. 30, 1974, two at  
Rockland Lake (Robert F. Deed, Donald S.  
Deed).

**Winter:** Three times on the 29 Rockland  
Audubon Society Christmas Counts and twice  
on the 28 Bear Mountain counts. Also Dec. 5 to  
Dec., 19, 1965, three at Iona island (Orth); Dec.  
14, 1963, at Rockland Lake (Morton Isler); Dec.

20, 1970, six on Rockland Lake (Ruth Steffens);  
Jan. 1, 1973, four on Rockland Lake (Brown).

We have one summer record: two birds on the  
Hudson River at South Nyack on July 19, 1971  
(Donald S. Deed).

**1983 Addenda** -- Add this once-rare duck to  
the local breeding birds: a pair with three grown  
young at Piermont Pier on July 29-30, 1981  
(Deed). Also several winter records from  
Rockland Lake and Stony Pt.



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## NORTHERN PINTAIL

*Anas acuta*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	abundant on Lake Ontario, less common on coast
1878-82	Mearns	fairly common transient visitant
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient visitant, Mar. 15 to Apr. 10 and Sept. 26 to Dec. 4
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	very rare
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon transient visitant, Feb. 22 to Apr. 25 and Oct. 24 to Dec. 30
1940	Carr	irregular migrant, March-May and September-January
1942	Cruickshank	common transient, especially in spring; uncommon to rare in winter
1960	Orth	irregular rare fall transient, no spring records
1976	Current status	uncommon migrant, spring and fall; very rare winter visitant

For some reason, in our region this species has not shared in the growth in abundance of other dabbling ducks, even though it has become very common in nearby areas of Westchester County and northern New Jersey. We have no 20<sup>th</sup> Century records at all prior to Feb. 24, 1931 at Palisades (Thomas P. Gilman); my own first

local record was on Mar. 4, 1936. The maximum number to date is six at the north end of Lake De Forest on Apr. 4, 1964, (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed).

**Spring:** Mar. 18, 1935 in Bear Mountain Park (H. A. Hochbaum) to May 31, 1958, a pair seen

during a canoe trip on the Hackensack on the present site of Lake De Forest (Edwin Gamble).

**Fall:** Oct. 2, 1960, two at Iona Island (John C. Orth) to Nov. 18, 1971, two on Rockland Lake (the Deeds).

**Winter:** Feb. 24, 1931 (Gilman); Dec. 29, 1939, near Bear Mountain (William H. Carr, Kenneth Lewis); Jan. 2, 1950 at Grassy Point on Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count (Orth party); Dec. 26, 1954, two on Congers Lake for the only other time on the RAS Christmas Count (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper); Feb. 22, 1960, at north end of Lake De Forest

(Gamble); Jan. 3 to at least Jan. 7, 1961, one with tame mallards at Lederle Laboratories, Nanuet (Frank R. Steffens); Jan. 14, 1972, male and two females at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos); Jan. 13, 1974, male at Rockland Lake (the Deeds), Dec. 4, 1975 and three more dates in December. at Piermont Pier (Amos), building to a maximum of five birds on Feb. 15, 1976 (Amos).

**1983 Addenda** -- A new maximum number of 26 at Cornwall Bay on Sept. 28, 1980, and a new early fall date of Sept. 27, 1981 at the Sparkill Creek (the Deeds). In 1981, third time on RAS Christmas Count, seen at Stony Point.

## GREEN-WINGED TEAL

*Anas crecca*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	common, breeds on Great Lakes
1878-82	Mearns	abundant transient visitant
1898	Chapman	rather uncommon winter resident
1898	Fisher	a common transient visitant, April and Sept. 11 to Oct. 28
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	no recent records in Hudson Valley
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon transient visitant, Mar. 20 to Apr. 21 and Oct. 4 to Nov. 30
1940	Carr	uncommon migrant, spring and fall on the Hudson
1942	Cruickshank	common transient visitant
1960	Orth	irregular uncommon spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	uncommon migrant, both spring and fall; very rare winter visitant; casual summer visitant

The occurrence profile for this species in the metropolitan area shows a deep dip around 1920, followed by something of a comeback. Yet the bird is neither regular nor common in our area today. It is generally seen in numbers of

two to four; we have two winter records of nine each and one record of 40 birds on Sept. 9, 1967 (Bernd Gravenstein) under the special circumstance of the fresh draining of the Lake Tappan reservoir site.

**Spring:** Mar. 11, 1950 at Grassy Point (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens) to May 14, 1976 at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos).

**Summer:** Aug. 15, 1968, a pair at the new Lake Tappan (James Demes); July 23, 1974, a pair at Piermont Pier (Amos). These two records— together with that of a pair seen on Aug. 5, 1961, at Warwick, Orange County, outside our territory, by Mr. and Mrs. John Dye—suggest breeding locally or nearby.

**Fall:** Sept. 7, 1963, five at Congers Lake (Morton Isler) to Nov. 30, 1947, near Bear Mountain (John C. Orth, Stanley O. Grierson).

**Winter:** Dec. 23, 1964 at Lederle Laboratories, Nanuet (Steffens); Jan. 1, 1965, nine at Rockland Lake (Eugene R. Brown); Jan. 2, 1971, nine at Congers Lake (Gravenstein); Dec. 17, 1972 at Piermont on Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count (Amos, David O. Hill), Dec. 17, 1975, one at Piermont (Amos). The single 1972 bird is the only record for either the RAS or the Bear Mountain Christmas Count.

**1983 Addenda** -- Two new winter records: Dec. 18, 1977, five flying over the Hackensack at Blauvelt (Louise, Donald & Bob Deed), and Jan. 14, 1979 at Rockland Lake (Edward Treacy, Lawrence Holland).

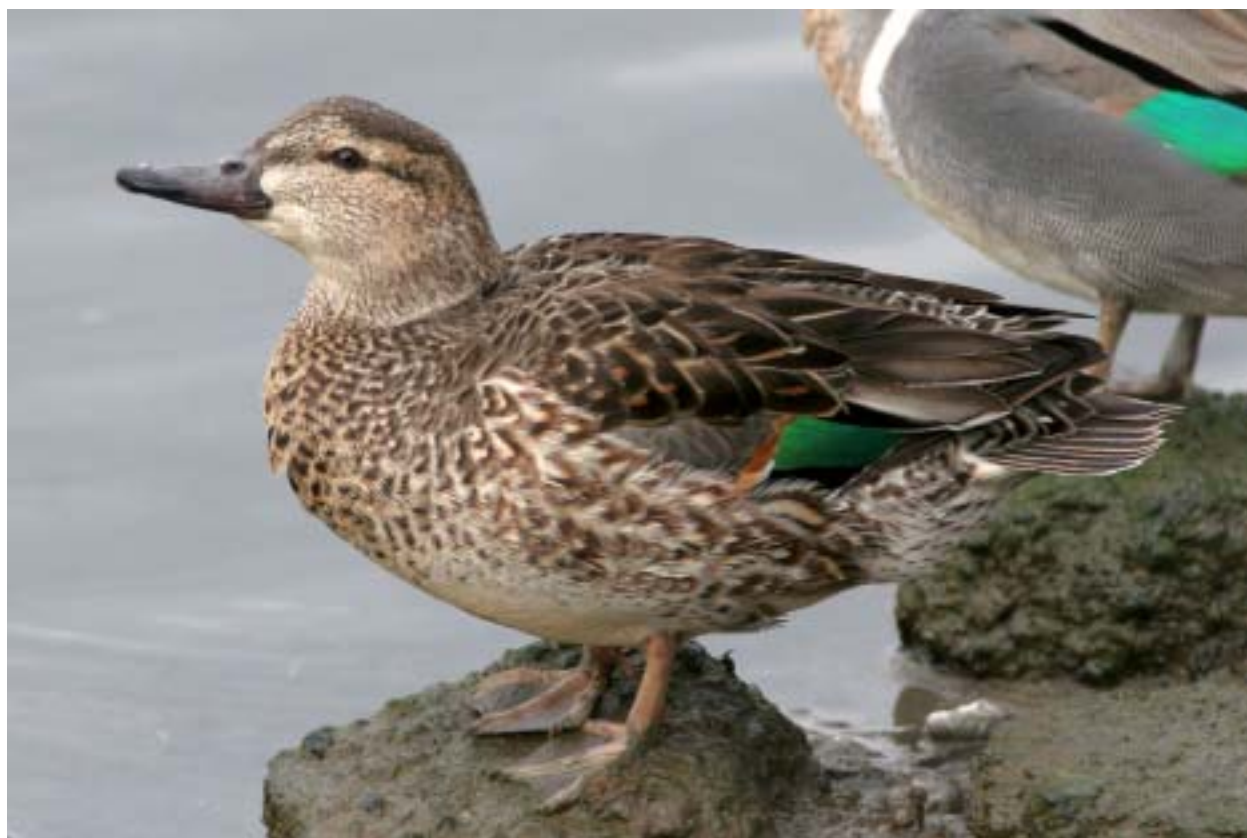


Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## BLUE-WINGED TEAL

*Anas discors*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	abundant on the Hudson in September
1878-82	Mearns	abundant transient visitant
1898	Chapman	uncommon transient visitant
1898	Fisher	common fall transient, Sept. 24 - Oct. 17
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	no recent records in Hudson Valley
1927	Kuerzi	rare transient. Mar. 18 to Apr. 26 and Aug. 29 to Nov. 14
1940	Carr	uncommon migrant, spring and fall, on Hudson
1942	Cruickshank	common transient, very rare local summer resident, accidental in winter
1960	Orth	occasional rare fall transient, no spring records
1976	Current status	a rare migrant and breeder after being fairly common 10 and 20 years ago; accidental winter visitant

In the late 1950s and through the 1960s, this species was slightly commoner than the green-winged teal, but we now have no record of it since the spring of 1971. It formerly nested in the portions of the Hackensack Creek that have

been flooded by Lakes De Forest and Tappan, and for a few years continued to breed at those lakes and at a nearby pond or two. It may also breed in the Piermont marsh, where an apparent family group of six was noted on Sept. 2, 1963

by Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed.

This species generally leaves earlier in the fall than the green-winged teal does. Dates range from Mar. 15, 1963 at Congers Lake (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Alma Polhemus) to Oct. 19, 1965 at Lake De Forest (Edwin Gamble). Our single winter date is Dec. 29, 1939 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr, Kenneth M. Lewis).

Breeding records in the past 20 years include: Apr. 13, 1957, a pair with four downy young at Lake De Forest (Dr. Hopper, Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens); May 13, 1968, a female with 13 downy young on a small pond near the present

Lake Tappan (Eugene R. Brown, the Deeds), plus five other adult birds.

The maximum local count was on Sept. 9, 1967, when Bernd Gravenstein estimated 25 of this species along with 40 green-winged teal at the drained site of Lake Tappan. Both teal were feeding on the freshly exposed vegetation that had been part of a Swamp.

**1983 Addenda** -- Our one winter record grows to three: Dec. 18, 1977, one at Rockland Lake on RAS Christmas Count, and Dec. 19, 1980 one at Piermont Pier (Peter Derven).



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## EURASIAN [EUROPEAN] WIGEON

*Anas penelope*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

An accidental visitant, with a single record on Mar. 11, 1938, on the Hudson River off Dunderberg (William H. Carr).

**1983 Addenda** -- A second record: Mar. 21, 1982 at Cornwall Bay (Kenneth and Joan McDermott).

## AMERICAN WIGEON

*Anas americana*

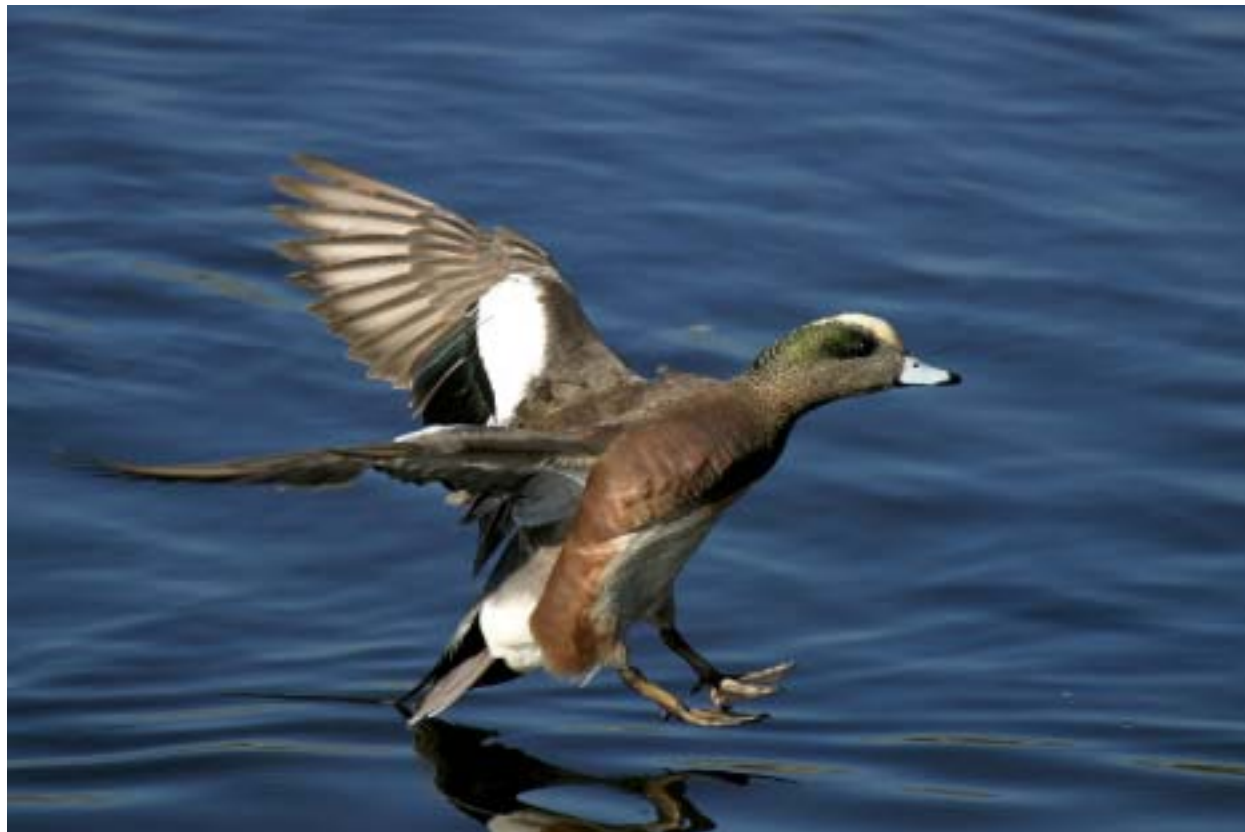


Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	spring and fall transient, not common; breeds in the state
1878-82	Mearns	common transient visitant
1898	Chapman	irregular transient visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient visitant, Mar. 11 to Apr. 12 and Oct. 4 to 28
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	rare; recent records in spring only
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon transient visitant, Feb. 28 to Apr. 21 and Oct. 4 to Nov. 30
1940	Carr	uncommon migrant, spring and fall, on Hudson
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common transient, occasionally in winter
1960	Orth	irregular fairly common spring and fall transient, rare in winter
1976	Current status	common migrant, irregularly common winter visitant, one breeding record

The baldpate has increased in recent years, and flocks of up to 50 may be seen on appropriate lakes, such as Rockland, during migration. It was a rare bird indeed 40 years ago; in 172 field trips in 1935, I saw a total of five, and in 139 trips in 1936, only one. Contrary to earlier

reports, this duck is less often found on the Hudson River than on the lakes, though Piermont Pier is the site of our one positive breeding record.

**Spring:** Mar. 4, 1955 at Congers Lake (Dr.

Marjorie R. Hopper) to May 19, 1957 (Dr. Hopper, Edward D. Treacy, Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens).

**Summer:** July 4, 1974, a male at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos); July 21, 1974, a female with four or five half-grown young swimming in a lagoon at the same place (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed).

**Fall:** Aug. 29, 1963, three on Congers Lake (Morton Isler) to Oct. 18, 1959 at Congers Lake (Dr. Hopper).

**Winter:** Seven times on the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts (one bird in 1958, 28 in 1964, 116 in 1965, ten in 1970, four in 1971, 42 in 1972, 77 in 1973). Four times on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts (eight in 1948, one in 1949, two in 1956, one in 1967). Also one on Dec. 26, 1964 near West Point on the Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club Christmas Count (Edward D. Treacy, Paul Jeheber).

**1983 Addenda** -- Three additional winter records at Rockland Lake and Stony Point, topped by a count of 40 at Rockland Lake on Jan. 6, 1980 (Eugene R. Brown).



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## NORTHERN SHOVELER

*Anas clypeata*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

Until late 1961 the only local record was Nov. 6, 1934, one bird on the Hudson River at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr, Kenneth H. Lewis). Since then we have accumulated 14 records, and this duck now ranks as a rare to uncommon migrant and winter visitant.

**Spring:** Mar. 9, 1969 at Rockland Lake (Eugene R. Brown) to Mar. 30, 1968 near Lake Tappan (James Demes).

**Fall:** Sept. 15, 1968 at Lake Tappan (Rockland Audubon Society field trip) to Nov. 28, 1974, ten (the all-time local high) on Rockland Lake (Brown).

**Winter:** Recorded on four of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts (two birds in 1965, one each in 1969 and 1970, four in 1974). Also Dec. 19, 1961 to Feb. 2, 1963 at the Lederle Laboratories power house pond, Nanuet (Frank R. Steffens); Dec. 14, 1963 two on Rockland Lake (Morton Isler); Dec. 16, 1965, two on Rockland Lake (Brown); Jan. 1, 1965, three on Rockland Lake (Wesley Hennessy); Feb. 1, 1967 and several days thereafter, one on the Lederle pond (Steffens).

**1983 Addenda** -- A new high count of 54 at Rockland Lake on Nov. 27, 1981



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## WOOD DUCK

*Aix sponsa*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	summer only
1878-82	Mearns	summer resident
1898	Chapman	rare local summer resident
1898	Fisher	fairly common summer resident
1908	Brownell	fairly common summer resident
1923	Griscom	very rare and local
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common transient; decreasing as a summer resident
1940	Carr	common summer resident, breeds
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common transient, most common as a breeder in northern New Jersey and northern Rockland County
1960	Orth	fairly common summer resident, nests; occasional in winter
1976	Current status	fairly common to common breeder, abundant in fall, rare in winter

The improving status of this beautiful duck is one of the most satisfying success stories of the past 50 years. Despite the encroachment of suburban development and the destruction of swamps, this bird has adapted well to nesting on

small ponds, the shores of recreational lakes, and even the sterile edges of the reservoirs. Throughout 1935, with 172 trips afield, I saw only one wood duck in the Rockland County area; in 1936, on 139 trips, I saw only 17. During

the 1950s and 1960s, it was possible to see twice that number on a half-day canoe trip on the Hackensack in late summer. Today it is probable that an observer can find a pair on any given day, except in winter, and it is possible at certain points in autumn to see a large flock.

Some of the larger counts: July 20, 1956, a female with 20 young, in two sizes from two broods at Lake De Forest (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens); Oct. 23 1960, a count of 57 at Iona Island (John C. Orth); Oct. 5, 1964 at least 25 at Congers Lake (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed); Nov. 3, 1961, between 50 and 60 at Iona Island (the Steffenses); Oct. 16, 1973, an accurate count of 314 at dusk on a small pond beside the machine shop of the Lamont-Doherty Geological Observatory at Palisades (Anthony F. Amos); Oct. 1, 1975, the fall maximum of 266 at the

same pond (Amos); Nov. 6, 1975, 122 birds, same site and same observer; Feb. 29, 1976, 27 birds, same site and same observer; May 18, 1976, 71 birds, same site and same observer.

It would be difficult if not impossible to compartment occurrence by season, but it may be said that this species is marked by an influx about Mar. 10 and is sharply rarer after about Nov. 23. It has been recorded five times on the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts (seven birds in 1947, one each in 1964, 1966; and 1969, and two in 1975) and twice on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts (one each in 1948 and 1955).

**1983 Addenda** -- Five additional winter records in 1978, 1979, and 1980.



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## REDHEAD

*Aythya americana*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	winter visitant, less common than canvasback
1878-82	Mearns	transient visitant, common at times
1898	Chapman	regular transient visitant, occasional winter visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient visitant, Apr. 1 to 14 and Oct. 12 to 28
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	fairly common transient on the Hudson
1927	Kuerzi	rare transient and winter visitant, Feb. 2 to Apr. 4 and Nov. 1 to Jan. 18
1940	Carr	rare migrant; one record for Lake Tiorati, Apr. 3 and 4, 1939
1942	Cruickshank	rather rarer than in Griscom's time
1960	Orth	casual rare transient, still only one record
1976	Current status	an uncommon migrant and winter visitant 20 years ago but no reliable record at all since 1964

Except for the decade of the 1950s, this duck seems always to have been very rare in our region in modern times, even when the closely related canvasback, ring-necked duck, and scaup were thriving. About half of our 18 records

have been in winter, including six appearances on the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts (ten in 1948, two each in 1949 and 1952, one in 1954, four in 1955, four in 1956) and one on the Bear Mountain Christmas Count (a single

bird in 1963). The rest of the records are evenly divided between spring and fall. The earliest fall date is Oct. 26, 1952, four birds at Stony Point (John C. Orth); the latest spring date is Apr. 4,

1939 at Lake Tiorati (William H. Carr, Kenneth M. Lewis). Maximum number is ten, on the 1948 RAS Christmas Count.

## RING-NECKED DUCK

*Aythya collaris*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	transient on coast, winter visitant in the interior
1878-82	Mearns	occasional transient visitant
1898	Chapman	very rare transient
1898	Fisher	accidental visitant, in April
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	very rare everywhere in the area
1927	Kuerzi	very rare transient, Jan. 11 to Apr. 6
1940	Carr	uncommon migrant, more numerous in spring
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common transient, very uncommon in winter
1960	Orth	regular fairly common transient, occasional in winter
1976	Current status	very common migrant, fairly common

Like the redhead but unlike the canvasback and, to a lesser extent, the scaup, this species is found primarily on the lakes, both in-Rockland County and in the Park portion of the Highlands. It may have reached a peak of abundance in the mid-1950s, when daily counts were highest, but

it remains regular in both spring and fall.

**Spring:** Mar. 14, 1957, a flock of 95 on Congers Lake (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper) to May 7, 1976 at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos).

**Fall:** Oct. 5, 1963 at Congers Lake (Morton Isler) to Nov. 25, 1954 at Piermont (Thomas Dow). High counts of 100-plus on Nov. 1, 1957 and 200-plus on Nov. 18, 1956 at Lake Tiorati (John C. Orth).

**Winter:** On 14 of the 29 Rockland Audubon

Society Christmas Counts, including highs of 25 birds in 1953, 26 in 1956, 24 in 1964, 60 in 1965, and 30 in 1975. On the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, only a single bird in 1954. A high late-winter count of 125-plus on Congers Lake on Mar. 4, 1955 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper).



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## CANVASBACK

*Aythya valisineria*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	sparingly on Hudson and coast
1878-82	Mearns	fairly common transient and winter visitant
1898	Chapman	uncommon transient visitant
1898	Fisher	rare transient visitant
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	rare transient visitant, but increasing
1927	Kuerzi	regular transient visitant, Oct. 23 to Apr. 11; most in February
1940	Carr	regular transient fall and spring; winters
1942	Cruickshank	usually rare, but the Hudson off Croton is a favored spot
1960	Orth	regular common, winter visitant in recent years
1976	Current status	common to very common winter visitant; very abundant in the 1950s

Numbers of this duck have been rising in the past 40 years, though there may have been a dip since 1960. In the course of 139 field trips in 1936, I saw only six birds, but I had seen none in 172 trips afield in the previous year. Since 1960, we have had Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count highs of 115 in 1966, 240 in

1970, 71 in 1971, and 108 in 1974. Other high winter counts include 170 birds off Piermont and Grand View on Jan. 9, 1965 (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed), 30 in the same area of the Tappan Zee on Nov. 24, 1966 (the Deeds), and 51 at Piermont Pier on Feb. 9, 1976 (Anthony F. Amos).

These counts are not in the same order of magnitude as those of the 1950s, chiefly in the cove on the south side of Stony Point. High numbers then included 100 at Stony Point on Nov. 17, 1951 (RAS field trip); 500 at the same place on the Dec. 26, 1953 RAS Christmas Count (John C. Orth party); 250-plus at the same place on the Dec. 26, 1954 Count (Orth party); 400-plus on the Hudson at Palisades on Feb. 10, 1957 (David G. Hill), 1,400 at Stony Point on Dec. 3, 1958 (the Deeds); 1,096, same place, on Dec. 14, 1959 (Eugene R. Brown), 572 in same place on the Dec. 26, 1959 RAS Christmas Count.

This species has been recorded on 23 of the 29

RAS Christmas Counts and on 12 of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, including 147 birds in 1954, 176 in 1958, and 610 in 1959.

Canvasbacks are rare before Nov. 1 and after Mar. 25. Extreme dates are Oct. 25, 1969, one bird on Rockland Lake (RAS field trip) and May 2, 1976 at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos).

**1983 Addenda** -- Some amazingly high counts: 4,000+ at Cornwall Bay and 2,000 at Iona Island on Nov. 12, 1979; 7,500 at Cornwall Bay on Nov. 20, 1980; 550 at Piermont Pier and 650 at Stony Point on Dec. 10, 1981; 1,200 at Stony Point on Dec. 18, 1981; 4,000 at Piermont Pier on Dec. 31, 1981 (Peter Derven); 5,000+ at Cornwall Bay on Nov. 21, 1982.



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## GREATER SCAUP

*Aythya marila*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	spring and fall visitant
1878-82	Mearns	very abundant transient and winter visitant
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient, Mar. 22 to Apr. 13 and Oct. 4 to Dec. 3
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	both scaup collectively, common in late March and early November
1927	Kuerzi	common transient and winter visitant, Oct. 17 to Apr. 24; one May 23 record
1940	Carr	regular transient, March-May and October-January
1942	Cruickshank	"one of our most abundant and best known ducks"
1960	Orth	irregular fairly common spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	very common to abundant migrant and winter visitant, casual summer visitant

It is ironic that the American Ornithologists' Union, in its 1973 Checklist, retained the separate species status of the two scaup, which are virtually indistinguishable in the field except

under extraordinary circumstances, while it combined the very different European and green-winged teal and continued to lump the quite distinctive grackles into one species. On

the theory, unproven but widely held, that the greater scaup is the commoner of the two scaup, we tend to throw all records not otherwise identified into this species. But the matter of positive, no putative, identification needs both more study and "more luck in (a) having sunlight strike the male bird's head just right or (b) having the bird fly and thus display its wing stripe. Even then, mistakes can be made; I have seen a mallard drake in brilliant sunlight swim in one direction showing an iridescent green head, then turn around and swim back showing a deep purple head.

Whichever the species, scaup have been recorded 20 times on the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts, often with only two to six birds but also with some high numbers: 61 in 1954, 99 in 1959, 174 in 1965, 68 in 1966, and 218 in 1975. It has been recorded three times on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, with a high of six in 1957. The maximum one-day count

at a single point is 400 at Rockland Lake on Nov. 5, 1966 (RAS field trip). Scaup appear both on the Hudson River and on the lakes, depending in winter more on ice conditions than any other obvious factor.

The earliest fall date is Sept. 15, 1968, a female at Piermont Pier (RAS field trip), but this may have been a summering vagrant--a female scaup was at the Pier in early summer of 1970 and 1972 and throughout the summer of 1973. The next earliest fall date, perhaps more representative, is Oct. 14, 1956 on the Hudson off Grand View (David O. Hill). The latest spring date is May 19, 1957 (Edward D. Treacy, Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens). In summer, a possibly injured bird was at Grassy Point on July 22, 1951 (Eugene R. Brown, Robert F. Deed), and Anthony F. Amos observed a female again at Piermont Pier from June 26, 1973 through the rest of the summer.



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## LESSER SCAUP

*Aythya affinis*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	very common on coast, prefers lesser streams
1878-82	Mearns	common transient and winter visitant
1898	Chapman	common transient visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient, Mar. 22 to Apr. 13 and Oct. 4 to Dec. 3
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	see above species
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon transient, Mar. 3 to Apr. 18; July 14; Oct. 18 to Nov. 20
1940	Carr	regular transient, March-May and October-January
1942	Cruickshank	fairly common transient, very uncommon winter visitant, extremely rare summer vagrant
1960	Orth	irregular rare spring and fall transient; Park lakes
1976	Current status	probably only fairly common migrant, rare to uncommon winter visitant, casual summer visitant

Scaup collectively have increased by 75% to 100% in the past 40 years and—perhaps through closer observation—this species has increased even more than the greater scaup in

the past 25 years, judging by the number of reports. As previously mentioned, the status of the two scaup remains in doubt. Only reports of males are counted for the lesser scaup.

**Spring:** Mar. 14, 1953 on Rockland Lake (Robert F. Deed) to May 12, 1973 at Cornwall (L. Van Etten, reported in July 1973 "Kingbird").

**Summer:** June 1, 1969 at Piermont Pier (Mr. and Mrs. Deed, Donald S. Deed), July 6, 1975 at the Pier (Anthony F. Amos), with two pairs later in the summer, a pair on Aug. 6 (Amos), and a female, presumably from this pair, on Aug. 10, (the Deeds).

**Fall:** Sept. 20, 1934 in Bear Mountain Park (William H. Carr, H. A. Hochbaum, Daniel B. Beard) to Oct. 30, 1959, three on Lake Tiorati

(John C. Orth).

**Winter:** Dec. 2, 1951 on Lake Tiorati (Mr. and Mrs. Orth), Dec. 2, 1975 at Piermont Pier (Amos); eight dates at the Pier in January and February, 1976, with a maximum of 24 birds on Feb. 15, 1976 (Amos), Jan. 15, 1935 in Bear Mountain Park (Beard, Hochbaum); Feb. 19, 1950 on the Hudson River (Betty Barron, Helene Stansbury).

**1983 Addenda** -- A pair at Piermont Pier July 26 to Aug. 11, 1978.



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## TUFTED DUCK

### *Aythya fuligula*

A recent accidental, discovered on Rockland Lake on Feb. 29, 1976 by Eugene R. Brown and seen that day by others, including Anthony F. Amos, who photographed this male bird

associating with scaup and bufflehead. Seen also at the same place on Mar. 4, 6, and finally 7 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Nancy Sickels).

## COMMON GOLDENEYE

*Bucephala clangula*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	winter visitant, coast and interior
1878-82	Mearns	very abundant transient and winter visitant
1898	Chapman	fairly common transient and winter resident
1898	Fisher	common transient and winter visitant
1908	Brownell	winter visitant
1923	Griscom	uncommon winter visitant
1927	Kuerzi	common winter visitant, Nov. 1 to Apr. 25; May 19
1940	Carr	regular transient in fall, winter, spring
1942	Cruickshank	in winter, "the second most common diving duck"
1960	Orth	regular fairly common winter visitant
1976	Current status	uncommon winter visitant, declining

Until 20 years ago, this species and the common merganser were the diving ducks most abundant on the Tappan Zee and Haverstraw Bay. My own totals were 402 goldeneyes in 1935 and 765 in 1936 with one-day maximum counts of 100 and 146 respectively. In recent years, an

equally active birder would find it hard to count 100 in a season. In 1934 through 1941, the Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Count included only the portion of the Hudson River from Piermont Pier south to Alpine, N.J., yet it recorded 30 goldeneyes each in 1934 and 1935,

80 in 1936, three in icebound 1937, 15 in 1940, and 22 in 1941. The Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Count, started in 1947, takes in most of the Rockland County riverfront (from Tomkins Cove south to the mouth of the Sparkill Creek, just south of Piermont Pier). In its first decade, numbers of goldeneyes compared favorably with the Bronx County Bird Club counts, reaching a high of 155 birds in 1954. In the 1960s, however, the high was only 57 birds in 1963. The species was missed in 1973 for the first time; the six counts in the 1970s have scored 5-2-1-0-0-7. One encouraging note: on Feb. 9,

1976, Anthony F. Amos found the month's maximum of 51 goldeneyes at Piermont Pier, much the highest count in recent winters.

The earliest fall date is Oct. 30, 1959, when John C. Orth saw several birds on Lake Tiorati. The latest spring date is May 20 1950 at Congers Lake (Eugene R. Brown, Robert F. Deed). Our area also has three slightly earlier records of: single birds, a male and two females, for May 13 and 14, weeks after most goldeneyes have gone north.



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## BARROW'S GOLDENEYE

### *Bucephala islandica*

At least a hypothetical accidental visitant, based on one record for Lake Tiorati on Apr. 25, 1954 (Rockland Audubon Society field trip led by Frank R. Steffens) and on Apr. 29, 1954 (John C. Orth). On the former date, what was believed to be an immature male was studied by telescope at close range and was also observed in flight. Park Naturalist Orth also studied skins

at the American Museum of Natural History and expressed confidence in the identification; he included the record in his 1960 checklist of Park birds. Concededly, though, the date and the occurrence on an inland lake do not seem typical of this species, and the record is not included in Bull's "Birds of New York State."

## BUFFLEHEAD

### *Bucephala albeola*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	autumn, winter, and spring
1878-82	Mearns	very common transient visitant
1898	Chapman	fairly common transient and winter resident
1898	Fisher	fairly common transient visitant
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	rare winter visitant
1927	Kuerzi	regular winter visitant, Oct. 22 to Apr. 12
1940	Carr	rare and irregular migrant, April and November records
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon transient and winter visitant
1960	Orth	regular uncommon spring and fall transient, occasional in winter
1976	Current status	common winter visitant

The bufflehead has gained greatly in regularity and in numbers during the past 40 years. In 1935 and 1936, I had respectively four and six birds per year; today, in season, a dozen or two dozen birds can be seen any day on Rockland Lake or at Piermont Pier. It is less common

upriver in winter, having been recorded only three times on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts—in 1953, 1956, and 1957 (the maximum of 11 birds)—in contrast to 18 times on the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts (maximum of 36 birds in 1965).

The earliest fall date is Oct. 31, 1957, three birds on Lake Tiorati (John C. Orth). The latest spring date is May 19, 1968, a female at Piermont Pier (Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Deed, Donald S. Deed). An isolated summer date is June 18, 1973, a

male possibly oiled, near Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos).

**1983 Addenda** -- A new maximum count of 90 at Cornwall Bay Nov. 8, 1978.



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## LONG-TAILED DUCK [OLDSQUAW]

*Clangula hyemalis*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	one of the most common winter visitants
1878-82	Mearns	very abundant transient and winter visitant
1898	Chapman	common winter resident
1898	Fisher	fairly common winter visitant, Dec. 4 to Apr. 6
1908	Brownell	fairly common winter visitant
1923	Griscom	rare winter visitant
1927	Kuerzi	uncommon winter visitant, Oct. 12 to May 15
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	irregular on the Hudson River
1960	Orth	casual very rare transient; one Park record
1976	Current status	rare winter visitant, casual in summer

This is still a rare duck, though the pace of records has been accelerating. In 1935 I had none on 172 field trips; in 1936, four on 139 trips. The species has appeared four times on the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts (1953, 1957, 1963, and 1964, with three

birds in 1964) but never on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts. We have only about 15 records, 11 of them since 1956. All are of single birds except on the 1964 RAS Christmas Count.

Dates range from Nov. 4, 1956 at Grassy Point (Edward D. Treacy) to Apr. 20, 1958, a female at Congers Lake (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens). Summer dates are for females at Piermont Pier on June 15, 1973 and June 16, 1974, both

records by Anthony F. Amos.

**1983 Addenda** -- At least five new records, with a maximum of 30 birds at Cornwall Bay on Nov. 3, 1981.



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## COMMON EIDER

*Somateria mollissima*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

**1983 Addenda** -- A new species: a female on Sept. 26, 1981 at Cornwall Bay, studied at distances as close as 60 feet for two hours by 18

members of Mearns Bird Club (Kenneth McDermott et al.).



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## WHITE-WINGED SCOTER

*Melanitta deglandi*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	in large flocks, October to April
1878-82	Mearns	very abundant transient, occasional winter visitant
1898	Chapman	common transient and winter resident
1898	Fisher	fairly common transient visitant
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	occasional on Hudson, Sept. 24 to May 15
1940	Carr	uncommon irregular migrant, May and November records
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon but regular on Hudson
1960	Orth	occasional uncommon spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	very rare migrant, occasionally in good-sized flocks; casual winter visitant

This is by far the least rare of the three scoters in our area, yet in more than 45 years of local birding I have seen it here only three times. Perhaps through more diligent observation, we have amassed 15 records since 1953, in contrast to only four or five previously, but we

have had no record in the past five years. In our time, obviously, the species has not been as abundant as Mearns found it in the Highlands in the 1870s.

High counts, all of migrant flocks on the Hudson

Valley flyway: 64 at Cornwall on Nov. 2, 1971 (Al and Barbara Merritt); 30 at Fort Montgomery on May 17, 1960 (John C. and Patricia Orth), and 11 at Bear Mountain on May 23, 1955 (Orth).

**Spring:** Apr. 21, 1955, eight off Grand View, (David O. Hill) to May 30, 1966, a male at Cornwall (Edward D. Treacy, Paul Jeheber).

**Fall:** Sept. 28, 1948 in Bear Mountain Park (Orth) to Nov. 6, 1956, two at Rockland Lake Landing (Eugene L. Brown).

**Winter:** Dec. 10, 1967, one bird, to Dec. 17, 1967, six birds, at Cornwall (the Merritts); Dec. 16, 1953 at Congers Lake (Dr. Marjorie R.

Hopper, Brown); Dec. 23, 1934 at Piermont Pier on Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Count (Roger T. Peterson, John F. Kuerzi, Robert F. Deed, et al.); Dec. 27, 1969, two near Stony Point, the species' only appearance on the Rockland Audubon Society's 29 Christmas Counts; Feb. 25, 1968, three at Piermont Pier (Bernd Gravenstein); Mar. 12, 1929 at Palisades (Thomas P. Gilman).

**1983 Addenda** -- Apparently regular as spring and fall migrant on Cornwall Bay, and an adult male with two immature males also seen at Piermont Pier on Oct. 30, 1981 (Deed).

## SURF SCOTER

### *Melanitta perspicillata*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	very common on coast during the winter
1878-82	Mearns	abundant transient visitant
1898	Chapman	common transient and winter visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient visitant, Oct. 7-22
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	fairly common on the Tappan Zee
1927	Kuerzi	irregular, sometimes occurs in small numbers
1940	Carr	rare migrant, one record
1942	Cruickshank	very rare on Hudson, usually only on the Tappan Zee
1960	Orth	casual very rare transient, two records
1976	Current status	casual migrant, accidental winter visitant

One can hardly understand the Mearns, Fisher, and Griscom appraisals of this bird's status. We still have only three records, one for each season except summer: Oct. 26, 1938 on the Hudson off Dunderberg (William H. Carr, Kenneth M. Lewis); Feb. 24, 1931 at Palisades

(Thomas P. Gilman); May 12, 1956, a flock of 60-plus, with seven white-winged, off Fort Montgomery (John C. Orth).

**1983 Addenda** -- Our fourth record: Cornwall Bay on Oct. 31, 1981.



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## BLACK SCOTER

*Melanitta nigra*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	by no means as common as the surf scoter
1878-82	Mearns	very abundant transient visitant
1898	Chapman	common winter resident
1898	Fisher	rare transient visitant, October
1908	Brownell	no mention
1923	Griscom	unknown at the present time except on the Hudson near Ossining
1927	Kuerzi	rare transient on the Hudson
1940	Carr	no mention
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon on Hudson, mostly on the Tappan Zee
1960	Orth	two recent records
1976	Current status	casual fall migrant

Again, one can hardly picture this species as Mearns saw it in the Highlands nearly a century ago. Our three fall records are: Oct. 4, 1957, a flock of 14 on Lake Skannatati in the Park (John C. Orth), Oct. 17, 1970, a small flock on Lake Tiorati in the Park (Mr. and Mrs. Frank R.

Steffens); Nov. 10, 1955, one picked up at Iona Island in poor condition (Orth).

**1983 Addenda** -- Three area records have been expanded by six more from Cornwall Bay, including the first spring dates: seven birds on

Apr. 1, 1978 to 20 birds on May 6, 1978. On Nov. 4, 1979, a new maximum count of 300 birds.



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## RUDDY DUCK

*Oxyura jamaicensis*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	rather rare on this coast
1878-82	Mearns	abundant transient visitant
1898	Chapman	fairly common transient visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient, Mar. 14 to Apr. 6 and Oct. 5-28
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	common transient visitant
1927	Kuerzi	irregular uncommon transient, Oct. 24 to Jan. 27 and Feb. 21 to May 15
1940	Carr	rare migrant, one spring and one fall record
1942	Cruickshank	"away from Long Island usually unknown"
1960	Orth	sporadic rare spring and fall transient; only one spring date
1976	Current status	very abundant migrant and winter visitant on the Tappan Zee, uncommon to fairly common elsewhere; casual in summer

Until 30 years ago, this was a rather rare duck in our area, seen regularly but in small numbers. Then, for some unknown reason, flocks began congregating on the Tappan Zee each October, usually near shore in the vicinity of the Grand

View-Piermont line, drifting north and south with the tide. For many years these birds have constituted the bulk of the ruddy duck total on the State Federation's waterfowl counts in mid-January. For the rest of the area, Carr's and

Orth's evaluations for the Bear Mountain-Harriman Park still hold true, and only a smattering of ruddies visit the Rockland County lakes, today primarily Rockland Lake but 20 years ago primarily Congers Lake.

Peak numbers are attained from late November to mid-December and again in late February. Indicative of the species' growth in abundance, I found only five all year on 172 field trips in 1935 and only four on 139 trips in 1936. On the six Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Counts (1934-41), the species was recorded only once: three birds in 1937. High counts in recent years, arranged chronologically, include: 400-plus on Apr. 1, 1955 (Robert F. Deed), 500-plus on Nov. 1, 1955 (Deed), 600-plus on Nov. 28, 1956 (Deed), 500 on Nov. 25, 1959 (Deed), an estimated 2,000 on Dec. 14, 1965 (Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Alma Polhemus), 1,350 in February, 1974 (Anthony F. Amos), 718 on Dec. 17, 1975 (Amos), 884 on Feb. 21, 1976 (Amos).

The ruddy has been recorded on 22 of the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts. as follows:

Year	Number		Year	Number
1947	30		1964	17
1948	78		1965	475
1949	150		1966	232
1952	200		1967	77
1953	131		1969	1
1954	211		1970	52
1956	321		1971	96
1957	194		1972	18
1959	1		1973	163
1962	6		1974	123
1963	6		1975	406

species has never been recorded on any of the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts.

The earliest fall date is Sept. 15, 1968, four at Piermont Pier (RAS field trip), but the first week of October is a more usual arrival time. Ruddies linger later into the spring than most ducks, with a count of 101 at the .Pier on May 1, 1976 (Amos) and records through May.

**Summer:** Aug. 24, 1970, three at the Pier (Donald S. Deed), July 22, 1973, female or immature at the Pier (the Deeds).



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## HOODED MERGANSER

*Lophodytes cucullatus*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	less common than the other two mergansers
1878-82	Mearns	common winter visitant
1898	Chapman	uncommon transient, occasional winter visitant
1898	Fisher	rare transient visitant, in March
1908	Brownell	transient visitant
1923	Griscom	rare transient visitant, in March
1927	Kuerzi	rare transient and winter visitant, Oct. 24 to Jan. 6 and Feb. 20 to Apr. 6
1940	Carr	regular transient, more common in spring; may winter
1942	Cruickshank	regular but by no means common
1960	Orth	regular fairly common spring and fall transient
1976	Current status	uncommon migrant, rare to very rare winter visitant

This merganser, found more often on the lakes than on the Hudson River and more regularly on the Bear Mountain lakes than elsewhere, has not changed much in occurrence in the past 40 years. In 1935, I had one; in 1936, two. Even today a birder cannot be sure of finding one,

even in the seasonal peaks of November and late March through April. Numbers in anyone place rarely exceed five, though there is one exceptional count of 26 on Nov. 17, 1963 for Lakes Nawahunta and Skannatati (John C. Orth). For many years, smallish Nawahunta was

the one best place in the area to look for this duck. Only in the last half dozen years have records been made on the open Hudson at Nyack and Piermont Pier.

The species has been recorded only three times on the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts: in 1957 (four birds), 1965 and 1971 (two birds). But it has scored six times on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts: in 1946, 1956 (four

birds), 1957 (two birds), 1962, 1967, and 1968 (two birds).

The earliest fall date is Sept. 21, 1950 at Iona Island marsh (John C. Orth, Peter Smith). The latest spring date is May 19, 1957 (Edward D. Treacy, Dr. Marjorie R. Hopper, Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Steffens). In most years the latest spring date is about Apr. 20.



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## COMMON MERGANSER

*Mergus merganser*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	autumn and winter; breeds in interior of the state
1878-82	Mearns	common winter visitant
1898	Chapman	uncommon winter visitant, Nov. to April
1898	Fisher	fairly common transient, Jan. 1 to Mar. 8
1908	Brownell	uncommon, winter visitant
1923	Griscom	very common winter visitant
1927	Kuerzi	common winter visitant, Nov. 1 to May 13
1940	Carr	regular transient, November to May
1942	Cruickshank	common winter visitant
1960	Orth	regular very common winter visitant
1976	Current status	very abundant winter visitant 20 years ago, now only fairly common to common

This species, like the goldeneye, has declined sharply as a typical winter duck of the Hudson River. In 1935, I totaled 236; in 1936, I had 1,247, with flocks of 150, and 275. Today a count of more than 20 at any point is

exceptional. However, the species has been missed only once on the 29 Rockland Audubon Society Christmas Counts: in 1969. It has been missed four times on the 28 Bear Mountain Christmas Counts: 1955, 1969, 1970, and 1971.

High counts: On the RAS Christmas Count, the maximum numbers have been 245 in 1949, 390 in 1953, 265 in 1955, 78 in 1958, 81 in 1960, 67 in 1967, 61 in 1973, and 32 in 1975--a steady downtrend in the peaks. On the Bear Mountain Christmas Counts, high marks were 165 in 1947, 182 in 1950, 189 in 1951, 71 in 1956, 68 in 1965, and no count higher than 15 since 1965. At Piermont Pier alone in the Bronx County Bird Club Christmas Count of 1936, the count was 150. Aside from the Christmas Counts, an RAS field trip on Feb. 27, 1955 saw an estimated 1,000 on the Hudson near Grassy Point, and

Bull's "Birds of New York State" refers to a count of 2,300 in the Haverstraw area on Feb. 24, 1952. The peak for the entire winter of 1975-76 at Piermont Pier was 13 birds on Dec. 21, 1975 (Anthony F. Amos).

The earliest fall date is Nov. 1, 1936 at Piermont (Robert F. Deed), and the latest spring date is May 16, 1976, two at Piermont Pier (Amos).

**1983 Addenda** -- On June 10-11, 1983, a male and three or four females at the north end of Lake De Forest (Deed et al.). Our first record later than May 16.



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

## RED-BREASTED MERGANSER

*Mergus serrator*



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells

1844	De Kay	breeds in interior of state
1878-82	Mearns	very abundant transient and winter visitant
1898	Chapman	abundant transient visitant
1898	Fisher	common transient, December through April
1908	Brownell	common winter visitant
1923	Griscom	very rare on the Hudson except in the Tappan Zee, where it occurs irregularly
1927	Kuerzi	fairly common transient and winter visitant, Oct. 15 to May 23
1940	Carr	rare, irregular migrant, winter and spring
1942	Cruickshank	uncommon but regular on Hudson
1960	Orth	occasional rare winter visitant
1976	Current status	rare winter visitant, increasing in recent years

From Mearns to Griscom we see a steep downward curve that may have been correcting itself in the past five or six years. In 1935, I totaled four birds; in 1936, none. The species has been recorded on nine of the 29 Rockland

Audubon Society Christmas Counts: 1947, 1948 (two birds), 1949 (two), 1950 (three), 1959. 1965 (two). 1966 (three), 1970 (five), and 1971. It has been recorded only once on the 28 Bear Mountain Counts: five birds in 1950.

Since 1950 we have had 13 records, but nine of these records have come since 1965, establishing a degree of regularity. The only daily counts exceeding three birds are: Jan. 2, 1961, a flock of 13 on the Tappan Zee off Grand View (Edwin Gambe); Mar. 24, 1968, eight at

Cornwall (Al and Barbara Merritt), Apr. 1, 1969, six close to the Nyack shore (Alma Polhemus).

The earliest fall date is Oct. 22, 1929 at Bear Mountain (William H. Carr). The latest spring dates are May 27 and 28, 1974, a female at Piermont Pier (Anthony F. Amos).



Photo Credit: Alan W. Wells