



November 27, 2018 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 25, 2018.

Jackson, MS – The duck hunting season opened over the Thanksgiving weekend, and harvest reports from public and private lands with managed water were mixed, with some areas reporting great success while others were below average. Mississippi experienced a warming trend, with rain sweeping over much of the state during the afternoon of the season opener. Wetland habitat availability is currently ahead of “normal” levels for this time of year across much of Mississippi. These habitat conditions should be attractive to waterfowl and other migratory birds as they continue to arrive in Mississippi this fall and winter. Waterfowl numbers in the Mississippi Delta region are slightly below average for this time of year, overall, but mallard numbers are above average. The first aerial waterfowl survey of the season was completed recently, and the survey report with distribution maps is posted online at www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl. Survey observations revealed that ducks are heavily using large, managed complexes of high quality wetland habitat in the Mississippi Delta.

Several state Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and intensively managed private lands across the Mississippi Delta are reporting increasing numbers of ducks this week. For the opening weekend, green-winged teal made up a significant portion of waterfowl harvest reports, with gadwall, northern shovelers, and mallards also being harvested. Large flocks of snow, blue, Ross’s, and white-fronted geese have been observed entering the state recently. Waterfowl hunters should remember that as weather and habitat conditions change, bird concentrations and behaviors will most likely change as well. With temperatures rising throughout the week, ducks may decrease their time spent feeding due to decreased energy requirements. This could mean lower activity levels overall, with birds spending more time loafing. 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 17. As soon as aerial waterfowl surveys are completed, the results and distribution maps will be posted on MDWFP’s website. The Waterfowl Program web page (www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl) 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 total duck abundance ratings for selected Wildlife Management Areas.

WMA	Water Levels*	Duck Abundance
Charlie Capps	100%	Low
William C. "Billy" Deviney	90%	Medium
Howard Miller	100%	High
Lake George	80%	Low
Mahannah	100%	Medium
Malmaison**	40%	Low
Muscadine Farms	60%	Medium
O'Keefe	70%	Low
Pearl River	90%	Low
Sky Lake	60%	Low
Sunflower***	50%	Low
Twin Oaks	90%	Low
Trim Cane	10%	Low
Tuscumbia	15%	Low

*Indicates percentage of water coverage in all wetland areas. Most managed 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. Water level rating includes the McIntyre Scatters portion of the WMA.

*****Sunflower WMA Flooding Plans for 2018-19 Waterfowl Season**

The green-tree reservoirs below will be prepared for flooding this season by placing boards into water control structures and closing valves to allow for accumulation of rainfall. Waterfowl habitat and hunting areas will increase as winter rainfall continues. Normally, late December and January is when suitable water levels begin to appear.

Green Ash GTR (#3) (Forest Service Road 717)

Redline GTR (Fordice) (Forest Service Road 703)

South GTR, northwest portion only (#8 GTR) (Forest Service Road 710)

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 in them and will be the first areas

to flood on the WMA. These natural, low-lying areas often provide better habitat and hunting opportunities than the GTRs. A map of Sunflower WMA wetland areas can be found here: <http://www.mdwfp.com/media/256111/sunflower-wma-gtrs-and-slough-areas.pdf>

Table 2: Waterfowl harvest and man-days reported from November 17 – 23, 2018 for selected Wildlife Management Areas.

WMA	Man-Days	Waterfowl Harvest	Avg. Birds/Hunter/Day
Canal Section	228	105	0.46
Charlie Capps	15	41	2.73
Howard Miller	65	309	4.75
William "Billy" C. Deviney	23	11	0.48
Mahannah	59	116	1.97
Malmaison**	268	125	0.47
Muscadine Farms	116	107	0.92
Nanah Waiya	53	23	0.43
Okatibbee	76	33	0.43
O'Keefe	120	82	0.68
Old River	22	8	0.36
Pascagoula River	105	14	0.13
Shipland	49	6	0.12
Trim Cane*	0	0	N/A
Tuscumbia*	13	8	0.62
Twin Oaks	40	15	0.38
Ward Bayou	97	30	0.31

*Trim Cane and Tuscumbia Unit 2 have not yet received enough rainfall to flood impoundments and have not yet been hunted for waterfowl.