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NEWS

NEWS RELEASE

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DFG Completes 2010 Waterfowl Breeding Population Survey

The Department of Fish and Game (DFG) has completed its 2010 waterfowl breeding population survey. The resulting data show that the overall number of breeding ducks has increased since last year, with the number of mallards - the most abundant duck breeding in the state - increasing 22 percent from last year.

“Abundant late spring precipitation this year resulted in improved habitat conditions in many areas,” said DFG’s Waterfowl Program biologist Shaun Oldenburger. “We expect average-to-good waterfowl production in many parts of the state, which will likely translate into improved early season hunting.”

The total number of ducks (all species combined) increased from 510,800 last year to 541,300 this year. This estimate is 9 percent below the long-term average. The breeding population of mallards increased from 302,000 in 2009 to 367,900 this year. Mallard numbers are close to their long-term average.

DFG biologists and pilots have conducted this annual survey using fixed-wing aircraft since 1955. The California Waterfowl Association assists DFG by surveying a sample of transects by helicopter. The survey covers the majority of the suitable waterfowl nesting habitat in the state, including wetland and agricultural habitats in northeastern California, Central Valley, Suisun Marsh and Napa-Sonoma Marshes.

The majority of California's wintering duck population originates from breeding areas surveyed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in Alaska and Canada, but these results will not be available until July. DFG survey information, along with similar data from other Pacific Flyway states, is used by the USFWS and the Flyway Council in setting regulation frameworks for the Pacific Flyway, including California.

The federal regulation frameworks specify the outside dates, maximum season lengths and maximum bag limits. Once DFG receives the USFWS estimates and the frameworks for waterfowl hunting regulations, DFG will make a recommendation to the Fish and Game Commission regarding this year's waterfowl hunting regulations.

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