



MDWFP Aerial Waterfowl Survey Report

November 13 - 16, 2017



WATERFOWL PROGRAM

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The mid-November MDWFP aerial waterfowl survey occurred the week of November 13 – 16. Although observed wetland habitat was limited, waterfowl habitat availability was closer to the “normal” range in the Mississippi Delta region of the state when compared with last November. As expected, shallowly managed water was rarely observed across much of the Mississippi Delta. Public lands held the majority of intensively managed, shallowly flooded wetland habitat. As a result, waterfowl were observed responding to these areas, often in high numbers. An abundance of harvested agricultural fields have been disked, which will result in reduced food availability for waterfowl if the fields are eventually flooded. As in most years, flooded habitat availability generally increased as survey transects moved further northeast.

Duck abundance estimates were considerably higher than recent years’ November estimates (Table 1 and Figure 1). Estimates for all groups of ducks were much higher than the long-term averages for November surveys, with mallards and other dabbling ducks more than doubling the long-term averages (Table 2). Dabblers other than mallards comprised about 60% of all duck observations, which is typical for this time of year in Mississippi. Gadwalls and northern shovelers were the two most abundant species observed overall. Ruddy ducks, scaup, and ring-necked ducks were the most abundant diving duck species observed, respectively. With the regular waterfowl hunting season set to open November 24, MDWFP biologists are optimistic that Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) will continue to attract and hold waterfowl for a good start to the season. Youth hunters got their first chance at duck hunting for the year on Saturday, November 18 and many WMAs offered quality hunting opportunities with several youth harvesting their first ducks. A push of cold air from the north is currently moving across the upper Midwest and Great Lakes regions, and is predicted to persist through this week. This weather could yield a southern migration of waterfowl down portions of the Mississippi Flyway to supplement the numbers of birds already present.

The northeastern portion of the Delta contained the greatest abundance of ducks overall, followed by the southeastern region. Mallards and other dabbling ducks were most abundant in the northeastern region. The greatest abundances of diving ducks were observed in the northwestern region.

Most mallards were observed using flooded agricultural fields, followed closely by moist-soil habitat (natural vegetation such as grasses and sedges) on intensively managed public and private lands. Most dabbling ducks other than mallards, as well as diving ducks were observed heavily using large catfish pond complexes. As expected, duck abundance was greatest in areas where a large complex of wetland habitat was available.

A few large concentrations of light geese (snow, blue, and Ross’ geese) were observed during the November survey. Moderate numbers of greater white-fronted geese were observed using large agricultural fields (both dry and flooded) and levees around production catfish ponds.

The first segment of the regular duck season will begin on November 24, 2017. For weekly waterfowl reports and 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 November survey period, 2015-2017.

Species	Survey Period		
	November 2015	November 2016	November 2017
Mallards	30,933	36,540	88,019
Other Dabblers	57,702	212,469	303,472
Diving Ducks	54,167	124,240	109,101
Total Ducks	142,802	373,249	500,591

Figure 1. Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the November survey period, 2015-2017.

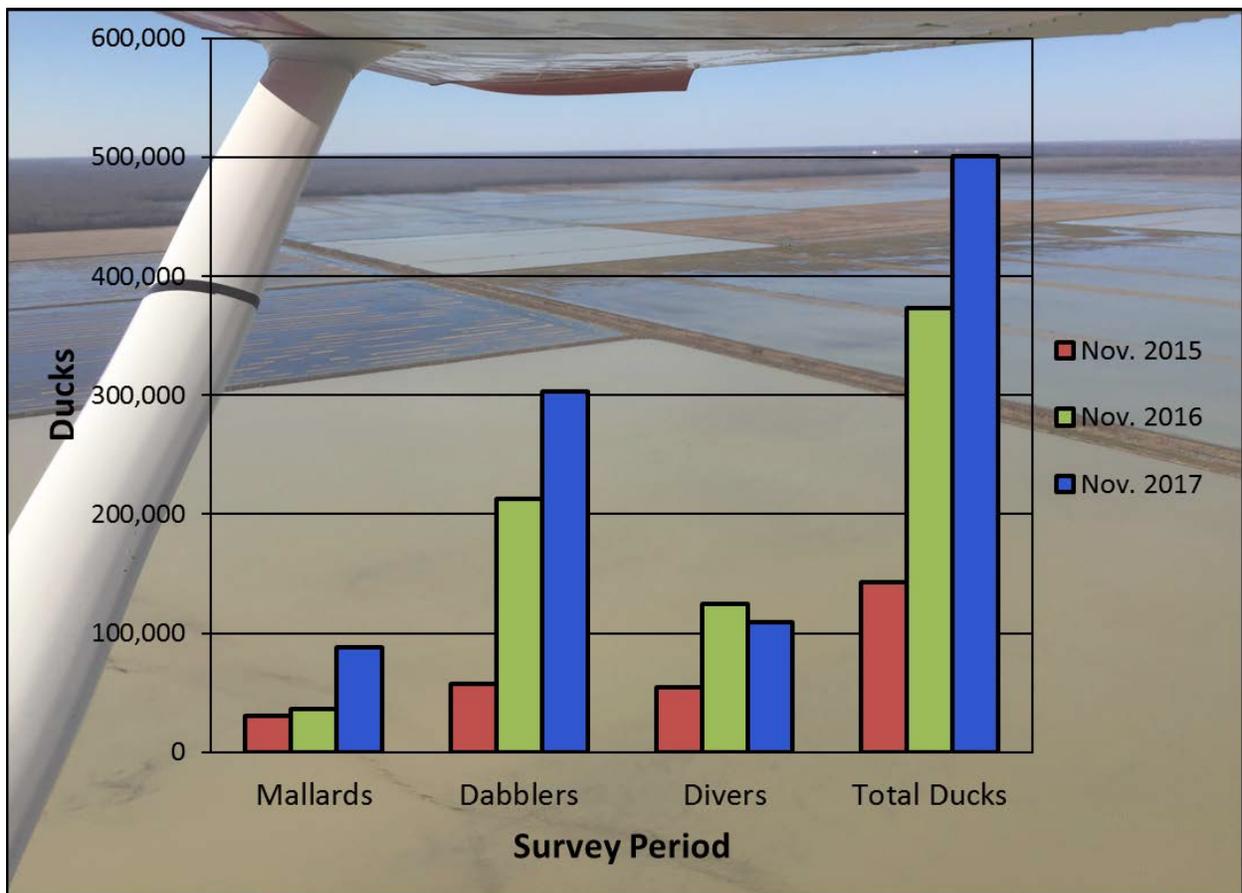
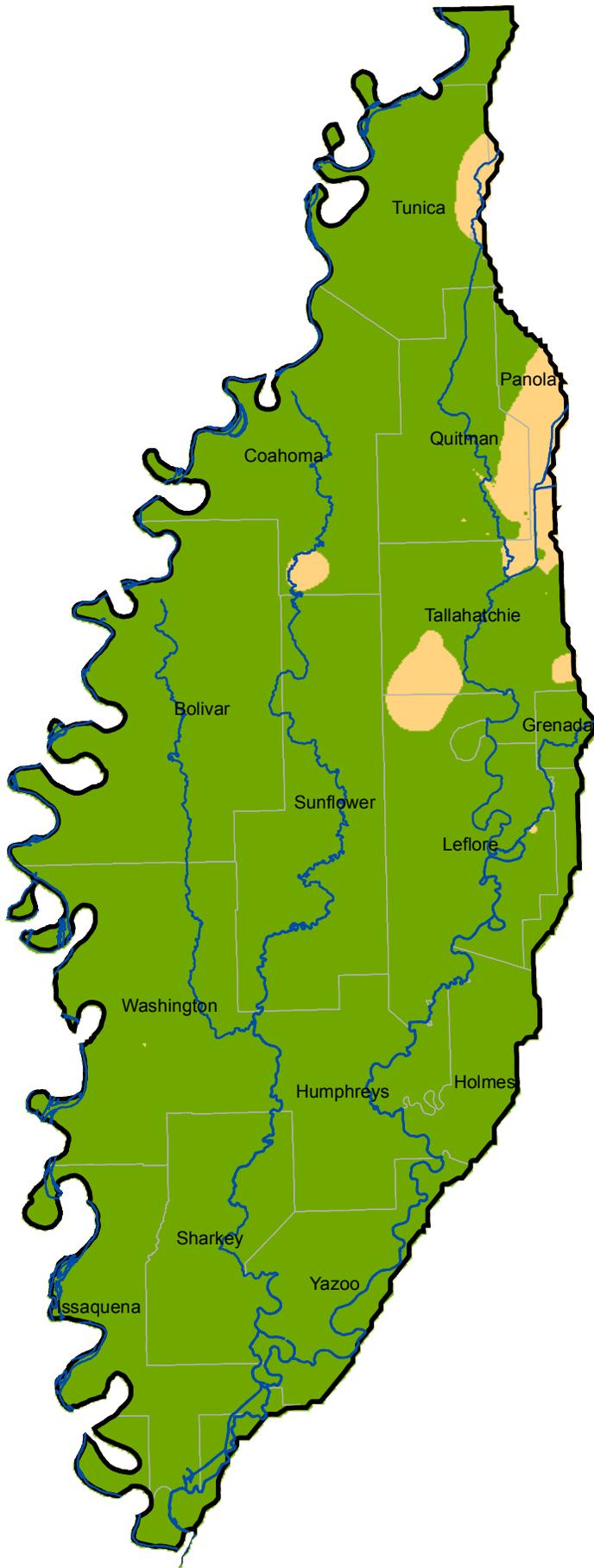


Table 2. Comparison of November 2017 aerial waterfowl survey estimates to the long-term average (LTA) for November survey estimates.

Species Group	November 2017	November LTA	% Change from Nov LTA
Mallards	88,019	42,080	+109.2%
Other Dabblers	303,472	147,320	+105.9%
Diving Ducks	109,101	84,388	+29.3%
Total Ducks	500,591	273,789	+82.8%

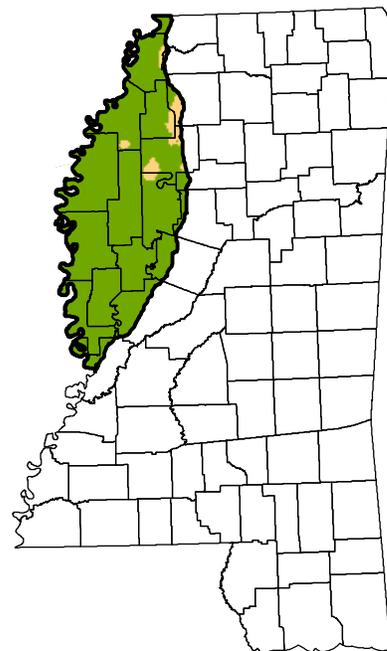
Distribution of Mallards in the Mississippi Delta

Nov. 13-16, 2017



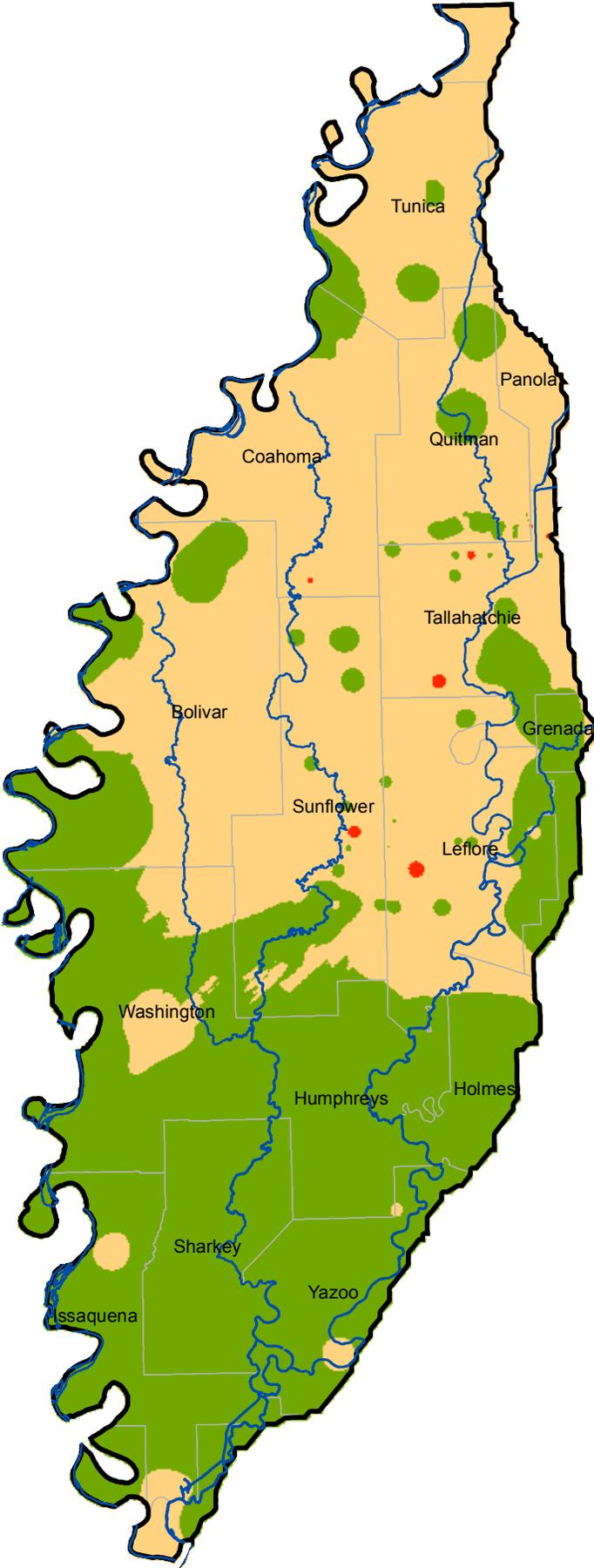
Description

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



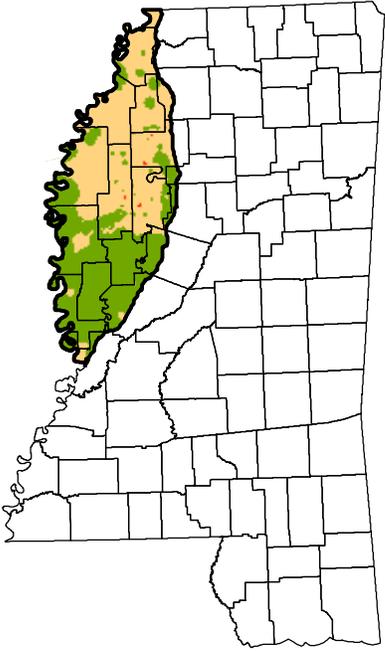
Distribution of Total Ducks in the Mississippi Delta

Nov. 13-16, 2017



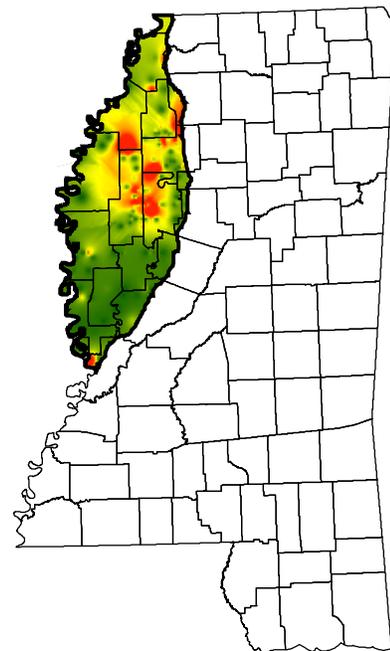
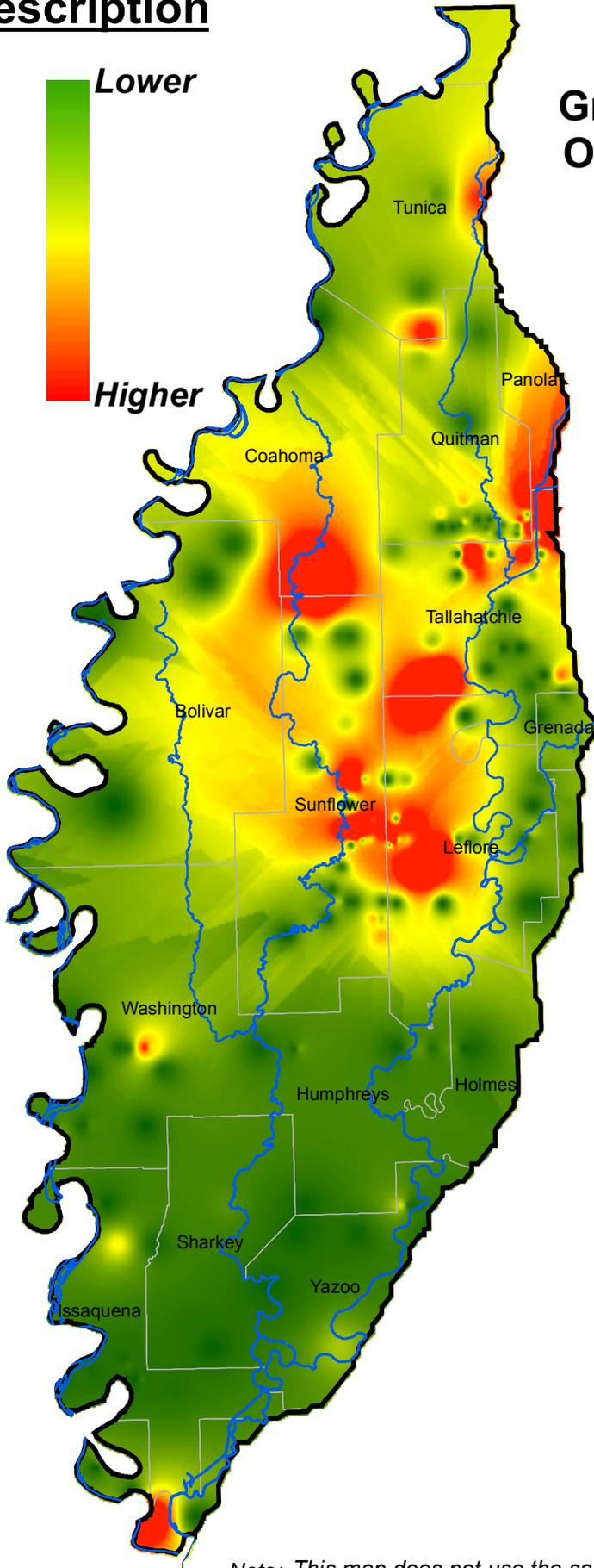
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- Low (<12/mi²)
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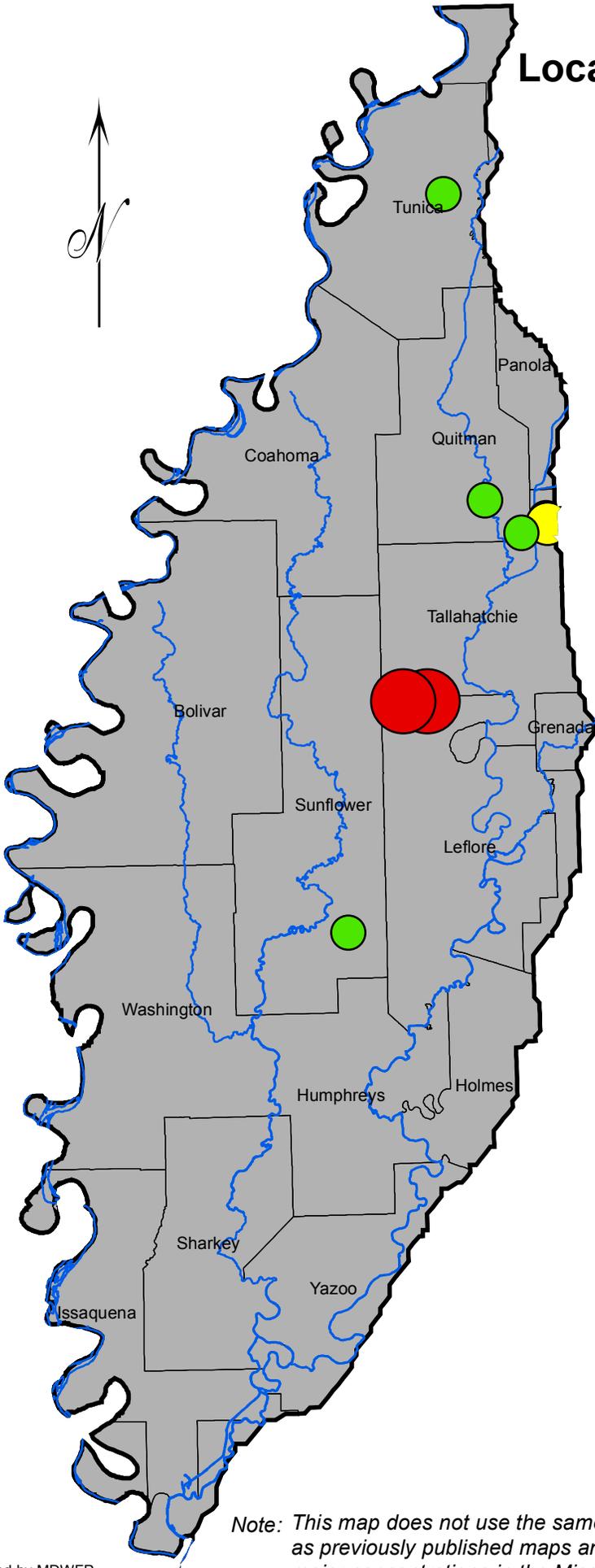
Description

Greatest Concentrations of Ducks Observed in the Mississippi Delta Nov. 13-16, 2017

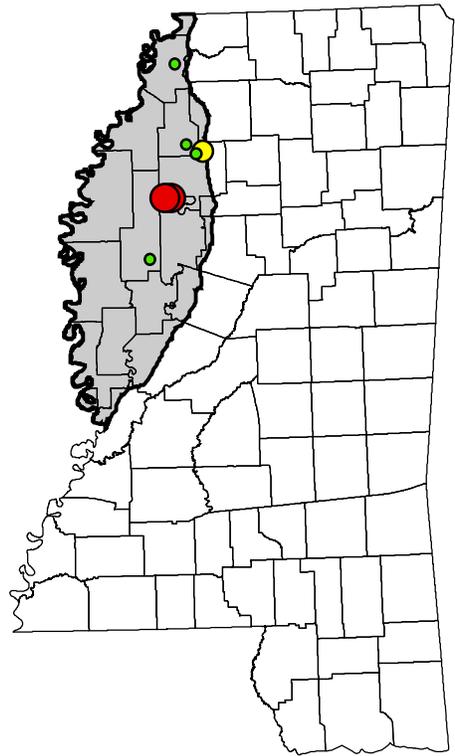
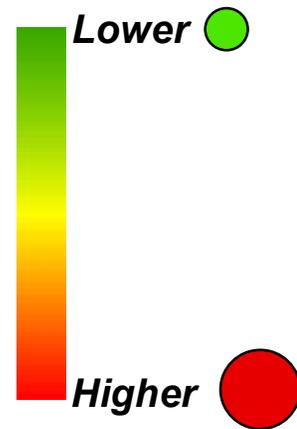


Note: This map does not use the same area calculations as previously published maps and is intended to illustrate major concentrations of ducks in the Mississippi Delta.

Locations and relative size of light goose flocks in the Mississippi Delta Nov. 13-16, 2017



Description



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