

THE 2001-02 DUCK KILL

If you complained last season about a scarcity of ducks in the sky and in the bag, take heart. You had plenty of company. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service harvest statistics disclose the total kill last season declined nine percent. This may seem a somewhat small drop, but the decline was unevenly distributed. As a general rule, the decline was most pronounced in southern states. Some duck hunters fared very poorly.

Overall, U.S. hunters retrieved 16.2 million ducks. The following table shows the top five species in the nationwide bag and the change from the previous season. Of these five species, only blue-winged teal were shot in greater numbers than the previous season. (The figure in parenthesis represents each species' percentage of the total kill.)

<u>Species</u>	<u>Kill</u>	<u>Change</u>
1. Mallard (37%)	5,216,700	- 8%
2. Gadwall (11%)	1,569,300	-24%
3. Green-Winged Teal (10%)	1,432,400	-16%
4. Blue-Winged Teal (9%)	1,227,900	+ 8%
5. Wood Duck (8%)	1,097,800	-16%

Many blamed last season's poor shooting on the unseasonably warm weather that lingered into January. This was especially true in the Mississippi Flyway. More than a few Midwest mallard hunters grumbled that great numbers of greenheads held "up north." Winter surveys suggest fewer mallards lingered in northern states than was commonly believed. More importantly, age-ratio data suggest mediocre production resulted in fewer mallards than expected winged southward.

Interestingly, the state of Arkansas, which normally kills the greatest number of mallards of any state in the union, reported a 26% decline in the mallard kill. It fell from 862,737 in 2000 to 636,951 in 2001. Farther south in Louisiana the mallard kill declined 58 percent. This compares to Missouri, Arkansas' northern neighbor, where the mallard kill increased from 236,421 in 2000 to 292,360 in 2001 – a 24 percent increase. But the Missouri Bootheel hardly qualifies as "up north."

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service harvest data reveals the following 2001-02 duck kill:

- Atlantic Flyway, 1.6 million ducks, down 13 percent from the previous season.
- Mississippi Flyway, 6.6 million, down 16 percent from the previous season.
- Central Flyway, 3.4 million, up six percent from the previous season.
- Pacific Flyway, 2.2 million, down five percent from the previous season.

The average adult U.S. hunter last season spent 8.8 days afield and killed a seasonal total of 8.36 ducks, according to the data. This works out to .95 ducks per hunt. The breakdown of average individual success by flyway is shown in the table below:

- Atlantic Flyway: 7.51 days afield, 6.02 ducks for the season..
- Mississippi Flyway: 9.96 days afield, 9.38 ducks for the season.
- Central Flyway: 8.00 days afield, 7.67 ducks for the season.
- Pacific Flyway: 8.11 days afield, 9.26 ducks for the season.

This tells us only West Coast hunters averaged more than one duck in the bag per hunt.

The Top Five states for total kill, with percentage change from the 2000-01 season, were:

1. Louisiana, 2,056,857, -18%.
2. Texas, 1,483,650, +9%.
3. Arkansas, 1,123,766, -25%.
4. California, 964,183, -3%.
5. North Dakota, 694,712, +19%.

Thus, the only Top Five states whose kill increased were in the Central Flyway. Louisiana's kill, as usual, exceeded that of the entire Atlantic Flyway.

The following table shows the 2001-02 kill by state and percentage change from the previous season:

ATLANTIC FLYWAY

Connecticut, 20,487, +5%.
Delaware, 45,282, -36%.
Florida, 152,087, +6%.
Georgia, 95,668, -30%.
Maine, 82,674, +49%.
Maryland, 160,527, -18%.
Massachusetts, 33,848, -40%.
New Hampshire, 18,244, +52%.
New Jersey, 82,977, -4%.
New York, 196,301, +3%.
North Carolina, 206,805, -35%.
Pennsylvania, 129,083, +15%.
Rhode Island, 11,184, -27%.
South Carolina, 254,056, -2%.
Vermont, 26,937, +6%.
Virginia, 103,623, -36%.
West Virginia, 6,470, no change.

MISSISSIPPI FLYWAY

Alabama, 143,685, -36%.
Arkansas, 1,123,766, -25%.
Illinois, 445,294, -6%.
Indiana, 141,743, +32%.
Iowa, 248,983, +19%.
Kentucky, 118,558, +7%.
Louisiana, 2,056,857, -18%.
Michigan, 304,002, +1%.
Minnesota, 647,110, +21%.
Mississippi, 245,025, -61%.
Missouri, 487,120, -2%.
Ohio, 112,499, no change.
Tennessee, 303,233, -27%.
Wisconsin, 253,040, -5%.

CENTRAL FLYWAY

Colorado, 154,340, +51%.
Kansas, 240,720, -6%.
Montana, 43,080, +34%.
Nebraska, 223,742, -15%.
New Mexico, 31,111, -20%.
North Dakota, 694,712, +19%.
Oklahoma, 242,022, -22%.
South Dakota, 290,787, +17%.
Texas, 1,483,650, +9%.
Wyoming, 42,338, +5%.

PACIFIC FLYWAY

Alaska, 61,869, -12%.
Arizona, 41,915, -28%.
California, 964,183, -3%.
Colorado, 36,258, +126%.
Idaho, 190,493, +8%.
Montana, 93,501, +11%.
Nevada, 33,740, -8%.
New Mexico, 2,465, -73%.
Oregon, 275,842, -9%.
Utah, 191,398, +2%.
Washington, 332,754, -17%.
Wyoming, 5,369, +118%.

If we take care of the ducks, the ducks will take care of us.
