



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



SEPTEMBER 2026

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PRIDE AND ARROGANCE

In the following, these are my thoughts and opinions only.

I wanted to name this as Pride and Prejudice, which is one of my favorite period movies (It is a chick flick, the remake, not original), but that was already taken but it would fit this article. Recently Craig Sondker of MFOR, his brother, Jerry SR and myself met with three members of MDC out at Columbia Bottoms (CB) to discuss even the most remote possibility of having waterfowl hunting there. Craig and his brother's family used to own that area and farmed it so they have a very unique view on how to manage it for water on areas that will hold water and areas that will not.

I want to give credit where credit is due to the three MDC employees who joined us. This was a Sunday morning with a follow up MFOR meeting in St Peters, they could be at home with their families but were here with us talking about Columbia Bottoms.

Currently there is the Setback project going on by the Corp of Engineers. Our first stop at CB was at a knoll next to the main road. We all got out of our vehicles and Craig began talking about how this knoll would be an ideal place for a pump since it was elevated, he discussed on how in previous floods this area rarely went under water, if it did, only by about six inches. As Craig talked, two members of MDC were engaged in that discussion but the other was staring off in the distance and I could see it in his eyes where he was thinking why was he here and who were these people telling us how to manage Columbia Bottoms, arrogance stepped in.

Our next stop was at the boat ramp and as we got out of our vehicles I wanted to know who these people were, I introduced myself and Jerry, Craig and his brother introduced themselves, the MDC folks introduced themselves and it got interesting, in my eyes anyway. Laura Conlee, introduced herself simply as Laura as the Deputy Director of Resource Management (who I have talked to before), Clinton Owenby introduced himself as the MDC Regional Resource Management Supervisor of the St Louis Region, then came Aaron Jeffries, he introduced himself as the Deputy Director MDC Outreach and Education division, publications and state and federal governmental relations along with other credits with 21 years of service, pride stepped in. I was impressed, I mean, I sincerely hope he had quite a few years of service if he is the Deputy Director of anything in MDC. My point is, he was proud of it and so should he be, but don't flaunt it. At the boat ramp we discussed security on how MDC could install cameras, IE Flock Cameras or something of the sort, but Aaron basically made us feel like that was an ignorant comment since people would just shoot them out and it cost \$25K to replace them. Laura stepped in and smoothed things over and talked about deer cameras or similar.

We then went to another area by the old refuge where Craig discussed water control and pump location. Again, Aaron came out and made us feel like who are we to question MDC and their management goals. Even if he was right, he needs to explain why something will not work not with the negative attitude. I brought up the idea again of selling CB to the zoo if CB was not a viable area in my mind, (Cont Page 5)

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**SELL
THOSE
MEAT
TICKETS!!!**

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MEMBERS MEETING

For this month's members meeting with the opening of early Teal season coming the following weekend we thought it would be good to have a refresher on Teal identification. This will be a short meeting, along with a discussion of tactics of finding cripples and then we want to go into a discussion of questions for Agent Jeff Breur who is a field Agent in the St Louis county area.

TROUT TRIP 2027

MVDHA is planning on our annual Trout Trip for 2027. The dates are going to be 19 March 2027 through 21 March 2027. Coming home on the 21st. 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/>

OCTOBER MEETING

For our October 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 and has agreed to come and speak to us for our October meeting. 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, but come up with some great questions to ask him. 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.

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.

Rob Mueller

I found out at our last board meeting Rob took a job down in Tennessee for better work and pay. We want to thank Rob for his many years of dedication to YOUR MVDHA and hope for the best in the years to come. **That leaves us a huge vacancy for our Treasurer. If you ever thought about becoming a member of the board and want to fill this vacancy let Jerry know.**

PRESEASON DRAW

The application time frame for the managed waterfowl hunts at MDC conservation areas began on 1 September. Go to the MDC website and halfway down the page you will see the link to take you to the registration page. Hunters may apply for pre-season reservations at up to three managed waterfowl hunting areas. Draw registration period is from Sep 01 2026 to Sep 18 2026. Draw results will be available Oct 01

MVDHA BOARD

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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 average. 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 com-

mon 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.

 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

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"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>

SHORT STORY CONT

and that the zoo would not want hunters shooting near by, but they flat out and stated that the zoo has no interest in buying it and that CB was still a very viable area and that MDC is turning it into a deer, turkey and quail area. Time will tell.

Final comments, Laura and Clinton are model employees and representatives of MDC, credit to them both, when I made ignorant statements or questions, they both handled it diplomatically and explained why or why not something could be done, Aaron however was not, if it was me talking like this to the public, I would of been sent off to sensitivity training. Our tax dollars at work.

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

Teal Season: Sept. 12 - 20

Limits: 6 daily and 18 in possession

Hours: Sunrise to sunset

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: Oct. 3 - 10 and 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

9 Sept : Ducks at a distance

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: September 9, 2026

Next Board Meeting: September 28, 2026

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"

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