

Minnesota Waterfowl Migration and Hunting Report, Nov. 19, 2020

The following report is a compilation of state and federal wildlife manager reports and waterfowl surveys from across Minnesota. This is the 9th and final report for 2020. 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.

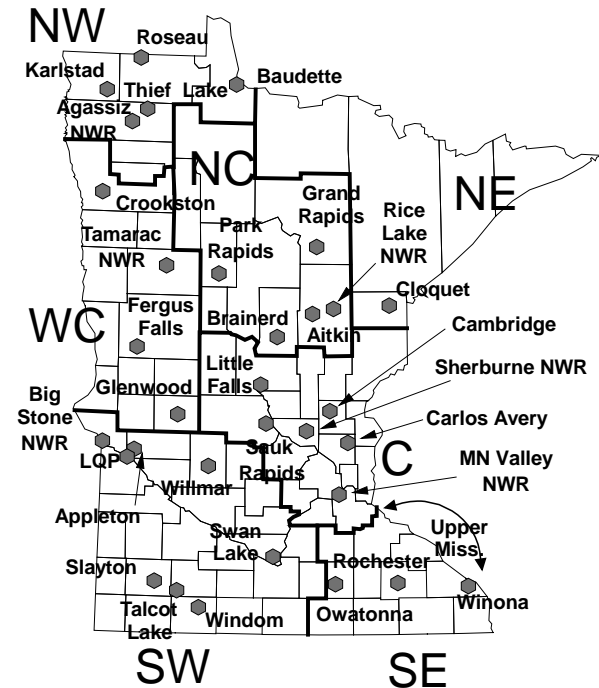
General: 19 November 2020

Duck hunting reports have been very limited this week as very few hunters are still hunting ducks. Northern Minnesota is mostly frozen except for large lakes. There are still some ducks present, but mainly on very large lakes. Canada goose numbers remain fairly good across the state.

Crop harvest is ~complete in most areas and much of the snow has melted. Field hunting options should continue for the next few weeks.

Temperatures are expected to be in the 20s and low 30s in the north and 40s in the south over the next week.

There are still some waterfowl hunting options this year, but birds are concentrated in a few locations, so scouting is essential.



Waterfowl season reminders		
	Duck season dates	Goose season dates
North Zone	Sept. 26-Nov. 24	Sept. 26-Dec. 25
Central Zone	Sept. 26-Oct. 4 and Oct. 10-Nov. 29	Sept. 26-Oct. 4 and Oct. 10-Dec. 30
South Zone	Sept. 26-Oct. 4 and Oct. 17-Dec. 6	Sept. 26-Oct. 4 and Oct. 17-Jan. 6

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. 22 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 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. 9 and until sunset the remainder of the season. Motorized decoys are prohibited statewide through Saturday October 10th and on state wildlife management areas at any time during duck season. The sandhill crane season is open through Oct. 25 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 2020 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 and Roseau Lake WMA		Frozen.	
Thief Lake WMA		Frozen.	
North central			
Park Rapids		Frozen except for very large water.	
West central			
Detroit Lakes	<p>All wetlands and shallow bodies of water are frozen, bigger fish lakes are 50% frozen.</p> <p>Crop harvest and tillage is near 100% complete.</p>	<p>Forecast is for highs in the 30s with lows in the 20s this weekend. Most water is frozen.</p> <p>Goose migration has been intense this past week; geese in the sky constantly the last few days. Some late season divers around, mainly buffleheads, mergansers, and goldeneyes, and some scattered pockets of mallards, but duck numbers are poor throughout the area.</p>	<p>Very little duck/goose hunting going on the 8th weekend as most people continued to chase deer. No bag checks completed; not many birds around.</p>

Area	Habitat conditions	Waterfowl migrations and weather conditions	Hunter Activity and Success
Southwest			
Lac qui Parle WMA	Not much left for snow in the area. Lac qui Parle lake is still at normal pool and is still ice-free for the most part. Some smaller basins are ice covered but can change by the day. Marsh Lake is in drawdown and is mainly ice covered except river channel. All crops out. Most if not all tillage done.	<p>Current goose count on the refuge 9,250. Good amount of mallards and some divers on Lac qui Parle.</p> <p>Saturday-sunny with a high near 45 south with 5-10mph.</p> <p>Sunday-sunny high near 40 NW winds 10-15mph.</p>	<p>Not much hunting activity in the state blinds. Many hunters were out deer hunting. Some success field hunting off the refuge.</p> <p>Waterfowl hunters please note that Marsh Lake is currently in drawdown to improve water quality and provide habitat for fish and wildlife. Water levels are currently less than a foot deep and boat access is not possible.</p>
Marshall	Last week's snowfall has mostly melted and holes have opened up on some wetlands, but larger water bodies are ice free. Crop harvest is completed and tillage has shut down. There are still a few corn stubble fields available for potential field hunting, but conditions are currently very muddy.	Good numbers of giant and lesser Canada geese in the area along with pockets of mallards and divers on bigger water. Even a few blue-winged teal and flocks of shorebirds were observed. Large numbers of swans have stacked up and remain in the area. Mild temps are predicted to last into next week. Weekend forecast is for mostly sunny skies with highs in the 40's and lows just below freezing. After high winds most of this week, Sat calls for light south winds switching to the NW for Sun at 10-15 mph.	Hunting pressure is very light in the area so I did not get any hunting reports this week. However, opportunity remains for those willing to scout and find an accessible hunting spot.

Area	Habitat conditions	Waterfowl migrations and weather conditions	Hunter Activity and Success
Swan Lake/Nicollet	Most smaller wetlands and lakes iced over once again including Swan and Middle, with the exception of larger/deeper lakes and moving water. Some pockets re-opened with the warmer temps and wind yesterday but cooler overnight temps in the forecast likely means some ice is here to stay. Nearly all crop harvest is complete with tillage operations completed for the year as well.	<p>Abundant geese across the area so opportunity remains for those still hunting. Any remaining mallards and divers are highly concentrated on select roost waters.</p> <p>Relatively mild forecast into next week likely won't do much for additional migration activity but should keep remaining birds around for the time-being.</p>	Little to no activity noted in the south-central area, very few waterfowl hunters still out after the firearm deer season.
Southeast			
Owatonna	Marshes and lakes are ice free. Water levels are seasonably low. Rice Lake in Steele County and Geneva and Lower Twin Lakes in Freeborn County are partially drawn down to improve habitats and access is difficult for most boats. State Line Lake near Emmons is in major drawdown and remaining water areas are inaccessible. Row crops are harvest is nearing completion with more than 95% harvested.	Very strong winds and seasonably cool conditions prevailed through the weekend with a mixture of drizzle, rain and fog on Saturday. Sunday winds were even stronger, but the precipitation had ended. A warming trend began Tuesday and temperatures have returned to above normal. Shallow lakes and wetlands were partially to completely ice covered until the 18 th and are presently ice free. Canada geese are a mix of locals and migrants and numbers have begun to drop. There are still good numbers of geese in the area near traditional staging areas such as Rochester, Albert Lea Game Refuge, Waseca, Faribault and Owatonna. Flocks of mallards and other late season migrants and a few coots can be found. Most birds are concentrated in only a few areas of providing open water, safety and good habitats.	Hunter activity has been light due to difficult winds, ice cover and competition from firearms deer season. Scouting is key to finding birds and hunting opportunities.