



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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1989 FALL FLIGHT OF DUCKS EXPECTED TO BE SMALLER THAN LAST YEAR

The 1989 fall population of migrating ducks is expected to be slightly smaller than last year, according to the annual fall flight forecast issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Canadian Wildlife Service.

The 1989 duck fall flight index is estimated at 64 million, down from 66 million in 1988. It is the second lowest fall flight index since such projections began in 1969, with the record low being 62 million set in 1985.

The fall flight projection is based on the results of spring surveys of duck breeding populations and July surveys of habitat and production. The 1989 breeding duck population dropped because of last year's severe drought, which devastated prairie wetlands where ducks nest and resulted in fewer young birds being produced to enter into this year's breeding population. The 1989 breeding population for ducks in all surveyed areas was just under 31 million, down 8 percent from last year and 24 percent below the long-term average from 1955-88. Nine of ten key species declined, with canvasbacks showing the only increase. Numbers of northern pintails, blue-winged teal, and scaup hit record lows.

Despite increased snow and rainfall over the past winter and spring, many wetlands have not recovered from the prolonged drought of the 1980's. Although duck production this year is better than last year in some areas, overall brood production remains significantly below average.

The outlook for fall flights of most goose populations is more optimistic. The following is a breakdown for some of the major goose populations. States listed in parentheses represent major wintering areas for these populations.

Canada geese--Most populations will experience a fall flight similar to last year, with some exceptions. The Atlantic population (New England to South Carolina) declined for the third year in a row and a smaller fall flight is projected. The Mississippi Valley population (Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, west Tennessee) remains high. A decrease is projected for the tall grass prairie (Oklahoma and Texas coast) population. Another large fall flight is projected for Mississippi Flyway giant Canada geese. Nest success for dusky

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Canada geese (western Oregon) was again poor and a reduced fall flight is expected. An increased fall flight is anticipated for cackling Canada geese, the smallest of the Canada geese, which winter in the Klamath Basin of Oregon and northern California.

Greater white-fronted geese--An increase is projected for the Pacific population (California). Eastern mid-continent birds (Louisiana) will decrease slightly from last year; western mid-continent birds (Texas coast) will be similar to last year.

Lesser snow geese--Numbers of the mid-continent population (Louisiana and Texas) remain healthy and will experience a fall flight similar to or slightly reduced from last year. The western Canadian Arctic population (central to southern California and New Mexico) and Wrangell Island population (Washington and northern California) will have fall flights similar to last year.

Ross' geese--A fall flight similar to last year is expected for these geese, which winter in northern and central California, New Mexico, and the Texas Gulf Coast.

Greater snow geese--Populations remain high for these birds, which winter along the Mid-Atlantic Coast. This year's fall flight will be less than last year's.

Atlantic brant--A slightly reduced fall flight is expected for Atlantic brant, most of which winter along the Atlantic coast from Massachusetts to North Carolina.

Pacific brant--These geese, few of which stop in the United States during fall migration, will experience a fall flight similar to last year.

Tundra swans--An increased fall flight is expected for the western population (migrating through western Montana to winter in California, Utah, and the Pacific Northwest), while a fall flight similar to last year is expected for the eastern population (migrating through eastern Montana and the Dakotas to coastal wintering areas from Maryland to North Carolina).

The Fish and Wildlife Service will publish framework regulations for waterfowl hunting in the August 16 Federal Register for a public comment period ending August 28. After considering public comments, the Service will establish final regulatory frameworks from which individual states will select hunting season dates and bag limits. States may be more restrictive, but not more liberal, than the established Federal frameworks.