



December 13, 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 11, 2022.

Jackson, MS – Following the first full week of Mississippi's waterfowl hunting season, harvest reports from public and private lands with managed water were very "hit or miss". This is often the trend for early December waterfowl hunting in Mississippi. A spell of warm, muggy, and often rainy weather lasted the majority of the week. Waterfowl are affected by warmer weather typically by reducing energy needs, which decreases the amount of movement in their daily patterns. And sometimes if warm temperatures are long lasting, waterfowl will even make a shift back to the north to find abundant, quality habitat. However, the coming week's forecast predicts a shift back to cooler temperatures with the lows dipping into the low 30's. Ice and snow are blanketing states in the northern part of the Mississippi flyway and biologists are hopeful that this will send large numbers of waterfowl further south. Additionally, the long-range forecast predicts an extremely cold weather event to reach deep into the southeastern states later next week.

Wetland habitat availability is still well below normal levels for this time of year across much of Mississippi but is increasing slowly with somewhat regular rain events. Land managers are reminded to monitor water levels as more rainfall is received and to maintain water level at optimum foraging depths for dabbling ducks of around 12 – 18 inches. Water levels in the Mississippi River are also well below normal levels for this time of year. Many of the state's Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and other public lands have provided many successfully hunting experiences this past week. As wetland habitat availability continues to be relatively low, WMAs will continue to influence the early season waterfowl harvest.

Northern shoveler, green-winged teal, gadwall, and wood ducks made up a significant portion of waterfowl harvest reports again last week. However, some areas still reported successful hunts with mallards and pintails in the bag. Snow, blue, Ross's, and white-fronted goose numbers have slowly 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 scheduled for this week has experienced weather delays. As soon as the survey is completed, results and distribution maps will be made available on MDWFP's website and social media platforms. 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	4	3	0.75
Black Prairie	3	2	0.60
Canal Section	74	76	1.03
Caney Creek	6	5	0.83
Charlie Capps	10	53	5.30
Divide Section	14	7	0.50
Howard Miller	54	98	1.81
John W. Starr	3	5	1.67
Lake George	7	10	1.43
Mahannah	85	284	3.34
Malmaison	39	37	0.95
Muscadine Farms	33	24	0.73
Nanih Waiya	36	41	1.14
Okatibbee	33	16	0.48
O'Keefe	39	64	1.64
Old River	36	16	0.44
Pascagoula River	88	50	0.57
Pearl River	26	40	1.54
Shipland	3	1	0.33
Sky Lake	7	13	1.86
Sunflower	90	102	1.13
Tuscumbia	37	32	0.86
Twin Oaks	5	4	0.80
Upper Sardis	10	13	1.30
Ward Bayou	25	25	1.00
William C. Billy Deviney	22	86	3.91

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>