

# MIGRATION REPORTS – SEPTEMBER 2016

SEPTEMBER 6, 2016



**Full Moon – September 16<sup>th</sup> – New Birds**

This past month the Houston area realized it's wettest August in over a century; if the rains continue we will most likely have a record rainfall for the year as well. Habitat conditions along Coastal Texas are ideal for holding waterfowl throughout the season. Aquatics are growing in abundance along with seeding emergents. In addition all this plant food will nurture invertebrates for the ducks later in the season. But habitat conditions are also ideal along the entire Central Flyway and even more so than last season. Hurricane Newton, currently clobbering West Mexico, will be curving inland over the next couple of days and sweetening the Panhandle of Texas (where many of our ducks resided last winter). The rhetoric question asked in the last newsletter is, "How will all this excellent Northern habitat impact migrating birds?" So far, so good. Bluewings have been arriving early this season, not just in the hundreds, but on some ponds in the thousands. Possibly it was the full moon a couple of weeks ago, maybe last week's string of light north-wind days, or perhaps the uncanny ability of the birds to zero in from afar on food and water. With the early teal season opening almost a week earlier than normal (due to federal guidelines) the timing of the bluewings early arrival could not be more perfect. I fully expect more birds to arrive later this week with a cold front kissing the weekend door followed by a full moon. Textbook perfect!

The abundant rain is also helping us in another way. The LCRA has opened the Highland Reservoirs

once again to rice farmers. Mature rice fields in golden harvest hues and newly flooded fields of vibrant "kelly-green" grace the county roads from Eagle Lake to Bay City. Nothing draws early teal into an area quicker than flooded second-cropped rice with openings. While we do not have any rice at the Northern in the right stage of production, the rice field just north of our Northern Property boundary line has ideal water levels and rice still in its early stages of growth. As of this weekend both the Northern Roost and Toby Ponds were holding 5,000+ teal. Expect those numbers to increase this week.

The early birds, mostly comprised of male bluewings, seek the carbs. Second cropped rice supplies perhaps one of the best nutrients for migrating teal heading south, some destined as far away as Peru and even the Galapagos Islands, one heck of an epic journey. When I use to fish offshore in the fall we often would see teal skirting the ocean waves while fighting tuna 70-miles offshore, surreal images of what these birds have to endure to survive.

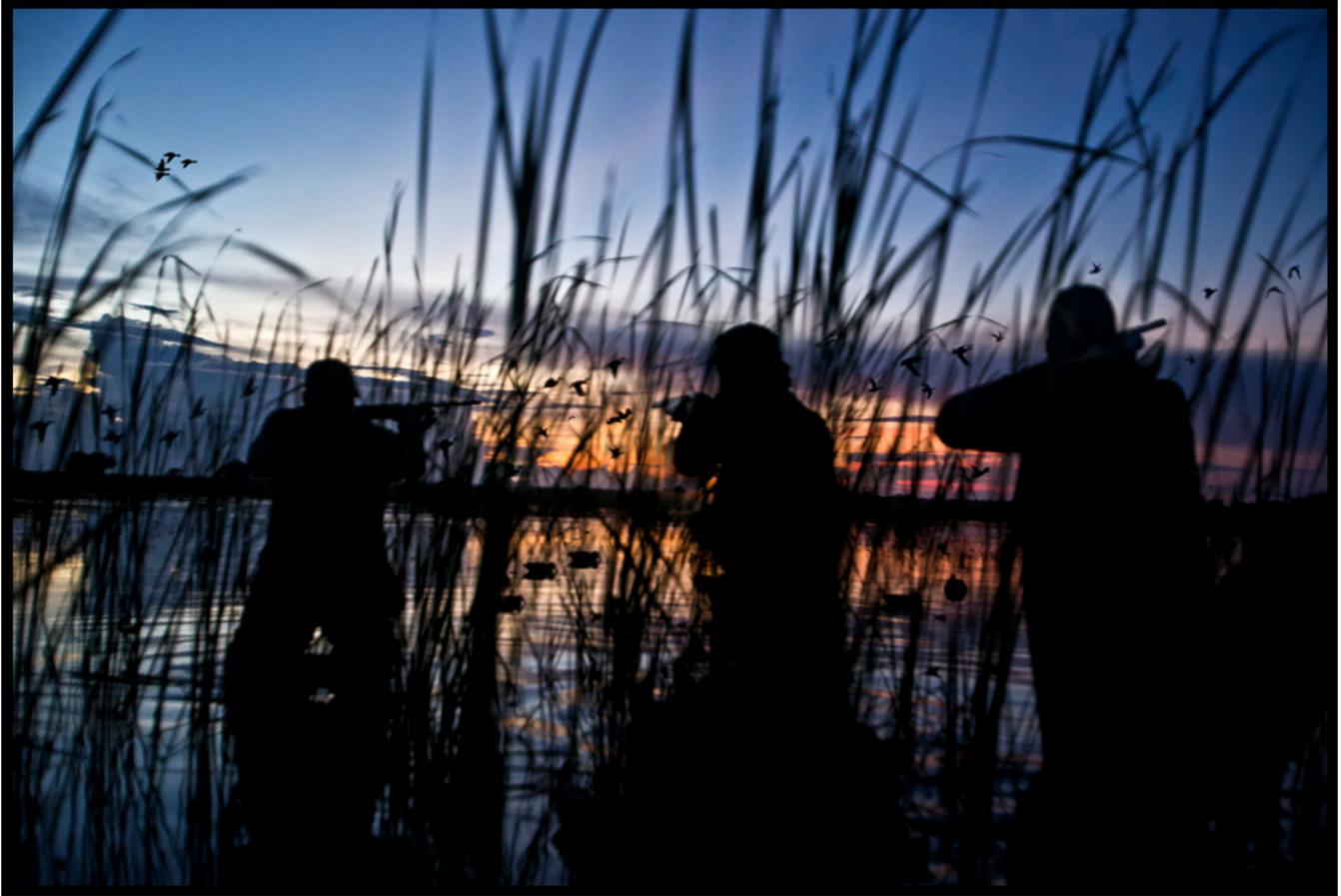
Every season our Northern Properties out produce the Southern Properties during the beginning of early teal. Later in September when the females start to migrate with their fledged young we start to see more teal on the coast feeding on our abundant Widgeon Grass and Southern Naiad. I fully expect the birds to act the same way this season.

## **SEPTEMBER 13, 2016**



Unlike last year where the teal did not arrive until a few minutes before the starting gun, this year anxiety attacks were nixed, and we watching and waiting on the birds well in advance of legal. And they did not disappoint this past weekend, some described birds flying so low that they had to "duck" in order to avoid an in-flight bird collision, others saw flights of not just hundreds by thousands of birds buzzing over the lifeless decoys silhouetted against inflamed morning waters, and then there were the jet squadrons, flocks of teal coming in so fast you would swear the formidable sound was an attack of F-22 Raptors descending to take out your spread.

**SEPTEMBER 26, 2016**



**Early Morning Action on the Pintail Pond**

As predicted our hunting slowed down the final week of teal season with a lack of bird-delivering-fronts; a total of 59 guns bagged 266 birds for an average of 4.5 birds/hunter/day\*. Limits of teal were shot on the following ponds; Gadwall, Pintail (2), Northern Roost, Toby, Mattie (2), Bear, Remington, and Marsh (3).

The 2016 teal season saw 211 guns harvesting 1,085 birds for an average of 5.1 birds/hunter/day. Up from the previous two seasons in which we produced 4.9 birds. Top producing property was the Northern with 16 limit hunts - and we didn't even have the Nellie Pond flooded! Top five producing ponds; Northern Roost (8), OM Marsh (8), Toby (5), Mattie (5), and Widgeon (4).