



December 4, 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 December 2, 2018.

Jackson, MS – The second segment of the duck hunting season occurred over the weekend, and harvest reports from public and private lands with managed water were generally better than the opening weekend's results. Mississippi experienced yet another warming trend, with rain and south winds sweeping over much of the state late last week and through the weekend. Wetland habitat availability is still ahead of "normal" levels for this time of year across much of Mississippi, but little habitat has been added since the season opener. Waterfowl numbers in the Mississippi Delta region appear to be increasing this week as a new cold front has arrived. The extended forecast predicts average temperatures for most of the week, with a cold and rainy weekend ahead. Weather severity index models predict that dabbling ducks, especially species other than mallards, should continue to push southward from mid-latitude areas throughout the week.

Several state Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and intensively managed private lands across the Mississippi Delta reported increased hunting success for the second weekend of the season. Green-winged teal and gadwall again made up a significant portion of waterfowl harvest reports. Large flocks of snow, blue, Ross's, and white-fronted geese continue to enter the state, using complexes of large agricultural fields. Waterfowl hunters are reminded that as weather and habitat conditions change, bird concentrations and behaviors will most likely change as well. With temperatures returning to a more normal range this week, ducks may increase their time spent feeding due to increased energy requirements. This could mean higher activity levels overall, with birds spending more time feeding to keep energy reserves high. 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 17. As soon as aerial waterfowl surveys are completed, the results and distribution maps will be posted on MDWFP's website. The Waterfowl Program web page (www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl) 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 total duck abundance ratings for selected Wildlife Management Areas.

WMA	Water Levels*	Duck Abundance
Charlie Capps	100%	Medium
William C. "Billy" Deviney	100%	Medium
Howard Miller	100%	High
Lake George	80%	Low
Mahannah	100%	Medium
Malmaison**	40%	Low
Muscadine Farms	70%	Medium
O'Keefe	70%	Low
Pearl River	100%	Low
Sky Lake	60%	Low
Sunflower***	50%	Low
Twin Oaks	90%	Low
Trim Cane	15%	Low
Tuscumbia	25%	Low

*Indicates percentage of water coverage in all wetland areas. Most managed 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. Water level rating includes the McIntyre Scatters portion of the WMA.

*****Sunflower WMA Flooding Plans for 2018-19 Waterfowl Season**

The green-tree reservoirs below will be prepared for flooding this season by placing boards into water control structures and closing valves to allow for accumulation of rainfall. Waterfowl habitat and hunting areas will increase as winter rainfall continues. Normally, late December and January is when suitable water levels begin to appear.

Green Ash GTR (#3) (Forest Service Road 717)
Redline GTR (Fordice) (Forest Service Road 703)
South GTR, northwest portion only (#8 GTR) (Forest Service Road 710)

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 and will be the first areas to flood on the WMA. These natural, low-lying areas often provide better habitat and hunting opportunities than the GTRs. A map of Sunflower WMA wetland areas can be found here: <http://www.mdwfp.com/media/256111/sunflower-wma-gtrs-and-slough-areas.pdf>

Table 2: Waterfowl harvest and man-days reported from November 24 – 30, 2018 for selected Wildlife Management Areas.

WMA	Man-Days	Waterfowl Harvest	Avg. Birds/Hunter/Day
Canal Section	150	105	0.70
Charlie Capps	15	40	2.67
Howard Miller	65	309	4.75
William "Billy" C. Deviney	32	11	0.34
Mahannah	59	116	1.97
Malmaison**	132	84	0.63
Muscadine Farms	116	107	0.92
Nanah Waiya	13	8	0.62
Okatibbee	18	11	0.61
O'Keefe	100	82	0.82
Old River	N/A	N/A	N/A
Pascagoula River	125	42	0.34
Shipland	N/A	N/A	N/A
Trim Cane*	0	0	N/A
Tuscumbia*	6	8	1.33

*Trim Cane and Tuscumbia Unit 2 have not yet received enough rainfall to flood impoundments and have not yet been hunted for waterfowl.