



MDWFP Aerial Waterfowl Survey Report

November 13 - 18, 2019



WATERFOWL PROGRAM

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The first MDWFP aerial waterfowl survey of the season occurred November 13 – 18, 2019. Despite the wet spring and summer, wetland habitat availability appeared to be only slightly above average for November. While natural wetlands and river levels were higher than normal for this time of year, seasonally managed water was still noticeably absent in many areas of the Mississippi Delta. Due to the lack of managed water in many areas, several MDWFP Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and other publicly managed lands with water management capabilities are currently attracting more waterfowl than their surrounding landscapes. Abundant opportunity remains for private landowners to capture rainfall with water control structures as fall and winter continue. As in most years, number of managed, flooded impoundments generally increased as survey transects moved further northeast in the Mississippi Delta. Temperatures were well below normal during the first day of the survey, resulting in icy conditions which likely impacted bird distributions and observability while surveying the North Delta.

The total duck abundance estimate for the Mississippi Delta was greater than the long-term average for November surveys, as was the diving duck estimate (Tables 1 and 2). However, estimates for mallards and other dabbling ducks were lower than the long-term average for November surveys. Mallards and other dabblers comprised about 46% of all duck observations, while diving ducks made up the majority of observations (54%). Gadwall and northern shovelers were the two most abundant dabbling duck species observed overall. Scaup and ruddy ducks were the most abundant diving duck species observed. The northeastern portion of the Delta contained the greatest abundances of mallards, other dabblers, and total ducks overall. The greatest abundances of diving ducks were observed in the southeastern region.

As expected, mallards and other dabblers were observed most commonly using flooded areas of agricultural fields. Ducks were commonly observed in large complexes with multiple flooded fields. A large number of dabbling ducks were also observed using semi-permanent or permanent wetlands with aquatic vegetation. In general, ducks were not evenly distributed across available wetland habitat. Instead, ducks were observed together in relatively large groups, which is typical of early-season behavior. Biologists speculate that ducks will soon begin to distribute further as they find additional wetlands with decreased competition for food. Several large concentrations of light geese (snow, blue, and Ross') and greater white-fronted geese (commonly called specklebellies) were observed during this survey.

With the regular waterfowl hunting season set to open November 29, MDWFP biologists are optimistic that WMAs will continue to attract and hold waterfowl for a great start to the season. Youth hunters, as well as veterans and active military personnel, got their first chance at duck hunting for the year on Saturday, November 16 and many WMAs offered quality hunting opportunities to begin the season. Temperatures are currently forecasted to remain mild with significant chances of rainfall through most of next week. However, the extended forecast shows cooler temperatures resuming by early December. Weather severity index models for waterfowl migration predict no significant migrations for mallards over the next week.

WMA waterfowl draw hunt applications are now open for the third 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 November survey periods, 2007-2019.

	Mallards	Dabblers	Divers	Total Ducks
2007-08	25,872	34,241	27,992	88,106
2008-09	30,748	96,245	105,089	232,081
2009-10	24,281	137,996	77,839	240,117
2010-11	10,481	70,123	100,740	181,344
2011-12	43,845	183,823	80,928	308,596
2012-13	No survey	No survey	No survey	No survey
2013-14	No survey	No survey	No survey	No survey
2014-15	88,005	229,810	79,400	397,215
2015-16	30,933	57,702	54,167	142,802
2016-17	36,540	212,469	124,240	373,249
2017-18	88,019	303,472	109,101	500,591
2018-19	55,258	103,181	55,932	214,371
2019-20	26,866	123,036	178,488	328,390
Average	43,398	142,906	81,543	267,847

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

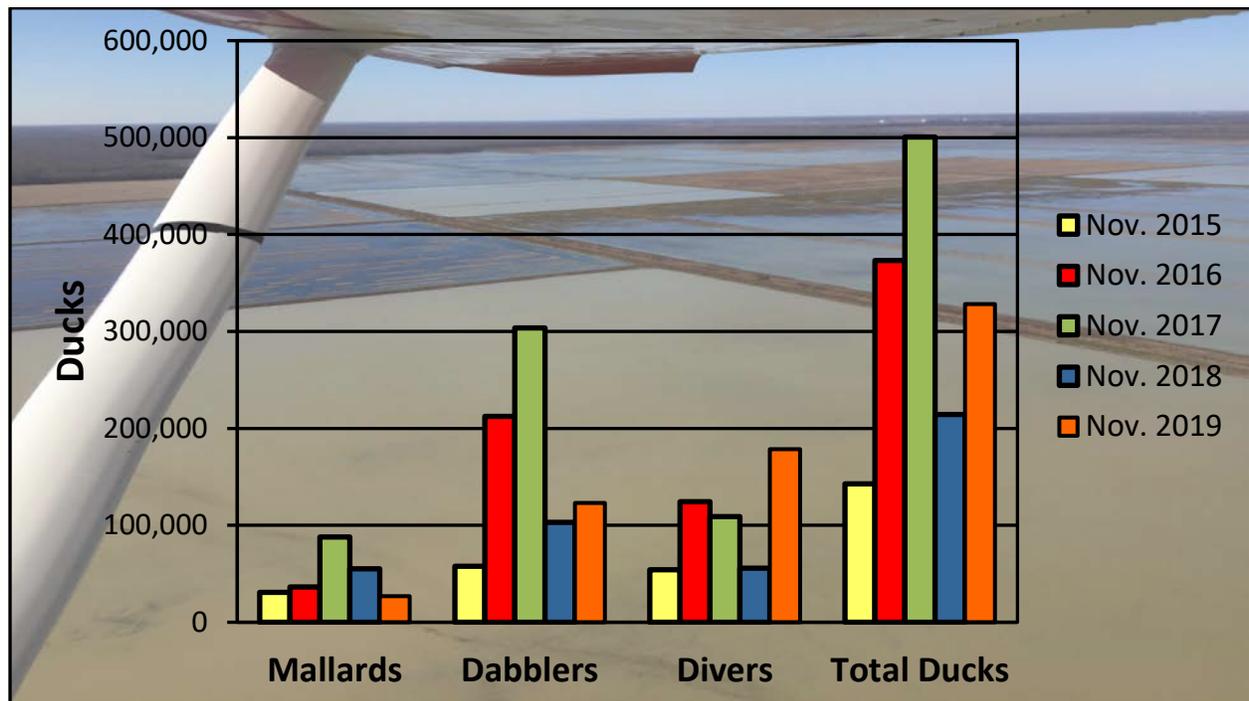
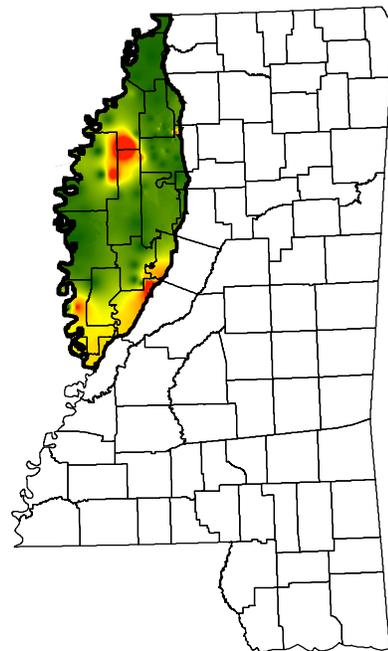
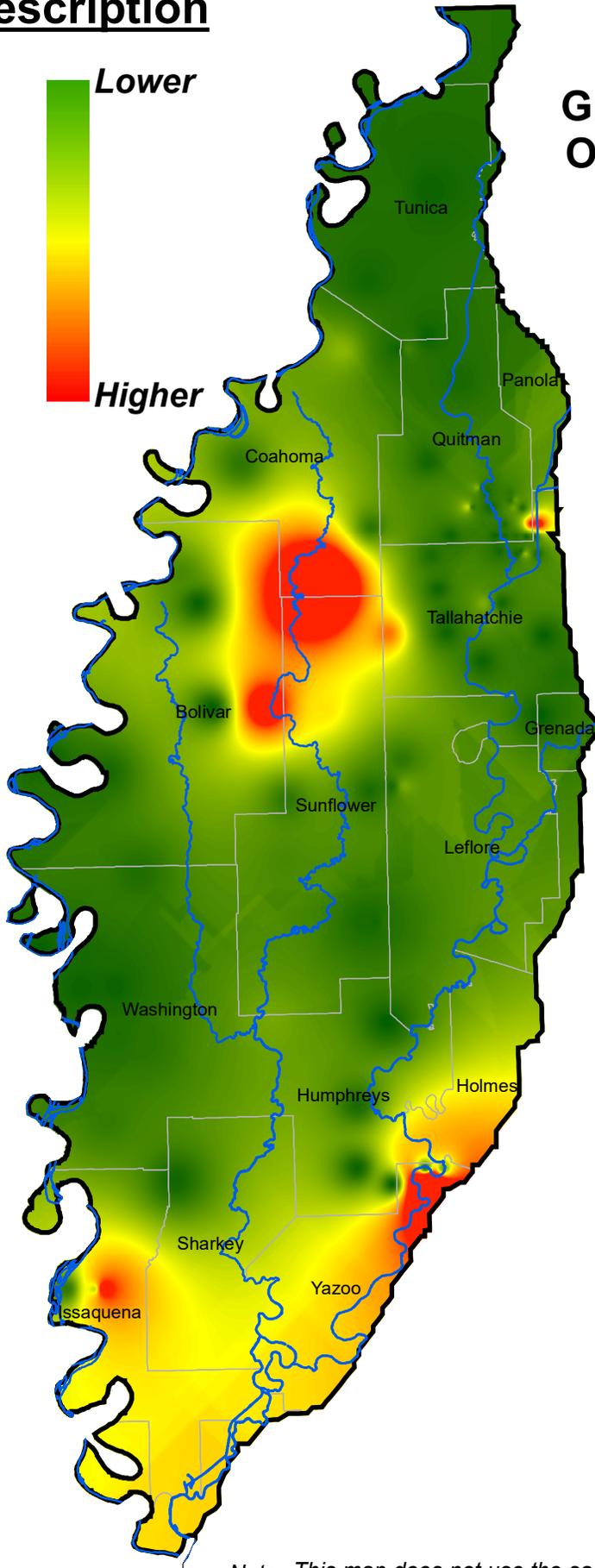


Table 2. Comparison of November 2019 aerial waterfowl survey estimates to the long-term average (LTA) for November survey estimates.

Species Group	November 2019	November LTA	% Change from LTA
Mallards	26,866	41,895	-35.9%
Other Dabblers	123,036	141,100	-12.9%
Diving Ducks	178,488	90,356	+97.5%
Total Ducks	328,390	273,351	+20.2%

Description

Greatest Concentrations of Ducks Observed in the Mississippi Delta Nov. 13-18, 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.

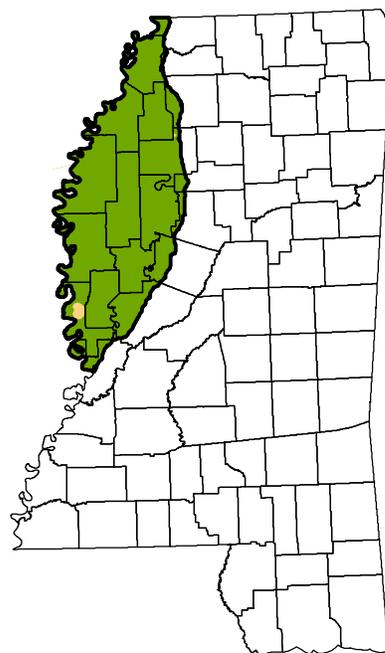
Distribution of Mallards in the Mississippi Delta

Nov. 13-18, 2019



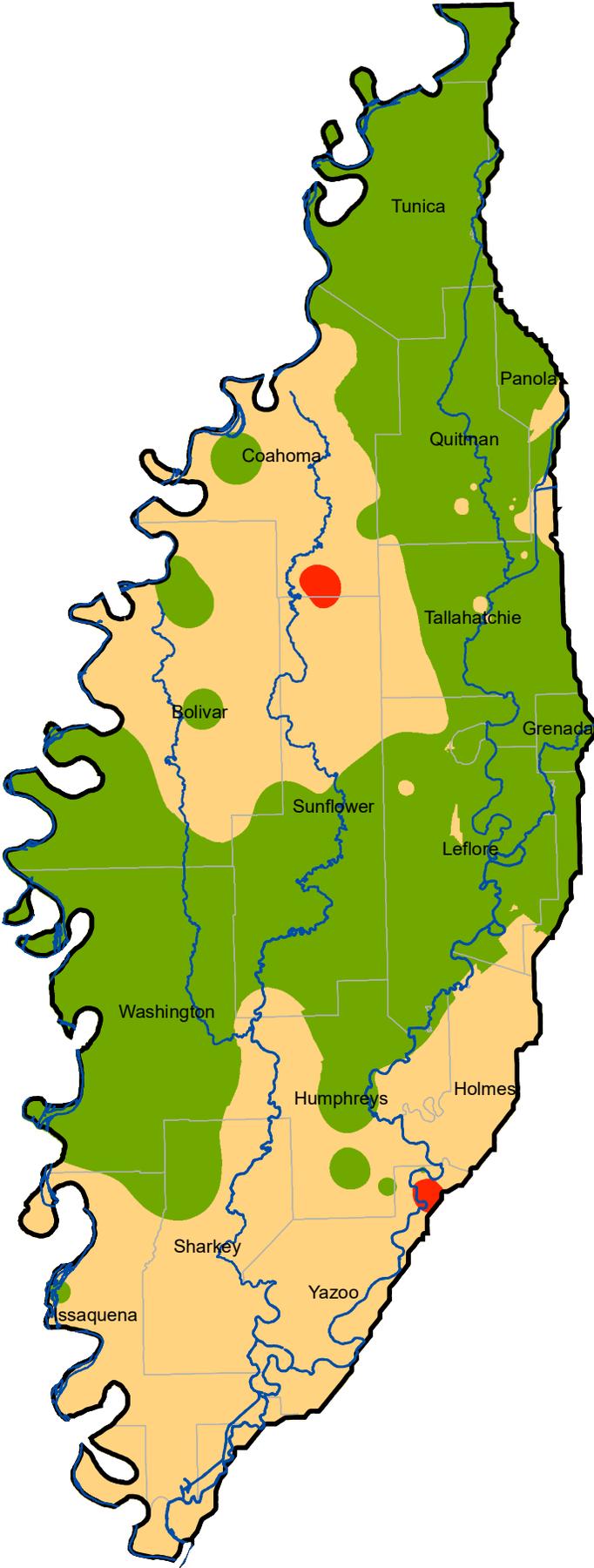
Description

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



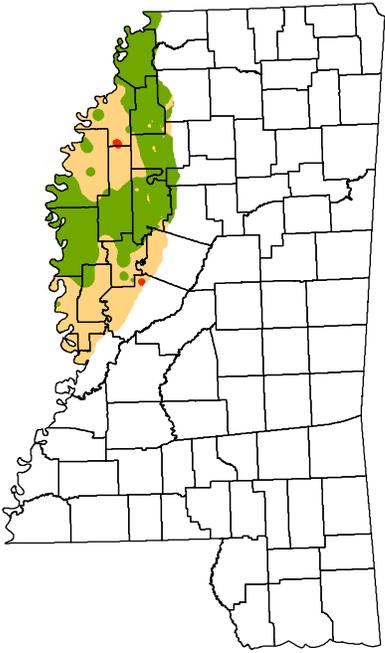
Distribution of Total Ducks in the Mississippi Delta

Nov. 13-18, 2019

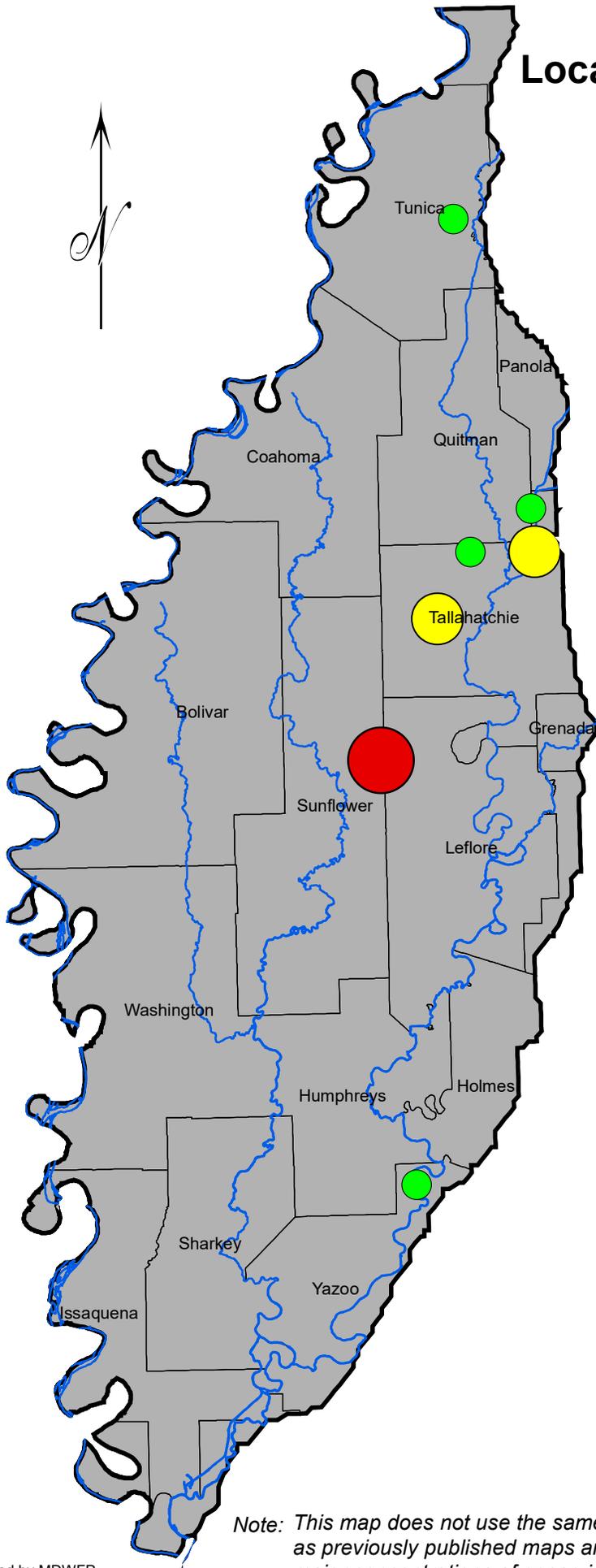


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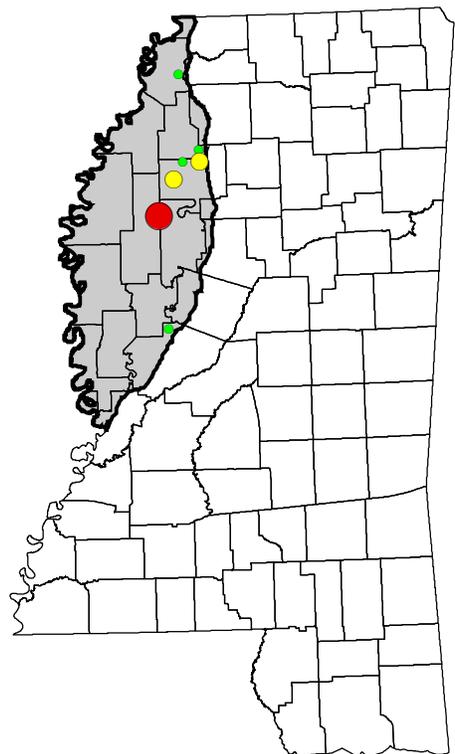
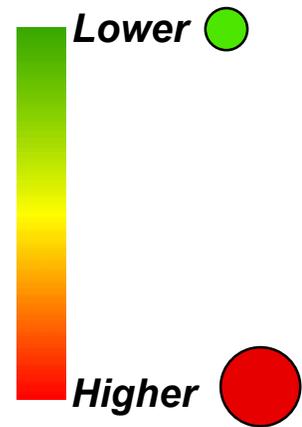
- Low (<12/mi²)
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Locations and relative size of light goose flocks in the Mississippi Delta Nov. 13-18, 2019



Description



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