



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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### MISSISSIPPI FLYWAY WINTER WATERFOWL COUNT UP

Wintering waterfowl in the Mississippi Flyway this year show an increase over 1960, the Department of the Interior announced today.

Reporting on results of the annual winter survey of waterfowl in 14 Mississippi Flyway States, the Department revealed that ducks, geese, and coot all recorded gains.

Some of this increase is attributed to excellent habitat conditions in certain Gulf areas which concentrated and held back ducks which previously had wintered further south outside the Flyway. Counts were especially high in Louisiana because of this factor. In the case of scaup along the Gulf, the count rose to 1,600,000 this year. It was nearly a million last year, but in some previous recent years it averaged only about 250,000.

In spite of the prospect that a reasonably good duck population has been assured to return to northern nesting areas in the spring, there is mounting concern over conditions on the best breeding grounds on the Canadian prairies. Severe drought looms there unless there is a lot of snow and rain between now and May. These prairies produce the bulk of the duck population in the best years.

With respect to other important individual species, the Department said that, partly due to a favorable breeding season and partly to special regulations last fall, the Canada goose of this Flyway made a remarkable come-back.

Arctic nesters, like the blue and white-fronted geese, also apparently enjoyed excellent nesting conditions, for the wintering population of these species was one of the highest on record.

News for the mallard and canvasback hunters was not as good, however. Although these two popular ducks increased somewhat, their populations still remain well below averages for the late 1950's.

The January waterfowl survey is conducted annually throughout the wintering grounds of the United States and Mexico to obtain an estimate of total waterfowl populations remaining after the close of the hunting season. Results of this survey along with information from breeding ground surveys, kill surveys, and banding data are used in formulating the annual waterfowl hunting regulations.

Cooperating in this massive operation were the various State conservation departments, the Department of Defense, and the Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior. In the Mississippi Flyway alone, 758 observers used 66 aircraft, 612 cars, and 54 boats to make the survey. The 66,500 miles traveled is almost like taking three trips around the world.

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