



January 23, 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 21, 2018.

Jackson, MS – A second round of extreme winter weather entered the state last week, once again covering the majority of wetlands in a thick layer of ice by mid-week, and lasting into the weekend. Very few shallow, seasonal wetlands preferred by waterfowl retained open water during this time, and as a result, many birds were forced to return to deep or flowing water for most of the week. Some shallow wetlands remained unfrozen due to high concentrations of ducks and geese roosting and feeding, keeping water disturbed in relatively small areas. Warmer temperatures returned during the weekend, and some wetlands began to thaw, resulting in a shift of waterfowl back into shallow, high-quality foraging habitats. The long range forecast predicts a relatively warm pattern for the final week of the regular waterfowl season. Significant chances of rainfall are predicted for much of the state during the final weekend. Water levels in the Mississippi River and many other river systems in the Delta are currently rising due to recent rainfall, but most are still well below flood stage.

Since most wetlands across the state have thawed, biologists expect waterfowl to once again resume their normal patterns of habitat use. Hunters are reminded to think about how weather and time of year may be impacting where ducks and geese are located. A large portion of the state received some much needed rainfall to start the week, and ducks may be found using newly flooded habitats such as fields which were not previously flooded, or more dense vegetation areas such as bottomland hardwoods. State Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) across the Mississippi Delta experienced mixed hunting success during the freeze, largely depending on the ability to maintain open water. The most abundantly harvested species on WMAs continue to be green-winged teal, gadwall, and northern shovelers. Light geese and white-fronted geese have remained abundant in number across much of the Delta region, and many waterfowl hunters reported success in harvesting geese, even in icy conditions last week. As always, availability of quality wetland habitat and weather conditions will continue to influence waterfowl hunting success on both private and public lands.

Mississippi's regular waterfowl season continues through January 28, followed by a youth waterfowl hunting day on February 3. The light goose conservation order will continue January 29 – February 2 and February 4 – March 31. The month of January typically brings peak waterfowl numbers and peak habitat availability to Mississippi. The late January aerial waterfowl survey is underway this week, and a report will be posted upon completion at www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl. 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-High
Mahannah	80%	Medium
Malmaison**	80%	Medium
Muscadine Farms	100%	Medium-High
O'Keefe	100%	Medium
Pearl River	100%	Medium-High
Twin Oaks	100%	Low
Trim Cane	50%	Low-Medium
Tuscumbia	70%	Medium-High

*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

No pumps are operational on Sunflower WMA currently. The GTRs below have had boards installed in water control structures and have had valves closed to allow accumulation of rainfall runoff. Very little natural flooding has occurred in GTRs thus far. Waterfowl habitat will increase as more precipitation is received.

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, and many are currently holding water.

Table 2: Waterfowl harvest and man-days reported from January 13-19, 2018 for selected Wildlife Management Areas.

WMA	Man-Days	Waterfowl Harvest	Avg. Birds/Hunter/Day
Charlie Capps	16	64	4
Howard Miller	73	124	1.7
William "Billy" C. Deviney	149	35	4.3
Mahannah	105	53	1.9
Malmaison	217	344	1.6
Muscadine Farms	272	173	1.6
O'Keefe	83	120	1.4
Old River	9	29	3.2
Pascagoula River	196	134	1.5
Pearl River	33	46	1.4
Twin Oaks	9	30	3.3
Trim Cane*	0	0	N/A
Tuscumbia*	0	0	N/A
Ward Bayou	N/A	N/A	N/A

*Trim Cane and Tuscumbia WMAs will conduct waterfowl draw hunts January 24 and January 27.