



# MDWFP Aerial Waterfowl Survey Report

January 26 - 29, 2016



**WATERFOWL PROGRAM**

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The late January MDWFP aerial waterfowl survey was conducted during January 27 – 29, 2016. Waterfowl habitat availability has remained very high across most of the Mississippi Delta, due to periodic rainfall, floodwaters from the Mississippi River, and backwater flooding from the closing off of Mississippi River tributaries. However, a lack of actively managed wetland habitat, as well as an abundance of disked agricultural fields, continue to be a trend across the Mississippi Delta, especially the northwest region. Flooded habitat was most available along the Mississippi River and in the southern portions of the Mississippi Delta. The current amount of flooded habitat available to waterfowl across the Delta may impact hunting success over the remainder of the season. Hunters are encouraged to adjust locations and techniques as needed to successfully hunt late season waterfowl.

Overall, duck estimates increased from the year's previous survey periods and reached peak levels for this hunting season. Estimates were much greater than recent years' late January estimates (Table 1 and Figure 1). Estimates for all categories of ducks were also greater than their long-term averages for all late January surveys (Table 2). Mallards and other dabbling ducks showed the largest increases for all species from the early January survey. Mallards and northern shovelers were the two most abundant duck species observed.

The northeastern portion of the Delta once again contained the greatest abundance of ducks overall, as well as the greatest amount of managed and flooded habitat across the landscape. However, estimates from all regions of the Delta showed increases in duck numbers since the last survey period. Mallard estimates were more evenly distributed than usual across the Delta. An increase in mallard abundance has also continued in the southern half of the Delta. The northeastern region of the Delta contained the greatest abundances of dabbling ducks other than mallards, as well as the greatest abundances of diving ducks.

Most mallards and other dabbling ducks were once again observed heavily using flooded agricultural fields. This was likely driven by the necessity for ducks to feed heavily on high energy food sources during cold temperatures and patches of frozen wetlands. Use of forested wetlands by mallards and other dabbling ducks also remained high, which was likely due to the abundance of naturally flooded forested habitat. Most diving ducks were observed using large catfish pond complexes and permanent wetlands such as large oxbow lakes and the Mississippi River. A large increase in migrant light geese (snow, blue, and Ross' geese), as well as greater white-fronted geese, has continued but most large concentrations of geese were observed in the north Delta. Geese were observed heavily using both flooded and dry agricultural fields in large numbers.

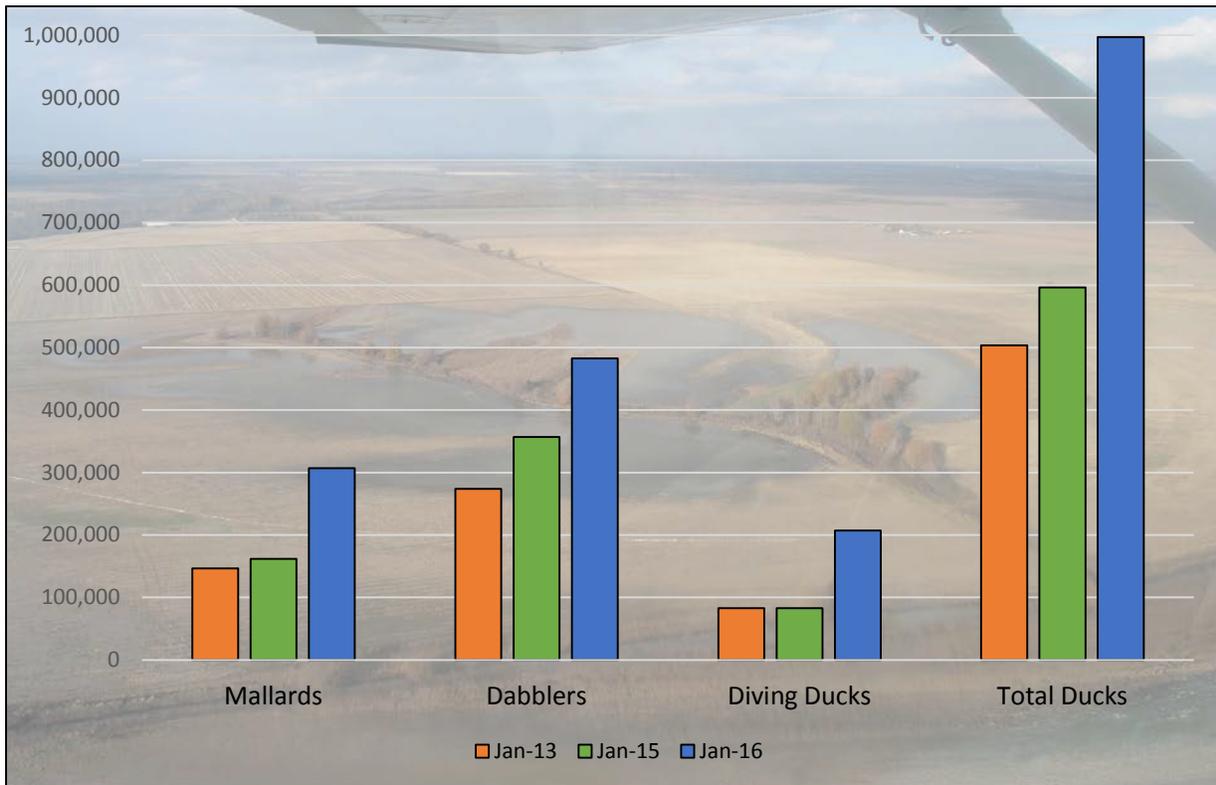
Weather is predicted to warm up as the regular waterfowl season comes to a close this weekend, but hunters may still find success due to the increase in duck numbers observed this week. Regular waterfowl seasons will continue through January 31, but hunters are reminded to also take advantage of the upcoming Light Goose Conservation Order (February 1 – 5 and February 7 – March 31) and the post-season Youth Waterfowl Day on February 6.

For more information on the MDWFP Waterfowl Program, as well as waterfowl hunting and habitat information, visit our website at [www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl](http://www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl).

**Table 1.** Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the late January survey period, 2013-2016. Note: a late-January survey was not conducted in 2014 due to inclement weather.

Species	Survey Period		
	Late January 2013	Late January 2015	Late January 2016
Mallards	146,782	162,098	307,177
Dabblers	273,905	356,993	482,843
Diving Ducks	83,119	82,733	206,983
<b>Total Ducks</b>	<b>503,806</b>	<b>596,092</b>	<b>997,003</b>

**Figure 1.** Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the late January survey period, 2013-2016. Note: a late-January survey was not conducted in 2014 due to inclement weather.

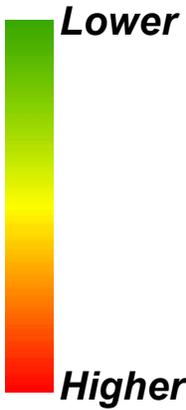


**Table 2.** Comparison of late January aerial waterfowl survey estimates to the long-term average (LTA) for late January survey estimates.

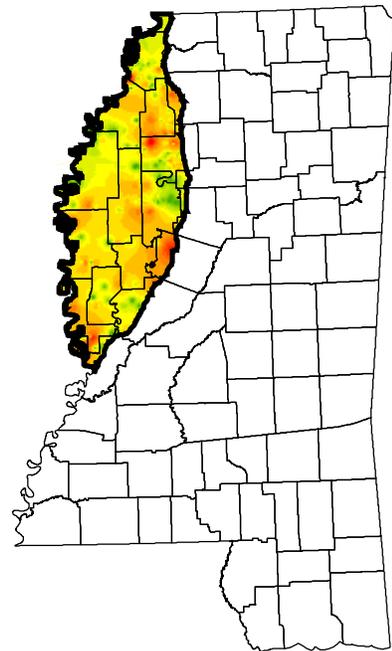
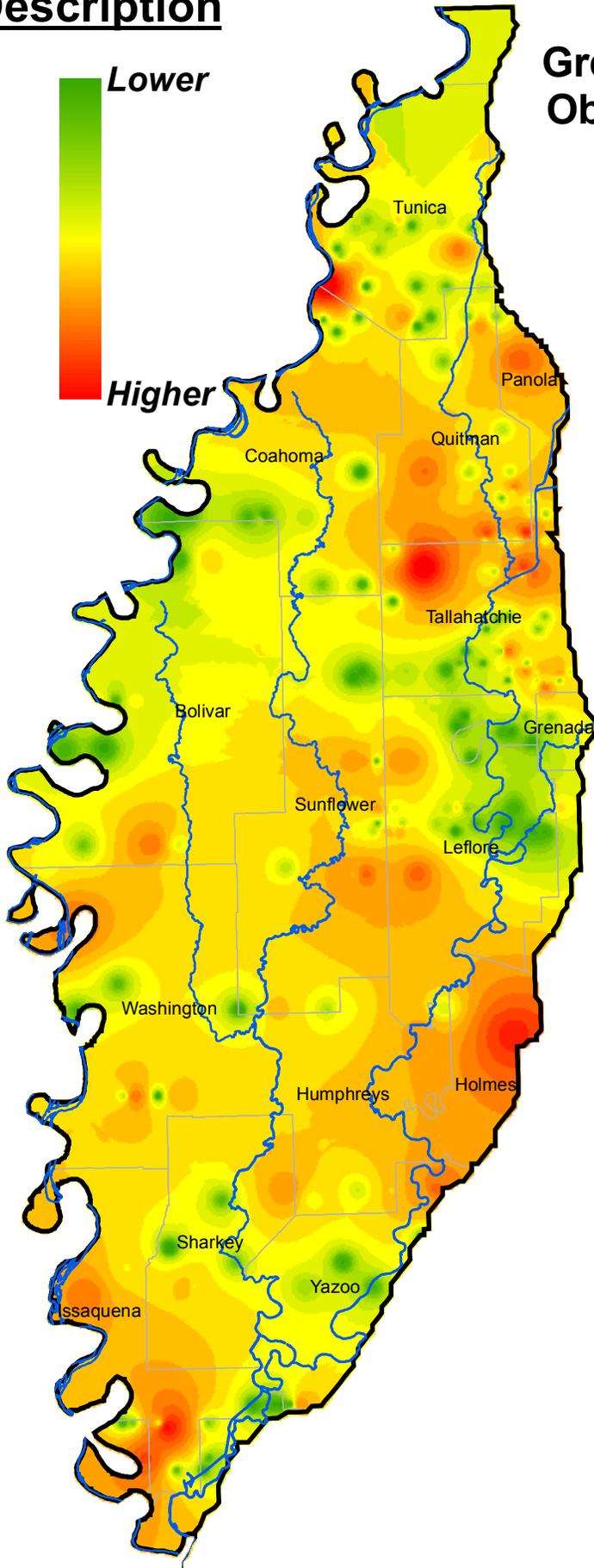
Species Group	Late January 2016	Late January LTA	% Change from LTA
Mallards	307,177	218,728	+40.4%
Other Dabblers	482,843	355,008	+36%
Diving Ducks	206,983	150,503	+37.5%
<b>Total Ducks</b>	997,003	714,377	+39.6%

Waterfowl distribution maps will be added when they become available.

# Description



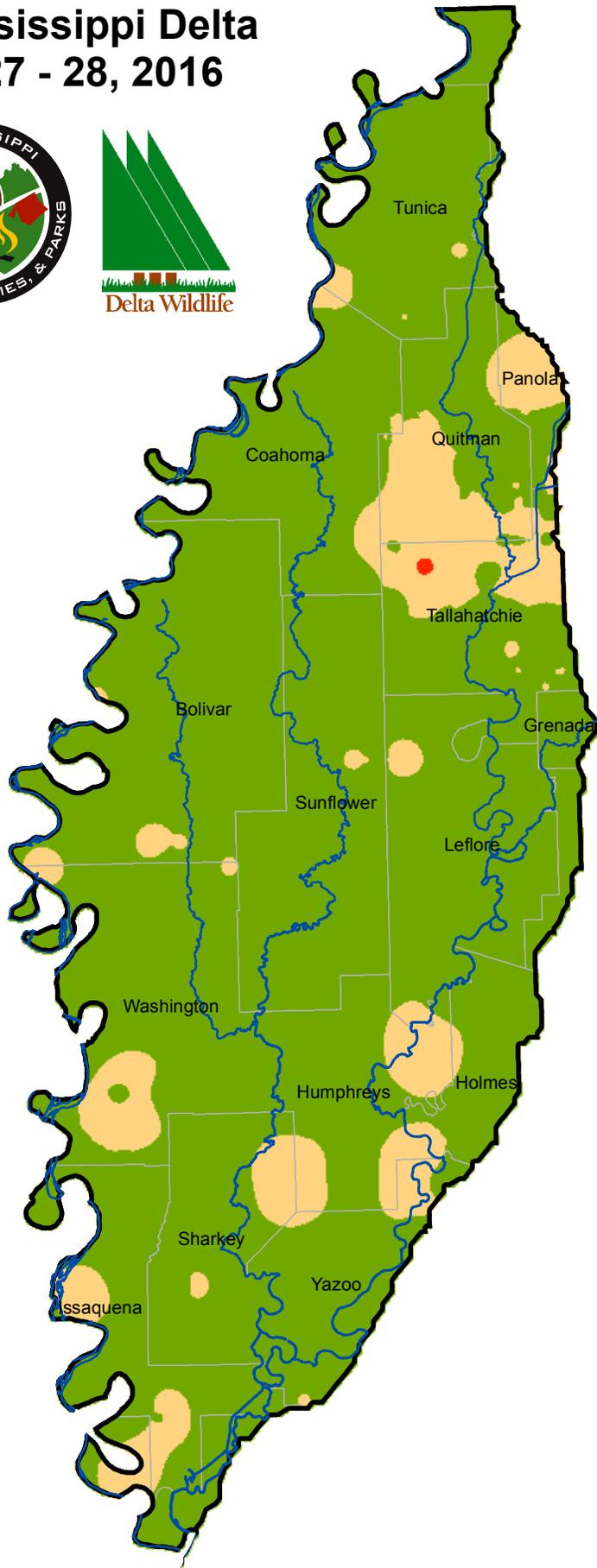
## Greatest Concentrations of Ducks Observed in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 27 - 28, 2016



*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.*

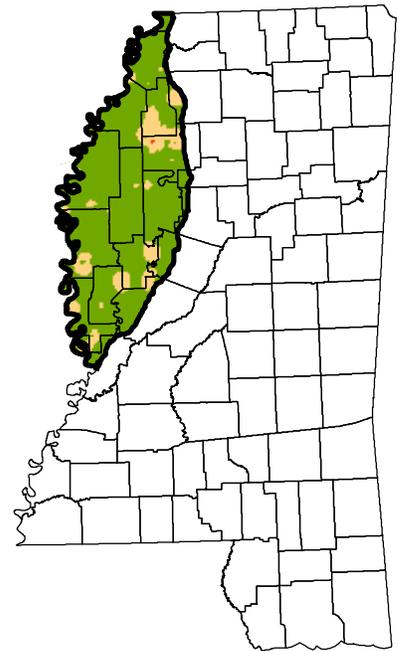
# Distribution of Mallards in the Mississippi Delta

Jan. 27 - 28, 2016



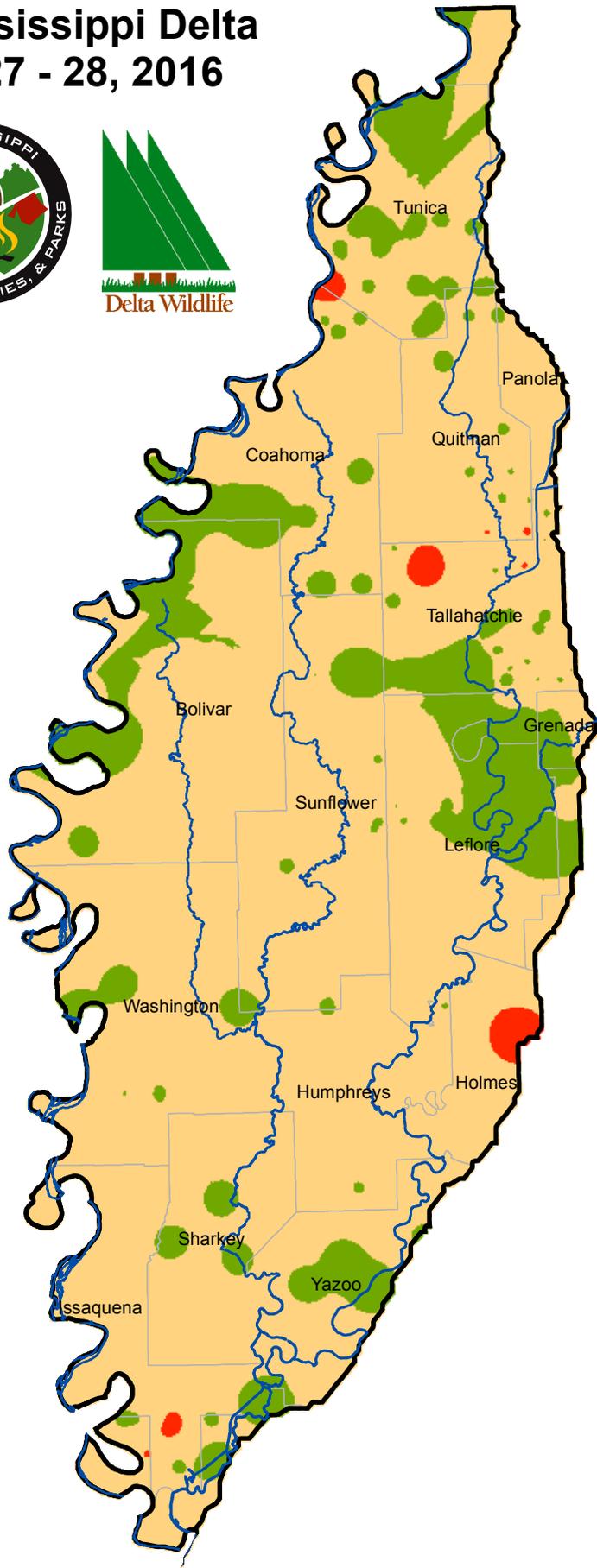
## Description

-  Low (<12/mi<sup>2</sup>)
-  Medium (12-115/mi<sup>2</sup>)
-  High (>115/mi<sup>2</sup>)



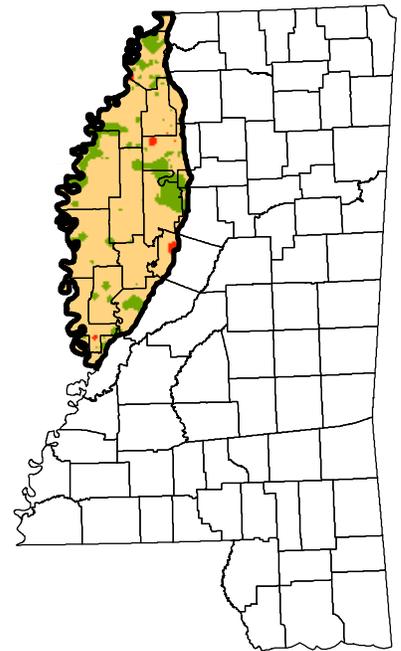
# Distribution of Total Ducks in the Mississippi Delta

## Jan. 27 - 28, 2016



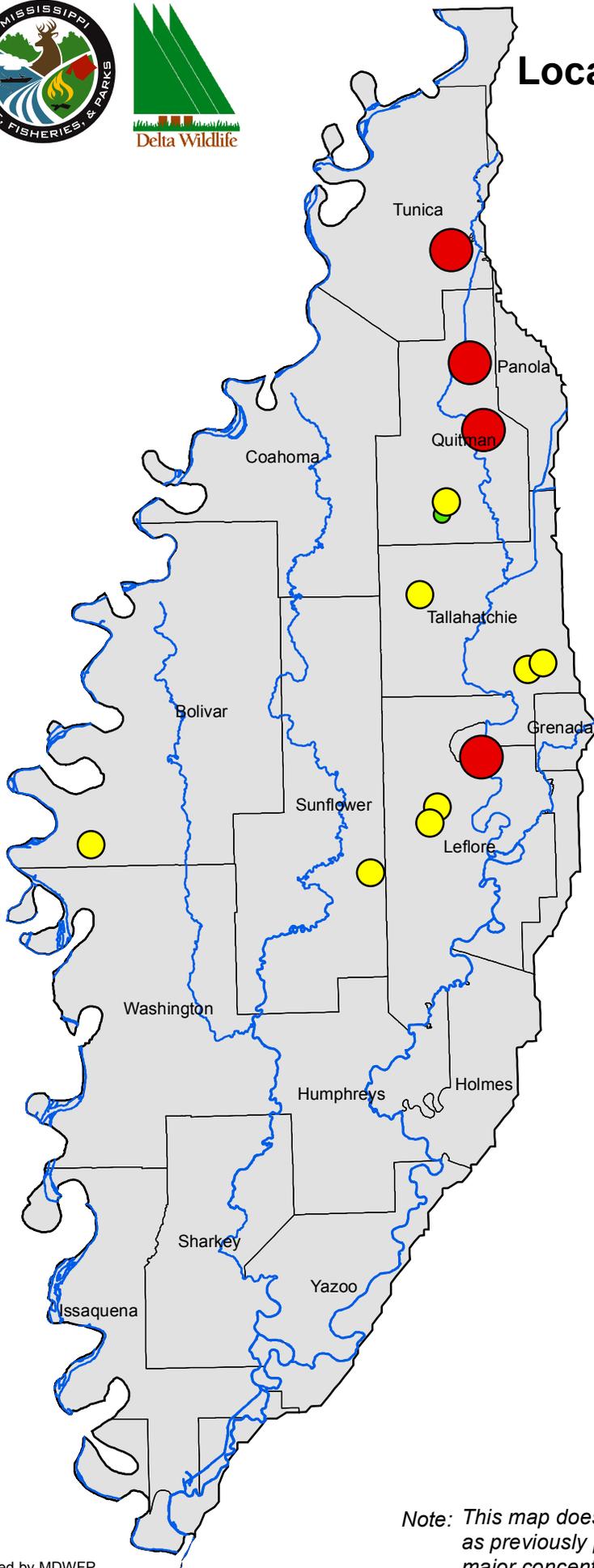
### Description

- Low (<math>< 12/mi^2</math>)
- Medium (<math>12-115/mi^2</math>)
- High (<math>> 115/mi^2</math>)

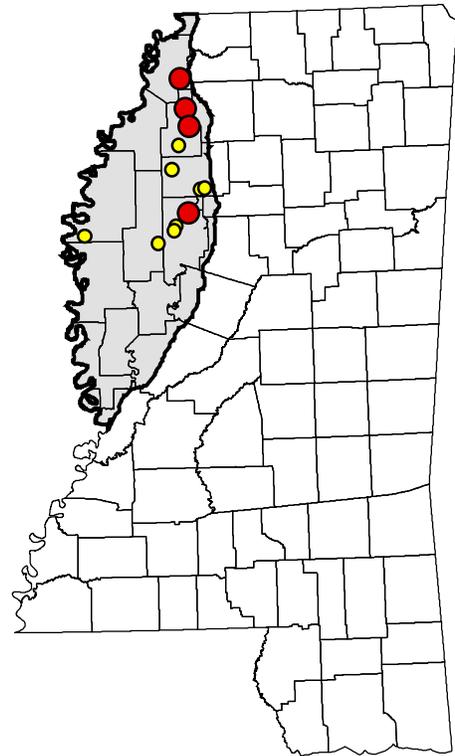




# Locations and relative size of light goose flocks in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 27 - 28, 2016



## 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.*