

# Season-At-A-Glance Table of Contents

**Click A Link Below:**

- [1. Upper Peninsula](#)**
- [2. Northeast Michigan](#)**
- [3. Northwest Michigan](#)**
- [4. Southeast Michigan](#)**
- [5. Saginaw Bay Area](#)**
- [6. Northern Half of Southwest Michigan](#)**
- [7. Southern Half of Southwest Michigan](#)**

# Season-At-A-Glance: Michigan's Upper Peninsula

2013-2014

HABITAT AND WEATHER	DUCK NUMBERS	DUCK HARVEST	GOOSE NUMBERS	GOOSE HARVEST	COMMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ In most areas water levels were better than 2012, but still low according to historical Great Lakes levels and hunter comments.</li> <li>▶ Great Lakes levels were better than in 2012 but still presented off-shore proximity issues to diver hunters as birds were again reported feeding and moving further offshore and making them more difficult to access.</li> <li>▶ Local lake and river systems had decent water levels and provided better access than in 2012.</li> <li>▶ Crop harvests were late across much of the region especially in the central UP where extremely wet conditions in September, October and November prevented corn harvest with many fields going un-harvested. This impacted local field hunting opportunities and bird movement patterns.</li> <li>▶ Acorn production was decent in many areas so hunters who keyed in on oaks did well on local wood ducks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Early season duck numbers were poor in many areas as local production was low from the poor spring conditions.</li> <li>▶ Good pushes of migrating mallards were not seen in many central and western county areas until late October and early to mid-November (right about when the split occurred) and many hunters reported later than normal flights.</li> <li>▶ EasternUP hunters reported later than normal flights of puddlers and divers as well.</li> <li>▶ Good flights were reported about the 20<sup>th</sup> of November in many areas.</li> <li>▶ Many Bay de Noc hunters did not report divers appearing until after deer season.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The opening weekend was warm and quiet (bluebird days) across much of the region and hunters reported low success in many areas.</li> <li>▶ Hunter numbers were reported as similar to 2012 and opening day harvest was mostly green-winged teal, wood ducks, local mallards and geese.</li> <li>▶ Munuscong, AuTrain and Sturgeon River Sloughs reported hunter numbers on opening weekend similar to 2012 with hunters taking fewer birds in the warm opening day weather.</li> <li>▶ Hunter reports were a mix between low early season success to sporadic mid and late season success on puddle ducks.</li> <li>▶ Divers were widely reported and arrived late and were at odd with season dates and timing in some cases. However hunters at AuTrain reported a good consistent diver season from mid-October on.</li> <li>▶ More late season goose and duck hunters were observed by LED and other staff this year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Local goose production was low but migrant birds were reported in many areas as early as September 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>.</li> <li>▶ Flights and pushes of new birds were sporadic but most goose hunters reported increased numbers and opportunity all season long across most of the region.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Goose harvest was up by most accounts and hunters by and large reported satisfaction with the goose season dates, especially the early and normal seasons running back to back.</li> <li>▶ Goose hunter numbers appear to be increasing along with opportunity as seasons expand.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The majority of hunters reported low satisfaction with the early opener and longer split. It could have been a function of poor local production and weather patterns, but hunters stressed a desire to return to a last Saturday in September opener and retain the Thanksgiving split but have less of a break between the splits.</li> <li>▶ Freeze-up came to most areas the first week of deer season around the 18<sup>th</sup> of November.</li> </ul>

# Season-At-A-Glance: Northeast Michigan

2013-2014

HABITAT AND WEATHER	DUCK NUMBERS	DUCK HARVEST	GOOSE NUMBERS	GOOSE HARVEST	COMMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Spring conditions were less than ideal. Temperatures were below average for most of April with lows below freezing most of the month. Many local nesting areas, including marshes, were still ice-covered in late April. These areas quickly thawed when above average temperatures moved into the region in early May.</li> <li>▶ Temperatures were average with little rain during September for the early goose season.</li> <li>▶ Weather conditions were mixed for the middle zone duck opener. A majority of the region experienced heavy rains.</li> <li>▶ The first 2 weeks of the season were warm and relatively dry with little wind which made for a slow start to the season.</li> <li>▶ Second half of October brought below average temps and was wet and windy resulting in good hunting conditions as birds came down from the north.</li> <li>▶ The second half of the season was wet and became very cold towards the end of November with snow accumulation on November 20.</li> <li>▶ Most water was frozen over prior to Thanksgiving which made for difficult late season hunting conditions.</li> <li>▶ Redheads, bluebills, and late season divers were hard to get at with ice building up on shoreline and most inland lakes froze.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Local duck production seemed up slightly from the last few years.</li> <li>▶ Throughout the region, there were mixed reports of mallard numbers. Many reported above average numbers while others said they seemed to be a lower than the previous years.</li> <li>▶ Wood ducks were abundant throughout the region until most pushed out in late October.</li> <li>▶ Teal were abundant the first few weeks of the season before leaving the area.</li> <li>▶ Redhead numbers continue to improve, both on the Great Lakes and interior lakes. Redhead numbers were reported to be up in some areas but lower than previous years on Lake Huron.</li> <li>▶ Scaup numbers seemingly continue to improve as well, with good migration during the third week of October.</li> <li>▶ Bufflehead numbers and migration patterns seemed to return to normal, and continue to dominate bags from late October on.</li> <li>▶ Goldeneye seemed to arrive mostly after the ice-up.</li> <li>▶ There appeared to be many more surf and black scoters than in the recent past and long-tailed ducks were found in good numbers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Below average duck harvest was experienced in the early portion of the season, while mid-season provided increased success before freeze-up occurred in late November.</li> <li>▶ Many hunters had success harvesting quite a few teal in early October before they migrated south.</li> <li>▶ Some big water diver hunters reported good harvests during the season.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Lower goose production combined with a lack of food sources made for a difficult early goose season. Local numbers were low and hunting pressure was very light from September 1 to 10 in the central part of the Northern Lower Peninsula. The geese that were around were concentrated in larger groups.</li> <li>▶ Migrating birds began to trickle in around September 10<sup>th</sup>, and continued into late September. Although hunting pressure was still light during this time, the season date adjustment to minimize "closed hunting" days during this time was welcomed by the hunters who were afield.</li> <li>▶ October was unusually windy and rainy, which also seemed to limit hunter numbers.</li> <li>▶ Areas closer to the Great Lakes shorelines again seemed to produce and hold many more geese than the interior areas. This is a continuation of recent trends, as the number of geese moving through the Northern Lower Peninsula has dropped significantly over the last ten years. Geese continued to trickle through until mid to late November, but did not appear in the concentrations that have happened in the recent past.</li> <li>▶ Large numbers of geese on small inland lakes in Presque Isle and Alpena and Alcona counties.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Reports of good goose hunts in the region, especially on waters closer to Lake Huron.</li> <li>▶ Corn harvest was late so geese were in the region until freeze up and most groups of hunters that put the time in had a good season. .</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Interest in Great Lakes sea ducks (primarily long-tails and white-winged scoters) continues to increase in the Northern Lower/Eastern Upper, despite many "blow days" when hunters could not safely get out on big water.</li> <li>▶ Hunters continue to enjoy the late two-day split, even though harsh conditions this year failed to make these two days as productive as some previous years for most hunters. Debate continues over the best time for this split, with many hunters still wishing for the end of December.</li> <li>▶ Diver hunters reported an increase in birds seen and have asked for an increase in the redhead bag limit.</li> <li>▶ Hunters are happy with the early announcement of future openers, even if they do not agree with the dates.</li> <li>▶ Many Middle and South Zone hunters that travel to the North Zone for divers were not happy with the closure during the historical peak of diver and sea duck numbers in the Eastern Upper Peninsula (mid-November split).</li> <li>▶ Goose hunters contacted were again very happy with the length of the season, even if they didn't necessarily take advantage of the extra days due to lack of birds and weather conditions.</li> </ul>

# Season-At-A-Glance: Northwest Michigan

2013-2014

HABITAT AND WEATHER	DUCK NUMBERS	DUCK HARVEST	GOOSE NUMBERS	GOOSE HARVEST	COMMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The season started off warm for the early goose season. Fields hadn't been cut yet. The weather started to cool for the Middle Zone opener.</li> <li>▶ Inland water started to freeze mid-November, with snow accumulating the third week of November.</li> <li>▶ Cold weather with record snow.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Early season bird movement was good for local birds.</li> <li>▶ The flight birds arrived mid-season.</li> <li>▶ Large rafts of mallards were observed in Lake Michigan.</li> <li>▶ Large rafts of Divers observed at the Straits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Duck harvest numbers were reported to be good.</li> <li>▶ Mallard numbers were reported up; diver numbers were also reported to be up for the season.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Goose flight numbers were good all season.</li> <li>▶ Reports were that they seemed to favor the fields rather than the water.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Goose harvest was reported to be above average.</li> <li>▶ Good numbers in the fields, not as many on the water.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Hunters commented on the season being good for length and weather.</li> <li>▶ Local and flight birds hunted well into the season.</li> <li>▶ The split was very cold but hunting was good.</li> </ul>

# Season-At-A-Glance: Southeast Michigan

2013-2014

HABITAT AND WEATHER	DUCK NUMBERS	DUCK HARVEST	GOOSE NUMBERS	GOOSE HARVEST	COMMENTS
<p><b>Pte. Mouillee and Western Lake Erie</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 2013 spring was better than 2012 for brood rearing but it was still less than ideal with some cold and rainy stretches.</li> <li>▶ The average spring gave way to a very wet June and July. This had a substantial impact on corn production and eliminated the ability to get millet in the ground.</li> <li>▶ Steady rain events throughout the summer kept lake and river water levels up. Flooding fields and hunter accessibility were not impacted this year.</li> <li>▶ The cattail and moist vegetation growing season was good and benefited from the steady rain events.</li> <li>▶ Much of the autumn's weather across Southeast Lower Michigan was mild with average precipitation and weather events throughout the fall kept the waterfowl moving around.</li> <li>▶ Weather overall during the month of October was nice and cool with an average high: 49 °F and average low: 32°F.</li> <li>▶ The month of November was cool providing good hunting conditions.</li> <li>▶ We had a few weather events here and there and then on November 22<sup>nd</sup> it started to get very cold. The marsh froze-up by the morning of November 24<sup>th</sup> and for the most part stayed that way through December 8<sup>th</sup>.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Pte. Mouillee and Western Lake Erie</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 2013 pre-season duck counts were lower than previous years but the weekly counts during the season were higher than last year.</li> <li>▶ We had a steady supply of ducks moving down almost every week.</li> <li>▶ We had average numbers of wood ducks and teal but not as many as last year.</li> <li>▶ The species that saw a big bump in abundance were gadwalls, especially in late October and into November.</li> <li>▶ Peak numbers occurred at Pte. Mouillee around October 12 holding around 7,500 ducks and geese.</li> <li>▶ We had some good pushes of birds around Oct 21 and Oct 28.</li> <li>▶ We had good duck numbers in both October and November right up until the marsh froze.</li> </ul> <p><b>Western Lake Erie/Detroit River</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Ruddy ducks arrived in large numbers on Oct 21-28 and we got a push of scaup the week of Oct. 21.</li> <li>▶ Diver migration occurred later than last year but in the normal range.</li> <li>▶ We got a push of scaup and redheads around Thanksgiving, which was about the time temperatures really dropped</li> </ul>	<p><b>Pte. Mouillee and Western Lake Erie</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Pte. Mouillee had managed hunting on 16 AM zones and 13 PM zones that were hunted 2 days/week.</li> <li>▶ The season started a little slow compared to previous years but was very consistent overall.</li> <li>▶ Over 100 ducks were harvested in each of the first 6 weeks.</li> <li>▶ 99.5% of the managed hunt harvest was in the first 6 weeks. The last two weeks only harvested 5 ducks. A total of 1,009 ducks were harvested through the managed hunt. That was down from last year but still one of the best years on record.</li> <li>▶ Hunter trips decreased this year due to a lack of hunting the last two weeks.</li> <li>▶ We finished at 1.4 ducks per hunter trip, up from last year.</li> <li>▶ Last year gadwall made up less than 10% of the bag in the managed hunt. This year they accounted for 25% of the bag. Mallard harvest was still number one at 43%.</li> </ul> <p><b>St. Clair Flats and Lake St. Clair</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ On Lake St. Clair, diver harvest was limited to ruddy ducks and buffleheads during the first month of the waterfowl season.</li> </ul> <p><b>Harsens Island</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Hunters harvested nearly 9,200 ducks. Mallards dominated the bag, with 66.3% of total harvest.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Pte. Mouillee and Western Lake Erie</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Goose brood production was up, we banded more geese at Pte. Mouillee this past year than any other year.</li> </ul> <p><b>St. Clair Flats and Lake St. Clair</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Goose numbers were up on the St. Clair Flats, portions of Anchor Bay and Lake St. Clair. It appeared to be the result of higher brood production, however there seemed to be large numbers of late broods which were observed during banding operations. There was a large variety of age classes of goslings; most likely a result of the spring and summer flooding that occurred across much of the region.</li> </ul> <p><b>Harsens Island</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Goose production on the island was again strong. This results in extreme amounts of crop damage in the hunting zones during the summer. On one morning, over 400 geese were counted in zone 30 alone. Goose numbers were up slightly during the hunting season, though few geese remain on the refuge itself.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Pte. Mouillee and Western Lake Erie</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Pte. Mouillee is not a big goose hunting area, hunter success was just average.</li> </ul> <p><b>St. Clair Flats and Lake St. Clair</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The area is not known for goose hunting opportunities, but was a relatively successful goose season.</li> </ul> <p><b>Harsens Island</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ While Harsens is not a big goose hunting area, our harvest this year was up considerably from the previous year, with 128 geese harvested compared to 107 geese last year.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Pte. Mouillee and Western Lake Erie</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 2013-14 was a very nice and consistent season. From the start of the season through freeze up we didn't have a bad week. A big reason for that was the number of gadwall in the area.</li> </ul> <p><b>St. Clair Flats and Lake St. Clair</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Harsens Island was on track for a 11,000-12,000 duck harvest if it hadn't been frozen out for the last 2 weeks of the season. Heavy boating traffic on Lake St. Clair coincided with the first major push of divers, displacing waterfowl to the Canadian side of the lake, where most remained for the majority of the season.</li> </ul> <p><b>Harsens Island</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ This area had a very good season. Until ice up, there weren't any weeks in which hunting was slow.</li> <li>▶ Weather was great for waterfowl and goose harvest was steady throughout the season.</li> <li>▶ This was the first year of the ban on spinning wing decoys on Harsens and it was met with a lot of positive feedback. About 9 out of 10 hunters that commented on the ban were in favor of it, with a lot of these comments coming from users with limited hunting trip opportunities. We also had many comments in favor of the</li> </ul>

# Season-At-A-Glance: Southeast Michigan

2013-2014

<p>The rivers and lake stayed open but all interior wetlands froze up.</p> <p><b>St. Clair Flats and Lake St. Clair</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The growing season started off with average conditions, apart from some cooler than normal temperatures at times. However, heavy rains began in the end of May and continued through June. From mid-May until the end of June, we received over 12" of rainfall at Harsens Island, compared to 2-3" last year during that timeframe. The end result was that many cropped areas had to be replanted and those that weren't suffered fairly significant flooding damage. Crops at St. Johns Marsh took the most damage; two days after corn planting was completed there, a storm came through that dropped 4-5" in under a day, severely flooding the entire area as well as several surrounding roads.</li> <li>▶ Unseasonably cool weather persisted for large stretches of July and August as well. Through September, temperatures dropped steadily, leading to some of our best waterfowling weather in recent years in October. Temperatures were in the low fifties to upper thirties most of the season, after a warmer week the week of the 14<sup>th</sup>. In addition, several days of steady northwest winds seemed to bring in more migrant birds than years past. November was much colder than recent years, with skim ice forming by the</li> </ul>	<p>and the interior marshes froze.</p> <p><b>St. Clair Flats and Lake St. Clair</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ At Harsens Island Managed Waterfowl Area, waterfowl began to show up in decent numbers around October 13.</li> <li>▶ Mallard numbers began to climb, however adult mallards were more abundant than juveniles, probably an indication of poor nesting success.</li> <li>▶ Refuge counts peaked around 30,000 during the week of November 3. A surprising number of pintail, gadwall and wigeon showed up during this period. Green-winged teal numbers peaked around the same period.</li> <li>▶ On Lake St. Clair, other than a handful of ruddy ducks and buffleheads, divers were almost non-existent until around the firearm deer season.</li> <li>▶ Around November 17, red-head and scaup began to show up in decent numbers on Anchor Bay and remained until the very end of the season. Divers were not nearly as abundant as they were in 2012. Canvasback and goldeneye began showing up in better numbers near the end of the season.</li> <li>▶ Few hunters were able to take advantage of the late split due to iced in boat ramps, canals, and river mouths. Those that managed to get out and hunt had decent success.</li> </ul>	<p>Pintail were surprisingly the second most harvested species, with 8.7% of the harvest and green-winged teal were close behind at 8.3%. Black duck and wood duck harvest were both down compared to recent years, at 4.6% and 2.7% respectively, while wigeon and gadwall were up.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Duck harvest increased significantly over last year, from 8,345 to 9,199 ducks harvested at the managed area.</li> <li>▶ The ducks/hunter trip also increased greatly, from 1.22 in 2012 to 1.45 in 2013. This was our fourth highest ducks/hunter trip total on record.</li> </ul>			<p>season framework, with the opener on the second Saturday of October and only a two day late split. We had lower weekday draw numbers and higher weekend draw numbers than recent years, with a high of 103 parties on the October 26 AM hunt.</p>
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<p>week of the 12<sup>th</sup> and hard ice forming by the 24<sup>th</sup>. Hunters were walking on top of the ice by the 26<sup>th</sup>. Apart from a couple good days of hunting on December 5 and 6, we lost the last two weeks to ice cover.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Heavy snowfall began the week of December 9.</li> </ul> <p><b>Harsens Island</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ An average to slightly warmer than average spring led to an extremely wet June and early July. From mid-May to mid-June, we had over 12" of rain, compared to 2.5" of rain in the same period in the previous year.</li> <li>▶ The remainder of the summer was average temperature with steady, average precipitation.</li> <li>▶ For the first time in several years, we had a nice, cool autumn. The first week of October was very warm, with temperatures in the high 60's and low 70's, but by the duck season opener temperatures were down to comfortable 40's and 50's. We had many days of good NW winds and rain events, leading to great duck hunting conditions. We had our first skim ice on November 12<sup>th</sup> and hard ice in the hunting zones by the 24<sup>th</sup>. Hunters were walking on the ice by the 26<sup>th</sup>. We lost 12 of the final 14 days of the season to ice.</li> <li>▶ There were noticeably less wood duck and mallard broods both on the island and the surrounding Flats.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Harsens Island</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Pre-season counts were lower than previous years, likely due to lower local duck production, especially in wood ducks.</li> <li>▶ Duck numbers throughout the season were comparable to past years, though we saw a much higher peak than past years on the week of November 3, with a peak over 28,000 ducks on the refuge.</li> <li>▶ We saw many more gadwall, pintail and wigeon than recent years, but black ducks and wood ducks were down.</li> <li>▶ The week of the Nov. 17, we dropped down to nearly 5,000 ducks and steadily declined from there.</li> </ul>				
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# Season-At-A-Glance: Saginaw Bay

2013-2014

HABITAT AND WEATHER	DUCK NUMBERS	DUCK HARVEST	GOOSE NUMBERS	GOOSE HARVEST	COMMENTS
<p><b>Nayanquing Point</b> experienced a cool, wet spring which delayed the planting and growing season slightly.</p> <p><b>Fish Point</b> Spring temps were slightly above average. An early summer rainfall flooded out the first corn planting. Replanting was completed by the end of June and produced a lower yield compared to prior years. There was adequate water to flood all areas to full pool by early November.</p> <p><b>Shiawassee River</b> Crops went in late this year due to significant spring flooding. However, all cropped units produced well with share harvest being completed by 22 October. Millet and approx. 500 acres of buckwheat were planted this spring and each grew well in all of the cropped units. Waterfowl season temperatures were significantly lower this year compared to the 2012 season and the area lost a total of 14 hunting days due to ice.</p>	<p><b>Nayanquing Point</b> Duck numbers were higher than last year prior to the start of the season. This was in part due to increased Saginaw Bay water levels. There was also an increase in numbers around Oct 19-26.</p> <p><b>Fish Point</b> Duck numbers were lower across the area compared to previous years. Peak numbers were seen the week that spanned the end of October into the beginning of November. No ducks were counted from the week of December 8 onwards due to ice coverage across the area.</p> <p><b>Shiawassee River</b> Duck counts were only completed for the Prior Rd. refuge unit. Duck numbers peaked at 20,000 on November 27 while 75% of the refuge was frozen over. Duck numbers continued to dwindle as ice cover increased and dropped to just 1,100 on November 29 once the refuge unit was completely frozen.</p>	<p><b>Nayanquing Point</b> Total harvest was 2,723, which is average for the last ten seasons. Mallard harvest was 51% of the total, followed by green-winged teal, pintail and wood duck. Mallard harvest was up by 43% and pintail harvest was up by 126% over last year.</p> <p><b>Fish Point</b> Despite lower duck numbers on the area, duck harvest increased compared to 2012 but was still below the 5-year average. Peak harvest on the area occurred in 2011.</p> <p><b>Shiawassee River</b> Duck harvest increased slightly over last year at 6,697 (6,440 in 2012); ducks harvested were below the 5-year average by about 700. The youth waterfowl hunt weekend of September 14-15 was successful with 130 ducks harvested in 76 hunter trips. This was on-par with last year's youth harvest of 131 ducks.</p>	<p><b>Nayanquing Point</b> Goose numbers were below average and were concentrated along the Saginaw Bay shoreline or in private fields.</p> <p><b>Fish Point</b> Goose numbers were less than half that seen in 2012. Peak numbers occurred over the first half of October.</p> <p><b>Shiawassee River</b> Goose numbers were up across the area and peaked at 11,000 on the November 11 Prior Rd. refuge count, significantly higher than the 3,800 maximum count from 2012.</p>	<p><b>Nayanquing Point</b> Goose harvest was 61 total Canada geese for all seasons combined.</p> <p><b>Fish Point</b> Echoing the number of geese seen on the area, goose harvest was lower this year compared to 2012 and was below the 5-year average.</p> <p><b>Shiawassee River</b> Goose harvest totaled 897, which is a decrease compared to 2012 when 1,027 were harvested and is below the 5-year average. A total of 16 geese were harvested during the youth waterfowl hunt, 78 during the early goose season (Sept. 1 – 10) and 85 during the late goose season (Sept. –21- 23).</p>	<p><b>Nayanquing Point's</b> season was cut short by extreme cold temperatures on November 13<sup>th</sup>. Although open water was available two days later all the birds left either south or to Saginaw Bay. Due to both increased water levels and decent cover across the area it appeared at first that the season would be record breaking. Ducks per day for the first 30 days was 85.5 but for the last 30 it was 4.4.</p> <p><b>Fish Point</b> There were four drawings in which there were more parties than hunting locations available; the largest drawing contained 103 parties. Due to the cold experienced during this year's winter, the area lost a total of 21 days due to freeze-over.</p> <p><b>Shiawassee River</b> As a result of spring flooding damage, maximum number of pre-registered parties was held at 30 for the first two days of the regular waterfowl season. Draws were slightly down for the 2013 season with a low draw of 5 on the November 25 morning hunt and a high draw of 60 on the November 19 morning draw. Hunters continue to be in favor of the spinning wing decoy ban as it improves the quality of the hunt, especially in terms of opportunity to harvest geese.</p>

# Season-At-A-Glance: Northern half of Southwest Michigan

2013-2014

HABITAT AND WEATHER	DUCK NUMBERS	DUCK HARVEST	GOOSE NUMBERS	GOOSE HARVEST	COMMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Increased precipitation during the winter and spring months of 2013 generally improved water conditions in most of west Michigan.</li> <li>▶ Dry conditions in August and September reversed some of the gains as we went into the early goose season and general waterfowl opener.</li> <li>▶ Even with the dry end of the summer, we still went into the fall of 2013 with improved water levels compared to 2012.</li> <li>▶ October and November rainfall was above average, with temperatures near normal. December weather was the significant outlier, with temperatures averaging almost 4 degrees F below normal and heavy snowfall in the lakeshore and inland areas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Duck numbers in the SW were generally average to below average for the general waterfowl opener on October 12, and some area hunters felt that many of the local early migrant species (teal and wood ducks) were more dispersed because of improved water conditions and early departures.</li> <li>▶ In keeping with recent years, mallard numbers were generally low throughout the season, but rebounded somewhat during the last half of November and early December.</li> <li>▶ On Lake Michigan, long-tailed ducks were harder to find in November than in 2012, and did not arrive in larger numbers until the first segment of the duck season ended in December. However, good numbers of other divers provided hunter opportunities in the last half of the season.</li> <li>▶ Freezing conditions at the end of December concentrated diving ducks in open water areas near the Lake Michigan lakeshore.</li> <li>▶ At the Muskegon GMU, overall duck numbers increased by approximately 25% due to high numbers of ruddy ducks and shovelers, but mallard numbers declined.</li> <li>▶ Peak mallard counts were reached in the mid-November to early December time period.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Duck hunter success was variable in the SW Region, with early season success for wood ducks slightly below average overall.</li> <li>▶ Mallard hunting was challenging throughout most of the season, but improved toward the end of the first segment of the duck season (mid-November into early December).</li> <li>▶ Diving duck hunting was good during November at the sunken river mouth lakes like Muskegon Lake, with long-tailed duck success picking up in the first week of December.</li> <li>▶ Due to extremely low temperatures and freeze-up, the December 28-29 split was poor, and provided few opportunities for local hunters. With fewer hunting days available at the Muskegon Wastewater GMU, total duck harvest declined, although success rates were similar to recent years.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Overall, goose numbers in the SW were similar to 2012 in the September through early December time period. However, intense cold, heavy snowfall, and freezing conditions starting in the second week of December moved many geese out of the north half of the SW Region.</li> <li>▶ At the Muskegon Wastewater GMU, peak counts were not significantly different between the 2012 and 2013 seasons. However, goose numbers dropped rapidly after the first week of December.</li> <li>▶ Peak counts were reached between November 20 through December 10 and then dropped quickly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Goose harvest success in the September 1-15 early goose season was average, although some hunters felt that high percentages of standing crops made it harder to find huntable areas.</li> <li>▶ The regular goose season was below average for many local goose hunters, and the early onset of severe winter weather reduced hunting success and opportunity. The same conditions kept many geese out of the area and made for poor late goose season hunting success.</li> <li>▶ Most local hunters indicated that it was very difficult to find any birds in the north half of the region.</li> <li>▶ Hunter turnout remained low at the Muskegon Wastewater GMU. Due to fewer hunting days available, total goose harvest declined in 2013, although success per hunter trip increased from 19% to 27% -- close to the long term average.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Despite the challenging waterfowl season, most hunters seemed to like the framework of available hunting days.</li> <li>▶ Some local SW hunters indicated that it was becoming increasingly difficult to obtain access to private lands for waterfowl hunting, especially large corporate dairy farms in and around the Muskegon Wastewater GMU.</li> </ul>

# Season-At-A-Glance: Southern half of Southwest Michigan

2013-2014

HABITAT AND WEATHER	DUCK NUMBERS	DUCK HARVEST	GOOSE NUMBERS	GOOSE HARVEST	COMMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The habitat and weather remained above average for the southern SW region.</li> <li>▶ It was a wet fall so the rivers and marshes retained water and provided habitat for waterfowl and access to hunters. High water in the Ottawa Marsh, for example, greatly improved the hunting quality by allowing hunters to get to areas they haven't for a couple years.</li> <li>▶ The early cold temperatures helped the duck hunting in the area until it became so cold that the watercourses almost froze completely.</li> <li>▶ The best portion of the season for mallards was the last 2 weeks, primarily due to the weather.</li> <li>▶ For geese, the best weather was in December and early January before the arctic vortex. After the first severe cold weather, the hunting really slowed down.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Duck numbers were average throughout the season with a peak toward the end of the duck season.</li> <li>▶ Wood duck numbers appeared to be down, and gadwall numbers were about the same as the last 3 years.</li> <li>▶ Hunters reported more wigeon, pintails, and black ducks than the past few years. On the Fennville Farm Unit, proportion of black ducks was up (5-7% vs. 2-3%).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Duck harvest was above average on the Fennville Farm Unit.</li> <li>▶ Across the region, harvest was average and there were few complaints about duck numbers and duck harvest.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Goose numbers were average throughout the early and regular season.</li> <li>▶ During the late season, there were fewer geese than the past few years due to the heavy snow and freezing conditions.</li> <li>▶ At the Farm Unit, there were below average numbers that peaked at about 15,000, probably because it got so cold so fast and then stayed cold for so long which pushed geese further south. Continued cold winter weather for the rest of the season kept goose numbers low.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Goose harvest was above average until the severely cold weather.</li> <li>▶ November was slow but success was average.</li> <li>▶ Harvest was well above average during December and early January on the Fennville Farm and surrounding private land.</li> <li>▶ Then following the cold weather in January, the hunting basically shut down. Most geese had left and those still around weren't moving much.</li> <li>▶ The midwinter count had probably half the geese normally seen in early January.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Overall, it was a good season compared to the last 2 years in the SSW.</li> <li>▶ Michigan's significant winter weather helped push birds (especially mallards and geese) into the region.</li> <li>▶ The late goose season suffered the most due to the extreme cold.</li> <li>▶ The early and regular goose seasons were well-timed as was the duck season, especially the last 2 weeks of the season.</li> <li>▶ The 2-day split was good for hunters that had access to private land fields. Otherwise, the weather was mild and harvest was low (including the Farm).</li> </ul>