

Minnesota Waterfowl Migration and Hunting Report, Nov. 16, 2017

The following report is a compilation of state and federal wildlife manager reports and waterfowl surveys from across Minnesota. This is the 9th 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: 16 November 2017

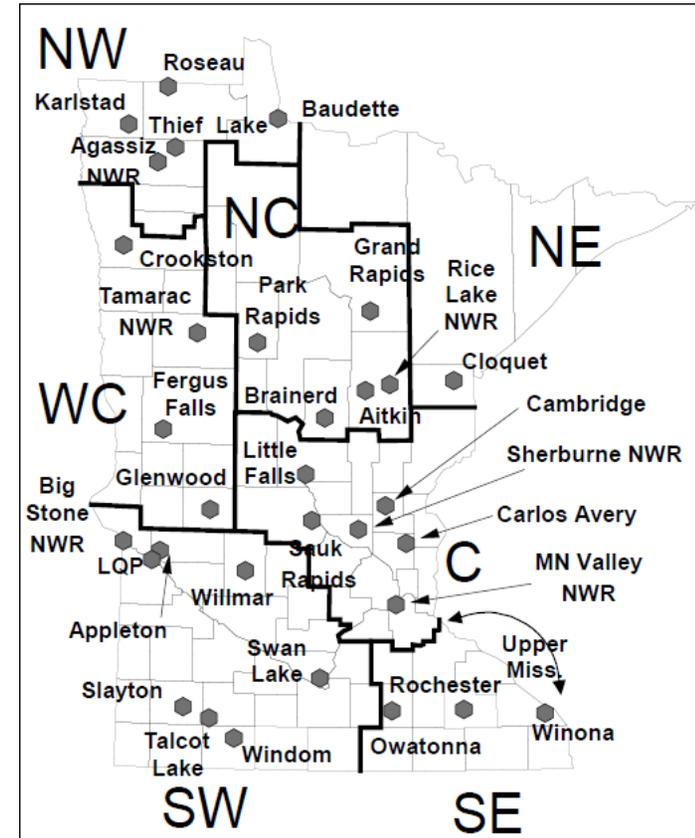
Waterfowl hunting success has remained very good over the past week especially for those field hunting for mallards and Canada geese, particularly in the western portion of the state. Most of the North zone remains frozen and significant ice cover is present in the rest of the state on small and medium sized lakes. There are some open water opportunities for late season diving ducks on large lakes and rivers, mainly in the central and south zones. Some lakes opened or partially opened back up the past few days with warmer temperatures and high winds. Hunting pressure remains very low.

Canada goose numbers increased over the past week and should provide good opportunities through Thanksgiving weekend in many areas.

Corn harvest is >80% completed.

The forecast on Saturday calls for below average temperatures with highs in the low 20s in the north and lows 30s in the south with strong northwest winds. On Sunday and Monday, temperatures should be warmer with highs in the upper 30s in the north and low 50s in the south. The extended forecast calls for near average temperatures with no precipitation through Thanksgiving weekend.

Duck season closes next Tuesday Nov. 21 in the north zone.



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			
Thief Lake WMA	Lake frozen over	No birds observed	Deer hunters only – no waterfowl hunting activity monitored
West central			
Glenwood	Most of the wetlands remain frozen but many of the lakes that had frozen over have opened back up as of Wednesday. I would expect these to freeze back up with the wind laying down and the lows around 15 forecasted for Saturday. But they should remain open through Friday.	Most of the divers have moved out along with the Coots, but large concentrations of Geese and some nice number of Mallards remain on the traditional late season spots. With the warm weather many geese have been able to keep open pockets on small lakes. And even many lakes opened up with the warm weather earlier this week spreading out the remaining birds some. Some very good field hunting opportunities should be available until the end of the season for Mallards and Geese. I do not see the big water roosts freezing over looking at the extended forecast before the end of the season. Farmers took advantage of the nice weather and many corn fields have been picked, a lot of stubble remains though.	Hunting activity has been very low but higher than normal field goose hunting pressure is occurring with the good Goose numbers. Success has been good for the groups that have had very large spreads being that most flocks are in 50+ birds, and for some that have gotten on the "X".
Detroit Lakes	Corn harvest is nearing completion. Ponds are frozen as well as most large lakes in the area. Open water can still be found on some large lakes and rivers but access to those areas may be difficult.	Weather conditions have remained below normal for much of this week. Early November brought a major migration of birds into and out of the area. Thousands of field feeding Canada Geese and Mallards remain in the area west of Detroit Lakes but open water areas are limited and are likely to freeze soon. A few Goldeneyes remain but in very low numbers.	With the firearms deer season in this part of the state just wrapping up this past weekend very little waterfowl hunting has been noted. The season closes November 21st in the North Zone.

Area	Habitat conditions	Waterfowl migrations and weather conditions	Hunter Activity and Success
Central			
Brainerd	Most if not all our shallow lakes and ponds are now frozen over.	Canada geese are still seen south and west of Brainerd using the rivers and corn stubble.	There are a few duck hunters having good success on the larger lakes and rivers in the area.
Mille Lacs WMA	All small lakes and wetlands are ice capped.	Late season divers present on large lakes that are still open.	No hunting activity observed.
Southwest			
Lac qui Parle WMA	Recent strong winds have opened up large areas on both LQP and Marsh Lakes that were ice covered a week ago. As of today (Nov 16), open water at the west end of Marsh Lake can be accessed via the Louisburg grade road and Correll accesses. Open water on the upper LQP Lake (N of Hwy 40) can be accessed by boat from the twin bridges, Hantho, and Milan Beach resort landings. The river channels between Hwy 119 and the Marsh L. dam and upstream from Marsh L. have remained open. Protected backwater areas and smaller water bodies remain ice covered.	<p>The goose count at the LQP refuge as of Monday (Nov 13) was 19,000. Most of those birds are still here, but duck numbers have dropped off considerably since last week – perhaps 25,000 as of Monday. Open water at Marsh L. is still holding several thousand ducks and geese.</p> <p>Weather will moderate tomorrow with a high temp of 45 deg. and light SSE winds. Saturday will be colder - 31 deg. max temp with blustery NW winds. Then expect warmer again on Sunday (near 40 deg. max) with lighter SW winds.</p>	Hunting pressure has been very light on the major unit since the colder weather moved in more than two weeks ago. Hunting activity in the state goose blinds has been relatively light too, but steady.

Area	Habitat conditions	Waterfowl migrations and weather conditions	Hunter Activity and Success
Nicollet area/Swan Lake	Most water was ice covered as of Friday 11/10 with lows well below freezing and remained that way into the week; however, warmer temps and wind re-opened most areas as of Wednesday. Corn harvest is mostly complete at this point with tillage still well-behind normal.	Good numbers of geese, swans, and mallards can still be found across the area. Diving duck numbers seem to have declined with ice-covered lakes over the weekend. Colder temps forecasted to return for the coming weekend but warming back up early in the week through Thanksgiving (40s-50's); should keep the area relatively ice-free for a while longer.	Not much waterfowl activity to report through the second weekend of firearm deer. Determined hunters continued to break ice on Swan through the weekend and kept accesses open after ice-up; spotty success from the few reports heard with mostly bluebill, goldeneye, and bufflehead taken. With the return of open water this week opportunities should remain for those who didn't hang up the gear for the season. Field hunting geese and mallards should continue to be another good option for the remainder of the season.
Willmar	Shallow lakes and wetlands remain frozen over, while the deep, larger lakes are wide open. 5% + of the corn in the northern part of the area remains unharvested and abundant crop stubble fields remain untilled.	Blustery today with WNW winds at 15-20 mph, high near 30. Temps. should be near normal for the next few days with highs in the 30's and 40's and lows in the 20's. Sat. will be colder, dropping into the teens and heavy wind. Back to normal after that one day. Migration of waterfowl through the area has come and gone and just a few small bunches of ducks and geese are scattered across the area.	Very limited hunting activity and duck numbers in the area this past weekend. The season is pretty much over with due to lack of birds. Just a few, isolated exceptions may continue to be available for a few more days. That's all folks!
Appleton	Conditions haven't changed much since last week. If anything, we maybe lost a little ice and fields softened up a bit with warmer weather.	Still holding lots of waterfowl in the area – mostly mallards and Canada geese, with a few hardy divers here and there. Based on forecast, we should be good with birds and water through the weekend.	Hunting has been excellent, especially the afternoon field hunts on cold days and morning field hunts on warmer days. Otherwise, water action is limited by access to open water and the fact the birds are only buzzing around at field feeding time. Otherwise, they are loafing contently in large rafts throughout the day.

Area	Habitat conditions	Waterfowl migrations and weather conditions	Hunter Activity and Success
Marshall	Small wetlands are froze up and larger wetlands and lakes have ice, but also open areas where birds are roosting. Crop harvest is wrapping up and tillage continues rapidly making field hunting more difficult.	Good concentrations of geese and ducks are in the area including mallards, late season divers and migrant geese. Swans are also moving through. Strong winds this week with highs over 40 Thurs and Fri should help open up more water. However, lows of 25 and 18 predicted for Fri and Sat night with high Sat only 33 and NW winds, but Sun topping 40 and lighter south winds.	Hunting pressure is light, but the dedicated waterfowlers are having some success.
Southeast			
Owatonna	Most areas iced over on the 9th except for rivers and some deeper lakes. Shallow lakes opened up again on the 15th, but ice began to reform again as overnight temperatures remained well below freezing. Crop harvest is nearing completion with less than 10% of the row crops (mostly corn) remaining to be harvested. While there has been extensive fall tillage there is no snow cover and there are plenty of fields available for field feeding geese and ducks.	Cooler than normal temperatures with northwest winds have dominated the weather. A strong cold front and ice cover forming on the 9th-10th forced most waterfowl to leave the area. Good numbers of Canada geese, mallards and some gadwalls remained in small patches of open water on a few of the larger lakes or associated with open water in towns and cities. Temperatures have moderated some and these birds seemed to disperse during the brief warm up that left lakes ice free for the 15th. A few small flocks of snow geese, trumpeter swans and mergansers are holding in the area.	Hunter activity has been light as ice effectively ended the season for most hunters on the 9th. A few hunters found some success field hunting near waterfowl concentrations while the ice cover remained.

Waterfowl Count Data, week of November 13, 2017

Area	Date	Swans this week	Canada geese			Ducks				Coot this week	Comments
			Number seen ^a :			Number seen:					
			This week	Last count	Last year	This week	Last count	Last year	This weeks duck species - % composition ^b		
Lac qui Parle WMA	11/13		19,000	9,000	11,500	15,000	60,000	10,000	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, SHOVS = Northern shoveler, PIN = Northern pintail, WD = Wood duck, RED = Redhead, CAN = Canvasback, SCP = Scaup, RN = Ring-necked duck, HOOD = Hooded merganser, NS = No survey.