

November 21, 2025

Kentucky Waterfowl Ground Counts

This is the ground count survey for November 17-21, 2025. From Sunday through Thursday, Kentucky experienced cooler than average conditions: daytime highs ranged from low 40s to mid 60s, with overnight lows dropping toward freezing. Skies were mostly overcast with occasional light rain or drizzle, resulting in damp ground and slowly rising wetland levels—ideal for waterfowl staging. Some areas reported gusty winds from cold fronts moving through, which increased bird movement during morning flights. Looking ahead toward the weekend and the special youth/veteran hunts, the forecast calls for a moderate warming trend: daytime highs in the 50s and 60s with lighter winds and a mix of sun and clouds. Overnight temperatures should remain above freezing, reducing the likelihood of surface ice. Wetland and impoundment conditions are expected to improve for ducks and geese with predicted rain, but birds may become less active midday with the milder air.

The first day of Special Youth Waterfowl Season is Saturday November 22, 2025. The first day of Special Veteran's Waterfowl Season is Sunday November 23, 2025. The first segment of duck season will open on Thursday November 27, 2025 and run until Sunday November 30, 2025. Goose season will open on Thursday November 27, 2025 and run until February 15, 2026. All bag limits will remain the same as the previous season, except that hunters may now harvest three pintails daily. Check out the [2025-26 Kentucky 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	Ducks	Geese	Duck Species Composition	Comments/Conditions
Barren River Lake WMA 11/20/2025	20 total 10 bufflehead 10 wood duck	169 Canada	50% bufflehead 50% wood duck	Lake 536.5(3.5) down 0.8 ft 2997cfs. Peters Creek MSU 30% full. Long Creek - Calvert Springs main unit 90% and units above and below the main spring 0-40%. MSUs off Hwy 100 are 0-20% full, with all MSU plants in weeds this year due to all time record summer flood. Dry conditions, but raining for the next two days. Dozen fishing boats on the lake. Beavers on MSUs. Loons and grebes present. Geese on pond, a few divers on main lake and next to bank. Wood ducks on MSUs.
Bluegrass Army Depot 11/20/2025	259 total 36 black duck 16 bufflehead 40 gadwall 5 grebe 17 mallard 6 pintail 26 redhead 80 ring-necked 9 scaup 24 wood duck	70 Canada	31% ring-necked 15% gadwall 14% black duck 10% redhead 9% wood duck 7% mallard 6% bufflehead 3% scaup 2% grebe 2% pintail	Recent weather fronts have brought in much needed rain. Moist Soil Units are ~60% full and beginning to really draw in ducks. All lakes and larger ponds are starting to raise water levels back to normal pool. Most of the ducks have shown up in the last week while geese have been fairly consistent over the last few weeks.
Doug Travis WMA 11/19/2025	540 total 20 merganser 500 mallard 20 wood duck	0	4% merganser 92% mallard 4% wood duck	400 mallards at Indian Camp Rest Area, everything else at Beaver Pond Rest Area. Low river levels, lack of precipitation, and resulting low water table have made pumping and holding water a challenge. All 3 wells have been pumping since 10/21/2025. The forecast for several inches of rain on 11/20 and 11/21 should greatly help conditions.
Duck Island WMA 11/17/2025	3114 total 2 black duck 22 canvasback 800 gadwall 325 GW teal 950 mallard 450 pintail 425 ring-necked	150 Canada 4 WF goose	31% mallard 26% gadwall 14% pintail 14% ring-necked 10% GW teal 2% wood duck 1% shoveler	Water levels are normal. Moist soil habitat is good/excellent. There were approximately 4000 ducks a week earlier.

	25 shoveler 40 wigeon 75 wood duck		1% wigeon 1% canvasback <1% black duck	
Peabody WMA 11/20/2025	12 total 4 grebe 3 mallard 2 wigeon 1 misc diver	5 Canada	33% grebe 25% mallard 17% wigeon 8% misc diver	

Figure 1. Mallard with suspected spontaneous sex reversal spotted at Duck Island WMA November 2025. PC: Pat Hahs.



November 28, 2025

Kentucky Waterfowl Ground Counts

This is the ground count survey for November 24-28, 2025. From Sunday through Tuesday, much of Kentucky saw daytime highs in the upper 50s to low 60s, with overnight lows dipping into the upper 30s to low 40s. The start of the week featured widespread fog into Monday morning that faded to partly sunny skies. Mid-week included periods of rain and showers — partly reversing the dry trend typical of late fall — that likely helped boost wetland and impoundment water levels. By Thursday highs fell into the 30s–40s with overnight lows near or below freezing in some areas. For waterfowl habitat and activity, the cool, damp early-week conditions combined with rainfall maintained or slightly elevated water levels, improving staging potential.

The first segment of duck season will open on Thursday November 27, 2025 and run until Sunday November 30, 2025. Goose season will open on Thursday November 27, 2025 and run until February 15, 2026. All bag limits will remain the same as the previous season, except that hunters may now harvest three pintails daily. Check out the [2025-26 Kentucky 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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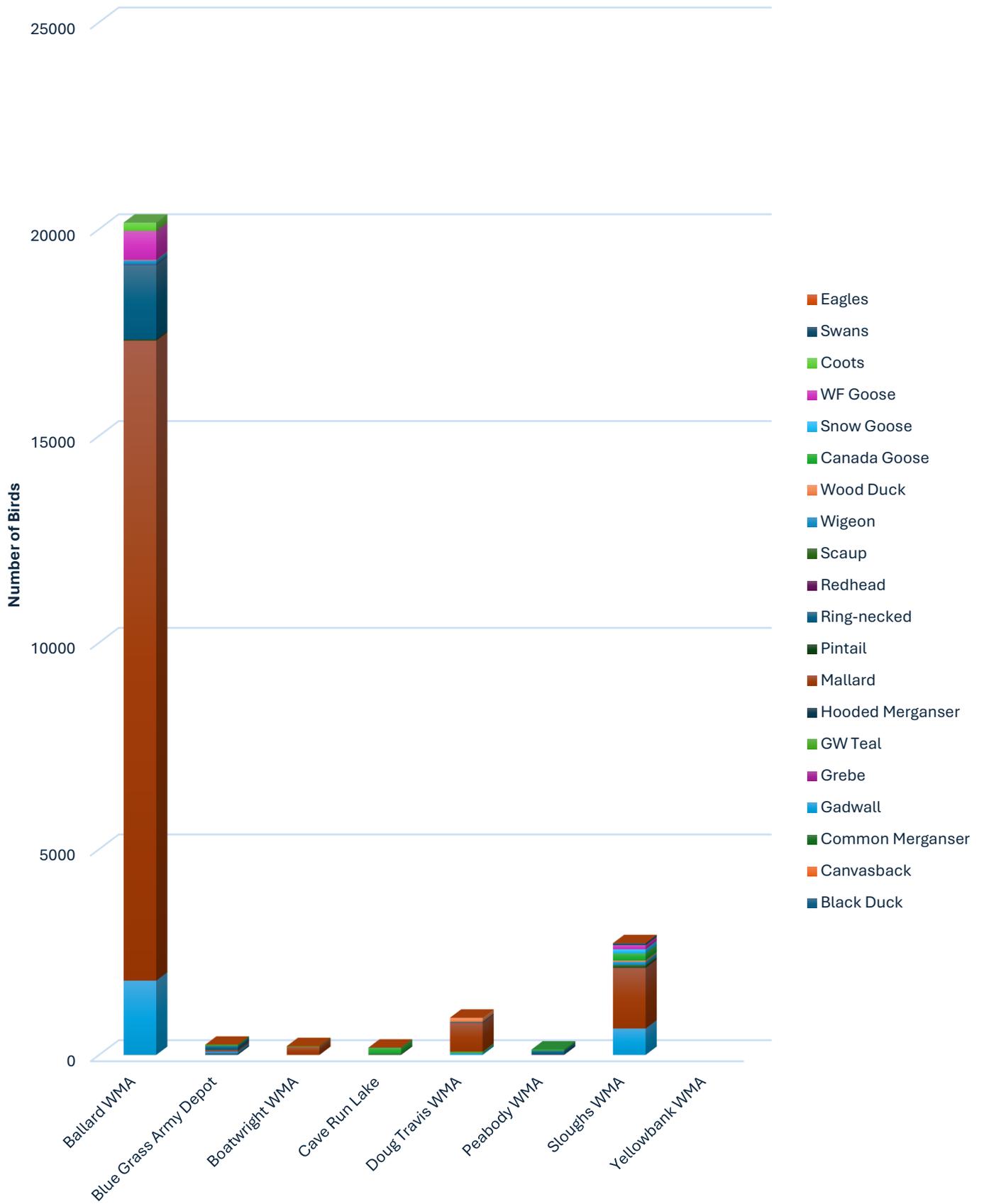
Location	Ducks	Geese	Duck Species Composition	Comments/Conditions
Ballard WMA 11/26/2025	19,315 total 5 black duck 1800 gadwall 15,500 mallard 30 pintail 10 redhead 1800 ring-necked 60 shoveler 100 wigeon 10 wood duck	700 WF geese	80% mallard 9% gadwall 9% ring-necked <1% black duck <1% pintail <1% redhead <1% shoveler <1% wigeon <1% wood duck	Early season birds are congregated in certain rest areas, but seem to be slowly expanding into the rest of refuge and hunt units. 200 coots.
Blue Grass Army Depot 11/24/2025	215 total 45 black duck 6 canvasback 32 gadwall 6 grebe 34 mallard 2 pintail 90 ring-necked	32 Canada	42% ring-necked 21% black duck 16% mallard 15% gadwall 3% canvasback 3% grebe 1% pintail	Past rain events have brought most lakes and ponds back to normal pool. Moist soil units are still holding at ~60% capacity. Expect bird numbers to bump up slightly over the next week with cooler forecasted weather. 1 eagle.
Boatwright WMA 11/26/2025	189 mallard	13 Canada	100% mallard	12 eagles.
Cave Run Lake 11/26/2025	26 total 17 common mergansers 8 pied-billed grebe 1 hooded merganser	150 Canada	65% common merganser 31% pied-billed grebe 1% hooded merganser	1 eagle.
Doug Travis WMA 11/26/2025	900 total 40 gadwall 40 GW teal 700 mallard 20 ring-necked 100 wood duck	0	78% mallard 11% wood duck 4% gadwall 4% GW teal 2% ring-necked	All 3 wells are running, and with the rise in river level they are producing more water than earlier in November. Town Creek MSU, Fish Lake, and Indian Camp Slough have huntable water for blind sites, along with Baldy's Woods walkin unit. Other blind sites may or may not have huntable water, sites 11-14 are gaining water daily through pumping. Lake Erie in Indian Camp Reast area is 90% flooded, with abundant moist-soil veg. Beaver

				Pond Rest Area is 80% flooded, and was holding almost all ducks found during this survey. Ducks were holding tight in flooded buckbrush in Beaver Pond Rest Area today, if anything I'd guess my numbers may be on the low side. There MIGHT have been some "new" ducks showing up, I saw a couple small groups of mallards drop in from very high altitude while I was there. 4 eagles.
Peabody WMA 11/24/2025	97 total 3 grebe 4 mallard 93 ring-necked	31 Canada	96% ring-necked 4% mallard 3% grebe	Recent rains have helped to put water in moist soil units. Most units are at least half full. Rain in the forecast for next week should benefit the wetland habitat.
Sloughs WMA 11/24/2025	2293 total 80 wigeon 640 gadwall 1478 mallard 25 pintail 40 scaup 30 wood duck	375 total 175 Canada 100 snow 100 white-fronted	64% mallard 28% gadwall 3% wigeon 2% scaup 1% pintail 1% wood duck	Ducks concentrated in marsh, willow/buttonbush thickets, and Anderson Pond. More in thick brush making counting difficult. Plentiful water on the landscape in both the refuge and hunt units. Spring flooding/rains combined with summer drought took a major toll on crops, and on natural vegetation to a lesser extent. Seed production is "poor to fair" across the landscape with a few "good" exceptions. 44 swans. 4 eagles.
Yellowbank WMA 11/24/2025	0 ducks	0 geese		See Figure 1 for photo of water level and habitat conditions at the refuge. We'll keep this current water level until the first week of December, then start increasing water level with pump. Rain water might do it for us before the pump is turned on. We're currently pumping up several of our hunting units in the bottoms with the same pump.

Figure 1. Habitat conditions at Yellowbank WMA on Monday November 24, 2025. PC: Ryan Taylor.



Waterfowl Counts at Waterfowl Use Areas in Kentucky for Nov. 24-28, 2025



December 5, 2025

Kentucky Waterfowl Ground Counts

This is the ground count survey for December 1-5, 2025. From Monday through Friday this week, many parts of Kentucky saw a shift into early-winter conditions. An arctic cold front pushed through, bringing below-average temperatures with highs hovering in the 30s and lows dipping toward or below freezing. Precipitation fell early in the week, initially as wintry mix (sleet or light snow) in northern and central regions before changing to cold rain across much of the state. The precipitation helped maintain or modestly raise water levels in wetlands and impoundments. By mid-week, skies cleared for many areas, with cold, dry air taking hold. These colder, drier conditions likely iced over small shallow basins, conditions that often concentrate waterfowl use into deeper, larger impoundments.

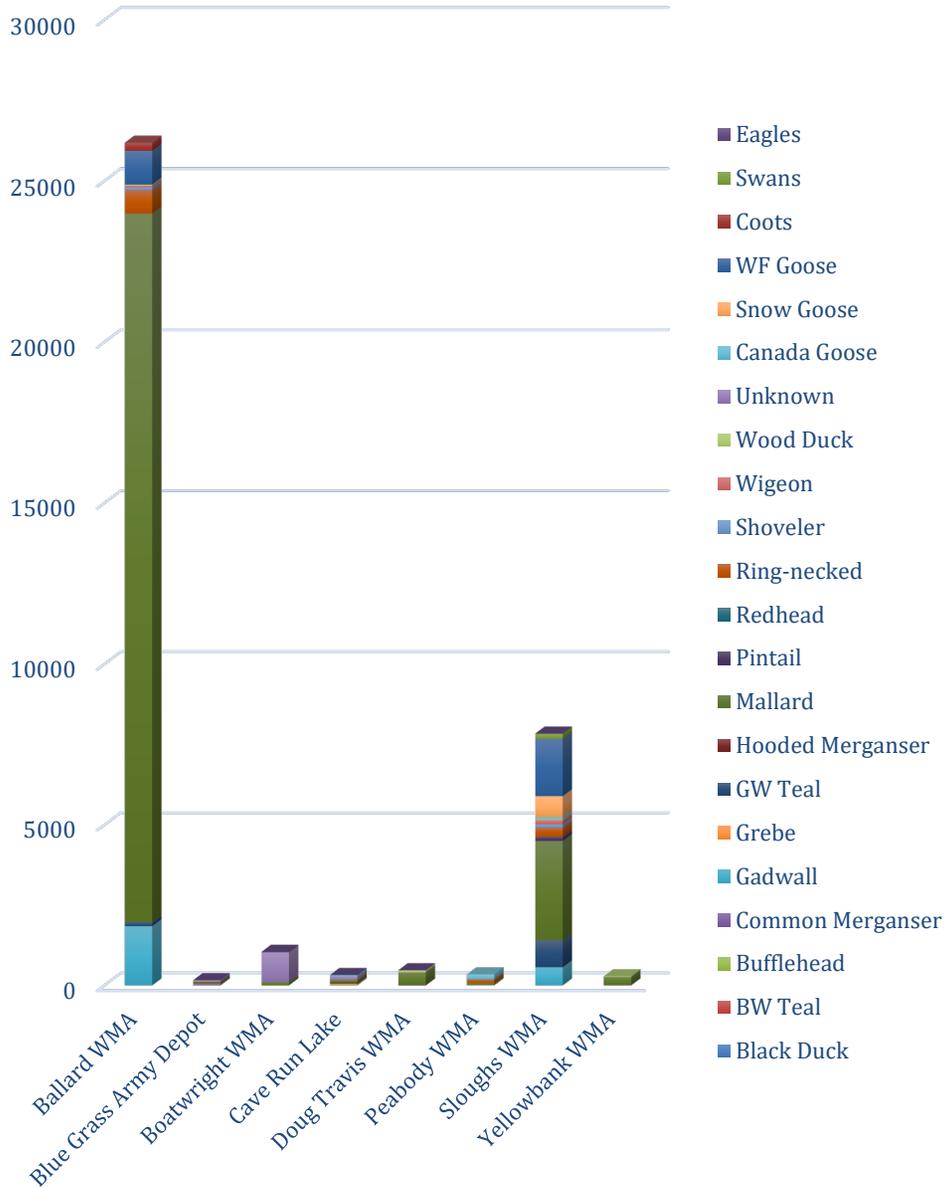
The second segment of duck season will open on Sunday December 7, 2025 and run until January 31, 2026. Goose season opened on Thursday November 27, 2025 and will run until February 15, 2026. All bag limits will remain the same as the previous season, except that hunters may now harvest three pintails daily. Check out the [2025-26 Kentucky 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	Date	Ducks	Geese	Duck Species Composition	Comments
Ballard WMA	12/04/2025	24888 total 22027 Mallard 1845 Gadwall 720 Ring-necked 120 GW teal 84 Shoveler 63 Wigeon 28 Wood duck 1 Bufflehead	1050 WF Goose	Mallard 89% Gadwall 7% Ring-necked 3% GW teal <1% Shoveler <1% Wigeon <1% Wood duck <1% Bufflehead <1%	Due to low Ohio River levels and a lack of seasonal precipitation, waterfowl have largely concentrated in refuge areas. However, some strong weather fronts have helped to bring additional waterfowl into the area.
Barren River Lake WMA	12/02/2025	400 total	229 total	90% divers 10% dabblers	Bufflehead, hooded merganser, ring-necked, wood ducks, Canada goose, snow goose. Lake 528.2(0.2) down 0ft 403cfs. Peters Creek MSU 50% full. Long Creek-Calvert Springs main unit 100%. Units above and below the main spring 20-60%. MSUs off Hwy 100 are 0-20% full, with all MSU plants in weeds this year due to all time record summer flood. Dry conditions, but good waterfowl weather in the extended forecast. Loons and grebes present.
Blue Grass Army Depot	12/01/2025	156 total 30 Unknown 28 Black duck 24 Mallard 20 BW teal 15 Ring-necked 8 Hooded merganser 8 Redhead 8 Wood duck 6 Pintail 5 Gadwall 4 PB Grebe	6 Canada	Unknown 19% Black duck 18% Mallard 15% BW teal 13% Ring-necked 10% Hooded merganser 5% Redhead 5% Wood duck 5% Pintail 4% Gadwall 3% PB Grebe 3%	Cold days and nights have resulted in most shallow ponds and moist soil units being frozen. All lakes remain open with the exception of shallow or wind protected coves. Most ducks are in shallower areas that are remaining open or where flow is present.
Boatwright WMA	12/04/2025	1032 total 923 Unknown 109 Mallard	0 total	Unknown 89% Mallard 11%	More consistent waterfowl activity at Swan Pond. The best harvest during the Thanksgiving season occurred in flooded timber and sloughs.
Cave Run Lake	12/03/2025	279 total 100 Unknown 80 Mallard 30 Bufflehead 27 Hooded merganser	42 Canada	Unknown 36% Mallard 29% Bufflehead 11% Hooded merganser 10% PB Grebe 6%	Most ducks were on the Zilpo flats, so getting close enough to identify all of them was not possible.

		16 PB Grebe 11 Common merganser 10 Wigeon 5 GW teal		Common merganser 4% Wigeon 4% GW teal 2%	
Doug Travis WMA	12/03/2025	470 total 375 Mallard 70 Wood duck 10 GW teal 10 Ring-necked 5 Hooded merganser	0 total	Mallard 80% Wood duck 15% GW teal 2% Ring-necked 2% Hooded merganser 1%	All 3 wells are running, we are slowly gaining water in several hunt units. This survey is a partial survey, to avoid damaging earthen levees.
Peabody WMA	12/02/2025	197 total 113 Ring-necked 52 Mallard 14 Unknown 8 Gadwall 5 Bufflehead 5 PB Grebe	146 Canada	Ring-necked 57% Mallard 26% Unknown 7% Gadwall 4% Bufflehead 3% PB Grebe 3%	Shallow water is freezing overnight in most areas this week. Hunting activity during the early portion of the season and changing weather has put a few more ducks and geese onto the refuge areas.
Sloughs WMA	12/01/2025	5183 total 3096 Mallard 840 GW teal 560 Gadwall 280 Ring-necked 140 Wigeon 130 Pintail 105 Shoveler 25 Wood duck 7 Black duck	2499 total 1785 Wf Goose 649 Snow 65 Canada	Mallard 60% GW teal 16% Gadwall 11% Ring-necked 5% Wigeon 3% Pintail 3% Shoveler 2% Wood duck <1% Black duck <1%	Majority of waterfowl concentrated in marsh, good amounts in southwoods.
Yellowbank WMA	12/03/2025	285 total 261 Mallard 20 Wood duck 4 Black duck	0 total	Mallard 92% Wood duck 7% Black duck 1%	Most units are at 40% water capacity. Excellent moist-soil plants and row crops in hunting units. See Figure 1 for aerial photo of flood tract units.

Waterfowl Counts at Waterfowl Use Areas in Kentucky for Dec. 1-5, 2025



Duck Species Composition (% of Total) at Waterfowl Use Areas in Kentucky for Dec. 1-5, 2025

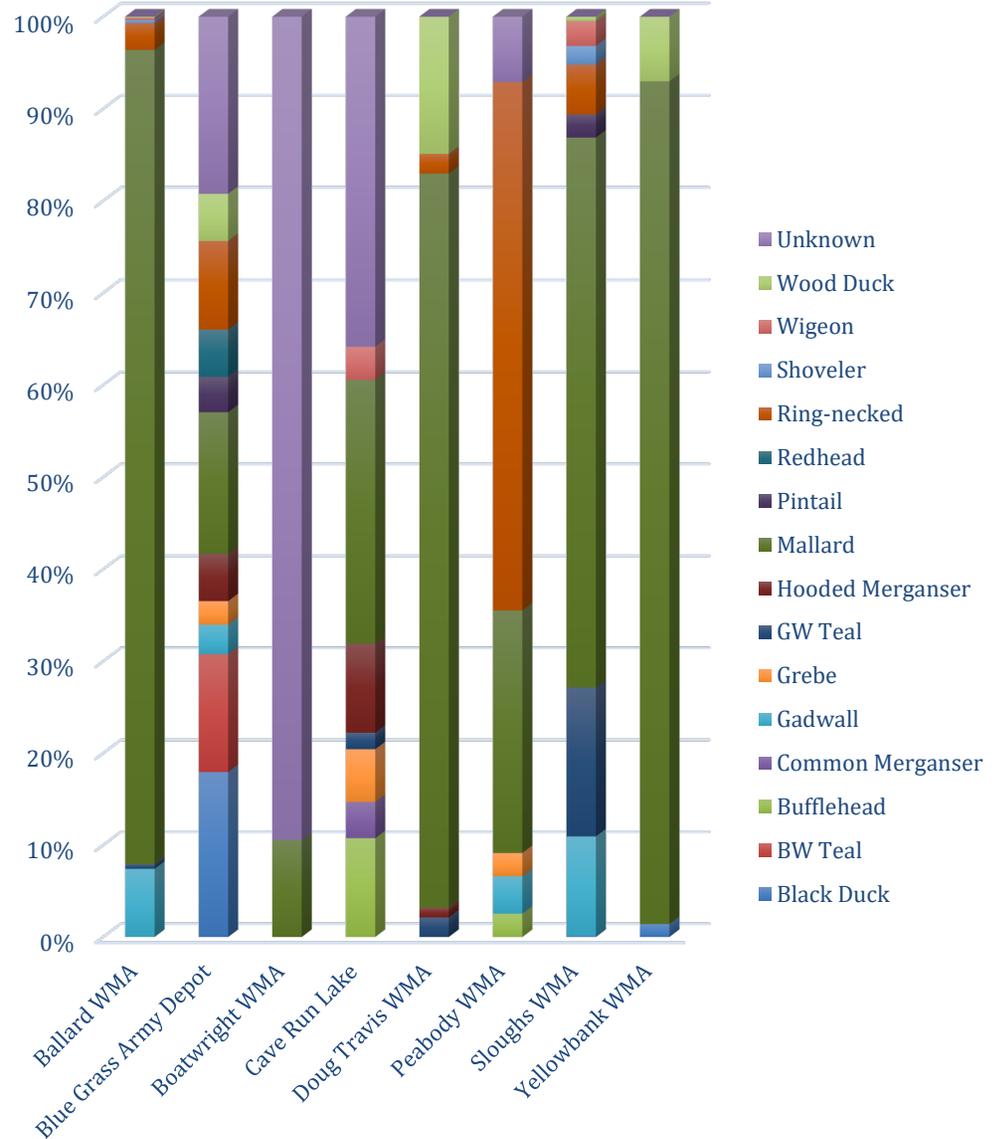


Figure 1. Aerial photo of flood tract units at Yellowbank WMA on December 3, 2025.



December 12, 2025

Kentucky Waterfowl Ground Counts

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Location	Date	Ducks	Geese	Duck Species Composition	Comments
Ballard WMA	12/12/2025	27798 total 25505 Mallard 905 Gadwall 845 Ring-necked 178 Wigeon 170 Shoveler 160 GW teal 15 Wood duck 12 Pintail 8 Black duck	20825 total 15175 Snow 5650 Wf Goose	Mallard 92% Gadwall 3% Ring-necked 3% Wigeon <1% Shoveler <1% GW teal <1% Wood duck <1% Pintail <1% Black duck <1%	Due to low Ohio River levels and a lack of seasonal precipitation, waterfowl have largely concentrated in refuge areas. We are focused on increasing surface water in hunt areas.
Barren River Lake WMA	12/09/2025	340 total	199 total		50% diver, 50% dabblers. Mallard, bufflehead, hooded merganser, ring-necked duck, Canada goose. Peters Creek MSU 50% full. Long Creek-Calvert Springs main unit 100%. Units above and below the main spring 20-60%. MSUs off Hwy 100 are 0-20% full. Dry conditions. Thin coat of ice on shallow/small ponds, but good waterfowl weather in the extended forecast. Loons and grebes present. Saw waterfowl during crane survey as well. Ducks on many ponds. Geese on pond/lake, divers in tight rafts on main lake, dabblers in large/med raft on big water, mergansers on creeks, nothing on MSUs. Lake 528.1(0.0) down 0.0 ft 403cfs. 0.0 inches rain last 24 hrs.
Blue Grass Army Depot	12/08/2025	533 total 262 Ring-necked 92 Black duck 69 Mallard 31 Hooded merganser 30 Unknown 24 Bufflehead 20 Gadwall 4 PB Grebe	2 Canada	Ring-necked 49% Black duck 17% Mallard 13% Hooded merganser 6% Unknown 6% Bufflehead 5% Gadwall 4% PB Grebe <1% Pintail <1%	Big push of birds have come in following recent weather events. Large diversity of species present. All bodies of water are currently open for the time being, this will change as colder temps move through as the week progresses. Expect good number of birds to continue coming into the area.

		1 Pintail			
Boatwright WMA	12/11/2025	2886 total 2663 Unknown 223 Mallard	0 total	Unknown 92% Mallard 8%	Ducks are starting to disperse on/around WMA. Freezing temps and low water levels observed in units.
Cave Run Lake	12/11/2025	282 total 188 Unknown 60 Mallard 10 Bufflehead 10 Ring-necked 10 Scaup 1 Canvasback 1 PB Grebe 1 Hooded merganser 1 Pintail	20 Canada	Unknown 67% Mallard 21% Bufflehead 4% Ring-necked 4% Scaup 4% Canvasback <1% PB Grebe <1% Hooded merganser <1% Pintail <1%	
Duck Island WMA	12/11/2025	2977 total 1250 Mallard 750 Gadwall 500 GW teal 230 Ring-necked 150 Pintail 45 Shoveler 18 Wigeon 18 Canvasback 9 Black duck 7 Ruddy duck	143 total 131 Canada 12 Wf Goose	Mallard 42% Gadwall 25% GW teal 17% Ring-necked 8% Pintail 5% Shoveler 2% Wigeon <1% Canvasback <1% Black duck <1% Ruddy duck <1%	Habitat conditions on the island are good/excellent. Water levels are optimum. Notable numbers of GWT. Pintail numbers have declined while mallard numbers increased.
Doug Travis WMA	12/10/2025	725 total 665 Mallard 20 GW teal 20 Wood duck 10 Hooded merganser 10 Ring-necked	0 total	Mallard 92% GW teal 3% Wood duck 3% Hooded merganser 1% Ring-necked 1%	All 3 wells are running, but we are at best holding water levels even in impoundments due to lack of rainfall and very low water levels in Mississippi River.
Peabody WMA	12/11/2025	270 total 144 Ring-necked 87 Mallard 27 Gadwall 12 PB Grebe	85 Canada	Ring-necked 53% Mallard 32% Gadwall 10% PB Grebe 4%	Water is dropping in most shallow water impoundments due to lack of significant rainfall. Shallow water continues to freeze most nights, but has typically thawed by the afternoon.
Sloughs WMA	12/08/2025	5591 total 3661 Mallard 1450 GW teal 270 Gadwall	4990 total 2775 Wf Goose 2050 Snow 165 Canada	Mallard 65% GW teal 26% Gadwall 5% Pintail 2%	Most ducks concentrated in marsh and muddy slough. 73 sandhill crane observed flying overhead during count.

		85 Pintail 75 Shoveler 50 Wigeon		Shoveler 1% Wigeon <1%	
Yellowbank WMA	12/08/2025	575 total 550 Mallard 20 Black duck 5 Wood duck	0 total	Mallard 96% Black duck 3% Wood duck <1%	Most waterfowl hunting units are at 40% water capacity. Excellent moist-soil plants and row crops in hunting units. River bottoms units have been significantly impacted by the pheasant quota hunt.

December 19, 2025

Kentucky Waterfowl Ground Counts

This is the waterfowl ground count report for the week of December 15-19, 2025. From Monday through Friday this week, Kentucky experienced a notable swing in winter weather as an early Arctic blast plunged temperatures well below average, with some areas seeing near-record lows and wind chills below zero early in the week. Northern and central parts of the state dealt with residual snow and cold conditions, while precipitation early in the week fell as a wintry mix before transitioning to rain and milder conditions mid-week. By midweek, temperatures rebounded, with highs in many central and eastern locations climbing into the 40s and even low 50s before another cold front moved through. The return of colder air later in the week brought temperatures back down toward freezing with drier conditions, promoting icing of shallow basins that were not already frozen.

The second segment of duck season opened Sunday December 7 and will run through January 31, 2026. Goose season opened on Thursday November 27, 2025 and will run through February 15, 2026. All bag limits will remain the same as the previous season, except that hunters may now harvest three pintails daily. Check out the 2025-26 Kentucky 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	Date	Ducks	Geese	Duck Species Composition	Comments
Ballard WMA	12/17/2025	36198 total 28859 Mallard 6450 Ring-necked 518 Gadwall 200 Shoveler 130 Wigeon 26 Wood duck 8 Pintail 7 PB Grebe 7 Hooded merganser 1 Black duck	8056 total 7000 Snow 1050 Wf Goose 6 Canada	Mallard 80% Ring-necked 18% Gadwall 1% Shoveler <1% Wigeon <1% Wood duck <1% Pintail <1% PB Grebe <1% Hooded merganser <1% Black duck <1%	<p>A strong cold front may have pushed new ducks into the area. Cold temperatures created freezing water conditions, possibly influencing ducks to congregate to open water. Waterfowl seem to be migrating within the area and areas of refuge. A decrease in geese may be due to feeding behavior during survey. Hunting activity moderate. Low water conditions may be influencing waterfowl behavior.</p>
Barren River Lake WMA	12/15/2025	1355 total	245 total		<p>Lake 528.4(0.4) down 0.0ft 404cfs. 0in rain last 24hrs. 20% diver, 80% dabblers. Mallard, bufflehead, hooded merganser, ring-necked, ruddy, goldeneye, Canada goose, snow goose. Peters Creek MSU 50% full. Long Creek- Calvert Springs main unit 90% full, and units above and below the main spring 0-40% full. MSUs off Hwy 100 are 0-10% full. Ice on half the lake. All ponds mostly locked up, streams in stack water frozen. Very dry conditions. Good waterfowl weather past few days. Waterfowl hunters on the lake; saw waterfowl during crane survey too. Saw many flocks flying into lake. 160+ White Pelicans, tundra swans report from birder, lots of eagles. Geese on pond/lake, some snows mized with Canada geese. Flock of interior Canada geese too. Divers in loose rafts all over the lake that wasn't iced over. Dabblers in</p>

					large/med/small rafts all over the lake. Mergansers on creeks. Lots of mallards at Calvert Springs.
Blue Grass Army Depot	12/15/2025	1606 total 503 Mallard 350 Black duck 223 Ring-necked 205 Pintail 151 Redhead 75 Unknown 62 Hooded merganser 37 Gadwall	0 total	Mallard 31% Black duck 22% Ring-necked 14% Pintail 13% Redhead 9% Unknown 5% Hooded merganser 4% Gadwall 2%	Single digit temperatures have left most bodies of water frozen. 75% of water remains open on Lake Vega, all other bodies are frozen aside from holes kept open by waterfowl. 38 sandhill cranes were observed during survey.
Boatwright WMA	12/18/2025	4611 total 2440 Mallard 2169 Unknown 2 Hooded merganser	0 total	Mallard 53% Unknown 47% Hooded merganser <1%	Experienced rain followed by a cold front in recent days. Increased waterfowl numbers during the last freeze up. Moderate hunting pressure in the past week and lower pressure at the start of this week. Low water reducing available habitat. Also low crop production.
Cave Run Lake	12/18/2025	423 total 200 Unknown 90 Hooded merganser 70 Bufflehead 30 Mallard 17 Black duck 10 Scaup 5 Redhead	25 Canada	Unknown 47% Hooded merganser 21% Bufflehead 17% Mallard 7% Black duck 4% Scaup 2% Redhead 1%	Several groups of hunters along the shore had ducks pushed way out on the lake. On the big part of the lake a lot of birds are just too far out to tell what species they are. We did see a good bunch of Black Ducks on a small wetland on private land near the lake.
Doug Travis WMA	12/15/2025	2242 total 2000 Mallard 50 GW teal 50 Gadwall 50 Hooded merganser 50 Ring-necked 40 Wood duck 2 Black duck	0 total	Mallard 89% GW teal 2% Gadwall 2% Hooded merganser 2% Ring-necked 2% Wood duck 2% Black duck <1%	Unknown number of mallards were loafing in thick buckbrush in Beaver Pond rest area. Rain is still needed to improve water conditions even with wells running.
Peabody WMA	12/17/2025	841 total 587 Ring-necked	90 Canada	Ring-necked 70% Gadwall 14%	Lack of rainfall has greatly reduced the amount of shallow water

		115 Gadwall 95 Mallard 37 GW teal 9 PB Grebe 4 Canvasback		Mallard 11% GW teal 4% PB Grebe 1% Canvasback <1%	throughout the area. Some rain in the forecast may help the waterfowl habitat in the coming week.
Sloughs WMA	12/15/2025	12745 total 10835 Mallard 1019 Gadwall 764 Misc Dabblers 127 Pintail	29299 total 14937 Wf Goose 14212 Snow 150 Canada	Mallard 85% Gadwall 8% Misc Dabblers 6% Pintail <1%	95% of the area froze over the weekend but birds kept holes open in the refuge and held tight. Gained a significant amount of ducks, snow geese and white-fronts. Remaining ice should disappear by Thursday with rain coming. Holding tight in open pockets of ice in marsh, southwoods, and muddy slough. 15 sandhill cranes observed flying on route. See Figure 1 for drone image.
Yellowbank WMA	12/17/2025	314 total 293 Mallard 21 Black duck	0 total	Mallard 93% Black duck 7%	Most waterfowl hunting units are at 40% water capacity. All units have sheet ice from the recent freeze but will open in the next few days.

December 26, 2025

Kentucky Waterfowl Ground Counts

The second segment of duck season opened Sunday December 7 and will run through January 31, 2026. Goose season opened on Thursday November 27, 2025 and will run through February 15, 2026. All bag limits will remain the same as the previous season, except that hunters may now harvest three pintails daily. Check out the 2025-26 Kentucky 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	Date	Ducks	Geese	Duck Species Composition	Comments
Ballard WMA	12/23/2025	34550 total 31975 Mallard 1600 Ring-necked 490 Gadwall 300 Shoveler 130 Wigeon 34 Wood duck 10 GW teal 7 Hooded merganser 2 Black duck 1 Ruddy duck	20730 total 17500 Snow 3200 Wf Goose 30 Canada	Mallard 93% Ring-necked 5% Gadwall 1% Shoveler <1% Wigeon <1% Wood duck <1% GW teal <1% Hooded merganser <1% Black duck <1% Ruddy duck <1%	
Barren River Lake WMA	12/22/2025	20 total	179 total		Normal conditions. Finally got a good runoff rain event this week. Lots of fishermen on the lake and bank. Lots of eagles. Warm weather moved the ducks out.
Boatwright WMA	12/26/2025	31110 total 1289 Mallard	263 total 203 Snow 60 Canada	Mallard 4%	
Blue Grass Army Depot	12/23/2025	1551 total 546 Mallard 453 Black duck 275 Ring-necked 108 Gadwall 46 GW teal 24 Pintail 17 Ruddy duck 10 Hooded merganser 10 Shoveler	117 total 117 Canada	Mallard 35% Black duck 29% Ring-necked 18% Gadwall 7% GW teal 3% Pintail 2% Ruddy duck 1% Hooded merganser <1% Shoveler <1%	A large number of waterfowl are still present after the cold snap we had last week. Most ducks are using the moist soil units or shallow flats on Lake Vega.
Sloughs WMA	12/22/2025	2834 total 1705 Mallard 110 Gadwall 107 Shoveler	17260 total 14450 Snow 2687 Wf Goose 123 Canada	Mallard 60% Gadwall 4% Shoveler 4%	

Doug Travis WMA	12/23/2025	175 total 140 Mallard 50 Gadwall 20 Ring-necked 15 Wood duck	0 total	Mallard 80% Gadwall 29% Ring-necked 11% Wood duck 9%	Beaver Pond Rest Ares was not surveyed due to muddy levees. We are still battling dry conditions. Some hunt units have lost water even with wells running.
Yellowbank WMA	12/22/2025	645 total 600 Mallard 20 Gadwall 15 Black duck 10 Wood duck	0 total	Mallard 93% Gadwall 3% Black duck 2% Wood duck 2%	

January 2, 2026

Kentucky Waterfowl Ground Counts

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Location	Date	Ducks	Geese	Duck Species Composition	Comments
Ballard WMA	12/31/2025	14825 total 12890 Mallard 1525 Ring-necked 266 Gadwall 79 Shoveler 21 Wood duck 14 Pintail 10 Redhead 8 Canvasback 7 Hooded merganser 5 Wigeon	12362 total 10700 Snow 1650 Wf Goose 12 Canada	Mallard 87% Ring-necked 10% Gadwall 2% Shoveler <1% Wood duck <1% Pintail <1% Redhead <1% Canvasback <1% Hooded merganser <1% Wigeon <1%	
Boatwright WMA	12/31/2025	2997 total 1257 Mallard 75 GW teal 2 Hooded merganser	1343 total	Mallard 42% GW teal 3% Hooded merganser <1%	
Blue Grass Army Depot	12/29/2025	881 total 327 Mallard 270 Ring-necked 233 Black duck 175 Gadwall 45 GW teal 18 Pintail 12 Ruddy duck 8 Wigeon 2 Wood duck	0 total	Mallard 37% Ring-necked 31% Black duck 26% Gadwall 20% GW teal 5% Pintail 2% Ruddy duck 1% Wigeon <1% Wood duck <1%	Cold snap and winds have most ducks relating to protected bodies of water. Forecasted low overnight temps for the rest of the week should result in smaller bodies of water freezing over. Some areas without wind are already beginning to freeze in the shallows and along the banks. Expect waterfowl numbers to increase as the week progresses as more water freezes in the area.
Doug Travis WMA	12/29/2025	3423 total	0 total	Mallard 93%	Most ducks were

		3175 Mallard 110 Ring-necked 50 Gadwall 30 GW teal 30 Wood duck 20 Hooded merganser 5 Pintail 3 Black duck		Ring-necked 3% Gadwall 1% GW teal <1% Wood duck <1% Hooded merganser <1% Pintail <1% Black duck <1%	found in buckbrush in Beaver Pond Rest Area. Wells were kicked off by storms 12/28 but restarted 12/29. Water levels are still below optimal in most units.
Sloughs WMA	12/29/2025	6835 total 5000 Mallard 800 Gadwall 400 Ring-necked 45 Pintail 40 Shoveler	850 total 700 Wf Goose 150 Canada	Mallard 73% Gadwall 12% Ring-necked 6% Pintail <1% Shoveler <1%	No snow geese observed on area today
Yellowbank WMA	12/30/2025	925 total 800 Mallard 75 Pintail 40 Black duck 10 GW teal	0 total	Mallard 86% Pintail 8% Black duck 4% GW teal 1%	

January 9, 2026

Kentucky Waterfowl Ground Counts

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Location	Date	Ducks	Geese	Duck Species Composition	Comments
Ballard WMA	01/07/2026	10172 total 9185 Mallard 500 Ring-necked 250 Gadwall 160 Shoveler 22 Canvasback 20 GW teal 11 Wigeon 10 Wood duck 8 Pintail 6 Hooded merganser	34054 total 25515 Snow 8500 Wf Goose 37 Canada	Mallard 90% Ring-necked 5% Gadwall 2% Shoveler 2% Canvasback <1% GW teal <1% Wigeon <1% Wood duck <1% Pintail <1% Hooded merganser <1%	
Barren River Lake WMA	01/06/2026	35 total	169 total		Very dry conditions. Lots of fishermen on the lake and banks. Lots of eagles and gulls. Warm weather moved the ducks out. Rain coming on Friday.
Boatwright WMA	01/07/2026	1625 total 766 Mallard	8 total 8 Canada	Mallard 47%	
Blue Grass Army Depot	01/05/2026	705 total 240 Ring-necked 202 Mallard 171 Black duck 25 GW teal 20 Gadwall 18 Pintail 12 Hooded merganser 5 Wigeon	9 total 9 Canada	Ring-necked 34% Mallard 29% Black duck 24% GW teal 4% Gadwall 3% Pintail 3% Hooded merganser 2% Wigeon <1%	Continued warm trend has led to a significant number of birds leaving the area. Ducks can be found on most bodies of water with a strong correlation of usage to moist soil units.
Cave Run Lake	01/07/2026	324 total 50 Bufflehead 30 Canvasback 30 Redhead 20 Hooded merganser 4 Common merganser	0 total	Bufflehead 15% Canvasback 9% Redhead 9% Hooded merganser 6% Common merganser	

				1%	
Doug Travis WMA	01/05/2026	1945 total 1800 Mallard 60 Ring-necked 40 Wood duck 20 Hooded merganser 10 Gadwall 5 GW teal 5 Pintail 3 Wigeon 2 Black duck	0 total	Mallard 93% Ring-necked 3% Wood duck 2% Hooded merganser 1% Gadwall <1% GW teal <1% Pintail <1% Wigeon <1% Black duck <1%	All 3 wells are running but fighting against dry conditions and low river levels. Ducks were dispersed today in flooded buckbrush and moist-soil habitat. Very little hunting pressure on 1/5/26.
Sloughs WMA	01/05/2025	6757 total 4400 Mallard 240 Pintail 202 Shoveler 165 Gadwall 85 Wigeon 70 Ring-necked 39 GW teal 4 Black duck	37601 total 31443 Snow 5955 Wf Goose 203 Canada	Mallard 65% Pintail 4% Shoveler 3% Gadwall 2% Wigeon 1% Ring-necked 1% GW teal <1% Black duck <1%	
Yellowbank WMA	01/05/2026	360 total 290 Mallard 50 Pintail 10 Black duck 10 Gadwall	0 total	Mallard 81% Pintail 14% Black duck 3% Gadwall 3%	

January 16, 2026

Kentucky Waterfowl Ground Counts

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Location	Date	Ducks	Geese	Duck Species Composition	Comments
Ballard WMA	01/14/2026	17716 total 16990 Mallard 450 Ring-necked 118 Gadwall 70 Pintail 57 Shoveler 20 Wigeon 9 Canvasback 1 Hooded merganser 1 Wood duck	33120 total 22508 Snow 10587 Wf Goose 25 Canada	Mallard 96% Ring-necked 3% Gadwall <1% Pintail <1% Shoveler <1% Wigeon <1% Canvasback <1% Hooded merganser <1% Wood duck <1%	
Barren River Lake WMA	01/12/2026	105 total	30 total		Lake 528.4(0.4) down 0.1 ft 404cfs. 0.3 inches rain last 24 hrs. 70% diver, 30% dabblers. Hooded merganser, bufflehead, mallard, Canada goose. Peters Creek MSU 70% full, Long Creek- Calvert Springs main unit 90% full, and units above and below the main spring 20-40% full. MSUs off hwy 100 are 0- 20% full. Very dry conditions. Lots of fishermen on the lake and banks. Lots of eagles and gulls. Warm weather moved the waterfowl out. Canada geese on lake, ducks on pond and lake coming in at dusk, nothing on MSUs.
Blue Grass Army Depot	01/13/2026	442 total 192 Mallard 104 Black duck 56 Gadwall 52 Ring-necked 30 GW teal 7 Shoveler 1 Hooded merganser	0 total	Mallard 43% Black duck 24% Gadwall 13% Ring-necked 12% GW teal 7% Shoveler 2% Hooded merganser <1%	Continued usage of moist soil units have yielded the largest concentration of ducks. Expect forecasted temps in the teens to start to concentrate numbers of waterfowl once ice forms on smaller bodies of water.

Boatwright WMA	01/14/2026	1834 total 1045 Mallard 539 Unknown 250 GW teal	19 Canada	Mallard 57% Unknown 29% GW teal 14%	
Doug Travis WMA	01/14/2026	1080 total 900 Mallard 50 Wood duck 45 GW teal 35 Ring-necked 30 Pintail 20 Hooded merganser	0 total	Mallard 83% Wood duck 5% GW teal 4% Ring-necked 3% Pintail 3% Hooded merganser 2%	Survey is incomplete as Beaver Pond Rest Area was inaccessible due to wet levees. All 3 wells running. Most ducks were found in flooded moist-soil veg in Indian Camp Rest Area.
Sloughs WMA	01/12/2025	7712 total 5394 Mallard 1926 Misc Dabblers 385 Pintail 7 Black duck	28768 total 24092 Snow 4425 Wf Goose 251 Canada	Mallard 70% Misc Dabblers 25% Pintail 5% Black duck <1%	
Yellowbank WMA	01/12/2026	340 total 280 Mallard 40 Pintail 10 Black duck 10 Gadwall	0 total	Mallard 82% Pintail 12% Black duck 3% Gadwall 3%	Most waterfowl hunting units are at 40% water capacity. Units are drying each week without significant rainfall. The refuge pump is running refill hunting units in Chenault Bottoms. The Flood Tract pump piping is currently being repaired due to freezing and thawing weather changes shifting piping.

January 23, 2026

Kentucky Waterfowl Ground Counts

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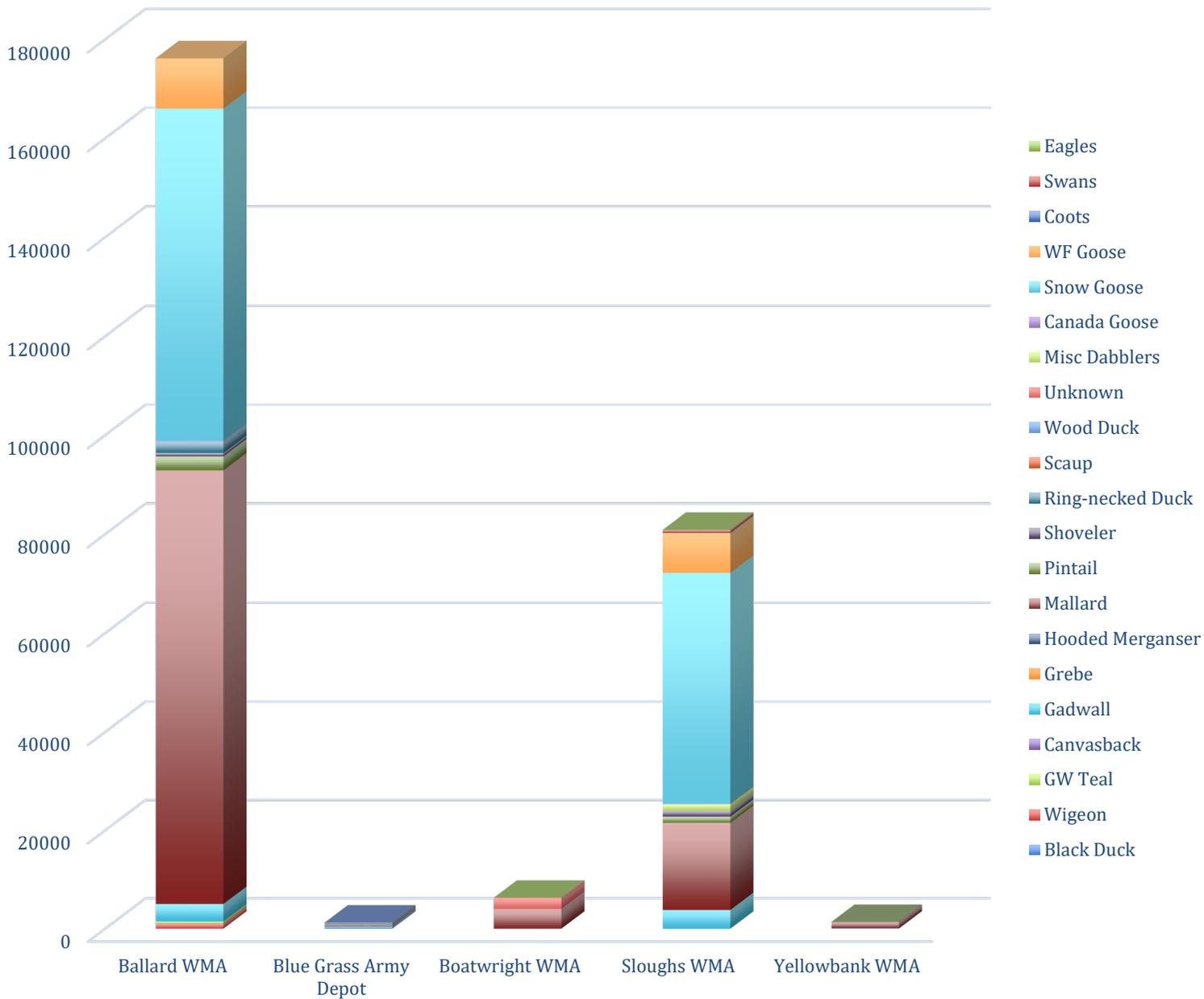
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Location	Date	Ducks	Geese	Duck Species Composition	Comments
Ballard WMA	01/21/2026	98925 total 87865 Mallard 3525 Gadwall 2825 Pintail 2350 Ring-necked 1000 Wigeon 700 Shoveler 450 GW teal 175 Wood duck 25 Canvasback 20 Hooded merganser 10 Black duck	77210 total 67000 Snow 10160 Wf Goose 50 Canada	Mallard 89% Gadwall 4% Pintail 3% Ring-necked 2% Wigeon 1% Shoveler <1% GW teal <1% Wood duck <1% Canvasback <1% Hooded merganser <1% Black duck <1%	There has been a strong migration pattern ahead of incoming weather front. During count on Wednesday birds were everywhere. The freeze seemed to spread these birds out or move them further south.
Barren River Lake WMA	01/20/2026	673 total	323 total		50% diver, 50% dabblers. Hooded merganser, bufflehead, redhead, mallard, Canada geese, WF geese. Lake 528.6(0.6) up 0.1ft 404cfs. 0.0in rain last 24hrs. Peters Creek MSU 70% full. Long Creek-Calvert Springs main unit 90% full. Units above and below the main spring 20-40% full. MSUs off hwy 100 are 0-20% full. Very dry conditions, few fishermen on the lake and banks, half the lake iced over, MSU iced over. Canada geese/specks on lake, ducks on large pond

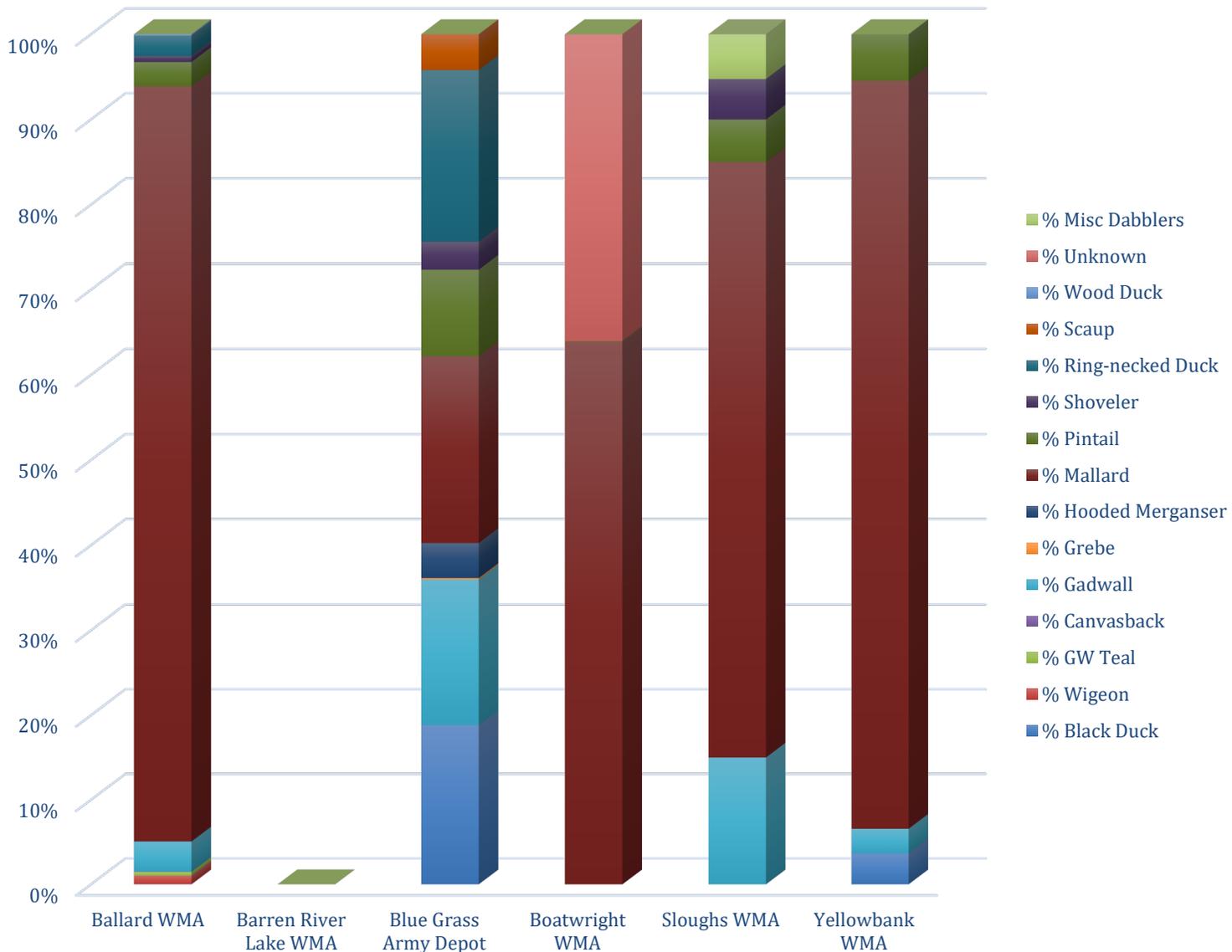
					and lake. Many coming in at dusk. Rafts all around lake and against rock walls. Nothing on MSUs.
Blue Grass Army Depot	01/20/2026	1244 total 261 Mallard 240 Ring-necked 224 Black duck 204 Gadwall 121 Pintail 50 Scaup 49 Hooded merganser 39 Shoveler 2 PB Grebe	0 total	Mallard 21% Ring-necked 19% Black duck 18% Gadwall 16% Pintail 10% Scaup 4% Hooded merganser 4% Shoveler 3% PB Grebe <1%	All small bodies of water and most of the creeks are frozen. Lake Vega is 80% frozen. A large congregation of birds are present currently with local bodies of water likely locked up. Ice eaters are deployed keeping holes open. Expect numbers of birds to increase as colder nights are forecasted over the coming days.
Boatwright WMA	01/21/2026	6262 total 4002 Mallard 2256 Unknown 4 Pintail	0 total	Mallard 64% Unknown 36% Pintail <1%	There has been a strong migration pattern ahead of incoming weather front. During count on Wednesday birds were everywhere. The freeze seemed to spread these birds out or move them further south.
Sloughs WMA	01/19/2025	25331 total 17731 Mallard 3799 Gadwall 1331 Misc Dabblers 1266 Pintail	54895 total 46719 Snow 8058 Wf Goose 118 Canada	Mallard 70% Gadwall 15% Misc Dabblers 5% Pintail 5% Shoveler 5%	99% frozen. Ducks/geese concentrated in a few pockets in marsh and muddy slough.

		1204 Shoveler			
Yellowbank WMA	01/21/2026	1370 total 1205 Mallard 75 Pintail 50 Black duck 40 Gadwall	0 total	Mallard 88% Pintail 5% Black duck 4% Gadwall 3%	Most waterfowl hunting units are at 35% water capacity with sheet ice covering 95% of the available water on WMA.

Waterfowl Counts at Waterfowl Use Areas in Kentucky for Jan 19-23, 2026



Duck Species Composition (% of Total) at Waterfowl Use Areas in Kentucky for Jan 19-23, 2026



January 30, 2026

Kentucky Waterfowl Ground Counts

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Location	Date	Ducks	Geese	Duck Species Composition	Comments
Barren River Lake WMA	01/28/2026	800 total	500 total		lake 533.7(5.7) up 0.8ft 425cfs. 0in rain last 24hrs. 10% diver, 90% dabblers. Hooded mergansers, mallards, and Canada geese. Duck and geese estimates are a minimum. Peters Creek MSU 90% full. Long Creek - Calvert Springs main unit 90% full. Units above and below the main spring 60-70% full. MSUs off Hwy 100 are 50-70% full. Normal conditions. Temps have been below freezing for a week so 80% of the lower lake is iced over. River and creeks are still ice free. MSUs iced over. Boat ramps have 2 inches of ice on them. Roads are in bad shape (ice). Access is limited. Canada geese on lake - flock after flock came in at dusk while doing crane survey. Many ducks on few holes in the big water - many coming in at dusk too. River and creek hunting are the only option until the season closes.
Blue Grass Army Depot	NA				All water bodies frozen.
Doug Travis WMA	01/27/2026	590 total 500 Mallard 50 Ring-necked 10 Wigeon 10 GW teal 10 Gadwall 10 Shoveler	0 total	Mallard 85% Ring-necked 8% Wigeon 2% GW teal 2% Gadwall 2% Shoveler 2%	Ducks were concentrated in Indian Camp Rest Area at discharge from Well #3, we chose to not flush ducks so count is incomplete. Other rest areas are frozen up, although we are holding minimal amounts of open water at Blind sites 11, 13, 14, and 17, as well as Baldy's Woods walk-in unit by running wells.
Sloughs WMA	NA				No count this week due to weather/lack of access. Running wells to try to keep open some water with varying success.

February 06, 2026

Kentucky Waterfowl Ground Counts

The second segment of duck season opened Sunday December 7 and closed January 31, 2026. Goose season opened on Thursday November 27, 2025 and will run through February 15, 2026. The special Youth-only waterfowl day in February is Saturday February 14th. The special Veteran and Active Duty Military personnel waterfowl day in February is Sunday February 8th. All bag limits will remain the same as the previous season, except that hunters may now harvest three pintails daily. Check out the 2025-26 Kentucky 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	Date	Ducks	Geese	Duck Species Composition	Comments
Ballard WMA	02/06/2026	35135 total 26800 Mallard 6510 Pintail 1100 Gadwall 415 Wigeon 310 Ring-necked 15 Common merganser	97235 total 94065 Snow 3150 Wf Goose 20 Canada	Mallard 76% Pintail 19% Gadwall 3% Wigeon 1% Ring-necked <1% Common merganser <1%	
Boatwright WMA	02/05/2026	407 total 300 GW teal 50 Mallard 50 Scaup 7 Pintail	25 total 25 Snow	GW teal 74% Mallard 12% Scaup 12% Pintail 2%	
Doug Travis WMA	02/03/2026	4950 total 4600 Mallard 100 GW teal 100 Ring-necked 50 Gadwall 50 Pintail 50 Wood duck	0 total	Mallard 93% GW teal 2% Ring-necked 2% Gadwall 1% Pintail 1% Wood duck 1%	All 3 wells are running, and ducks were present in each area of open water created by wells. Most of the ducks found were in open water near Well #3 and loafing in nearby dry soybean stubble.
Sloughs WMA	02/03/2026	4149 total 3778 Mallard 305 Misc Dabblers 57 Pintail 9 Black duck	98 total 68 Snow 30 Canada	Mallard 91% Misc Dabblers 7% Pintail 1% Black duck <1%	Habitat remains largely frozen except a few holes in hunt units and refuge from pumping water. There are more waterfowl around the area this week than counts indicate, they were just not present during the count.

February 13, 2026

Kentucky Waterfowl Ground Counts

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Location	Date	Ducks	Geese	Duck Species Composition	Comments
Doug Travis WMA	02/09/2026	11123 total 9195 Mallard 450 Pintail 400 Gadwall 400 Shoveler 400 Ring-necked 109 Wood duck 100 GW teal 50 Black duck 19 Hooded merganser	2000 total 1500 Wf Goose 500 Canada	Mallard 83% Pintail 4% Gadwall 4% Shoveler 4% Ring-necked 4% Wood duck <1% GW teal <1% Black duck <1% Hooded merganser <1%	All 3 wells are running, and ducks were present in each area of open water created by wells. Most of the ducks found were in open water in Indian Camp Rest Area and nearby harvested dry soybean fields. Areas of open water are beginning to enlarge due to warming weather.
Sloughs WMA	02/10/2026	12441 total 9513 Mallard 1307 Misc Dabblers 1121 Pintail 500 GW teal	20670 total 14500 Snow 6110 Wf Goose 60 Canada	Mallard 76% Misc Dabblers 11% Pintail 9% GW teal 4%	