

# MIGRATION REPORTS – NOVEMBER 2015

NOVEMBER 4, 2015



Rain is in the forecast again, but hopefully the Jetstream will stay to the north as predicted and bring us limited precipitation. Should the weatherman be wrong - has happened a few times in the past - and the Jetstream dips to the south we will be flooded out for a third straight weekend. Next week a major bird-delivering front is on the way. Expect the first of the snow geese (currently moving into North Dakota) to begin showing up with this front along with a mixture of gadwalls, pintails, greenwings, redheads, and shovelers. The bluewings that made up the majority of last weekend's bag - and this week's - will be moving on out. The main migration is pretty much in line with other seasons per reports from Missouri and Kansas; bluewings have left, gadwalls, pintails, redheads, shovelers, greenwings, and whitefronts are building their numbers. Very strong numbers of ducks are currently staging in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. With all our great habitat and many of our ponds food sources untouched, it should be a great first split for Thunderbird.

**NOVEMBER 12, 2015**



Looking ahead to next week, there is a potential of 2+ inches of rain early next week. El Nino is indeed alive and well. According to NOAA, El Nino has an 80% chance of living until the spring of 2016. Personally I would like someone to shoot it, wring its neck, and strap it. No doubt it is impacting our hunting, but at the same time it is great for the wintering waterfowl that actually need a break from the drought stricken middle coast. While we still have some of the best habitat with all the effort and money that went into pond preparation over the last two and half months, birds can and have dispersed with all the water. Scatter a flock across every pond in Matagorda County and you suddenly loose the thousands of birds we are accustomed to. Hopefully the rains go away and the birds find our ponds to their liking. For those in the know the popular J.D. Murphree Wildlife Management Area, a 24,498 acre tract of fresh, intermediate and brackish water coastal marsh on the upper coast of Texas, is averaging less than 0.5 birds per hunter, so our 4.1 average is looking pretty good in comparison. More on the coastal waterfowl populations can be found in today's Shannon Tompkin's article @ <http://www.chron.com/sports/outdoors/article/Wet-start-to-waterfowl-season-a-mixed-bag-6626155.php>.

To the north this is what I have gathered from various regional reports and managers, ducks are stalled and snow geese numbers are building large in the Dakotas. Perhaps the front today, a remnant of the blast that hit the Rockies and the Mid-west earlier will push us some new birds.

NOVEMBER 18, 2015



Our leases are finally drying up and pond levels are returning too normal. This is very important as the aquatics were just too deep for the puddle ducks for an extended period of time. Our top producing ponds such as Nellie, Appelt, and the Bear Ponds should start producing ducks with the water being drawn down. Yesterday we received only a sprinkle of rain from yesterday's front; hopefully it will be pouring waterfowl over the next couple of days. In talking with Shannon Tompkins who hunted Port O'Connor this morning the guides noted a definite influx of ducks in the surrounding bays. Up north the Dakota refuges are building good numbers of snows and ducks. Per their report they expect all of their birds to be gone shortly as the shallow waters of the refuges are due to freeze and they will be hit by high north winds between 50-60 mph. Moving further south on the Flyway, the major refuges in Kansas are also building duck numbers, along with large numbers of specks. The first significant snow of the year fell recently in the Mid-west blanketing parts of Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma...with more to come This should also help push birds into Texas. The one wild card still is all the water on the landscape. Will they stop short in North Texas? How scattered will the birds be when they hit the coast? This weekend should be a good barometer for what's in store for us.

NOVEMBER 23, 2015



Considering all the cold weather of the week, if birds do not show up soon I predict the second half could be very slow, especially if the El Nino rains persist. We have more habitat (with great food) than we have ever had before and the ratio of members to ponds is our lowest ever. We will shoot more birds than most, but our averages will be down. The "pigeon shoots" are over, it is now time to get serious. To kill birds the remainder of the season it will take more work; going into a duck pond quietly, hunting out of temporary blinds that hides everyone well, hunting the exact spot the birds were seen, camo face paint on clear days, more decoys (especially on big open water), strategic decoy spreads, and good duck calling. Note, I said good duck calling which is very different from calling non-stop like you are on the High School Band. Even then our ducks can get up in the morning and never return due to casual water. Hunting ponds back-to-back, even on our very best ponds, will have limited results. Sunday's will be tough hunting. Birds have left the Dakotas and are now in Nebraska and to the south. The front that barreled through this past weekend did not impress me at all with the birds it delivered. Up north a blanket of snow will be hitting the middle of the country later this week. Hopefully this will push birds - spoonbills welcome!