

[From Winter 2005-2006]

If It Quacks Like a Duck...

With a slow start, waterfowl migration began in October. Very little rainfall from mid-August through early October caused water levels in the moist soil management units to be lower than anticipated for fall migration and resulted in low waterfowl numbers on the refuge. Ducks and geese prefer water levels of 6 to 18 inches to feed and rest. Waterfowl numbers for the month of October were 3,421 compared to 21,355 in 2004.

With increased water from rainfall, November waterfowl numbers were higher this year compared to 2004. Averages of 40,000 snow geese were observed this year compared to only 14,000 in 2004.

The duck population also showed an increase with an average 6,956 observed this year compared to 4,616 in 2004. Some of our highest numbers so far this year have been Northern Pintail and Greenwinged Teal. Some other waterfowl with good numbers now are Black Ducks, Mallards, Northern Shovelers and Tundra Swans.

With cooler weather on the horizon and migration well underway, we should see more waterfowl.

Eva M. Savage
Biological Technician