



MDWFP Aerial Waterfowl Survey Report

December 17 - 19, 2012



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The December MDWFP aerial waterfowl survey occurred during December 17 – 19. After an extremely dry summer and fall, recent rains have begun to fill many areas with water management capability. However, there are still many wetlands with little or no available water across the Delta. Also, while the Mississippi River and its tributaries are currently rising, they have not produced a significant amount of naturally flooded habitat. These conditions help demonstrate why managed water is extremely important during this time of year.

Overall, December duck estimates were below average compared to December surveys in previous years (Table 1 and Figure 1). Mallards and other dabblers followed the same trend, with estimates below the past averages for this time of year. Diving duck estimates were greater than the average of recent estimates for December. Northern shovelers and gadwall appeared to comprise the majority of dabbling duck observations other than mallards.

The northern portion of the Delta contained the greatest abundance of ducks overall, as well as the greatest amount of flooded habitat on the landscape. Since managed habitat generally increased as survey transects moved northeast, the northeastern region of the Delta contained the highest abundances of mallards and other dabblers. The southeastern region contained the highest abundances of diving ducks.

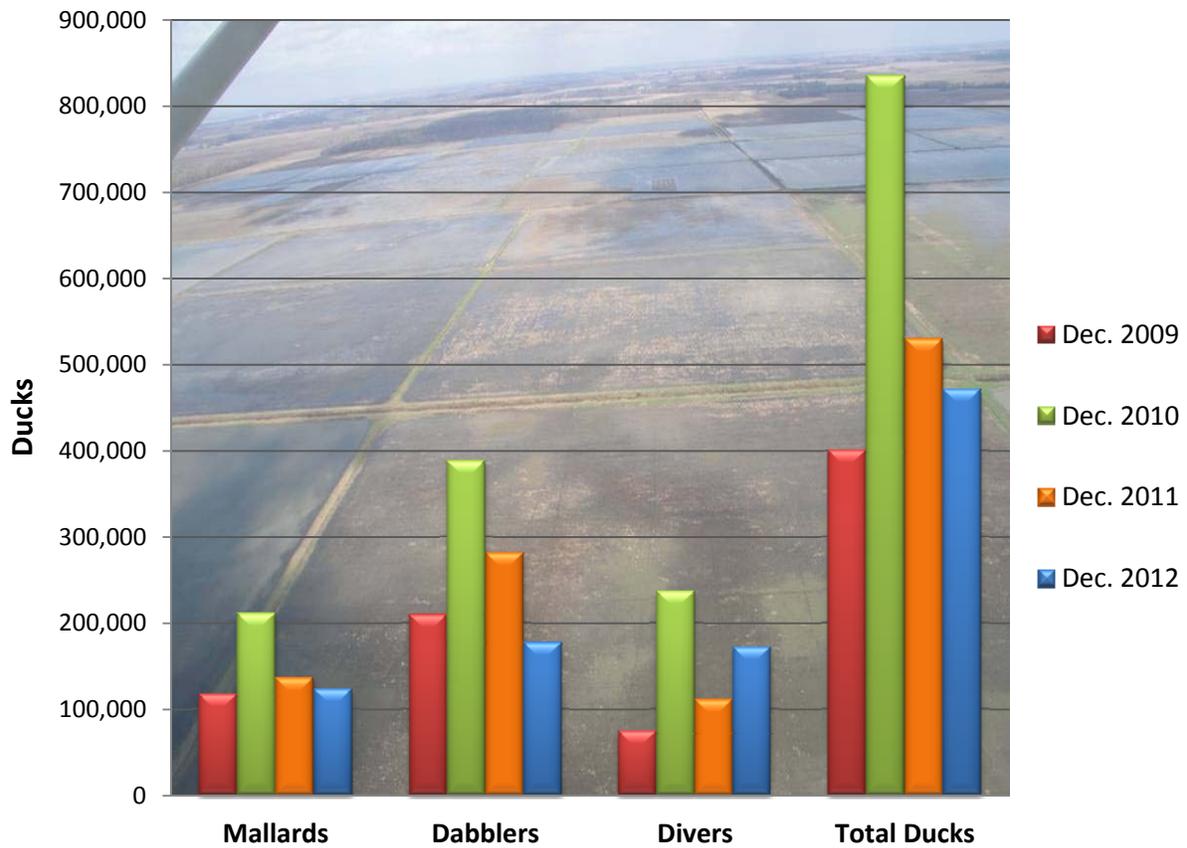
Most mallards and other dabblers were observed using large expanses of flooded habitat. Flooded agricultural fields held the greatest abundances of mallards and other dabblers, followed closely by natural moist-soil habitat. Most diving ducks were observed using large permanent wetlands such as deep oxbow lakes, closely followed by catfish pond complexes.

The next aerial waterfowl survey is scheduled to begin January 7, 2013. Hunters are reminded that while duck numbers are relatively low, available habitat is also relatively low. This situation can provide quality hunting experiences on well-managed wetland habitat. With severe winter weather forecasted for the Midwest, biologists anticipate a migration of ducks into southern states in the coming days. For more information on the MDWFP Waterfowl Program, visit our website at <http://mdwfp.com/waterfowl>.

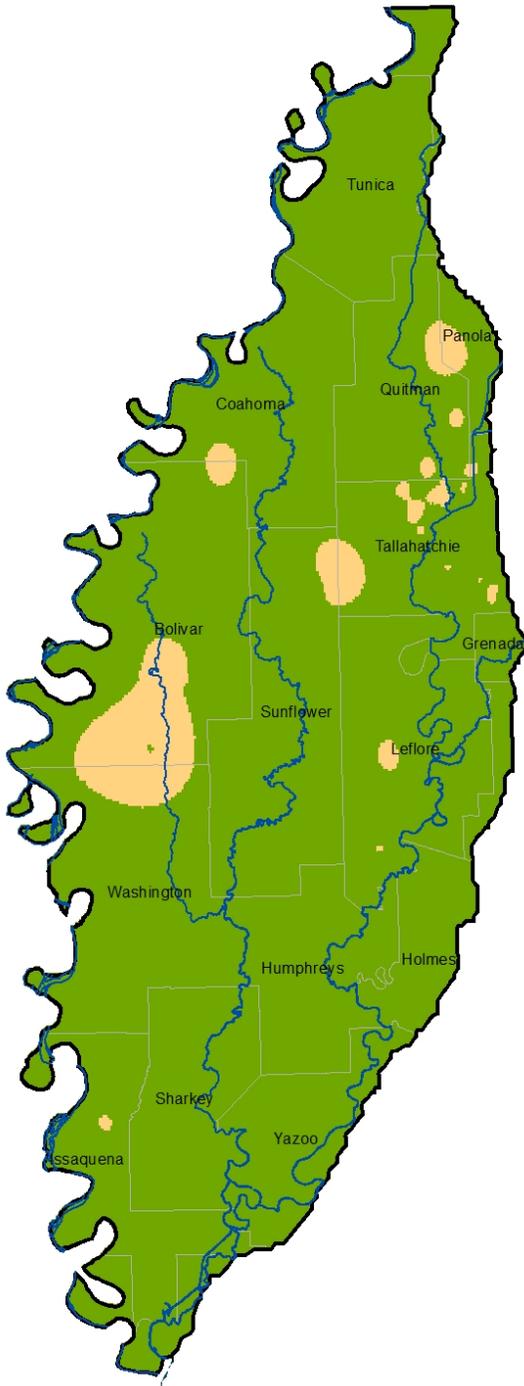
Table 1. Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the December survey period, 2009-2012.

Species	Survey Period			
	December 2009	December 2010	December 2011	December 2012
Mallards	116,748	210,531	136,776	122,779
Dabblers	209,346	388,064	281,560	176,950
Diving Ducks	74,396	236,966	111,423	171,542
Total Ducks	400,491	835,561	529,758	471,271

Figure 1. Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the December survey period, 2009-2012.



Distribution of Mallards in the Mississippi Delta Dec.17 - 19, 2012

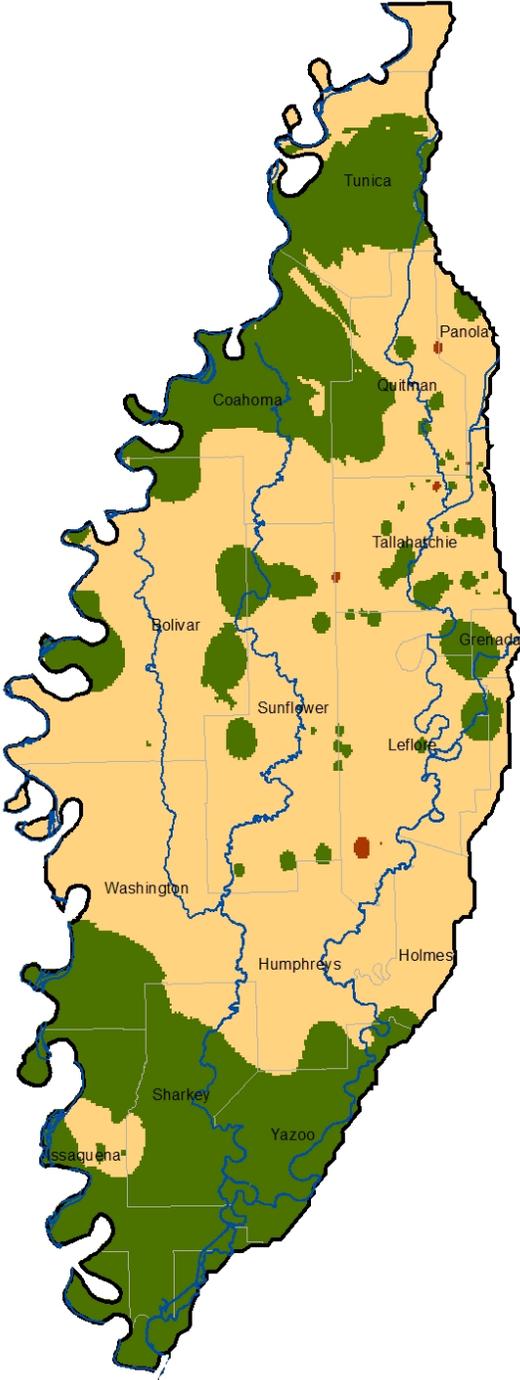


Description

- Low (<12/mi2)
- Medium (12-115/mi2)
- High (>115/mi2)



Distribution of Total Ducks in the Mississippi Delta Dec.17 - 19 ,2012

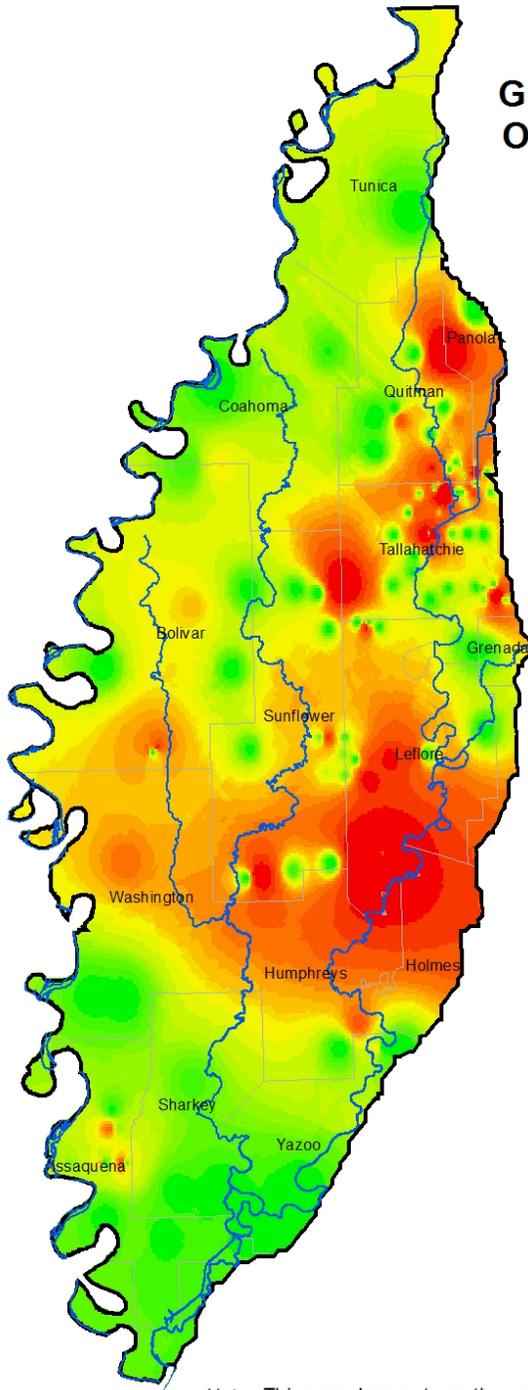


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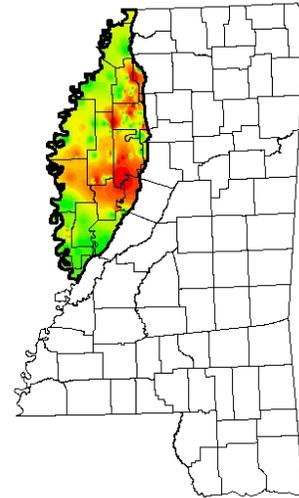
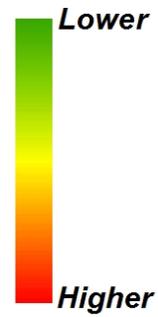
- Low (<12/mi2)
- Medium (12-115/mi2)
- High (>115/mi2)



Greatest Concentrations of Ducks Observed in the Mississippi Delta Dec. 17 - 19, 2012



Description

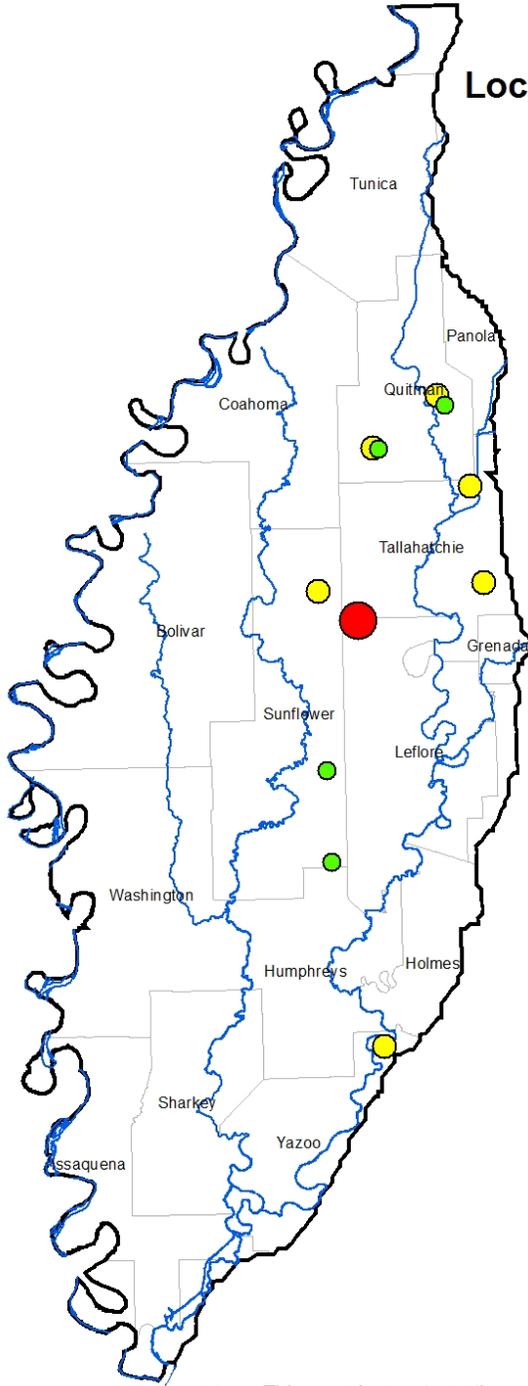


Note: This map does not use the same area calculations as previously published maps and is intended to illustrate major concentrations of ducks in the Mississippi Delta.

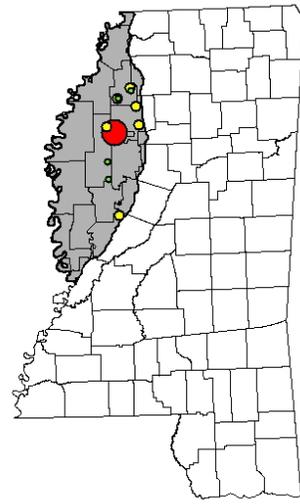
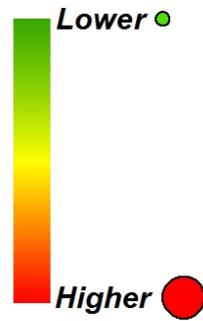
Prepared by MDWFP
GIS Lab 20 Dec. 2012



Locations and relative size of light goose flocks in the Mississippi Delta Dec. 17 - 19, 2012



Description



Note: This map does not use the same area calculations as previously published maps and is intended to illustrate some locations of light geese in the Mississippi Delta.

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