



MDWFP Aerial Waterfowl Survey Report

December 19 - 29, 2011



Prepared by:

Houston Havens

Conservation Resources Biologist Migratory Game Bird Program

MS Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks

Cell: 662-299-0273

houstonh@mdwfp.state.ms.us

The late December MDWFP aerial waterfowl survey occurred during November 19 – 29. In contrast to the November 2011 survey, waterfowl habitat availability was much greater. After an extremely dry summer and fall, heavy December rains filled many areas with water management capabilities. Also, the Mississippi River and its tributaries provided large areas of naturally flooded habitat across the Delta. Managed water generally increased as survey transects moved further northeast, while natural flooding was greatest in the southwest.

Overall, December duck estimates were greater than those observed during the November 2011 survey. However, estimates were near average compared to recent years' December surveys (Table 1 and Figure 1). Mallards, other dabblers, and diving ducks followed the same trend, with increases compared to November 2011, but near the average for this time of year. Northern shovelers and gadwall 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. Mallards were distributed relatively evenly among the northeastern and northwestern survey regions. The northeastern region of the Delta contained the highest abundances of dabbling ducks other than mallards, as well as diving ducks.

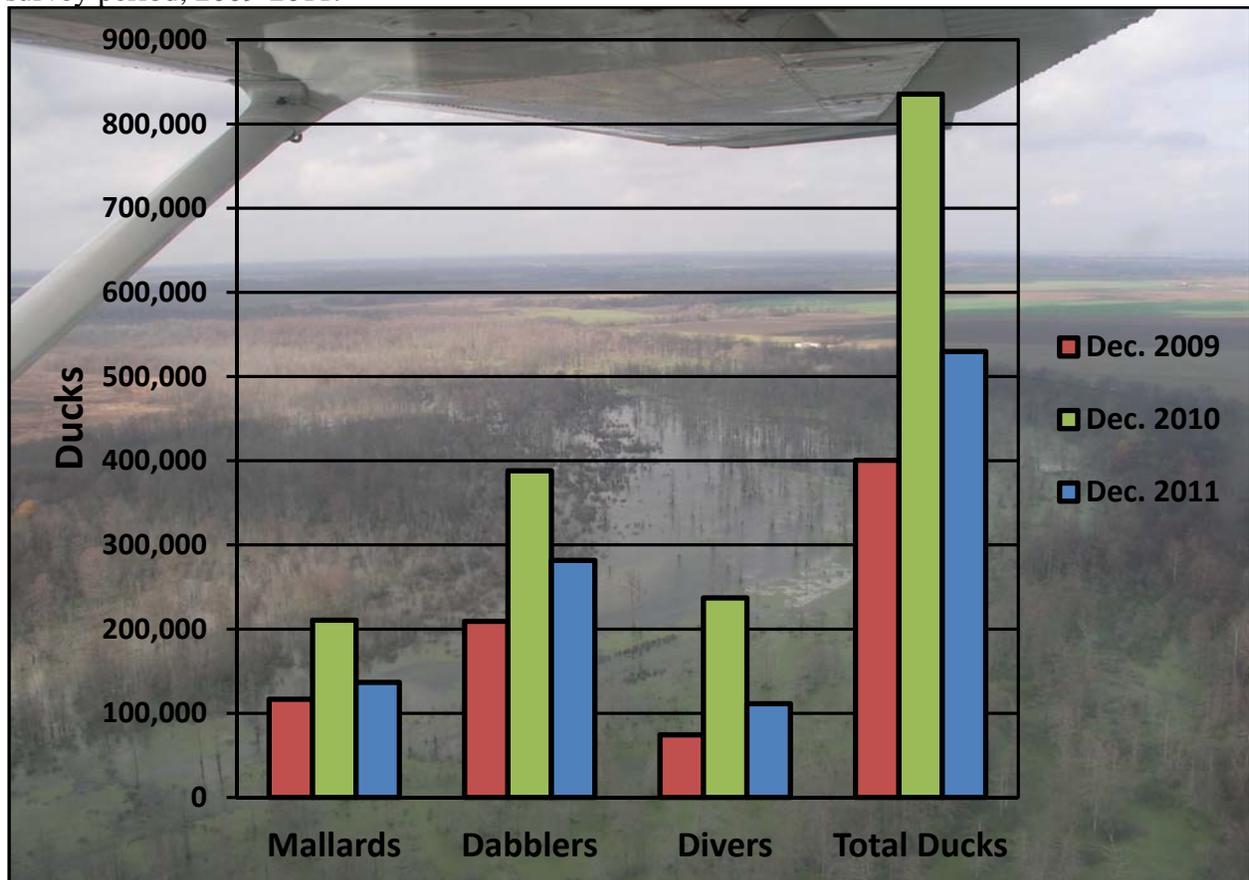
Most mallards and other dabblers were observed using large expanses of flooded agricultural fields. Mallards and other dabblers were seen using open areas of fields, likely causing difficulty for eager waterfowl hunters. Most diving ducks were observed using large catfish pond complexes.

The next aerial waterfowl survey will begin January 3, 2012. Hunters are reminded that flooded habitat is now more readily available. Although there are many factors influencing waterfowl migration, this abundance of habitat may prove challenging to hunters. The mobility of a hunting setup will likely pay off during these conditions. 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 late December survey period, 2009-2011.

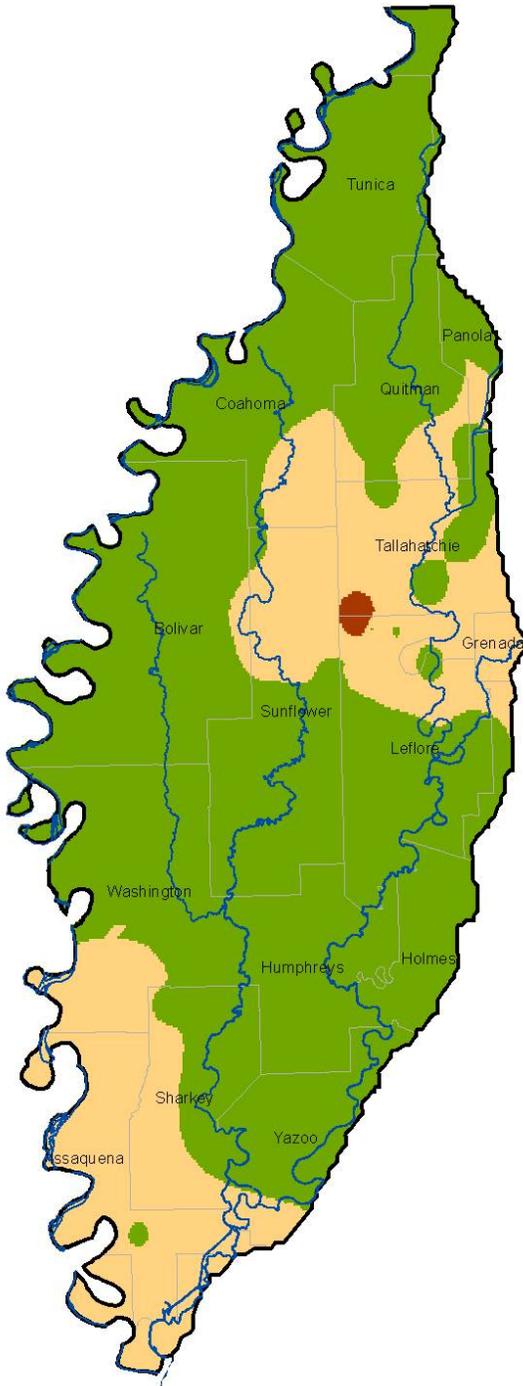
Species	Survey Period		
	Late December 2009	Late December 2010	Late December 2011
Mallards	116,748	210,531	136,776
Dabblers	209,346	388,064	281,560
Diving Ducks	74,396	236,966	111,423
Total Ducks	400,491	835,561	529,758

Figure 1. Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the late December survey period, 2009-2011.



Distribution of Mallards in the Mississippi Delta

Dec. 19, 21 & 29, 2011

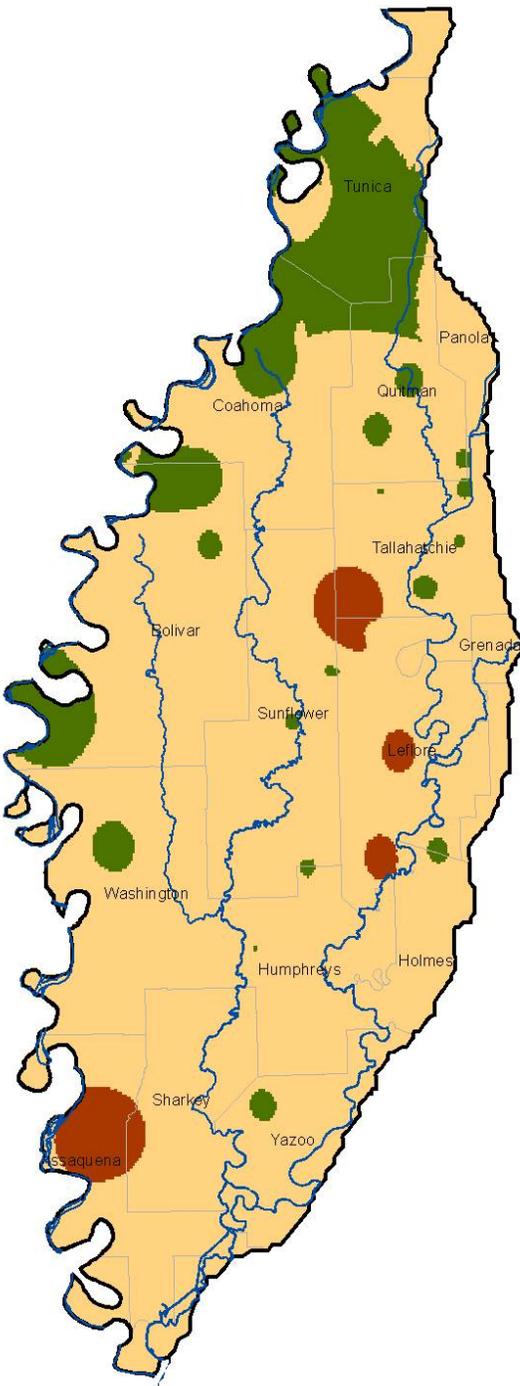


Description

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

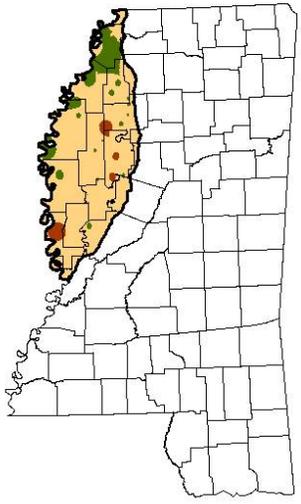


Distribution of Total Ducks in the Mississippi Delta Dec. 19, 21 & 29, 2011



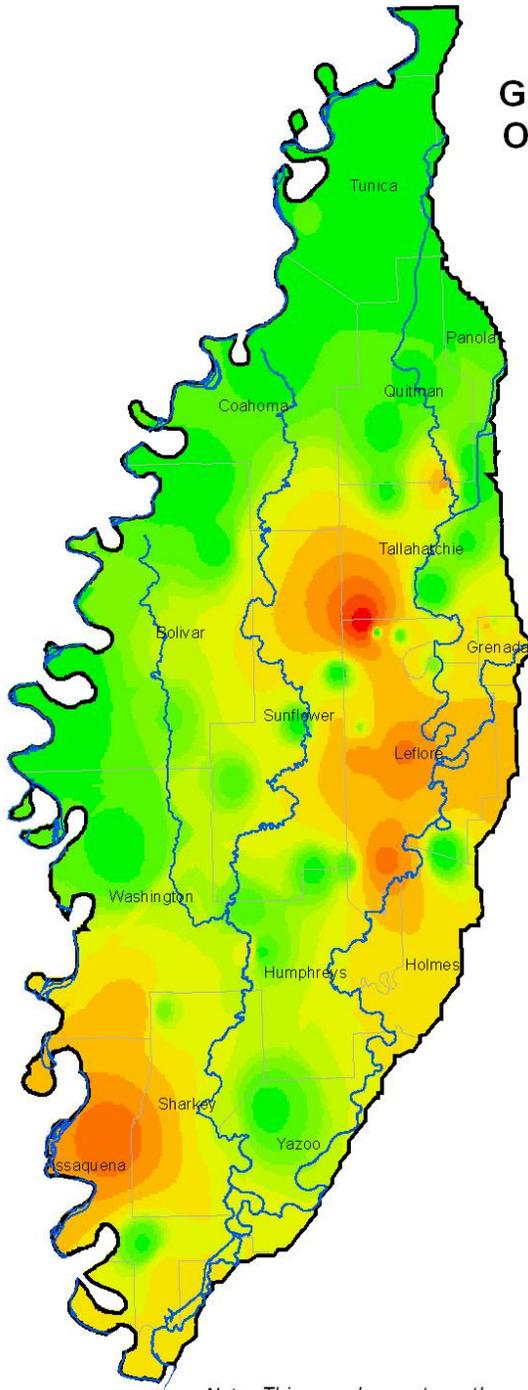
Description

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

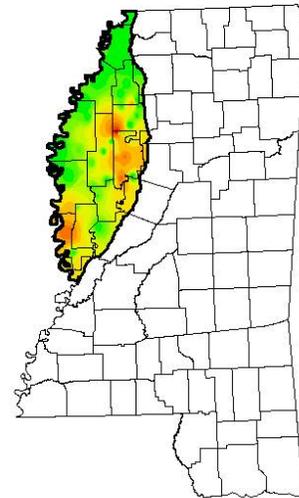


Prepared by MDWFP
GIS Lab 3 Jan. 2012

Greatest Concentrations of Ducks Observed in the Mississippi Delta Dec. 19 , 21 & 29 , 2011



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.

Prepared by MDWFP
GIS Lab 3 Jan. 2012

