



January 22, 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 January 18, 2019.

Jackson, MS – Last week's weather for much of Mississippi was once again dominated by mild temperatures, followed by a rise in temperatures, and yet another rainy weekend. Frequent rainfall has continued to increase or maintain the already above-average wetland conditions in many areas, keeping some rivers and smaller tributaries above flood stage. Water levels in the Mississippi River and several other river systems in the interior Mississippi Delta remain very high, but have started to slowly fall. After a cool start to this week, the weather forecast predicts a short warm-up, and then a rainy mid-week followed by a cool end to the final week of the waterfowl hunting season. Building off of last week's snowfall at mid and northern latitudes, weather severity index models predict further southern movements of mallards and other dabbling ducks this week from mid-latitude areas. This prediction is largely due to continuation of a winter storm across much of the Midwest. While weather appears to be improving for waterfowl migration, newly arriving ducks and geese will still have abundant wetland habitat available across the Southeast.

Waterfowl hunting success on many public and private lands has continued to be below average over the last week, but some areas did benefit from high water levels. Green-winged teal, northern shovelers, and gadwall have made up a significant portion of recent waterfowl harvest reports. With a high and sustained amount of wetland habitat across the state, ducks are expected to continue spreading out into newly flooded areas to find new food resources. Duck hunters are encouraged to scout areas which may have recently become flooded, or the "leading" edges of flooded areas where the water line has moved higher throughout the season. In particular, mallards will typically seek out flooded forests and other areas with dense flooded vegetation when available late in the hunting season. Very large flocks of snow, blue, Ross's, and white-fronted geese are still being observed across the Delta, and waterfowl hunters have continued to take advantage by incorporating goose setups into their duck hunting strategies. The post-season light goose conservation order may provide additional quality waterfowl hunting opportunities in Mississippi if current weather patterns hold for the coming weeks. Waterfowl hunters are reminded to remain flexible with their hunting methods and locations to find success. The availability of quality wetland habitat and weather conditions will continue to influence waterfowl harvest on both private and public lands.

Mississippi typically observes peak waterfowl numbers during the month of January, and biologists are optimistic that the current weather conditions will help this trend to continue. The late January aerial waterfowl survey is scheduled to be flown this week and into early next week. A full report will be posted at www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl upon completion.

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%	Low
Howard Miller	100%	Medium
Lake George	100%	Low
Mahannah	100%	Medium
Malmaison**	90%	Low
Muscadine Farms	90%	Low
O'Keefe	100%	Low
Pearl River	100%	High
Sky Lake	80%	Low
Sunflower	100%	Low
Twin Oaks	100%	Low
Trim Cane	100%	Low
Tuscumbia	100%	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.

Table 2: Waterfowl harvest and man-days reported from January 12 – 18, 2019 for selected MDWFP Wildlife Management Areas.

WMA	Man-Days	Waterfowl Harvest	Avg. Birds/Hunter/Day
Canal Section	124	103	0.8
Chickasaw	1	5	5.0
Divide Section	11	0	0.0
Howard Miller	79	132	1.7
William C. "Billy" Deviney	27	38	1.4
Mahannah	4	6	1.5
Malmaison	190	115	0.6
Muscadine Farms	74	84	1.1
Okatibbee	6	1	0.2
Old River	4	1	0.3
Pascagoula	9	6	0.7
Pearl River	47	58	1.2
Trim Cane	13	8	0.6
Tuscumbia	65	34	0.5
Ward Bayou	4	0	0.0