



# MDWFP Aerial Waterfowl Survey Report

December 18 - 20, 2019



**WATERFOWL PROGRAM**

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The mid-December MDWFP aerial waterfowl survey occurred the week of December 18 – 20. Building upon the wet start to the hunting season in November and similar to last December, wetland habitat availability remained well above the “normal” levels typically observed during December surveys. Shallowly managed water was observed across much of the Mississippi Delta as a result of landowners and managers capturing recent rainfall. As in most years, flooded habitat availability generally increased as survey transects moved further northeast in the Mississippi Delta. Water levels remained relatively high in most drainages, creeks, and rivers, with some “natural” over-bank flooding observed in a few areas. Water levels in the Mississippi River are currently high and are providing significant waterfowl habitat and hunting opportunities.

Despite increases since the November survey, December duck abundance estimates were similar to or below recent years’ December estimates for the Mississippi Delta region (Table 1 and Figure 1). Estimates for all ducks were also lower than their long-term averages (Table 2). Arkansas also recently reported below-average duck numbers for December. Dabblers other than mallards comprised about 45% of all duck observations, which is typical for this time of year in Mississippi. Mallards were by far the most abundant dabbling duck species observed overall, showing a significant increase from November to December. Gadwall and green-winged teal were the next most abundant dabbling duck species observed. Scaup were the most abundant diving duck species observed. The weather forecast for the week ahead predicts warm and rainy weather, with more seasonable temperatures expected early next week.

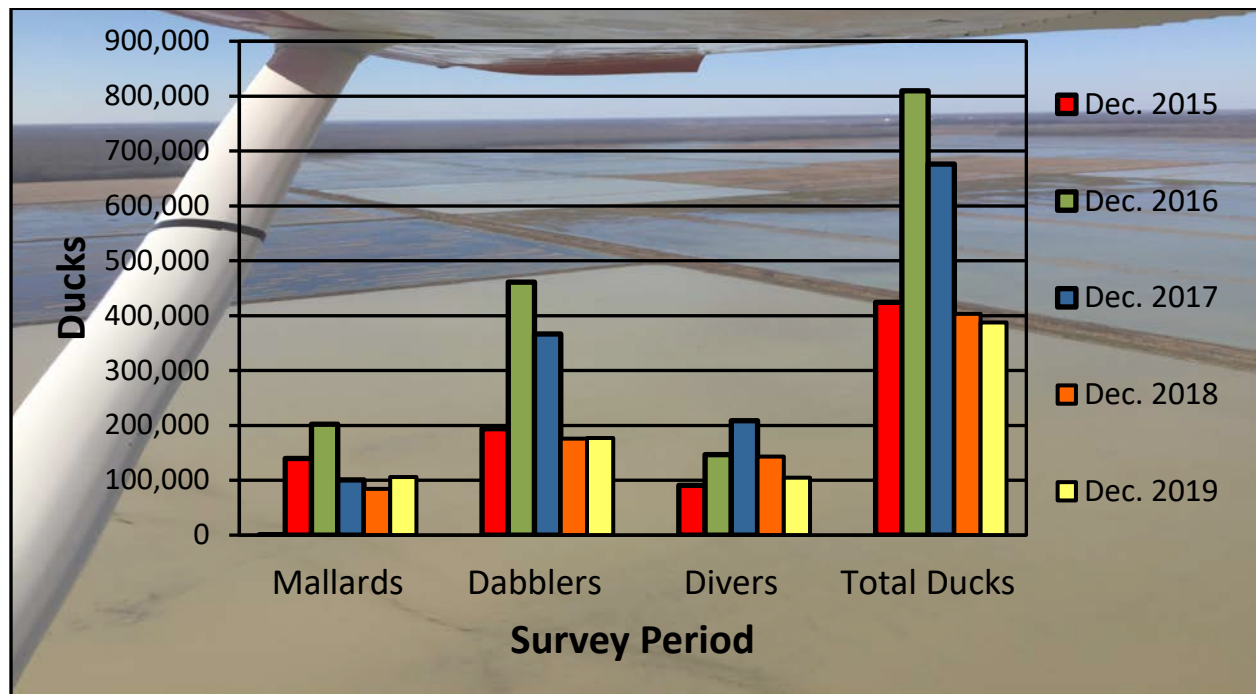
The northeastern portion of the Delta held the greatest abundances of mallards, other dabblers, and total ducks overall. The greatest abundances of diving ducks were observed in the southeastern region. Most large concentrations of geese were observed in the north half of the Delta. Mallards and other dabbling ducks were relatively concentrated in large social groups using flooded agricultural fields and moist-soil habitat (natural vegetation such as grasses and sedges) on intensively managed public and private lands. Most diving ducks were observed heavily using large catfish pond complexes. As expected, duck abundance was greatest in areas where large complexes of wetland habitat were available.

Mississippi’s duck season is nearing the midpoint, and the regular duck and goose hunting seasons will continue through January 31, 2019. WMA waterfowl draw hunt applications are now open for the fifth and final draw period of the season. Applications can be submitted at <https://xnet2.mdwfp.com/drawings/public/WmaDrawingsV3.aspx>. For weekly waterfowl reports and more information on the MDWFP Waterfowl Program, visit our website at <http://www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl>.

**Table 1.** Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the December survey periods, 2007-2019.

	<b>Mallards</b>	<b>Dabblers</b>	<b>Divers</b>	<b>Total Ducks</b>
2007-08	50,368	75,604	41,738	167,710
2008-09	223,976	389,939	70,750	684,665
2009-10	116,748	209,346	74,396	400,491
2010-11	210,531	388,064	236,966	835,561
2011-12	136,776	281,560	111,423	529,758
2012-13	122,779	176,950	171,542	471,271
2013-14	230,634	638,386	100,412	969,432
2014-15	86,838	331,460	102,117	520,415
2015-16	139,805	193,719	90,958	424,482
2016-17	202,135	460,752	146,707	809,594
2017-18	100,389	366,802	208,749	675,940
2018-19	84,032	176,070	143,417	403,519
2019-20	105,827	176,863	104,843	387,533
<b>Average</b>	<b>139,295</b>	<b>297,347</b>	<b>123,386</b>	<b>560,029</b>

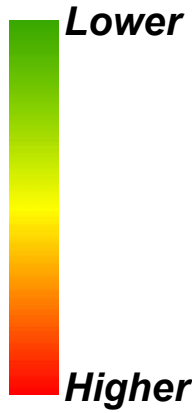
**Figure 1.** Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the five most recent December survey periods.



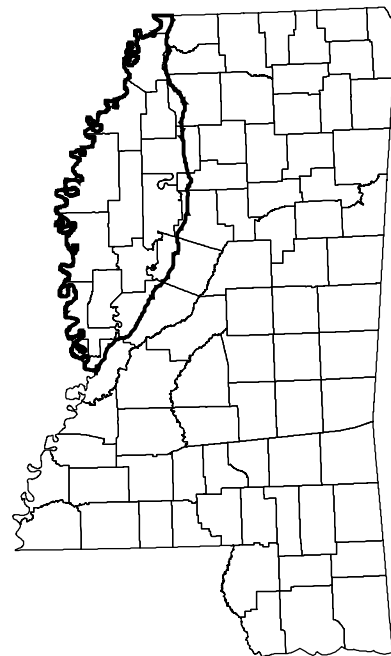
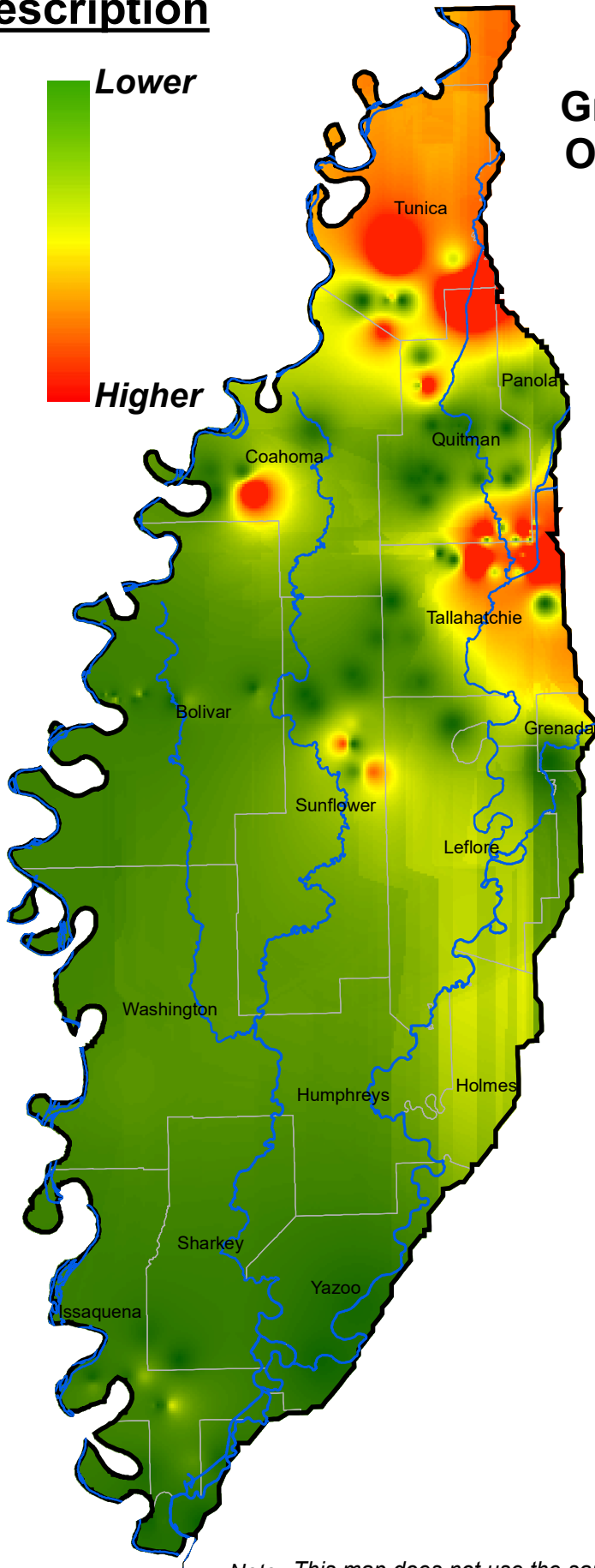
**Table 2.** Comparison of December 2019 aerial waterfowl survey estimates to the long-term average (LTA) for December survey estimates.

Species Group	December 2019	December LTA	% Change from LTA
Mallards	105,827	139,295	-24.0%
Other Dabblers	176,863	297,347	-40.5%
Diving Ducks	104,843	123,386	-15.0%
<b>Total Ducks</b>	<b>387,533</b>	<b>560,029</b>	<b>-30.8%</b>

# Description



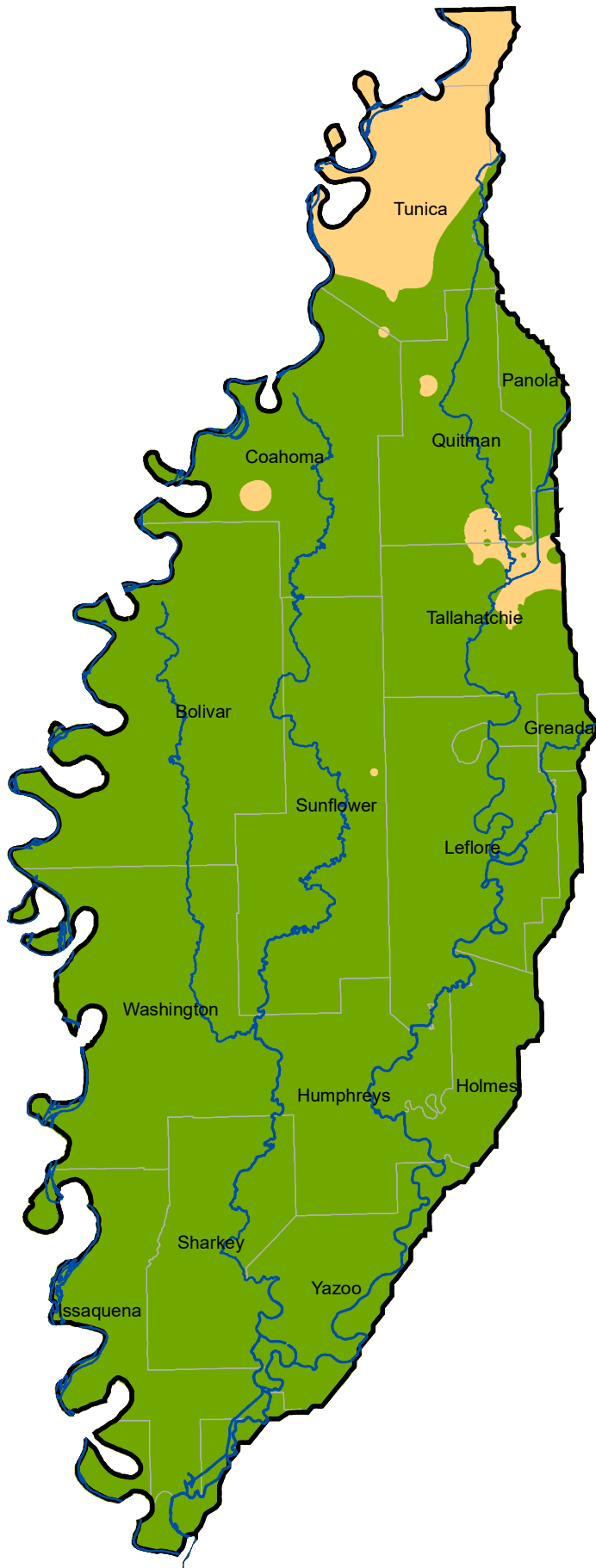
## Greatest Concentrations of Ducks Observed in the Mississippi Delta Dec. 18 - 20, 2019



*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.*

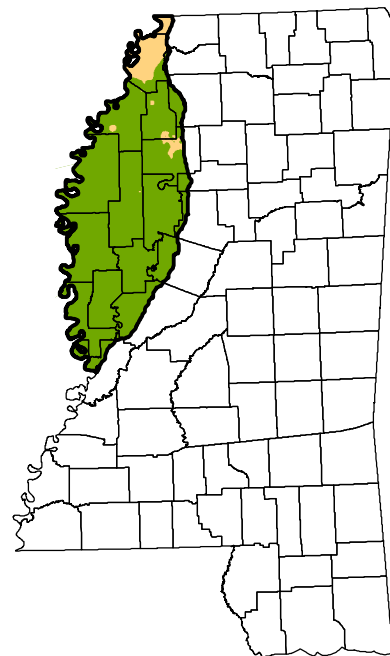
# Distribution of Mallards in the Mississippi Delta

## Dec. 18 - 20, 2019



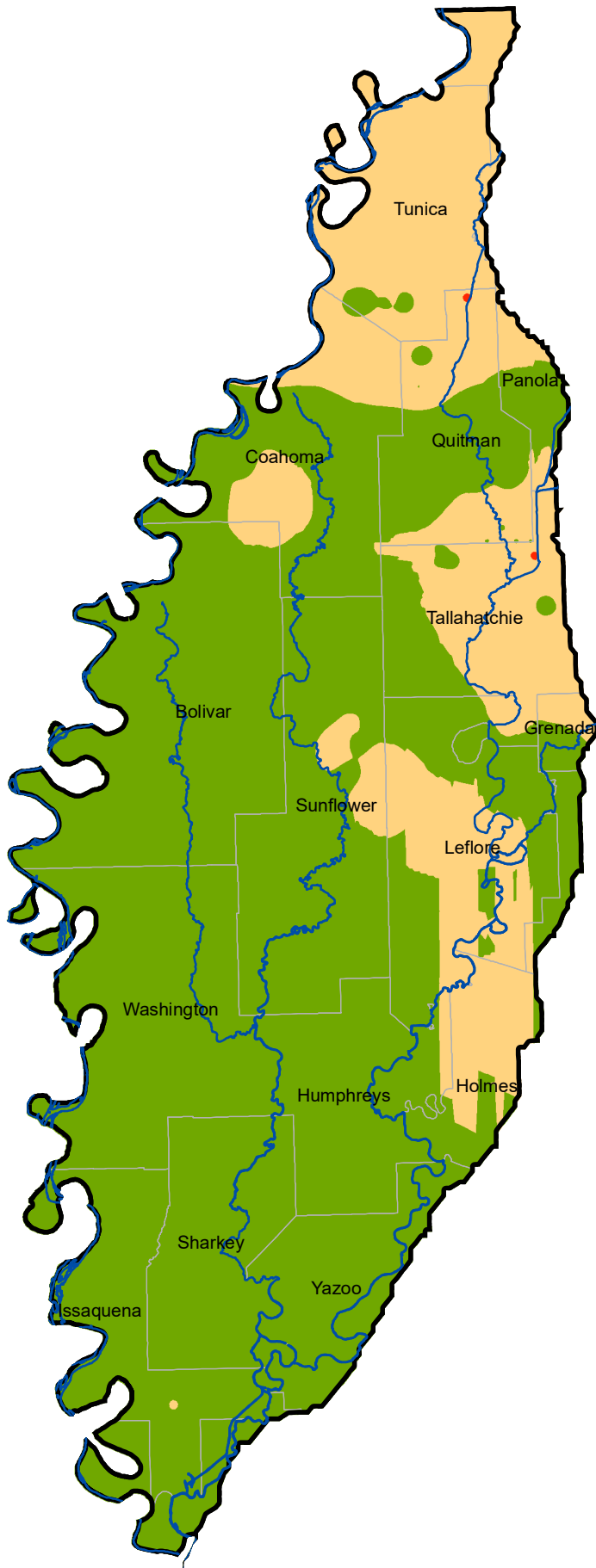
### Description

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



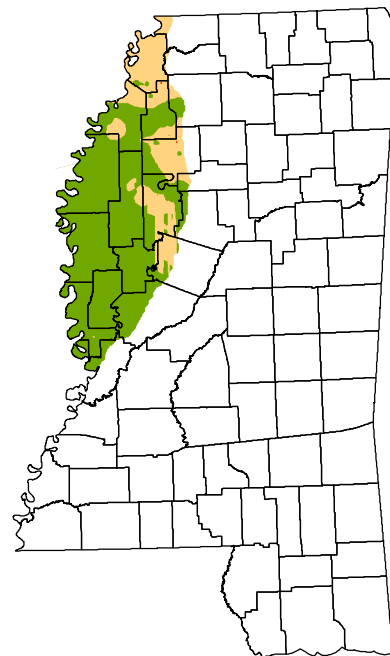
# Distribution of Total Ducks in the Mississippi Delta

## Dec, 18 - 20, 2019

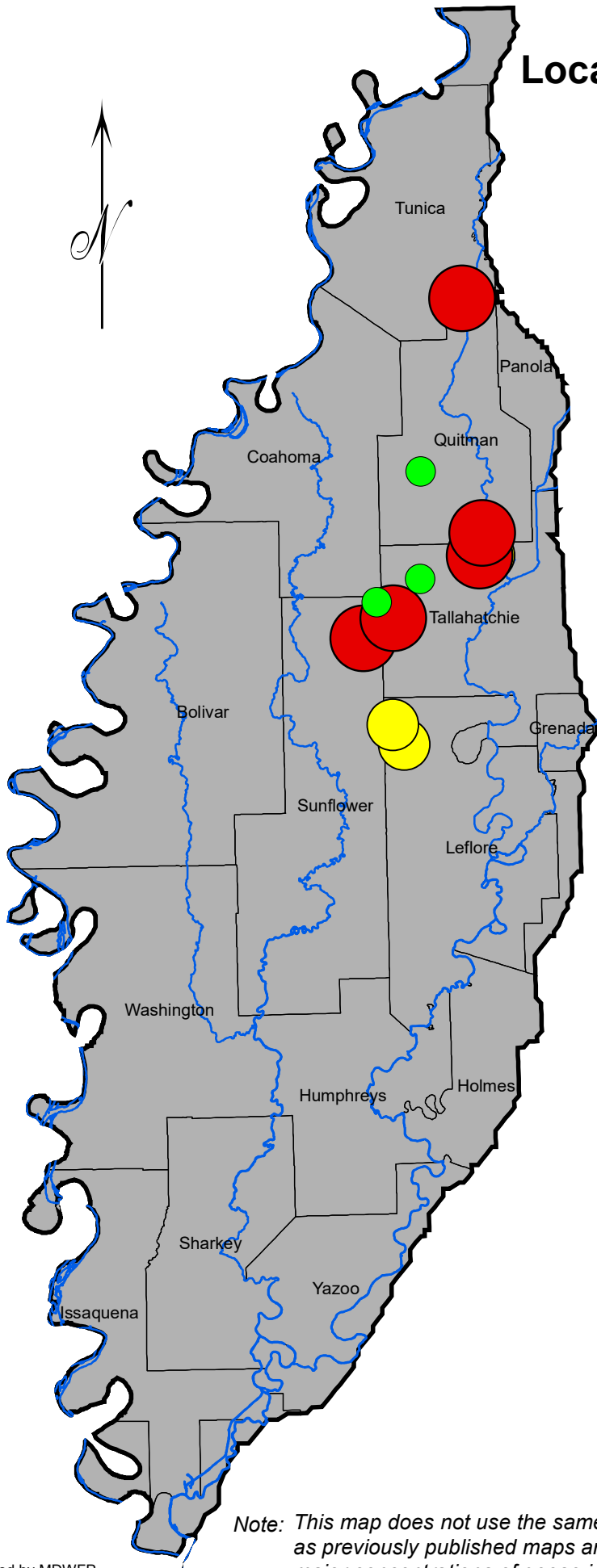


### Description

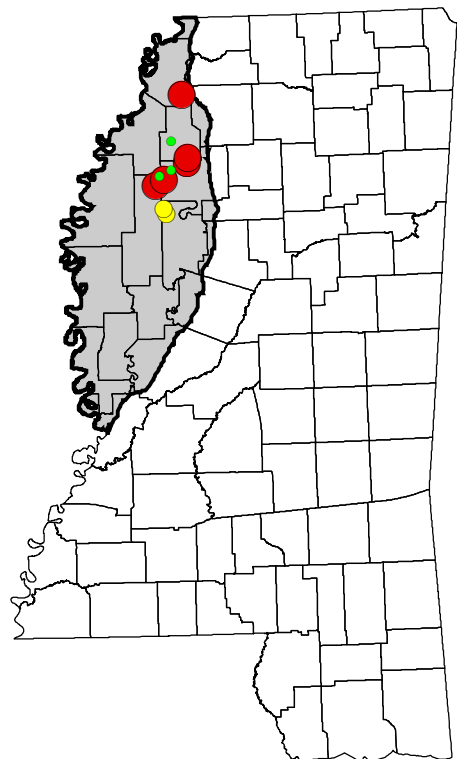
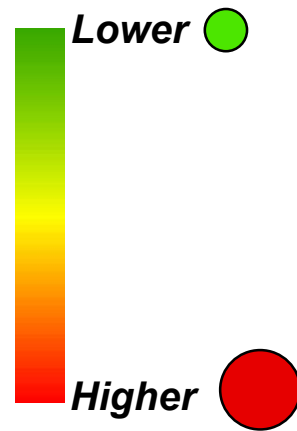
- Low (<math>< 12 \text{ ducks/mi}^2</math>)
- Medium (<math>12-115 \text{ ducks/mi}^2</math>)
- High (>math>115 \text{ ducks/mi}^2</math>)



# Locations and relative size of light goose flocks in the Mississippi Delta Dec. 18 - 20, 2019



## Description



*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.*