

Waterfowl Hunting on the Honobia Creek and Three Rivers WMAs

Waterfowl hunters looking for public hunting areas in Oklahoma are familiar with the Hackberry Flat Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and perhaps even the Red Slough WMA, but the term “waterfowling” is rarely combined in the same sentence with the Honobia Creek and Three Rivers WMAs- at least until now.

Often, some of the best waterfowling action is found in areas that are yet unexplored by hunters. While the Honobia Creek and Three Rivers WMAs are well known for producing great deer, the WMAs also offer opportunities for harvesting many species of duck and certainly offer a different type of waterfowl hunt than the conventional lake or pond hunting. Combined, the WMAs provide several hundred miles of creeks and rivers, another 150 or so small ponds, and some flooded timber areas that frequently attract wood ducks, mallards, hooded mergansers, common goldeneye, gadwall, and blue-winged teal. Buffleheads, green-winged teal, and pintail have also been observed on the WMAs as well. Knowing the best places to go on the WMAs is the key to finding some birds.

While many of the larger ponds on the WMAs do attract ducks, the many creeks and two large rivers on the WMAs are the places to scout. There is nothing quite like a group of mallards or wood ducks fluttering down through the timber as they prepare to land in a group of decoys. Hooded mergansers and goldeneye are also frequently seen using creek and river habitat. The abundance of acorns along these riparian waterways is attractive to many waterfowl species, but especially wood ducks and mallards. Hooded mergansers are primarily fish and aquatic organism eating birds and there is no shortage of fish, crayfish, and other crustaceans in the creeks and rivers on the WMAs.

While a small boat may be necessary when hunting some of the larger water holes along the Glover and Little Rivers, chest waders is usually all that is needed to be able to use decoys and retrieve harvested birds. Wood ducks are regularly observed along many of the smaller creeks on the WMAs including Harris Creek, Black Fork Creek, Terrapin Creek, Boktuklo Creek, East Creek, Pine Creek, and Cypress Creek. Oxbow habitats along the Glover River and Little River systems offer wetland habitat that draws in dabbling ducks especially mallards that feed on the abundant wetland plants that these habitats support. Beavers have also created several flooded timber wetland areas on the WMAs that must be considered when visiting the WMAs for waterfowl hunting. The Pin Oak Flat Wetland Area on the Three Rivers WMA is home to a family of beavers, but it's not just beavers that take advantage of the flooded habitat as a wide variety of ducks and other migratory birds use it daily during the duck hunting seasons.

For some waterfowl hunters, the joy of seeing new areas and trying just a little different type of waterfowl hunt is what makes waterfowl hunting so enjoyable. Waterfowl opportunities on the Honobia Creek and Three Rivers WMAs offer just that- the chance to harvest a mixed bag of ducks in forest-dominated habitat that most waterfowl hunters overlook.

The Honobia Creek and Three Rivers WMAs are privately owned by timber companies, but open to the public through cooperative agreements between the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and each timber company. Accessing the Honobia Creek and Three Rivers WMAs for any type of recreation does require each person to purchase a Land Access Fee permit. The permit, \$40 for Oklahoma residents between the ages of 18 and 64 and \$85 for nonresidents (no age exemptions for nonresidents), is good for one calendar year and is sold at all locations in Oklahoma that sell hunting and fishing licenses. All revenue from each Land Access Fee permit sold goes not only toward the management of the WMAs, but also to pay the timber investment companies an annual lease fee to help keep the WMAs open for the public to enjoy. Please, when visiting the WMAs, be sure to leave only footprints. Picking up any trash or litter is a great way for everyone to help keep the WMAs open for all to enjoy.

Feel free to contact the Honobia Creek and Three Rivers Wildlife Management Area biologist at 918-527-5308 before planning your next hunting trip to the Honobia Creek and Three Rivers WMAs.



The Pin Oak Flat Wetland Area on the Three Rivers Wildlife Management Area regularly attracts a wide variety of ducks and other migratory birds.



Beavers have created several flooded areas on the WMAs that are perfect areas to set out a few decoys and see what might come in.



Waterfowl management on the WMAs includes the use of wood duck boxes, the control of invasive wetland plants, and the seeding of millet.



Wood ducks and hooded mergansers frequently utilize the small creeks that flow through the WMAs.