

Minnesota Waterfowl Migration and Hunting Report, Nov. 9, 2017

The following report is a compilation of state and federal wildlife manager reports and waterfowl surveys from across Minnesota. This is the 8th report for 2017. Reports will be compiled weekly throughout the hunting season and should be available by Thursday afternoon each week. The Conservation Officer Report, available on the DNR web site, also contains information about waterfowl hunter success across the state.

General: 9 November 2017

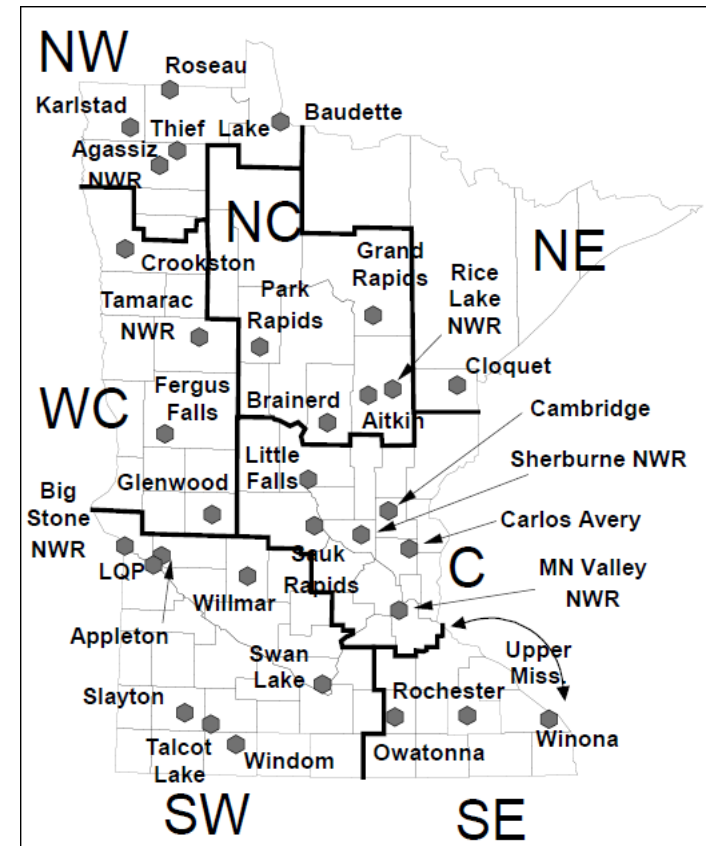
Waterfowl hunting success has remained very good over the past week but very few hunters have been out. Most of the harvest has been mallards and Canada geese, but some scaup and goldeneyes remain on larger lakes in the central and southern portion of the state. Most of the North zone is now frozen and significant ice cover is present in the rest of the state on small and medium sized lakes.

Canada goose numbers increased significantly statewide with large numbers of migrating geese and tundra swans observed all week.

Corn harvest is >60% completed.

The weekend forecast calls for highs in the 20s to near 30 in the north and lows in the teens. In southern Minnesota, highs are expected in the 30s to low 40s with lows in the mid-20s. The forecast through next week calls for considerably warmer temperatures across the state.

The best opportunities are in the south and central zone, especially for field hunting. Some opportunities should remain through at least next week in this portion of the state.



Waterfowl season reminders		
	Duck season dates	Goose season dates
North Zone	Sept. 23-Nov. 21	Sept. 23-Dec. 22
Central Zone	Sept. 23-Oct. 1 and Oct. 7-Nov. 26	Sept. 23-Oct. 1 and Oct. 7-Dec. 27
South Zone	Sept. 23-Oct. 1 and Oct. 14-Dec. 3	Sept. 23-Oct. 1 and Oct. 14-Jan. 3

Bag limits are 6 ducks/day, with no more than: 4 mallards (2 hens), 3 scaup, 3 wood duck, 2 redhead, 2 canvasback, 2 black duck, 1 pintail. Mergansers: 5 per day, no more than 2 may be hooded mergansers. Bag limits for geese are 3 dark geese/day.

Possession limits: 3 times the daily bag limit for all migratory birds.

Shooting hours begin ½ hour before sunrise until 4 p.m. through Friday, Oct. 6 and until sunset the remainder of the season. Motorized decoys are prohibited statewide through Saturday October 7th and on state wildlife management areas the entire season. The sandhill crane season is open through Oct. 22th in the Northwest zone only. Bag limits are 1/day and a sandhill crane permit is required.

Open water hunting: On Lake Pepin, Lake of the Woods, Lake Mille Lacs, and Lake Superior, open water hunting is allowed as long as boats remain anchored. On the Mississippi River south of Hastings, hunting is allowed not more than 100 feet from any shoreline, including islands. Hunters should consult the 2017 Waterfowl Hunting regulations (available from license vendors or online at the [Minnesota Hunting and Trapping Regulations page](#) for additional details and regulations.

Safety Never Takes A Holiday: treat every gun as if it were loaded, be 100% certain of your target before pulling the trigger, wear your life vest, pay attention to other hunters and your hunting partners, and watch the weather.

The following is a summary of pre-season waterfowl habitat and hunting conditions from various reporting stations across the state.

Area	Habitat conditions	Waterfowl migrations and weather conditions	Hunter Activity and Success
Northwest			
Roseau River WMA	The pools are completely frozen over and nearby farmland has a 2-3" blanket of snow. The main channel of the river has open water in scattered spots.	A major migration of Canada geese through the area was observed on Sunday, 5 November.	The pools are completely frozen over and nearby farmland has a 2-3" blanket of snow. The main channel of the river has open water in scattered spots.
Thief Lake WMA	Lake apparently frozen over for season. Single digit temperatures on 11/6-7 froze any leftover open water areas.	Major movement of birds (primarily geese) visible the morning of 11/5, with birds bypassing the area and proceeding further south.	Two hunters broke ice down the Moose River on Friday and were checked with two ring-necks on their return. The river has remained frozen over since that time.
North central			
Grand Rapids	Small waters now frozen	Mostly small rafts of divers on big water, Some flocks of northern mallards passing quickly through area. Freezing temps with snow now.	Little hunting activity.
Park Rapids	All but the larger deeper lakes and rivers have iced over in the last week. Corn harvest continues with quite a bit still standing.	Below average temperatures with lows in the single digits and winter-like weather have moved most of the ducks out of the area. Lots of duck, goose, and swan migration was observed in the last week. There are just late season migrants, such as goldeneyes, left on the larger unfrozen lakes, but good numbers of geese remain in the area.	Just a few hardy late-season waterfowlers were out this past week, but the duck season is effectively over for most hunters with widespread ice and continuing cold in the area.

Area	Habitat conditions	Waterfowl migrations and weather conditions	Hunter Activity and Success
West central			
Fergus Falls	All but deeper lakes frozen over. Lots of food available for field feeding as corn comes off	Major movement of geese this past week with thousands in Fergus Falls Area as of Sunday. Birds are mostly concentrated around Fergus Falls, Orwell Refuge and Carlisle areas. Also some mallards mixed in.	Reports of some diver shooting on big waters and field hunting for geese and mallards this past week. Predicted single digit lows will continue the freeze and limit water hunting ability but field hunting, particularly for geese, should be outstanding.
Glenwood	All of the wetlands have frozen over along with most of the small to medium lakes.	A push of ducks continued through the weekend into Monday, I was off on freeze up with a lot of the larger wetland opening back up late in the week last week. This allowed for some excellent hunting for the few hunters that decided to chase ducks rather than deer. Most everything from medium lakes on down have frozen over the last couple nights and with the next few days of forecast being lows of 16,12,10 I would expect all but the largest lakes to freeze over by Thursday. If a few "refuges" can remain open through this cold spell I would expect some good opportunities for field hunting in the coming weeks. The extended forecast calls for a decent warm up after Thursday. We did get close to 6 inches of snow over some of the work area Friday night and this has caused corn harvest to stall out with around 55-60% harvested.	Again almost no hunting pressure, but this is not surprising due to the late season and deer firearm opener. The few hunters that have gotten out the last few days for the most part had excellent success.

Area	Habitat conditions	Waterfowl migrations and weather conditions	Hunter Activity and Success
Detroit Lakes	<p>Wetlands good, rice beds fairly deteriorated. All shallow water is frozen over, expect fishable ice by this weekend. Deeper lakes still have open water.</p> <p>Small grain, soybean, and beet harvests are all largely complete. Corn harvest 80% complete.</p>	<p>Coldest day of the year today, high temp of 14 degrees with low of 6 degrees tonight. Forecast is for temps below freezing throughout the weekend, then a warmup into the 40s next week. Winter came early this year.</p> <p>Migration has been intense since last weekend. Thousands of geese and mallards field feeding in the area right now, especially West of Detroit Lakes, but I expect most will be gone by this weekend. Birds migrating South have been in the air constantly since last weekend. Tens of thousands of Canada geese moving South right now, staging on any open water they can find. Tundra swans really started moving through on Sunday, which typically signals the tail end of the migration. Large numbers of scaup moved through over the weekend also.</p>	<p>Not many people out duck/goose hunting on the 7th weekend since it was deer opener, but those that were had good shooting. Mallards, scaup and Canada geese were in the bag.</p> <p>Now is the time to be field hunting mallards and geese, numbers are strong West of DL. Saw numerous tornados of birds descending into picked corn fields this week. Haven't seen these numbers of field feeding late season birds in a number of years around Detroit Lakes.</p>
Central			
Carlos Avery WMA	Only the rivers remain open, everything else is ice covered.	Geese and swans have been heard migrating overhead.	Hunter success remained very good for those hunters out through Sunday. Monday morning most pools were froze over.

Area	Habitat conditions	Waterfowl migrations and weather conditions	Hunter Activity and Success
Southwest			
Lac qui Parle WMA	<p>The water level on the upper LQP Lake is now 1.8 feet above winter pool. Marsh Lake is still about a foot above normal. Both water bodies are mostly ice covered, but with scattered pockets of open water. The river channel is open between the two lakes and also upstream of Marsh L. Backwater areas, impoundments and wetlands are now covered with 1-2 inches of ice.</p> <p>Corn harvest is 90% completed.</p>	<p>Duck numbers have increased dramatically in the LQP refuge since the last report. We estimate 75,000 – 90,000 ducks using the refuge in recent days, most of which are mallards - plus good numbers of divers. The goose count is up too – 9,000 as of yesterday. Open water at Marsh L. has also been holding a few thousand ducks and geese.</p> <p>Colder than normal weather will persist through the upcoming weekend. Expect southerly winds with a high temp of 400 on Veterans Day - northwesterly winds and a high of 340 on Sunday. Strong winds today and tomorrow (Friday) should erode some ice on the larger water bodies.</p>	<p>Hunting activity continues to be light on the major unit. Some duck hunters were able to break ice to get to open water on Marsh Lake last weekend, but no reports to pass along relative to success. Hunting pressure has been very light in the state goose blinds, however, some of the experienced LQP goose hunters are getting geese. Note: Certain state blinds will be closed through the remainder of the regular firearms season (ends on 12 Nov). These blinds are listed in the LQP Goose Hunting Guide (can be accessed via the DNR website).</p>
Nicollet area/Swan Lake	<p>Shallow lakes and wetlands beginning to ice over (some completely) while larger lakes remain open. Wind has been keeping water open in a lot of areas but one calm night could change conditions rapidly. Corn harvest is still behind with ~25% remaining in the fields.</p>	<p>Much colder, with a strong NW wind and daytime high in the 20's Thursday and forecasted overnight low near single digits; lows will remain in the 20's through the weekend so we'll likely be seeing a lot more ice in the near future. Temps forecast returning to the 40's early next week so should continue to have opportunities if open water is still available. As of Thursday morning good numbers of geese and swans still in the area along with smaller groups of mallards. Rafts of bluebills, redheads, and buffleheads can still be found on some of the larger lakes with a little scouting.</p>	<p>Waterfowl activity slowed with the start of the firearm deer season; very few reports heard. Some hunters seem to be taking advantage of the weather and getting out during the week while they still can.</p>

Area	Habitat conditions	Waterfowl migrations and weather conditions	Hunter Activity and Success
Willmar	Heavy ice now covers all the shallow lakes and smaller basins. Only flowing water and large fish lakes remain open as of today, Wednesday. Lots of standing corn still in area fields north of highway 12.	This past weekend ushered in much colder weather with a major front pushing through on Sunday with strong NW wind and cold weather. Essentially, the last big push of migrating waterfowl came through with this front. Swans, geese and ducks were noted by hunters in deer stands and duck blinds. Some rafts of diving ducks, and a few groups of geese and swans are sitting on the big, fish lakes. Temperatures are supposed to drop to single digit numbers and stay way below freezing for the next couple of days – even more ice.	Sunday was the last “hurrah” for most duck hunters. There may be a few isolated opportunities for those who put an effort into scouting, but for most, the duck season has come to an end.
Slayton	Small wetlands are frozen up. Corn harvest is still behind with several large fields in the area.	Finally had an influx of ducks and geese in the area. Canada goose numbers have jumped and even have a few snow geese in the area. Influx of divers as well.	Hunting activity for waterfowl has been quiet again as hunters focus on deer.
Appleton	Only open water to be found will be on bigger lakes or rivers/streams. Much, but not all the corn is out and field conditions mostly good.	Large numbers of mallards and geese migrating in and out of the area. Those that stop are finding limited open water and field feeding. Slight warming trend next week; if we can hold onto some birds until then, the season might continue a bit longer.	Limited reports from hunters last week, but all of them have been very good, especially with the field hunting.

Waterfowl Count Data, week of November 6, 2017

Area	Date	Swans this week	Canada geese			Ducks				Coot this week	Comments
			Number seen ^a :			Number seen:			This weeks duck species - % composition ^b		
			This week	Last count	Last year	This week	Last count	Last year			
Thief Lake WMA											Frozen
Rice Lake NWR											Frozen
Carlos Avery WMA											Frozen
Rochester	11/2		6,800	3,500	4,600	1,800	2,400		34% GAD, 29% SHOV, 23% MAL, 11% RN, 3% PIN	1,500	
Murray/Lincoln county WMAs	11/8		2,500	100	900	1,200	100	600	87% RN, 10% MAL, 3% GWT		250 snow geese
Lac qui Parle WMA	11/8		9,000	2,200	2,900	60,000	5,000	1,000	100% MAL		

^a- Numbers seen during the current survey, last survey: the previous count from this year, last year: the number recorded during the same or nearby week last year.

^b- abbreviations: MAL = mallard, GAD = Gadwall, WIG = Am. wigeon, GWT = Am. green-winged teal, BWT = blue-winged teal, SHOV = Northern shoveler, PIN = Northern pintail, WD = Wood duck, RED = Redhead, CAN = Canvasback, SCP = Scaup, RN = Ring-necked duck, HOOD = Hooded merganser, NS = No survey.