



NOVEMBER 2025

VOLUME 69 ISSUE 11 NOVEMBER 6, 2025

ACCIDENT CLAIMS LIVES OF DUCK HUNTERS

Do I have your attention?

This is a future headline. There has been no fatality among duck hunters today to our knowledge.

Tomorrow? Well that's another story entirely. Today, tomorrow, the next day or next month, the record coldly shows that one of us is not coming home.

In fact, if this year is anything like others, 10 of our brother water-fowlers will die. Most of drowning or exposure to harsh elements. And while it's less today than 50 years ago before Hunter education training began in earnest, gun accidents also will take a toll.

The answer to this sobering little commentary is to have fun and enjoy the hunt - - but with safety and common sense always in the back of our minds. We all know the safety list... Wear a life jacket on the water. Let someone know where you're going. Watch that muzzle of the shotgun. And always know when to say, it's too dangerous. So I'll spare you the whole list.

Bottom line is, few things are more enjoyable than the day on the marsh or other habitat where we pursue these beautiful waterfowl. Don't let a lack of planning or attention, or an overwhelming desire for a limit, lead to a tragedy.

PS yes the headline was a dirty trick. But listen, if a dirty trick and short commentary saves one person's life somehow down the road, then yes, I will gladly risk having folks grumbling at me over the merits of shock headlines.

This post was forwarded to me by Jerry SR from Facebook that was written by a person named Gordy Gordon, who I am sure would not mind me reposting, which I thought would be prudent since our season just started. Gordy is absolutely right, don't be a statistic. A duck or a goose is not worth it, there will be other days afield.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

SHORT STORY	1
MEMBERS MEETING	2
LAST MEETING	2
EAGLE BLUFFS	2
HOLIDAY PARTY	2
FUND RAISER UPDTE	3
BOARD ELECTIONS	3
TROUT TRIP	3
ANNUAL DUES	3
STRATEGIES	3
SEASONS	5
UPCOMING EVENTS	5
GENERAL INFO	COV

**SELL
 THOSE
 MEAT
 TICKETS!!!**

**SELL
 THOSE
 MEAT
 TICKETS!!!**

MEMBERS MEETING

NO MEETING THIS MONTH, WE ARE ALL OUT HUNTING!

LAST MONTHS MEETING

At our last member's meeting we had Reid Viegut who gave us the waterfowl area update. He is MDC's waterfowl biologist who gave us an outstanding presentation. Before the meeting we sat down with him to pick his brain about our concerns and issues with MDC and plans. Some notes that I took to pass onto you:

1. Finished his Masters degree from the University of Missouri in 2023.
2. His thesis was leveraging drones and AI to conduct waterfowl surveys where he teamed up with programmers to design software along with the drones to conduct the aerial surveys. Arkansas is interested in his work.
3. He is a duck hunter and has been hunting since he was 8 or 10 years old.
4. He is originally from North East Texas
5. Waterfowl pump concerns, since from our last meeting there was basically only one individual handling the pumps in the MDC waterfowl areas they have contracted out this maintenance. One thing he stated about pumps at Eagle Bluffs was that they planned on replacing two pumps there and pulled them to find out that they had not ordered the new pumps yet and he directed them to reinstall the pumps for waterfowl season until the new ones arrived.
6. Columbia Bottoms: Nothing is going to change with Columbia Bottoms, managing for doves only.

7. When asked about crop management, MDC does contract out to farmers for planting and are supposed to leave a certain amount of crops for hunting.
8. MDC is not planning on stopping hunting over row crops unless mandated by the Federal Government.
9. He stated to get further updates on waterfowl areas to check out UTube videos.
10. MDC carries waterfowl reports, hunters success and waterfowl counts on the MDC website under the prospects page. <https://mdc.mo.gov/hunting-trapping/species/goose/waterfowl-reports-prospects>
11. Email address is: reid.viegut@mdc.gov

EAGLE BLUFFS

At the recent board meeting Jerry SR brought up that the pumps at Eagle Bluffs did not go as planned. When MDC installed the two old pumps back into the ground they could not get one of them to work. From Jerry, only half of the refuge will be flooded. So if you have a reservation for Eagle Bluffs, you might want to call them to get the status of the area before you go.

HOLIDAY PARTY

We will be having our end of year holiday party for our December meeting. We are planning on providing two free drink tickets FOR JUST BEER OR SODA. We are selling raffle tickets for two hand made and tuned duck calls that were contributed by Doc and some TSS loads by yours truly. Speaking of the Gift table, we are hoping some members can bring in some items since we are low on gifts as is past years. So please check your stuff and if you have anything you would like to do-

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

nate bring it in. For food, we are planning on sandwiches from Borgettis Bar & Grill, chips and cake.

FUND RAISER UPDATE

Once again we will be having our popular fund raising event of the Kenrick's meat certificates. This is for a gift certificate of \$300 towards a meat package of your choice from Kenrick's Meats at 4324 Weber Rd, St. Louis, MO 63123. Tickets will be \$5 each **OR 5 TICKETS FOR \$20** and the winner of the certificate will be drawn at this year's Holiday party in December. Contact any board member for tickets or contact Jerry for tickets to sell at 314-603-6548 and he will get them to you. Remember, this is for your MVDHA Club.

IF YOU HAVE NOT BROUGHT YOUR TICKETS TO JERRY BRING YOUR TICKETS AND MONEY TO THE HOLIDAY PARTY SO THEY WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE DRAW.

BOARD ELECTIONS

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? 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 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

MVDHA is planning on our annual Trout Trip this coming year. The dates we are looking at are going to 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/>

We are in the planning stages, this date is not firmed yet, more info in future newsletters.

ANNUAL DUES

Might as well start this now, your annual membership dues are due at the end of this year. 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.

STRATEGIES

From the DU website:

5 Strategies for Freelancers

When waterfowlers talk about freelancing, they are usually discussing a mobile style of hunting that occurs outside the confines of a permanent blind. Although it can include some private land scenarios (knocking on farmhouse doors on the prairies, for example), freelancing is mostly a public land endeavor, where you're free to scout and hunt in a manner that suits

you, and where success depends on your skill in putting together a strategy after considering a host of conditions and variables. Freelancing is rarely easy, but it's far and away my favorite way to hunt.

From the big rivers of the East to the flooded timber of the South to the sprawling marshes of the Great Salt Lake, savvy freelance hunters depend on some common strategies. We asked three hunters who excel at this style of waterfowling to share their secrets for success.

1. Avoid Heavily Hunted Areas

Fred Zink, co-host of DU TV and founder of Zink Calls, often hunts the windswept waters and sprawling marshes bordering Lake Erie and Lake St. Clair. These big waters hold a lot of ducks, but they attract a lot of hunters too. Zink says the birds quickly learn to avoid the spots that receive regular hunting pressure.

"You can hunt those traditional areas and see plenty of birds, but it's difficult to be effective once the ducks have been pressured," Zink says. "The biggest key to success when hunting public water is to hunt the spot that the ducks have just moved into. Say it gets cold and they move out of a marsh and into more open water. Even if they are the same birds that have been around all season, when they move to that new spot it's just like they've migrated to a new area, at least for a short time. They don't know where the bogeyman is, and this can make even stale ducks easier to hunt."

Freelancer's Tip | Hide That Layout: Layout blinds are essential gear for setting up on big-river sandbars and islands, but they don't make you invisible. Look

for areas with some sort of overhead cover, like a leaning treetop or deadfall, and consider bringing a folding shovel to dig a slight depression to help lower your blind's profile.

2. Follow the Water

If a shift in wind direction calls for knocking off work one afternoon, a rising river can be cause for a full-on vacation. Matt Harrison, DU's digital communications manager, has been hunting public land in southeast Arkansas with his brother, Michael, for years. He says there is still outstanding freelance hunting to be had in this area for those who are willing to put in the work. "We love hunting public ground, where everyone else has the same chance that we do," Harrison says. "And there's nothing like mallards in green timber. If we have the choice of shooting a few birds in the woods or a lot of birds in a field, we'll take the woods every time."

For timber hunting, Harrison depends heavily on the onX Hunt app. By dropping GPS pins and using saved offline maps, he can quickly find his spots in the dark. And if one spot is taken, he can easily move to a different one. After years of mapping and pinning his favorite areas, while also watching river levels, Harrison has learned exactly when these spots will have just the right amount of water for a good hunt.

"New water is the key to finding ducks in the timber," Harrison says. "If we know the water is just beginning to spill into an area, that's where we're going to go. You can find birds in spots with only three to six inches of new water. The apps and online data that are available today

make it simple to check all of that in real time."

Freelancer's Tip | Call as a Team: Good calling strategies are an asset in flooded timber. "We might have five guys blowing cut-down calls," Matt Harrison says, "because we set up in high-traffic areas where aggressive calling works. Once we break a group down, we have a lead caller who finishes them."

3. Scout More Than You Hunt

Rafe Nielsen, director of marketing for Browning firearms, has hunted the expansive marshes and flats of Utah's Great Salt Lake his entire life. When he was younger, he and his buddies used to hike to their spots carrying feed sacks full of decoys over their shoulders. These days, he accesses his hunting spots by boat and mud motor, even though some walking is usually required as well.

Despite his years of experience in the area, Nielsen says he still usually needs two days—one to scout and one to hunt—to be successful. "Without that day of scouting, it's usually a struggle," he says. "But if you do your homework, the hunting here can be pretty good."

Nielsen does most of his scouting with binoculars and a spotting scope. He parks at vantage points that allow him to see a long way and looks for concentrations of feeding ducks. Ideally, he wants to see ducks on the water as well as traffic in the air to give him a good idea of how birds are working a particular spot. When he's out hunting, Nielsen keeps his binoculars handy, always on the lookout for something promising for the next day.

Freelancer's Tip | Mind the Sun: When considering where to set

up, Browning's Rafe Nielsen is more worried about the sun than the wind direction. "A lack of shadows makes it exponentially more difficult to hide," he says. "In a marsh, I can usually work around the wind. In fact, I like to decoy birds in a crosswind, and I don't mind them quartering over the top of me if the setup is good. But almost none of it works if they see you shining in the sun."

4. Make Magic with Motion

Most freelancers are very particular about their decoys. On the Great Salt Lake, Nielsen likes a mixed spread of mallards, gadwalls, and teal, along with a handful of goose floaters. In the Arkansas timber, Harrison and his crew typically deploy two dozen hyper-realistic mallards. Zink likes big spreads on Lake Erie when migration flights are on, but he downsizes to a smaller spread of his most realistic decoys when local birds become stale. Without exception, though, all the hunters we talked to stressed the importance of motion.

"I don't use spinning-wing decoys that much, but I love jerk cords and motorized feeders," Nielsen says. "Anything to make a ripple seems to really help, especially in the smaller marsh areas where I like to hunt."

Harrison adds, "Where it's legal, we'll have a spinning-wing decoy out 99 percent of the time. Also, pulsators are great to have, and we love jerk strings. I've never seen a raft of ducks where the water wasn't moving, so add as much motion as you can. In the timber, you can kick the water too."

"On public water, you're typically hunting educated ducks," Zink

notes. "If it's been warm with no new birds, I don't suggest running a spinner. But if there's some migration or inclement weather, a spinner will help. Probably six out of 10 birds will still flare from it, but you will attract some birds that will finish right over it. In most cases, the more ducks you can attract with the flash, the better off you'll be, even if many birds in the area are wise to it."

Freelancer's Tip | Call with Caution: Nielsen thinks that calling can actually hurt more than it helps in the open marshes where he hunts and where pressure is high. "I almost never call out there," he says. "The competition is just hammering on calls all day, so I keep quiet. I depend on good scouting to get me in the right spot, a lifelike spread, and being perfectly hidden."

5. Hunt Overlooked Spots

Duck hunters love pretty spots. Big marshes, flooded green timber, and rolling grainfields can captivate our imagination and, at times, monopolize all of our scouting effort. But good freelancers know that some of the best spots are overlooked and in some cases not all that aesthetically attractive.

To this day, one of the best duck hunts I've ever had was over a 20-yard-wide three-inch-deep mud hole in the middle of a North Dakota crop field. The ducks were roosting on a nearby lake and dry-feeding in the field. My buddies and I set up next to that mud hole with layout blinds and just two dozen full-body decoys and two spinners. All morning, we enjoyed steady shooting as small bunches of mallards and pintails broke off from the field and dropped right into our spread.

Zink says areas just like that are choice spots for prairie freelancers these days, especially in Canada. "It's more difficult than it used to be to get permission on the big, obvious fields that are full of feeding birds," Zink says. "But it's still easy to get permission to hunt the small loafing ponds, because you can't hide 10 guys around them. The key is to understand the difference between a true roost pond, where ducks spend the night, and a loafing or watering pond, which is often near the field where the birds are feeding."

In flooded timber, hunters often gravitate toward the big, open holes near the boat lanes. But Harrison and his hunting partners usually end up hiking a mile or more to their best timber spots—some of which are scarcely more than a bit of extra sunshine in the tree canopy. "One of our favorite spots is a tiny hole where a single big tree blew over," he says. "My brother and I hiked in there one time and shot our four mallards each in less than 30 minutes. Especially late in the season, ducks like to get into the thicker cover and sit where they're not bothered."

Freelancer's Tip | Don't Sweat It: Even in cold weather, you can expect to start sweating as you haul decoys and other gear on foot. Dress lightly on the front end of the hunt and carry extra layers with you in a backpack. Also, consider trading your blind bag for a shell vest or sling pack.

SEASONS

2025-2026 WATERFOWL HUNTING

Ducks Season:

North Zone: Nov. 1 — Dec. 30

Middle Zone: Nov. 1 - 9 and Nov. 15 through Jan. 4, 2026

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

Bag Limit: 6 ducks daily with species restrictions of:

4 mallards (no more than 2 females) 3 wood ducks 2 red-heads 2 hooded mergansers

2 canvasbacks 2 black ducks

3 pintail 2 scaup for first 45 days and 1 scaup for last 15 days

1 mottled duck

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

Nov 12 : NO MEETING

Dec 10 : Holiday Party

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. 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: NO MEETING FOR NOVEMBER

Next Board Meeting: November 24, 2025

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

