

Comments on comparability 1993-1997 and 2013-2017.

How comparable are counting conditions from 1993-1997 and 2013-2017? It would be great if we could say they were identical. Perhaps only on a species by species basis could we argue the effect on the birds counted of changing conditions. Below are some of the factors to be considered.

Habitat

We have seen how the environment has changed. Trees are older or dead or chopped down. Shrubbery is denser etc So there have been habitat changes. In May of 2017 7 large and dead trees beside the road were cut down. They were located in the first few hundred meters of the count area.

Miscellaneous

Note there were exceptionally high-water levels on Lake Ontario in May 2017 and high levels of precipitation. Water remained in the south end of the count area until the end of May. See Figure 3B May 13, 2017.

Counters

During the 1993-1995 surveys at PWW and PWE, over 25 persons contributed some time to counting. Eight of these counters were involved on a regular basis for three or more years. The average age of these eight observers was 57, with a range from 35 to 80. During the 2013-2015 surveys at PWW over 15 persons contributed some time to counting. Twelve counters were involved on a regular basis, including four individuals that participated in 1993-1997. The average age of these twelve counters was 58, with a range of 31 to 83.

In 1993-1997 1 or 2 counters were typical although on some occasions a third counter was present. In 2013-2017 the average number of counters was higher between 2.3 and 2.4. This increase was in part due to the addition of more birders with limited experience.

It would be reasonable to say that the presence of at least one experienced birder on all count days insured that effort was reasonably similar in both time periods.

Weather

John Stevens noted in 2014

“While the counts were conducted every day, two of the days that I did it were definitely affected by the weather. The day that you, Carol and I did it in the heavy

rain when it was difficult to hear and see was definitely detrimental. The day that Nancy Smith, Judy Robins and I did it, the fog rolled in just after we started and curtailed visibility to the extent that it was impossible to see the tops of the trees from right beneath them. This latter may have been a great day without the fog.”

Duration of count

In the 1993-1997 count the counters were advised to spend at least 1 hour on the count. In some case they spent more time but this was not logged. In the 2013-2017 count the start and end times were recorded. Average times over the 5 years were between 59 and 66 minutes.