

WATERBIRD COUNT 2018

Summary

Sunset Point, Presque Isle State Park, Erie County, Pa.

By

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Time in the field this year was 133 hours, up from 128 hours last year. A few days were spent at the mouth of Walnut Creek when Sunset Point could not be accessed. It was a very slow season with waterbird numbers down about 27% from last season. There were relatively low counts for 14 species of waterfowl, which is about half the waterfowl species recorded. There were uppers and downers this season. Northern Shoveler was completely missed, the first time since 2004. Red-breasted Mergansers had the lowest numbers of any other species of waterfowl. lowest season total since 2003, the lowest birds per party hour since 1988, and the lowest daily high since 1998. On the upside, the single day high of unidentified scaup was broken with a whopping 25,000 birds in one flock off the mouth of Walnut Creek. Red-throated Loon had the highest single day count of 56 since 2005 when 63 were counted. This was the second time Pacific Loon was recorded on the waterbird count. Common Loon had a poor season, the lowest season total since 2004 and the lowest birds per party hour since 1999. The second record of Great Egret was established this season. Little Gull was missed, the first time since 2003. A significant non-waterbird related record was established with Bald Eagle. They had a record season total of 45 sightings and a record single day high of ten birds. There were no new bird species added to the waterbird count this season. Misses this season that are likely annual were Brant, Northern Shoveler, King Eider, Harlequin Duck, Purple Sandpiper, Red Phalarope, Black-legged Kittiwake, Little Gull, and Pomarine Jaeger.

Thanks to all of the birders who stopped by and helped at times with the count. I would also like to thank the park staff at Presque Isle State Park, especially the Operations Manager, Mathew Greene, for giving me permission to conduct the survey, by car, from the hard pan sand ridge adjacent to Sunset Point. This site allowed me a clear 180 degree scan of the lake, and the increased elevation gave me the height needed to identify distant birds.

Below are the specifics of the count:

Time period.....	Sept. 10, 2018 to Jan. 4, 2019
Hours observed.....	133
Total species of water related birds.....	44
Total species of other birds.....	14
Total of all species of birds.....	58
Total individuals of water related birds.....	68974

Total individuals of other species of birds.....	2171
Total of all individuals.....	71145

Season Totals by Species Waterbirds

Snow Goose.....	3
Canada Goose.....	180
Tundra Swan.....	589
Wood Duck.....	5
Gadwall.....	191
American Wigeon.....	35
American Black Duck.....	201
Mallard.....	315
Northern Pintail.....	64
Green-winged Teal.....	53
Canvasback.....	419
Redhead.....	471
Ring-necked Duck.....	33
Greater Scaup.....	577
Lesser Scaup.....	12866
Scaup species.....	29323
Surf Scoter.....	140
White-winged Scoter.....	254
Black Scoter.....	40
Surf/Black Scoter.....	199
Long-tailed Duck.....	1805
Bufflehead.....	494
Common Goldeneye.....	601
Hooded Merganser.....	83
Common Merganser.....	67
Red-breasted Merganser.....	12137

Ruddy Duck.....	21
Red-throated Loon.....	232
Pacific Loon.....	1
Common Loon.....	896
Loon species.....	62
Pied-billed Grebe.....	2
Horned Grebe.....	877
Red-necked Grebe.....	5
Eared Grebe.....	1
Double-crested Cormorant.....	5226
Great Blue Heron.....	4
Great Egret.....	1
Black-bellied Plover.....	2
Killdeer.....	1
Greater Yellowlegs.....	1
Sanderling.....	28
White-rumped Sandpiper.....	1
Pectoral Sandpiper.....	1
Dunlin.....	261
Unidentified shorebird.....	11
Parasitic Jaeger.....	1
Common Tern.....	95

Non-water related birds

Turkey Vulture.....	9
Bald Eagle.....	45
Red-tailed Hawk.....	1
Merlin.....	12
Peregrine Falcon.....	6
Short-eared Owl.....	1
Eastern Phoebe.....	4
Ruby-crowned Kinglet.....	5
Kinglet species.....	10
Yellow-rumped Warbler.....	1
Unidentified warbler.....	2
White-throated Sparrow.....	1
Dark-eyed Junco.....	2
Snow Bunting.....	6
Red-winged Blackbird.....	1430

Common Grackle.....	200
Unidentified blackbird.....	300
Small passerine.....	41

Non-bird related

Unidentified bat.....	1
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