

January 19, 2024 Kentucky Waterfowl Ground Counts

This is the ground count survey for January 15 – January 19, 2024. Kentucky was very dry and warm from late summer to beginning of January, but we've seen a cold front and some precipitation over the last couple weeks. Rain with warmer temperatures is predicted for next week. We had a good growing season for our crops and moist soil habitats throughout most of the state. The waterfowl hunting season habitat is mainly limited to areas that have the capacity to pump water, which is limited, due to the low levels in the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. This means 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. The recent rain has been helping.

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.

Good luck hunting this year. Be safe and enjoy your time afield and Happy Holidays!

Location	Number	Species Composition	Comments
Ballard <i>01/16/2024</i>	90,981 ducks 18,000 WF geese 7,000 Snow geese 65 CA geese	69% Mallard 9% Ring-Necked 8% Gadwall 5% wigeon 5% pintail 4% green winged teal >1% wood duck, shoveler, black duck, hooded merg.	A significant cold front moved into area 8-10 days prior to survey. We noticed a sharp increase in number of birds on the WMA. The ability to operate the Ohio River pump station allowed us to assist the birds in maintaining open water in sub-zero temps. Hunter success in some of the units surrounding the area have sharply increased.
Boatwright <i>01/18/2024</i>	10,100 ducks 150 WF geese 3,000 snow geese	72% Mallard 28% unknown dabblers	Strong cold front has about 90% of surface water frozen with ¾" – 1 ½" of ice sheeting. Most of the ducks are holding

			tight on swan pond or any open water where they are trying to keep open. WF and Snow geese are actively dry-feeding on the cover crops in large ag fields in area.
Duck Island <i>Not surveyed</i>			
Doug Travis WMA <i>01/18/2024</i>	~4,000 ducks	80% Mallard 20% mixed dabblers	All water bodies on the DTWMA are frozen except for the sites where we have wells running. A continual interchange of ducks coming and going to the Mississippi River and points beyond. Several blind sites have open water from wells pumping and are experiencing very good success right now.
Sloughs WMA <i>01/15/2024</i>	4,800 ducks 8,500 snow geese and WF geese 24 tundra swans	85% Mallard 15% mixed dabblers – pintail, green-winged teal, gadwall	Severe cold weather has frozen almost all water on the area. Ducks were holding extremely tight in pockets of the refuge to hold water open.
Peabody WMA <i>01/17/2024</i>	1,365 ducks 620 CA geese	45% ringneck 40% mallard 15% gadwall, green-winged teal, and northern shoveler	Water levels in shallow areas have risen due to the recent rainfall, although frigid temperatures have frozen all shallow water and some of the more shallower strip pits. Large, deep strip pits are maintaining open water and are currently concentrating waterfowl use.
Yellowbank WMA <i>01/16/2024</i>	0 Ducks		All units have a thick sheet of ice.

Barren River WMA <i>Not surveyed</i>			
Blue Grass Army Depot (all lakes and ponds) <i>Not surveyed</i>			
Cave Run Lake <i>01/11/2024</i>	168 Ducks 268 CA geese 39 other	37% bufflehead 61% hooded merg. 1% canvasback, common merg. 79% common loon 21% pied-billed grebes	Numbers were way up compared to last week. Cold front must have pushed them in.