



MDWFP Aerial Waterfowl Survey Report

November 12 - 17, 2025



WATERFOWL PROGRAM

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The first MDWFP aerial waterfowl survey of the season occurred November 12 – 17, 2025. Despite the wet spring and early summer, dry conditions dominated observations across the Mississippi Delta during this survey. Seasonally managed water was still noticeably absent in many areas of the Mississippi Delta, which is common for this time of year. 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. Ducks were also observed using areas with large complexes of managed water across multiple private properties. As a result of the dry fall, many harvested agricultural fields have been disked, which will result in reduced food availability for waterfowl even if the fields are eventually flooded. Much opportunity remains for landowners and managers to capture rainfall with water control structures as fall and winter continue along, and as more waterfowl migrate south into the state. Mississippi River levels are also currently very low. As in most years, flooded habitat availability was greatest in the northeast portion of the Delta.

Much of Mississippi experienced two nights of below-freezing temperatures a few days prior to the start of this survey. Likely as a result of this cold front from the north, duck abundance estimates for the Mississippi Delta were well above the November long-term averages for total ducks and for dabbling ducks other than mallards (Tables 1 and 2). Mallard and diving duck estimates were below their long-term averages, but both estimates were higher than those from the past two Novembers. Dabbling ducks other than mallards comprised 73% of all duck observations. Northern shovelers and gadwall were the most abundant dabbling duck species observed overall. Scaup were the most abundant diving duck species observed, followed closely by ring-necked ducks. The northeastern portion of the Delta contained the greatest abundances mallards and total ducks overall. Weather patterns at more northern and mid-latitudes appear to be developing more favorable conditions for continued southern migrations of waterfowl during late November and early December. It's important to note that Mississippi's November duck estimates are not strong indicators of where peak numbers could reach later in the winter. However, early season hunting success on managed habitat is often very high when duck numbers are near or above average and wetland availability is limited.

In the Mississippi Delta, mallards and other dabbling ducks were most commonly observed using semi-permanent and permanent water areas like oxbow lakes, sloughs, and cypress-tupelo brakes. And as usual, the greatest abundances of diving ducks were observed on aquaculture complexes. 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) in areas with managed complexes of diverse wetland habitat. Biologists expect ducks to begin to distribute further as new wetland habitats become available throughout the winter. A large portion of the state is forecast to receive much needed rain this week, but habitat conditions in many areas will remain below average levels during the early part of the hunting season. Very few concentrations of light geese (snow, blue, and Ross') or greater white-fronted geese (commonly called specklebellies) were observed during this survey, but recent field reports suggest that numbers are now increasing.

The regular duck hunting season for Mississippi is set to open Friday, November 28, and MDWFP biologists are optimistic that state WMAs with groundwater pumping capabilities will

continue to attract and hold waterfowl for an enjoyable start to the season. Weekly waterfowl reports will begin the week following the duck season opener, and will include updates from Mississippi hunting reports, as well as weather and habitat conditions. For weekly waterfowl reports and more on the MDWFP Waterfowl Program, please visit our website at <http://www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl>.

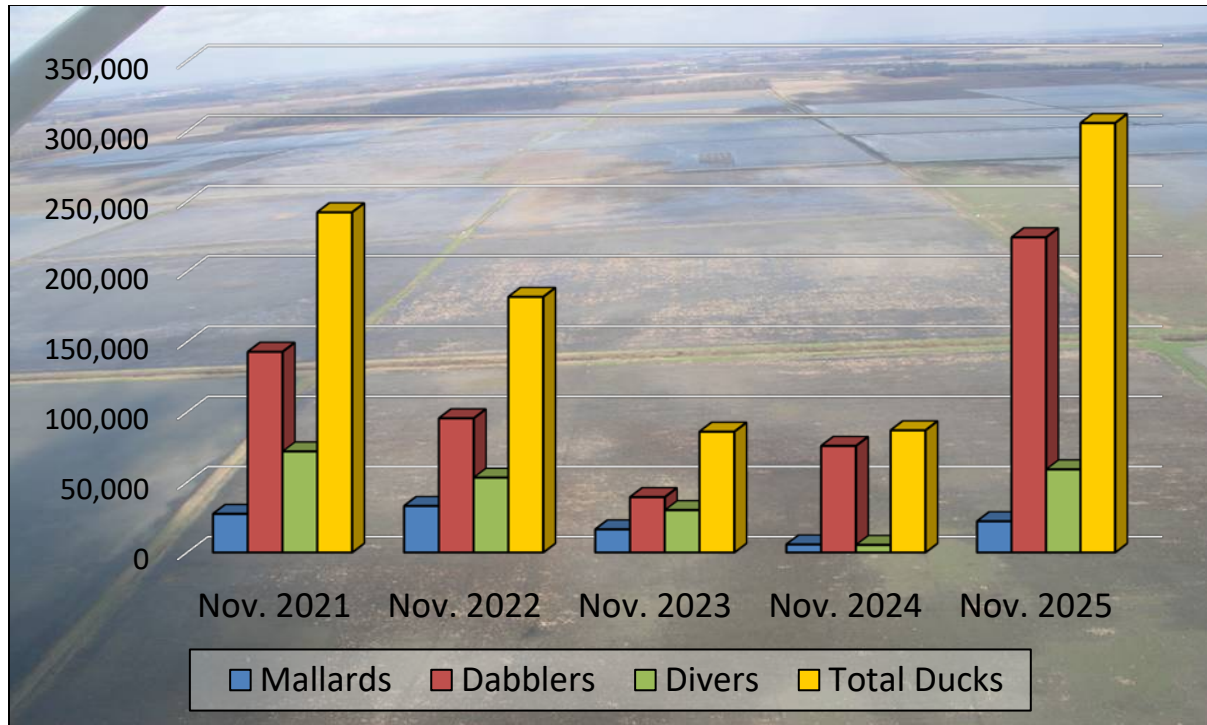
Table 1. Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the November survey periods, 2007-2025.

	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
2020-21	40,100	157,750	68,343	266,194
2021-22	27,462	142,941	71,940	242,344
2022-23	33,149	95,574	53,346	182,069
2023-24	16,446	39,438	30,152	86,035
2024-25	5,741	75,902	5,369	87,011
2025-26	22,231	224,513	59,166	305,910
Average	35,646	134,601	75,425	245,672

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

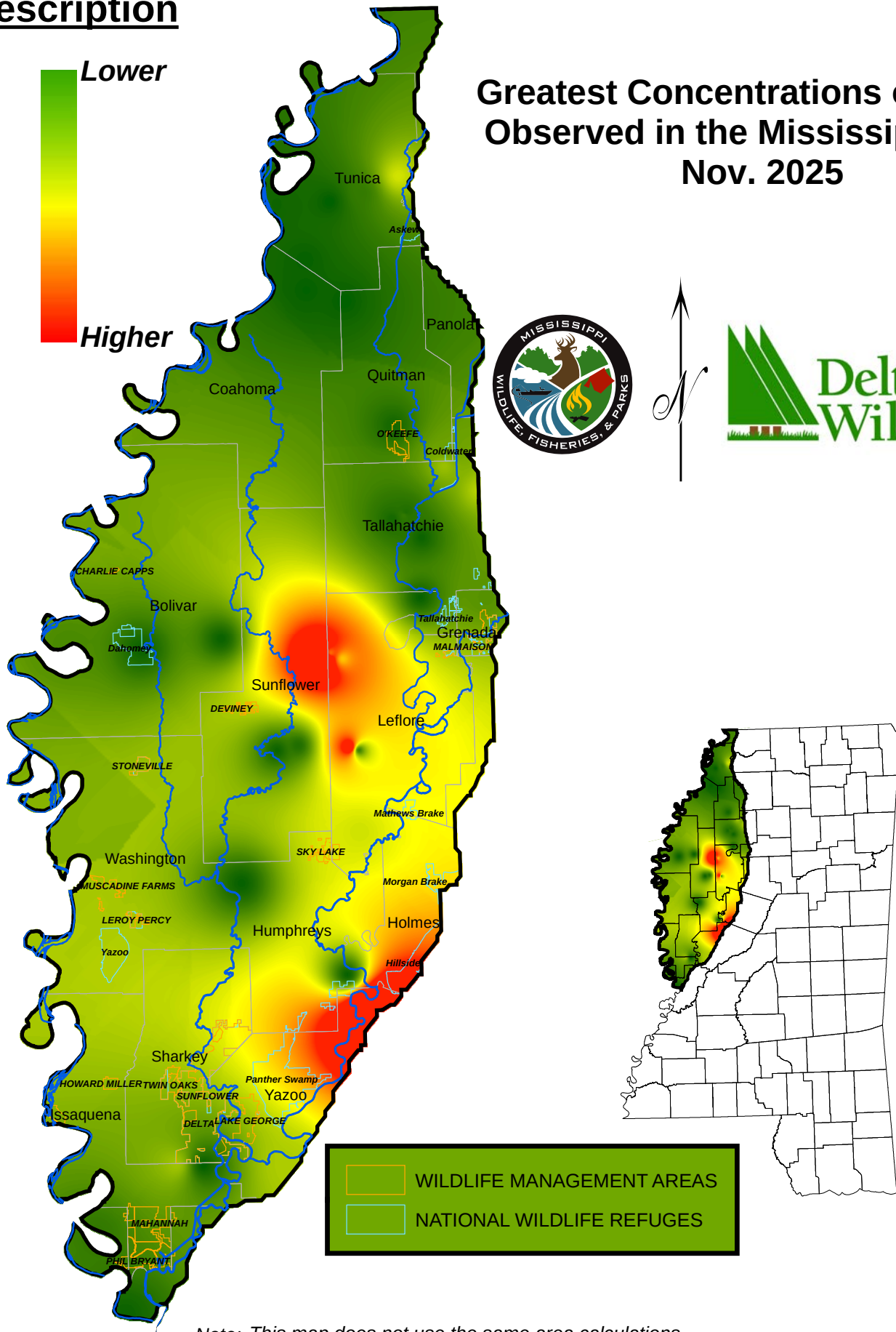
Species Group	November 2025	November LTA	% Change from LTA
Mallards	22,231	35,646	-38%
Other Dabblers	224,513	134,601	+67%
Diving Ducks	59,166	75,425	-22%
Total Ducks	305,910	245,672	+25%

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



Description

Greatest Concentrations of Ducks Observed in the Mississippi Delta Nov. 2025



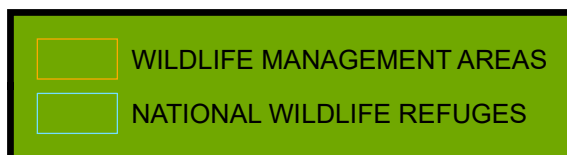
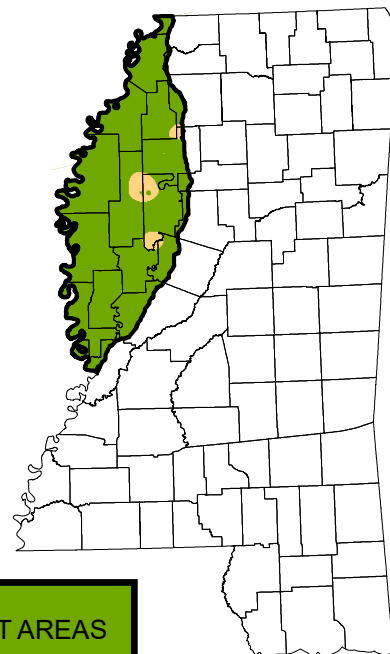
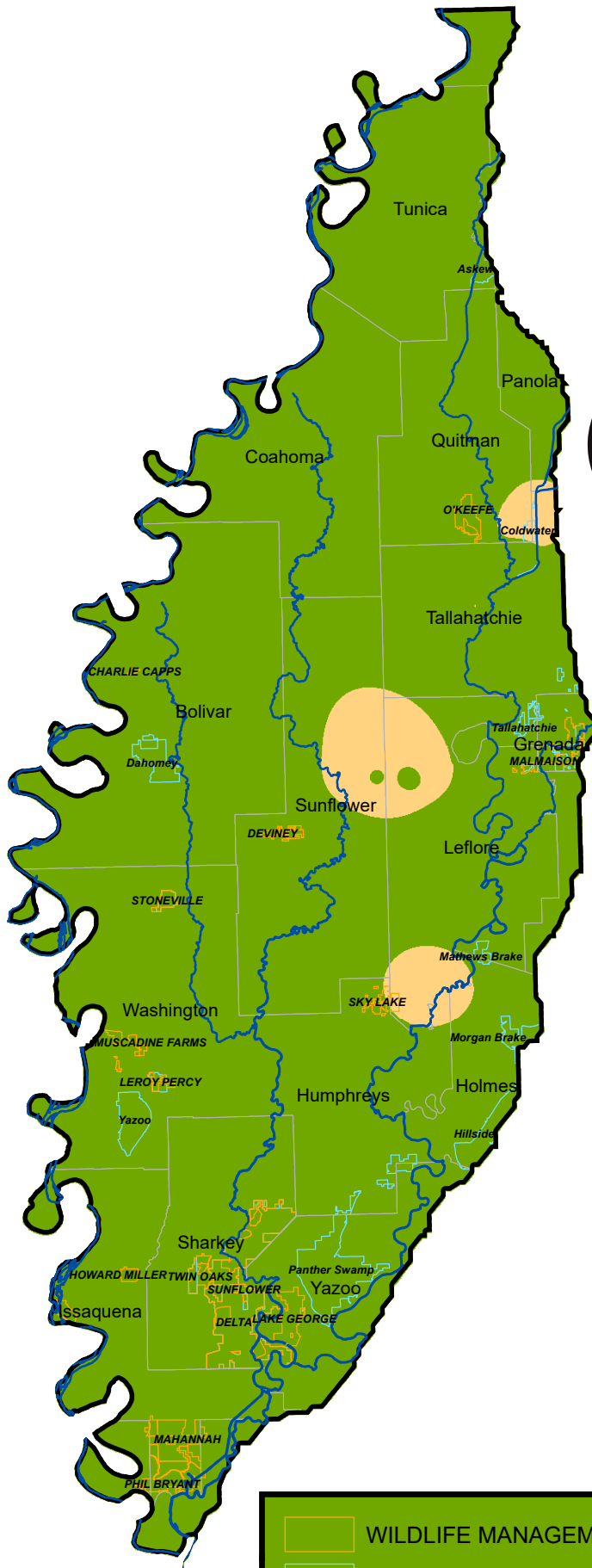
Note: This map does not use the same area calculations as previously published maps and is intended to illustrate major concentrations of ducks in the Mississippi Delta.

Distribution of Mallards in the Mississippi Delta Nov. 2025

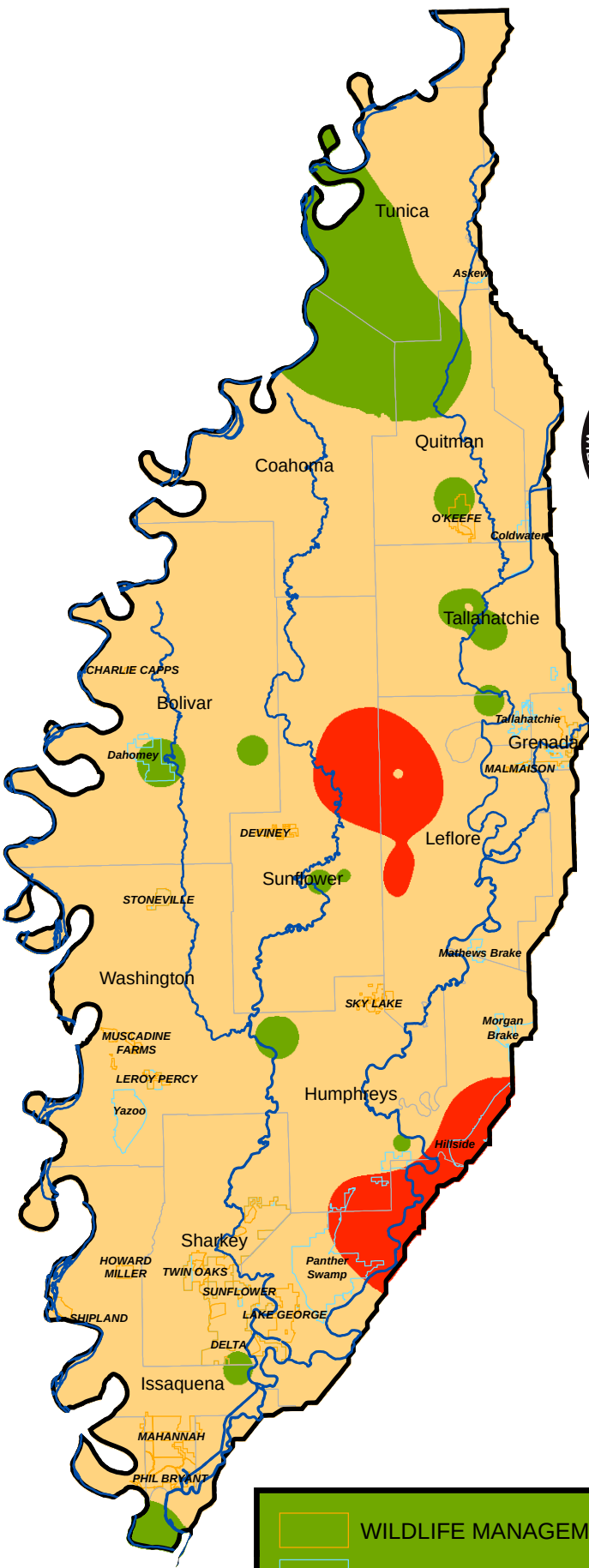


Description

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

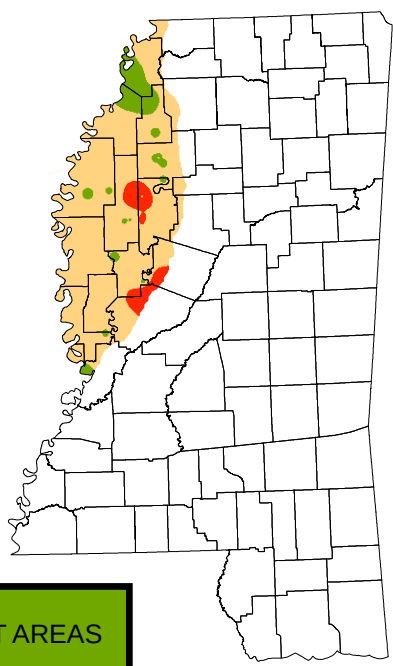


Distribution of Total Ducks in the Mississippi Delta Nov. 2025



Description

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



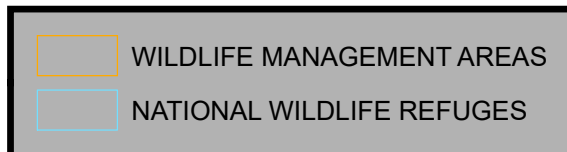
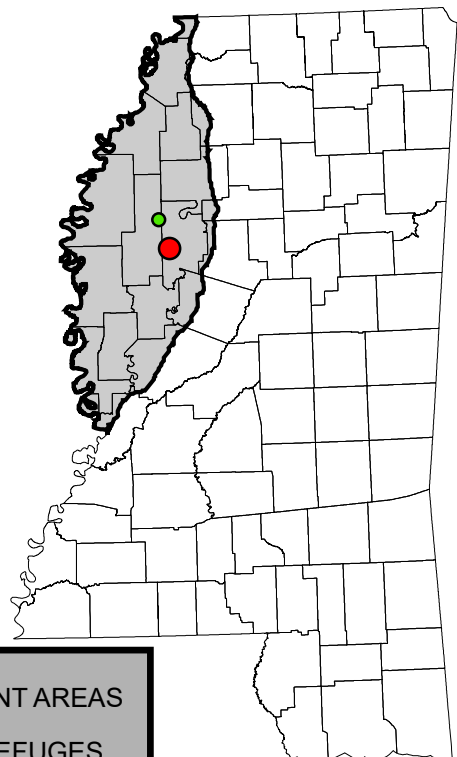
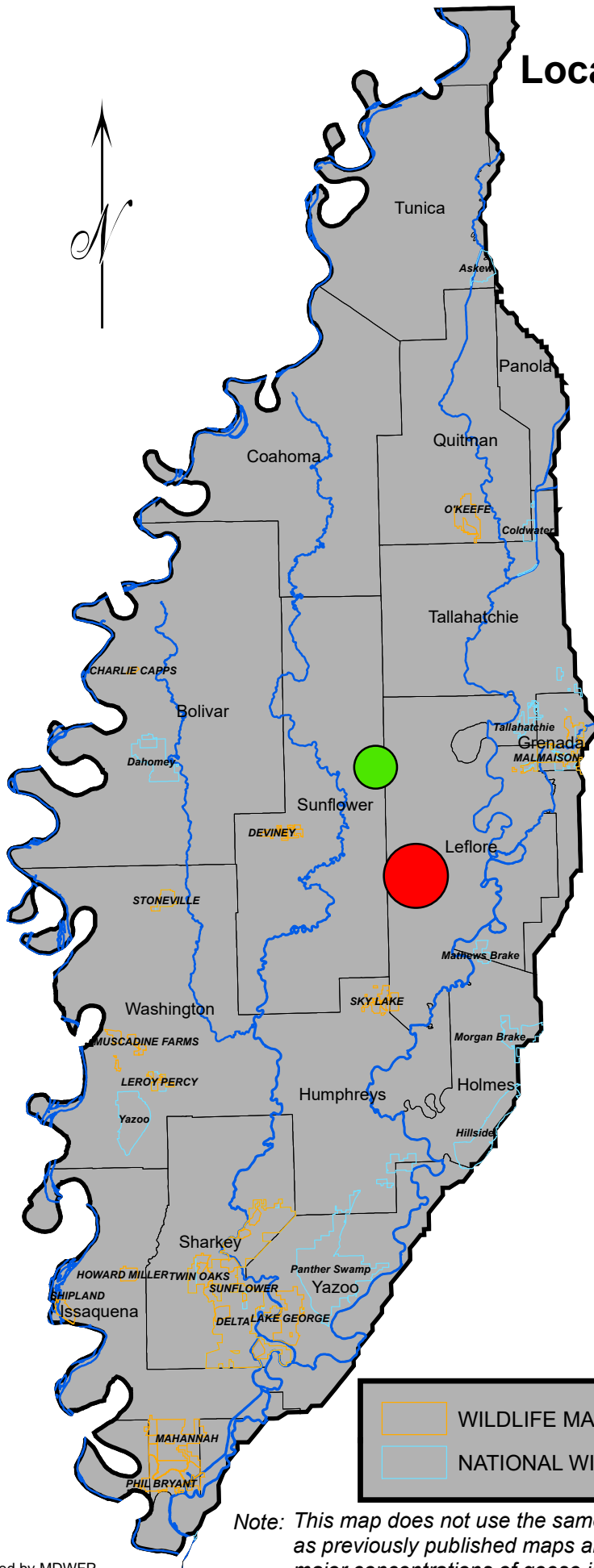
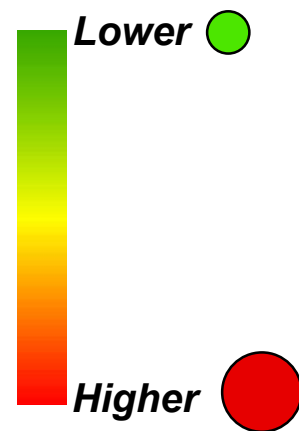
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS

NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

Locations and relative size of light goose flocks in the Mississippi Delta Nov. 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.