



MDWFP Aerial Waterfowl Survey Report

January 21 - 24, 2025



WATERFOWL PROGRAM

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The fourth and final MDWFP aerial waterfowl survey of the season was flown January 21 – 24, 2025 after overcoming a few mechanical delays. It is important to note that during this survey, overnight low temperatures were well below freezing, and even the daily highs barely reached above freezing. Given these extreme conditions, waterfowl were not distributed across the Mississippi Delta as they normally would have been during this time of year. These unusual distributions with high concentrations of birds in relatively few areas, along with many birds being somewhat displaced into non-traditional areas, introduced a high level of variability in survey estimates. Although the ability of this survey to detect a potential increase in waterfowl abundance was limited, surveying under these conditions can provide a valuable perspective on how waterfowl respond with habitat preferences and distributions.

The estimate for mallards increased significantly from their early January estimates, likely because of the continued freezing weather during the survey. However, the mallard estimate remained below the long-term average for late January. Other dabbling ducks, diving ducks, and total ducks overall decreased from early January estimates and remained below their long-term averages (Tables 1 and 2). Biologists suspect that many of the less ice-tolerant species (other than mallards) likely moved out of the Mississippi Delta temporarily to find open water on large lakes and reservoirs. Hunting reports during the survey week also supported this thought. Mallards and other dabblers again made up nearly 90% of all duck observations. Mallards and gadwall were the most abundant species observed, followed by green-winged teal. However, northern pintails were again highly abundant compared to past years. Scaup were the most abundant diving duck species observed. The northeastern portion of the Delta held the greatest abundances of mallards, other dabbling ducks, and total ducks overall while the southeastern portion held the greatest numbers of diving ducks.

Mallards and other dabblers were most observed using limited flooded agriculture fields with open water, likely in response to the need for high energy foods during very low temperatures. As usual, most diving ducks were observed using aquaculture ponds and deep, permanent water bodies. As has been the case since mid-December, large flocks of light geese (snow, blue, and Ross') mixed with greater white-fronted geese (commonly called specklebellies) were commonly observed across the Mississippi Delta.

This season of otherwise mostly dry, mild weather conditions appears to be concluding on a high note as waterfowl numbers increased during the month of January and hunting success improved as conditions thawed this week. Mississippi's regular waterfowl hunting season continues through Friday, January 31. There will also be a Youth, Veterans, and Active Military waterfowl hunting weekend February 8 – 9. Additionally, the light goose conservation order will resume February 1 – 7 and February 10 – March 31.

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, 2008-2025.

	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
2023	182,649	307,643	25,942	516,153
2024	152,099	450,950	64,056	667,105
2025	136,688	257,872	58,814	446,817
Average	208,760	359,174	107,657	666,326

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

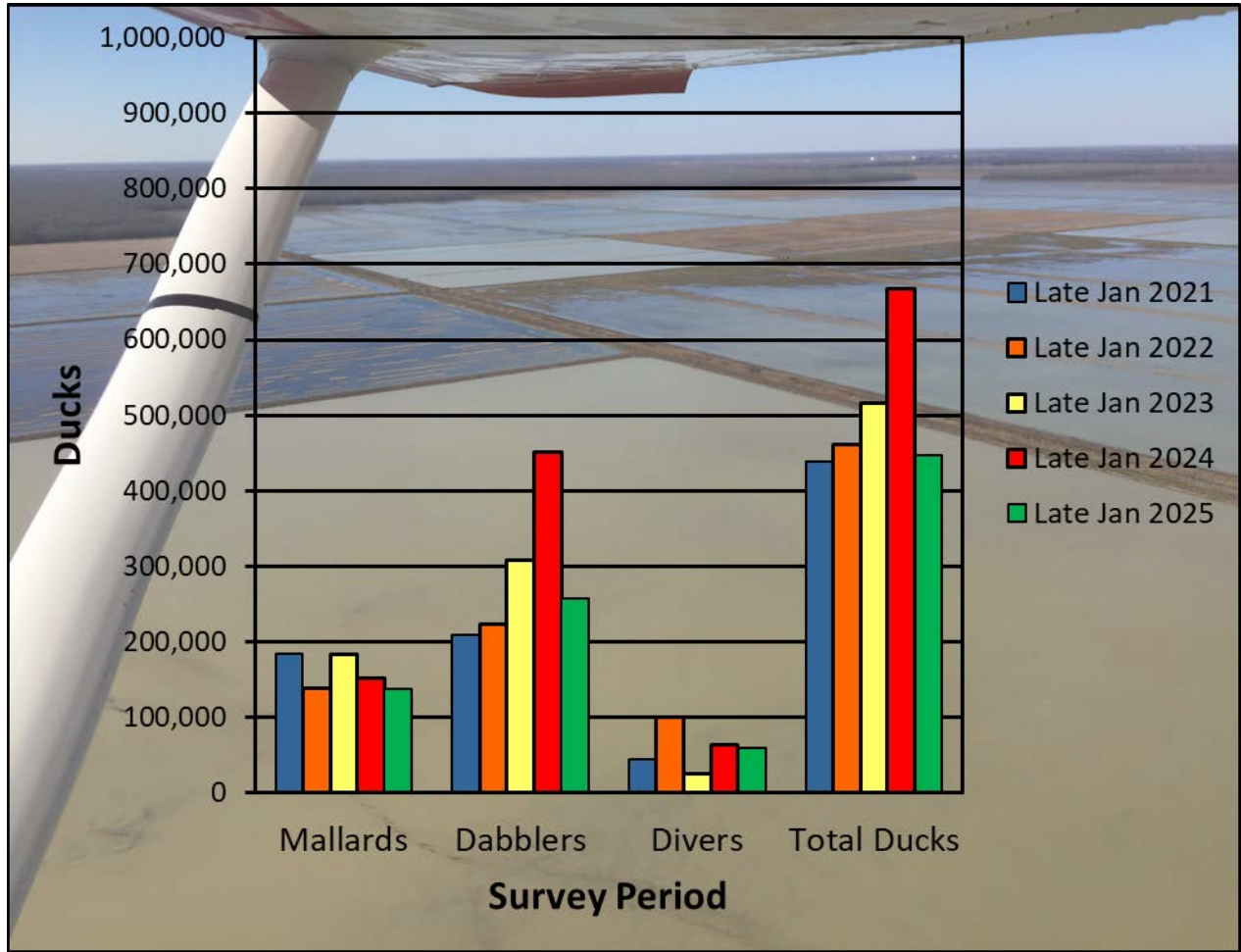


Table 2. Comparison of late January 2025 aerial waterfowl survey estimates to the long-term average (LTA) for late January survey estimates.

Species Group	Late Jan 2025	Late Jan LTA	% Change from LTA
Mallards	136,688	208,760	-34.5%
Other Dabblers	257,872	359,174	-28.2%
Diving Ducks	58,814	107,657	-45.4%
Total Ducks	446,817	666,326	-32.9%

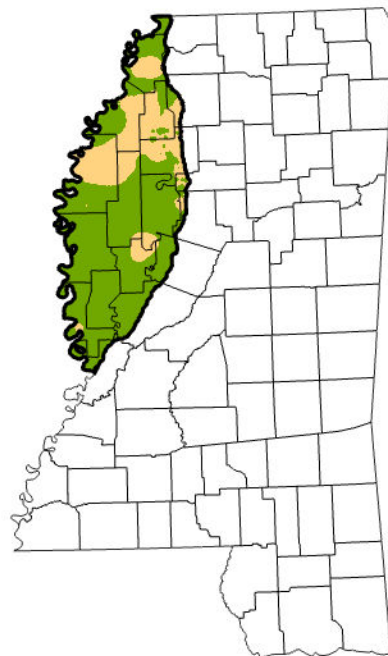
Distribution of Mallards in the Mississippi Delta

Jan. 21 - 24, 2025



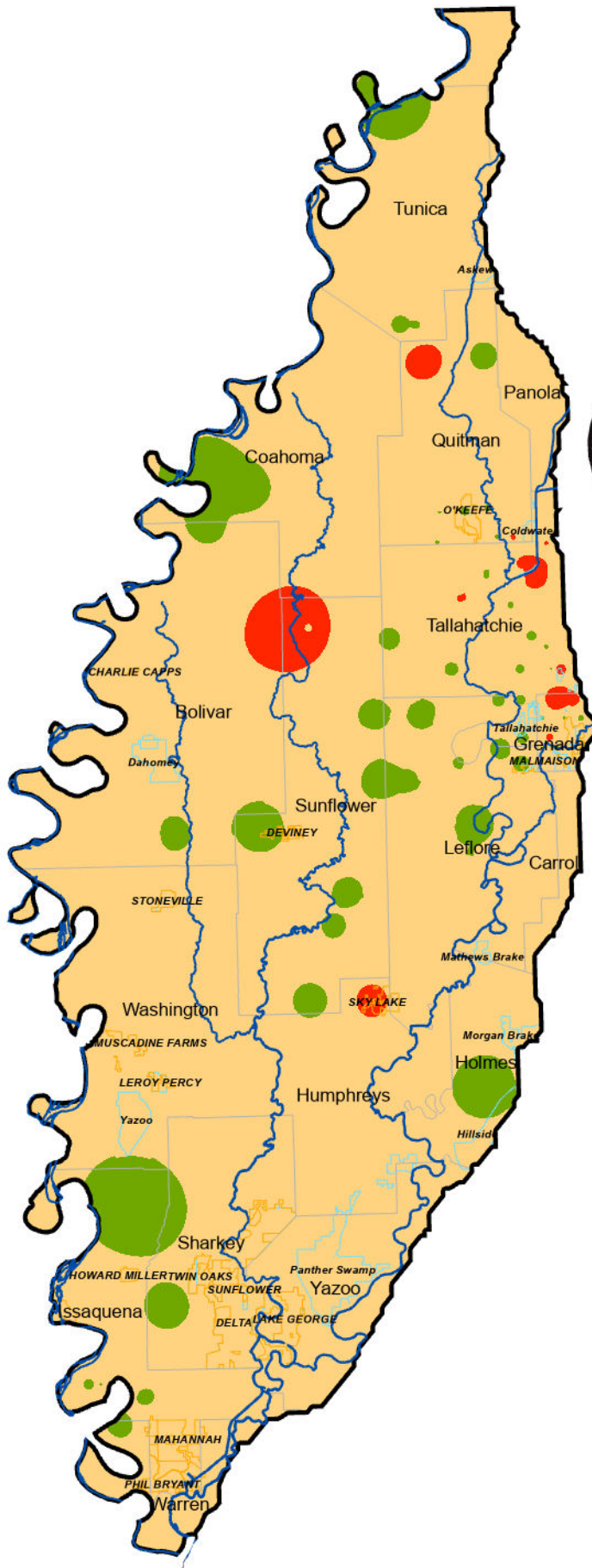
Description

- Low (<math>< 12/mi^2</math>)
- Medium ($12-115/mi^2$)
- High (>math>115/mi^2</math>)



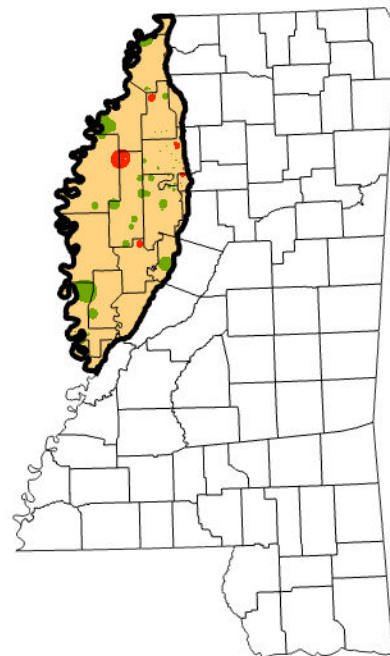
Distribution of Total Ducks in the Mississippi Delta

Jan. 21 - 24, 2025

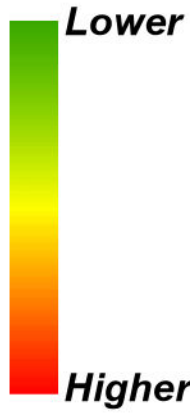


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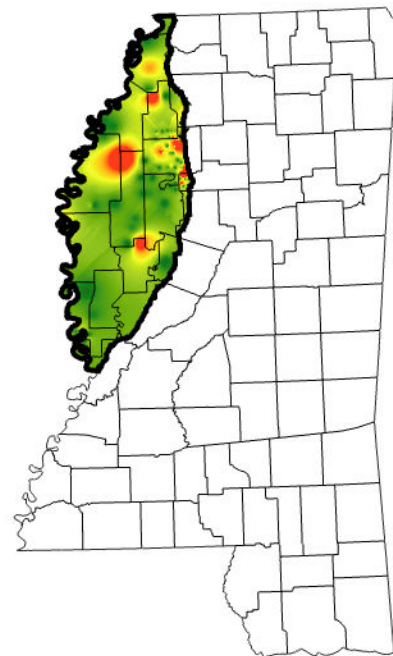
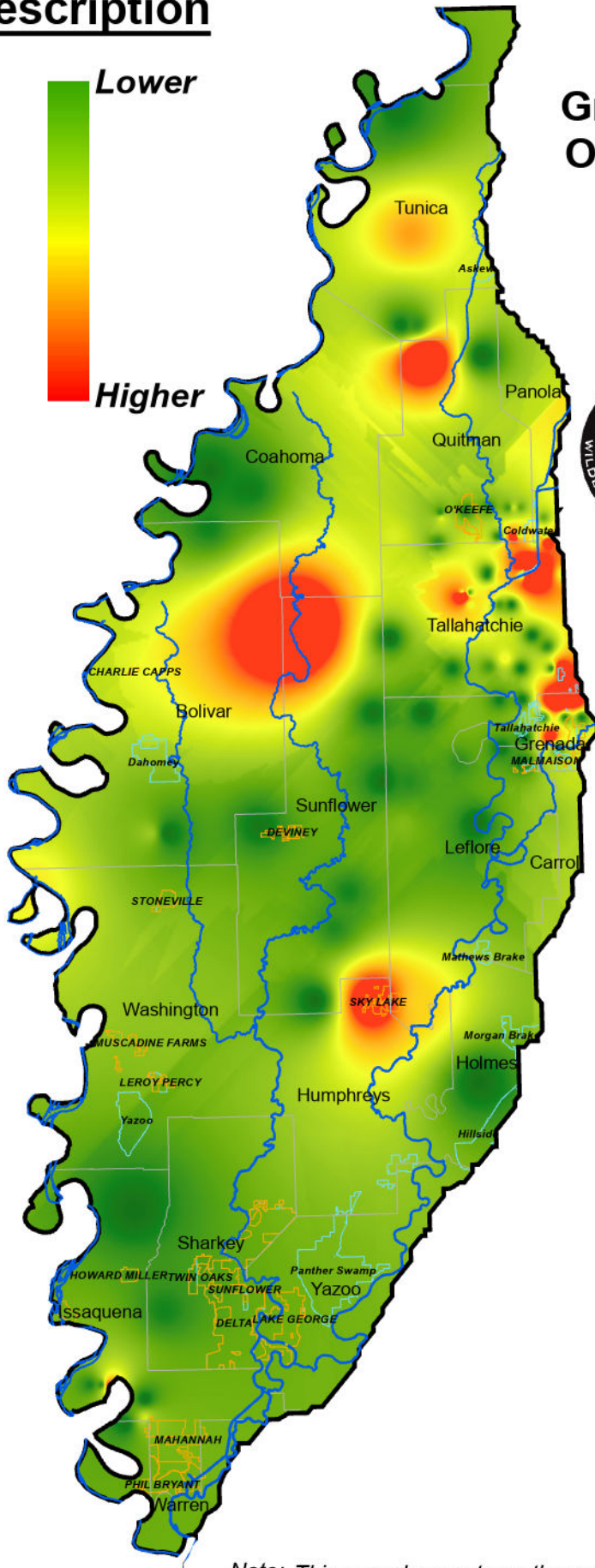
- Low (<12/mi²)
- Medium (12-115/mi²)
- High (>115/mi²)



Description



Greatest Concentrations of Ducks Observed in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 21 - 24, 2025

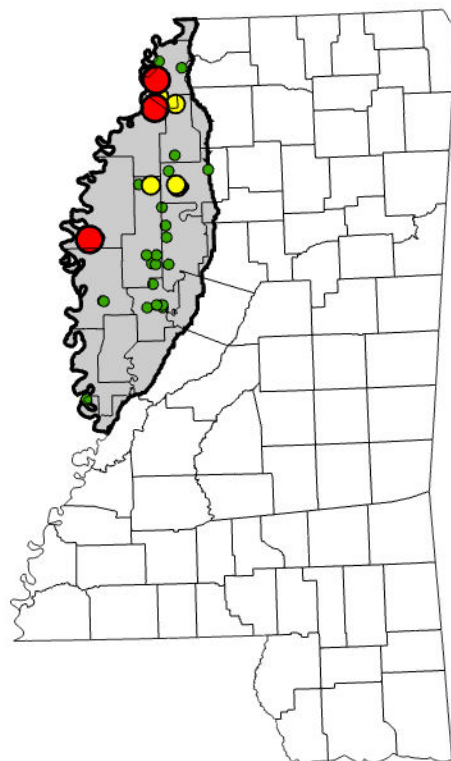
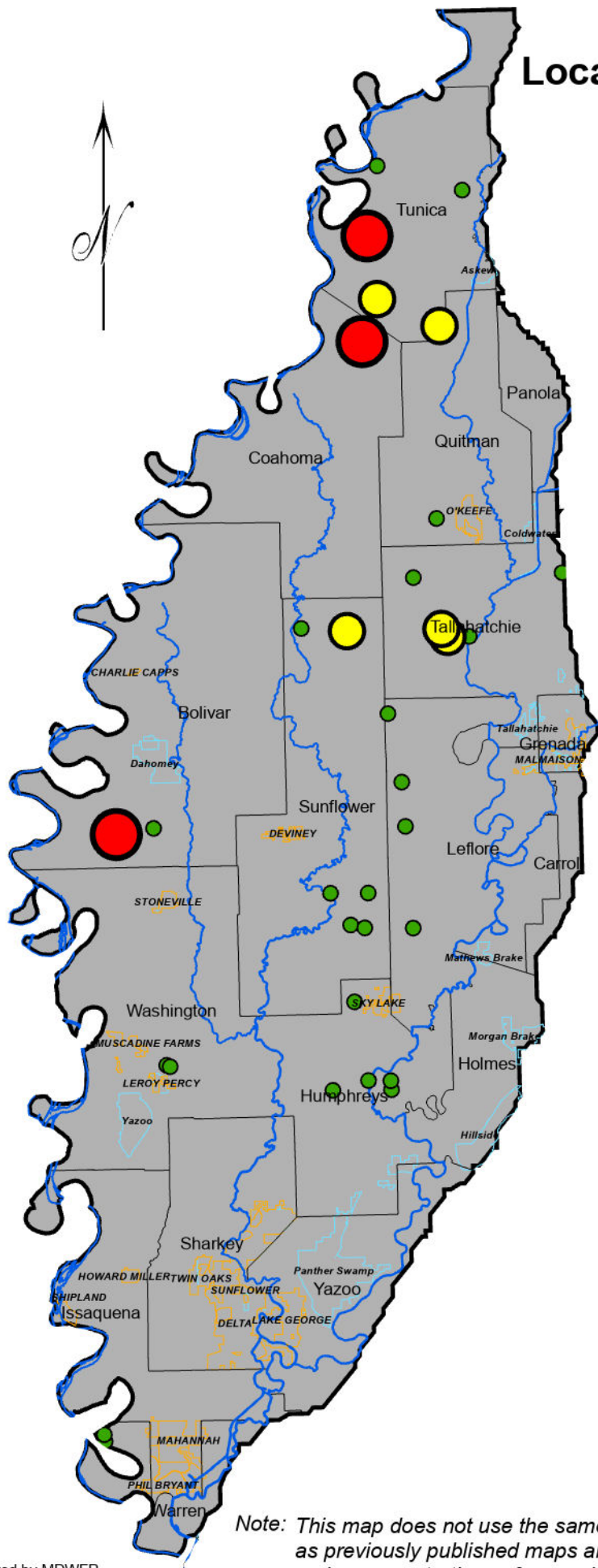
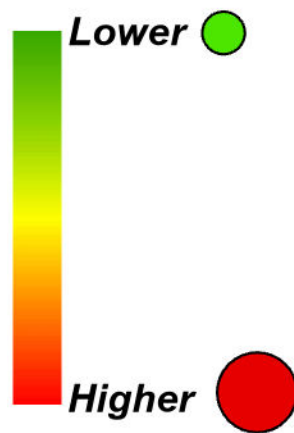


Note: This map does not use the same area calculations as previously published maps and is intended to illustrate major concentrations of ducks in the Mississippi Delta.

Locations and relative size of light goose flocks in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 21 - 24, 2025



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.