

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Duck Populations

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

Seeing redhead ducks in the local pond on my drive home from work is a little treat. Overall redheads aren't rare ducks, but the Southern Appalachians are not a hotbed of duck activity and it's nice to see some migrant ducks amidst the resident mallards that seem to dominate the local waterfowl scene.

Duck populations have increased in overall abundance over last year, and their habitat conditions have improved, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Trends in Duck Breeding Populations 2014 report. These conclusions are based on a 2014 waterfowl survey by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Canadian Wildlife Service. The annual duck survey encompasses more than 2 million square miles of waterfowl habitat across Alaska, north-central and northeastern U.S. states; and south-central, eastern and northern Canada.

The preliminary estimate for the total duck population is 49.2 million birds, an 8 percent increase over last year's estimate of 45.6 million birds, and 43 percent above the long-term average.

The report also provides abundance estimates for individual duck species. Most species' populations, such as mallard and blue-winged teal, remain significantly above the long-term average, while others, including scaup and pintail are still below.

Waterfowl population surveys and monitoring programs are critical components of successful waterfowl management and guide the Service's waterfowl conservation programs.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.