

Minnesota Waterfowl Migration and Hunting Report, Nov. 7, 2019

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 2019. 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: 7 November 2019

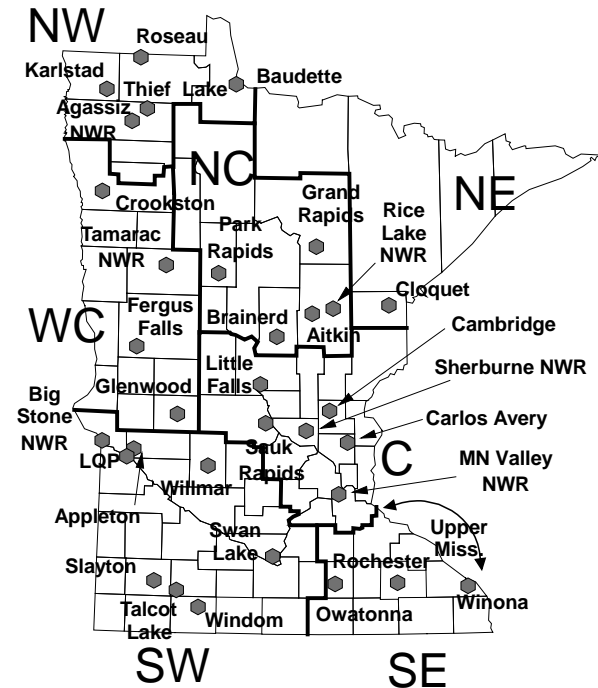
Most of the state is now ice-covered except for rivers or the very large and deep lakes. Hunting pressure has been minimal this week but those that were out are shooting a mixed bag of mainly late season diving ducks. Canada goose numbers continued to increase slightly throughout the state.

Crop harvest progressed some this week with the drier conditions.

The weather forecast calls for highs in the low 30s in the north and upper 30s in the south on Friday and Saturday. A strong cold front will then move into the state and by Sunday and Monday, highs will only reach the teens with single digit lows along with strong NW winds. The long-term forecast calls for high temperatures to remain below freezing for most of the state for the next 10+ days.

There will be limited open water hunting opportunities left this season but field hunting opportunities should continue for mallards and Canada geese in some area.

This is the final report for 2019.



	Duck season dates	Goose season dates
North Zone	Sept. 21-Nov. 19	Sept. 21-Dec. 21
Central Zone	Sept. 21-Sept. 29 and Oct. 5-Nov. 24	Sept. 21-Sept. 29 and Oct. 5-Dec. 26
South Zone	Sept. 21-Sept. 29 and Oct. 12-Dec. 1	Sept. 21-Sept. 29 and Oct. 11-Jan. 2

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. 4 and until sunset the remainder of the season. Motorized decoys are prohibited statewide through Saturday October 5th and on state wildlife management areas at any time during duck season. The sandhill crane season is open through Oct. 20 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 2019 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.

North central	Habitat conditions	Migrations and weather	Hunter success
Park Rapids	Only larger deeper lakes and rivers remain unfrozen. Corn harvest is still well behind average with only about 10% of fields harvested.	Cold dry weather will continue into next week with some windy days. Late-season migrants remain on the larger bodies of water. Goose numbers continue to build in some areas and a few field feeding mallards have been observed. The remaining ring necks moved out the last week and migrating geese and swans have been commonly seen since the weekend.	Just a few late-season hunters have been out and hunting success has been spotty with goldeneyes, buffleheads, and mergansers the most common species in the bag. The open water season is nearly done but some field hunting opportunities will continue.
Grand Rapids	Very High water levels	Freezing temps most every night. Most water frozen over, except largest waters with wind action still open.	Heard of little /no hunting activity, boat landings on large lakes also freezing up making for difficult access

West central			
<p>Fergus Falls/Lake Christina</p>	<p>Fields have dried out to the point that harvest is now possible. Most bean fields have been harvested and corn harvest is picking up. Fall tillage is progressing quickly behind harvest.</p> <p>Small basins are now frozen, and only the largest wetlands and lakes are ice-free, this in spite of the cold temperatures. Wind is now maintaining open water, and once that dies down, everything else will freeze.</p> <p>Though it opened up for a short time last weekend, Lake Christina is now mostly frozen and few, if any birds are using it.</p>	<p>We've seen a large migration over the past few days with numerous large flocks of Canada geese bypassing the area, though some are staying.</p> <p>Most puddle ducks are gone, save for some mallards, and late season divers like buffleheads, goldeneyes, and hooded mergansers now make up the bulk of the ducks around.</p>	<p>With the cold temperatures and mostly frozen wetlands, hunting pressure has been light, though some brave souls are still trying to make the most of the remaining open water. Field hunting for geese and mallards is picking up, and those that have access to fields near open roosting areas should do well. With the deer hunting opener this weekend and forecast colder temperatures, hunting pressure will only diminish.</p> <p>For those looking to bag a late-season goldeneye, the next few days might provide the last chance until next season.</p>

<p>Glenwood</p>	<p>Most wetlands froze over as of Tuesday and Wednesday morning, lakes remain open but I would think that the medium to small lakes will begin to freeze over the next couple of nights.</p>	<p>As most wetlands froze over last week and then opened back up as the week progressed and finally freezing back over as of Tuesday and Wednesday this week duck numbers have varied with no real strong pushes but fairly consistent numbers. The forecast calls for colder temps for the remaining of the week and I would think this will freeze over the rest of the medium lakes on down. With the lakes freezing most of the remaining divers that have been hanging around will be pushed out. Field hunting opportunities should remain for Mallards and Geese with the largest bodies remaining open. Geese continue to be in very low numbers for most of the area but we do have a couple pockets that have been starting to show up. Crop harvest continues to go with most of the beans now being harvested and anywhere from 40 to 85% of the corn depending on the location in the work area.</p>	<p>Hunting activity has been very low as is normal this time of year. The last few hunters that have been getting out have had fair success as a few divers, mostly Ring necks have been trickling in and hanging around, we also saw a few new Mallards show up in bags.</p>
<p>Detroit Lakes</p>	<p>Wetlands have abundant water, rice beds fairly deteriorated. Small basins and wetlands are all frozen. Big lakes are still open except some ice in bays, don't expect them to stay open long with a lows at night in the teens.</p> <p>Crop harvest continues to be behind. Small grain is 95% complete, beet harvest is 80% done, corn at 50%, and soybean harvest is at 80%. Only about 30% of the fall tillage is done also.</p>	<p>It has been cold this week, with lows at night in the teens and highs in the 20s. Forecast is for a slight warmup with highs of 32 Fri-Sat, then teens from Sunday on. I expect most water to be completely locked up by Veteran's Day on Monday.</p> <p>Geese and swans have been migrating through the area in large numbers since the weekend, but ducks are largely absent. Very poor late season migration for ducks again this year. Some divers were around this past weekend, mainly buffleheads, scaup, goldeneyes, and ringnecks, along with a bunch of hooded mergansers, but not much for puddle ducks seen.</p>	<p>Not many people out duck/goose hunting on the 7th weekend and most water will be frozen for deer opener this weekend. Heard a few reports of hunters finding decent numbers of divers, mainly buffleheads, scaup, goldeneyes, and ringnecks.</p> <p>Goose numbers were decent over the weekend, but were less than past years. Those hunters targeting geese in the fields had good luck since harvested corn fields are in short supply with the late harvest. Last report for the season I think.</p>

Central			
Carlos Avery WMA	Thursday morning all Carlos Avery pools were 95% to 100% frozen. With high flows, the Sunrise River should remain partially open for a while.	Geese and swans have been seen and heard migrating.	This week a few hunters tried breaking ice to get to spots, with unknown success.
Southwest			
Marshall	High water levels persist and skim ice now present on lakes and wetlands making water hunts more difficult. Corn harvest has been steady with less than a third left to complete. Soybean harvest is completed and tillage continues. Beware of hunting cover crop fields that were tilled or chopped without being harvested as these fields, by Fed law, are considered baited.	Observed larger flocks of mallards this week along with additional ringnecks, bufflehead and other divers. Good numbers of Canada geese are also flocked up in the area. We got 3" of snow Tues night along with colder temps this week have produced ice; hit low of 9 Weds nite and highs not getting above freezing. Warming to 48 predicted for Sat with slight chance of rain and light west wind, but cooler and blustery Sun with high of 29 and north winds around 20 mph. Cooler than normal temps ahead again next week.	Duck hunting activity has slowed, but those going out are finding some success. Mostly mallards and divers in the bag now including redheads and ring-necks.

<p>Swan Lake (Nicollet)</p>	<p>Overnight low of 5 degrees Wednesday night (11/6) locked up Swan Lake and all smaller lakes and wetlands. Only a few of the bigger (deeper) lakes in the area were still ice-free as of Thursday morning, along with the MN River which is still flowing at a high level.</p> <p>Crop harvest continued over the past week with the majority of beans now gone, and 80-90% of corn harvested - 11 days behind average according to USDA.</p>	<p>Little to no migration activity noted for ducks with most of the state now icing up. Goose and swan numbers have been notably building over the past week.</p> <p>We appear to be approaching the end of the open-water season for all but a few select waters. Record lows forecasted by Monday in the single digits with daytime highs not getting above freezing for the next week. Without a significant warming trend most huntable water will be locked up for the year.</p>	<p>Swan Lake continues to see a small amount of remaining hunter activity during the week; 8 rigs observed at 2 public accesses Thursday morning but overall success seems low. Access channels were iced over but hunters are still able to break ice to get on the lake; that option may be running out soon as well. A few divers still being taken for those that can find open water; remaining mallards hard to come by as they fly out high to feed in fields and return to roost in refuge areas.</p> <p>Good numbers of geese in the area should continue to provide opportunities for field hunters for the remainder of the season; otherwise we've likely reached the end for all but the hardcore hunters - would expect most to hang up the waders for the blaze orange and slug gun from here out.</p>
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Southeast			
Owatonna	<p>Shallow lakes and marshes are frozen and the area has been blanketed with 4 – 6 inches of new snow. Open water may be found on a few rivers and deep lakes. About 80% of row crops have been harvested including nearly 100 percent of the soybeans. Prevented planting acres are between 5 and 10%.</p>	<p>Weather conditions have been cool to downright cold. A widespread rain on Sunday evening slowed crop harvest with ¼ to ½ inch of rain. A strong cold front brought 4 – 6” of new snow Tuesday evening and Wednesday. Temperatures fell to single digits above and below zero causing shallow lakes and marshes to freeze over entirely by dawn on the 7th. Canada geese were continuing to build in our area prior to the freeze. Notable numbers of mallards were found associated with refuges and larger lakes as were small flocks of diving ducks, coots and swans. A few late migrant wood ducks continued to move through the area prior to the snow storm. Presently, most ducks have moved on in search of softer water. Cold weather and ice conditions are predicted to persist for the near term.</p>	<p>Most lakes had moderate to light hunting activity as late season hunters took advantage of the last flights of birds as they pushed out ahead of ice in parts north. Bag reports suggest hunters were finding a mix of mid and late season migrants. Rice Lake hunters reported about 1 duck/goose per hunter this week with ring-necks comprising about 26% of the bag followed by mallards (23%), and scaup (17%). Canvasbacks, buffleheads, shovelers, mergansers, goldeyes and Canada geese were also noted in the take.</p>

Waterfowl Count Data, week of November 4, 2019

Area	Date	Swan	Canada geese this week	Canada geese last count	Canada geese last year	Ducks this week	Ducks last count	Ducks last year	Duck species composition	Coot
Sherburne NWR	11/7	60	1,545	4,600	0	1,200	20,000	0	84% MAL, 16% RN	

^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.