



December 19, 2022 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 18, 2022.

Jackson, MS – Over the course of the past week, harvest numbers from public and private lands saw a slight improvement, overall. The week started off warm, but temperatures cooled off heading into the weekend. A heavy rain event early in the week put a substantial amount of water on the landscape in some areas and many land managers were able to capture some of the runoff, leading to an increase in overall wetland habitat availability. Biologists continue to encourage landowners and managers to hold winter water for waterfowl, shorebirds, and other wildlife benefits.

The national weather outlook predicts a dramatic drop in temperatures towards the end of this week, dipping well below freezing and remaining for several days. This extreme weather event could produce a strong migration of waterfowl from northern latitudes into the state. Early reports this week indicate that waterfowl numbers are already beginning to increase ahead of the coming blast of cold air from the north. During periods of freezing temperatures, waterfowl tend to feed more actively on grains and other sources of carbohydrates to help sustain energy levels. When shallow, high-quality foraging habitats freeze over, waterfowl will often find deeper wetlands or flowing water systems to spend their time. When shallow wetlands begin to thaw, birds typically respond quickly to build up energy reserves again.

Northern shovelers, green-winged teal, gadwall, and wood ducks made up a significant portion of waterfowl harvest reports again last week. However, mallard harvest reports increased as the week moved along. Snow, blue, Ross's, and white-fronted goose numbers have significantly increased across the Mississippi Delta. As always, availability of quality wetland habitat and weather conditions will greatly influence waterfowl harvest on both private and public land.

The December aerial waterfowl survey experienced multiple weather delays but was finished early this week. Survey results and waterfowl distribution maps will be made available on MDWFP's website and social media platforms as soon as data entry and analysis are completed. For more information regarding waterfowl in Mississippi, visit our website at www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl or call us at (601) 432-2199. The Waterfowl Program web page lists links to hunting regulations, migration reports, and habitat information for specific WMAs and other public lands throughout the state.

Table 1: Waterfowl harvest and WMA visits reported over the past week for Wildlife Management Areas where harvest of at least one bird was reported. Note: this data does not necessarily represent the total number of hunters and harvest for each WMA. Hunters are reminded of the requirement to check in prior to hunting and to check out upon leaving the WMA. Waterfowl hunters are also reminded to review all regulations and any applicable draw hunt procedures for any WMA they plan to hunt.

WMA	WMA Visits	Harvest	Avg. Harvest/Day
Bienville	16	8	0.50
Black Prairie	11	11	1.00
Canal Section	117	35	0.30
Caney Creek	16	5	0.31
Charlie Capps	34	72	2.12
Divide Section	11	12	1.09
Howard Miller	153	491	3.21
John Bell Williams	5	7	1.40
Lake George	25	17	0.68
Little Biloxi	2	1	0.50
Mahannah	195	476	2.44
Malmaison	82	151	1.84
Marion County	5	1	0.20
Mason Creek	1	1	1.00
Muscadine Farms	80	95	1.19
Nanih Waiya	68	45	0.66
Okatibbee	76	62	0.82
O'Keefe	74	53	0.72
Old River	44	16	0.36
Pascagoula River	125	49	0.39
Pearl River	15	28	1.87
Phil Bryant	40	46	1.15
Shipland	8	12	1.50
Sky Lake	31	53	1.71
Stoneville	2	2	1.00
Sunflower	148	132	0.89
Tallahala	10	16	1.60
Tuscumbia	46	87	1.89
Twin Oaks	12	15	1.25
Upper Sardis	22	5	0.23
Ward Bayou	43	19	0.44
William C. Billy Deviney	82	175	2.13
Yockanookany	2	2	1.00

Sunflower WMA Flooding for 2022-23 Waterfowl Season

Water control structures in the Long Bayou and Dowling Bayou green-tree reservoirs (GTRs) will be closed to capture water for the 2022-23 hunting season on Sunflower WMA. 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. Other 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>