In 2019, Delta Waterfowl initiated a study of migration and wintering ground habits of dabbler in the Mississippi Flyway. We partnered with Dr. Douglas Osborne of the University of Arkansas, and master's degree students Starla Phelps and Daniel Odin, to put radios on mallards, wigeon and green-winged teal during the winters of 2019-2020, and again in 2020-2021 in east-central Arkansas. In September 2021, 60 additional radios were affixed to mallards and green-winged teal in South Dakota. The shift to marking in the north is an effort to learn more about the choices ducks make in the fall regarding migration routes, timing, and settling at wintering areas. Following are recently recorded duck movements, but note that not all ducks in the study will transmit location data during each reporting period.

Fall and early winter have been mild. Only a few short-term cold fronts have hit the southern prairies since the previous report and much of the Dakotas is still virtually snow free. In response, few of our radioed mallards and green-wings have moved substantially. Apparently, they found sufficient food and open water and decided to stay put. These data support the idea that birds can get stale without wintery weather to move them around. We are anxious to see when these birds will move.

Of the 12 September-marked mallards that have checked-in since the last report, only one has moved more than 80 miles (see Map 1). That bird dropped southward from eastern South Dakota to eastern Kansas. For the mallards that transmitted since the previous report, seven are still in South Dakota, four are in Missouri, two are in Kansas and a single bird is in western Ohio.

The September-marked greenwings, much like the mallards, have made no substantial movements in spite of cooler weather systems (see Map 2). Of the 10 teal that transmitted data for both this report and the report three weeks ago, nine stayed at the same location, while one moved from Illinois to Arkansas. Right now, five teal are in Arkansas, two in Missouri, two in Kansas and one in Louisiana.

Few of the mallards marked in spring 2021 have sent signals since the Nov. 24 report. This is likely due to the transitioning of cell systems and our 3G transmitters are not “talking” well to 4G and 5G cell towers. Experience has shown that these non-reporting birds will eventually dump their stored movement data for the fall. So far only two of these older radios have provided updates, with one mallard moving from eastern North Dakota to western Iowa, and the other moving from western Iowa to southern Missouri (see Map 3).
Map 1 - Migration paths for mallards marked in September 2021 as of Dec 6, 2021.
Map 2 - Migration paths for green-winged teal marked in September 2021 as of Dec 6, 2021.
Map 3 - Migration paths for mallards marked in winter of 2020-2021 as of Dec 6, 2021.

- **Spring Migration**
- **Summer Migration**
- **Fall Migration**