

Duck season open, but water needed

PRATT — Duck season opened Oct. 8 in the High Plains Zone (west of U.S. Highway 283), and seasons are set to open Oct. 15 in the Early Zone and Oct. 29 in the Late Zone. However, if the state does not receive significant rainfall soon, most public hunting in the central and western areas of the state may not hold ducks, even though good numbers of ducks are expected.

As of mid-October, Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area near Great Bend — one the state's most popular areas — had no water in any hunting pools. Nearby Quivira National Wildlife Refuge is faring a little better. The area has a fair amount of water and approximately 27,000 ducks, but the salt flats are dry.

Farther north, conditions at Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge are poor, with little to no flooded timber, open flats, or shoreline. Prospects for duck hunting at Jamestown Wildlife Area, in Jewell County, "look a little grim," according to area manager Rob Unruh. All pools are either low, dry, or being worked on. A recent 1-inch rain, however, may have improved prospects, depending on the timing and volume of the migration.

Another popular wetland in the central portion of the state, McPherson Wetlands Wildlife Area, has few ducks and limited water. Like the other areas, until it receives significant rainfall, hunting prospects are poor to fair. Texas Lake, west of Pratt, is a smaller area,

but it has water because they are able to pump the pools prior to season opening.

Farther east, habitat conditions look better. The water levels at Milford Wildlife Area, near Junction City, are good. The area had a good early teal season, and area manager Mark Mohler is pumping the hunting pools. "Hunting should be pretty good if we get the ducks," Mohler said. Southeast of Milford about 80 miles, John Redmond Reservoir also has good water levels, so hunters should expect this area to attract solid numbers of ducks throughout the season.

Some of the best hunting may be near the Missouri border. Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area, near Pleasanton, has abundant water. Hunters should be aware that much of the water may be concealed by standing vegetation, making excellent duck habitat. Currently, there are few ducks on the area, but the season doesn't begin there until Oct. 29. Nearby Marais des Cygnes National Wildlife Area has limited waterfowl hunting because the only habitat is the river and a few oxbow lakes and farm ponds. These, however, may attract fair numbers of ducks if the wildlife area has a good year.

The other major waterfowl management area in eastern Kansas is Neosho Wildlife Area, near St. Paul. Traditionally an excellent place to hunt ducks, Neosho had a good teal season, but water levels have gone down

since. Area manager John Silovsky put it bluntly: "We need some rain. We've got some water now and about 3,000 ducks, but the refuge pool is extremely low. If we get rain, we can pump from the river, but we need precipitation to hold ducks."

All of this, of course, depends on the weather, so heavy precipitation during the long seasons could change prospects considerably, especially for later migrating ducks. Also, the state's reservoirs should not be overlooked. Hunters should scout these areas, phone the area managers, or check the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks waterfowl reports online.

Kansas is divided into three hunting zones, with season dates split into two segments in each of the three zones. Season dates and zones include the following:

- Early Zone — Oct. 15-Dec. 11 and Dec. 17-Jan. 1;
- Late Zone — Oct. 29-Jan. 1 and Jan. 21-29; and
- High Plains Zone — Oct. 8-Jan. 3 and Jan. 21-29.

A separate season for pintail and canvasback includes the following dates:

- Early Zone — Oct. 15-Nov. 22;
- Late Zone — Oct. 29-Dec. 6; and
- High Plains Zone — Oct. 8-Nov. 15.

A six-duck daily bag limit may include no more than one pintail (in season), one mottled duck, one canvasback (in season), two wood ducks, two redheads, two scaup, or five mallards, of which only one may be a hen. The merganser limit is five, including no more than one hooded merganser.

For a detailed map of the duck zone boundaries, obtain a copy of the 2005 Kansas Hunting and Furharvesting Regulations Summary, available at all Kansas Wildlife and Parks offices and most license vendors, or download the booklet from the KDWP website.

Second goose season opens on Nov. 12

PRATT — Kansas goose hunters had the opportunity to take a shot at their favorite game before the influx of upland bird hunters hit the field Nov. 12.

A two-day goose season ran Oct. 29-30 statewide, with the exception of the Marais des Cygnes Valley Unit in eastern Kansas.

The second segment of white-fronted goose season begins Nov. 12 and runs through Jan. 20. The Canada goose second segment runs Nov. 12-Feb. 12.

Although it may be early for large numbers of migrating Canada geese to arrive in Kansas, the state has a growing population of resident geese. Nearly every public wildlife area with a lake or reservoir has resident Canada geese that may be successfully hunted with a little scouting.

Harvested crop fields around many urban areas can also provide good opportunities. Many cities have burgeoning populations of resident geese that are often destructive of parks, golf courses, and other greenways within the cities. Hunters can enjoy a good hunt and help cities as these geese fly to feed in fields in the country during morning and late afternoon.

Hunting pressure is usually low for this short early season, providing an excellent opportunity for the avid hunter.

Check your area Waterfowl Reports



Lynn Harper, Norton, snagged this 27 3/4 inch, 7 pound wiper on Oct. 9 using blue gill as bait.

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