



January 9, 2018 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 January 7, 2018.

Jackson, MS – An extreme cold front entered the state of Mississippi last week, lasting most of the week and covering the majority of wetlands in a thick layer of ice by mid-week. Very few “traditional” wetland habitats preferred by waterfowl maintained open surface water during this time, so many birds were forced to use deeper or flowing water for most of the week. Some shallow wetlands remained unfrozen due to high concentrations of ducks and geese roosting and feeding in small areas. Water levels in the Mississippi River and many other river systems in the Delta are currently stable or slightly falling. The long range forecast predicts warm temperatures later this week, along with chances of rain, and with another cold front entering the state by the weekend.

Since most wetlands across the state have thawed, biologists expect waterfowl to resume their normal patterns of habitat use. Since high quality foraging habitat has been extremely limited since last week, ducks are expected to intensely seek out habitats with foods high in energy, such as agricultural grains, to re-fuel body reserves needed for body heat and every day functions. Hunters are reminded to think about how weather and time of year may be impacting where ducks and geese are located. State Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) across the Mississippi Delta experienced mixed hunting success during the freeze. The most abundantly harvested species on WMAs have been green-winged teal and gadwall. Areas that completely froze experienced large decreases in harvest, but these areas have already begun to see birds returning. Light geese and white-fronted geese have remained abundant in number across much of the Delta region. As always, availability of quality wetland habitat and weather conditions will continue to influence waterfowl hunting success 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 month of January typically brings peak waterfowl numbers and peak habitat availability to Mississippi. The early January aerial waterfowl survey was recently completed, and a report will be posted soon on the Waterfowl Program web page at www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl and through MDWFP social media outlets. The late January aerial waterfowl survey is scheduled to be flown the week of January 15th. The Waterfowl Program web page also lists links to regulations and habitat information for specific WMAs and other public lands throughout the state, as well as other general waterfowl biology, habitat, and hunting 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	100%	High
Howard Miller	100%	Medium
William "Billy" C. Deviney	100%	Medium
Mahannah	80%	Low
Malmaison**	80%	Low
Muscadine Farms	100%	Medium-High
O'Keefe	100%	Low
Pearl River	100%	Low
Twin Oaks	100%	Low
Trim Cane	50%	Low
Tuscumbia	70%	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: Waterfowl harvest and man-days reported from December 30, 2017 – January 5, 2018 for selected Wildlife Management Areas.

WMA	Man-Days	Waterfowl Harvest	Avg. Birds/Hunter/Day
Charlie Capps	4	18	4.5
Howard Miller	141	114	0.8
William “Billy” C. Deviney	52	41	0.8
Mahannah	89	36	0.4
Malmaison**	199	260	1.3
Muscadine Farms	114	215	1.8
O’Keefe	32	30	0.9
Old River	53	43	0.8
Pascagoula River	241	148	0.6
Pearl River	13	5	0.4
Twin Oaks	4	0	0.0
Trim Cane*	0	0	N/A
Tuscumbia*	0	0	N/A
Ward Bayou	N/A	N/A	N/A

*Trim Cane and Tuscumbia have not yet received enough rainfall to hunt impoundments for waterfowl.