

**LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE & FISHERIES
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Waterfowl Population Estimates
 in Louisiana's Coastal Zone Below
 U.S. Highway 90 and on Catahoula Lake.

Date: Coastal Zone, November 8-10, 2004,
Catahoula Lake & N.E. Louisiana
November 5, 2004

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November 12, 2004

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Estimates made from Aircraft (*) Estimate less than 1,000

SPECIES	SOUTHWEST	SOUTHEAST	CATAHOULA LAKE	TOTALS
MALLARD	33,000	*	*	33,000
MOTTLED	61,000	28,000	*	89,000
GADWALL	248,000	104,000	1,000	353,000
WIGEON	46,000	4,000	*	50,000
GW TEAL	231,000	19,000	1,000	251,000
BW TEAL	25,000	40,000	*	65,000
SHOVELER	18,000	1,000	*	19,000
PINTAIL	95,000	11,000	4,000	110,000
TOTAL DABLERS	757,000	207,000	6,000	970,000
SCAUP	*	*	*	*
RINGNECKED	40,000	*	15,000	55,000
CANVASBACK	*	*	1,000	1,000
TOTAL DIVERS	40,000	0	16,000	56,000
TOTAL DUCKS	797,000	207,000	22,000	1,026,000
COOTS	25,000	213,000	1,000	239,000

COMMENTS:

The estimate of 1 million total ducks recorded on this survey is slightly lower than last year's estimate (1.3), and about half that of the 5-year and long term averages (1.9 and 2.2 respectively). All species except green-winged teal and mottled ducks were well below their long term

averages. Southeast Louisiana waterfowl numbers was most notably reduced; however, there were some large groups of scaup and additional gadwall observed off the survey lines.

Once again, abnormally warm and wet weather in Louisiana and in northern latitude states is contributing to a delayed migration of ducks and geese. Recent reports from Minnesota indicate temperatures of the past 4-6 weeks have been well above normal and wetland conditions are good across the state. There have been few major weather events this fall and wetlands remain ice free to the north. A cold front this week has caused the lowest temperatures of the season with lows in the teens in portions of North Dakota, but warming is expected. In Louisiana, the statewide average temperature for October was 74 degrees which was 7 degrees above normal, and this was the third warmest October in the past 100+ years. During the latter half of October statewide temperatures averaged 13 degrees above normal with many record-high daily temperatures set across the state.

Waterfowl habitat in southwest Louisiana is good, with fair to excellent submerged vegetation in marsh ponds and fairly abundant sheet water in rice fields from Lake Charles west to about Jennings, where open water areas were reduced eastward. Many farmers are still harvesting second crop rice in the drier rice region to the east. Southeast marshes, particularly those east of the River, such as Biloxi and Pass A Loutre WMA's, were impacted by Hurricane (and Tropical Storm) Ivan in late September and waterfowl resources will be short in many areas of that region. However, some recovery of wetland vegetation in this region was noted already.

Statewide precipitation during the first week of November averaged 3.4 inches, with northern and southwestern parishes receiving the most rainfall, but all areas of the state had above normal rains. This has increased soil moisture across a broad area of southwest, central and north Louisiana (and into Arkansas) with good wetland habitat conditions.

Despite this survey's below average waterfowl estimates, a short-lived cold front on November 4-6 did bring new birds to Louisiana. Numerous reports of initial migrations of mallards and snow geese across the state were received. Another timely cold front has moved across the state today (Nov. 12) with additional migrations expected.

In northeast Louisiana, conditions for waterfowl are good, with surplus soil moisture being reported and fair amounts of sheet water and some backwater flooding. An additional 69,000 ducks and 71,000 geese (53% white-fronted) were estimated across the region with good coverage obtained.

The waterfowl estimate for Catahoula Lake (22,000) is well below the previous 5-year average (166,400). Lake water levels had jumped more than a foot and a half just prior to the survey and strong winds during the survey likely had caused many dabbling ducks to move off the lake.

Duck season opens tomorrow, Nov. 13 in the West Zone and on Nov. 20 in the East Zone. Hunters in each zone are reminded that the first segment of the pintail season is just during the first 9 days of the season and will reopen statewide Dec. 18 for an additional 21 days. Also the Canvasback season will be closed statewide until Dec. 18