



MDWFP Aerial Waterfowl Survey Report

November 17 - 20, 2014



WATERFOWL PROGRAM

Prepared by:
James Callicutt
Waterfowl Program Biologist
MS Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks
Cell: 601-432-2079
jamesca@mdwfp.state.ms.us

The mid November MDWFP aerial waterfowl survey occurred during November 17 – 20. In contrast to many past November surveys, waterfowl habitat availability was greater. However, a lack of actively pumped water was still observed in most of the Mississippi Delta, especially the northwest and southern regions. Also, an abundance of harvested agricultural fields have been disked, resulting in less available food for waterfowl. Similar to recent years, flooded habitat generally increased as survey transects moved further northeast.

Overall, duck estimates were considerably greater than recent years' November estimates (Table 1 and Figure 1). Mallard numbers were nearly double that of estimates in November of 2011. Dabbling ducks (other than mallards) estimates were also greater than those from past November surveys. Dabblers comprised over half of all duck observations with northern shovelers comprising the majority of these observations. Diving duck estimates were very similar to estimates in recent years.

The northeastern portion of the Delta contained the greatest abundance of ducks overall, as well as the greatest amount of flooded habitat across the landscape. Mallards were more abundant in this region than other portions of the Delta. The northeastern region of the Delta contained the greatest abundances of dabbling ducks other than mallards and diving ducks as well.

Most mallards were observed using flooded agricultural fields, followed by moist-soil habitat (natural vegetation, shallowly flooded). Most other dabblers and diving ducks were observed using large catfish pond complexes, moist-soil, and permanent wetlands such as oxbow lakes and sloughs. Few ducks were observed using isolated patches of habitat. Ducks were highly concentrated within large contiguous complexes of flooded habitat.

The November aerial waterfowl survey conducted by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission showed similar trends to those observed in Mississippi, with total duck estimates remaining similar to recent years, but with much greater mallard observations. Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' aerial survey reported much greater total duck numbers than their past November surveys, especially for species such as gadwall, scaup, and northern pintail. This could explain why Arkansas and Mississippi did not observe the same trends in dabbling and diver abundance as observed for mallards. Many early migrant dabblers observed in recent weeks in Mississippi may have migrated further south into Louisiana.

The regular duck season will begin on November 27, 2014. Hunters are reminded that quality waterfowl habitat is in relatively short supply during this time of year. Although there are many factors influencing waterfowl migration, this shortage in habitat may cause ducks to be concentrated in certain areas, which could lead to excellent hunting. For more information on the MDWFP Waterfowl Program, visit our website at <http://www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl>.

Table 1. Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the late November survey period, 2010-2014*.

Species	Survey Period		
	Late November 2010	Late November 2011	Late November 2014
Mallards	10,481	43,845	88,005
Dabblers	70,123	183,823	229,810
Diving Ducks	100,740	80,928	79,400
Total Ducks	181,344	308,596	397,215

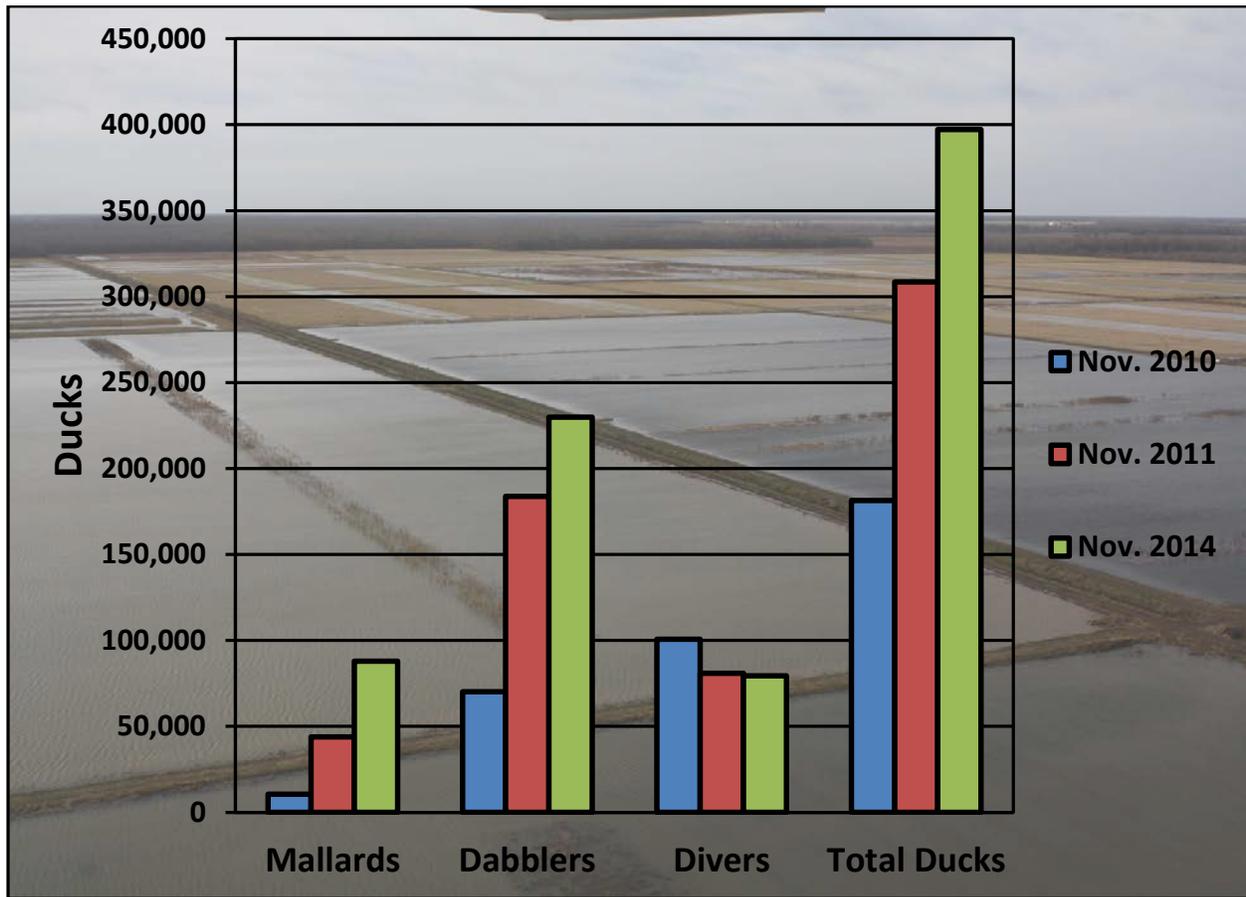
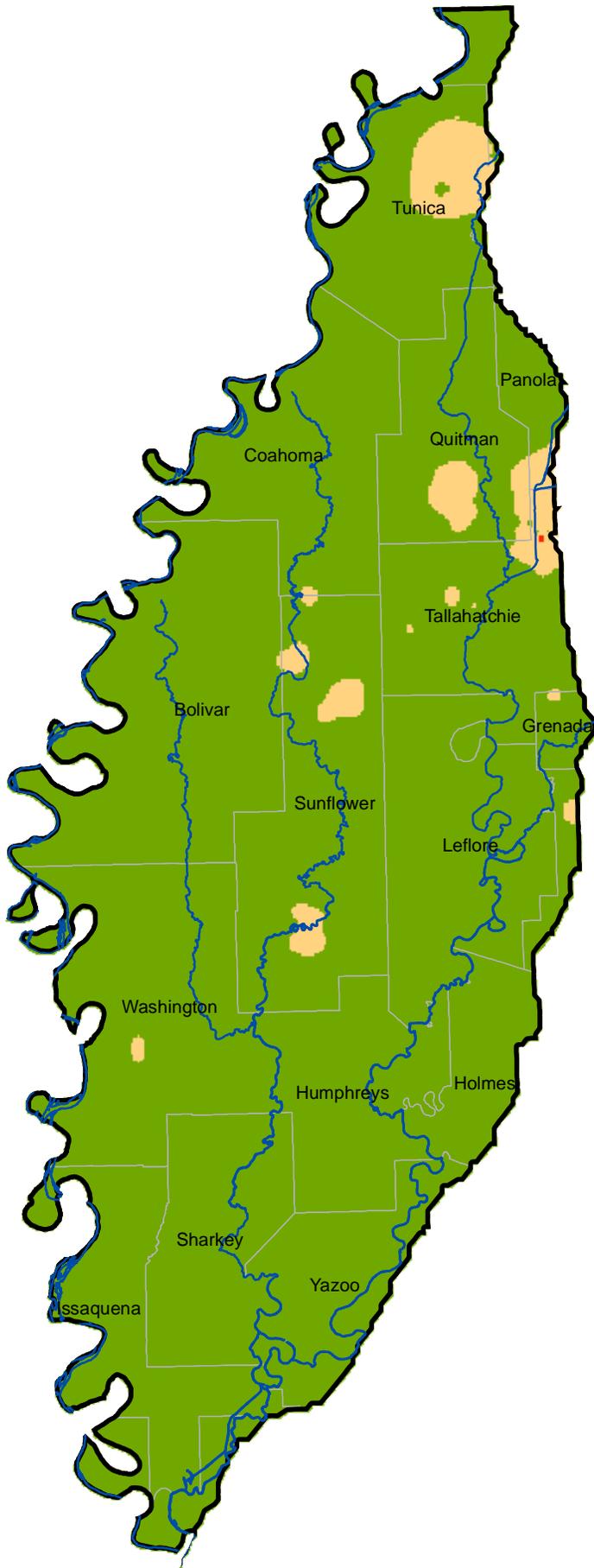


Figure 1. Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the late November survey period, 2010-2014*.

* Aerial surveys were not conducted during November of 2012 and 2013 due to inclement weather.

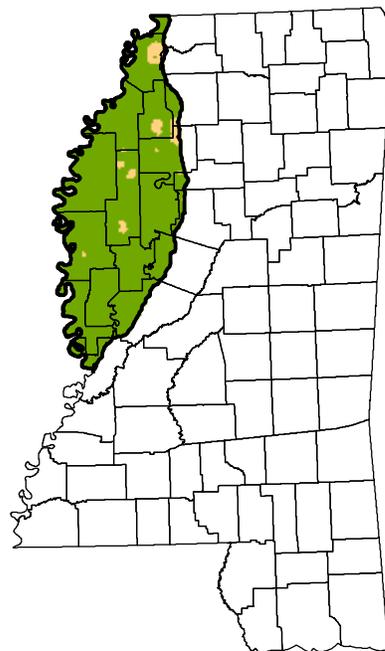
Distribution of Mallards in the Mississippi Delta

Nov.17 - 20, 2014



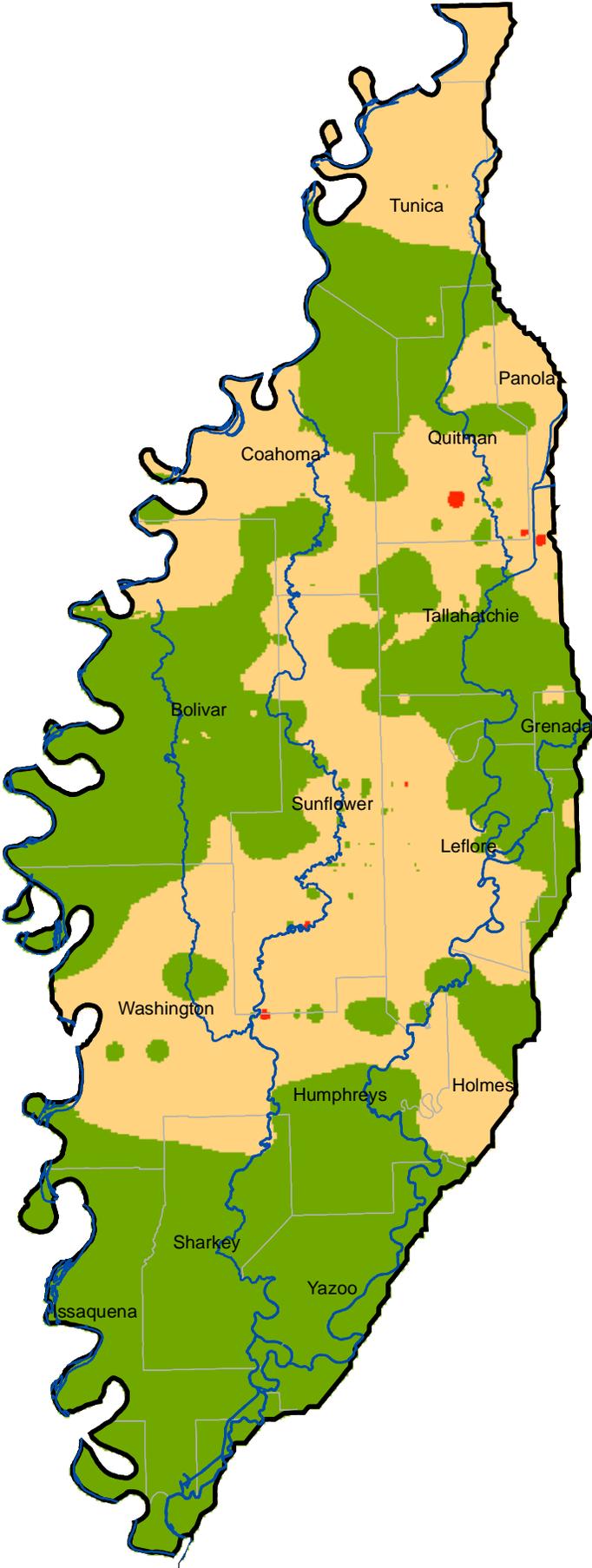
Description

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



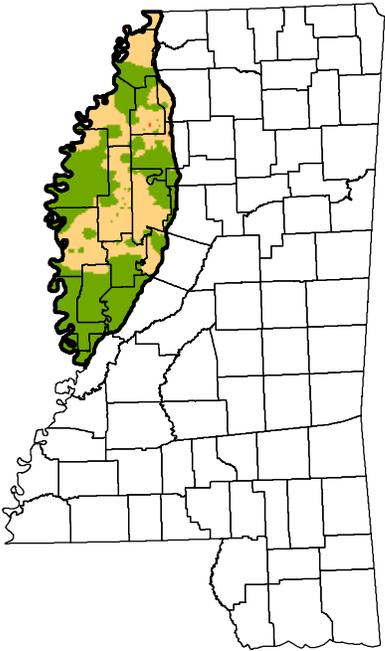
Distribution of Total Ducks in the Mississippi Delta

Nov.17- 20, 2014

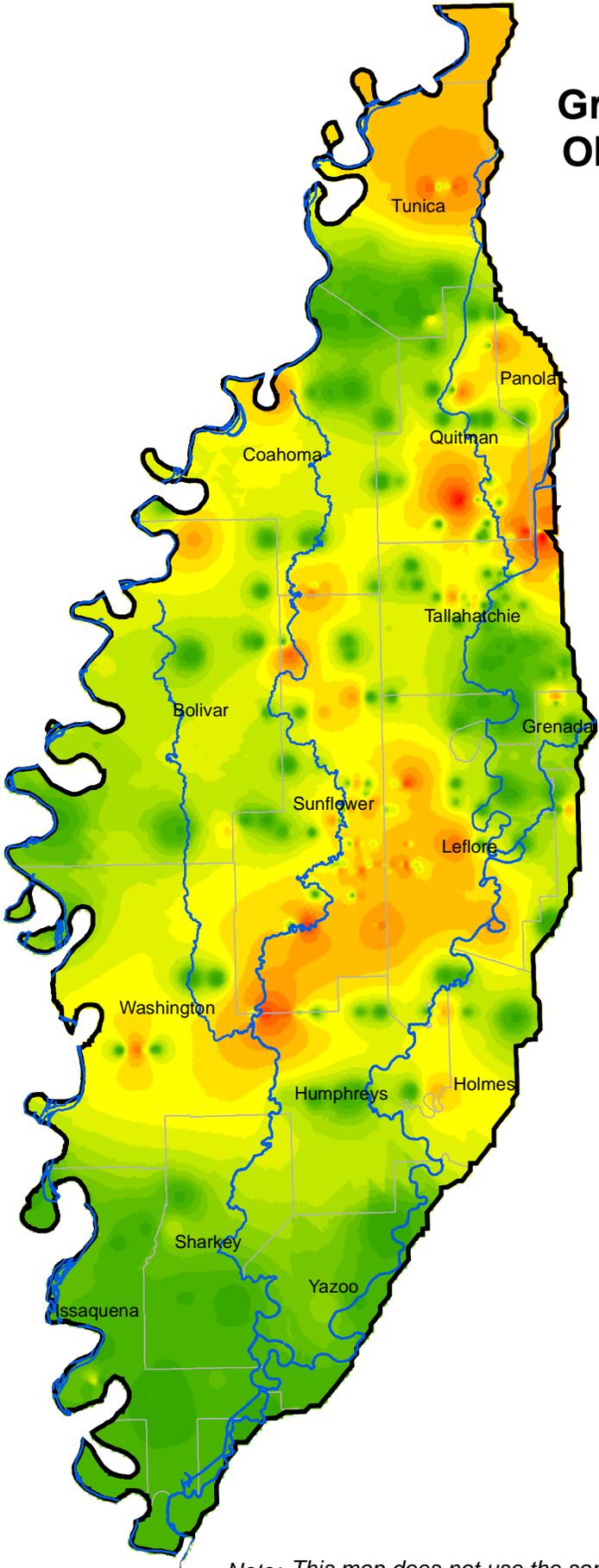


Description

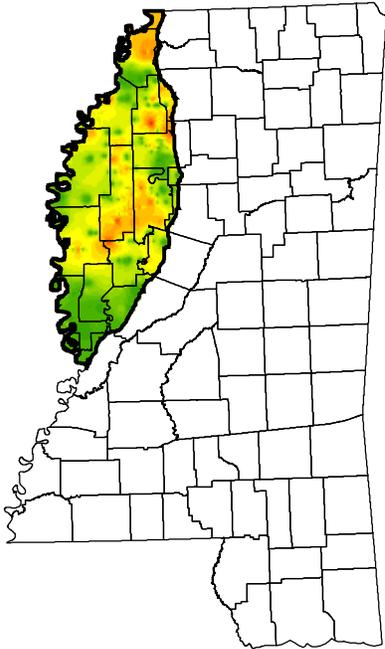
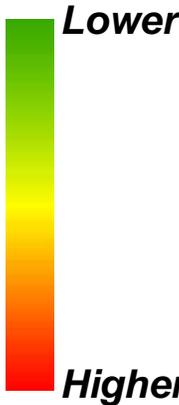
- Low (<12/mi²)
- Medium (12-115/mi²)
- High (>115/mi²)



Greatest Concentrations of Ducks Observed in the Mississippi Delta Nov. 17 - 20, 2014



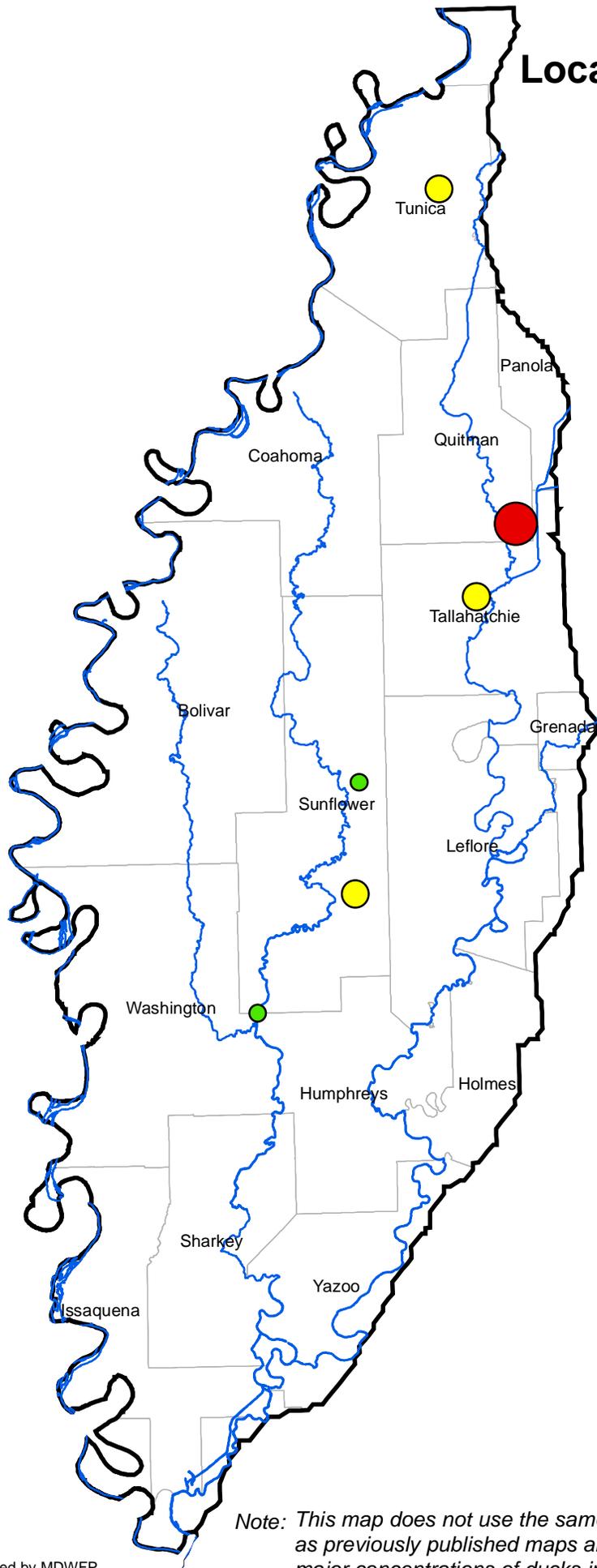
Description



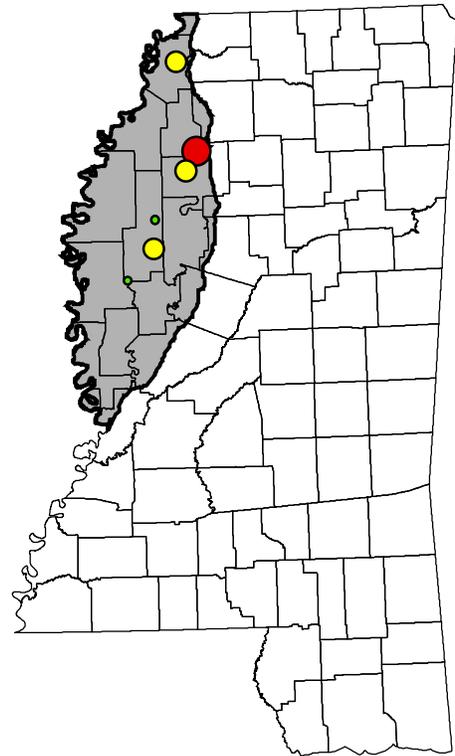
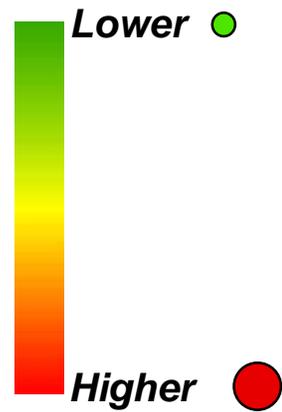
Note: This map does not use the same area calculations as previously published maps and is intended to illustrate major concentrations of ducks in the Mississippi Delta.



Locations and relative size of light goose flocks in the Mississippi Delta Nov. 17-20, 2014



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.