

# MDWFP Aerial Waterfowl Survey Report

January 21 - 23, 2011



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The late January MDWFP aerial waterfowl survey occurred during January 21 – 23. Low temperatures continued to linger throughout the survey, causing shallow wetlands to freeze overnight and thaw by mid-afternoon. Overall, the Mississippi Delta's flooded habitat is still below average. As in previous surveys, a general lack of flooding in many agriculture fields was a common observation in most of the Mississippi Delta, especially the northwest region along the Mississippi River. The northeast and east-central parts of the Delta continue to provide the largest areas of managed wetland habitat through pumping ground water.

Overall, duck numbers were very good, with a total duck estimate surpassing peak numbers from winters 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 (Table 1 and Figure 1). Mallard and diving duck estimates were greater than late January 2010 numbers, and were similar to 2009. Other dabbling duck estimates were substantially greater than estimates from late January 2009 and 2010. Northern shovelers and gadwalls comprised the majority of observations of dabbling ducks other than mallards.

Once again, the northeastern portion of the Delta contained the greatest abundance of ducks overall, as well as the greatest abundances of mallards and other dabblers. This is a common observation, and is likely due to the amount of managed habitat available across the landscape in this area. The southwestern region's mallard abundance finished a close second, with numbers similar to the northeastern region. The southeastern region of the Delta contained the greatest abundance of divers, followed closely by the northwestern region.

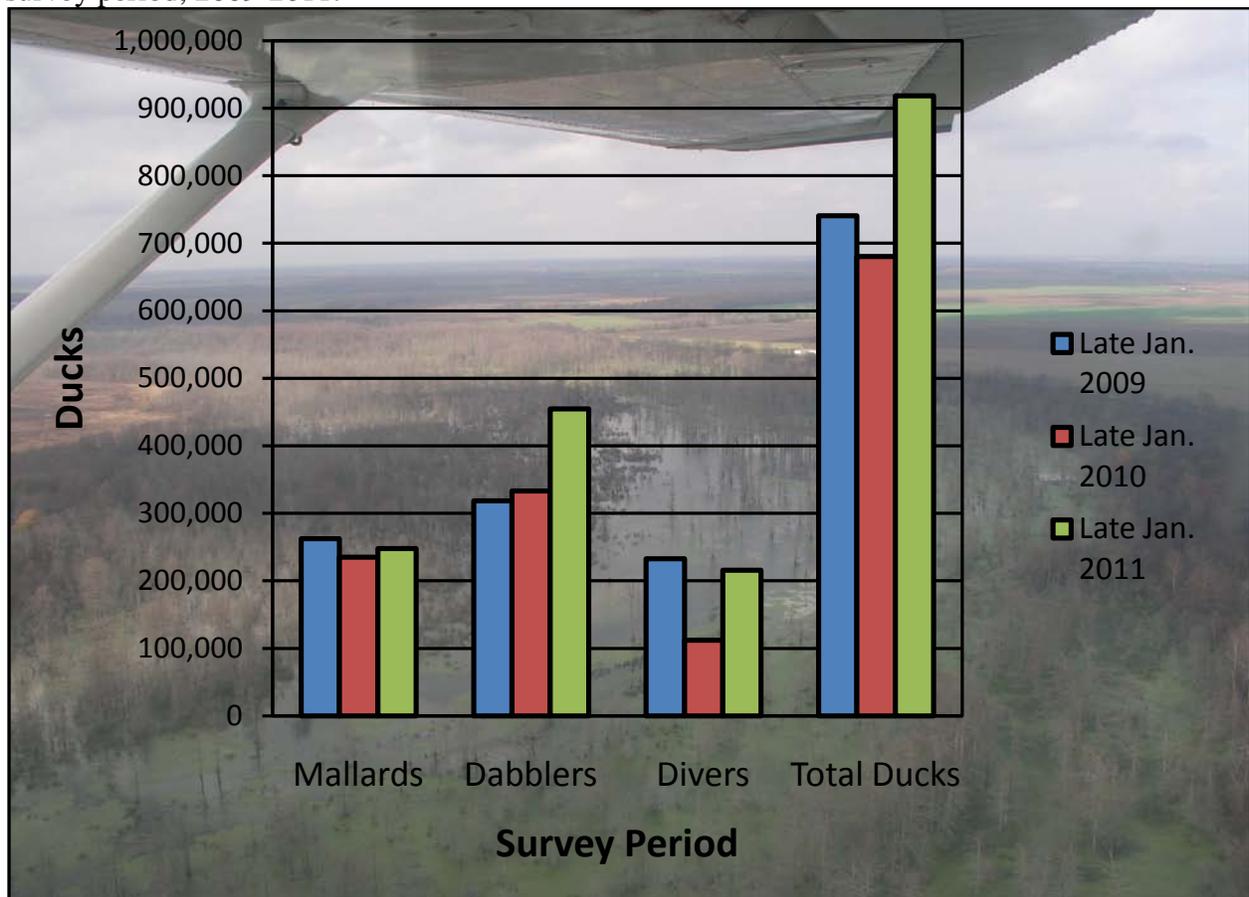
Most mallards and other dabblers were observed using flooded agricultural crops. This may have been due to lingering below-freezing temperatures causing ducks to feed on high-carbohydrate foods like waste grains for quick energy sources. Forested wetlands also attracted mallards, since during late winter, breeding pairs seek secluded areas for pair-bonding. Most diving ducks were observed using large catfish pond complexes, which serve as the main source of deepwater habitat in the Delta.

The regular duck season will end on January 30, 2011, but will be followed by the youth waterfowl hunting weekend (February 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>) and the remainder of the light goose conservation order season. Hunters are encouraged to maintain winter water levels through the youth hunting weekend and to introduce youth to the sport of waterfowl hunting. Also, keeping wetlands flooded throughout February and early spring provides important habitat for waterfowl as they survive the winter and begin their long migrations back to the breeding grounds. Large flocks of light geese are still being observed throughout the Mississippi Delta, which may provide some action for waterfowl hunters during the light goose conservation order season. Snow, blue, and Ross' geese can usually be found in areas with large acreages of winter wheat, or in previously flooded agriculture fields that have been drained. For more information on the MDWFP Waterfowl Program, visit our website at <http://home.mdwfp.com/wildlife/species/waterfowl/default.aspx>.

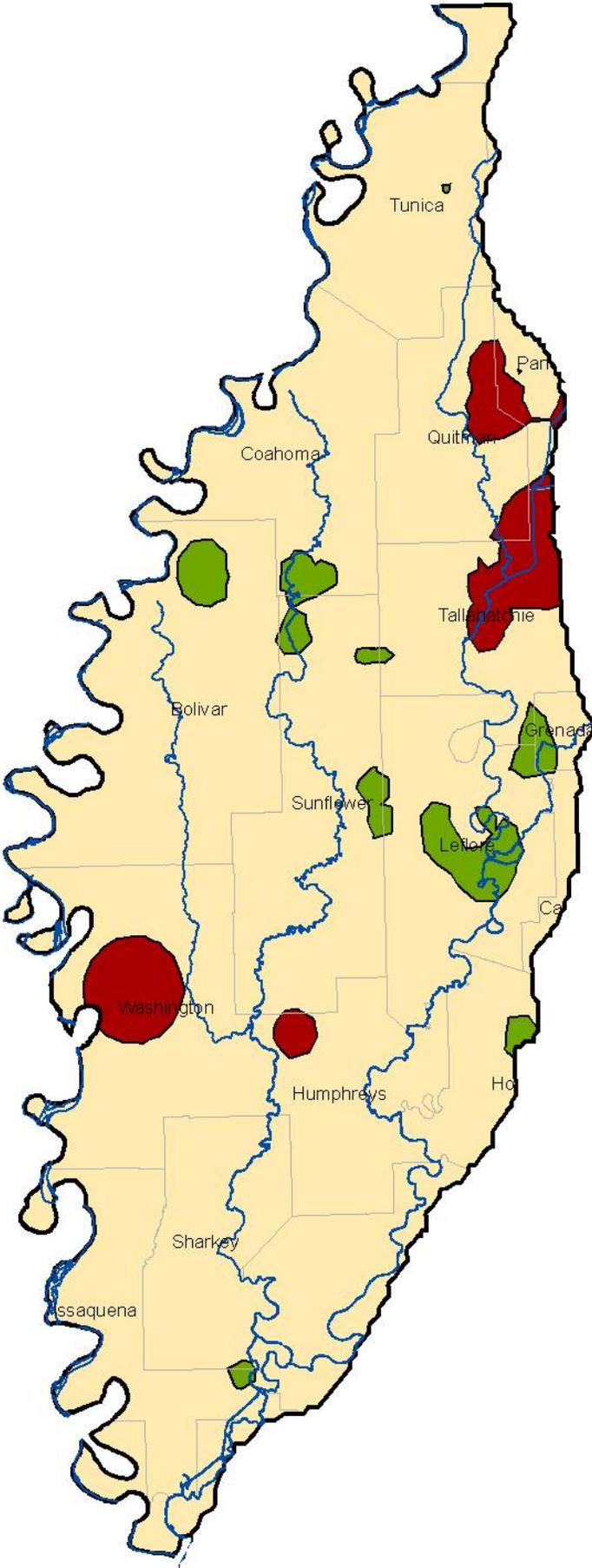
**Table 1.** Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the late January survey period, 2009-2011.

Species	Survey Period		
	Late January 2009	Late January 2010	Late January 2011
Mallards	262,235	234,937	247,913
Dabblers	318,638	333,240	454,578
Diving Ducks	232,878	112,167	215,821
<b>Total Ducks</b>	<b>740,591</b>	<b>680,344</b>	<b>918,313</b>

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

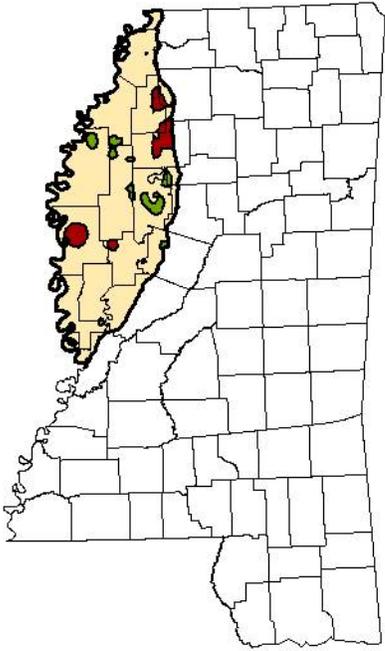


# Distribution of Total Ducks in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 21 - Jan. 23, 2011

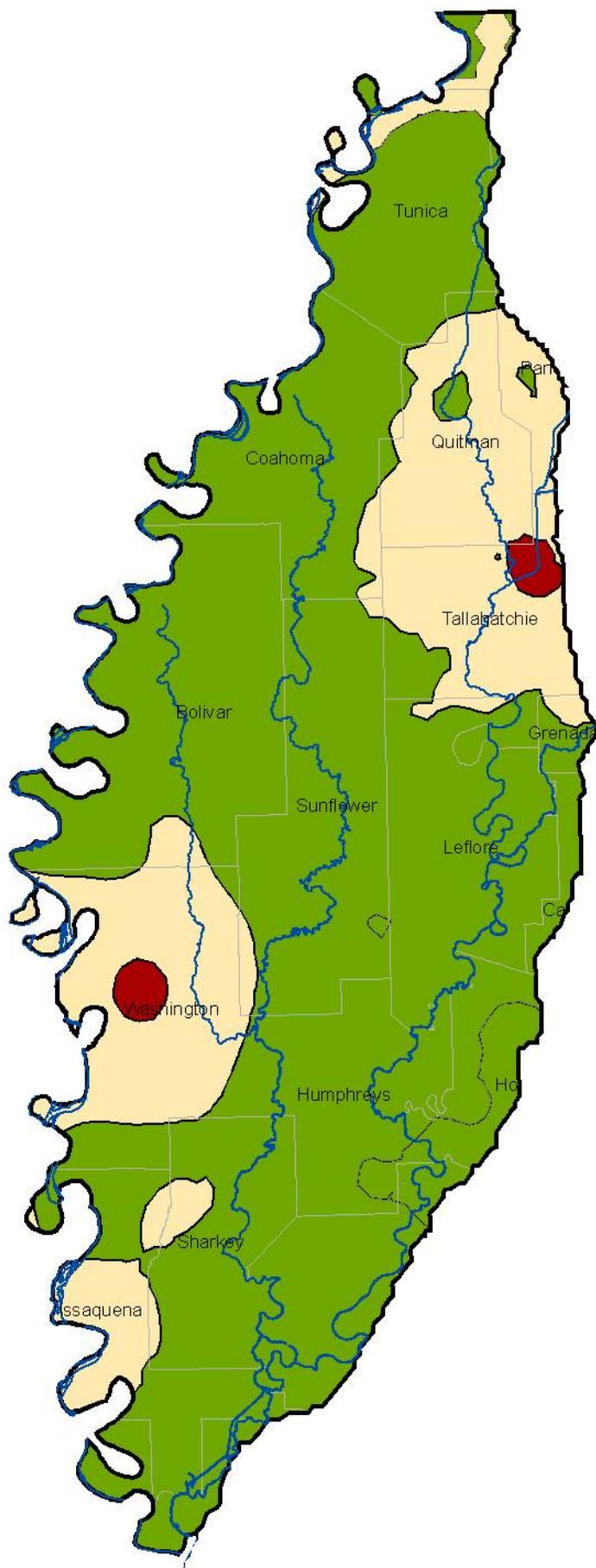


### Description

- Low (<math>< 12/\text{mi}^2</math>)
- Medium (12-115/<math>\text{mi}^2</math>)
- High (>115/<math>\text{mi}^2</math>)

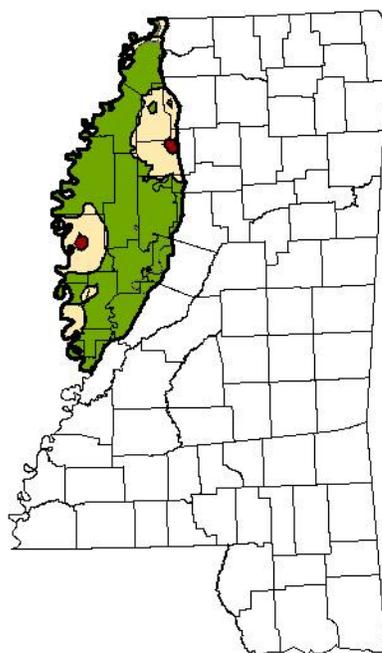


# Distribution of Mallards in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 21 - Jan. 23, 2011

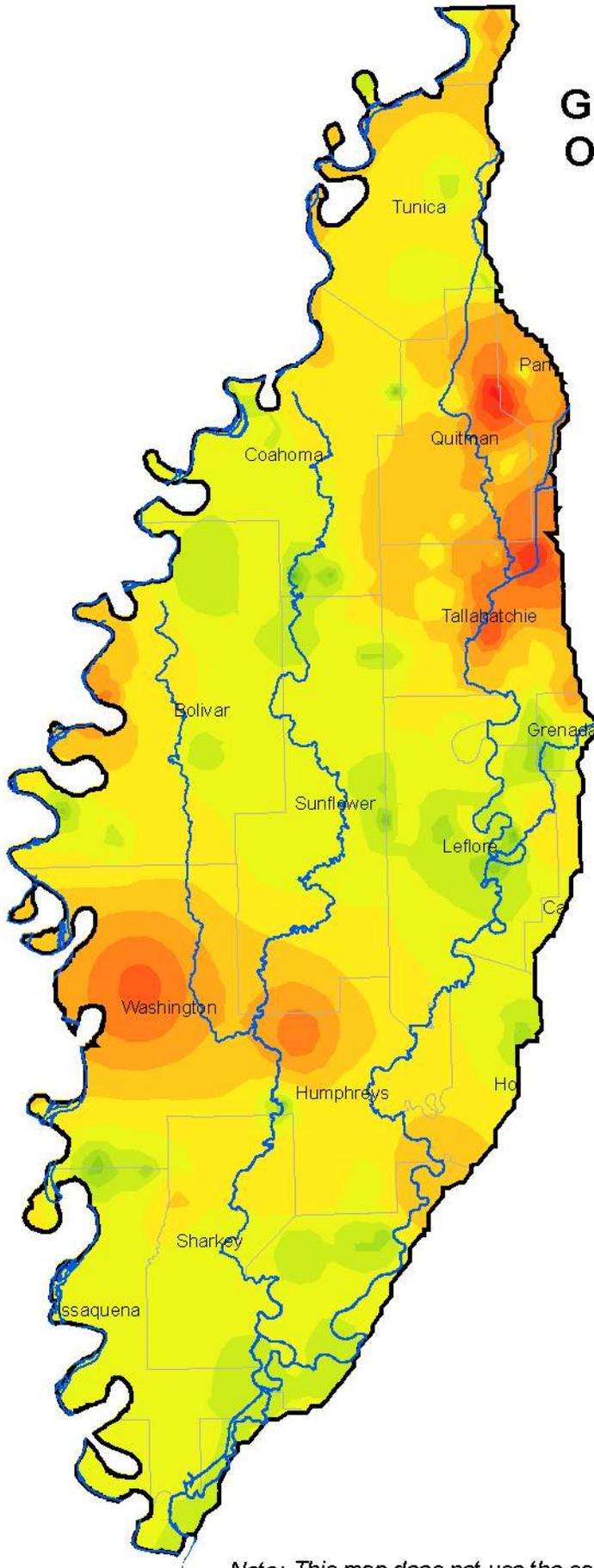


## Description

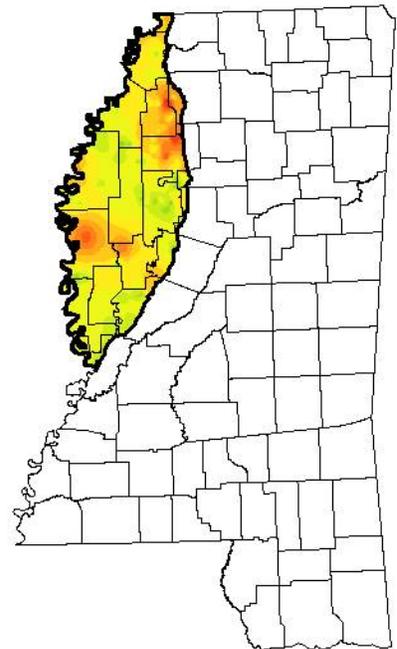
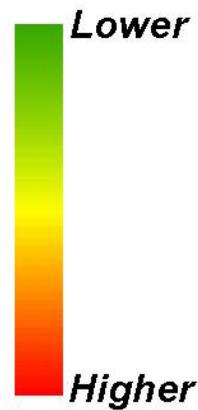
- Low (<12/mi<sup>2</sup>)
- Medium (12-115/mi<sup>2</sup>)
- High (>115/mi<sup>2</sup>)



# Greatest Concentrations of Ducks Observed in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 21 - 23 , 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.*