

Counting Waterbirds

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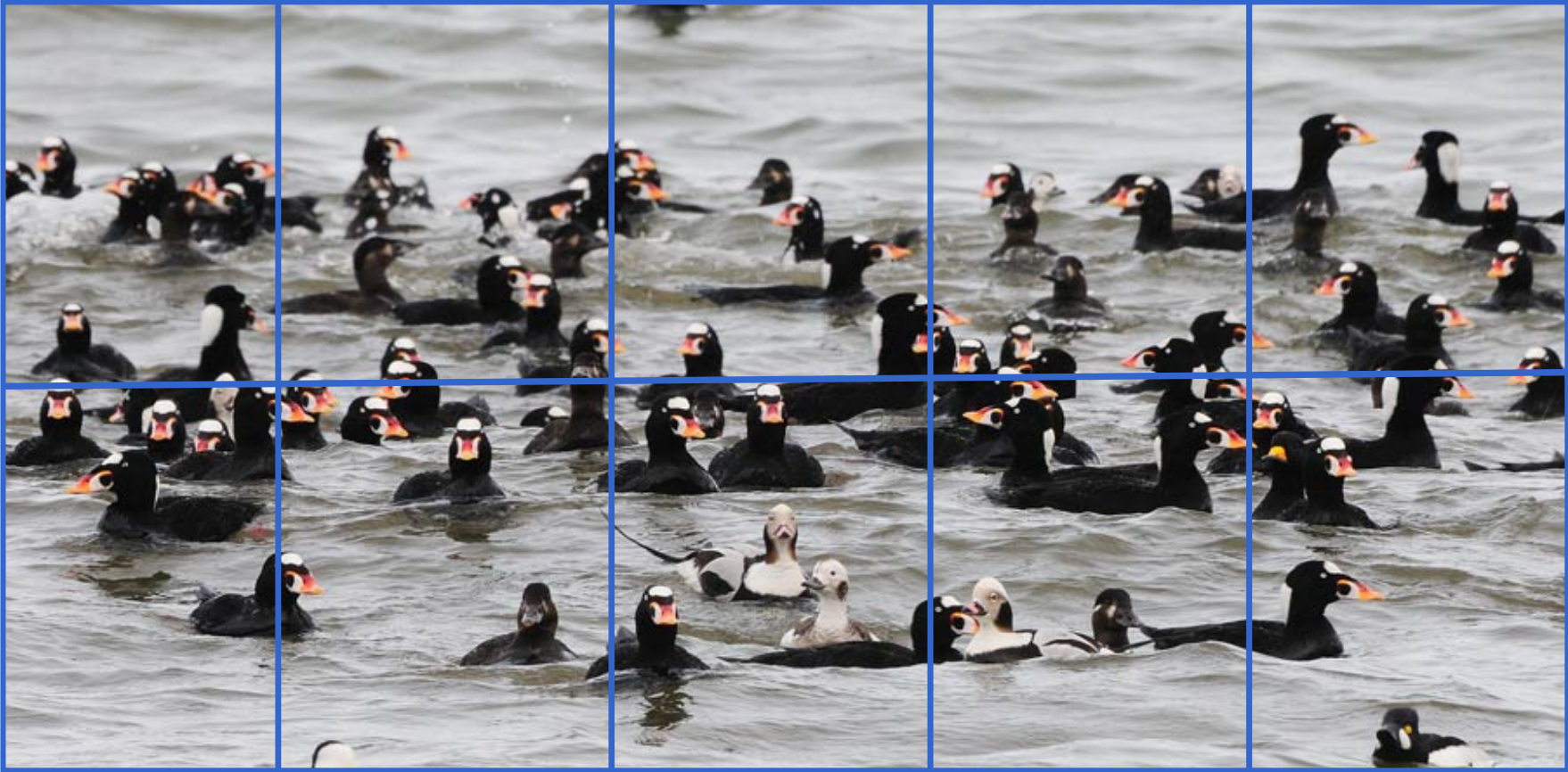


Counting Waterbirds

- Assess flock size & species composition:
 - How many birds? How many species? Look for any unusual or rare species.
 - Is the flock dense or well spaced out?
 - Are the birds actively diving, flying, is there a predator around spooking them (e.g., Peregrine Falcon)
- Can you count them easily by individual bird?
 - If not, estimate using appropriate sub-group classes
- If multiple species, estimate composition along transects



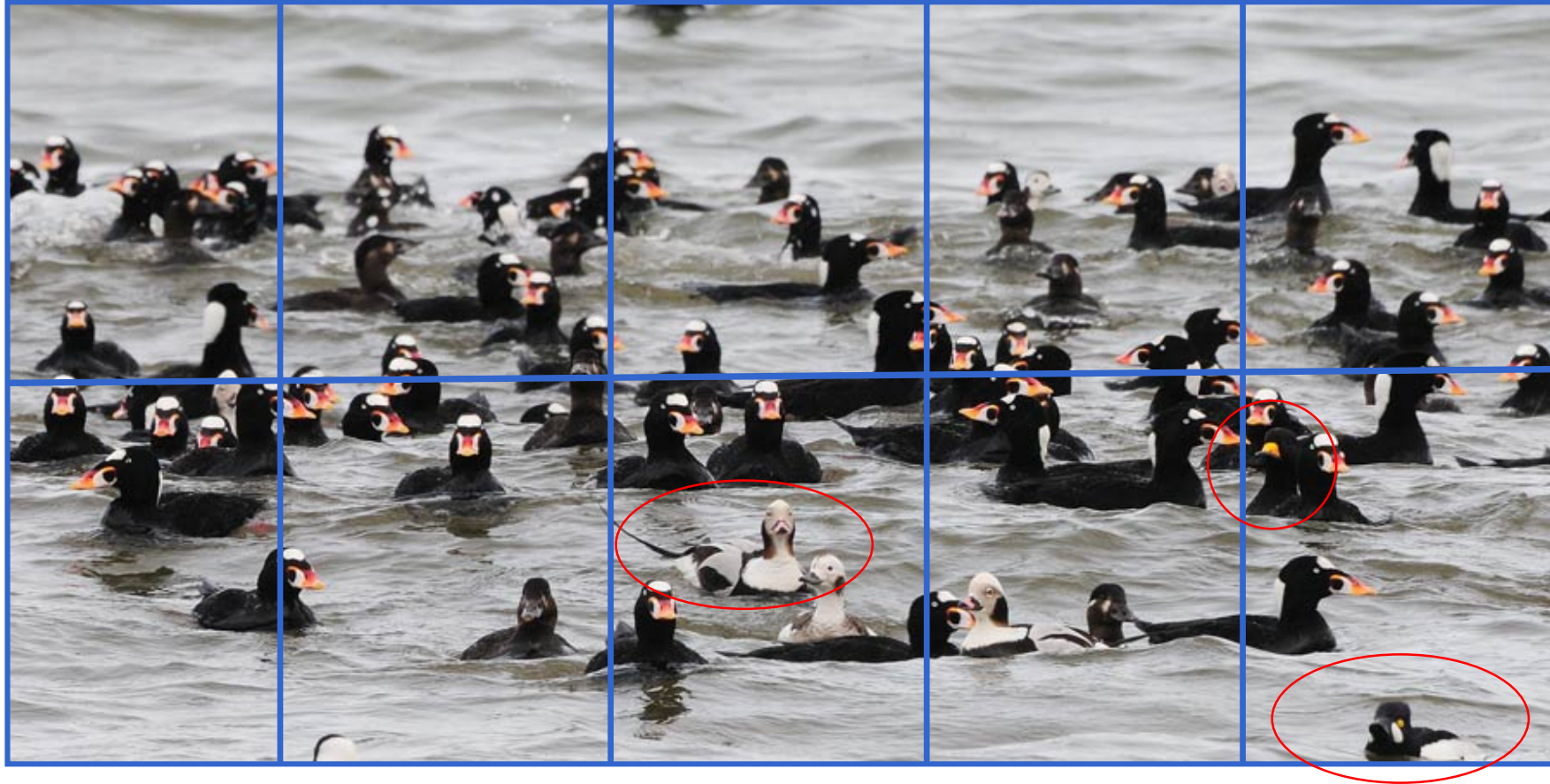
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How many species? How many individuals?

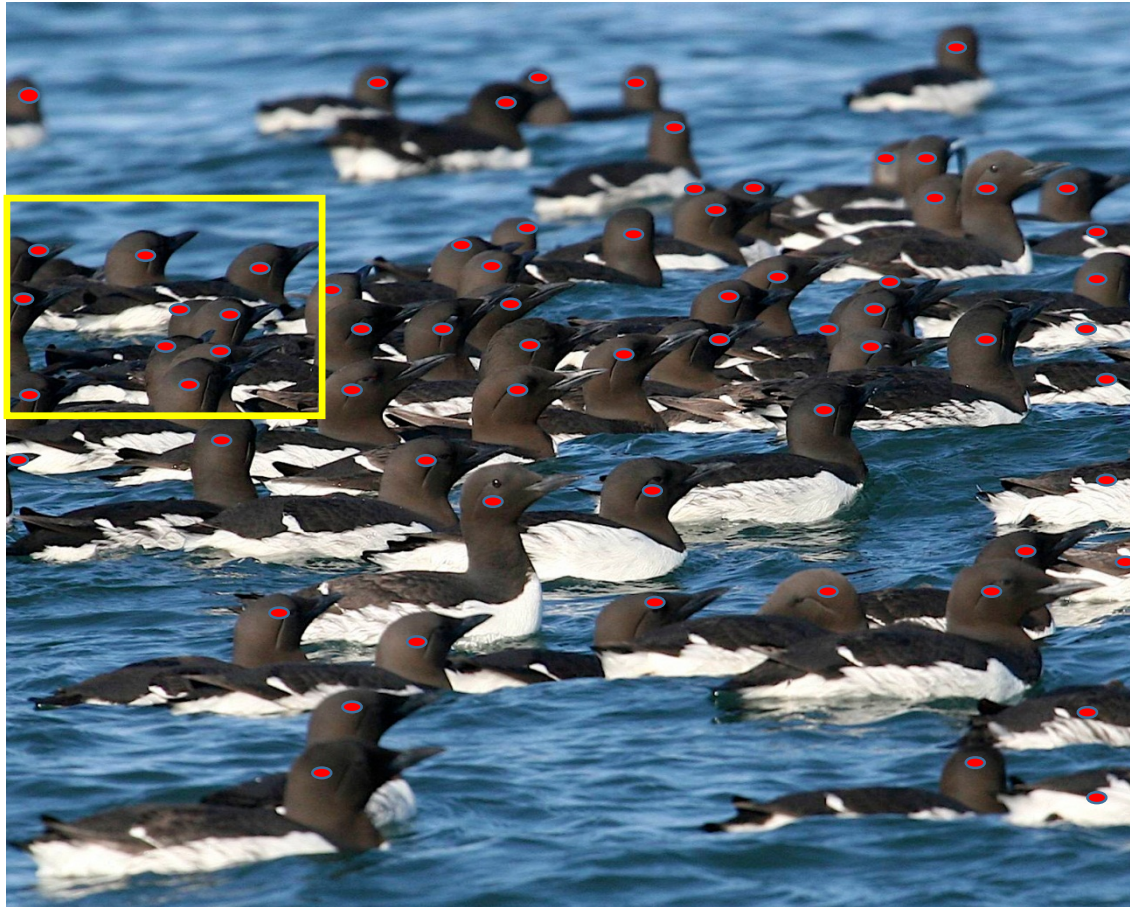
Photo: M. Yip

Counting Waterbirds



71 Surf Scoter, 6 Long-tailed Duck, 1 Barrow's Goldeneye, 1 Black Scoter
95% Surf Scoter, 4% Long-tailed Duck, 1% other

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There are 10 birds in the yellow box. How many birds are there in the flock?

Photo: R. Tizard

Counting Waterbirds



68 Common Murre in
this flock!

Photo: R. Tizard

Counting Waterbirds



Note how the size of your count-estimate frame decreases with distance.

← 56 birds

Photo: M. Lemon

Estimating flocks of many 1,000s best done in sub-groups of 500-1,000. There's probably ~2,000 birds in this picture.
Estimate the species composition by counting the # of each species along transects through the flock.

Estimate of ~60 Dunlin to ~20 Westerns → $\frac{3}{4}$ Dunlin and $\frac{1}{4}$ Westerns → ~1,500 Dunlin and ~500 Westerns

Further Counting Help

- [Ebird](#)
 - For bird counting tips and techniques for counting single-species flocks see [Bird Counting 101](#)
 - For guidance for counting large numbers, moving flocks, and mixed species flocks see [Bird Counting 201](#)



- Practice with an experienced person, it gets easier!
- Start with smaller, easier flocks and progress to larger groups.
- Take photos to try to calibrate your eye.
- Have fun!