



November 21, 2017 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 19, 2017.

Jackson, MS – With the approaching duck season opening day on November 24, wetland habitat availability appears to be near “normal” levels for this time of year across much of Mississippi. As a result, waterfowl numbers are off to a very good start in many areas, particularly the Mississippi Delta. The first aerial waterfowl survey of the season was completed last week, and the survey report is posted online at www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl. Survey estimates indicate that above average waterfowl numbers are heavily using large, managed complexes of high quality wetland habitat in the Mississippi Delta.

Wetland habitat is typically in low supply during the month of November, and increases as winter rainfall is collected and water is artificially pumped into impoundments. While current habitat is once again limited in the Mississippi Delta, wetland availability is off to a much better start than last year. Areas that may not have surface water available yet are likely holding more ground moisture than this time last year, which should allow for quicker flooding when adequate rainfall is received. Some landowners and managers with pumping capabilities are currently providing critical wetland habitat, and are expecting quality hunting opportunities early in the hunting season as a result. In the weeks leading up to the waterfowl hunting season, managers of many Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) across the state have been pumping shallow water into waterfowl impoundments. Charlie Capps, William “Billy” C. Deviney (formerly Indianola), Malmaison, O’Keefe, Muscadine Farms, Mahannah, and Howard Miller WMAs are just a few of these areas providing quality early season wetland habitat. Recent field reports indicate that ducks have been settled into these areas for a couple of weeks. A large number of migrant snow, blue, Ross’s, and white-fronted geese have also begun to enter the state. Mid-latitude and northern states continue to receive cold fronts pulsing southward. Another such cold front is forecasted for this week across the Great Lakes region. Migration and hunting reports from states in the Midwest suggest that duck migration (including mallards) is continuing to progress southward. As always, availability of quality wetland habitat, combined with weather conditions, will greatly influence Mississippi’s waterfowl harvest on both private and public lands.

Hunting reports from the youth waterfowl day on November 18 were very good overall, with high numbers of birds observed. Northern shovelers and gadwall were the primary species harvested. The regular duck season will begin Friday, November 24, and the weather is forecasted to be relatively cool and clear for the opening weekend. The second round of WMA waterfowl draw hunt applications is currently open online. For more information regarding waterfowl in Mississippi, visit our website at www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl or call us at (601) 432-2199. The Waterfowl Program website lists links to regulations and habitat information for specific WMAs and other public lands throughout the state.

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

WMA	Water Levels*	Duck Abundance
Charlie Capps	90%	Medium-High
Howard Miller	90%	High
William C. "Billy" Deviney	80%	High
Mahannah	50%	Low
Malmaison**	50%	Medium
Muscadine Farms	80%	Medium-High
O'Keefe	90%	Medium
Twin Oaks	60%	Low
Trim Cane	10%	Low
Tuscumbia	10%	Low

*Indicates percentage of water coverage in managed impoundments. Most 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.

Sunflower WMA Green-tree Reservoir (GTR) Flooding for 2017-18 Waterfowl Season

The GTRs below will be prepared for flooding this season by placing boards into water control structures and closing valves to allow for accumulation of rainfall. No pumps are operational on Sunflower WMA currently. Waterfowl habitat and hunting areas will be limited until adequate rainfall is received. Normally, mid to late December and January is when suitable water levels begin to appear.

Long Bayou #7 GTR

South GTR #8 GTR (southeast portion only)

Sunflower GTR (west and southeast portions only)

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 to allow for flooding.