

[From Winter 2003-04]

Quack Quack....Fall is Back

Waterfowl returned to the area this fall to discover that the Chincoteague refuge had plenty of water in its moist soil management units. Water levels in the impoundments have been higher this year and have provided good conditions for migrating and wintering waterfowl.

So far, the number of waterfowl has been good this year. A peak of 14,324 ducks was observed on the refuge during the November surveys, an increase of 81% over last November. Pintails came in earlier than normal this year and peaked in November with 5,688 birds compared to 2,470 birds in November 2002.

Other notable waterfowl species observed on the refuge were green-winged teal, black ducks and mallards. Other duck species still moving into the area are northern shovelers, gadwalls, American wigeons, ruddy ducks, scaup, red-breasted and hooded mergansers.

Tundra swan numbers have been remarkable as well! A total of 179 tundra swans was counted this year compared to just 42 birds in November 2002. Although the snow geese were a little slower to arrive this year, their numbers are still much higher than our ten-year average. With the cooler weather moving in, waterfowl numbers will continue to increase through the beginning of the winter months.

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