

Dunkirk Harbor

*Located on the southern shore of Lake Erie in Western New York
A Watchable Wildlife Site*



Thomas Janik

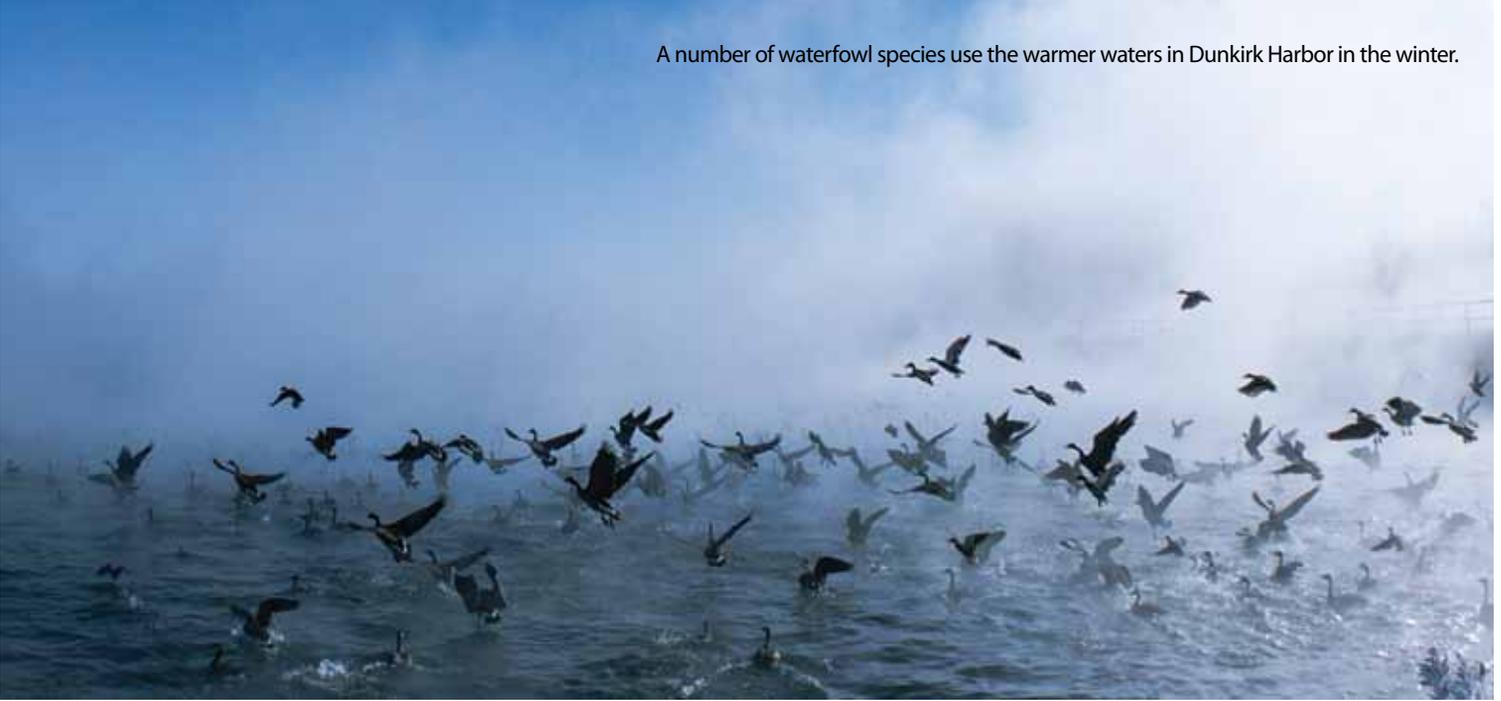


Surrounded by businesses, residences, urban parks and a power plant, Dunkirk Harbor may not appear to be a winter birdwatcher's paradise, but don't let the setting fool you—people drive hundreds of miles to see the incredible array of waterfowl found here in the winter months. A breakwall shelters the harbor from prevailing winds and waves, and heated discharge water from the nearby power plant keeps it ice-free, attracting large rafts of diving ducks. The heated water also attracts fish, and anglers come to the harbor to take advantage of concentrations of steelhead and brown trout found here in the winter. Many visitors use the long, paved pier to access the harbor.



red-breasted merganser

A number of waterfowl species use the warmer waters in Dunkirk Harbor in the winter.



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Wildlife to Watch

Dunkirk Harbor is a designated Important Bird Area and wintertime visitors can observe migratory birds, including waterfowl, loons, grebes and gulls as they rest and feed here. When Lake Erie freezes to its maximum extent, impressive flocks of common goldeneyes, common mergansers, buffleheads and diving ducks such as canvasback and greater and lesser scaup can be found here in the open water.

In spring, huge numbers of migrating red-breasted mergansers occur in the harbor, along with common and Caspian terns. Late summer brings Forster's terns, and a few shorebirds like willets and Baird's sandpipers have been seen. During fall migration, a few red-throated loons and red-necked grebes and good flights of common loons may be observed. A brief flight of brant (a small goose) occurs in late October or early November.



lesser scaup

Jeff Nadler



Site Features

Site Notes: The main pier, reached by turning toward the lake off NY 5 at Central Avenue in Dunkirk, is the primary vantage point for bird-watching. Other vantage points include Memorial Park (west of the pier), the Northern Chautauqua Conservation Club (at the foot of Mullet St., west of Memorial Park), the foot of Deer and Main Sts. (east of the pier), and a 12-block stretch along Lakeside Blvd. (from Main St. east to Wright Park).

Accessibility: Free parking spaces run the entire length of the main pier. Restrooms are nearby. Other harbor access points to the east and west include convenient parking as well.

Directions: Take I-90 to exit 59 (Dunkirk/Fredonia). Turn right onto NY 60 (Bennett Rd), go approximately 2.0 miles and turn left onto NY 5. At Central Ave, turn right onto the pier.

Contact: City of Dunkirk,
716-366-9879, www.dunkirktoday.com

