

A DECADE OF WINTERING BRANT IN BOSTON HARBOR

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Boston Harbor typically supports some two percent of the total wintering population of Atlantic Brant, as determined by R. E. Kirby and H. H. Obrecht, III (Journal of Field Ornithology 53:333, 1982). The accompanying table summarizes maximum harbor counts of this species from November to March during the winters 1972-73 to 1982-83. Prior to 1979-80 the counts were taken by individuals at a few locations - harbor-wide, the actual number of birds present almost certainly must have been greater. Thereafter, the counts were obtained in single-day whole-harbor TASL censuses coordinated by Craig Jackson and Soheil Zendehe - these values may well be accurate to within a few percent.

The observed number of Brant over this decade indicates that Boston Harbor (defined here as encompassing the area westward of a line from the north tip of Nantasket Beach to the eastern tip of Nahant) is an important wintering area for this species. At times, as the table shows, the harbor may contain two or three thousand birds. They are generally concentrated, depending on the state of the tide, in small areas: the Fore River, along Wollaston Beach, and in Squantum. Unfortunately, all of these locations are very vulnerable to ecological disruption. Oil tankers are common in the harbor, raw sewage flows from the Nut Island "treatment" plant, and the Squantum peninsula continues (especially now!) to be threatened by development and adjunct population pressures.

Boston Harbor Maximum Brant Counts 1972-83.

Date/ Reference	Number of Brant	Percent of Kirby-Obrecht Totals for Same Period
March 1973		
<u>BOEM</u> 1:58, 1973	200	0.5
March 1974		
<u>BOEM</u> 2:80, 1974	1200	1.4
March 1975		
<u>BOEM</u> 3:100, 1975	2-3000	2.3-3.4
March 1976		
<u>BOEM</u> 4:80, 1976	1000	0.8
March 1977		
<u>BOEM</u> 5:89, 1977	1000	1.4
December 1977		
<u>BOEM</u> 6:63, 1978	1031	2.4
December 1978		
<u>BOEM</u> 7:70, 1979	2500	5.7
March 1980 (TASL)	1309	1.9
March 1981 (TASL)	2247	
November 1981 (TASL)	1697	
January 1983 (TASL)	933 (incomplete)	