

[From Winter 2004-2005]

Quack Quack - Fall Is Back

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

Waterfowl numbers have also been good so far 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 ducks species still moving into the area are northern shovelers, gadwalls, American wigeons, ruddy ducks, scaup, and red-breasted and hooded mergansers.

Tundra swan numbers have been remarkable as well! A total of 179 tundra swans were 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 spectacular, with between 30,000 and 40,000 using the refuge in November - much higher than the ten-year average. With the cooler weather moving in, waterfowl numbers should continue to increase through the beginning of the winter months.

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