



## **Weekly Waterfowl Report**

**Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks**

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### **January 18, 2017 Edition**

The following report is a compilation of public and private land reports and habitat assessments during the week ending January 15, 2017.

Jackson, MS – For the second week in a row, Mississippi experienced an extreme range of temperatures last week. The hard freeze from the previous weekend extended through Monday, but by midweek, temperatures had reached well above average. The early January aerial waterfowl survey coincided with the extreme cold period, and thus, record numbers of ducks were estimated across the Mississippi Delta. When shallow wetlands began to thaw last week, an abundance of hungry waterfowl were waiting to feed on sources of high energy such as flooded agricultural fields. Hunting success in general experienced an increase immediately following the thaw, and has somewhat decreased as warm weather has settled in. Shallowly flooded wetland habitat availability is currently still below average for the majority of the state, but significant chances of rainfall are forecasted for much of the state in the coming weeks. More rainfall will be required before natural flooding will occur along most rivers and smaller tributaries. Water levels in the Mississippi River and many other river systems in the Delta are currently holding steady or slightly rising.

As weather and habitat conditions change, waterfowl concentrations and behaviors will most likely change as well. Warm weather allows waterfowl to spend the majority of their time resting and courting potential mates, rather than constantly feeding to keep energy levels high. During these times, hunting conditions can be difficult, and hunters may need to seek out resting areas such as flooded timber or other densely vegetated areas. Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) across the Mississippi Delta experienced an increase in hunting success after the freeze, and have seen a moderate decrease in the last several days. Harvest on many WMAs has been dominated by green-winged teal. Very large flocks of light geese and white-fronted geese have remained in the Mississippi Delta region, and hunters have continued to have success in harvesting these species. As always, availability of quality wetland habitat and weather conditions will greatly influence early season waterfowl harvest on both private and public lands.

Waterfowl draw hunt applications for WMAs have now ended, but several WMAs still have stand-by opportunity or open access for waterfowl hunters seeking to hunt public land. The late January aerial waterfowl survey is scheduled to be flown next week, and the report will be posted on Waterfowl Program website at [www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl](http://www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl). The Waterfowl Program website also lists links to regulations and habitat information for specific WMAs and other public lands throughout the state, as well as other general waterfowl information as it becomes available.

**Table 1:** Water levels and general duck abundance ratings for selected Wildlife Management Areas.

<b>WMA</b>	<b>Water Levels*</b>	<b>Bird Abundance</b>
Charlie Capps	100%	Medium-High
Howard Miller	100%	Medium-High
Indianola	100%	Medium
Mahannah	100%	Medium
Malmaison**	100%	Medium
Muscadine Farms	90%	Low-Medium
O'Keefe	100%	Low-Medium
Twin Oaks	100%	Low-Medium
Trim Cane	15%	Low
Tuscumbia	15%	Low

\*Indicates percentage of impoundments with water levels sufficient enough to hunt.

\*\*Malmaison WMA green-tree reservoir is being managed at a lower pumped water level than in past years. Rainfall will also be captured by water control structures throughout the winter. Water levels do not include the McIntyre Scatters portion of the WMA, which will vary by rainfall and river levels.