

MDWFP Aerial Waterfowl Survey Report

January 3 - 6, 2012



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The early January MDWFP aerial waterfowl survey occurred during January 3 – 6. Waterfowl habitat availability remained steady from December observations. As in December, managed water generally increased as survey transects moved further northeast, while natural flooding was greatest in the southwest.

Overall, early January duck estimates were greater than those observed during the December 2011 survey. Estimates were very similar to early January estimates from 2011 and were lower than estimates from early January 2010 (Table 1 and Figure 1). Mallards, other dabblers, and diving ducks individually followed the same trend. Northern shovelers and northern pintails appeared to comprise the majority of other dabbling duck observations.

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. Hunters should keep in mind that with abundant available habitat ducks can easily seek out areas with low hunting pressure. This leads to spotty distributions of birds, thus making it hard for hunters to find large concentrations. Mallards were distributed relatively evenly among the northeastern, northwestern, and extreme southern survey regions. The northeastern and northwestern regions of the Delta contained the highest abundances of dabbling ducks other than mallards, and the southeastern region contained the highest abundances of diving ducks.

Most mallards and other dabblers were observed using large expanses of flooded agricultural fields. Mallards and other dabblers were seen using open areas of fields, likely to avoid hunting pressure. However, mallards and other dabblers observed using forested wetlands increased from the December survey. As these ducks seek refuge to form pair bonds, use of forested and scrub-shrub wetlands will likely continue to increase. Most diving ducks were observed using large catfish pond complexes.

MDWFP aerial waterfowl surveys are conducted by randomly selecting east-west lines (transects) across the Delta region of Mississippi. Transects are selected randomly to provide an unbiased sampling of the Delta. Using GPS units, biologists fly at an altitude of 500 feet along selected transects, recording numbers and species of ducks, as well as the type of wetland habitat being used. Observations from transects are then used to compute estimates for the entire Delta region. Repeating this scientific method for each survey allows biologists to compare survey results among different months or years.

The final aerial waterfowl survey will begin January 23, 2012. Hunters should remember that changing hunting tactics during the late season can be productive. Using fewer decoys and calling less can often be rewarding when pursuing late season “call-shy” ducks. For more information on the MDWFP Waterfowl Program, visit our website at <http://home.mdwfp.com/wildlife/species/waterfowl/default.aspx>.

Table 1. Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the early January survey period, 2010-2012.

Species	Survey Period		
	Early January 2010	Early January 2011	Early January 2012
Mallards	281,622	197,319	215,268
Dabblers	440,314	352,858	339,908
Diving Ducks	170,797	120,700	100,202
Total Ducks	892,734	670,878	655,379

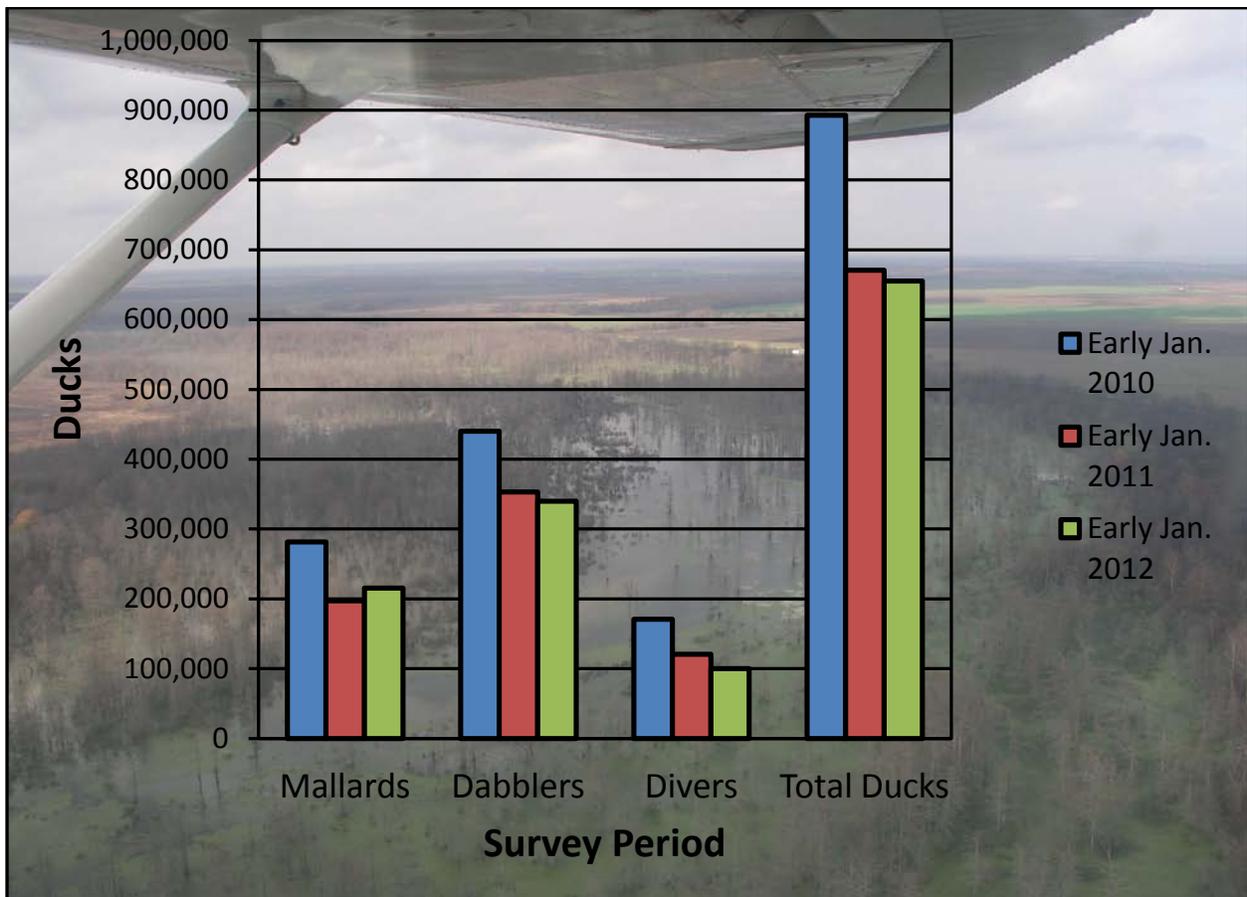
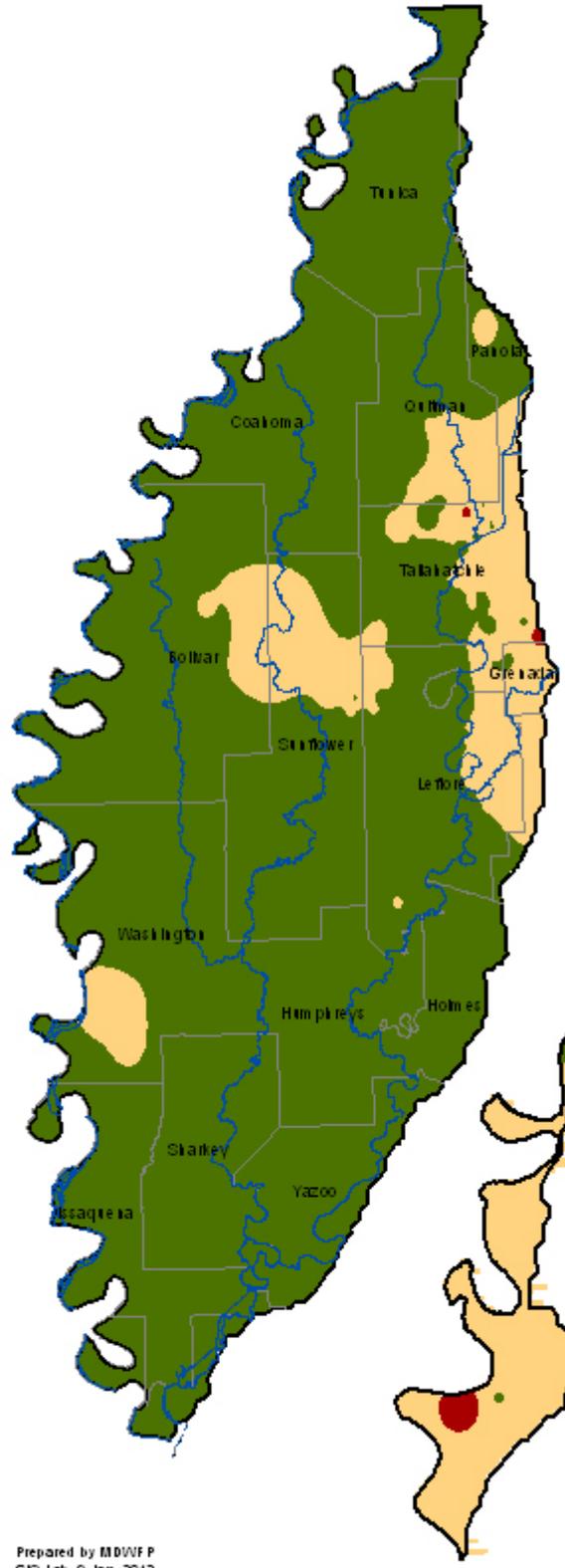


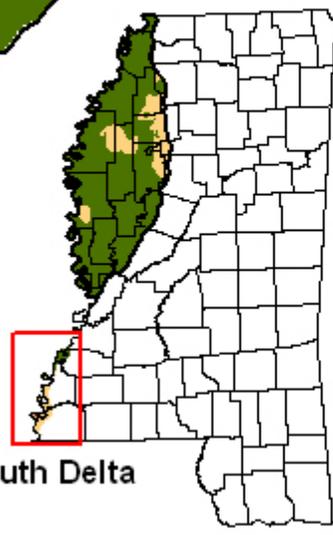
Figure 1. Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the early January survey period, 2010-2012.

Distribution of Mallards in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 3-5, 2012



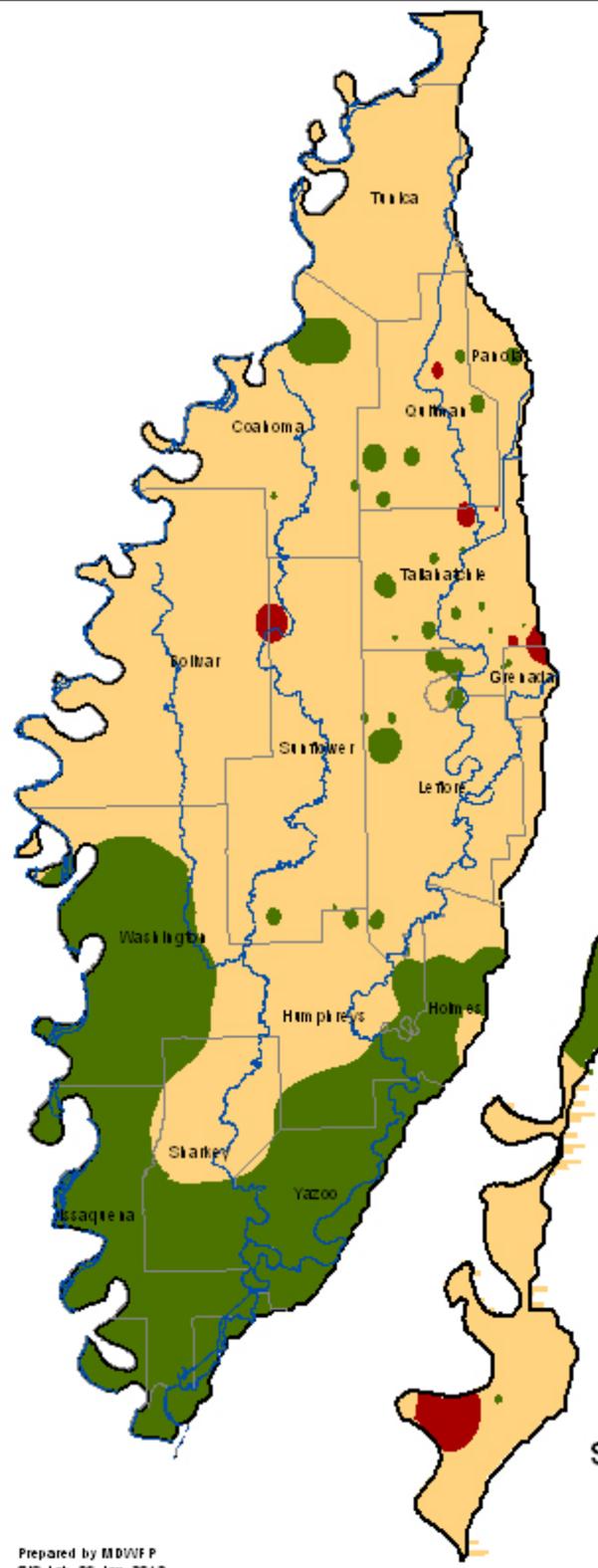
Description

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



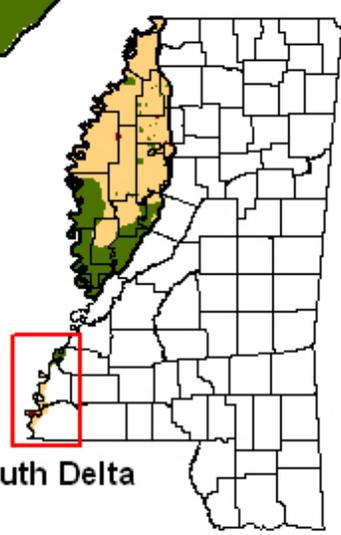
South Delta

Distribution of Total Ducks in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 3-5, 2012



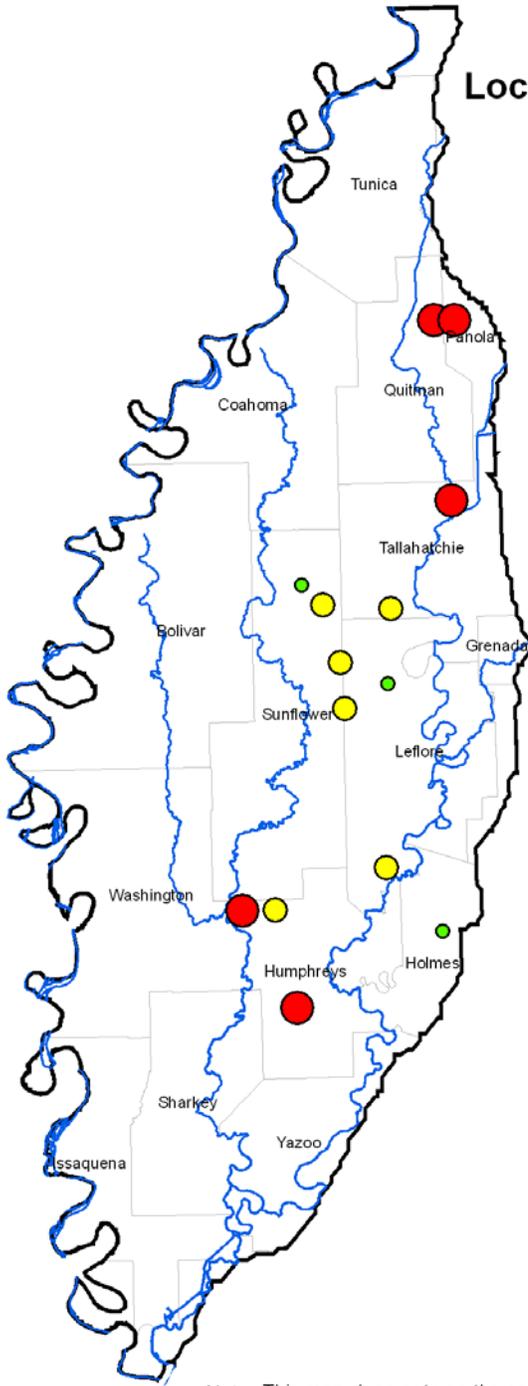
Description

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

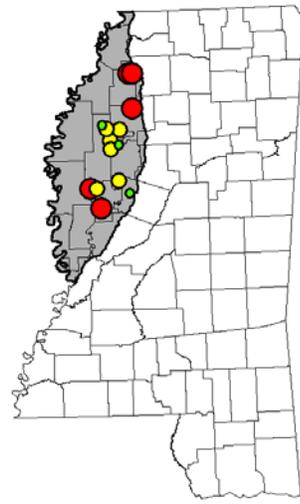
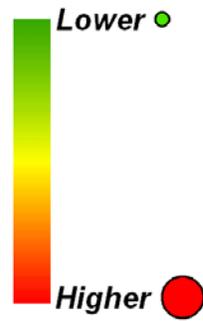


South Delta

Locations and relative size of light goose flocks in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 3 - 5, 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.

Prepared by MDWFP
GIS Lab 9 Jan. 2012

