

Northwest Area -- WATERFOWL

North and Mid-Coast (Clatsop, Tillamook and Lincoln counties)

Youth waterfowl this year runs Sept. 26-27 while the season opens for all hunters on Oct 17. Early duck hunting should be fair to good on coastal bays. A mix of ducks (mainly wigeon, pintails, mallards and divers) should be available in larger north and mid-coast estuaries, such as the lower Columbia River and Tillamook, Nestucca, Nehalem, Siletz, Alsea, and Siuslaw Bays. In recent years, the numbers of ducks on these estuaries tend to be greater earlier in the season, especially teal, with numbers diminishing by December.

However, numbers and distribution can change on a yearly basis, and success can be good in these areas into January. With the onset of storms comes the best waterfowl hunting on the coast. Stormy weather moves birds off the bays and into more sheltered waters where they can be hunted more effectively. However, when there is too much rain, birds move into agricultural areas where hunting cover tends to be limited or nonexistent. Another excellent time to hunt the coast is during cold spells when some inland waters are ice-covered.

Coos County

General observations by biologists around Coos County, it appears duck and goose brood may not have done as well this year as some past years. However, the bulk of waterfowl that will be here for waterfowl season are migrants from other parts of the Pacific Flyway. Once these birds arrive in the county, hunting should be at least average. This is due to better reproductive success farther north. Hunters should expect plentiful hunting opportunities this season in coastal bays.

Normally, as waterfowl begin their southward migration those that arrive early on the Oregon Coast will concentrate in the lower portions of bays and estuaries, generally in saltwater. These birds will begin to disperse into inland valleys as increasing rain inundates agricultural fields later in the season. Since the weather forecast is calling for an El Nino condition to settle into the Pacific Northwest, the fall rain could come earlier into the season. This means hunting in the bays may be productive earlier in the season with a slower decline as winter weather becomes more severe.

The entire [Coquille Valley Wildlife Area](#) is open to public access. After several years of habitat restoration on the Winter Lake tract, waterfowl numbers are beginning to increase as local ducks and geese discover these new food sources. As fall precipitation inundates fields with water, and more waterfowl migrate into the county, there should be good hunting in the fall on CVWA. Hunters need to be aware there are channels throughout the Winter Lake tract that have very steep sides and at high tide may be deep enough to go over chest waders. Also, as the tide changes there may be a current in the channels that could make crossing them challenging. Hunters should wear personal flotation devices (PFDs) when crossing the channels or, in most cases, try not to cross the channels at all. These channels are part of a habitat improvement project designed to establish an intertidal connection between Coquille River and the Winter Lake tract. Hunters who want to hunt CVWA need to fill out a permit daily. Permits are available at the access point located along North Bank Road. Each hunter must fill out their own permit. Please do not take more than one permit per hunter from the box.

The Ni-les'tun and Bandon Marsh Units of the [Bandon Marsh National Wildlife Refuge](#) near Bandon will have areas open for waterfowl hunting. Waterfowl numbers in these areas can be quite good early in the season. Geese will concentrate on private pastures around river valleys. Canada goose populations have been growing over the past few years, although to a lesser extent this year. Good goose hunting can be found in most of the county. The key to a successful hunt is prior scouting for areas where geese are going to feed or rest.