



January 8, 2019 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 January 4, 2019.

Jackson, MS – Mississippi's new year was ushered in with much higher than normal temperatures, followed by another significant rainfall event over much of the state late last week. Rainfall has continued to increase or maintain the already above-average wetland conditions in many areas, with some rivers and smaller tributaries reaching flood stage. This week's forecast predicts more seasonable temperatures by mid-week and another rainy weekend. Water levels in the Mississippi River and many other river systems remain very high and are predicted to rise in the coming days. Weather severity index models predict some southward movements of dabbling duck species this week from mid-latitude areas. However, abundant wetland habitat is available throughout much of the Mississippi Flyway due to heavy rainfall and backwater flooding.

Waterfowl hunting success on many public and private lands has slightly improved recently, but continues to be below average overall. Some areas have experienced localized success. Mallards, green-winged teal, and gadwall have made up a significant portion of recent waterfowl harvest reports. With an increasing amount of wetland habitat across the state, ducks have been observed spreading out into newly flooded areas to find new food resources. Duck hunters are encouraged to scout areas which may have recently become flooded, including low-lying areas near field drainages and forested areas along creeks and rivers. Very large flocks of snow, blue, Ross's, and white-fronted geese are still being observed using agricultural fields and wetlands across the Delta, and some waterfowl hunters have taken advantage by incorporating goose setups into their duck hunting strategies. With sustained mild weather conditions and high wetland habitat availability, waterfowl hunters are reminded to stay flexible with their hunting methods and locations when possible in order to find success. The availability of quality wetland habitat and weather conditions will continue to influence waterfowl harvest on both private and public lands as Mississippi's hunting season continues.

The early January aerial waterfowl survey is currently ongoing this week. Mississippi typically observes peak waterfowl numbers during the month of January, and biologists are hopeful that this trend will continue. A full report with waterfowl distribution maps will be available at www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl when the survey is completed. 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 general waterfowl information as it becomes available.

Table 1: Water levels and total duck abundance ratings for selected MDWFP Wildlife Management Areas.

WMA	Water Levels*	Duck Abundance
Charlie Capps	100%	Low
William C. "Billy" Deviney	100%	Low
Howard Miller	100%	Medium-High
Lake George	90%	Low
Mahannah	100%	Medium
Malmaison**	90%	Low
Muscadine Farms	90%	Low
O'Keefe	100%	Low
Pearl River	100%	Low
Sky Lake	80%	Low
Sunflower	75%	Low
Twin Oaks	90%	Low
Trim Cane	100%	Low
Tuscumbia	100%	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.

Table 2: Waterfowl harvest and man-days reported from December 29, 2018 – January 4, 2019 for selected MDWFP Wildlife Management Areas.

WMA	Man-Days	Waterfowl Harvest	Avg. Birds/Hunter/Day
Canal Section	113	170	1.5
Charlie Capps	12	15	1.3
Howard Miller	226	534	2.4
William "Billy" C. Deviney	39	25	0.6
Mahannah	113	113	1.0
Malmaison	252	169	0.7
Muscadine Farms	150	100	0.7
Okatibbee	3	10	3.3
O'Keefe	71	32	0.5
Old River	22	8	0.4
Pearl River	87	81	0.9
Sunflower	216	174	0.8
Trim Cane*	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tuscumbia	57	68	1.2
Twin Oaks	20	25	1.3

*Trim Cane WMA will hold its first waterfowl hunt of the season on January 9.