



Weekly Waterfowl Report
Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks
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December 21, 2016 Edition

The following report is a compilation of public and private land reports and habitat assessments during the week ending December 18, 2016.

Jackson, MS – Over the last week, harvest reports from public and private lands improved overall, likely due to favorable weather conditions. The week’s weather once again began with mild temperatures, but fell below the freezing point heading into the weekend. Wetland habitat availability was maintained over much of the state by small amounts of rainfall, but overall, habitat availability remains relatively low. The long-range forecast predicts unseasonably warm and rainy weather over the Christmas holidays. However, recent snowfall and extreme low temperatures throughout the Midwest could continue to provide incentive for waterfowl to proceed with their southern migrations. Significant amounts of rainfall will still be required to fill many of the state’s low-lying areas before natural flooding can occur along most rivers and small tributaries. Water levels in the Mississippi River and many other smaller river systems are currently stabilized or falling.

Waterfowl hunters should remember that as weather and habitat conditions change, bird concentrations and behaviors will most likely change as well. When newly flooded habitat becomes available, waterfowl will typically exploit newly flooded areas, and hunters may need to adjust hunting locations or tactics to keep success rates high. Also, during mild temperatures, waterfowl will not be forced to feed as heavily, which will often lead to a reduction in overall activity. Mild winter weather often leads to observations of waterfowl “loafing” and resting throughout the day since they no longer require high energy levels to maintain body heat and energy levels. These times of low activity can often be challenging for hunters. Many state Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) across the Mississippi Delta continue to experience great hunting success, and mallard numbers continue to be relatively high on several areas. Light geese and white-fronted geese continue to build in number across much of the Delta region, with some local areas holding very large flocks of geese. As always, availability of quality wetland habitat and weather conditions will greatly influence early season waterfowl harvest on both private and public lands.

The fourth draw period for WMA waterfowl draw hunts is still 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 currently underway, and as soon as surveys are completed, the results 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 general duck abundance ratings for selected Wildlife Management Areas.

WMA	Water Levels*	Bird Abundance
Charlie Capps	100%	Medium-High
Howard Miller	100%	High
Indianola	100%	Medium
Mahannah	100%	Medium
Malmaison**	100%	Medium
Muscadine Farms	90%	Medium
O'Keefe	90%	Low
Twin Oaks	100%	Low-Medium
Trim Cane	5%	Low
Tuscumbia	10%	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.