



## **December 11, 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 9, 2018.

Jackson, MS – A very warm start to last week gave way to more seasonable weather by mid-week, followed by a very rainy weekend for most of the state. Rainfall over the weekend helped to increase flooded areas in many locations and likely kept wetland habitat availability well ahead of normal for this time of year. The upcoming week's forecast includes a brief warm-up with high chances of rain by toward the end of the week. Water levels in the Mississippi River and many other river systems are currently high and still rising. Weather severity index models predict small southward movements of mallards in mid-latitudes early this week, but once weather moderates by midweek, there is unlikely to be significant movements into southern latitudes. Temperatures may be low enough early in the week to force continued southward movements of other dabbling ducks.

Many state Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), other public lands, and intensively managed private lands across the Mississippi Delta continue to experience waterfowl hunting success. Several areas reported increases in harvest and/or bird numbers last week. Green-winged teal and gadwall have continued to make up a significant portion of waterfowl harvest reports, but early indications from field reports this week suggest that mallard numbers are beginning to increase. Very large flocks of snow, blue, Ross's, and white-fronted geese have been observed using agricultural fields across the Delta. Many waterfowl hunters have begun to take advantage of high abundances of geese over the last two weeks. As always, availability of quality wetland habitat and weather conditions will continue to influence waterfowl harvest on both private and public lands.

The fourth draw period for WMA waterfowl draw hunts opens for applications on Tuesday, December 11. 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 next week. As soon as aerial waterfowl surveys are completed, the results and distribution maps will be posted on MDWFP's website. The Waterfowl Program website ([www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl](http://www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl)) 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.

<b>WMA</b>	<b>Water Levels*</b>	<b>Duck Abundance</b>
Charlie Capps	100%	Medium
William C. "Billy" Deviney	100%	Medium
Howard Miller	100%	High
Lake George	80%	Low
Mahannah	100%	Medium
Malmaison**	60%	Low
Muscadine Farms	80%	Medium
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 1 – 7, 2018 for selected Wildlife Management Areas.

WMA	Man-Days	Waterfowl Harvest	Avg. Birds/Hunter/Day
Canal Section	N/A	N/A	N/A
Charlie Capps	19	47	2.5
Howard Miller	148	591	3.9
William “Billy” C. Deviney	45	23	0.5
Lake George	30	23	0.8
Mahannah	98	251	2.6
Malmaison**	168	179	1.1
Muscadine Farms	78	129	1.7
Nanih Waiya	N/A	N/A	N/A
Okatibbee	8	10	1.3
O'Keefe	65	49	0.8
Old River	50	39	0.8
Pascagoula River	121	35	0.3
Pearl River	12	17	1.4
Shipland	N/A	N/A	N/A
Trim Cane*	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tuscumbia*	N/A	N/A	N/A
Twin Oaks	5	10	2.0
Ward Bayou	115	29	0.3

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