



MISSISSIPPI VALLEY DUCK HUNTERS ASSOCIATION  
A NON-PROFIT ASSOCIATION OF, BY, AND FOR THE DUCK  
HUNTERS.



OCTOBER 2023

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### WIDGEON HOMECOMING

Fast forward about five or six years, I was contacted to see if I wanted Widgeon back since all the kids started their own lives and moved out of the house. So I made arrangements to meet my daughter in South Carolina to pick up Widgeon.

It was a long trip traveling there, going through Kentucky where a recent ice storm had occurred was incredible. The ice was still on the tress and just about every tree we saw had broken limbs and I am not talking about small ones either.

When we arrived just south of the North Carolina border we met my daughter to pick up Widgeon. When Widgeon hopped out of her vehicle and saw me, you could not tell which end of his body was his tail! You know the drill, when a Lab is happy to see you they will wag their tail, but when a Lab is extremely happy to see you they not only wag their tail but their head too. It is like the middle of their body is a pivot point and their head and tail are all wagging in opposite directions at the same time!

Now, the last time I saw Widgeon, he was at a respectable weight for a big block headed Labrador at about 70 lbs but when he got out of the car and saw me and ran up to me and jumped on me I was not quite ready for that, he was HUGE! Well over 85 lbs and almost knocked me to the ground, his coat was dull and dingy and looked like he had not been groomed or combed out in quite some time, shedding immensely.

We loaded him up in the vehicle, bid my daughter good by and started heading back. Since we had been on the road for quite some time we decided to spend the night in Kentucky. Remember that ice storm I talked about in Kentucky? Well, finding a hotel there was a challenge. Ameren had deployed their crews to fix all of the power outages, remove down trees and fix the lines so finding a room was difficult. We did find a motel that would allow dogs with a room, granted, it was a wheel chair accessible room, but it was the only one we could find! And that room proved to be a God Send.

We checked in and went to the room. I checked over Widgeon and decided before we did anything with him, he needed a serious bath. I stripped down and Widgeon and I went into the wheel chair accessible shower, which proved it's weight in gold! It was large and had a hand held shower, perfect for giving him a bath. The dirt and hair that came off that dog was amazing! To prevent hair from going down the drain and clogging the lines I put a wash cloth down and after removing all the hair from it I could of filled up a Walmart shopping bag with it! He probable lost a couple of pounds from the hair that came off of him.

The rest of the trip home was pretty much uneventful. He settled in at my house with no problems and I decided to take him to the Vet to get him checked out and get his shots up to date. When he got on the scale, he clocked out at 89 lbs. The vet immediately put him on a diet and changed his food from Ole Roy to a better feed. He took blood work and gave him his shots. A week later the blood work came back, heart worms.

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## OCTOBER MEETING

Do you own a boat? Have you ever thought about owning a boat? Either for fishing or hunting from? Ever wondered what it takes to maintain a boat? This month's member's meeting we have a rare opportunity to pick the brain and listen to a team member of Bass Pro.

Steve Brand of Bass Pro will be giving this month's presentation about boat maintenance and probably just about anything you come up with regarding boats. There has been a lot of changes in boats and maintenance with the new four stroke motors and what to do/how to maintain newer boats. So come on out and listen and bring your questions to this month's meeting as the Waterfowl season is about to get underway.

This month's meeting will revert back to our normal time of 7:30 and place of Borgett's Bar & Grill 1667 South Old Hwy 141 Fenton MO

## DURA-TOUCH

Recently I was pulling my older guns out of the safe to clean and just to check them out and I found my Browning Maxus which has a synthetic stock was really sticky. I mean, it was to the point where you had to pull the stock off of your hand to let go of it. I thought that was odd and started googling for how to clean the stock. I found out that Browning got sued and that there was a class action law suite against them for any gun that had the DURA-TOUCH coating and that they will repair the gun free of charge, including shipping. It is a pretty seamless process, other than finding a box to box up your gun to ship it to Fenton (you cannot drop it off, I asked) via UPS. Go to <https://duratouchsupport.browning.com/>

To start the process. So check your Browning guns!

## DUCK BROOD NUMBERS

From North Dakota Game and Fish:  
Wed, 08/23/2023

State Game and Fish Department migratory game bird biologists expect a fall flight of ducks similar to 1998, 2004 and 2020.

If those past seasons don't ring a bell, the fall flight is anticipated to be about 23% above last year's fall flight, based on observations from the annual mid-July duck production survey.

According to Mike Szymanski, migratory game bird management supervisor, the department's 76th annual breeding duck survey conducted in May indicated the 2023 duck index was the 23rd highest on record, up 1.5% from 2022, and exceeded the 1948-2022 average index by 39%.

"After a very dry summer and fall last year, a snowy winter helped wetland conditions rebound nicely going into breeding season. However, precipitation has been spotty across the Prairie Pothole Region of the state since spring thaw, with the southern and central areas of the Missouri Coteau receiving more consistent rainfall," Szymanski said. "Habitat conditions in uplands and wetlands were in good shape for a majority of the breeding season. A relatively strong number of ducks present in May helped to support breeding efforts that, despite a late thaw, were not delayed to a great degree."

The number of broods observed during the department's July brood survey was up 79% from 2022, and 88% above the 1965-2022 average index. The average brood size was 6.5 ducklings, down 10% from 2022.

While there remains a shortage of upland nesting habitat across the state, Szymanski said overwater nesting species such as canvas-

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backs, redheads and ring-necked ducks all set records for number of broods observed this year, along with ruddy ducks nearly breaking their previous record.

Game and Fish biologists will conduct a separate survey in mid-September to assess wetland conditions heading into the waterfowl hunting season.

## **WATERFOWL SURVEY**

From the Delta Waterfowl Website:

**Annual Breeding Waterfowl Population Survey Estimates 32.3 Million Ducks**

Total ducks and mallard numbers decline, but pintails and canvasbacks increase

**BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA** — The breeding population of ducks declined 7% this spring, while pond counts dropped by 9% compared to last year, according to the 2023 Waterfowl Population Status report released today by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Those numbers resulted from the Waterfowl Breeding Population and Habitat Survey, which has been conducted annually by the USFWS and Canadian Wildlife Service since 1955, except for 2020 and 2021 because of COVID-19 concerns. The survey, which is used to set hunting regulations throughout North America, estimated a breeding duck population of 32.3 million ducks in the traditional survey area, which is 7% less than 2022 and 9% below the long-term average. Importantly, the May pond count, a key indicator of duck habitat and potential production, showed 4.98 million ponds, a 9% decrease and 5% below the long-term average.

The numbers might seem discouraging on the surface, but Dr. Frank Rohwer, president and chief scientist of Delta Waterfowl puts forth an important reminder: “We don’t hunt the breeding population. We hunt the fall flight, which is made of the breeding population plus this year’s duck production. Duck production is the key to the upcoming hunting season.”

Rohwer and other waterfowl managers see plenty of reasons for optimism. Timely rains after the survey was conducted should boost duck production in key areas of the prairie pothole region, including the Dakotas and southern Saskatchewan.

I think duck production is going to be a much better picture than what we’re seeing in these survey numbers,” Rohwer said. “The Dakotas got rain in late May after the pond count data was assessed, and then we’ve had intermittent rain throughout the summer. Many areas of the key PPR breeding grounds stayed relatively wet, and that’s really good for renesting and duckling survival—two of the big drivers of duck production. Saskatchewan started the spring with better water conditions than in 2022, and summer rains helped keep that water later in the nesting season than we have seen in recent years. I was impressed by the number of blue-winged teal broods I saw in southern Saskatchewan in July.”

While water is the key driver of duck nesting and renesting effort, predation is the key determinant of whether duck eggs hatch or fail. According to Mike Buxton, waterfowl programs director for Delta Waterfowl, the extreme winter that socked the Dakotas and southern Manitoba helped knock back the populations of duck-nest predators such as raccoons and skunks.

Buxton runs Delta’s Predator Management Program.

“The Dakotas got a lot of snow in early November, and winter never let up until mid-April,” Buxton said. “We never had that winter thaw. It was a long, hard, cold winter. Any animal that wasn’t in tip-top shape going into the winter probably had it rough.”

Fewer predators on the landscape always helps nest success, and in turn, duck production.

Looking at breeding survey estimates for individual species, mallards came in at 6.1 million in the traditional survey area, an 18% drop from last year. The estimate puts mallards 23% below the long-term average—the lowest index since 1993. Regionally, mallard numbers declined by 36% in the eastern Dakotas and 50% in southern Saskatchewan, while increasing 8% in southern Alberta.

Blue-winged teal, the second most abundant duck in North America, declined a shocking 19% from last year. At 5.25 million, bluewings are still 2% above the species’ long-term average. The Eastern Dakotas, which were exceptionally wet in 2022, still had fairly good spring water this year. According to the survey, the region attracted just over 2 million breeding bluewings, which is down a whopping 39% from the previous year.

“Bluewings are the big surprise for me,” Rohwer said. “I thought they had pretty good production last year in the prairies, especially in the eastern Dakotas, yet the number went down. This spring, some of those teal kept going past the 49th parallel and settled in southern Saskatchewan, where their numbers jumped by

16% this year. However, the total breeding population dropped more than I would have predicted.”

Pintails, a favorite duck for many, bounced back nicely from a record low in 2022. The pintail estimate is 2.22 million, up 24% year over year, but still a troubling 43% below the long-term average. Of interest, pintail numbers jumped 54% in the eastern Dakotas, 203% in southern Saskatchewan, and 126% in southern Alberta.

“Pintails made a big improvement,” Rohwer said. “They’re an early nesting species. The pintails arrived in the Dakotas right

when the huge winter snows melted, so they settled in to take advantage of the good early water conditions.”

Green-winged teal breeding populations also climbed. Greenwings are estimated at 2.5 million, up 16% from last year and 15% above the long-term average. Greenwings nest predominantly in boreal forest regions such as northern Alberta, British Columbia, and the Northwest Territories.

Among other puddle ducks in the survey, gadwalls declined 5% but remain a healthy 25% above the long-term average. Similarly, Shovelers declined 6% but stand

8% above the long-term average. Wigeon are not doing as well—they dropped 14% and sit 28% below the long-term average.

Goldeneyes in the Eastern Survey were up this year as the Atlantic Flyway saw more rains. Dr. Chris Nicolai, who oversees Delta research program, said production from prairie nesting puddle ducks—particularly blue-winged teal, gadwalls, and shovelers—appears to be good to excellent across the Dakotas and eastern prairie Canada.

“My observation from field work and driving around is that duck production was really good in the



## 2023 WATERFOWL BREEDING POPULATION AND HABITAT SURVEY

SPECIES	2023	2022	% CHANGE FROM 2022	% CHANGE FROM LTA
 MALLARD	6.13	7.43	▼ 18	▼ 23
 GADWALL	2.56	2.69	▼ 5	▲ 25
 AMERICAN WIGEON	1.89	2.19	▼ 14	▼ 28
 GREEN-WINGED TEAL	2.50	2.15	▲ 16	▲ 15
 BLUE-WINGED TEAL	5.25	6.49	▼ 19	▲ 2
 NORTHERN PINTAIL	2.22	1.78	▲ 24	▼ 43
 NORTHERN SHOVELER	2.86	3.04	▼ 6	▲ 8
 REDHEAD	0.93	1.07	▼ 13	▲ 27
 CANVASBACK	0.62	0.59	▲ 6	▲ 5
 SCAUP	3.52	3.66	▼ 4	▼ 29
TOTAL DUCKS	32.32	34.66	▼ 7	▼ 9

NUMBERS IN MILLIONS. LTA (LONG-TERM AVERAGE)



Dakotas,” Nicolai said. “I’ve been seeing broods of puddle ducks all over.”

Results are mixed for diving ducks. Canvasbacks increased to 619,000, up 6% and 5% above the long-term average. Redheads declined to 931,000, down 13% but still 27 above the long-term average. Scaup continued to trend downward, dropping 4% in 2023, which puts them 29% below the long-term average.

Duck numbers in the eastern survey area—birds most likely to migrate down the Atlantic Flyway—are strong. Although mallards declined 4%, they held above 1.2 million, which should keep a four-mallard daily limit in place for the 2024-2025 season. Black ducks, at 732,000, rose 8% and are now 6% above the long-term average. Green-winged teal increased by 17%, while goldeneyes were up 28%. Ring-necked ducks declined by 3% and mergansers fell by 1%. Populations of wood ducks, one of the species in the formula used to determine season lengths and bag limits in the east, held steady at a robust 1 million in the Atlantic Flyway.

Overall, this year’s duck production—and hunting during the upcoming season—is likely to be a mixed bag.

The Waterfowl Breeding Population and Habitat Survey data is released in late August—months after the actual counting because it is a massive effort to survey the continent’s waterfowl. Ironically, the survey is simply a snapshot of the breeding population and habitat in early spring. Although the breeding population numbers are slightly below average, remember that production in the summer has far more

to do with fall hunting success than a snapshot of pair numbers.

“I think production this summer was far better than what pair numbers would suggest,” Rohwer said. “We had very timely rains in much of the PPR and water stayed on the landscape. Couple that with reduced predator numbers, and it is a recipe for success. I’ve seen teal broods everywhere across the prairie, and young mallards dominate the ducks caught during banding efforts in Manitoba. That makes me very excited about the upcoming hunting seasons.”

## BANDS

Some interesting things that Jerry shared with us that came out of this banding session.

Goose bands are now black to blend in better with the goose’s feet to discourage hunters from shooting only banded birds and also give the bird more of a fighting chance of not getting harvested sooner.

If you do shoot a banded bird, which leg was the band on? If the band is on the left leg then it is a female, if the band was on the right leg, then a male.

## 2023-2024 Season

Ducks Season:

North Zone: Oct. 28 - Dec. 26

Middle Zone: Nov. 4 - 12 and Nov. 18 through Jan. 7, 2024

South Zone: Nov. 23 - 26 and Dec. 7 through Jan. 31, 2024

Bag Limit: 6 ducks daily with species restrictions of:

4 mallards (no more than 2 hens)

2 scaup for first 45 days and 1 scaup for last 15 days

3 wood ducks, 2 redheads, 2 hooded mergansers, 1 pintail, 2 canvas-

backs, 2 black ducks, 1 mottled duck

## PRODUCTS

Recently last month, Jerry SR went to the waterfowl expo that was held out in St Charles, I believe, and came across a couple of products that look very interesting to him and wanted to share with the members.

Now, we do not normally do this, promote products, so this is not really a promotion but information that is out there to when someone sees a new product that might be of interest to us members.

The first product, which the flyer is above, is called the Animator, which to me looks pretty cool. This product will convert just about any type of mojo to add ripples in the water, which is extremely helpful on those calm days where the water is just glass and the decoys look lifeless. In the picture above you see an arm attached to the mojo, and the bottom of that arm is a wings-on-the-water splash plate which moves up and down and splashes the water which in turns creates noise and ripples on the water. This plate is standard with the package, just like ducks frolicking in the water or you can get silent plates to just make the ripples. This looks like a really cool product. They appear to be lite and you will no longer have to haul out a rippler with you to the blind. They are easy to convert back too on those windy days.

There are quite a few reviews out on the web, videos on UTube and also at the blue bird waterfowl website so you can assess on your own. The link to the website is:

<https://bluebirdwaterfowl.com/>



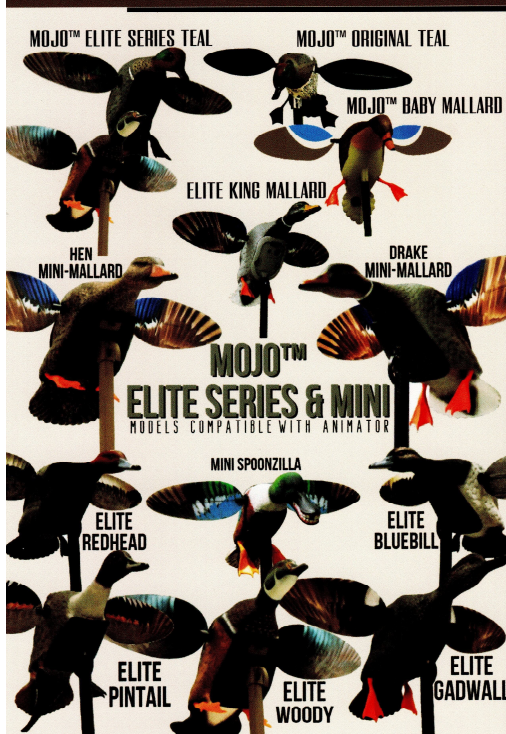
## THE ANIMATOR

Fitting Guide

by blue bird waterfowl



CONVERT ANY OF THESE SPINNERS INTO A WATER MOTION DECOY

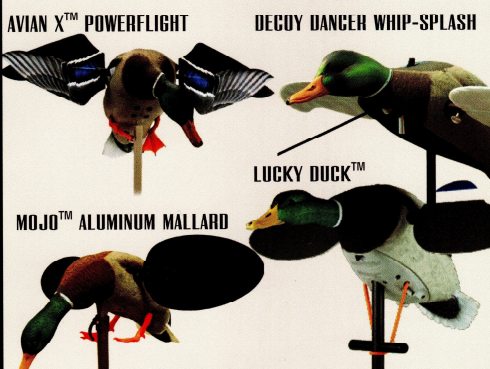


### FEATURES

- Retrofits to your decoy
- Weighs only 2.4 ounces
- Adds motion to any decoy
- Water-sound attracts waterfowl
- Limited-lifetime warranty
- Satisfaction guaranteed



### OTHER COMPATIBLE DECOYS



The cost is \$67.45 each. I was looking at getting a Higdon pulsator, but the cost of those are \$149.99 at Rogers so I decided to give these a try. They come from Santa Rosa California so shipping takes about a week to get here.

UPDATE: I received my animator yesterday and had a small issue. I sent an email to them about it and within two hours I got a phone call from the owner

and addressed the issue. Now, that is customer service!!

The other product was one I knew about from last year's season, which is Boss Shells.

From their website of <https://bosshotshells.com/>

In 2017, in Cash, Arkansas. On the heels of a dry-ground, snow goose crushfest, Michigan base-met-ballistics prodigy Brandon Cerecke leaves a grip of 2 3/4" #5

handloads with the guides of Mat Schauer's Northern Skies Outfitters. As the story goes, the shells were tossed into a blind bag and largely forgotten about. One year later, Brandon returns again and hands out yet another handful of hulls. Weeks later, Schauer's guys eventually chamber a few of these loads and the performance they saw blew both of their minds. This stuff ain't steel — it's way better.



Just like the bygone days of lead, they're stoning birds at 50 and 60 yards. No cripples — and eventually, no more shells left.

When Brandon returned the following year, the boys at Northern Skies were salivating in the hopes he bring more with him — it was all anyone talked about during the entire off-season. Soon after on tailgates, in blinds and on barstools, the hushed



word spreads like a brushfire among the nation's notoriously secretive waterfowlers. Rumor had it, there was a devastating new non-toxic load and it was actually affordable — and yeah, you could actually get them ... but you had to know somebody who knew somebody who knew Brandon. To say that the legend of the 2 3/4" Shorty #5's copper-plated destruction happened organically would be a massive understatement. Flash forward to the spring of 2018, Brandon calls Schauer, asking if he knew someone that could help bring his shells to the mass-market. Enter goose wizard Cory Loeffler, who runs it by Zach Meyer and he drops a name of a Minnesota-based photographer and brand master, Lee Kjos. Lee meets Brandon in May at the Kjos farm for a jam session and BOSS was officially off and running.

The phenomenon that became copper-plated BOSS can be traced back to partnership born of mutual respect and decades of waterfowling passion and experience. Over a bourbon-

soaked 1 a.m. conversation, Kjos and Brandon find themselves aligning on everything from their love of lead's performance to a disgust over what lead does to the environment. They both recognized the necessity of steel's non-toxic properties, but hated the crippling that is so prevalent from their ineffectiveness. Above all, they both lived old-schooler values: Conservation. Real woodsman-ship. Patterning shotguns. American manufacturing. Customer service. In this, the #unmuzzled brand and our direct-to-consumer business model was born. We fully credit the stoke coming from the #BOSSmen community for the continued groundswell. Your support, comments and suggestions helped build this movement as much as anyone — rest of the BOSS story is a narrative we're writing together.

Now, you cannot buy Boss shells from a dealer, it comes directly from Boss. I heard some pretty good things about these shells, The pellets are bismuth with a thin layer of copper over them. You can get 2 3/4 shells up to 3" shells. Duplex loads or any single shot size. They come in 12, 16, 20 and 410 gauges.

Granted, they are a bit pricey, \$3.60 a round for 12 gauge, on average, and you get twenty rounds per box of shells. I am looking into it, since I have a few legacy guns in my safe that cannot shoot steel without damaging the barrel. Below is the CEO business card. Go check them out!



Granted, it is hard to see, but it states:

Scott Defries

Chief Executive Officer

sdefries@bosshotshells.com

269.325.8018

## BOARD ELECTIONS

Ever had or thought there was a problem with the association? Ever complained about one thing or another on why this association does this or that and should do it this way? Ever thought about becoming a solution to these problems instead of just complaining about them? Here is your chance! There will be board member elections. Step up now and put your name in the hat. So if you are interested in becoming a board member, or if you have questions on becoming a board member, you can ask any board member, talk to Jerry, email your questions or interest to mvdha@mvdha.com or mail them to the address on the back of this newsletter and they will be forward to Jerry. If you want to make a change, here is your chance.

## Up Coming Events

**Oct 11** : Boat Maintenance with Steve Brand of Bass Pro

**Nov 8** : NO MEETING

**Dec 13** : Holiday Party

### General Information

This newsletter is distributed to our active members. For non-active members check the website for the current newsletter. We have our general meeting the second Wednesday of every month at 7:30 PM and our Board of Directors' Meeting every fourth Monday at 7 PM. Members meetings are held at Borgettis Bar & Grill 1667 South Old Hwy 141 Fenton MO. Board Meetings are held at various locations, contact Jerry Mercurio at 314-603-6548 for this month's location. In case of bad weather call Ken Liebel at 314-822-8030 or Jerry Mercurio at 314-603-6548.

Visit YOUR web site at <https://mvdha.com> to get the most recent news, events and updates. There you will find this newsletter and other helpful information concerning conservation and the great outdoors that we love. If you would like to be added to the email listing of important news and updates you can do that through the web site through the contact us link, fill out the form and make sure you add your email address.

Any comments or suggestions concerning the newsletter or the website can be sent to [mvdha@mvdha.com](mailto:mvdha@mvdha.com). I am always looking forwards to suggestions concerning content and what you would like to see or be presented in these publications.

**Next members meeting:           October 11, 2023**

**Next Board Meeting:           October 23, 2023**

**Members are invited to the Board Meeting**

**Member's meeting start at 7:30, Board meeting starts at 7:00**

### MISSISSIPPI VALLEY DUCK HUNTERS ASSN. INC.

*"A Nonprofit Association of, by, and for the Duck Hunters"*

"ST. LOUIS' NONPROFIT ASSOCIATION"

P.O. BOX 6, VALLEY PARK, MO 63088

