



November 28, 2017 Weekly Waterfowl Report

Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks

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The following report is a compilation of public and private land reports and habitat assessments during the week ending November 26, 2017.

Jackson, MS – The duck hunting season opened over the Thanksgiving weekend, and harvest reports from public and private lands with managed water were very good. Relatively cool weather moved into the state just in time for the season opener, which made for desirable hunting conditions. With the lack of recent rainfall, some wetlands have experienced a decline in water levels over the last week. Unfortunately, no significant chances of rain are currently forecasted. Significant amounts of rainfall will be required to fill many of the state's low-lying areas before natural flooding can occur along most rivers and small tributaries. However, shallowly flooded and intensively managed wetland habitat availability is currently near average for this time of year in the Mississippi Delta. The national weather outlook predicts unseasonably warm temperatures this week and into the next, followed by another large cold front from the north by late next week. This weather pattern could produce a large waterfowl migration just in time for the third duck season segment in Mississippi.

Many state Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and intensively managed private lands across the Mississippi Delta are holding large numbers of ducks for this time of year. Several WMAs reported high waterfowl harvest for the opening weekend. Green-winged teal have made up a significant portion of waterfowl harvest reports, but several WMAs reported hunters filling their daily bag limits of mallards and gadwall. Large flocks of snow, blue, Ross's, and white-fronted geese have been observed using agricultural fields across the Delta, and public land hunters have harvested some geese while duck hunting. Waterfowl hunters should remember that as weather and habitat conditions change, bird concentrations and behaviors will most likely change as well. With temperatures rising, ducks typically will decrease their time spent feeding due to decreased energy requirements. This could mean lower activity levels overall, with birds spending more time loafing. However, Mississippi's waterfowl numbers are relatively high for November, so hunters may find continued success during the second duck season segment December 1 – 3. As always, availability of quality wetland habitat and weather conditions will greatly influence early season waterfowl harvest on both private and public lands.

The third draw period for WMA waterfowl draw hunts is now open for applications. Hunters are encouraged to apply for any WMAs and dates they may be interested in hunting. The December aerial waterfowl survey is scheduled to be flown the week of December 11. As soon as aerial waterfowl surveys are completed, the results and distribution maps will be posted on MDWFP's website. The Waterfowl Program website (www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl) 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 total duck abundance ratings for selected Wildlife Management Areas.

WMA	Water Levels*	Duck Abundance
Charlie Capps	90%	Medium
Howard Miller	90%	High
William C. "Billy" Deviney	90%	High
Mahannah	60%	Low
Malmaison**	50%	Low
Muscadine Farms	80%	Medium
O'Keefe	90%	Medium
Twin Oaks	60%	Low
Trim Cane	10%	Low
Tuscumbia	10%	Low

*Indicates percentage of water coverage in managed impoundments. Most impoundments are intentionally allowed to gradually fill to capacity over the course of the winter.

**Malmaison WMA green-tree reservoir is being managed at a lower pumped water level than in past years to better manage the existing bottomland hardwoods in the area. Rainfall will also be captured to supplement pumping throughout the winter to gradually flood the area.

Sunflower WMA Green-tree Reservoir (GTR) Flooding for 2017-18 Waterfowl Season

The GTRs below will be prepared for flooding this season by placing boards in water control structures and closing valves to allow accumulation of rainfall. No pumps are operational on Sunflower WMA currently. Waterfowl habitat will be limited until adequate rainfall is received. Normally, mid to late December and January is when suitable water levels begin to appear.

Long Bayou #7 GTR

South GTR #8 GTR (southeast portion only)

Sunflower GTR (west and southeast portions only)

Additional Wetland Areas on Sunflower WMA:

There are approximately 5,200 acres of low-lying sloughs, lakes, and other wetlands scattered across Sunflower WMA. Most of these areas have water control structures to allow for flooding.

Table 2: Total reported waterfowl harvest and man-days for selected Wildlife Management Areas.

WMA	Man-Days	Waterfowl Harvest	Avg. Birds/Hunter/Day
Charlie Capps	11	38	3.45
Howard Miller	85	395	4.65
William C. "Billy" Deviney	27	110	4.07
Mahannah	59	74	1.25
Malmaison**	198	124	0.63
Muscadine Farms	195	384	1.97
O'Keefe	213	358	1.68
Twin Oaks	N/A	N/A	N/A
Trim Cane*	0	0	0
Tuscumbia*	0	0	0

*Trim Cane and Tuscumbia have not yet received enough rainfall to flood impoundments, and have not yet been hunted for waterfowl.