



MDWFP Aerial Waterfowl Survey Report

January 2 - 10, 2024



WATERFOWL PROGRAM

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The third of four planned MDWFP aerial waterfowl surveys for the season occurred January 2 – 10, 2024. At the time of this survey, very little rainfall had been received over much of the Mississippi Delta since our last survey in mid-December. As a result, wetland habitat availability remained extremely low, and in some areas, had decreased since December. Public lands continue to provide a large portion of intensively managed waterfowl habitat across the state. Although some much-needed rainfall has occurred since the completion of this survey, much opportunity remains to capture rainfall with water control structures as winter continues along. Water levels in the Mississippi River are currently rising, but are still well below normal for this time of year.

No substantial increases in duck abundances were observed during this survey, as estimates remained similar to those from the December survey. Estimates for mallards, other dabblers, diving ducks, and total ducks were all well below their long-term averages for early January surveys (Tables 1 and 2). Gadwall and northern shovelers were the two most abundant dabbling duck species observed, overall. The northeast portion of the Delta, which held the greatest abundance of wetland habitat, also contained the greatest abundances of mallards and total ducks overall.

A large portion of mallards and other dabbling ducks were observed using natural moist-soil wetlands and permanent wetlands with aquatic vegetation. Most diving ducks were observed using aquaculture complexes. However, managed complexes with diverse wetland habitats typically held higher duck numbers than relatively small, isolated flooded areas. Significant rainfall will be required to increase wetland availability in many areas, particularly areas which rely on over-bank flooding of creeks and rivers. Several large concentrations of light geese (snow, blue, and Ross') and greater white-fronted geese (commonly called specklebellies) were observed during this survey. Geese were more distributed throughout the Delta than in November and December.

Peak numbers of waterfowl are typically observed in Mississippi during the month of January. Biologists and hunters are optimistic that incoming, extreme winter weather will be enough to significantly increase numbers in Mississippi before the season comes to a close on Wednesday, January 31. Similar surveys conducted in other states suggest that large numbers of waterfowl were still at northern and mid-latitudes during early January, so the potential remains for a large migration into the deep South. The last aerial waterfowl survey of the season is scheduled to begin the week of January 22. Weekly waterfowl reports will continue to include updates from Mississippi hunting reports, as well as updated weather and habitat conditions. For weekly waterfowl reports and more information on the MDWFP Waterfowl Program, visit our website at <http://www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl>.

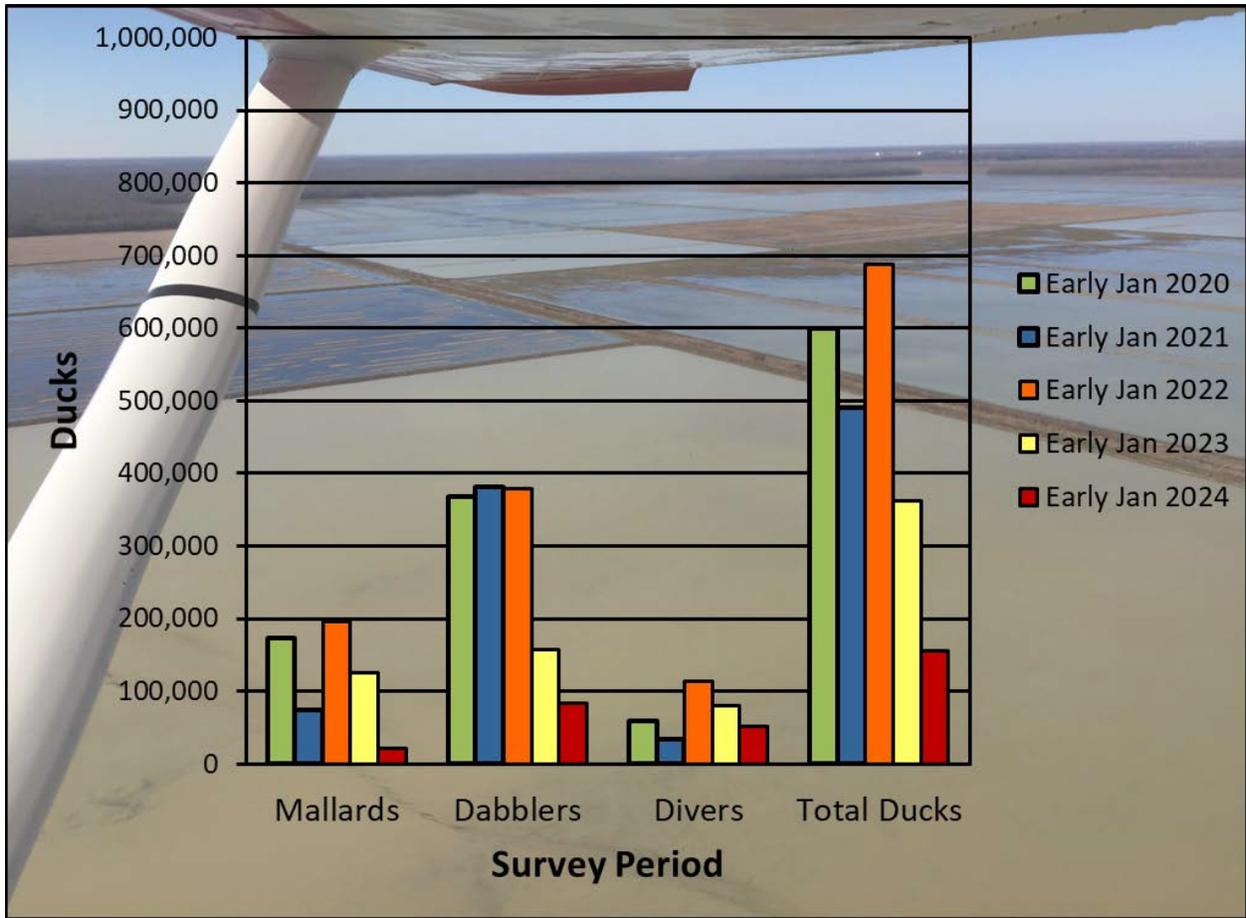
Table 1. Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the early January survey periods, 2008-2024.

	Mallards	Dabblers	Divers	Total Ducks
2008	204,322	248,542	74,342	527,205
2009	191,236	278,601	66,691	536,529
2010	281,622	440,314	170,797	892,734
2011	197,319	352,858	120,700	670,878
2012	215,268	339,908	100,202	655,379
2013	131,930	263,852	70,775	448,586
2014	313,851	742,182	191,888	1,244,714
2015	145,153	364,349	74,502	584,004
2016	213,759	210,159	109,414	521,662
2017	678,235	620,432	143,739	1,442,406
2018	484,121	595,303	49,488	1,128,912
2019	111,787	186,633	69,791	368,211
2020	173,834	367,714	58,875	600,423
2021	73,724	381,903	34,315	489,942
2022	195,533	379,391	113,217	688,141
2023	125,221	156,929	80,177	362,327
2024	20,869	82,800	51,401	155,070
Average	221,046	353,639	92,960	665,713

Table 2. Comparison of early January 2024 aerial waterfowl survey estimates to the long-term average (LTA) for early January survey estimates.

Species Group	Early Jan 2024	Early Jan LTA	% Change from LTA
Mallards	20,869	221,046	-90.5%
Other Dabblers	82,800	353,639	-76.6%
Diving Ducks	51,401	92,960	-44.7%
Total Ducks	155,070	665,713	-76.7%

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



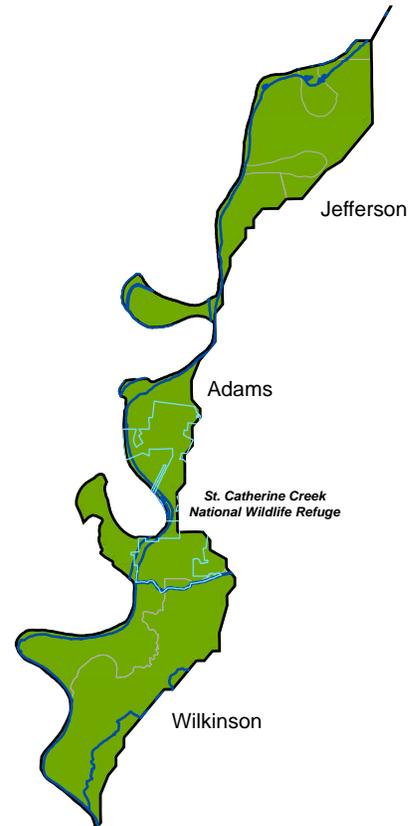
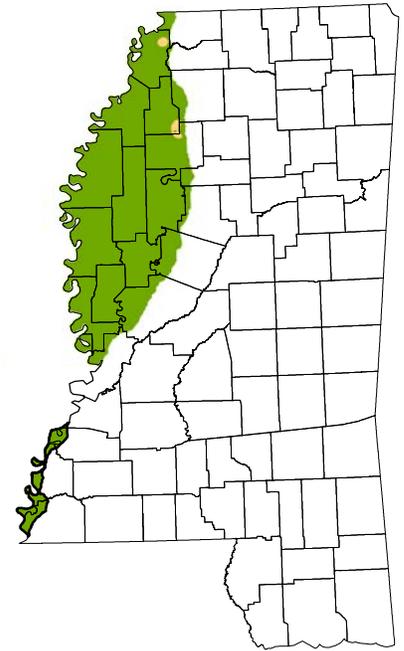
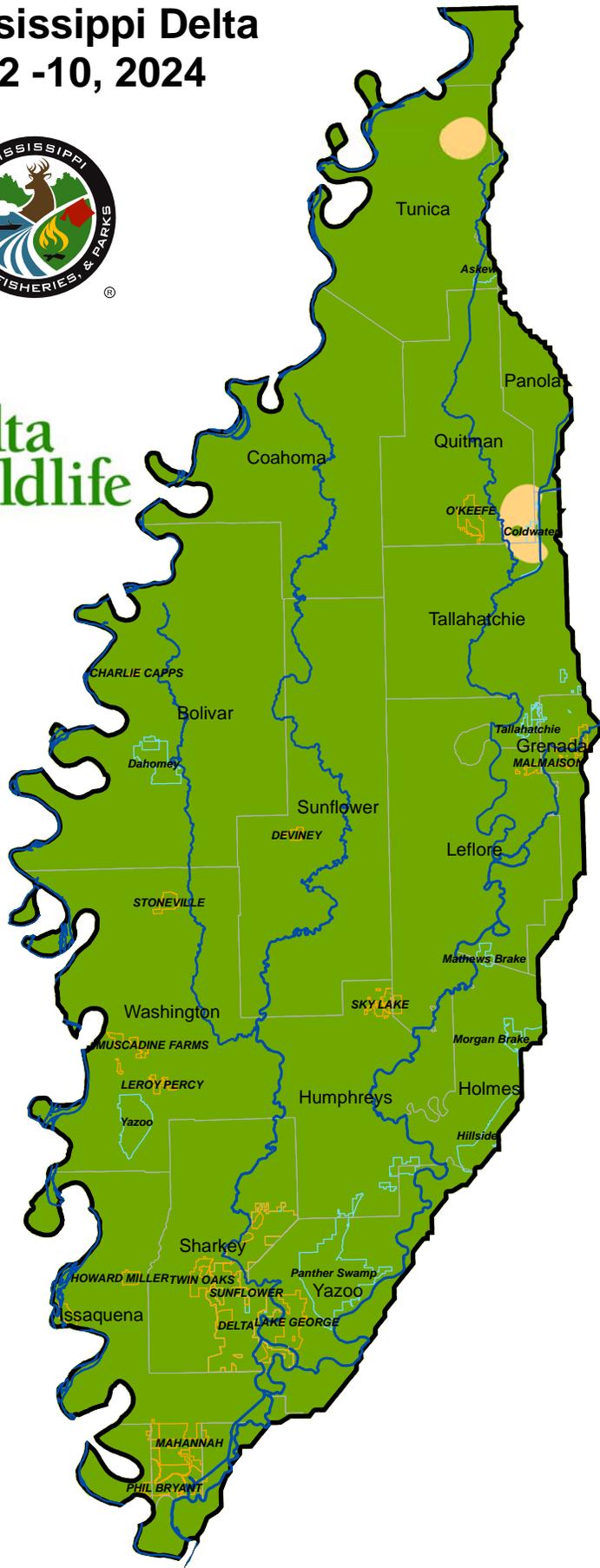
Distribution of Mallards in the Mississippi Delta

Jan. 2 -10, 2024



Description

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



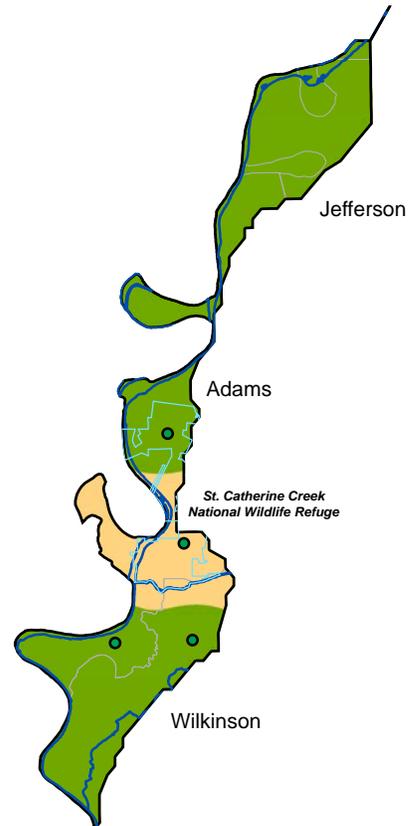
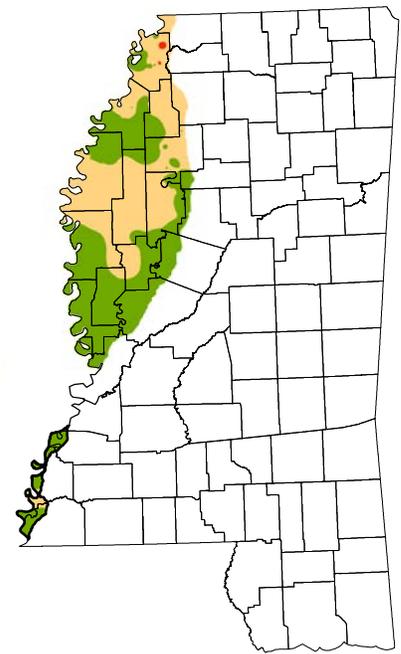
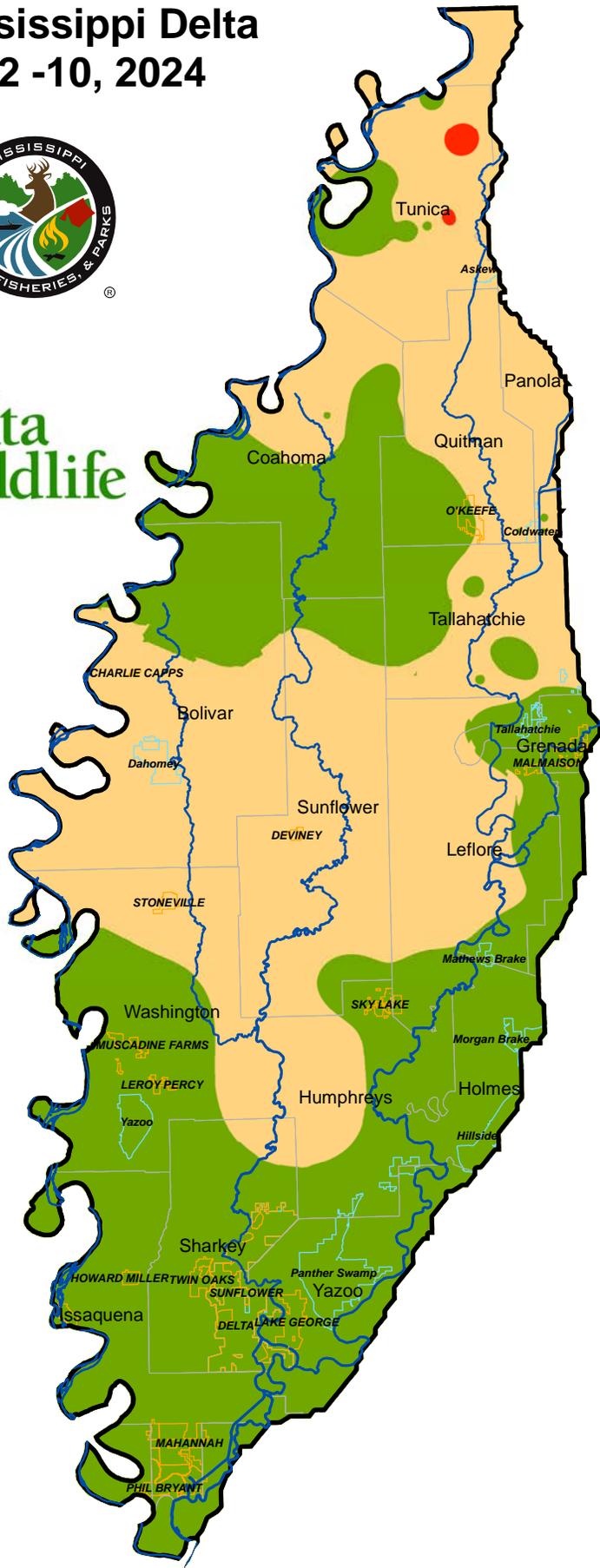
Distribution of Total Ducks in the Mississippi Delta

Jan. 2 -10, 2024



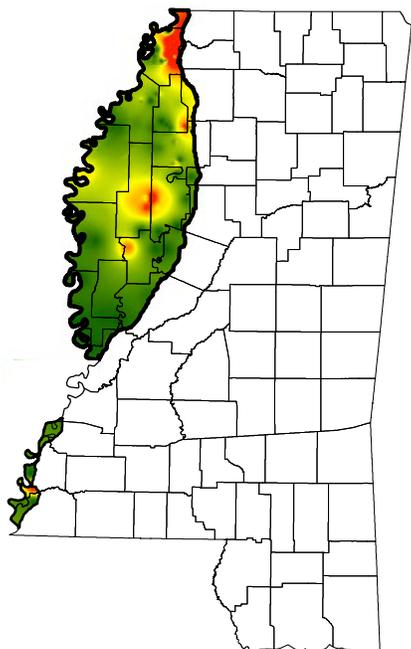
Description

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

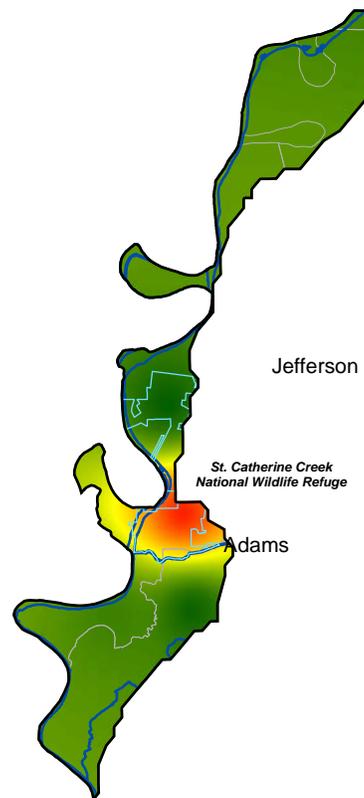
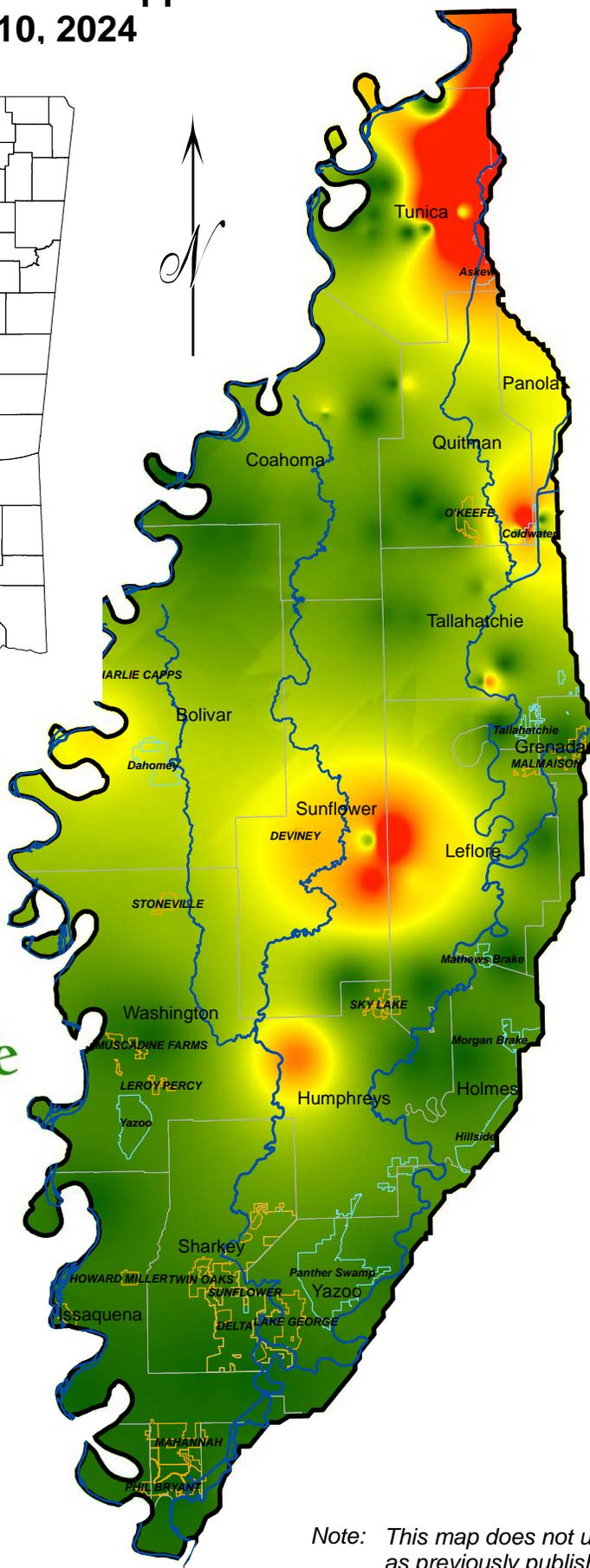
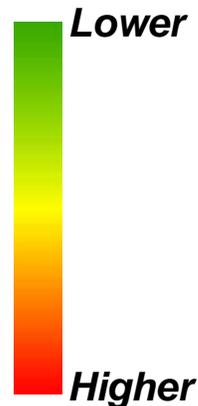


Greatest Concentrations of Ducks Observed in the Mississippi Delta

Jan. 2 -10, 2024

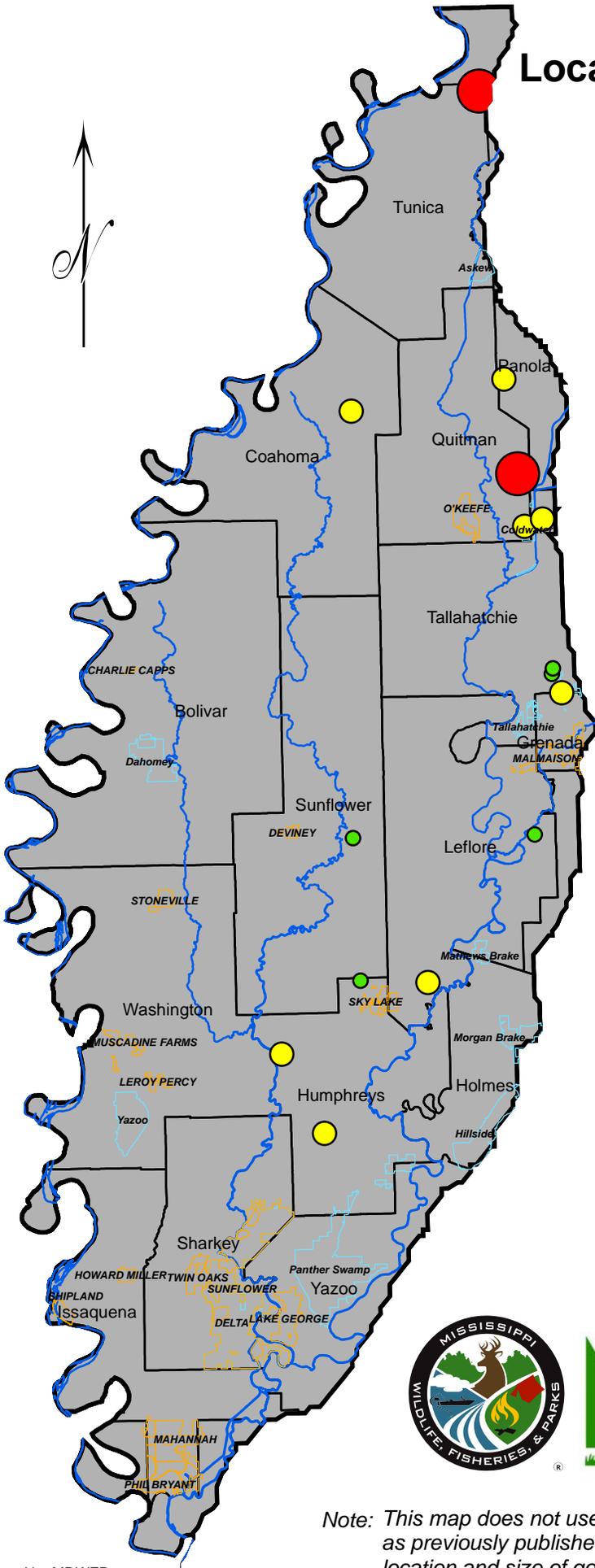


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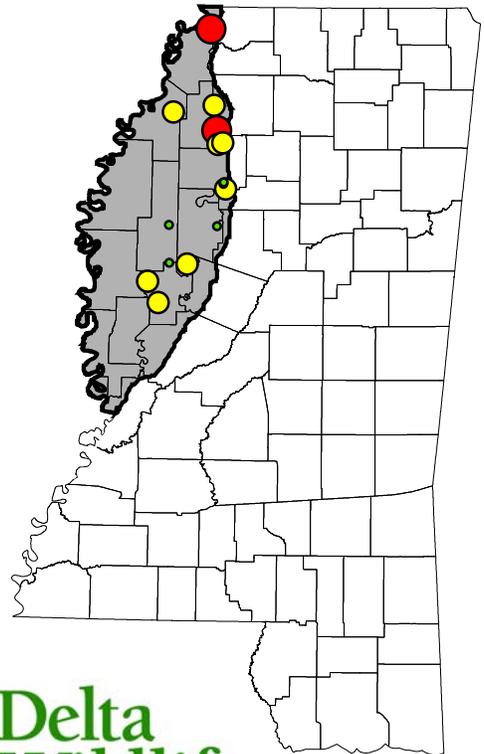
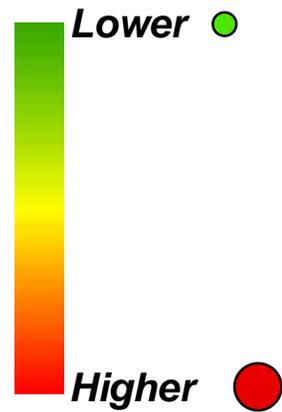


Note: This map does not use the same area calculations as previously published maps and is intended to illustrate major concentrations of ducks in the Mississippi Delta.

Locations and relative size of light goose flocks in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 2 -10, 2024



Description



Note: This map does not use the same area calculations as previously published maps and is intended to illustrate location and size of goose flocks in the Mississippi Delta.