

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge
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News Release

For Immediate Release January 22, 2014

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Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge Wintering Waterfowl Numbers are Increasing

Recent survey results recorded over 200,000 ducks, geese and swans on Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge. This represents a trend of increasing wintering waterfowl numbers on the Refuge over the past few years.

Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge conducts aerial and ground counts annually to record wintering waterfowl populations on the refuge. With several thousand acres of managed wetlands and North Carolina's largest natural lake, Lake Mattamuskeet, the refuge provides a diversity of habitat and sanctuary for thousands of wintering waterfowl. We are approximately halfway through the wintering waterfowl period that spans from October through early March, and this year's aerial survey results indicate the wintering waterfowl population is up from last year.

The most abundant species surveyed on the refuge were green-winged teal, northern pintail, American wigeon, gadwall and ring-necked ducks. Mattamuskeet Refuge and its associated habitats are of particular importance to green-winged teal, northern pintail and tundra swans. Long-term survey data for these species indicate that 20-30% of all green-winged teal, 40-80% of all northern pintail and 25-35% of all tundra swans in the Atlantic Flyway in any given year utilize Mattamuskeet Refuge as their core wintering grounds.

Habitats used by wintering waterfowl on the refuge consist of freshwater marsh and submerged aquatic vegetation. Wintering waterfowl consume wetland plant seeds, roots, and tubers as well as aquatic insects and small fish to meet their energetic demands (e.g. migration and maintenance). A variety of wetlands on Mattamuskeet Refuge (e.g. shallow marsh, flooded timber, and the lake) provide a combination of habitats that enable wintering waterfowl to meet their nutritional requirements.

Many opportunities exist for the public to observe and/or photograph wintering waterfowl and other wildlife on the refuge during daylight hours. Recent posts to a popular trip website proclaim Mattamuskeet Refuge as a "Fantastic Birding Opportunity" and "Great Place to Visit". Come see for yourself and stop by the Refuge Visitor Center for a refuge map and advice on the best locations to view this impressive wildlife spectacle!

The Mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.



Photo credit: Allison Stewart/FWS

Since 2006, record numbers of wintering waterfowl have been documented on Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge is open to the public during daylight hours. Winter is a great time for birders, hunters, and other nature enthusiasts to visit. For information on refuge management activities, visit www.fws.gov/mattamuskeet/updates.html. Follow this page to learn how managers support great habitat for native wildlife species!