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## WATERFOWL SURVEY SHOWS FOURTEEN PERCENT DECREASE IN MISSISSIPPI FLYWAY

The annual winter waterfowl cooperative survey of the Fish and Wildlife Service shows a decrease in ducks and geese wintering in the 14 Mississippi Flyway States, the Department of the Interior announced today. Compared with a year ago, water fowl numbers--including ducks, geese, coots, and swans--were down about 14 percent.

There were 15 percent fewer ducks, about 19 percent fewer geese and swans, but 8 percent more coots. The mallard population, which normally provides at least half the duck shooting in this flyway, was 38 percent below that of January 1961 and 43 percent below the 12-year average. Four years ago, more than twice as many mallards were recorded.

Another popular duck, the canvasback, made a slight gain this year, but remains at levels 46 percent below long-term averages. Excellent food conditions in southwestern Louisiana again attracted and held large numbers of ducks which normally winter south of the United States. As a result of Hurricane Audrey in 1958, the coastal marshes of Louisiana have vegetative conditions that are ideal for ducks.

Bolstered by one and a half million scaup which chanced to be inshore when the counts were made, Louisiana this year had 70 percent of the entire flyway duck population at the time of the survey. In marked contrast with the favorable conditions at the south end of the flyway, most of the north end was snow- and ice-bound, explaining in part the low duck numbers recorded there.

Canada geese came through the hunting season at population levels similar to those of a year ago. Blue and snow geese, which had a disastrous nesting season last summer along with other arctic nesters, were considerably reduced in numbers when compared with the high populations of the previous year.

Coots also had a poor breeding season due to the drought, but their numbers in the Mississippi Flyway increased anyway, apparently because excellent food conditions attracted and held birds which usually winter farther south.

Snow conditions on the drought-stricken prairies, where many of these wintering ducks normally breed, are somewhat better than those of a year ago, according to recent information from Canada and the Dakotas. However, exceptionally heavy late winter snows or spring rains will be needed if the birds are to find water in the potholes when they return in May.

The Mississippi Flyway survey is part of a huge operation which includes all the flyways, areas in Canada which have wintering birds, and Mexico. Results of this survey, along with breeding ground surveys, kill surveys, and banding data are considered in formulating the annual waterfowl hunting regulations. Complete continental midwinter survey results will be announced later.

In the Mississippi Flyway study, 740 people participated. They covered 61,000 miles in 50 aircraft, 603 automobiles, and 20 boats. The extensive coverage was made possible because of the excellent cooperation of State conservation departments and the Department of Defense with the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, which coordinates the survey.

In addition to Louisiana and Mississippi, the Mississippi Flyway States are Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee, and Wisconsin.

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