



## **Weekly Waterfowl Report**

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

**Houston Havens (662)299-0273, email: [houstonh@mdwfp.state.ms.us](mailto:houstonh@mdwfp.state.ms.us)**

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The following report is a compilation of public and private land reports and habitat assessments during the week ending January 8, 2017.

Jackson, MS – Mississippi experienced an extreme range of temperatures last week. Temperatures began much warmer than usual, but by midweek had plummeted to below normal and resulted in a hard freeze over much of the state. These conditions produced a significant increase in observed waterfowl numbers as widespread snow and ice swept from north to south. Wetland habitat availability was held stable by light rainfall in most areas; however, shallowly flooded wetland habitat availability is currently still below average for the majority of the state. Significant amounts of 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 falling. The long range forecast predicts more warm temperatures with significant chances of rain over the next ten days.

As weather and habitat conditions change, waterfowl concentrations and behaviors will most likely change as well. Following a hard freeze, waterfowl will generally feed more actively on grains and other sources high in carbohydrates to restore energy levels. When the majority of Mississippi's shallow wetlands froze over, waterfowl were forced to move to deeper, somewhat less desirable wetlands for foraging habitat. Now that shallow wetlands with high food densities are available again, waterfowl have been observed returning to these areas to feed. Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) across the Mississippi Delta have experienced a recent increase in hunting success. Species commonly harvested are green-winged teal, mallards, gadwall, and northern shovelers. Significant numbers of light geese and white-fronted geese have remained in the Mississippi Delta region, and hunters have also had 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 early January aerial waterfowl survey has recently been completed, and the report will be posted on Waterfowl Program website at [www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl](http://www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl). The late January aerial waterfowl survey is scheduled to be flown the week of January 23<sup>rd</sup>. Mississippi duck numbers typically peak during the month of January, and biologists are optimistic this trend will continue this year. 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%	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.