



Weekly Waterfowl Report
Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks
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November 29, 2016 Edition

The following report is a compilation of public and private land reports and habitat assessments during the week ending November 27, 2016.

Jackson, MS – The duck hunting season opened over the Thanksgiving weekend, and harvest reports from public and private lands with managed water were good. Relatively cool weather with north winds moved into the state just in time for the season opener, which improved hunting conditions. Wetland habitat availability remained low throughout last week, but the long-range forecast shows good chances of rainfall in the coming days with relatively cool weather returning late in the week. Shallowly flooded wetland habitat availability is currently still below average for the majority of the state. 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. The national weather outlook predicts a cold blast sweeping from the Northwestern U.S. to the Southeastern U.S. over the coming weekend. This weather pattern could produce a waterfowl migration just in time for the second duck season segment in Mississippi December 2 – 4.

Waterfowl hunters should remember that as habitat conditions change, bird concentrations and behaviors will most likely change as well. When newly flooded habitat becomes available, waterfowl will typically exploit the freshly flooded food resources. However, if cold fronts continue to push southward, newly arriving migrant waterfowl should also be arriving to take advantage of Mississippi's wetlands. Many state Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) across the Mississippi Delta are holding ducks, and several intensively managed WMAs reported high harvest for the opening weekend. Gadwall and 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. The first few large flocks of snow, blue, Ross's, and white-fronted geese have been observed using agricultural fields as well. 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 19. 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 general duck abundance ratings for selected Wildlife Management Areas.

WMA	Water Levels*	Bird Abundance
Charlie Capps	90%	High
Howard Miller	90%	Medium-High
Indianola	90%	Medium-High
Mahannah	70%	Medium
Malmaison**	60%	Medium
Muscadine Farms	70%	Medium
O'Keefe	70%	Low
Twin Oaks	60%	Low
Trim Cane	0%	Low
Tuscumbia	0%	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.