



December 18, 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 14, 2018.

Jackson, MS – A cool start to last week's temperatures quickly turned into unseasonably warm conditions by mid-week, which lasted through the weekend. Small amounts of rainfall were received over much of the state, likely maintaining the already above-average wetland conditions in many areas. The upcoming week's forecast predicts more mild and rainy weather ahead. Water levels in the Mississippi River and many other river systems still remain high, but are beginning to fall. Weather severity index models predict little to no southward movements of dabbling duck species this week.

Waterfowl hunting success on many public and private lands have experienced overall declines during the past week. However, some areas have continued to report localized success. Green-winged teal and gadwall have continued to make up a significant portion of waterfowl harvest reports. Very large flocks of snow, blue, Ross's, and white-fronted geese are still being observed using agricultural fields across the Delta. Many waterfowl hunters have begun to take advantage of high abundances of geese in combination with their typical duck hunting setups. With mild weather conditions and high wetland habitat availability, waterfowl hunters are encouraged to adapt their hunting methods and locations when possible in order to find success. The availability of quality wetland habitat and weather conditions will continue to influence waterfowl harvest on both private and public lands as Mississippi's hunting season continues.

The fourth draw period for MDWFP Wildlife Management Area waterfowl draw hunts is currently open. Hunters are encouraged to apply for any WMAs and dates they may be interested in hunting. The December aerial waterfowl survey is now underway. As soon as aerial waterfowl surveys are completed, the results and corresponding 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 general waterfowl information as it becomes available.

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

WMA	Water Levels*	Duck Abundance
Charlie Capps	100%	Low
William C. "Billy" Deviney	100%	Medium
Howard Miller	100%	High
Lake George	80%	Low
Mahannah	100%	Medium
Malmaison**	60%	Low
Muscadine Farms	80%	Low
O'Keefe	80%	Low
Pearl River	100%	Low
Sky Lake	60%	Low
Sunflower***	60%	Low
Twin Oaks	90%	Low
Trim Cane	50%	Low
Tuscumbia	90%	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 December 8-14, 2018 for selected MDWFP Wildlife Management Areas.

WMA	Man-Days	Waterfowl Harvest	Avg. Birds/Hunter/Day
Charlie Capps	12	20	1.7
Howard Miller	128	410	3.2
William "Billy" C. Deviney	36	74	2.1
Mahannah	209	204	1.0
Malmaison	202	219	1.1
Muscadine Farms	163	150	0.9
Okatibbee	23	13	0.6
O'Keefe	97	63	0.6
Old River	50	20	0.4
Pascagoula River	163	40	0.2
Pearl River	38	40	1.1
Sky Lake	9	3	0.3
Trim Cane*	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tuscumbia*	N/A	N/A	N/A
Twin Oaks	3	3	1.0
Ward Bayou	42	1	0.02

*Trim Cane and Tuscumbia Unit 2 have not yet been hunted for waterfowl. These areas will start with the 4th draw period.