

Where the wild ducks are.....

The warm weather this fall has kept many waterfowl from migrating south and seeking warmer winter quarters, said Mel Madorin, a captain in the law enforcement division of Kansas Wildlife and Parks in the Hays office.

Madorin said duck hunting was spotty at best in the area for opening weekend. Hunters were out, but the numbers were down from some previous years.

Fall hunting conditions look good, and Madorin expects duck numbers to increase.

The usual number of hunters are expected in the area, which includes many local hunters, as well as those from out of the area, Madorin said.

The area provides good nesting places for Canadian geese, so hunting geese looks good this year, as well, he said.

Norton Wildlife Area and Prairie Dog State Park, three miles southwest of Norton, gives visitors the opportunity to view and photograph wildlife including waterfowl.

The Wildlife Area borders Keith Sebelius Lake, which was created in 1964 when the Bureau of Reclamation completed construction of the Norton Dam.

A 1.4 mile nature trail in the park with interpretive signage provides hikers a good area for wildlife watching. Waterfowl at the State Park includes Canada geese, wild turkey, ducks, geese and even an occasional osprey.

With walk-in access nearly unlimited, the area provides great hunting, fishing and boating. Seasonal and permanent roads also give good access for vehicles. Fees are required, and licenses for fishing, hunting and boating support management of the area.

According to the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks website conditions listed for the first week of October, Sebelius Reservoir is approximately seven feet below conservation pool, but more than three feet higher than this time last year.

In addition to Sebelius Reservoir and Prairie Dog State Park, the area has several community lakes. While some are dry periodically, they may host waterfowl when full. They include Sheridan State Fishing Lake, Sherman State Fishing Lake, Atwood Lake Main, Colby-Villa High Lake, Logan City Lake, Sherman County Smoky Gardens and St. Francis Keller

Lake.

High Plains teal and youth duck seasons have ended, but duck season runs October 9 to January 3 and January 22-30.

Refuge is in effect November 1 through January 31.

The daily bag limit for ducks has changed from last year, according to a news release from the Department of Wildlife and Parks. The daily bag limit for youth and regular duck seasons is six ducks this year, up from a daily limit of five from last year.

"This limit 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," according to the news release.

The daily bag may comprise six of any other duck or combination of duck species, and possession limit is two times the daily bag.

Duck numbers generally have declined from highs in the 1970s when all time highs were reported during waterfowl surveys. The decline in Kansas duck numbers is due mostly to loss of breeding habitat in Canada and states north of Kansas, aging reservoirs and changing agricultural

practices in the state, according to Wildlife and Parks information.

Waterfowl season is upon us, and hunters have patterned shotguns and restrung decoys in preparation. But there's no more important piece of "equipment" than knowledge of where the ducks (and geese) are hanging out. To provide this all-important hunting information, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) offers <<http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us/news/Hunting/Migratory-Birds/Waterfowl-Reports>>waterfowl reports on its website, <<http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us/>>www.kdwp.state.ks.us. Reports on waterfowl numbers, habitat conditions, hunting success, and phone and email contacts are provided for major public waterfowl hunting areas in the state's five regions.

Hunters should note that duck season does not begin in much of central and eastern Kansas until Oct. 30. Consult the KDWP website or the <<http://kdwp.state.ks.us/news/Hunting/Hunting-Regulations>>2010 Kansas Hunting and Furharvesting Summary for details on dates and zone boundaries.

Warm fall weather has likely slowed

waterfowl migration this year, with most areas reporting few ducks so far, and very few mallards, as of early October.

Northwest Kansas:

At Cedar Bluff there are good hunting conditions with lots of flooded shoreline vegetation and about 1,800 ducks;

Glen Elder has fair hunting conditions with the lake 2 feet below conservation pool and approximately 2,700 ducks;

At Jamestown there are fair to good hunting conditions with approximately 3,000 ducks;

At Lovewell the reservoir is 3.5 feet below conservation pool with very few ducks at this time;

Norton has good hunting conditions with excellent cover in flooded timber but about 500 ducks at this time;

Smoky Hill/Kanopolis has plenty of water and about 500 ducks;

Webster has low water and only about 300 ducks; and

Wilson has good flooded vegetation and about 450 ducks.

Have a safe and successful season!



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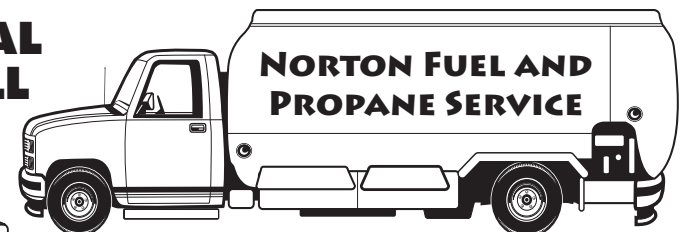
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