

## 1986 CAPE COD LAKE AND POND WATERFOWL SURVEY

by Blair Nikula

The Cape Cod Bird Club's fourth annual waterfowl survey was conducted on the weekend of December 6-7, 1986, with twenty-six observers censusing 239 ponds and recording 10,702 birds of twenty-five species.

Despite the impression among participants that numbers were low, the totals were essentially the same as in 1985. A large increase in scaup numbers (+897 birds), however, was responsible for maintaining the level in 1986. Except for scaup, most species were somewhat diminished. The most notable declines were recorded in Canada Goose (-23%), Hooded Merganser (-65%), Common Merganser (-71%), and American Coot (-55%). Substantial increases were recorded for Mute Swan (+57%), Redhead (+1750%), scaup (+32%), Common Goldeneye (+31%) and Bufflehead (+40%). As usual, Falmouth was far ahead of all other towns with a total of 4470 birds (53% of which were scaup) on forty-seven ponds for an average of 95.1 birds per pond. Yarmouth was a distant second with 1590 birds on eighteen ponds and an 88.3 birds per pond average.

Unlike last year, Falmouth also had the best variety -- eighteen species, whereas Barnstable fell to second place with sixteen species. Lowly Wellfleet again brought up the rear with a meager total of 18 birds of five species and a microscopic 1.6 birds per pond average.

Among the the individual ponds, Cedar Lake in North Falmouth took top honors with 2021 birds, due to a massive flock of scaup estimated at 2000 birds. Swan Pond in Dennis (690 birds) and Salt Pond in Falmouth (623 birds) were next on the list. Three ponds, Shawme Pond in Sandwich, Pilgrim Lake in Orleans, and Herring Pond in Eastham tied for the best variety with ten species each. The overall average was 44.8 birds per pond, a slight increase over last year's 44.1 birds per pond.

Two Tundra Swans reported from Great Pond in Eastham were by far the rarest species reported. A Northern Shoveler in Falmouth and a Horned Grebe in Brewster were also somewhat unusual. The most disturbing trend this year was the drop in the number of participants, down from thirty-one to twenty-six with the result that a handful of people performed yeoman service to insure complete coverage. This census becomes more valuable with each passing year, and it is hoped that adequate coverage will be maintained in the future. A town-by-town summary is presented in the table.