



January 3, 2023 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 1, 2023.

Jackson, MS – As a blanket of ice and snow covered many parts of the northern states in the Mississippi flyway, Mississippi saw a significant increase in waterfowl numbers. Many shallowly flooded fields iced over, leading to birds being forced to use deeper or flowing water for the week. Waterfowl were concentrated in areas of open water, such as oxbow lakes, brakes, and catfish ponds. Some state WMAs and private lands turned on their wells and pumped water into impoundments to help provide more open water habitat. This provided for excellent hunting opportunities to those willing to tough out the cold weather conditions. The later part of the week saw temperatures rise back to above freezing and even reach temperatures in the mid 60's. This led to birds returning to the thawed flooded fields in search of food, and waterfowl harvest reports remained very high. The long-range forecast predicts cooler temperatures coming, but nothing below freezing.

A significant uptick in mallard harvest was reported on many public and private land hunts. Gadwall, northern shovelers, and green-winged teal continue to make up a large proportion of hunter harvest as well. Availability of quality wetland habitat and weather conditions will continue to influence waterfowl harvest as winter continues along.

The early January aerial waterfowl survey is scheduled for this week, but weather has already caused delays in getting started. Mississippi typically observes peak waterfowl numbers during January, and biologists expect this trend to hold this year. As soon as the survey report is completed, it will be posted online and on MDWFP social media accounts. 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	19	26	1.37
Black Prairie	11	6	0.55
Canal Section	167	292	1.75
Caney Creek	19	18	0.95
Charlie Capps	35	52	1.49
Chickasaw	18	24	1.33
Copiah County	5	9	1.80
Divide Section	21	20	0.95
Howard Miller	145	400	2.76
John Bell Williams	12	7	0.58
John W. Starr	1	3	3.00
Lake George	45	24	0.53
Leroy Percy	4	6	1.50
Mahannah	302	1051	3.48
Malmaison	161	406	2.52
Muscadine Farms	92	230	2.50
Nanah Waiya	48	22	0.46
Okatibbee	114	82	0.72
O'Keefe	107	137	1.28
Old River	34	49	1.44
Pascagoula River	181	92	0.51
Pearl River	57	100	1.75
Phil Bryant	74	98	1.32
Shipland	14	41	2.93
Sky Lake	24	71	2.96
Stoneville	5	3	0.60
Sunflower	110	87	0.79
Tallahala	15	4	0.27
Trim Cane	4	8	2.00
Tuscumbia	56	78	1.39
Twin Oaks	14	24	1.71
Upper Sardis	37	8	0.22
Ward Bayou	102	85	0.83
William C. Billy Deviney	61	89	1.46

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>