



# JANUARY 2026

VOLUME 70 ISSUE 1 JANUARY 5, 2026

## END OF THE SEASON

I wrote this last year and thought it would be prudent to write it again this year. As I write this the North Zone season has ended and the Middle Zone ended yesterday. Unless you are hunting the south zone or planning a trip outside of the state your season for duck hunting is over with. Now is the time to reflect back on this past season of what worked and what did not work, make notes of those items to either use, fix or avoid next year.

What did not work for me this year. As most of you know I design my own shotgun shells with TSS. I probably developed over fifty rounds in the off season and I believe I stretched it too much to try and field test those rounds. One round that did not work well, which surprised me, was a 28 gauge 5/8 oz round loaded in a Nobel Sport hull. My Benelli just flat out did not like that round, jammed several times so I abandoned it till I could look deeper into it off season.

I decided this year I was going to rely more on motion than spinning wing decoys and I kind of went overboard on that, more of that in a bit, I built a swimmer decoy out of a Teal decoy, rigged it up with a remote, used an aquarium power head as propulsion powered by a lithium 9 volt battery. It worked pretty good and I was quite impressed with it and cost only about \$20 for everything, problem was, it only ran for about 45 minutes, not good and abandoned it.

What did work. Several of my 28 gauge shells worked really well, the 5/8 oz in a Cheddite hull and the 9/16 oz in a Cheddite hull were really good once I got over the high and left shooting of the 28 gauge, but the star of the loads was a 12 gauge duplex load I modified from a recipe that I bought in a #2 steel, #8 tss combination, and a #1 steel with a #7.5 tss combination, proved to be flat out hammers. With the cost of TSS going close to \$85 a lb, I will probably go to all duplex loads.

As stated before, I decided to go into more motion decoys this year. I first started out with two Flashback decoys, which worked incredibly well, then I hunted with a buddy of mine who had the Mojo Dabblers and the AvianX Butt Kicker. These two motion decoys are incredible! Lifelike and really but the ripples on the water, I highly recommend checking them out. I had to them of course, found the Dabblers at Bass Pro and my better half got me the AvianX for Christmas. With the advent of my failed swimmer I looked into a commercially built one, and of course Rogers had the AvianX swimmer on sale. I liked the low profile of it along with the constant swimming or intermittent swimming of the decoy, plus you could get it in three different species, so I had to get a Gadwall since that was the main bird I had harvested this year. When it arrived and used it the next day, it looks so real I had to warn the others that that was a decoy and not a real bird. I only used it a few times, had some anchor cord issues but after switching over to tangle free it has worked great. Check it out!

As you reflect back over this past year, write down those items that worked and did not work, either fix those items that did not or discard them for next year and next years season will be here sooner than you think, only 360 days to go and counting!

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

SHORT STORY	1
MEMBERS MEETING	2
HOLIDAY PARTY UP	2
FUND RAISER UPDTE	2
BOARD ELECTIONS	2
TROUT TRIP UPDATE	3
ANNUAL DUES	3
DELTA BANQUET	3
HUNTER DECLINE	3
NON RESIDENT	5
SEASONS	5
UPCOMING EVENTS	5
GENERAL INFO	COV

**MEMBERS MEETING**

This month's meeting we will be having Jerry and Jerry to talk about taxidermy. I believe SR is going to bring in a very nice Bull Canvasback to demonstrate on that he recently harvested. Should be an interesting discussion.

**HOLIDAY PARTY UPDATE**

If you missed our holiday party last month you missed a really good time had by all. A few pics I took just before everybody showed up.



Enjoying each others company



Jerry being Jerry



Enjoying the evening



**FUND RAISER UPDATE**

After all of the bills were paid we had a very successful fund raiser, raising over \$300 to add back to the coffers. Thanks for your support! The winning ticket of the meat went to Willie Hate who is an associate of one of the workers at Borgettis Bar & Grill

**BOARD ELECTIONS**

**WE ARE STILL IN NEED OF A MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN.**

Ever had or thought there was a problem with the association? Ever complained about one thing or another on why this association does this or that and should do it this way? Ever thought about becoming a solution to these problems instead of just complaining about them?

**MVDHA BOARD**

- President:** Ken Liebel
- First V. Pres.:** Scott Thoele
- Fin. Secretary:** Rob Mueller
- Rec. Secretary:** Bill Hilgeman
- Correspondence Secretary:** Bill Hilgeman
- Membership Chairman:** Vacant
- Board of Directors:**
- Chairman of the Board** Jerry Mercurio
- Asst Chairman of the Board** Art Wende
- Directors:** Brad Douglass, Jerry Mercurio Jr., James Edwards, Nick Witte, Gary Hirsch

Here is your chance! There will be board member elections. Step up now and put your name in the hat. So if you are interested in becoming a board member, or if you have questions on becoming a board member, you can ask any board member, talk to Jerry, email your questions or interest to [mvdha@mvdha.com](mailto:mvdha@mvdha.com) or mail them to the address on the back of this newsletter and they will be forward to Jerry. We currently have our Membership position vacant and need it filled. If you want to make a change, here is your chance.

**TROUT TRIP UPDATE**

MVDHA is planning on our annual Trout Trip this coming year. The dates will be 13 March 2026 through 15 March 2026. Coming home on the 15th. We will be staying at Trout Hollow Lodge at Taneycomo as we did last year. The address for Trout Hollow Lodge is: 1500 Acacia Club Rd, Hollister, MO 65672. To reserve your room call Trout Hollow at 417- 334- 2332 and tell them you are part of MVDHA or online at <https://trouthollow.com/>

Reserve your room now so you can get the room you want. If something comes up that you have to cancel, you have two weeks before the trip to cancel without any penalties.

Don't forget that if you need to reserve a boat or a slip to set that up also. If you are a military veteran they also give discounts for that too. If you have never gone to one of our annual fishing trips to Taneycomo you are really missing out on one of the best trips or events that we do. It is always a great trip and Trout Hollow is one of the best areas to go to down there.

One note to mention, if you bring any food to be cooked at the cook-out, please make sure it is totally thawed out so there are no issues when it is deep fried. Hopefully we will see you there!

**ANNUAL DUES**

Your annual membership dues are now due. At the next Board meeting we will be going over our membership. Please consider renewing your membership dues of \$25. If you have not paid your dues yet, you can bring your money to the next members meeting or mail your check to the address on the back.

**DELTA BANQUET**

**Delta Waterfowl Confluence Chapter**

Saturday, March 21, 2026

Doors Open: 6:00 PM | Dinner: 7:00 PM

The Christy | 9000 Veterans Memorial Pkwy | O'Fallon, MO 63366

Ticket Options:

Youth Ticket - \$35

Single Ticket - \$80

Couples Ticket - \$150

Silver Table - \$600

Includes: 8 Event Tickets, 8 Delta hats, 8 Friends of Delta Memberships, 4 Sponsor Only Gun Raffle Tickets, and Advertising at Event and on Social Media.

Gold Table - \$1,000

8 Event Tickets, Preferred Seating, 8 Delta hats, 1 \$100 Delta Waterfowl Membership Sponsor, 7 Friends of Delta Memberships, 8 Sponsor Only Gun Raffle Tickets, Advertising at Event and on Social Media, and Ability to Display Banner or Table Cloth.

Sponsor Gift - Swamp Gear pack  
20 Mag Bag Cooler

Platinum Table - \$2,500

8 Event Tickets, Preferred Seating, 8 Delta hats, 1 \$100 Delta Waterfowl Membership Sponsor, 7 Friends of Delta Memberships, 16 Sponsor Only Gun Raffle Tickets, Advertising at Event and on Social Media, and Ability to Display Banner or Table Cloth.

Sponsor Gift - Savage Axis 30-06

For more information, please contact: Jameson Perkins at (314) 707-9543 | [perkinsjameson27@gmail.com](mailto:perkinsjameson27@gmail.com)

**HUNTER DECLINE**

From Delta Waterfowl

**Waterfowl Hunter Numbers Drop**

Reports reveal slight decrease from prior season, duck harvest also dips

The number of active waterfowl hunters in North America continues to decline, following a decades-long trend.

According to the Migratory Bird Hunting Activity and Harvest Report issued annually by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1.26 million people actively hunted ducks and geese in the United States during the 2024-2025 season. The USFWS estimate shows a 2.5% decrease in active waterfowl hunters from the 2023-2024 season.

A separate report from the Canadian Wildlife Service puts the number of active resident hunters at 127,082 in 2024, a 1.4% decline from the previous year and Canada's second-lowest number of waterfowl hunters in data records beginning in 1966.

The number of North American waterfowl hunters peaked in the 1970s, with 505,681 Canadian

hunters in 1978 and 2.02 million U.S. hunters in 1970-1971.

So, who's still hunting ducks and geese, and where?

In the United States, Texas has the most active waterfowlers with 119,700, with Arkansas firmly in second at 79,400. Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Louisiana round out the Top 5. In Canada, Ontario leads with 44,052 resident waterfowl hunters, with Quebec next at 27,216. That means 56% of Canada's resident waterfowlers live in Ontario and Quebec. Alberta, Newfoundland, and Saskatchewan complete Canada's Top 5.

#### Harvest Stats

The USFWS report estimates hunters shot 14.34 million ducks in the United States during the 2024-2025 season, a 2.2% decrease from the previous year's estimate of 14.76 million.

Arkansas hunters took 1.42 million ducks, the most of any state. Louisiana hunters shot 1.25 million ducks, with California next with 1.11 million. Texas hunters harvested 1.1 million ducks, while Minnesota ranked fifth at 655,700.

California hunters averaged 21.9 ducks per hunter, while Louisiana hunters shot 21.2 ducks. The average Arkansas hunter shot 18.8 ducks. Pennsylvania hunters have the dubious distinction of the least ducks killed per hunter, averaging only 4.4 last season.

The most popular duck in North America—the mallard—tops all other species in harvest. U.S. hunters shot 3.47 million last season. Arkansas led with 530,183 mallards, but the next states on the list might surprise people. Oklahoma was second

with 201,683, while Missouri ranked third with 187,251. Tennessee was fourth with 180,965, followed by North Dakota at 164,401.

Green-winged teal at 2.39 million were the second-most-commonly harvested duck, with wood ducks third at 1.78 million. Gadwall were fourth, and blue-winged/cinnamon teal fifth. Among diving ducks, ring-necked ducks ranked 7th at 626,648, with buffleheads 10th at 275,897.

While U.S. hunters shot fewer ducks than the previous year, the goose harvest increased 2.4% to 3.48 million during the 2024-2025 season. Of those, hunters shot 2.37 million Canada geese, 416,769 white-fronted geese, and 381,471 snow/blue geese, 235,793 cackling geese, 64,428 Ross's geese, and 14,461 brant.

California hunters shot 276,100 geese, the highest total of any state. California's take of 97,174 snow/blue geese also led the country, as did the state's harvest of 22,443 Ross's geese. California hunters harvested 89,534 white-fronted geese, second only to Arkansas hunters who shot 134,741. Arkansas was third overall in goose harvest with 256,400 total geese. Kansas hunters ranked second with 258,200 geese, averaging an impressive 13.6 geese per hunter.

North Dakota hunters shot 184,400 geese, with Michigan closing out the Top 5 with 169,400 total geese. Michigan hunters harvested the most Canada geese, with 167,809 honkers.

Oklahoma hunters took 42,432 cackling geese, the highest total for that species, with Texas at 40,845 and Kansas at 39,943 close behind.

New Jersey led in brant harvest with 2,535, while Alaska was next at 1,978.

#### Flyway Snapshots

In the United States, the Atlantic Flyway had 287,100 active waterfowlers, or 22.8% of the nation's duck and goose hunters. Atlantic hunters shot 2.41 million ducks, representing 16.7% of the total U.S. harvest, and 579,100 geese equaling 16.6%. Wood ducks were the most taken duck, with the flyway's total of 579,417 woodies making up 32.5% of the country's harvest. The Atlantic Flyway led in black duck harvest with 149,448, or 79.8% of the total. Atlantic hunters also shot 84.3% of the country's scoters. Florida hunters accounted for nearly half of the mottled duck harvest and led all states with 140,058 ring-necked ducks.

The Mississippi Flyway had 512,200 waterfowl hunters, or 40.7% of the total. They shot 6.4 million ducks, or 44.4%, and 1.38 million geese, or 39.7%. Mississippi Flyway hunters accounted for 51% of the U.S. mallard harvest, 60.7% of the wood ducks, and 49.2% of blue-winged/cinnamon teal. In addition, the flyway's harvest of 1.38 million Canada geese was 58.2% of the total for the species. Mississippi Flyway hunters also shot the most shovelers and pintails. Arkansas was the top state in the nation for mallards and gadwalls, while Louisiana led in wood duck and canvas-back harvest and ranked second for green-winged teal and blue-winged/cinnamon teal.

The Central Flyway had 291,500 active hunters, or 23.1%. They shot 3.18 million ducks or 22%, while 986,600 geese equaled 28.3% of the U.S. harvest. The Central finished second in har-

vest of mallards, gadwalls, wigeon, and green-winged teal. Led by Texas, the Central Flyway accounted for 125,138 red-heads, which was 57.7% of the harvest.

At 162,900 hunters, the Pacific Flyway had only 12.9% of the country's waterfowlers. However, they shot 2.39 million ducks or 16.6%, and 535,000 geese, a mark of 15.4%. Pacific hunters shot 363,874 wigeon, 49.5% of the total U.S. harvest. The flyway ranked second in harvest of shovelers and pintails. California hunters shot 86,358 pintails, more than double the total taken in any other state.

#### Canada Stats Incomplete

Harvest statistics for the 2024 season were not yet available, but a quick snapshot of 2023 numbers showed 874,613 geese and 776,610 ducks were taken by 145,847 licensed hunters, including 16,902 non-Canadians.

In 2023, hunters shot 353,464 mallards, 53,689 black ducks, 53,572 green-winged teal, and 51,181 pintails in Canada. Hunters took 619,883 Canada geese, 141,199 snow/blue geese, 81,270 whitefronts, and 32,214 Ross's geese.

Saskatchewan hunters led all provinces with 184,632 ducks and 281,469 geese. Alberta was second in goose harvest with 194,059, but third in ducks at 134,205. Ontario was second in ducks with 176,364 and third in geese at 150,291. Quebec ranked fourth with 102,027 ducks and 135,360 geese. — Paul Wait

## NON RESIDENT

### MDC offers new non-resident migratory bird hunting permit

New non-resident migratory bird permit is \$60 and becomes effective Jan. 1, 2026.

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — Beginning Jan. 1, 2026, non-resident hunters in Missouri who want to pursue waterfowl, doves, snipe, woodcock, and rails will be required to purchase a new Non-Resident Migratory Bird Permit for a price of \$60. The new permit is part of a broader set of permit price adjustments by the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) and was approved by the Missouri Conservation Commission in October.

If non-resident hunters purchased a migratory bird hunting permit before Jan. 1, 2026, the permit will remain valid through the end of the season, Feb. 6, and no additional permit is needed for that season.

If non-resident hunters have NOT purchased a migratory bird permit before Jan. 1, 2026, they must buy the new Non-Resident Migratory Bird Permit to hunt between Jan. 1 and the end of the season, Feb. 6.

Starting with the 2026–2027 migratory-bird hunting season, all non-residents must purchase the new non-resident migratory bird permit.

While the proportion of non-resident hunters is low compared to resident hunters, a public opinion survey by MDC and other public feedback showed that Missourians generally support raising the costs of non-resident hunting permits to bring them more in line with those of surrounding states.

Additional revenue from permit sales will help MDC maintain and improve its nationally recognized programs and services for hunters,

anglers, wildlife watchers, and others. Additional revenue from permit prices will also help MDC with rising costs of maintaining infrastructure at conservation areas, fish hatcheries, intensively managed wetlands, lake and river accesses, and shooting ranges that are many decades old and in need of significant repair or replacement.

## SEASONS

### 2025-2026 WATERFOWL HUNTING

#### Ducks Season:

**South Zone:** Nov. 27 – 30 and Dec. 7 through Jan. 31, 2026

#### Snow Geese (White and Blue Phases) and Ross's Geese

Season: Nov. 11 through Feb. 6, 2026

#### White-Fronted Geese

Season: Nov. 11 — Feb. 6, 2026

#### Canada Geese and Brant

Season: Oct. 4 - 12 and Nov. 11 – Feb. 6, 2026

#### Light Goose Conservation

Season: Feb. 7 — April 30, 2026

South Zone: Nov. 22 and 23

## Up Coming Events

**Jan 14 : Taxidermy**

**Feb 11 : Movie Night**

**Mar 11 : Decoy Carving**

### General Information

This newsletter is distributed to our active members. For non-active members check the website for the current newsletter. We have our general meeting the second Wednesday of every month at 7:30 PM and our Board of Directors' Meeting every fourth Monday at 7 PM. Members meetings are held at Borgettis Bar & Grill 1667 South Old Hwy 141 Fenton MO. Board Meetings are also held at Borgettis Bar & Grill 1667 South Old Hwy 141 Fenton MO. In case of bad weather call Ken Liebel at 314-822-8030 or Jerry Mercurio at 314-603-6548.

Visit YOUR web site at <https://mvdha.com> to get the most recent news, events and updates. There you will find this newsletter and other helpful information concerning conservation and the great outdoors that we love. If you would like to be added to the email listing of important news and updates you can do that through the web site through the contact us link, fill out the form and make sure you add your email address.

Any comments or suggestions concerning the newsletter or the website can be sent to [mvdha@mvdha.com](mailto:mvdha@mvdha.com). I am always looking forwards to suggestions concerning content and what you would like to see or be presented in these publications.

**Next members meeting: January 14, 2026**

**Next Board Meeting: January 26, 2026**

**Members are invited to the Board Meeting**

**Member's meeting start at 7:30, Board meeting starts at 7:00**

## MISSISSIPPI VALLEY DUCK HUNTERS ASSN. INC.

*"A Nonprofit Association of, by, and for the Duck Hunters"*

"ST. LOUIS' NONPROFIT ASSOCIATION"

P.O. BOX 6, VALLEY PARK, MO 63088

