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## **Migratory Birds Respond to Malardi WMA Enhancement Project**

Shorebirds abundant on shallow lake mudflats during draw-down

MONTROSE, Minn. – May 29, 2013 – Days after the world celebrated [International Migratory Bird Day](#) on May 11, thousands of arctic-bound ducks and shorebirds flocked to newly exposed mudflats on Malardi Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Wright County, Minn. The WMA's 149-acre shallow lake is in the initial stages of a temporary two-year draw-down to enhance its aquatic ecology.

Once reflooded, this lake will provide important wetland habitat for migrating ducks, especially diving ducks that rely on large wetlands and shallow lakes for all their food resources.

Dr. Philip Chu from the Department of Biology at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minn., tallied 168 ducks, geese and swans, 10 black terns, and 2,370 shore and wading birds representing 25 different bird species. According to Chu, his count of 1,347 least sandpipers is Minnesota's second-highest spring total on record.

The draw-down is the result of many years of planning by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), support from private landowners and partnership with Ducks Unlimited (DU). DU secured an Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) grant for the project as recommended by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council and appropriated by the 2012 state legislature.

"Standing on the edge of Malardi Lake and seeing literally thousands of shorebirds and waterfowl feeding on exposed mudflats created by our draw-down project, it occurred to me that I was observing the early stages of an impaired shallow lake healing and recovering from years of continual turbid water inundation and stagnation," said Fred Bengtson, DNR Area Wildlife Manager in Sauk Rapids. "It's hard to convey the power of the scene that was in front of me. The process to get the project to this point was challenging as usual, but in that brief moment, the reward was clear."

Thanks to a DU-engineered and installed water-control structure, the DNR field staff now has the means to actively manage water levels in the shallow lake basin.

"Shallow lake draw-downs are important for improving water quality and enhancing wetland habitat for migratory waterfowl," said Bart Bly, wildlife lake specialist for Minnesota DNR. "Exposing mudflats and high densities of invertebrate forage they contain is also very beneficial for many shorebird species too. For many species that

migrate farther north, having good stopover sites in which to forage in Minnesota helps to ensure they arrive on their northern nesting grounds in good physical condition, and have a better chance at successfully reproducing to maintain or improve their population."

Many diving ducks, such as lesser scaup and ring-necked ducks, nest in Canadian boreal forest and arctic landscapes and rely on prairie wetlands to fuel their long migrations. These same marshes also provide opportunities for waterfowl hunting in the fall, a traditional outdoor sport in Minnesota for more than 100,000 residents.

Ducks Unlimited Inc. is the world's largest non-profit organization dedicated to conserving North America's continually disappearing waterfowl habitats. Established in 1937, Ducks Unlimited has conserved more than 13 million acres thanks to contributions from more than a million supporters across the continent. Guided by science and dedicated to program efficiency, DU works toward the vision of wetlands sufficient to fill the skies with waterfowl today, tomorrow and forever. For more information on our work, visit [www.ducks.org](http://www.ducks.org). Connect with us on our Facebook page at [facebook.com/DucksUnlimited](https://facebook.com/DucksUnlimited), follow our tweets at [twitter.com/DucksUnlimited](https://twitter.com/DucksUnlimited) and watch DU videos at [youtube.com/DucksUnlimitedInc](https://youtube.com/DucksUnlimitedInc).