

[From Fall 1994]

Waterfowl Migration

It's time again for fall waterfowl migration on Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. Every fall, thousands of ducks, swans and geese (which were nesting up north) make the trip south to spend the winter in warmer climates. Many of these species use the excellent habitat which Chincoteague Refuge provides for their wintering needs.

September is a good month to catch a glimpse of the first migrating snow geese and various duck species. In the past, more than 10,000 snow geese have used the refuge during the winter. Many additional geese have been observed flying over the refuge, and the population usually peaks during the months of November and December. The numbers of black ducks, pintails, mallards, gadwalls, shovelers, wigeons and many others steadily increase and generally peak in November.

The first tundra swans and brant may be seen in October. An average of 500 tundra swans make use of the moist soil management units throughout the winter and over 1,000 brant have been seen using areas in and around the refuge. Overall, as mother nature plays her role of providing us with rain, water levels in the impoundments increase and waterfowl numbers increase as well. So, once you see those rain clouds rolling in, get out your binoculars because the birds are not far behind.

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