



MDWFP Aerial Waterfowl Survey Report

January 18 - 24, 2022



WATERFOWL PROGRAM

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The fourth and final MDWFP aerial waterfowl survey of the season was flown January 18 – 24, 2022. As has been the case the entire fall and winter, wetland habitat availability across the Mississippi Delta was below normal levels for this time of year. Although shallow, managed water has incrementally increased with each survey since November, the Mississippi River and interior Delta river systems have remained below their flood stages. These river systems have provided little or no natural, overbank flooding throughout the hunting season and river levels have fallen over the past week. As usual, wetland habitat availability generally increased as survey transects moved further northeast in the Delta region during this survey.

In contrast to previous years, estimates for all groups of ducks declined from their early January peaks. Estimates for mallards, other dabbling ducks, diving ducks, and total ducks all remained below their respective long-term averages for late January (Tables 1 and 2). However, it is worth noting that Mississippi experienced several days of freezing temperatures during this survey, which may have shifted ducks to “non-traditional” wetlands such as large reservoirs to the east of the Mississippi Delta. Mallards and other dabblers made up nearly 80% of all duck observations, while diving duck estimates declined after peaking in December. Mallards were the most abundant species observed, followed by gadwall and northern shovelers, and a notable increase in northern pintails was observed. Scaup and ring-necked ducks were the most abundant diving duck species observed. The northeastern portion of the Delta held the greatest abundances of mallards, other dabbling ducks, diving ducks, and total ducks overall.

Mallards and other dabblers were most observed using flooded agriculture fields, which is common for late January, as well as anytime temperatures reach below the freezing mark for several days in a row. As usual, most diving ducks were observed using aquaculture ponds and deep, permanent water bodies. In agricultural fields, ducks were commonly observed in large complexes with multiple flooded fields. Contrasting to the previous surveys, ducks were more evenly distributed across available wetland habitat, which is typical of late-season behavior. Observations of light geese (snow, blue, and Ross’) and greater white-fronted geese (commonly called specklebellies) remained high, particularly in the northern half of the Mississippi Delta region.

The final week of Mississippi’s regular waterfowl hunting season has arrived, with the final day coming on Monday, January 31. However, hunters are reminded to take advantage of the additional waterfowling opportunities for youth, veterans, and active military personnel February 5 – 6. Abundant hunting opportunities also remain during the light goose conservation order February 1 – 4 and February 7 – March 31. Local weather conditions are predicted to be cool and clear in the coming days, followed by a warmup on Sunday and Monday to wrap up the regular season.

For more information on waterfowl and wetland habitat, visit the MDWFP Waterfowl Program website at <http://www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl>.

Table 1. Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the late January survey periods, 2008-2022.

	Mallards	Dabblers	Divers	Total Ducks
2008	110,476	182,869	70,396	363,741
2009	262,235	318,638	232,878	740,591
2010	234,937	333,240	112,167	680,344
2011	247,913	454,578	215,821	918,313
2012	278,205	436,996	199,926	915,127
2013	146,782	273,905	83,119	503,806
2014	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2015	162,098	356,993	82,733	596,092
2016	307,177	482,843	206,983	997,003
2017	267,078	483,037	106,419	815,903
2018	334,140	516,240	45,587	895,968
2019	151,742	309,696	74,525	532,413
2020	252,276	507,754	106,770	839,005
2021	183,868	209,731	44,407	438,006
2022	138,551	222,967	99,631	461,149
Average	219,820	363,535	120,097	692,676

Figure 1. Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the five most recent late January survey periods.

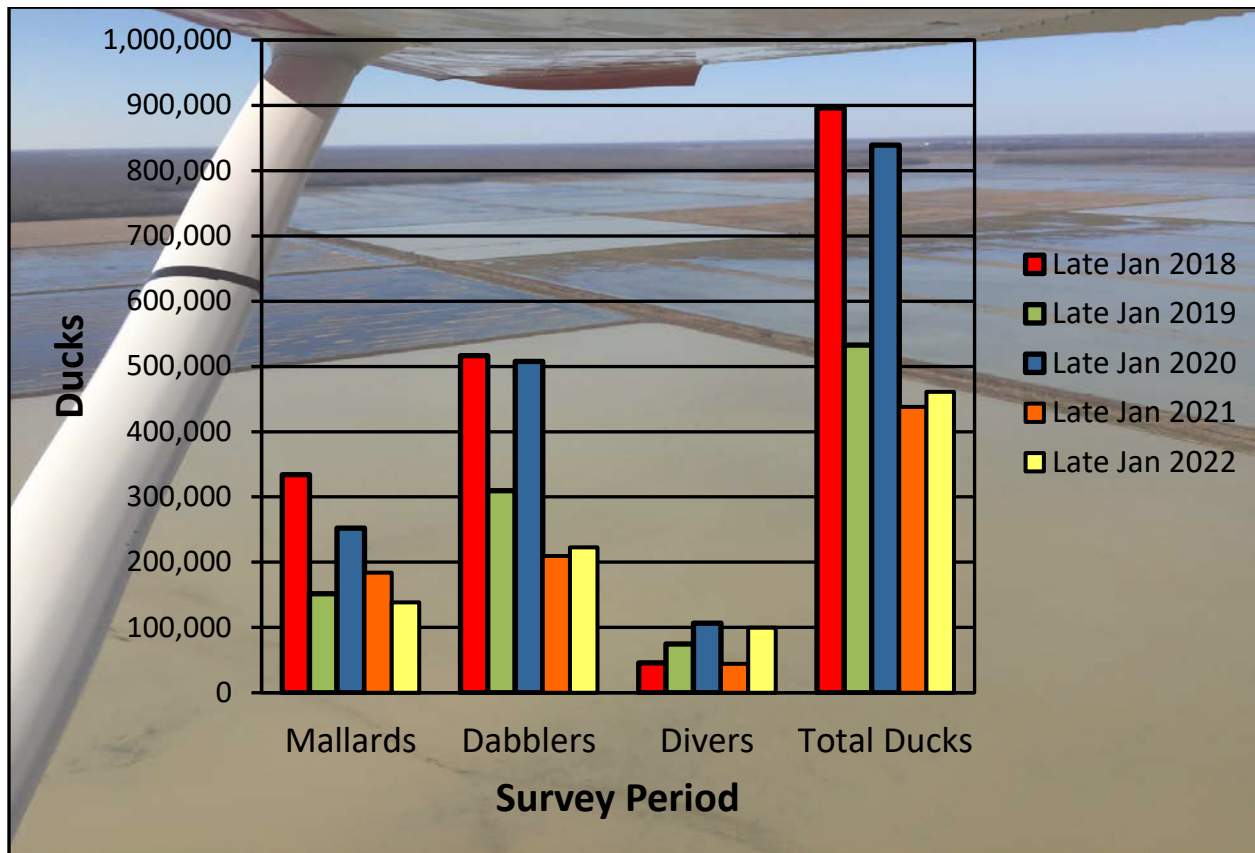


Table 2. Comparison of late January 2022 aerial waterfowl survey estimates to the long-term average (LTA) for late January survey estimates.

Species Group	Late Jan 2022	Late Jan LTA	% Change from LTA
Mallards	138,551	219,820	-37.0%
Other Dabblers	222,967	363,535	-38.7%
Diving Ducks	99,631	120,097	-17.0%
Total Ducks	461,149	692,676	-33.4%

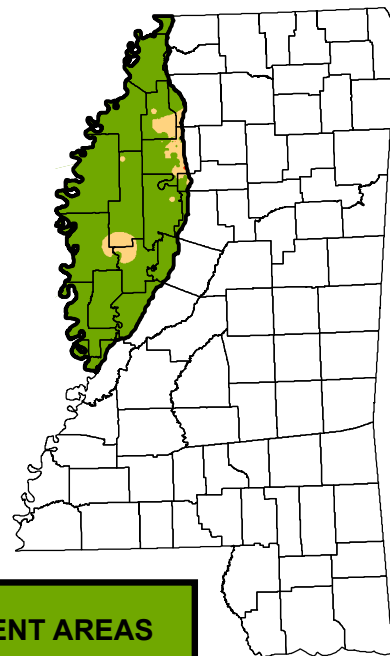
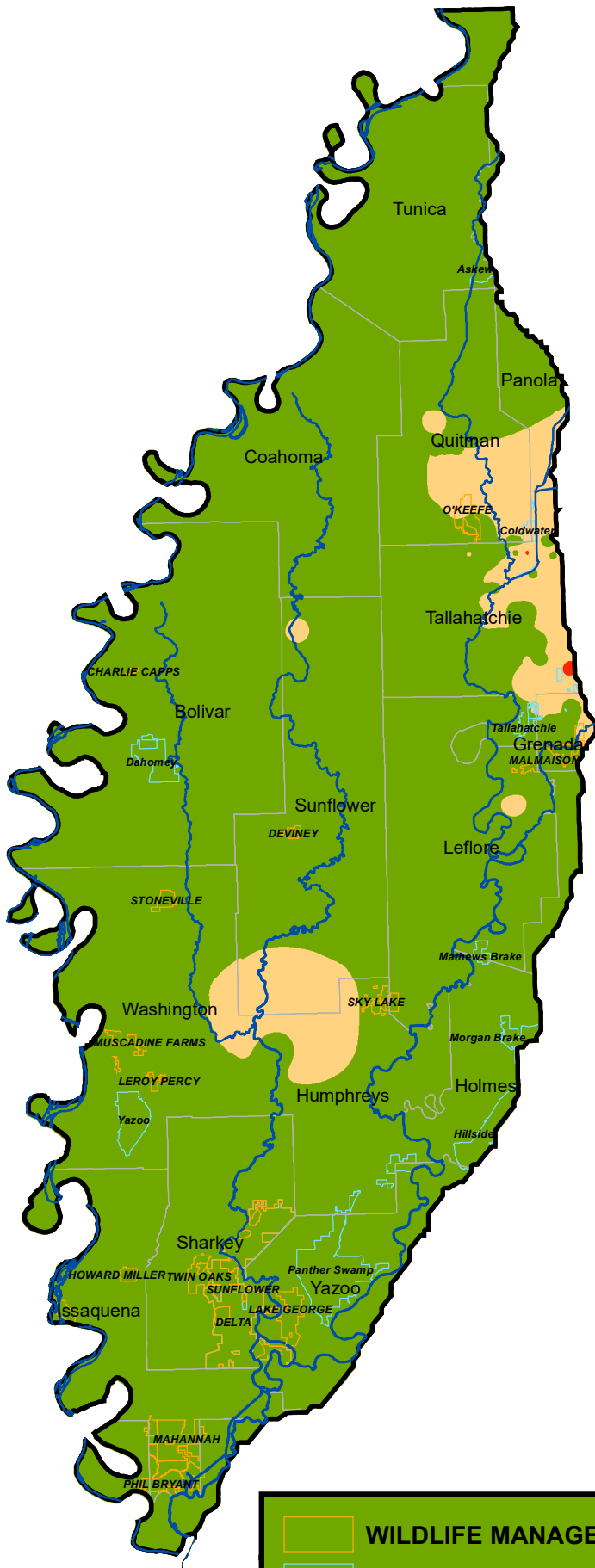
Distribution of Mallards in the Mississippi Delta

Jan. 18 - 24, 2022



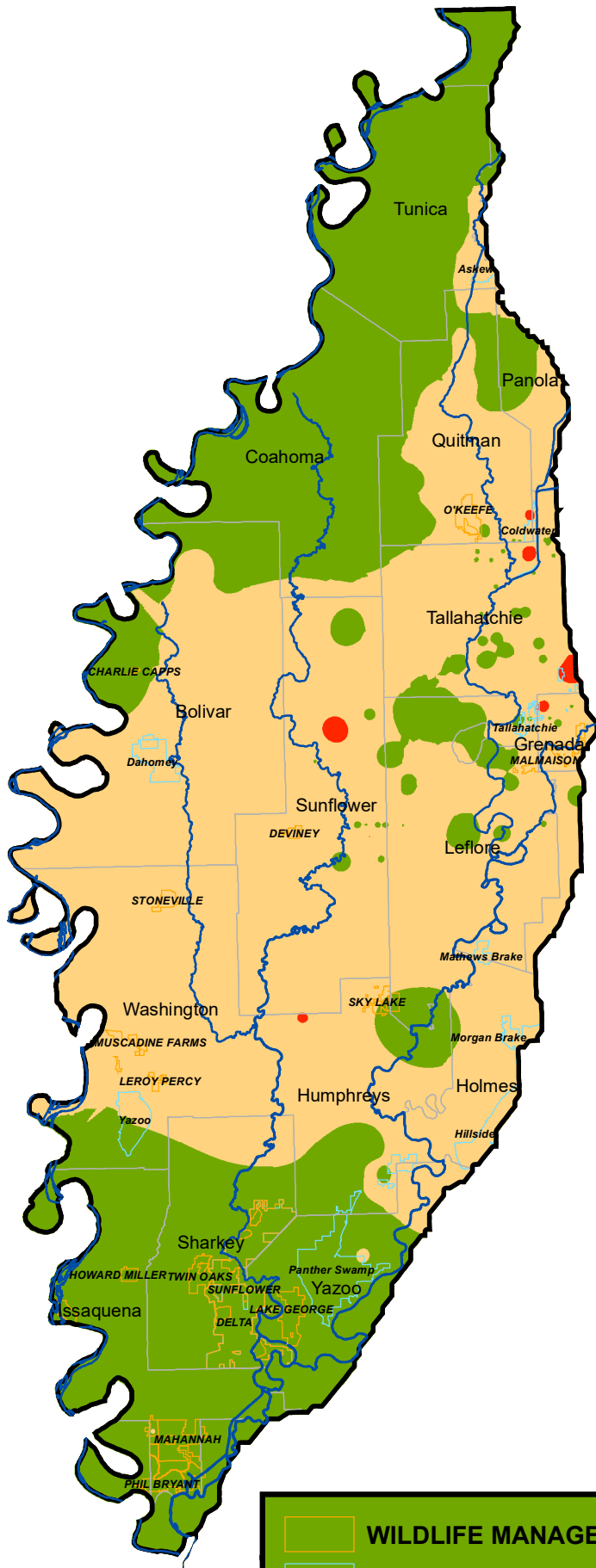
Description

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



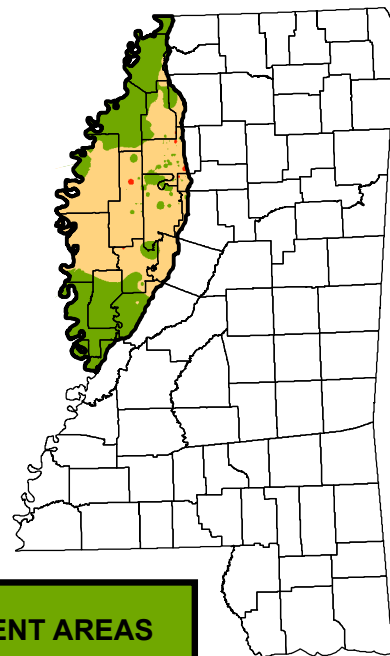
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- NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

Distribution of Total Ducks in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 18 - 24, 2022



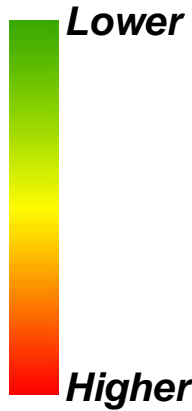
Description

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



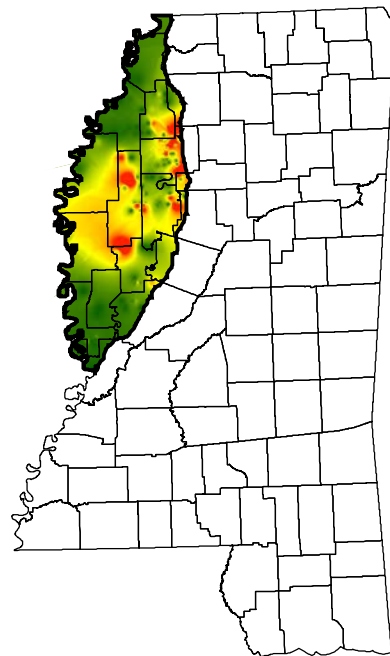
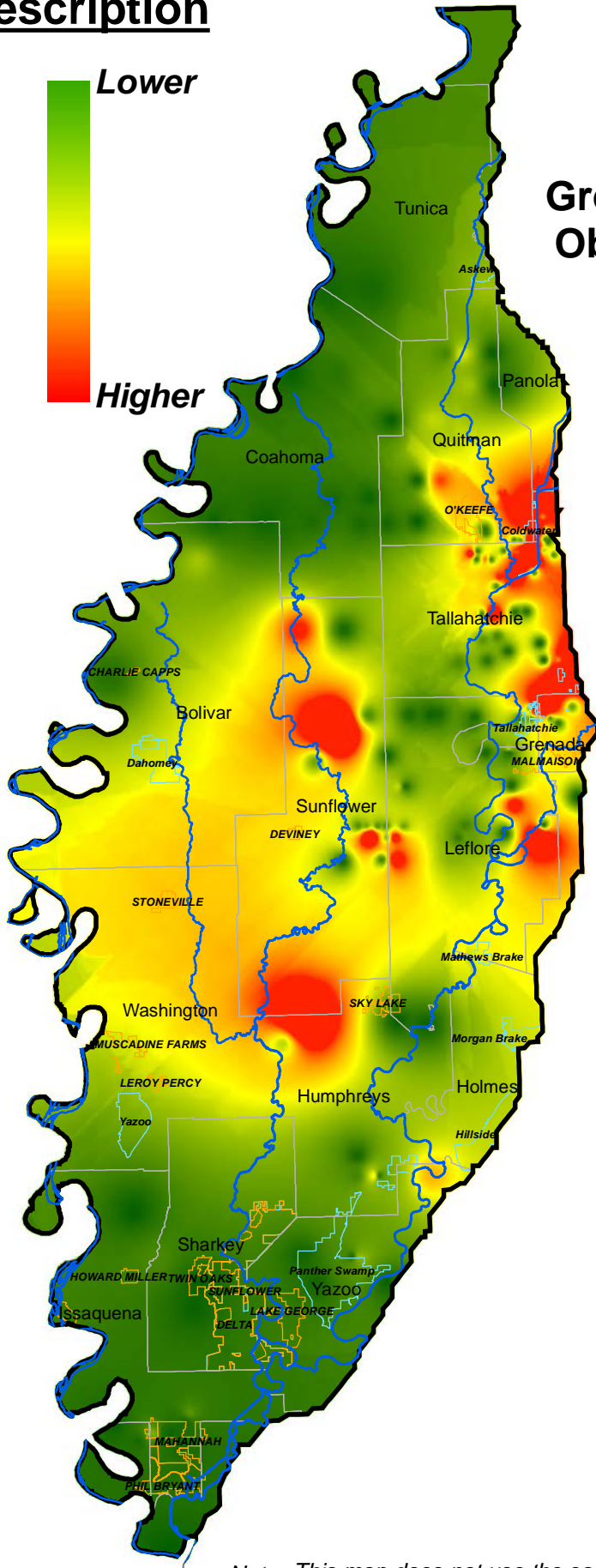
- WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS
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Description



WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

Greatest Concentrations of Ducks Observed in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 18 - 24, 2022

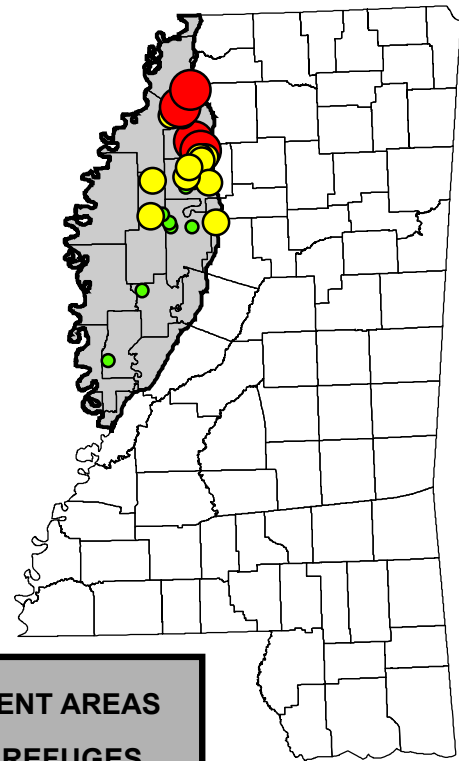
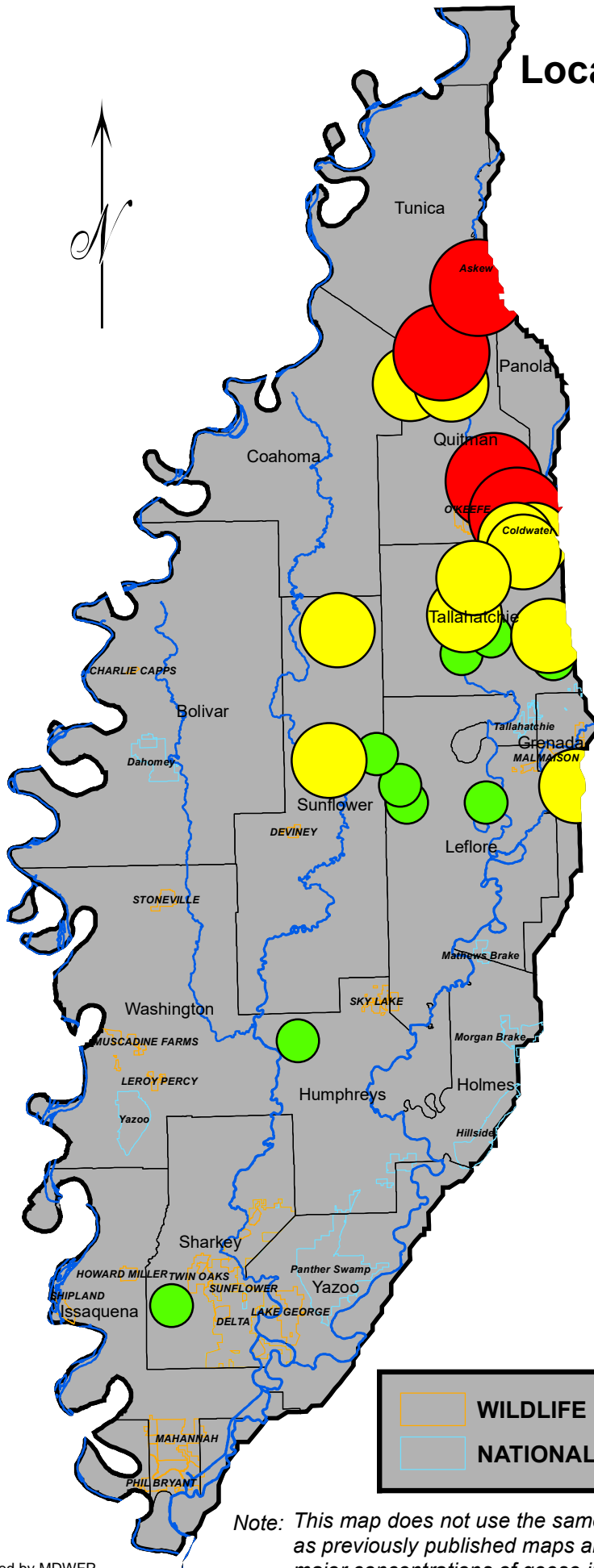
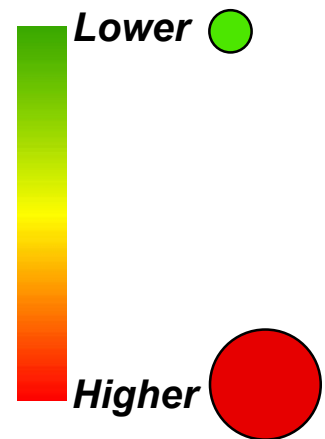


Note: This map does not use the same area calculations as previously published maps and is intended to illustrate major concentrations of ducks in the Mississippi Delta.

Locations and relative size of light goose flocks in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 18 - 24, 2022



Description



WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS
 NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

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