

December 15, 2023 Kentucky Waterfowl Ground Counts

This is the ground count survey for December 11 – December 15, 2023. Kentucky has been very dry since late summer however we have gotten some rain the past couple weeks. We had a good growing season for our crops and moist soil habitats throughout most of the state. At the start of 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 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>Not surveyed</i>			Same birds have been here for weeks now so no new report for this week.
Boatwright <i>Not surveyed</i>			Same birds have been here for weeks now so no new report for this week.
Duck Island <i>Not surveyed</i>			
Doug Travis WMA <i>Not surveyed</i>			
Sloughs WMA <i>12/11/2023</i>	14,700 ducks 45 CA goose 9,000 WF goose 11,000 Snow goose	80% mallard 20% mixed dabblers – green winged teal, black ducks, gadwall, widgeon, northern shoveler	Habitat conditions remain the same, recent rain has helped, but still in need of water on the landscape.

Peabody WMA <i>12/14/2023</i>	4 ducks 200 CA goose	100% mallards	Low water levels continue to impact duck use. Significant rainfall is needed to fill shallow water areas and wetlands.
Yellowbank WMA <i>12/13/2023</i>	380 Ducks	90% mallard 5% wood duck 5% black duck	Excellent moist soil plant response and crop production in waterfowl units. Units are slowly gaining sheet water – 30% water capacity.
Barren River WMA <i>12/11/2023</i>	40 ducks 120 CA geese	50% divers/50% dabblers mergansers, scaup, redhead/mallards, wood ducks	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: 528.3'
Blue Grass Army Depot (all lakes and ponds) <i>Not surveyed</i>			
Cave Run Lake <i>12/14/2023</i>	43 Ducks 0 CA geese 22 other	50% bufflehead, 50% hooded merg. 72% pied-billed grebes 22% red-necked grebes 4% common loon	