

**Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge**  
**Fall 2011 Waterfowl Migration**  
Updated 12/06/2011 - Final

Waterfowl estimates for Sand Lake NWR as of **9/28/2011**

Canada Geese – 1,200

Snow Geese – 0

Ducks – 9,000

Swans – 0

Refuge water conditions are very high for this time of year due to high flows in the James River. Both Mud Lake and Sand Lake are currently over 3 feet above full pool level and expected to remain near that level through most of October. This is at a time when we are normally drawing pools down below full pool level. At this point of the season, surrounding wetland conditions are more suitable for ducks than the deeper refuge pools.

Wetland conditions throughout Brown County are good and should provide excellent hunting opportunities this fall.

The soybean harvest is just getting started in the area.

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Waterfowl estimates for Sand Lake NWR as of **10/05/2011**

Canada Geese – 1,200

Snow Geese – 0

Ducks – 9,000

Swans – 0

There was no change in waterfowl numbers on the refuge since last week. Weather conditions through the week were warm and dry. High temperatures are expected to be near 80 until Saturday, when highs are expected to be in the 60's. Refuge water levels remain high.

Wetland conditions throughout Brown County are good and are providing good hunting opportunities. Some swans have been observed in some wetlands in Brown County.

The soybean harvest in the area is in full swing.

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Waterfowl estimates for Sand Lake NWR as of **10/12/2011**

Canada Geese – 1,800

Snow Geese – 0

Ducks – 12,000

Swans – 0

There was some waterfowl movement last weekend, but little change in bird numbers on the refuge. Several flocks of White-fronted Geese were seen moving through

the area on Saturday. Weather conditions have cooled down some since last week, and we received about an inch of rain over the weekend. Refuge water levels remain high.

Wetland conditions throughout Brown County are good and are providing good hunting opportunities. Small numbers of swans have been seen in wetlands in Brown County.

The soybean harvest in the area is winding down and the corn harvest has begun.

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Waterfowl Estimates for Sand Lake NWR as of **10/18/2011**

Canada Geese – 2,500

Snow Geese – 0

Ducks – 18,000

Swans – 40

More waterfowl moved through and into the area last weekend. Although refuge duck numbers remain relatively low, good numbers of Mallards, Gadwalls, Green-winged Teal, Redheads, and some Scaup have moved into the area wetlands. Good numbers of swans are also using some of the surrounding wetlands.

Weather conditions continue to cool down some, with highs in the 40's and 50's, and lows in the low 20's for the next few days. Warmer weather is predicted for the coming weekend.

Water releases from two North Dakota dams on the James River are being reduced beginning today, so refuge water levels should begin to slowly recede within the next ten days.

The corn harvest in the area is in full swing.

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Waterfowl Estimates for Sand Lake NWR as of **10/26/2011**

Canada Geese – 3,000

Snow Geese – 0

Ducks – 45,000

Swans – 40

More waterfowl moved into the area over the past week. The increase was mostly made up of Mallards, along with some Pintail, Green-winged Teal, and divers. Some flocks of Mallards have begun feeding in harvested corn fields in the area. Small flocks of Snow Geese are being seen, but none are currently using Sand Lake. Good numbers of swans are using some of the surrounding wetlands.

Weather conditions are predicted to remain relatively warm, with highs in the 50's and lows in the high 20's and low 30's.

Water releases from two North Dakota dams on the James River are being reduced, but refuge water levels still remain at high levels.

The corn harvest in the area is over 75% complete.

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Waterfowl Estimates for Sand Lake NWR as of **11/02/2011**

Canada Geese – 3,800

Snow Geese – 7,000

Ducks – 72,000

Swans – 120

Waterfowl numbers continue to build in and around Sand Lake. Lesser Scaup numbers increased the most since last week, along with smaller increases in Redheads, Shovelers, Gadwalls, Ruddy Ducks and Buffleheads. There are currently about 7,000 Snow Geese on Sand Lake, with other small flocks in the area. Swans are still being seen in some of the surrounding wetlands.

Weather conditions are predicted to cool off slightly, with lows dipping into the teens tonight, and then moderating to the high 20's and lower 30's later this week.

Refuge water levels are beginning to decrease, but are still nearly 3 feet above full pool level.

The area corn harvest is almost complete.

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Waterfowl Estimates for Sand Lake NWR as of **11/8/2011**

Canada Geese – 4,800

Snow Geese – 58,000

Ducks – 90,000

Swans – 145

Waterfowl numbers continue to build in and around Sand Lake, especially Mallards and Snow Geese. Good numbers of Mallards are being seen in the Putney Slough area.

Weather conditions are predicted to remain cool, with lows dipping into the high teens and twenties, and highs in the 40's and low 50's. Water is freezing overnight in shallow wetlands and in wetland edges, but so far is opening back up during the day.

Refuge water levels have dropped about 6 inches in the past 10 days, but levels remain very high for this time of year.

The area crop harvest is pretty much over.

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Waterfowl Estimates for Sand Lake NWR as of **11/16/2011**

Canada Geese – 6,000

Snow Geese – 80,000

Ducks – 110,000

Swans – 150

Birds have been moving in and through the area this past week, especially with the strong NW winds yesterday and today. Snow Goose numbers reached over 100,000 on Sand Lake over the past weekend. There are other flocks of Snow Geese in the area, besides the 80,000 currently using the refuge. Mallards make up most of the ducks on the refuge.

Most of the small wetlands in the area and wetland edges of larger wetlands froze over last night. Temperatures are predicted to drop to the single digits tonight. A chance of 2-5 inches of snow and more cold temperatures are predicted for Saturday.

Refuge water levels have dropped about a foot in the past 20 days, but levels are still very high for this time of year.

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**Waterfowl Estimates for Sand Lake NWR as of 11/21/2011**

Canada Geese – 4,500

Snow Geese – 125,000

Ducks – 90,000

Swans – 30

There was a lot of bird movement into and through the area with the strong northwest winds on Saturday. The Sand Lake area only received a trace of snow, but temperatures down to 5 degrees have frozen most of the wetlands in the area. The river channel near the bridges and water-control structures on the refuge is still open and holding birds. Temperatures are expected to moderate during the week and reach into the 40's later this week.

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**Waterfowl Estimates for Sand Lake NWR as of 11/29/2011**

Canada Geese – 5,000

Snow Geese – 145,000

Ducks – 80,000

Swans – 0

There are still a lot of waterfowl using Sand Lake. The open water areas in and near the river channel have grown since last week, but the majority of both Mud Lake and Sand Lake is still frozen over. The number of ducks on the refuge has dropped some since the weekend. High temperatures are predicted to be in the upper 30's for the next few days, then gradually cooling to the 20's and low 30's later in the week.

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**Waterfowl Estimates for Sand Lake NWR as of 12/6/2011**

Canada Geese – 2,000

Snow Geese – <500

Ducks – 800

Swans – 0

The number of waterfowl on Sand Lake has dropped drastically since the weekend. Cold temperatures have frozen all water but the immediate channel near the bridges and water control structures.