



MDWFP Aerial Waterfowl Survey Report

January 5 - 9, 2015



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The 2015 early January MDWFP aerial waterfowl survey occurred during January 5 – 9. Wetland habitat availability has increased substantially since the December survey. As in December, managed water generally increased as survey transects moved further northeast. Natural flooding was greatest in the southwest region and the very most southern counties along the Mississippi River (i.e., Warren to Wilkinson Counties).

Overall, early January duck estimates were significantly down from the 2014 estimate, but were average compared to the same surveys in previous years (Table 1 and Figure 1). Mallards and diving ducks were below the long-term average for the early January survey (-17% and -23%, respectively). Dabbling ducks were 11% above the long-term average, and total duck abundances were only down 3% from the long-term average. Mallards were the most abundant species observed followed by gadwall and green-winged teal.

The northeastern portion of the Delta contained the greatest abundance of ducks overall, as well as the greatest amount of managed wetland habitat on the landscape. The north Delta also contained the greatest abundance of mallards. However, distribution of these birds was greatly influenced by the availability of open water.

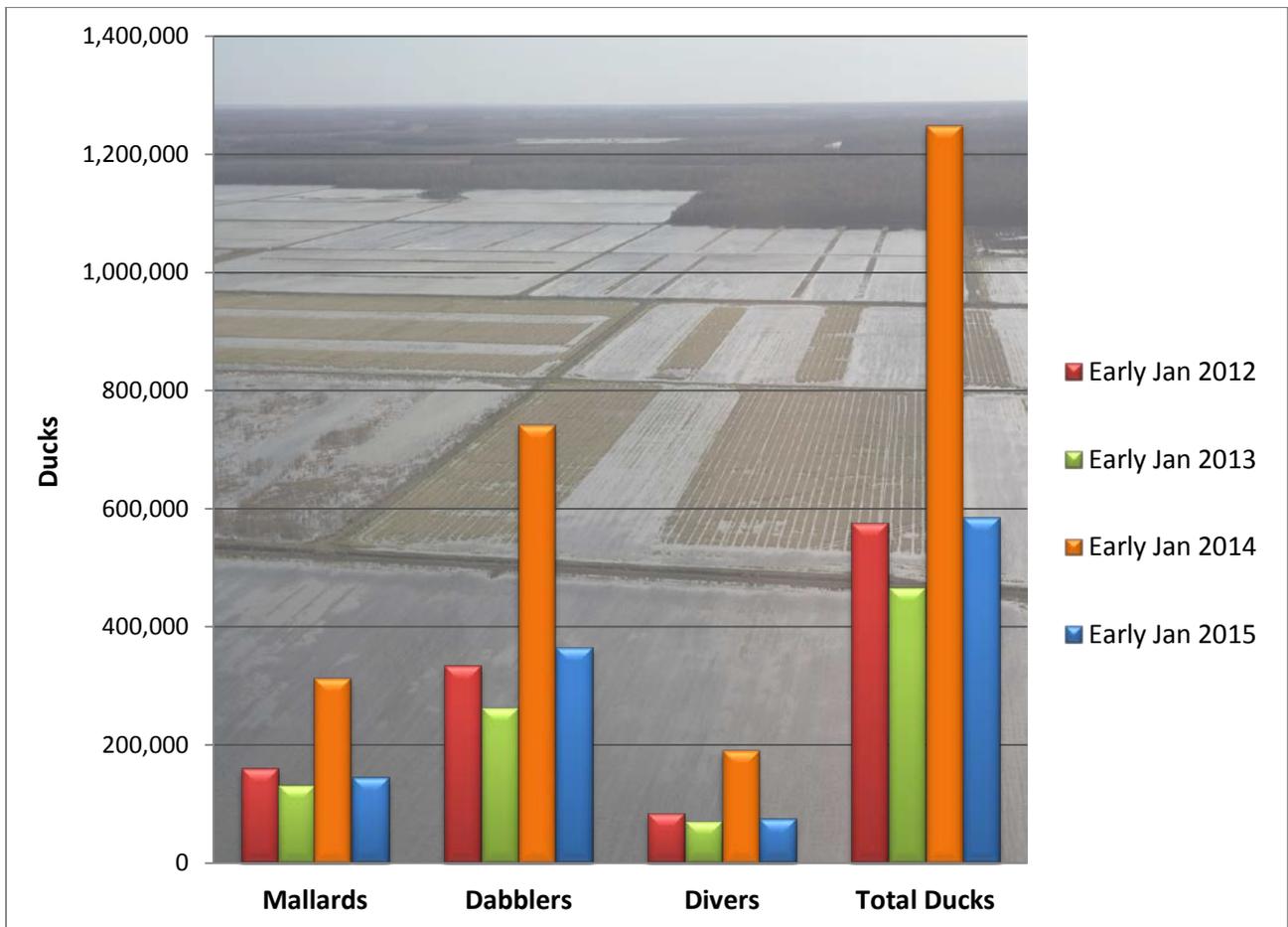
During the time of the survey the majority of shallow habitats were frozen, leaving only deep water habitats such as rivers and oxbows available for waterfowl to utilize. Most mallards and other dabblers were observed using oxbows and sloughs along the Mississippi River and its tributaries, as well as the rivers themselves. A large proportion of mallards and other dabblers were observed on a very small number of agricultural wetlands that were kept unfrozen by bird activity. As shallow habitats began to thaw, mallards and other dabblers quickly began to use moist-soil and forested wetlands. Most diving ducks were observed using large permanent wetlands such as deep sloughs and catfish ponds. Most dabblers using permanent water were observed on large brakes and scrub-shrub wetlands. This time of year, mallards and other ducks will seek out habitats with more cover to form and strengthen pair bonds with mates and to avoid hunting pressure. This behavior was evident as these habitats became available with warmer temperatures.

The next aerial waterfowl survey is scheduled to begin the week of January 19, 2015. With the recent arrival of severe winter weather, hunters are optimistic that Mississippi will receive more migration events on into late January. For more information on the MDWFP Waterfowl Program, visit our website at <http://mdwfp.com/waterfowl>.

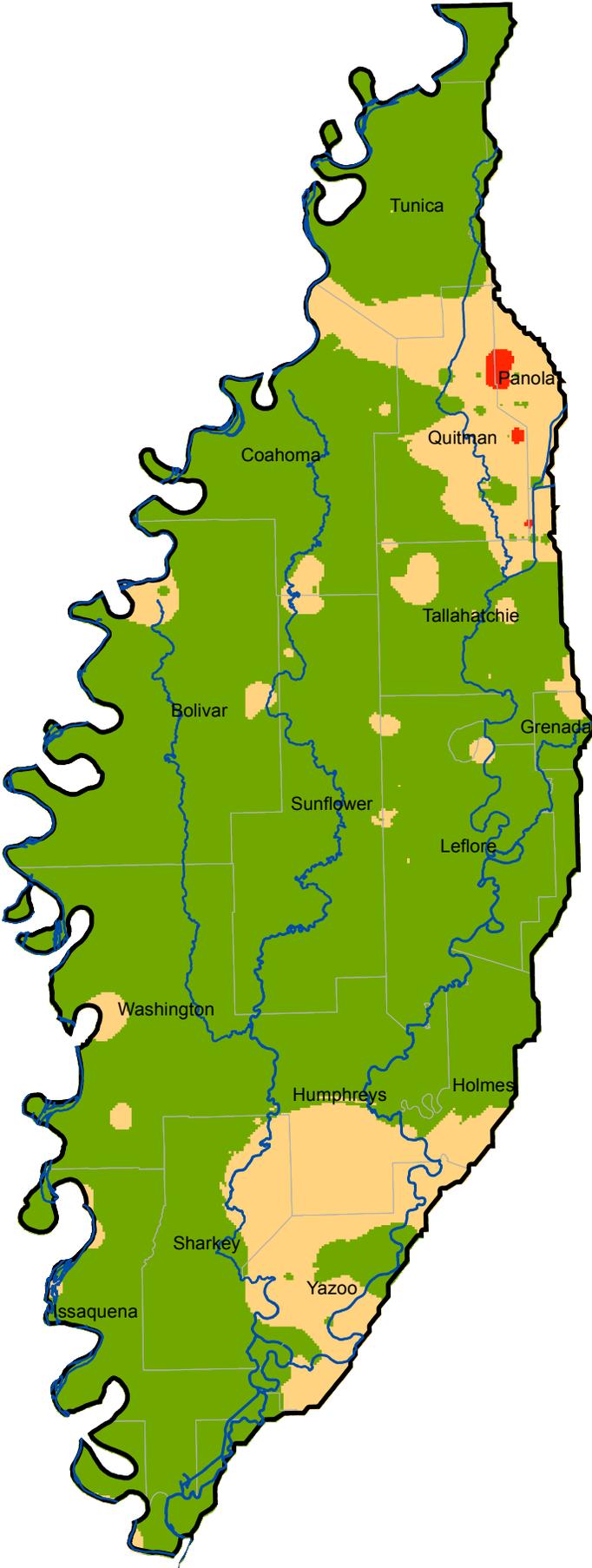
Table 1. Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the early January survey period, 2012-2015. 2015 estimates are adjusted for accurate comparison to previous years' estimates.

Species	Survey Period			
	Early Jan 2012	Early Jan 2013	Early Jan 2014	Early Jan 2015
Mallards	159,512	131,930	313,851	145,153
Dabblers	333,430	263,852	742,182	364,349
Diving Ducks	83,880	70,775	191,888	74,502
Total Ducks	576,822	466,557	1,247,921	584,004

Figure 1. Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the early January survey period, 2012-2015. 2015 estimates are adjusted for accurate comparison to previous years' estimates.

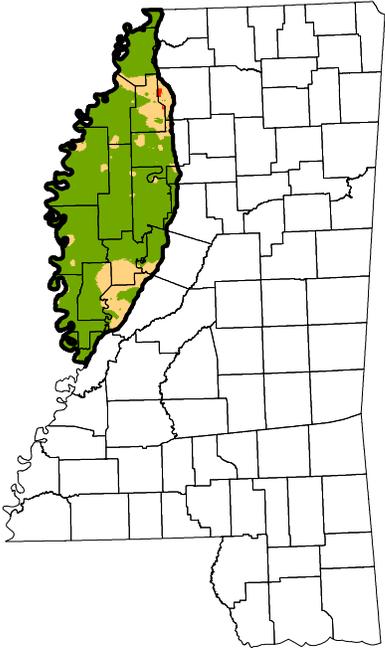


Distribution of Total Ducks in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 5 - 9, 2015



Description

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

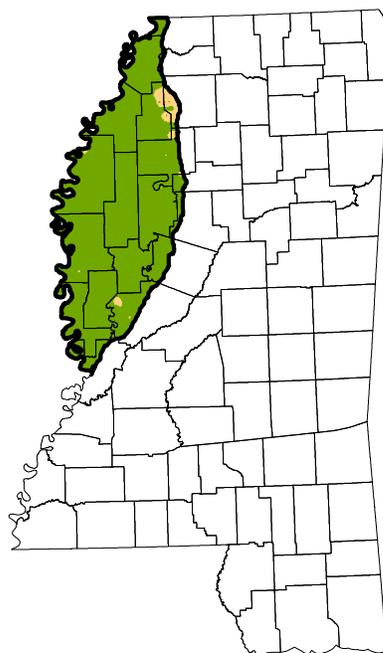


Distribution of Mallards in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 5- 9, 2015

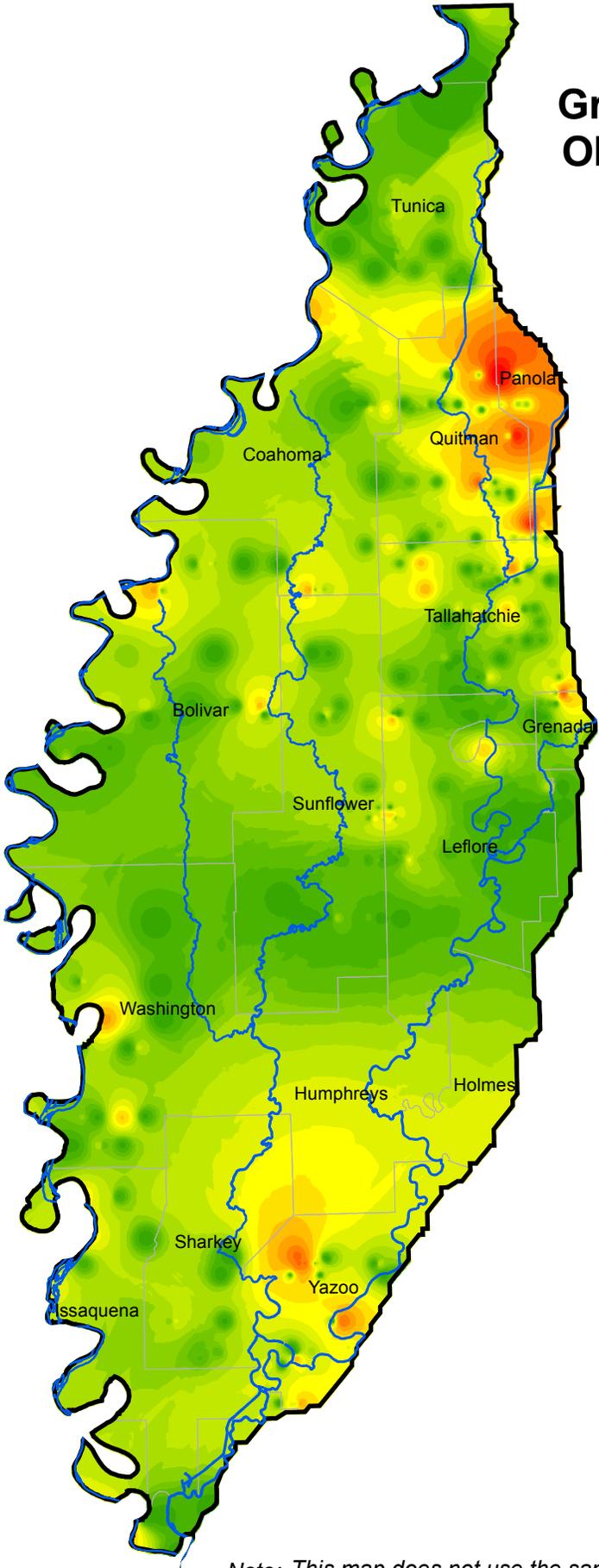


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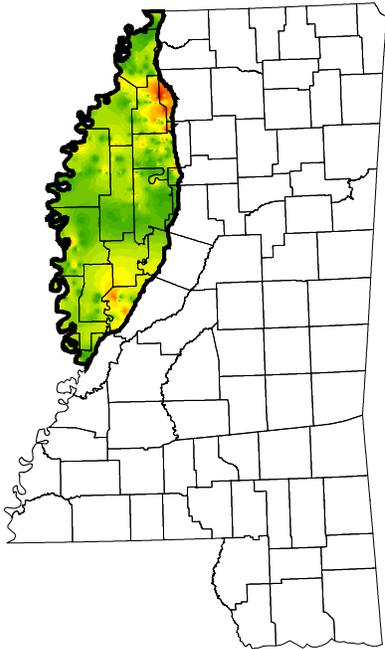
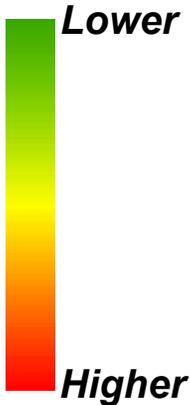
- Low (<12/mi²)
- Medium (12-115/mi²)
- High (>115/mi²)



Greatest Concentrations of Ducks Observed in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 5 - 9, 2015



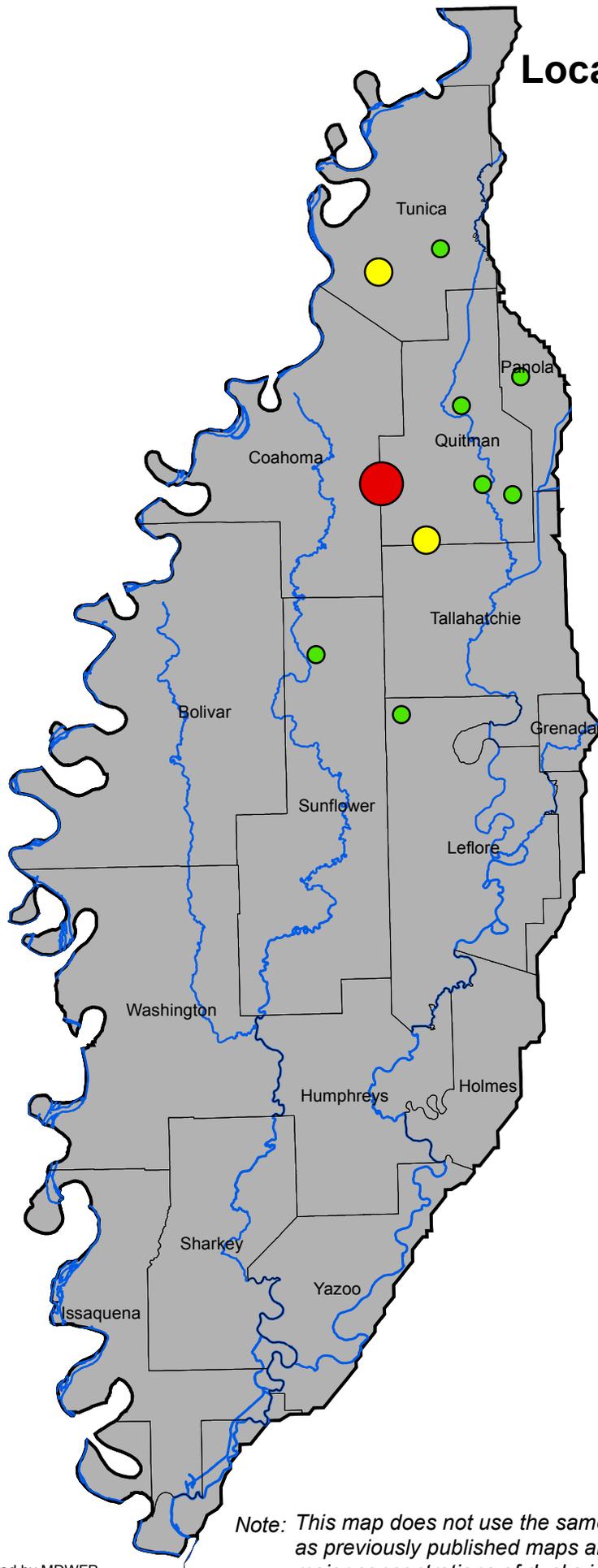
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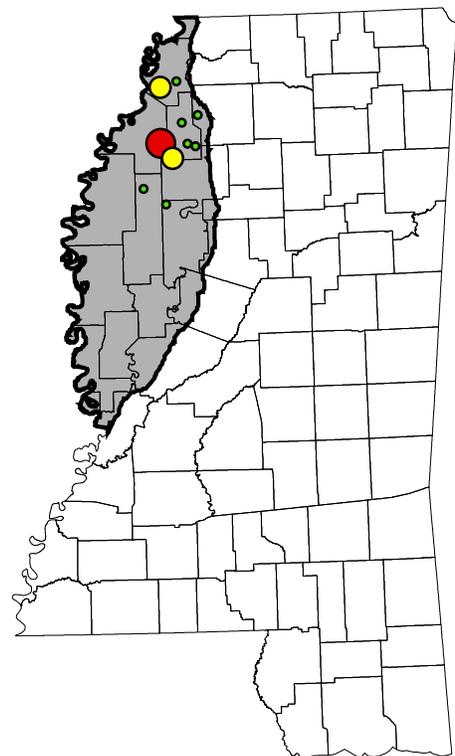
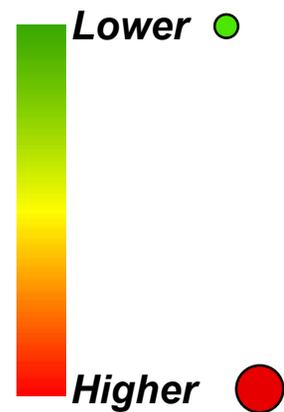
Note: This map does not use the same area calculations as previously published maps and is intended to illustrate major concentrations of ducks in the Mississippi Delta.



Locations and relative size of light goose flocks in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 5 - 9, 2015



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.