

Record-high duck numbers recorded

Record-high duck numbers could make great hunting; rainfall needed PRATT — Kansas duck hunters don't have long to wait before seasons open. The early teal season runs Sept. 17-25 in the High Plains (west of U.S. 283) and Sept. 10-25 in the Low Plains (east of U.S. 283), and there should be plenty of birds. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports that blue-winged teal numbers are 91 percent above their long-term average (a record), and green-winged teal numbers, although down from last year, are still 47 percent above their long-term average.

The only problem is lack of water. Long-term drought throughout much of the state may make finding migrating waterfowl difficult unless rainfall hits critical marshes in late August and early September. If that happens, Kansas could have an excellent opening waterfowl season.

"We still have time," says Carl Grover, manager of Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area, near Great Bend, one of the premier marshes in the country. "One storm could change everything." Grover adds that the Bottoms will probably not be as good as last year, but there will be water. The holding pool had about 39 inches of water as of Aug. 23, and staff plan to release water to pools 3B, 4B, and 5.

Nearby Quivira National Wildlife Refuge also reports that they are moving some wa-

ter, and they are "cautiously optimistic" that they'll have water for teal season. Farther east, McPherson Valley Wetlands reports that as of Aug. 3, only pools 8 and 15 in the Big Basin have any water. At Neosho Wildlife Area in southeast Kansas, the refuge pool is 2 feet low. Area staff have been pumping for about two weeks to fill ditches in both Pool 1 and Pool 2. However, they have had several inches of rain recently, which should help finish out the moist plant soil seed production.

Localized areas of the state have had good rainfall at times this summer, so good hunting may be found in many areas of the state, both public and private. For weekly updates on public waterfowl management areas, visit the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWP) website, www.kdwp.state.ks.us, and click "Hunting/Migratory Birds/ Waterfowl Reports." KDWP biologists will begin updating these sites about Sept. 1. Phoning the nearest KDWP office may be the best way to decide where to hunt. These numbers may be found on the website under "KDWP Info/Locations."

New for regular duck seasons this year is the Southeast Zone, which is bordered on the west by U.S. Highway 77 from the Oklahoma border, on the north by Butler County Neb. 150th Street to U.S. Highway I-35, I-35 to Kansas Highway K-68, and from there to the Missouri border..

Youth seasons
 High Plains Zone — Oct. 1-2;
 Low Plains Early Zone — Oct. 1-2;
 Low Plains Late Zone — Oct. 22-23;
 and
 Low Plains Southeast Zone — Oct. 22-23.

Regular Duck Seasons
 High Plains Zone — Oct. 8-Jan. 2, 2012, and Jan. 21-29, 2012
 Low Plains Early Zone — Oct.8-Dec.4, and Dec. 17-Jan. 1, 2012
 Low Plains Late Zone — Oct. 29-Jan. 1, 2012, and Jan. 21-29, 2012
 Low Plains Southeast Zone — Nov. 5-Jan. 8, 2012, and Jan. 21-29, 2012

During youth seasons, hunters 15 and younger may take ducks, geese, coots, and mergansers while hunting under the supervision of an adult 18 years or older. The adult may not hunt.

In both youth and regular seasons, six ducks is the daily bag limit, which may include no more than one canvasback, two redheads, two pintails, two scaup, three wood ducks, and five mallards (only two of which may be hens). The daily bag may comprise six of any other duck, such as six teal, six gadwall, or six wigeon.

The 2011 goose seasons are as follow:
 Canada and Brant — Oct. 29-Nov. 6 and Nov. 9-Feb. 12, 2012, daily bag limit three possession limit six
 White-fronted — Oct. 29-Jan. 1, 2012, and Feb. 4-12, 2012, daily bag limit two, possession limit four
 Light (Ross', snow, blue) — Oct. 29-Nov. 6, and Nov. 9-Feb. 12, 2012, daily bag limit 20, no possession limit

By special conservation order, light geese may also be taken from Feb. 13-April 30, 2012. During this period, there will be no bag or possession limit on light geese. In addition, participants will be allowed to use unplugged shotguns and electronic calls and take light geese from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset during this conservation order.

For a detailed map of the duck boundaries, as well as other duck and goose regulations, pick up a copy of the 2011 Kansas Hunting and Furharvesting Regulations Summary, available in early September at all KDWP offices and most license vendors, or download the booklet now from the KDWP website. Click "Hunting," then "Hunting Regulations."



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