WATERBIRD COUNT 2025

Summary

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

by

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The objective of the count is to record movement of birds, primarily birds associated with water, along the south shore of Lake Erie, whether they are actual migrants, or birds just moving from roosting and feeding sites. This is my 39th season of counting birds from this site.

Time in the field this year was 169.5 hours down from 217 hours last year mainly because of storm activity or little bird movement. 552 birds per hour were recorded this year, down about 12% birds per hour from last year.

There were no record high waterfowl counts recorded this season, except for a single day count of 152 Green-winged Teal, the highest count since 1995. Tundra Swan were nearly absent with just a meagre 18 birds counted one morning. They clearly bypassed the count site or moved through during the night. Most divers stayed well offshore this year, which may be attributed to the lower lake level. I theorize that this may be due to the food source being in cooler deeper water far offshore. Canvasbacks have not recovered much in the last few years, with a slight uptick this year from last year. White-winged Scoters continue in high volume with the last four years having the greatest number of birds recorded since the counts began in 1987. However, Surf and Black scoters have been on a downward trend. All three merganser species were low with Red-breasted Mergansers down by 39% from last year. Surprisingly, puddle duck numbers were up a bit from last year except for Gadwall and Mallard. Shorebirds were light, but Dunlin made up for the shortfall with a whopping 700 recorded in just one day for a new record single day count. After last year's high of 21 Purple Sandpipers, none were recorded this season! Loon and grebe numbers continue to fall with Common Loon and Horned Grebe showing the greatest decline in recent years. Passerines didn't put on much of a show this season with few crossing the lake and minimal numbers moving along the lake shore. No new passerines were recorded. A Hoary Bat made the lake crossing successfully for the second year in a row. A Silver-haired Bat crossed the lake one morning for a third record since the counts began in 1987.

Please note that the left column indicates species totals for the 2025 season while the right column indicates species totals for the 2024 season. Increases in number of individuals per species this year from last year is highlighted in green, while decreases in number of individuals per species this year from last year is highlighted in red.

There were a few rare or uncommon sightings including Red-necked Grebe, Little Gull, Lesser Black-backed, Glaucous Gull, Parasitic Jaeger, and Common Raven. However, some expected rarities were missed including Snow Goose, Brant, King Eider, and Purple Sandpiper.

Thanks to all the birders who stopped for visit and helped at times with the count. A special thanks goes to DCNR for allowing me to park on the high sand plain west of the beach 10 bathhouse, and for the maintenance staff for not blocking access to the site.

Below are the specifics of the count:

Time period	Aug. 25 to Dec. 25, 2025
Hours observed	169.5
Total species of water related birds	42
Total species of other birds	15
Total of all species of birds	57
Total individuals of water related birds	93379
Total individuals of other species of birds	260
Total of all individuals	93639

Season Totals by Species
Waterbirds

	Season 2025	Season 2024
Canada Goose	506	380
Tundra Swan	18	71
Wood Duck	6	1
Gadwall	68	177
American Wigeon	172	51
American Black Duck	298	161
Mallard	246	639
Northern Shoveler	15	19
Northern Pintail	328	243
Green-winged Teal	284	245
Blue-winged/Green-winged teal	30	
Canvasback	123	18
Redhead	351	323
Ring-necked Duck	213	206
Greater Scaup	8012	6766
Lesser Scaup	2872	1269
Scaup species	28472	54344
Surf Scoter	215	277

White-winged Scoter	1049	1890
Black Scoter	8	39
Surf/Black scoter	128	170
Long-tailed Duck	98	73
Bufflehead	404	580
Common Goldeneye	760	481
Hooded Merganser	5	91
Common Merganser	460	598
Red-breasted Merganser	24590	40315
Common/Red-breasted merganser	21	5
Ruddy Duck	16	59
Red-throated Loon	107	152
Common Loon	499	795
Loon species	43	126
Pied-billed Grebe	1	1
Horned Grebe	150	681
Red-necked Grebe	2	8
Double-crested Cormorant	28392	20619
Great Blue Heron	1	9
Black-bellied Plover	1	15
Semipalmated Plover	1	
Spotted Sandpiper	2	
Sanderling	62	50
Dunlin	790	237
Calidris species	11	1
Little Gull	1	1
Lesser Black-backed Gull	2	
Glaucous Gull	1	
Common Tern	249	446
Common/Forster's tern	57	43
Parasitic Jaeger	1	2

Non-water related birds

Turkey Vulture	38	73
Bald Eagle	54	71
Merlin	22	25
Peregrine Falcon	7	3
Merlin/Peregrine Falcon	1	
Eastern Phoebe	1	
Common Raven	1	1
Tree Swallow	2	
Purple Martin	10	93

Barn Swallow	3	
Kinglet species	3	6
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	1
Sparrow	1	----
Small Passerine	14	8
European Starling	9	
Snow Bunting	72	175
American Tree Sparrow	25	
Dark-eyed Junco	4	

Non-bird related

Hoary Bat	1	1
Silver-haired Bat	1	
Unidentified bat	2	1
Monarch	6	34