

## December 22, 2023 Kentucky Waterfowl Ground Counts

This is the ground count survey for December 18 – December 22, 2023. Kentucky has been very dry since late summer however we did get some rain the first couple weeks of December. 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.

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

Location	Number	Species Composition	Comments
Ballard <i>12/19/2023</i>	38,963 ducks 30 CA goose 8,600 WF goose 12,000 Snow goose	80% mallard, 7% gadwall. 6% ring-necked, 3% shoveler, 2% green-winged teal, 1% wigeon, 1% black duck, pintail, wood duck	
Boatwright <i>12/21/2023</i>	2696 ducks	91% mallard, 8% unknown	Small cold front 4 days prior with gradual warm-up to present. Slight increase in waterfowl numbers.
Duck Island <i>Not surveyed</i>			
Doug Travis WMA <i>12/20/2023</i>	~900 ducks	95% mallard, 5% green-winged teal, wood ducks, mergansers	All 3 wells are pumping. Low groundwater conditions are slowing the recharge of water into well casings, so pumping is limited to prevent damage to pumps.

			Well #1 pumping for blinds #16, 17, and Willow Slough rest area. Well #2 is pumping into the Blinds 11/12 and 13/14 impoundments. Well #3 is pumping into the Baldy's Woods walkin unit, Indian Camp Rest Area, and Lake Erie impoundment.
Sloughs WMA <i>12/18/2023</i>	13,000 ducks 9,000 WF goose 9,500 Snow goose	90% mallard 10% mixed dabblers – gadwall, green winged teal, pintails, black ducks, northern shoveler	
Peabody WMA <i>12/14/2023</i>			
Yellowbank WMA <i>12/18/2023</i>	510 Ducks 20 WF geese	95% mallard 5% black duck	Excellent moist soil plant response and crop production in waterfowl units. Most units are at 30% water capacity. Several units are drying due to sandy loam soils.
Barren River WMA <i>12/19/2023</i>	140 ducks 120 CA geese	50% divers/50% dabblers mergansers, coot, scaup/mallards, gadwalls	Peters Creek MSU 10% full, Long Creek-Calvert Springs main unit 40% and units above and below the main spring 50%, MSUs off HWY 100 are 0% full. MSU plants in great condition. Extremely dry conditions. Lake level: 528.2'
Blue Grass Army Depot (all lakes and ponds)  <i>Not surveyed</i>			
Cave Run Lake  <i>12/21/2023</i>	99 Ducks 0 CA geese  16 other	39% bufflehead, 59% hooded merg., 1% ruddy duck  100% pied-billed grebes	

