



January 23, 2024 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 21, 2024.

The state of Mississippi experienced an extreme cold weather event over the course of the past week. Waterfowl hunters have been longing for a lengthy cold snap in hopes of a large migration event. Well, mother nature did not disappoint, with daytime temperatures in the 20's and low temperatures dipping into the single digits in some areas. Events like these can be a double-edged sword, in that Mississippi will typically receive a large number of "new" birds, but also almost all of the shallow flooded habitat freezes over and becomes unusable for waterfowl. Many private and public land managers are left trying to keep these areas open, whether it be with ice eaters or turning on wells and keeping water moving continuously. The deeper wetlands such as rivers, oxbow lakes, barrow pits, and flood control reservoirs become highly utilized not only by waterfowl but also by waterfowl hunters. During these extreme cold weather events, waterfowl will concentrate on these areas in search of thermal cover, refuge from hunters, as well as food since the majority of their typical foraging areas are under a layer of snow and ice. Although many traditional hunting areas were inaccessible for waterfowl and hunters during this freeze, harvest reports greatly improved on areas with open water.

As weather and habitat conditions change, waterfowl concentrations and behaviors will most likely change as well. Following the hard freeze, waterfowl will generally feed more actively on grains and other sources high in carbohydrates to restore energy levels. When the shallow wetlands with high food densities become available again, waterfowl are expected to return to these areas to feed. Increased temperatures and heavy rain are forecasted to move in this week. This should provide a significant increase in habitat across much of the state and waterfowl will likely disperse into these newly available areas in search for food.

The late January aerial waterfowl survey is scheduled for this week, however, a large rain event will likely delay the survey. As soon as the survey is completed, the results and distribution maps will be posted on MDWFP's website and released through social media. 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.

WMA	WMA Visits	Harvest	Avg. Harvest/Day
Bienville	20	19	0.95
Black Prairie	21	35	1.67
Canal Section	128	176	1.38
Caney Creek	6	3	0.50
Charlie Capps	17	61	3.59
Chickasaw	5	10	2.00
Choctaw	12	4	0.33
Divide Section	18	9	0.50
Howard Miller	29	26	0.90
John Bell Williams	11	25	2.27
John W. Starr	2	2	1.00
Lake George	15	11	0.73
Leroy Percy	4	2	0.50
Mahannah	187	381	2.04
Malmaison	80	141	1.76
Muscadine Farms	45	153	3.40
Nanih Waiya	46	66	1.41
Okatibbee	39	23	0.59
O'Keefe	34	139	4.09
Old River	66	48	0.73
Pascagoula River	182	437	2.40
Pearl River	47	51	1.09
Phil Bryant	53	72	1.36
Shipland	46	50	1.09
Sky Lake	28	21	0.75
Sunflower	132	97	0.73
Tuscumbia	11	7	0.64
Twin Oaks	19	5	0.26
Ward Bayou	79	64	0.81
Yockanookany	15	11	0.73