

December 8, 2023 Kentucky Waterfowl Ground Counts

This is the ground count survey for December 4 – December 8, 2022. Kentucky has been very dry since late summer however we did get some rain this week. We had a good growing season for our crops and moist soil habitats throughout most of the state. The bad news is that at the start of the waterfowl hunting season, habitat will mainly be limited to areas that have the capacity to pump water and even that is limited. Very low levels in the Ohio and Mississippi rivers means our waterfowl areas like Ballard, Boatwright and Doug Travis are struggling to keep water. Limited water is forcing us to limit hunting areas available on some of these WMAs.

Avian Influenza is present in Kentucky, so hunters should use common sense when handling/cleaning harvested waterfowl. See page two of the [KY Waterfowl Guide](#) for recommendations for the safe handling and disposal of your birds. After cleaning waterfowl, hunters are encouraged to place the remains in trash bags and dispose of them through trash collection or a permitted landfill. Bald eagles and other raptors are particularly susceptible to avian influenza. This simple action could help prevent bald eagle and other raptor mortalities.

The second segment of duck season opens on December 7 and will run until January 31, 2024. Goose season opened Thanksgiving Day and will remain open until February 15, 2024. The second day of Special Youth Waterfowl Season is Saturday, February 11, 2024. The second day of Special Veteran's Waterfowl Season is on Sunday February 11, 2024. All bag limits remain the same as last season. Check out the 2023-2024 Waterfowl hunting guide or visit the waterfowl hunting web page for more details. Good luck hunting this year. Be safe and enjoy your time afield.

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Location	Number	Species Composition	Comments
Ballard <i>12/06/2023</i>	20,951 ducks 42 CA goose 4,000 WF goose 20 Snow goose	90% Mallard, 2% Galdwall, 1% Wigeon, Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Green-Winged Teal, Wood Duck 7% Ring-necked <1% Hooded Merg.	Major front coming for the weekend with the potential of one inch plus rain. Hunt units that are flooded are getting heavy use due to ag crops. Moist soil units where flooded are seeing heavy use along with thick cover.
Boatwright <i>12/07/2023</i>	853 ducks	89% Mallard, 2% Galdwall, 1% Other	Cooler last two days then warmer into the weekend with rain a couple days out. Slight increase in number of

			waterfowl as we start the regular season.
Duck Island <i>Not surveyed</i>			
Doug Travis WMA <i>Not surveyed</i>			
Sloughs WMA <i>12/04/2023</i>	13,560 ducks 75 CA goose 9,300 WF goose 7,000 Snow goose	85% mallard 15% mixed dabblers – pintails, black ducks, teal, and gadwall	Habitat conditions remain the same, recent rain has helped, but still in need of water on the landscape.
Peabody WMA <i>12/07/2023</i>	12 ducks 100 CA goose	100% pintails	Moist soil plant growth over the summer was good. Low water levels continue throughout the WMA due to the lack of significant rainfall over the last couple of months.
Yellowbank WMA <i>12/06/2023</i>	325 Ducks	90% mallard 5% wood duck 5% black duck	Excellent moist soil plant response and crop production in waterfowl units. Units are gaining sheet water after 1.91 inches of rain over the last two weeks – 30% water capacity.
Barren River WMA <i>12/05/2023</i>	20 ducks 120 CA geese	50% divers/50% dabblers mergansers/mallards	Very dry conditions. Peters Creek MSU 10% full, Long Creek-Calvert Springs main unit 90% and units above and below the main spring 20%, MSUs off HWY 100 are 0% full. MSU plants in great condition. Lake level: 528.4'
Blue Grass Army Depot (all lakes and ponds) <i>Not surveyed</i>			
Cave Run Lake <i>12/07/2023</i>	37 Ducks 26 CA geese 9 other	65% bufflehead, 35% hooded merg. 9 pied-billed grebe	No comments.

