

# Waterfowl Magnet

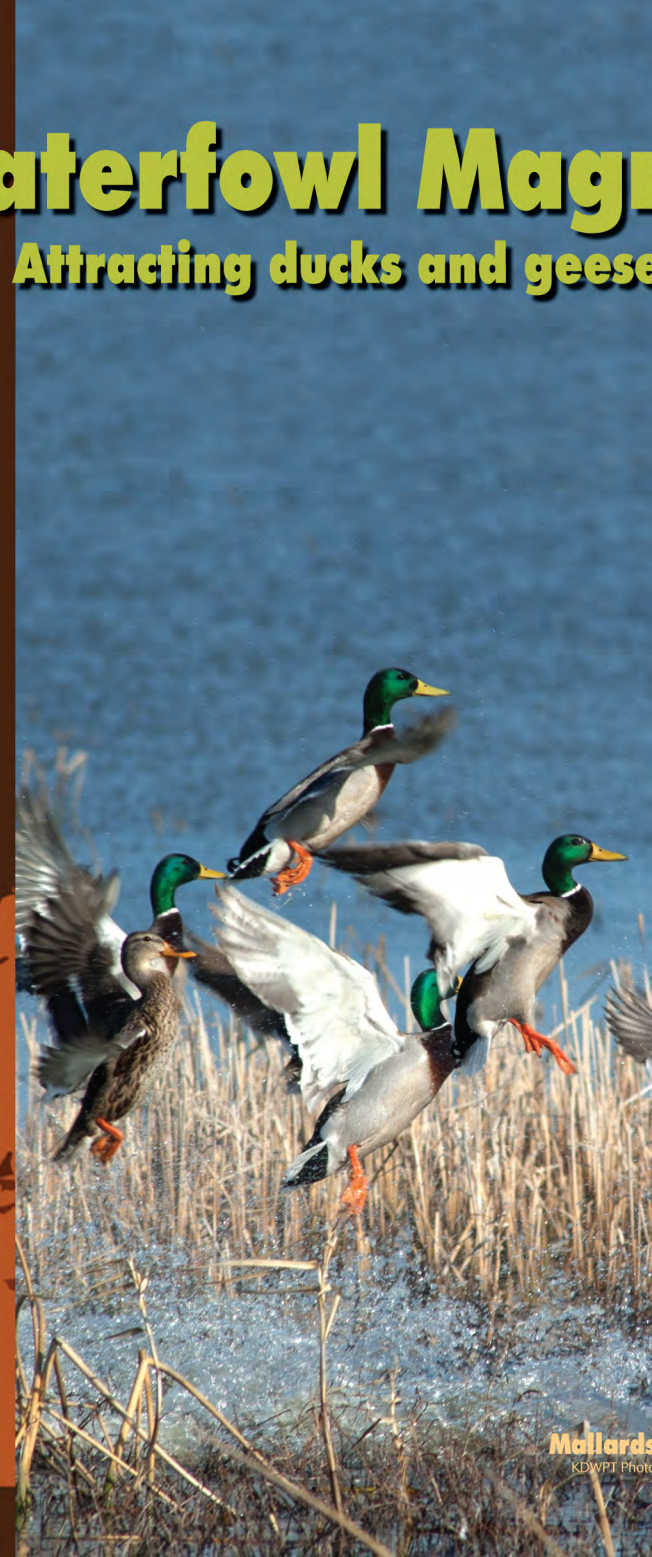
## Attracting ducks and geese

**T**hirty-four species of waterfowl have been observed at Cheyenne Bottoms. Of these, 15 species are known to have nested here.

Duck species known as puddle ducks are the most common nesters at Cheyenne Bottoms. As the name implies, this group prefers shallow water habitats like Cheyenne Bottoms.

The primary puddle duck nesting at the Bottoms is the blue-winged teal, followed by the mallard. Most puddle ducks are grassland-nesting birds that lead their precocial young to the marsh within one or two days after hatching. For a marsh to provide good duck nesting potential, adjacent grasslands are needed.

However, the most important role Cheyenne Bottoms plays in waterfowl conservation is providing migrating birds a place to rest and refuel. During the spring and fall migrations, hundreds of thousands of ducks and geese can be found resting at Cheyenne Bottoms.

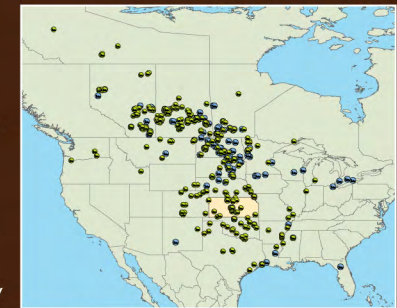


Challenger tractor discing dry pool, KDWPPT

Management Plans  
When ducks arrive at Cheyenne Bottoms during their fall migration, they are looking for a place to rest and find food. Part of the management activities on the wildlife area is to provide these birds that food resource. The principle component of duck food is plant seeds. As a general rule, the seeds most preferred by waterfowl come from annual plants. They typically produce more seeds than perennial plants and are very nutritious. Therefore, management plans are designed to ensure annual seed-producing plants remain prime components of the marsh. To accomplish this, staff works to reduce perennial plants, like cattail, in favor of annuals like barnyard grass and sprangletop. As the marsh ages, perennial plants naturally increase in coverage. This will eventually turn the marsh into a wet meadow with willows and cottonwoods. The management plan's goal is to stop this aging process, called succession, and keep the marsh young with lots of annual plants.

### Motion and Change

Waterfowl managers have tracked banded ducks for decades to establish what has become known as the migration flyways in North America. Birds are captured and numbered bands are placed on the birds' legs. They are then released, unharmed.



Graphic of recorded data, KDWPPT

Banding is generally done on the nesting areas. Bands that are recovered, by recapturing the bird at a later date, finding the bird dead or harvested by hunters, provide managers with a known route taken from initial banding site to recovery site. The map above shows where most mallards and blue-winged teal recovered at Cheyenne Bottoms were hatched.

Mallards  
KDWPPT Photo