



Delta Waterfowl Programs Boost Duck Production

Breeding success appears high in key regions of prairie pothole region—supported by Delta Duck Production

The mission of Delta Waterfowl is to produce more ducks and secure the future of waterfowl hunting in North America.

Producing more ducks in existing habitat is key to securing the future of waterfowl hunting. This also requires sustaining and increasing the number of dedicated conservationists concerned about producing ducks—that means hunters. And the number one desire of hunters is more ducks. Each part of Delta's mission is essential to the other.

The relationship of ducks and duck hunters defines 'symbiotic.'

Year in, year out, the reason we strive to produce more ducks is to increase the number of birds in the fall flight. Shorthand for that is: *To put more ducks over your decoys.*

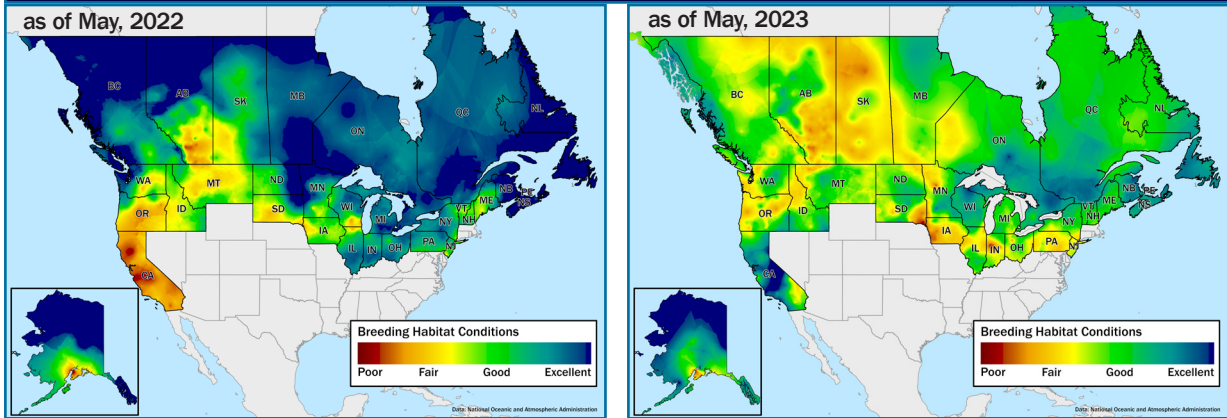


**DELTA'S PROVEN INTENSIVE
MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS
PRODUCE DUCKS.**



**THE PRIMARY GOAL
OF DELTA DUCK
PRODUCTION IS TO
SEND MORE DUCKS
SOUTH IN EACH AND
EVERY FALL FLIGHT.**

Waterfowl Breeding Habitat Conditions



Ducks arrived on the key breeding grounds to find significantly different conditions in 2023 than they did in 2022. However, timely rains in some regions are good reason for optimism for brood success in key regions.

2023 Duck Production Outlook

While the breeding populations for key species such as mallards and blue-winged teal were down significantly as reported in August in the annual U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Breeding Waterfowl Habitat and Population Survey, ducks experienced good to excellent habitat conditions in some critical areas that should have led to good nest success.

Overall, wetland habitat conditions were fair to poor across western Saskatchewan and Alberta during the 2023 waterfowl breeding season, but nesting ducks found good to excellent conditions to raise broods in the Dakotas and Manitoba. And late, timely rains after the survey was conducted should boost duck production in vital areas of the prairie pothole region, including the Dakotas and southern Saskatchewan.

Delta's trappers, biologists, and research technicians are widely optimistic about strong brood success based on their summer observations across the prairie pothole region. And just as this report was prepared, North Dakota announced its state brood success survey showing a whopping 79% increase in brood counts over 2022. That number is also 88% above the 1965 to 2022 average index.

There's little doubt it was a banner year for breeding ducks in North

Dakota which feeds both the Central and Mississippi flyways in particular. Abundant winter snow and spring rains in California erased the drought and delivered excellent nesting conditions there which should be a boon to Pacific flyway hunters. Good conditions in much of the eastern survey region should also have delivered solid duck production to send birds south throughout the Atlantic flyway.

Delta Waterfowl Duck Production

The Duck Hunters Organization continues to work across the breeding grounds to maximize duck production, primarily through Delta's Predator Management and Hen House programs.

Delta operated 31 Predator Management sites in the PPR in 2023—including 25 in North Dakota, three in Manitoba, and three sites in the parklands of Saskatchewan where research is underway to refine new techniques of determining nest success by monitoring brood survival.

Managing key mammalian nest predators such as raccoons and skunks in areas with high densities of breeding ducks (>60 pairs per square mile) but with a low percentage of grassland nesting cover can dramatically boost nest success. Delta's Predator Management restores a more equitable predator/prey balance and allows ducks to successfully hatch nests and raise broods on the prairie landscape.

To push forward the goals of the Million Duck Campaign, Delta plans to expand to 46 Predator Management sites in 2024, as well as develop new trapper recruitment and training programs. These programs will be critical to operating 366 sites across the PPR and Parklands to deliver 750,000 ducks each year when the Million Duck Campaign is fully up to scale.



A mallard using a Delta Hen House is up to
12 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO HATCH
 a nest than a mallard nesting in the grass.



DELTA PILLAR: DUCK PRODUCTION

Nest success is the primary driver of duck populations in North America. In general, 15% to 20% of nests must hatch to maintain the population. In many areas of the prairie breeding grounds, nest predators such as raccoons, skunks, and other mammalian predators are overly abundant. As a result, nest success is poor, often less than 5%.

Through more than three decades of innovative research, Delta Waterfowl has tested and refined solutions to produce

ducks cost-effectively. Delta's proven duck production programs—Hen Houses and Predator Management—significantly boost nest success.

Delta maximizes the impact of our duck production work by removing predators and installing nest structures in areas where ducks breed in high numbers, but where nest success is low because of heavy predation and a lack of nesting cover.

Predator Management and Hen Houses are the perfect complement to dollars spent to conserve wetlands on the breeding grounds. These Delta programs are the best available tools

to restore a reasonable predator/prey balance and make quality wetlands and grasslands actually result in increased duck production.

Predator Management and Hen Houses are proven tools to add ducks to every fall flight for the benefit of hunters. We're fulfilling the promise of our mission as The Duck Hunters Organization to produce ducks and secure the future of waterfowl hunting.

MILLION DUCK CAMPAIGN GOAL:

1,000,660**DUCKS PRODUCED
ANNUALLY**

During the winter of 2022-2023, Delta installed just over 1,100 Hen Houses bringing the total fleet in the program to 10,775—an all-time high. Record-setting winter snows prevented achieving the total 2023 goal for newly installed Hen Houses last year, but those structures will be added to the planned 2023-2024 winter installation.

Additionally, a study group of 200 Hen Houses was installed in three areas of California and will be monitored for usage during upcoming breeding seasons. The hope is they can increase nest success for locally produced mallards in the Golden State.

For the upcoming winter of 2023-2024, the planned installation of 1,450 new Hen Houses includes 500 in Saskatchewan, 450 in Manitoba, 300 in Alberta, and 200 in North Dakota. These installations will be made thanks to the support of grants from the Manitoba Conservation Trust, Wildlife Habitat Canada, the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund, the Manitoba Fish and Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Fund, and other philanthropic donors.

Used primarily by mallards, Hen Houses are proven to increase nest success dramatically—up to 12 times higher than a hen nesting in the nearby grass. A nesting cylinder lined with flax straw mounted on a pole over

a shallow semi-permanent wetland, Hen Houses keep the hen and eggs safely out of reach of most mammalian predators.

In total, Delta now has program Hen Houses in key breeding areas for mallards, including Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, North Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Pennsylvania, and Colorado, plus new structures in California. To produce 250,000 mallards every year toward the Million Duck Campaign goal, Delta's fleet across the prairie pothole region will ultimately number 110,884 Hen Houses.

90%**of failed duck nests
are lost to predators****Predator Management
boosts nest success!****Increasing Delta's Impact**

One year after launching the Million Duck Campaign, Delta announced at The Duck Hunters EXPO that approximately \$200 million of the \$250 million campaign goal had been pledged or delivered. When fully funded, the Delta MDC will add 1 million more ducks to the fall flight every year—forever.

Delta's duck production programs continue to deliver for North America's duck hunters in every flyway. Of course, all of Delta's duck production work is a partnership with you—our valued members, volunteers and donors. Thank you for your continued support, and have a great season!

DELTA  WATERFOWL

U.S. Office
1412 Basin Avenue Bismarck,
ND 58504
OFFICE 701.222.8857
TOLL FREE 1.888.987.3695
usa@deltawaterfowl.org

Canada Office
RR1 Site 2, Box 2
Portage la Prairie, MB R1N
3A1
OFFICE 204.956.7766
TOLL FREE 1.877.667.5656
canada@deltawaterfowl.org

DELTAWATERFOWL.ORG