

Water bird surveys – Lake Pepin to Pool 2

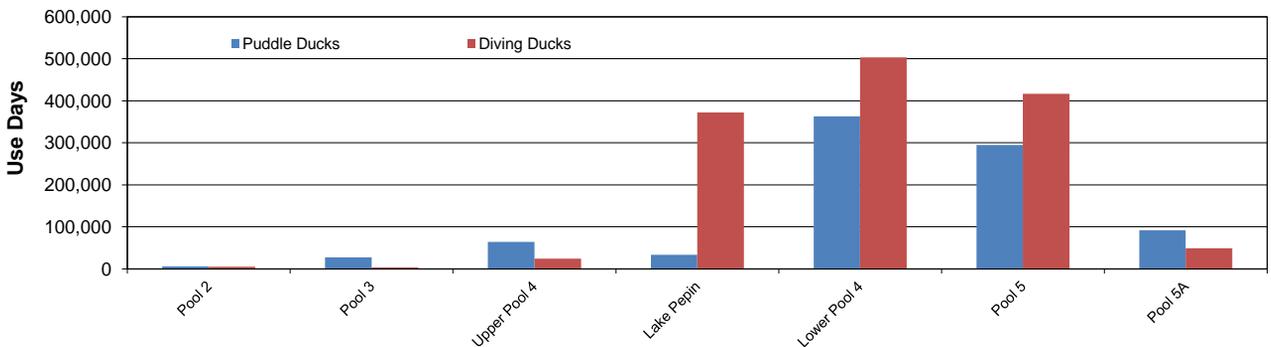
The US Fish and Wildlife Service has been collecting waterfowl use information on the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge from Wabasha, MN to the Quad Cities for over 20 years. This information has proven critical to monitoring waterfowl abundance, determining peak migration times, establishing protected areas, and evaluating the benefits of habitat restoration projects.



Little is known, about water bird use on the reach of Mississippi River from Lake Pepin to the Twin Cities. This reach, once a mecca for waterfowl and other wildlife, is considered by the MN Pollution Control Agency to be impaired by turbidity and nutrients. Poor habitat for water birds makes this reach a high priority for restoration.

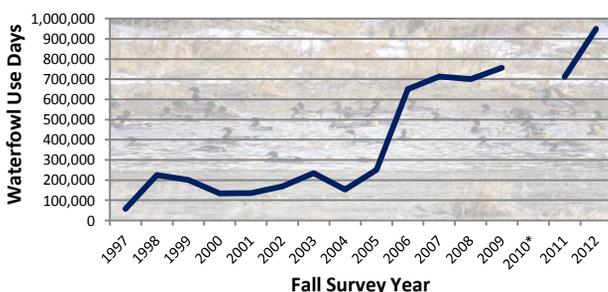
Since 2009, a survey consisting of weekly aerial water bird counts (from late September through early December) has been conducted from Pool 2 (Twin Cities) through Lake Pepin. This has been a cooperative effort between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources, Audubon, and the Prairie Island Indian Community.

Average Duck Use Days by Pool Determined from 3 Survey Years (2009, 2011 and 2012)



As expected, survey results indicated water bird use was much less than observed in Pools further downriver where better habitat is found. For example, the average use days for puddle ducks were less than 34,000 for Pools 2 and 3 combined, compared to nearly 300,000 in Pool 5.

Waterfowl (Ducks, Geese, and Swans) Use Days on Pool 5 (1997 - 2012)
Drawdown was done in 2005 and 2006



This information will help establish baseline conditions. Over time, as best management practices are implemented in the watershed, and restoration projects are completed on this reach of the Mississippi River, water bird numbers are expected to increase.

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* Mississippi River Water Levels were extremely high and fewer aerial surveys were conducted