

## MIGRATION REPORTS – NOVEMBER 2017

OCTOBER 30, 2017



Yesterday morning I toured Shannon Tompkins and his brother Les around on our properties as I checked water wells. "And around the corner a dozen Mottled Ducks will flush," I tell them both. On cue they flush...all 12 of them. I think to myself, "You are spending way to much time with these damn ducks!" Not sure how many "wows" and "you got some birds" I heard from them both yesterday, but it was a bunch.

As of yesterday, just about every single pond had ducks on them ranging from a few hundred to thousands, and of every species of puddlers. Normally Blue-winged Teal dominate the landscape for the November opener, but come this weekend it will be a mixed bag: Pintails, Gadwalls, Widgeon, Shovelers, Blue-winged Teal, and Green-winged Teal - Mottled Ducks off limits until 11/09. With snow blanketing Canada it would not surprise me to see a little diver duck action as well.

Sometime between now and next week our goose numbers should explode especially on the

Northern Property. The Southern Roost Pond is filled with second cropped rice that we grew exclusively for the waterfowl. The Northern Roost Pond is currently in rice, to be cut tomorrow, and flooded immediately afterwards. Geese are already chowing down on the aquatics in nearby Bree and Cali Ponds. Then there is the much improved goose hatch. I have heard nothing but excellent reports on successful broods from both Snow Geese and White-fronted Geese. The geese I saw yesterday solidified the reports; at least one white bird to every gray bird (something I have not seen in a while) and the whitefronts appear to have an even better ratio of adults to juveniles. One flock of specks had two adults and ten young geese! Not sure if they raised that many or two broods combined at some point. Bald Eagles have also migrated in and are thick on all of our properties, delighting on harassing waterfowl.

Up north states are reporting a large push of ducks just about everywhere. Canvasbacks and Redheads are arriving in mass in the Great Lakes area and along "pools" in the Mississippi River, these birds seem to be on time with their migration, so expect the big webbed-foots to arrive sometime in the next week or two. South Dakota biologist state that they are experiencing a very large influx of Gadwalls and Widgeon. Ducks are piling into refuges in Kansas and as of late last week the Cheyenne Bottoms was holding 45,000 ducks, predominantly greenwings and shovellers.

Geese are staging in Canada where snow covers much of the landscape and birds are just now crossing the border in mass into the states.

## NOVEMBER 08, 2017



Per today from Kevin Kraai, Waterfowl Leader for TP&WD, "North Dakota is mostly frozen, South Dakota has open water on big lakes only, Kansas and Nebraska are bragging on their waterfowl numbers. It will not be long now until many of those birds head our way." Not that we really need anyone more ducks as they still seem to be very plentiful—even bountiful—but the more the merrier. Yesterday as I left our Northern Properties snow geese had tripled their numbers, suspect we will get a major influx of geese very soon and perhaps today's cold front delivers—get out the floaters! The Cheyenne Bottoms in Kansas as of yesterday was holding 50,000 to 75,000 geese along with a mixture of dabblers and divers numbering 40,000 to 60,000. Other refuges in Kansas are seeing similar increases in waterfowl. Delta Waterfowl reports North Dakota is completely frozen, unlike last year where they had lots of open water into late November. Also reported that a major migration of ducks and geese occurred this past weekend in the northern Central Flyway.

With probably another major push of birds over the next couple of days we will be sitting pretty at the club for the weekend. Five major properties—Blue Creek, Northern, Harrison, OM, and OM Marsh will have had five plus days of rest, not a single shot fired. Should be a lights out weekend with mucho patos, winds, cloud cover, and waning moon.

**NOVEMBER 14, 2017**



Conditions are very dry on the prairies and along the coast with no relief in sight. Our concentrated duck populations that are chowing down on the abundant "groceries" in our ponds may very well change back to a similar pattern of last season—stay on the coast. Right now fronts are delivering batches of new birds to all of our properties, but once the migration stops in the second half of the season we may very well drive the ducks off of our Northern Properties (the prairies) and birds will once again flock to the Southern Properties (the coast).

The last front delivered bluewings, greenwings, and pintails to us. Even a few stray mallards showed up on some of the straps. Noticeable absent from the straps at the cleaning tables were redheads, gadwalls, and shovellers, although there were a few. There are still plenty of ducks of just about every species on all of the wildlife refuges in the mid-west, so plenty of new ducks yet to come.

Two timely fronts will be greeting us over the next week, the first a Pacific front due to hit us sometime this weekend delivering our annual two-week pulse of redheads, the second is an Arctic front due to hit us in the middle of next week transporting the geese. The Northern Property will explode into a blanket of white, always enjoyable to hear geese overhead while in the duck blind or at the lodge. Right now geese are stacked up in South Dakota and Nebraska.

**NOVEMBER 20, 2017**



I flip-flopped the migration of the redheads and snows in the last newsletter. It was a no-show on the redheads and a full court press on the snow geese with last week's front. Perhaps 15k-20k snows went into the Northern Roost Pond on Saturday (prompting us to chase out the rat snakes from the goose bags—literally—and knock off the mud-dobbers from the decoys). Maybe Wednesday morning's front will deliver the redheads. Always fun to wail away on those decoying birds, makes you feel like a real duck hunter! This cold front seems to have lost some of its intensity, but with a dip in the Jetstream and strong northerly winds it still should be a significant "bird maker." This last front delivered a slew of pintails, along with more greenwings, bluewings are still hanging around but numbers are dropping, nice push of gadwalls, a few bluebills and wood ducks, and a major push of geese. Ladies and gentlemen where are the spoonies?

Mallards are beginning to show up in South Dakota and other states to the south meaning winter is upon those areas. I have been told that geese are thick across the plains of Nebraska / Kansas and into the Missouri / Arkansas. Big pushes of ducks have entered these states as well, just a matter of time before some of them head our way, dry conditions up north will also favor us receiving more birds as they push to greener pastures. Freezing temps reach into the Panhandle of Texas on Wednesday, most likely triggering a good migration from the north.

**NOVEMBER 29, 2017**



Well we now have plenty of geese, even saw a few Canada's yesterday. Geese were on every single pond I visited yesterday! Redheads and canvasbacks are piling into the Lodge Pond at OM. Nice push of gadwalls and shovelters also occurred over the past two days. Still swarms of pintails and teal on all of our properties, simply mind-boggling at times. Conditions are dry here, in Arkansas, Kansas, all over. Ponds with water and veggies are in demand, and we have plenty of them!

Still plenty of birds holding up north, but that is fixing to change next week, a strong front will dump snow across the northern plains and put them into the deep freeze. We may experience temps in the upper 30's come the opening day. Expect the fantastic to become squared. Unlike the first opening where we shot mostly bluewings, this opener will be a smorgasbord of birds. And get the kinks worked out of your speck call, they are everywhere!