



December 10, 2019 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 8, 2019.

Jackson, MS – After a four-day break, Mississippi's waterfowl hunting season resumed over the weekend and will now remain open through January 31. Overall, harvest reports from public and private lands were very good, with many areas noting increased bird numbers from the previous weekend. Wetland habitat availability is still ahead of "normal" levels for this time of year across much of Mississippi. Rainfall in late November and early December has maintained previous water levels, and many areas have increased wetland habitat added by runoff since the season opener. The Mississippi River, which began the hunting season at a relatively high level, has continued to rise recently. Water levels in Steele Bayou have also significantly increased, causing changes in waterfowl hunting regulations on Phil Bryant Wildlife Management Area (WMA). While the water level in Steele Bayou is at or above 82 feet, waterfowl hunting on the Ten Point and Goose Lake units will be allowed daily. The current water level for the Steele Bayou (landside) gauge is 83.26 and rising. For Mississippi, the extended forecast predicts a brief period of cold temperatures on Tuesday, followed by more moderate temperatures through the weekend, with another relatively cold snap early next week. Weather severity index models predict southern movements of mallards and other dabbling ducks in the Mississippi Flyway this week due to a strong, yet brief cold front moving across the Great Plains and mid-latitude states.

Several state WMAs and intensively managed private lands across the Mississippi Delta have continued to report high hunting success. Green-winged teal and gadwall made up a significant portion of waterfowl harvest reports, but mallard harvest increased as well. Large flocks of snow, blue, Ross's, and white-fronted geese are still being observed across the Delta. As newly arriving waterfowl continue to enter the state, changes in water levels and distribution of wetland habitat will impact where birds congregate.

The December aerial waterfowl survey is planned for next week. As soon as surveys are completed, the results and distribution maps will be posted on MDWFP's Waterfowl Program web page. The fourth round of WMA waterfowl draw hunt applications is currently open online at <https://xnet2.mdwfp.com/drawings/public/WmaDrawingsV3.aspx>. 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 hunting regulations, migration reports, and habitat information for specific WMAs and other public lands throughout the state.

Table 1: Average waterfowl harvest per man-day reported for selected Wildlife Management Areas.

WMA	Avg. Birds/Hunter/Day
Canal Section	0.95
Charlie Capps	1.20
Howard Miller	3.48
William "Billy" C. Deviney	4.22
Mahannah	4.00
Malmaison	1.69
Muscadine Farms	2.14
Okatibbee	0.17
O'Keefe	1.46
Old River	1.36
Pascagoula	0.41
Pearl River	1.31
Shipland	1.60
Trim Cane	0.00
Tuscumbia	0.61
Twin Oaks	0.00

*Trim Cane and Tuscumbia Unit 2 have not yet been hunted for waterfowl. These areas have a delayed start each year to ensure sufficient water levels before hunting.

Sunflower WMA Flooding for 2019-20 Waterfowl Season

Due to prolonged backwater flooding throughout most of the spring and summer of 2019, water control structures in the green-tree reservoirs (GTRs) will not be closed to capture water for the 2019-20 hunting season on Sunflower WMA. However, hunters are reminded that 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>