



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



OCTOBER 2026

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GETTING READY

Decided to run a short story that I put out back in September 2024 that I thought would be prudent for this time of year since the season is upon us, but I should of ran it last month. First, I cannot believe it has been two years since I wrote this, but it is very still relevant.

Now is the time to start really getting ready for the up and coming hunting season. As waterfowlers, it amazes me of the amount of gear we accumulate to pursue our sport. Think about it, between guns, decoys, calls, specialized clothing, waders and everything else you can throw in, it amazes me we have enough space to store it all, don't even get me started if you have a boat, ATV or a dog! All of this so that we can chase a bird that only weighs a couple of pounds if that! But we love it!

Getting ready for the up and coming season, for me, comes in phases, hope this sort of check list helps you. I first start off checking or finding all my gear from last year. I try religiously to store my gear so that it is easily found the up and coming year, but that is never the case, there is always something missing and I have to find it. I check over my notes from my previous year or reflect on my previous year to remember what worked and what did not, so I can get ready for this season, then I start to work.

Once I get everything located, I check it over and make sure nothing is broke or needs fixing. Mojos, Any wires broke? Do they still work, along with the remotes? Do they need oiling so they don't squeak out in the field? Do my waders need replacing, if they do, this is the time to replace them since you have the time. Does my hunting jackets need replacing, same reason as your waders, you have the time now to get them replaced. If they don't need replacing give them a good coat of waterproofing spray like Scotchgard. Check your head lamps, do they still work, do you need to replace them? This is the time to find what you want to use, since you have that time. If your existing ones are fine, put fresh batteries in.

Decoys, you can talk forever about them. But for the basics, do they need replacing? Do they need a good cleaning or a fresh coating of paint? Do you need to re-rig them? Go from a J hook weight to a texas rig?

Blinds, either boat blinds, layout blinds or home built field blinds. What do they look like, how did they or are they performing. This is the time to spruce them up and make sure they work correctly.

This is the time of year to check all your gear, prioritize what needs fixing, getting stuff on order or replacing it so you will be ready on opening day. Don't be that guy on opening day that is not ready.

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**SELL
THOSE
MEAT
TICKETS!!!**

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MEMBERS MEETING

For this month's members meeting we are having back Field agent (aka Game Warden). MDC Agent Jeff Breuer. If you recall, he spoke to us back in April of 2023. This is a very rare opportunity to be able to ask a Game Warden all of those interesting questions you have in the field with no consequences. He is the field agent for the St Louis County region which includes Columbia Bottoms I am sure he will have some fun stories to discuss with us at our meeting. I for one am curious what kind of stupid things he has seen in his career that us hunters have done that we can either educate ourselves or educate those new hunters that come into the field.

The questions that we have accumulated from the members are the following, where I will have his answers in our next month's newsletter:

1. With the layoffs going on at MDC, will this affect any of the Field Agents being laid off?
2. Will there be any waterfowl hunts out at Columbia Bottoms? We know there will not be a draw, but what about free lancing or open hunting there?
3. Can you have multiple guns hunting as long as they maintain the three shell regulations?
4. Please review the Deer Season regulation changes.
5. With the advent of the legalization of Copper Shot, IE BOSS CIC CuProX shot and Ballistic Products CIC Copper Shot, who is telling reloaders to load in translucent hulls, how are you prepared for checking those loads that are not magnetic to verify nontoxic loads for waterfowl?

6. Define 'Reasonable Effort' in trying to retrieve downed game? Is it ticketable?
7. If a Farmer specifically states to stay out of a certain bean field and a crippled or downed bird lands in that field and you observed that, what is the course of action if you confront the hunter and he explains the situation?
8. Your opinion, what do you believe is the course of action with Columbia Bottoms future? Who is the driving force behind the changes or lack thereof with Columbia Bottoms?
9. How is River Hunting going to work?
10. What are the rules of usage of Electric Bikes on Conservation Areas?
11. If Bow Fishing, what license is required?

TROUT 2027 UPDATE

MVDHA is planning on our annual Trout Trip for 2027. **The dates are changing from 19 March 2027 through 21 March 2027 to 12 March 2027 through 14 March 2027. Coming home on the 14th.** This change is due to a recent scheduled fishing tournament being held at Trout Hollow. We will be staying at Trout Hollow Lodge at Taneycomo as we did last year. The address for Trout Hollow Lodge is: 1500 Acacia Club Rd, Hollister, MO 65672. To reserve your room call Trout Hollow at 417- 334- 2332 and tell them you are part of MVDHA or online at <https://trouthollow.com/>

TREASURER

With Rob taking a job down in Tennessee we are in the need of a treasurer. If you ever thought about becoming a member of the board

MVDHA BOARD

President: Ken Liebel

First V. Pres.:

Scott Thoele

Fin. Secretary:

VACANT

Rec. Secretary:

Bill Hilgeman

Correspondence

Secretary: Bill Hilgeman

Membership Chairman:

Duane Stinchcomb

Board of Directors:

Chairman of the Board

Jerry Mercurio

Asst Chairman of the Board

Art Wende

Directors:

Brad Douglass,

Jerry Mercurio Jr.,

James Edwards

Gary Hirsch

and want to fill this vacancy let Jerry know.

FUND RAISER

Once again we will be having our popular fund raising event of the Kenrick's meat certificates. This is for a gift certificate of \$300 towards a meat package of your choice from Kenrick's Meats at 4324 Weber Rd, St. Louis, MO 63123. Tickets will be \$5 each **OR 5 TICKETS FOR \$20**. Since we are starting this late this year, the winner of the certificate will be drawn when we have a sufficient number of tickets sold. We do not want to go for a loss on this fund raiser. It might be in December's meeting

but more than likely not, will keep you posted on when the drawing will occur. Contact any board member for tickets or contact Jerry for tickets to sell at 314-603-6548 and he will get them to you. Remember, this is for your MVDHA Club.

WATERFOWL SURVEY

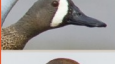
From the DU Website

2026 Waterfowl Population Survey Results

Mallards declined 11% to their lowest estimate in 33 years, while May ponds increased 14%.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) today released its 2026 Waterfowl Population Status Report. This report contains results from surveys and population estimation methods conducted by the USFWS, Canadian Wildlife Service and numerous state and provincial partners.

The estimate for total breeding ducks in the traditional survey area was 33.4 million, which was similar to the 2025 estimate of 33.9 million and 6% below the long-term average (since 1955). Mallards were estimated at 5.9 million, 11% below 2025, and 26% below the long-term aver-

 2026 WATERFOWL SURVEY DUCKS.ORG/DUCKNUMBERS					
SPECIES	2026	2025	% CHANGE from 2025	% CHANGE from LTA	
 MALLARD	5.859	6.554	-11%	-26%	
 GADWALL	2.351	2.414	-3%	+13%	
 AMERICAN WIGEON	2.940	3.191	-8%	+12%	
 GREEN-WINGED TEAL	2.334	2.550	-8%	+6%	
 NORTHERN SHOVELER	3.289	2.758	+19%	+24%	
 BLUE-WINGED TEAL	3.962	4.432	-11%	-22%	
 NORTHERN PINTAIL	1.988	2.239	-11%	-48%	
 REDHEAD	0.931	0.918	+1%	+26%	
 CANVASBACK	0.782	0.690	+13%	+32%	
 SCAUP	4.155	3.675	+13%	-15%	
Total Ducks	33.439	33.980	-2%	-6%	
May Ponds (US & Canada)	4.761	4.180	+14%	-9%	

Numbers in millions. Traditional Survey Area. LTA (Long-term Average)
 From USFWS Waterfowl Population Status Report
 Waterfowl Photos: PHIL KAHNKE

Sponsored by 

age. The 2026 May pond estimate was 4.8 million, a 14% increase from the 2025 estimate of 4.2 million but 9% below the long-term average.

The report also includes breeding population estimates for six common duck species groups from the eastern survey area, which encompasses eastern Canada and the northeastern U.S., from Virginia to Maine. Estimates for these six species groups were essentially unchanged from 2025. The report also provides updates on the status of goose and swan populations.

According to the companion Adaptive Harvest Management report, the USFWS is expected to recommend liberal frameworks for the 2027–2028 duck season across all four flyways.

"These results are largely consistent with our expectations, as last year saw the lowest recorded May pond count since 2004. Those dry conditions almost certainly resulted in low production in 2025 and slight to moderate declines in returning breeding populations this year. Mallards are now at their lowest level in over 30 years. This provides a stark reminder that our conservation work is far from done and underscores the need for sustained investments in science-based population monitoring and management."

- Dr. Steve Adair, Ducks Unlimited Chief Scientist

Key Takeaways

Mallards declined 11% from 2025 to 5.9 million and were 26% below the long-term average. The 2026 estimate was the 9th lowest on record and the lowest since 1993.

May pond estimates increased 14% from 2025 to 4.8 million but remained 9% below the long-term average. Prairie Canada drove the increase, with pond numbers up 29%. Drier conditions led to a 10% decrease in the U.S. prairies, highlighting regional habitat variability.

Pintails declined 11% from 2025 to 1.9 million and were 48% below the long-term average. Under the USFWS interim pintail harvest strategy, hunters are expected to have a three-pintail daily bag limit for 2027–2028.

Blue-winged teal were estimated at 3.9 million, down 11% from 2025 and 22% below the long-term average. Based on current USFWS special early teal season guidelines, the Service is expected to recommend a 9-day early teal season for 2027.

According to the companion Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM) report, the USFWS is expected to recommend liberal frameworks in all four flyways for the 2027–2028 duck season.

Diving duck populations remained strong in the traditional survey area. Redheads were 26% above the long-term average, and canvasbacks were 32% above the long-term average.

Alaska duck estimates declined 11% from 2025 to 2.3 million and were 37% below the long-term average.

Eastern survey area duck populations remained stable, although Atlantic flyway hunters will move to a 3-mallard bag limit, with no sex restriction, for the 2027–2028 season thanks to a newly adopted eastern mallard harvest strategy.

Pond Numbers

Reported pond counts have been near or below average since 2018, leading to a multi-year decline in duck populations over that same timeframe. This year, May ponds increased by 14%, helping stabilize dry conditions in the prairies and prevent them from getting worse. This year's increase was driven primarily by improved conditions in prairie Canada, which saw a 29% jump in estimated ponds due to above-average spring precipitation. However, conditions were drier in the U.S. prairies, with pond counts declining 10%.

Because we cannot predict where precipitation will occur from year to year, it is important to have a base of wetlands across the prairies that can produce ducks when they have water. Much of the resilience we are seeing in duck populations is due to landscape-level conservation that allows ducks to respond to annual variations in water conditions.

Although wetland conditions improved from 2025, pond counts at the time of the survey were 9% below the long-term average. Above-average precipitation persisted across much of the prairies throughout spring and summer. Field reports suggest good to excellent wetland conditions for brood-rearing and late-nesting species in some portions of the prairies, raising expectations for somewhat improved duck production in 2026.

"Despite below-average breeding populations for most duck species, habitat conditions across the major breeding regions were improved over 2025. This bodes well for a moderate increase in the number of young birds flying south this fall. More

importantly, we are hopeful that these wetland conditions will carry over to benefit nesting ducks in 2027."

- Dr. Steve Adair, Ducks Unlimited Chief Scientist

Survey Background

The surveys that provide data for this report, including the Waterfowl Breeding Population and Habitat Survey, which has been conducted since 1955, are recognized as the world's most thorough and accurate wildlife survey effort. The primary purpose of the surveys is to provide annual information on spring population size and trajectory for 19 North American duck species, or species groups, Canada geese and swans, and to evaluate prairie breeding habitat conditions by estimating the number of May ponds.

Data from these surveys inform hunting regulations in the United States and Canada and provide vital information for researching relationships between waterfowl and their habitats, which are critical to effective conservation. The results are eagerly awaited by hunters, scientists, and the waterfowl management community.

Each spring, the USFWS and Canadian Wildlife Service, in collaboration with state and provincial partners from the Pacific, Central, Mississippi, and Atlantic flyway councils, send air and ground crews into the 2-million-acre survey area, which stretches from Alaska's Seward Peninsula to the shores of Newfoundland, and south nearly to the Nebraska-South Dakota border. For weeks, teams fly, drive and hike survey routes across vast landscapes and numerous types of waterfowl habitats.

For the full report go to:

<https://www.ducks.org/waterfowl-surveys>

SEASONS

Dove

Season: Sept. 1 thru Nov. 29

Limits: 15 daily and 45 in possession combined total for all three species

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

2026-2027 WATERFOWL

Ducks

North Zone: Oct. 31 thru Dec. 29

Middle Zone: Nov. 7 - Dec. 13 and Dec. 19 through Jan. 10, 2027

South Zone: Nov. 26 – 29 and Dec. 7 through Jan. 31, 2027

Bag Limit: 6 ducks daily with species restrictions of:

4 mallards (no more than 2 females), 3 wood ducks, 2 redheads

2 canvasbacks, 2 black ducks

3 pintail, 2 scaup for first 45 days and 1 scaup for last 15 days

1 mottled duck

Possession Limit: Three times the daily bag or 18 total, varies by species

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Snow Geese (White and Blue Phases) and Ross's Geese

Season: Nov. 11 thru Feb. 6, 2027

Limits: 20 blue, snow, or Ross's geese daily with no possession limit

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

White-Fronted Geese

Season: Nov. 11 thru Feb. 6, 2027

Limits: 2 daily and 6 in possession

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Canada Geese and Brant

Season: Nov. 11 – Feb. 6, 2027

Limits: 3 Canada geese and Brant in aggregate daily, 9 in possession

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Light Goose Conservation Order

Season: Feb. 7 through April 30, 2027

Limits: No daily or possession limits

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset

Methods: For the taking of blue, snow and Ross's geese, hunters may use shotguns capable of holding more than three shells and recorded or electronically amplified bird calls or sounds or imitations of bird calls or sounds.

YOUTH HUNTING DAYS

North Zone: Oct. 24 and 25

Middle Zone: Oct. 31 and Nov. 1

South Zone: Nov. 21 and 22

Limits: Same as during regular waterfowl season

Hours: Same as during regular waterfowl season

Up Coming Events

14 Oct : Game Warden

11 Nov: No Meeting

9 Dec: Holliday 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 also held at Borgettis Bar & Grill 1667 South Old Hwy 141 Fenton MO. 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: October 14, 2026

Next Board Meeting: October 26, 2026

Members are invited to the Board Meeting

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

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"ST. LOUIS' NONPROFIT ASSOCIATION"

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