

Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge
Spring 2013 Waterfowl Migration
Updated 04/26/2013

This information is current as of Friday, **March 8, 2013**.

The snow goose migration is just beginning to reach southern South Dakota. There are reports of snow geese beginning to move into the Yankton and Lake Andes area during the last several days.

As of today, there are no snow geese in the Sand Lake area. The first Canada geese just began to show up this week. There is about 16 inches of snow on the ground at Sand Lake, with no open water on the refuge.

Temperatures in the Sand Lake area are expected to reach just the low 30's during the next five days.

This information is current as of Thursday, **March 14, 2013**.

Snow geese have continued to move into the southeast corner of South Dakota. There are currently good numbers of snow geese in the Lake Andes area, with the first snow geese just beginning to show up in the Madison and Huron areas.

As of today, there are no snow geese in the Sand Lake area. There is still over a foot of snow on the ground at Sand Lake, with no open water on the refuge.

After today's high of near 40 degrees, temperatures in the Sand Lake area are predicted to remain well below freezing through next Wednesday, with a chance of 2 – 5 inches of snow predicted for Sunday night into Monday.

This information is current as of Monday, **March 18, 2013**.

Not much has changed with the snow goose distribution in South Dakota over the weekend. The main concentrations remain south of interstate 90, with some birds as far north as the Madison area. A few small flocks have been seen as far north as Huron.

As of today, there are no snow geese in the Sand Lake area. There is still over a foot of snow on the ground at Sand Lake, with no open water on the refuge.

Sand Lake received less than an inch of snow from the predicted storm, but we are currently experiencing a ground blizzard in the Sand Lake area. Temperatures are predicted to drop to 11 degrees below zero Tuesday evening, and daytime temperatures are predicted to remain below 32 degrees through Saturday.

This information is current as of Wednesday, **March 20, 2013**.

The concentrations of snow geese are starting to make it north of the Interstate 90 corridor. On Tuesday, good numbers of geese had moved into Davison and Hanson Counties, in the Mitchell area. There are reports today of large flocks of snow geese on Lake Herman near Madison, and throughout the area between Madison and Salem. There are also reports of many snow geese in the Chamberlain area.

As of today, there are no snow geese in the Sand Lake area. There is still over a foot of snow on the ground at Sand Lake, with no open water on the refuge.

Temperatures are predicted to drop to 7 degrees below zero tonight, and daytime temperatures are predicted to finally reach into the 20's by Friday and make it to 30 degrees on Sunday. There is a chance of snow from Thursday night through Monday.

This information is current as of Monday, **March 25, 2013**.

The concentrations of snow geese are continuing to push north against the snow line in eastern South Dakota. Snow geese are beginning to get close to highway 14, near the Brookings and Huron areas. Much of the landscape north of that line in northeastern South Dakota is still mostly snow-covered. Large numbers of snow geese are being reported just south of that line, in the Chamberlain, Mitchell, Madison, Ft. Thompson and Vermillion areas.

As of today, there are still no snow geese in the Sand Lake area. There is still nearly a foot of snow on the ground at Sand Lake, with no open water on the refuge. But warming weather later this week should signal the beginning of the migration in this part of the state.

Temperatures are predicted to only reach into the 20's today and tomorrow, but finally hit 30 by Wednesday, and near the 40's on Thursday and Friday.

This information is current as of Thursday, **March 28, 2013**.

The warm weather yesterday has allowed the snow geese to keep pushing further north. A small flock of snow geese was seen near Groton this morning, along US highway 12. More snow geese are beginning to move into the Huron area along US highway 14. There continues to be large flocks of snow geese in the East River areas south of highway 14 to the South Dakota/Nebraska border.

As of today, no snow geese have been seen in the immediate Sand Lake area. Yesterday there were numerous flocks of Canada geese and a few flocks of white-fronted geese that showed up on the refuge.

There is still over 6 inches of snow on the ground in the Sand Lake area, and very little open water. Temperatures are predicted to reach 40 degrees today through Saturday, and then cool down through next Tuesday, before the next warm-up.

This information is current as of Friday, **March 29, 2013**.

With the warmer weather the past few days, the snow geese are continuing to push against the snow line in eastern South Dakota. There are reports of larger flocks of snow geese moving into the Huron area along US highway 14. Yesterday there were reports of 100,000 to 150,000 snow geese on Collins Slough GPA in Hand County and smaller flocks in other areas of Hand County. This afternoon, several small flocks of snow geese were seen between Groton and Andover along US highway 12, and near Aberdeen.

As of today, no snow geese have been seen in the immediate Sand Lake area. Canada geese, a few white-fronted geese, and a few species of ducks have moved onto Sand Lake, but there is very little open water for them to use.

There is still about 6 inches of snow at Sand Lake. Temperatures are predicted to reach 40 degrees today and tomorrow, and then cool down through next Tuesday, before the next warm-up.

This information is current as of Monday, **April 1, 2013**.

The snow geese are just starting to make it up to the Sand Lake area. A few small flocks of snow geese were seen near Sand Lake over the weekend and early this afternoon there were large flocks flying in the vicinity of Sand Lake. None were seen on the ground. There are reports of large numbers of snow geese up near US highway 12, in the Aberdeen and Groton areas, and in southern Brown County and throughout Spink and Beadle Counties.

There is still about 4 inches of snow at Sand Lake and very little open water. Temperatures are predicted to reach near 50 degrees by Wednesday, and then drop back to the 40's the remainder of the week.

This information is current as of Wednesday, **April 3, 2013**.

More waterfowl moved into the Sand Lake area yesterday. Some pretty good-sized flocks of snow geese were resting on the ice in Sand Lake near the south end and a few miles south of highway 10. There were also reports yesterday of over 1 million snow geese in the area of southern Brown County and northern Spink County between Groton and Doland, and on south of Doland. There is lots of sheet water in the fields and still some snow in that area.

There is about 3 inches of snow remaining on the ground in the Sand Lake area and still very little open water. Temperatures are predicted to reach above 50 degrees today, with south winds, and drop back into the 40's the rest of the week.

This information is current as of Thursday, **April 4, 2013.**

The waterfowl migration is in full swing in the Sand Lake area. Many geese and ducks moved into Sand Lake during the day yesterday. As of today there are at least 260,000 snow geese in the immediate Sand Lake area. The main concentration this afternoon is on the ice in the middle of Sand Lake. There are also large numbers of ducks, Canada geese and white-fronted geese on Sand Lake near the south end of the refuge and near highway 10.

The warmer weather yesterday melted a lot of snow, providing sheet water in many of the surrounding fields. This morning, waterfowl could be seen feeding and resting in almost every field near the refuge. Temperatures are predicted to reach the 40's throughout the coming week. Snow geese have already been seen moving into North Dakota.

This information is current as of Friday, **April 5, 2013.**

Good numbers of waterfowl continue to move into and through the Sand Lake area. Yesterday afternoon, over 1 million snow geese were observed in northern Brown County. Many of these birds were in the area between Putney Slough and Groton. Large flocks of snow geese remained in this area through this morning. There was only a small flock of snow geese on the refuge this afternoon, as most of the birds stayed out feeding in the surrounding fields. Several hundred thousand ducks have also moved into Sand Lake, with the best viewing areas at highway 10 and near the south end of the refuge.

Precipitation is predicted through the coming week, with highs in the 40's.

This information is current as of Monday, **April 8, 2013.**

It appears that the biggest push of snow geese has already moved into North Dakota. Large flocks of snow geese moved through Brown County and the Sand Lake area on Saturday. There were still several good-sized flocks of snow geese feeding in fields near Groton on Saturday. Yesterday, there were some fairly large flocks near Sand Lake, but today we've only seen small flocks of snows moving around the area.

There are still large numbers of ducks using the marshes of Sand Lake along highway 10 and near the south end of the refuge.

Highs near 32 degrees and a chance of snow are predicted for the next three days in the Sand Lake area.

This information is current as of Wednesday morning, **April 10, 2013.**

The snow geese are back in the Sand Lake area! This morning, there were well over 1 million snow geese on and around Sand Lake. Large flocks of birds could be seen going out to feed in every direction.

The lakes are still mostly frozen, except for the river channels. The immediate Sand Lake area has not received any snow from the storm system in South Dakota, as of this morning. Highs are predicted to remain near freezing through tomorrow, and then begin rise in the 30's and 40's through the weekend.

This information is current as of Thursday, **April 11, 2013.**

The snow storm in South Dakota has made it to the Sand Lake area. Snow began falling last night, and by 8:00 this morning, there was 5 inches of snow on the ground. Snow is predicted to continue through the day, with 2-4 more inches expected.

Yesterday, the large number of snow geese on Sand Lake dispersed and fed in fields throughout the area. Less than 100,000 came back to the refuge during the day.

This information is current as of Friday, **April 12, 2013.**

There are still large numbers of snow geese in the Sand Lake area. This morning, there were close to 500 hundred thousand snow geese on the ice on Sand Lake south of highway 10 and near the south end of the refuge. There are also large numbers of ducks in these same areas.

Sand Lake received about 7 inches of snow from the storm yesterday. The lakes on the refuge are still mostly ice-covered, except for the river channel near the bridges and water control structures. Cold weather is predicted through the coming week, with highs only in the 30's.

This information is current as of Monday, **April 15, 2013.**

There are still snow geese in the Sand Lake area. This afternoon, there was a flock of over 100,000 on the ice in Mud Lake, and several smaller flocks on the ice and water near highway 10. Yesterday afternoon, during the snow storm, there were many small flocks feeding in fields between Britton and Sand Lake. There are some reports of snow geese moving back south after this latest storm. There are large numbers of ducks using the limited open water in both Mud Lake and Sand Lake. Highway 10 provides the best view of these birds.

Sand Lake received about 10 inches of snow from the storm yesterday. The lakes on the refuge are still mostly ice-covered, except for parts of the river channel near the bridges and water control structures. Another snow storm is predicted for this area from Wednesday through Thursday, with predicted highs in the 30's through the week.

This information is current as of Thursday, **April 18, 2013.**

It appears that many of the snow geese in the Sand Lake area last week have shifted back to the south. There are reports of small flocks of snows in southeastern North Dakota, but many of the large flocks are to the south of Sand Lake. Good numbers have been reported south of Groton, in Spink County, in areas near Wolsey and south of Huron, and near Britton. As of yesterday, there was still a flock of just over 100,000 snow geese on Mud Lake, and several smaller flocks near highway 10 on Sand Lake. Duck numbers have also dropped since last week.

The weather continues to be a big factor in holding up the migration. The Sand Lake area has at least 8 inches of snow on the ground and little open water. High temperatures this week have only been in the low 30's. More rain and snow and highs in the 30's are predicted through the weekend. It looks like warmer temperatures may be finally coming next week.

Refuge roads remain closed due to snow and wet conditions.

This information is current as of noon, **Tuesday, April 23, 2013.**

Not too much has changed in the overall progress of the migration since the last report. Some flocks of snow geese were seen in fields in southeastern North Dakota during the weekend. We are still getting reports of good numbers of geese east and south of Groton and in the Scatterwood Lake area southwest of Aberdeen. Large flocks were reported in the Redfield area over the weekend, and in the Huron area, along highway 14. Last evening, large flocks were seen between Ashton and Mellette, in northern Spink County. As of yesterday and this morning, there are very few snow geese in the immediate Sand Lake area. Duck numbers have also dropped on the refuge.

It looks like the weather will finally start to warm up on Thursday, with highs in the 40's predicted. Highs in the 50's and 60's are expected after that. There is still about 3 inches of snow on the ground in the Sand Lake area, with little open water except for the river channel. If the expected forecast remains unchanged, we expect to see the snow geese push into North Dakota quickly.

This information is current as of Wednesday afternoon, **April 24, 2013**.

It appears that the push of snow geese into North Dakota is beginning. This morning and early this afternoon, there were many flocks of high-flying snow geese flying north over the Sand Lake area. As of late this afternoon, no snow geese have been seen landing on or adjacent to Sand Lake Refuge.

With high temperatures predicted in the 50's and 60's through the weekend, and winds shifting to the south tomorrow, we expect to see many of the snow geese move into North Dakota quickly.

This information is current as of Friday, **April 26, 2013**.

Snow geese continue to fly over the Sand Lake area, moving into North Dakota. Some smaller flocks of snow geese have stopped to feed in the area, but are not currently using Sand Lake. Reports are that the flocks of snow geese in the Groton and Redfield areas are thinning out. Smaller flocks of snow geese will probably continue to move through the area, but with the upcoming warm weekend, will probably not be staying long. Temperatures today through Sunday are predicted to reach highs of 60's and 70's.

The lakes are still mostly frozen over, but the edges of the lakes and areas near the channels are opening up. Several great egrets and snowy egrets were observed near the headquarter's area this morning, and we also heard several willets.

Refuge roads are currently closed, but should be open soon, weather permitting.