



January 12, 2021 Weekly Waterfowl Report

Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks

Houston Havens (662) 299-0273, email: houston.havens@wfp.ms.gov

Darrin Hardesty (662) 588-2596, email: darrin.hardesty@wfp.ms.gov

The following report is a compilation of public and private land reports and habitat assessments during the week ending January 10, 2021.

Jackson, MS – The first full week of January ended with a drop in temperatures and an increase in migrating waterfowl into at least portions of Mississippi. Reports from both public and private land managers relayed improvements from previous weeks, and spirits are higher among hunters who are suddenly experiencing an increase in success. North winds and snowfall seemed to have brought more migrating waterfowl southward into Mississippi. The forecast for this week includes snow early, followed by a continued cold front for the remainder of the week. Wetland habitat availability has continued to increase, however with forecasts of temperatures dipping below freezing at night; many shallow flooded wetlands may freeze over at least temporarily. Weather severity index models predict some southern movement of dabbling ducks early and again late this week, but substantial migrations are not predicted this week. However, there is potential for a polar vortex disruption to occur next week, which could create favorable conditions for significant migrations.

Reports of mallards using forested wetlands remain high. Waterfowl seek dense cover for several reasons, including escaping from inclement weather, avoiding hunting pressure, and isolating for pair bonding. With potential freezing of shallow flooded habitat in the upcoming week, ducks are expected to change habitat uses. Ducks can typically be found feeding heavily in wetlands with abundant food sources prior to a freeze. During a freeze, a good way to maintain openings after breaking ice is to turn on a flowing water source or otherwise keep water moving. Having pumping capabilities can give hunters the upper hand during these harsh weather conditions. Migrant goose numbers are increasing as the weather severity increases. Hunters are encouraged to take advantage of any opportunity to take geese while hunting ducks.

The early January aerial waterfowl survey was completed late last week due to weather delays. A full report will be available soon on www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl. This site also includes much more information regarding waterfowl in Mississippi, including links to hunting regulations, migration reports, and habitat information for specific WMAs and other public lands throughout the state. The late January aerial waterfowl survey is scheduled for the week of January 18, and the regular waterfowl seasons will remain open through January 31.

Table 1: Waterfowl harvest and hunter effort reported over the past week for Wildlife Management Areas.

	WMA Visits	Harvest	Avg. Harvest/Day
Delta Region			
Charlie Capps	8	5	0.63
Howard Miller	66	114	1.73
Lake George	34	37	1.09
Mahannah	145	306	2.11
Muscadine Farms	11	0	0.00
O'Keefe	42	21	0.50
Phil Bryant	39	55	1.41
Shipland	14	7	0.50
Sky Lake	19	12	0.63
Sunflower	170	235	1.38
Twin Oaks	20	28	1.40
William "Billy" C. Deviney	30	2	0.07
East Central Region			
Nanah Waiya	33	46	1.39
Okatibbee	14	4	0.29
Trim Cane	1	1	1.00
Yockanookany	7	3	0.43
Northeast Region			
Canal Section	64	58	0.91
Chickasaw	1	0	0.00
Divide Section	11	3	0.27
John Bell Williams	11	0	0.00
Tuscumbia	32	7	0.22
Northwest Region			
Malmaison	76	85	1.12
Upper Sardis	8	6	0.75
Southeast Region			
Old River	13	13	1.00
Pascagoula River	151	109	0.72
Ward Bayou	39	21	0.54
Southwest Region			
Bienville	7	1	0.14
Caney Creek	3	0	0.00
Pearl River	20	15	0.75
Tallahala	8	6	0.75

Sunflower WMA Flooding for 2020-21 Waterfowl Season

Due to prolonged backwater flooding the last two growing seasons, water control structures in the green-tree reservoirs (GTRs) will not be closed to capture water for the 2020-21 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. GTRs may also eventually flood from winter rainfall and backwater. A map of Sunflower WMA wetland areas can be found here: <http://www.mdwfp.com/media/256111/sunflower-wma-gtrs-and-slough-areas.pdf>