

## Minnesota Waterfowl Migration and Hunting Report, Nov. 20, 2024

The following report is a compilation of state and federal wildlife manager reports and waterfowl surveys from across Minnesota. This is the 10th report for 2024 and will be the final report.

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.

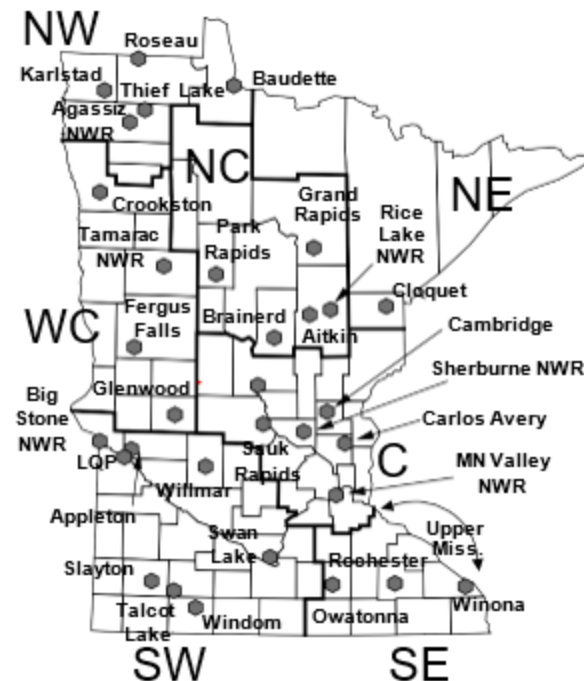
**General:** 20 November 2024

The weather we have seemingly been waiting for all season has finally arrived. Cold and NW winds will move through the state Wednesday and Thursday. Further north the temps in Manitoba and Saskatchewan will start to freeze up sending many birds south.

For ducks, most locations are reporting increasing bird numbers with the cold front moving in.

For geese, a similar story to ducks with birds moving in across the state.

As always hunters should plan to scout if they hope to be successful. With the cold and windy conditions hunters should remember to be safe this weekend. Wear your life jacket! For those who choose to venture out this weekend, good luck and be safe.



Waterfowl season reminders		
	Duck season dates	Goose season dates
North Zone	Sept. 21-Nov. 19	Sept. 21-Dec. 21
Central Zone	Sept. 21-29 and Oct. 5-Nov. 24	Sept. 21-29 and Oct. 5-Dec. 26
South Zone	Sept. 21-29 and Oct. 5-Nov. 24	Sept. 21-29 and Oct. 5-Dec. 26

Bag limits are 6 ducks/day, with no more than: 4 mallards (2 hens), 3 wood duck, 2 redhead, 2 canvasback, 2 black duck, 1 pintail. 1 scaup (bluebill) may be taken per day through Oct. 10 and 2/day the remainder of the season. Mergansers: 5 per day, no more than 2 may be hooded mergansers. Bag limits for geese are 5 dark geese/day.

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

Shooting hours begin ½ hour before sunrise until sunset the entire season. Motorized decoys are legal statewide for the entire season. Hunting geese overwater is legal statewide the entire season. The sandhill crane season is open Sept. 14 through Oct. 20 in the Northwest zone only. Bag limits are 2/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 2024 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
<b>West Central</b>			
<b>Fergus Falls/Lake Christina</b>	Habitat conditions remain unchanged despite some rain on Monday into Tuesday.	An early report deadline this week coincided with the first winter weather of the season, so no report on how that changed the migration. There have been small pockets of divers like buffleheads and redheads, along with some hooded mergansers and gadwalls, otherwise, there isn't much around. Some cold overnight temps the next few days following some snow should have small wetlands iced over, but larger lakes should remain open for at least a few days.	No good reports from the past week. Hunting will likely pick up over the next few days in the Central Zone, south of Highway 210, at least as long as water stays open. The Central Zone season closes Sunday. Unfortunately, this weather arrived a day too late for North Zone hunters and that season is now closed. Goose season remains open for about another month, so there are still opportunities!
<b>Glenwood</b>	From last report to the afternoon on Monday the 18 <sup>th</sup> brought more of the same warm dry weather. This all changed on Monday night with most of the work area seeing at least one inch of rain and some parts primarily on the south part of the work area seeing over two inches of rain. In the parts of the area that saw the heavier rain amount tiles even started to run and the accompanying jump on some of the wetlands was over a foot.	Like I said until Monday the 18 <sup>th</sup> afternoon we saw more of the warm dry weather with south winds and that all changed Monday night with significant rains across most of the work area. We also saw a strong wind switch to more north winds and an accompanying drop in temperatures Tuesday into Wednesday with lows getting into the low 20's and projected to get into the lows in the high teens over the weekend, the small wetlands that are protected froze over Tuesday night and I would expect freeze over to continue onto the larger shallow wetlands into Friday, Saturday and Sunday but the larger deeper wetlands and lakes and rivers should stay open for the remainder of the duck season that closes on the 24 <sup>th</sup> . Migration of ducks had continued to be spotty at best but are hoping to see some pretty good numbers moving with this front. Geese continuing to be a bright spot with numbers still growing, some scouting will be needed to find the fields that they are using but if successful with the drop in temperatures and forecasted snow in addition to the new arrivals some very good hunting for them is a possibility.	No reports or hunters seen from the beginning of the gun deer season two weekend ago, I would expect a uptick in pressure this weekend as some hunters will be looking for that one last chance and hoping for a good push of ducks if access onto water they want to hunt does not become an issue, otherwise finding a field will be high odds for success.

Area	Habitat conditions	Waterfowl migrations and weather conditions	Hunter Activity and Success
<b>Southeast</b>			
<b>Owatonna</b>	Recent rains stabilized water levels. Some shallow marshes have reflooded and many rivers and ditches are floatable again. Most lakes remain below seasonal norms. Boat access is challenging at some lakes. Unharvested fields are few and far between as harvest transitions to fall tillage, tiling and manure applications. Fields planted to cover crops are greening up nicely with the extended mild weather	Mild and dry conditions over the weekend were followed by another significant rain event. Rain totals over 19 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> were about 1 - 1¼ inches. Temperatures have been dropping to the upper 20s and low 30s. Some snow fell on the morning of the 21 <sup>st</sup> with little accumulation. Cold temperatures are predicted to continue through the next week. Some skim ice has formed on shallow protected wetlands, but lakes and marshes remain open. Mallards, swans and some divers have moved with the cold fronts. Forecast looks good for a significant late season push.	Waterfowl hunting activity has been light as many hunters turned their attention to deer through last weekend.
<b>Southwest</b>			
<b>Appleton</b>	Two inches of rain Monday saturated fields and left a bit of sheet water. Freezing temps will firm things up though.	Birds are moving through right now with the strong N winds and cold temps, but it doesn't seem like many are staying (yet). Smaller basins will be icing over by the weekend.	Limited reports of good diver hunts and some mallard shoots, but overall, it's been pretty quiet. This weekend could be good though.
<b>Lac qui Parle WMA</b>	The area received about 1.5-2.0 inches of rain this past week. Marsh Lake and Lac qui Parle remain ice free as of this morning and look to be in good shape through the duck season. Field conditions are still good. Access is still good, but just need to plan your route in the field accordingly as recent rains have created some wet spots. Water levels on wetlands and impoundments haven't changed much even with the recent rains.	<p>Some more ducks arriving on Marsh and Lac qui Parle Lakes. Mallards and some late season diver species like scaup and goldeneyes noted. Strong west-northwest winds the last few days have helped pick up bird numbers in the area, but nothing drastically increased. Scouting is key. Find birds and set up on the right spot.</p> <p>Thursday-Mostly cloudy, with a high near 32. Breezy, with a northwest wind 15 to 20 mph, with gusts as high as 30 mph.</p> <p>Friday-Partly sunny, with a high near 32. Northwest wind 5 to 10 mph.</p> <p>Saturday-Mostly cloudy, with a high near 33. North wind around 5 mph becoming east in the morning.</p>	<p><b>Waterfowl season closes Sunday November 24<sup>th</sup>.</b></p> <p>The Lac qui Parle State Game Refuge is closed to pheasant and small game until December 1st. Reminder- Waterfowl hunting at Lac qui Parle Game Refuge opens October 17th and runs through the end of the goose season. Please see the 2024 Waterfowl hunting Regulations for complete summary of rules and restrictions.</p> <p>The general water trapping season opens on Saturday November 2nd for muskrat, mink, beaver, and otter south of Interstate 94.</p> <p><b>Waterfowl hunters please note that boat traffic on Marsh Lake is possible but need to scout areas in daylight to find best route for access. Mud motors or jack plates will make access easier. Hunters should be ready for more than 3,000 acres of new emergent vegetation. Scouting ahead of time will be important. Remember the eastern half of the lake is feeding and resting area. No motors allowed. Paths have been mowed to open water at Peterson access and the access below 490th st.</b></p>

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<b>Marshall</b>	Received about 1.2" rain and snow flurries this week but water levels still below normal. Crop harvest complete and tillage now slowing down with freezing temps, but field hunting opportunities still exist.	More swans and divers are in the area this week and a few flocks of field feeding mallards. Some high flocks of migrating whitefronts and snow geese have been observed and more coot are also rafted up on area lakes. Colder air and strong NW winds ahead of the weekend could result in more waterfowl pushing through. Weekend forecast is for mostly cloudy skies with highs in upper 30's but Friday's low around 20 and Sat low of 26 so likely sheet ice to contend with. Lighter SE winds are predicted for Sat shifting to light NW on Sun.	Waterfowl hunting activity has been slow. Expect a few more hunters this weekend for the final push of the season.
<b>New London</b>	We received approximately 2" of rain on Tuesday 11/19, which is a welcome site after a long dry fall. That will give an incremental bump in water levels. The main habitat topic is that we have liquid water, and not a single wetland is locked up tight in ice. This will hold through the end of the waterfowl season and freeze up looks imminent shortly thereafter.	The cold front that arrived on Tuesday did usher birds into the area. I expect that we will have enough ducks in the area to make the last remaining days of the season worthwhile to hunt. In fact, it should be some of the best hunting we have seen since early season. This weather shift was exactly what was needed get some new birds into the area. Better late than never!	Hunter activity has been slow due to the firearms deer season, but I expect that many avid duck hunters will seize this last-minute opportunity to get a crack at the new influx of birds that rode the cold front in. Geese are here and I expect them to remain in the area until the larger lakes freeze up. Field hunting is the avenue for pursuing them. The optimist in me says that it could be a great end to the duck season. The end is near...last (duck) call!