



Happy New Year to you!

One great thing about living near Salem Sound is the opportunity to see waterbirds from the far north that winter in our coastal waters.

In this newsletter, back by popular demand, we have included a guide to some of Salem Sound's Winter Waterfowl.

Also, this month we have a new feature called "Ask Salem Sound Coastwatch;" some Salem Sound Coastwatch updates; and information on upcoming activities that you may find interesting.

The Winter Waterfowl of Salem Sound

Here are a few of the ducks and waterbirds you can see in Salem Sound. Most of these birds breed in Canada and Alaska during the summer then fly "south" to our coast for the winter.

Remember, you don't have to be a seasoned birder to enjoy seeing these magnificent creatures. Just grab some binoculars and head out to a beach or rocky coastline--and let us know your favorite spot for viewing!

1. Red-breasted Merganser

The Red-breasted Merganser is a diving duck notable for the shaggy crest on the back of its head and a long thin orange/red bill. It sits low in the water.

Photos by Glen Tepke, www.pbase.com/gtepke



Male



Female

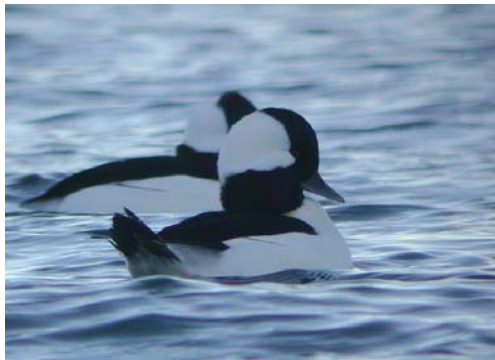
2. Common Eider

The Common Eider, at 25 inches long is the largest duck in the Northern Hemisphere. The male has distinctive black and white plumage; the female is brown. The common eider eats mollusks (especially blue mussels) crustaceans, and sea urchins, all of which are abundant in Salem Sound.



Photos by Glen Tepke, www.pbase.com/gtepke

3. Bufflehead



The Bufflehead is a tiny black and white duck with a rounded head. It is the smallest duck that winters in our coastal waters. Buffleheads are very frisky and entertaining to watch.

Photo by Glen Tepke, www.pbase.com/gtepke

4. Brant

The Brant is a small black and white goose with similar markings to the Canada Goose, but the Brant is smaller, and the white marking on its cheek is not as distinct. The Brant's favorite food is eelgrass-- there are significant eelgrass beds along the coast in Beverlv and Manchester-by-the-Sea.

Photo by Robert Buchsbaum



5. Common Loon



Did you know that the Common Loon winters off our coast? Many of us think of the Loon as living on lakes in the north woods. And it does, in the summer--when it has its distinctive checkerboard pattern on its back. The winter plumage is black and gray. Look for a large waterbird--the Common Loon can be up to 36" long.

Photo by Glen Tepke, www.pbase.com/gtepke

6. Common Goldeneye

The Common Goldeneye is a medium sized duck with yellow eyes. It has a triangular shaped head and the male has a distinct white patch on its cheek. The female has a chocolate-colored head. The Goldeneye is also called the Whistler because its wings make whistling sounds when it flies.

Photo by Glen Tepke, www.pbase.com/gtepke



If you would like to learn more about these and other birds, here are some easy-to-follow web sites:

[Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#)
[Ducks Unlimited Waterfowl ID Gallery](#)

Many thanks to Robert Buchsbaum and Glen Tepke for the use of their pictures. You can see all of Glen's wonderful bird photographs at the following link: [Glen Tepke's Photo Gallery](#)

"Ask Salem Sound Coastwatch"

Welcome to our new column. Each month we will feature at least one question that has been submitted to us about Salem Sound.

This just in from a concerned citizen:

Q. I saw someone dumping snow from a parking lot near my house. Doesn't road salt pollute the water? Who should I report this to?

A. You're right. Snow removed from paved surfaces is not only contaminated with salt, but with sand, automotive pollutants such as oil, and litter--all of which threaten the environment.

To protect waterbodies, drinking water and aquatic habitats, the MA Department of Environmental Protection prohibits dumping snow into any Waterbody-- including rivers, the ocean, reservoirs, ponds or wetlands unless it is a dire emergency. The snow disposal policy is available at www.mass.gov/dep/water/laws/snowdisp.htm.



If you see anyone dumping snow in the water, contact your local Conservation Agent.

Feel free to contact us with your questions or concerns. We can be reached at 978-741-7900 or info@salemsound.org.

--News From Salem Sound Coastwatch

- **Channel 5's Chronicle Features SSCW**

In December, Chronicle, Channel 5's daily news magazine, produced a story about invasive species in New England which included the local invasive tunicate *Didemnum vexillum*.

Barbara Warren, SSCW's Executive Director, was interviewed on the show and several volunteers were filmed monitoring a rocky tidepool at Winter Island.

Didemnum, a fouling species with no known predators, is rapidly spreading through Salem Sound. It forms long rope like lobes along floating docks, pilings, ship hulls and rocks. It can also grow along the sea bottom covering and smothering bivalves and destroying their habitat.



SSCW is sharing monitoring data on this and other invasive species with state and federal programs.

- **2009 Greenscapes Program**

SSCW is now recruiting towns to participate in the 2009 Greenscapes Program, which educates homeowners about environmentally friendly lawn and yard care practices.



Let your Conservation Agent or DPW Director know that you would like your city or town to participate in Greenscapes.

- **SSCW Volunteers Honored**

Curtis Dragon and Lynn-Andrea Vago were named "Volunteers of the Year" at the SSCW Annual Meeting.

Curtis, a certified organic landscaper and arborist who owns Earth Landscape in Salem, has worked tirelessly on the Greenscapes program and has been an invaluable advisor.

Lynn-Andrea, a freelance graphic designer in Manchester-by-the-Sea, devoted countless hours to creating and designing Salem Sound Coastwatch's new brochure. If you haven't seen it we would be happy to send you a copy, or you can see it at www.salemsound.org under "[About Us.](#)"

FYI --Upcoming Events

- **February 4 - "[A Cruise Aboard the USCG Barque EAGLE](#)"** - Free Lecture sponsored by Schooner FAME and Salem Maritime National Historic Site.

Staff and volunteers from the Friendship, Salem's tall ship, share their experiences sailing to the Galapagos Islands on the Eagle. 7 PM St. Joseph's Hall, 160 Derby St., Salem.

- **February 9 - 13 - Salem State College Darwin Festival**
This week-long celebration of Darwin's birth includes numerous lectures and videos, all free and open to the public. [Click here](#) for more information.