

# Water bird surveys – Lake Pepin to Pool 2

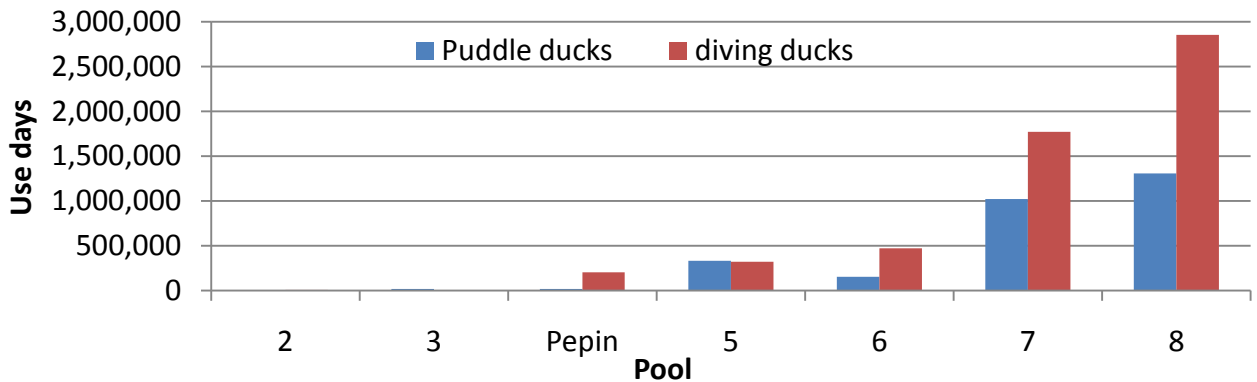
The US Fish and Wildlife Service has been collecting waterfowl use information on the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge from Wabasha, MN to the Quad Cities for over 20 years. This information has proven critical to monitoring waterfowl abundance, determining peak migration times,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



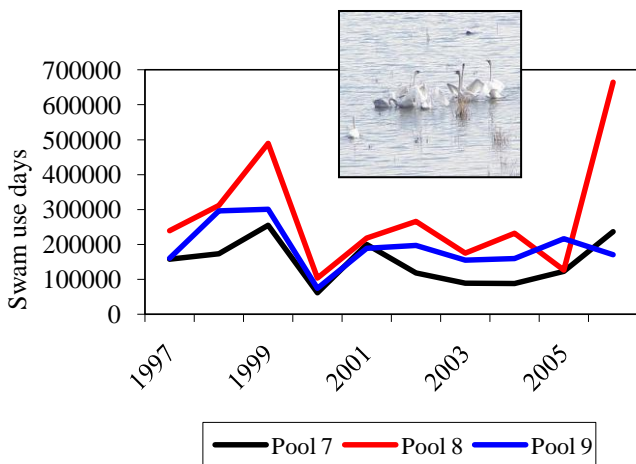
Photo by William Vinge

Little is known, however, 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 listed by the MN Pollution Control Agency as impaired for turbidity and nutrients. Habitat for water birds is poor, and this reach is considered a high priority for restoration.

Recently, partners teamed up to begin surveying water bird use in this reach. From late September through early December, 2009 weekly aerial counts were conducted from Pool 2 (Twin Cities) through Lake Pepin. This was a cooperative effort between the US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources, Audubon and the Prairie Island Indian Community.



As expected, survey results indicated water bird use was much less than observed in Pools further downriver where habitat is significantly better. For example, use days for diving ducks were less than 17,000 for Pools 2 and 3, compared to nearly 3 million in Pool 8.



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

**For more information contact:**

Brian Stemper, USFWS

507-494-6221

[Brian\\_Stemper@fws.gov](mailto:Brian_Stemper@fws.gov)