



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



SEPTEMBER 2023

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WIDGEON IT FINALLY CLICKED

After the spitting out the duck issue at Lake Marion, I was very disappointed to say the least. I loaded him up in the boat and bagged it and headed for home.

The next day I started his training again, this time with that Wood Duck. Each time I would toss it into the yard to see if he would retrieve it, he would do the same thing, go out and sniff at it, and never touch it. I tried forcing him to hold it, but to no avail. Went back to the dummies with the wings tied on and he retrieved them with gusto, no hesitation what so ever. I was at a loss. Understand, this was during the time where we did not have the internet like we do today so I could not Google up some help and the books I had did not address this situation very well. The season was coming to an end, so basically, I gave up for this season and stuck the duck in the freezer for next years training.

In the Spring of the following year, I started working Widgeon again. He was still showing the signs of a promising retriever, I believe he was about three years old now. His ground manners were outstanding, did single, double retrieves, returning to hand with no issues. Even worked on blind retrieves which it did ok, not outstanding, but did get the job done. Even broke out the dog stand again for him to remember that, again, no issues what so ever. Brought out the dummies with the wings tied on, granted, I did not freeze them and were a little ripe, but again, no issues, he charged out and retrieved them with no problems, so I decided to thaw out the duck and see what he would do.

I put Widgeon in the heal position, let him sniff the duck, he was showing signs of excitement, which I thought was a positive thing, threw the duck out. He sat there next to my side waiting and anticipating the release. I sent him, he charge out to the duck, with me yelling encouragement all the way, he got to the duck, sniffed it, and came back to me, no duck in mouth. To say the least, I was very discouraged, and flat out did not know what to do and basically gave up on him and decided he would be just a family pet.

September rolled around and the kids and I went on a dove hunt behind our house where a few birds were seen, as usual, Widgeon always came with me on my outings. I set my son and daughter up on the tree line looking for birds. The birds were not exactly cooperating, but we had one that came in, that my son knocked down, crippled it to be honest, but it fell into a very thick brush pile. Thinking we will never find it, but it was my son's first official bird with a shotgun, I started going through the brush to try and find it, Widgeon was just ahead of me, when all of a sudden the dove flew straight up about two feet above his head, and he leapt up and snagged that bird right out of the air!! He brought it to my hand, just like he was taught, was I proud of him! Finally, it clicked! I do not know if I was more proud of him for his first retrieve or my Son's first bird! He retrieved several more birds that season with no more issues, but life happens, divorce, and I left Widgeon with the kids, not seeing him again, for about six years.

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September MEETING

This month members meeting we will be meeting at Jay Henges Range for the MDC presentation of the up and coming waterfowl season. **We will be starting the program at 7 PM.**

Please hold all questions to the end of Andy's presentation so he can get through it. Some of the questions we are going to ask:

Will there be more waterfowl areas available for St Louis hunters now that Columbia Bottom is not pumping?

Now that Kansas and Arkansas are limiting out of state hunters to certain days, will MDC consider a like program?

Is MDC going to online with next year's Waterfowl, Turkey, and Deer Digests?

Any changes in store for teal season, hours, etc.?

MDC and lead prohibition on all areas for hunting and fishing?

Also at the meeting we will be discussing next years trout trip, determine how many folks are interested, where would you like to stay and any other ideas you might come up with.

PRE SEASON DRAW

The application time frame for the managed waterfowl hunts at MDC conservation areas begins on 1 September.

Go to the MDC website and select hunting and trapping link off of the main menu, top navigation. Under the popular species listing on the right hand side select Waterfowl. On the left hand navigation screen of the next page select Managed Hunts Waterfowl. On that page on the left hand side select Waterfowl Reservations. Scroll down the page and you will see a link for Apply For

a Waterfowl Reservation. On the next page you will be able to put in your reservation on 1 Sept. Draw registration period is from Sep 01 2022 to Sep 18 2022. Draw results will be available Oct 01

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 rec-

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ord, 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 canvasbacks, 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 blue-

wings, 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 esti-

mate 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 mil-



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)

lion, 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 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

Teal Season: Sept. 9-24

Limits: 6 daily and 18 in posse

Hours: Sunrise to sunset

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 canvasbacks, 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



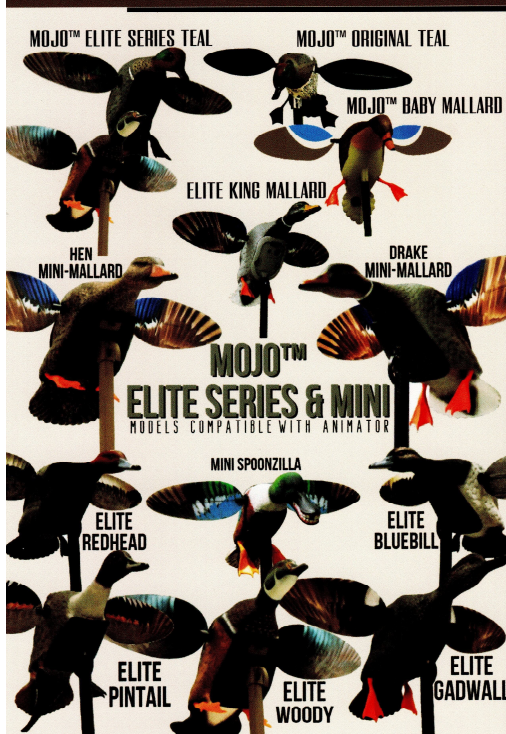
THE ANIMATOR

Fitting Guide

by blue bird waterfowl



CONVERT ANY OF THESE SPINNERS INTO A WATER MOTION DECOY

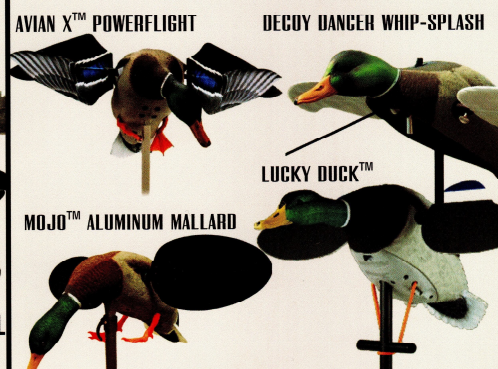


FEATURES

- 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



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 turn 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.

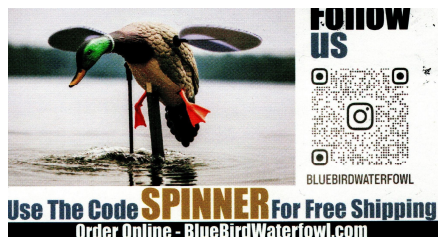
There are quite a few reviews out on the web, videos on UTube and also at the blue bird waterfowl website so you can assess on your own. The link to the website is:

<https://bluebirdwaterfowl.com/>

The cost is \$67.45 each. I was looking at getting a Higdon pul-sator, 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 basement-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

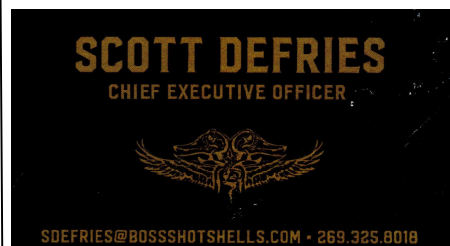
during the entire off-season. Soon after on tailgates, in blinds and on barstools, the hushed word spreads like a brushfire among the nation's notoriously secretive waterfowlers. Rumor had it, there was a devastating new non-toxic load and it was actually affordable — and yeah, you could actually get 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 woodsmanship. 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, com-

ments 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

Up Coming Events

Sept 13 : Waterfowl Forecast Jay Henges Range, starting at 7 PM

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. 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: **September 13, 2023 Start at 7 PM Jay Henges Range**

Next Board Meeting: **September 25, 2023**

Members are invited to the Board Meeting

MISSISSIPPI VALLEY DUCK HUNTERS ASSN. INC.

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

"ST. LOUIS' NONPROFIT ASSOCIATION"

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