



December 5, 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 December 3, 2017.

Jackson, MS – A spring-like warmup occurred during the second duck hunting season segment, and hunting reports across the state declined overall. The absence of cold fronts from the north likely prevented incentives for ducks to continue their southward migrations into Mississippi. Also, the ducks that remained here in the state were not stressed by cold weather conditions, and were not forced to feed heavily for energy resources. This warm weather likely allowed birds to limit their movements and settle into more of a loafing pattern during the daytime. Once again, no significant rainfall was received across most of the state, and some wetlands continued to experience a decline in water levels over the last week. However, there are chances of rain in the forecast for the upcoming week. 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 large, sustained cold front from the north this week. This weather pattern could produce a large waterfowl migration as the main portion of the waterfowl hunting season begins.

Many state Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and intensively managed private lands across the Mississippi Delta are still holding relatively large numbers of ducks. Several WMAs reported high waterfowl harvest again for the second weekend, but most areas reported declines in harvest. Green-winged teal have made up a significant portion of waterfowl harvest reports. Although not a significant portion of the overall harvest, reported abundance and harvest of northern pintails has been relatively high for this time of year. Large flocks of snow, blue, Ross's, and white-fronted geese have been observed using agricultural fields across the Delta, and many waterfowl hunters turned their attention toward geese during the last week's warm, windy weather. Waterfowl hunters should remember that as weather and habitat conditions change, bird concentrations and behaviors will most likely change as well. As temperatures begin to decrease, ducks typically will increase their time spent feeding due to increased energy requirements. This could mean higher activity levels overall, with birds spending more time moving around to find food. The waterfowl hunting season opens again on December 6, and will end on January 28. 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 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 scheduled to be flown the week of December 11. 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 total 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	100%	Med-High
Mahannah	60%	Low
Malmaison**	50%	Low-Medium
Muscadine Farms	80%	Low-Medium
O'Keefe	90%	Low
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 in water control structures and closing valves to allow accumulation of rainfall. No pumps are operational on Sunflower WMA currently. Waterfowl habitat 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 to allow for flooding.

Table 2: Total reported waterfowl harvest and man-days for selected Wildlife Management Areas.

WMA	Man-Days	Waterfowl Harvest	Avg. Birds/Hunter/Day
Charlie Capps	20	45	2.25
Howard Miller	161	711	4.42
William "Billy" C. Deviney	61	186	3.05
Mahannah	59	74	1.25
Malmaison**	N/A	N/A	N/A
Muscadine Farms	297	426	1.43
O'Keefe	288	433	1.50
Twin Oaks	27	17	0.63
Trim Cane*	0	0	0
Tuscumbia*	0	0	0

*Trim Cane and Tuscumbia have not yet received enough rainfall to flood impoundments, and have not yet been hunted for waterfowl.