



Impoundment Drawdowns at Middle Creek

What is an impoundment?

Middle Creek is home to over 30 water impoundments. Most visitors call them ponds, but these shallow water bodies can range in size from small seasonal wetlands to large bodies like Middle Creek's lake. These impoundments are man-made and equipped with a special device called a water control structure. Each structure enables Game Commission habitat managers to raise or lower the water level based on the habitat and wildlife goals for the area. Fluctuating water levels are important for creating and maintaining habitat for different plants to grow.



Water Control Structure

What is a drawdown?

A drawdown occurs when water is removed from an impoundment exposing its shoreline and bottom. Habitat managers begin removing water from Middle Creek's impoundments in the Spring and early Summer.



Gadwall



Lesser Yellowlegs

Benefiting wildlife

Drawdowns create necessary growing conditions for valuable wildlife food resources. For example, various species of shorebirds begin to migrate south from their breeding grounds during July and August and use Middle Creek as a vital stopover site to rest and refuel. They feed on invertebrates present in exposed mudflats or wetlands.

Timing and length of drawdowns

Drawdowns are vital to the success of many wildlife species. This management practice provides food and habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, reptiles, amphibians, and other wetland species. Timing is an important factor in managing wetlands. Early season drawdowns occur within 45 days of the growing season (usually March 15 to May 1), while most late season drawdowns occur after July 15. Early season drawdowns are great for seed production and late season drawdowns produce favorable grasses. Length of the drawdown also affects what grows. Slow drawdowns improve diversity of plants whereas fast drawdowns produce similar vegetation.



Northern Shoveler



This impoundment has been drawn down, exposing mudflats that provide valuable food for shorebirds and growing conditions for many wetland plant species.



The same impoundment has had time to grow vegetation and has been re-flooded making it accessible for several waterfowl species.

This educational kiosk was made possible by donations from the Blue Mountain Chapter of Safari Club International.



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