

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.

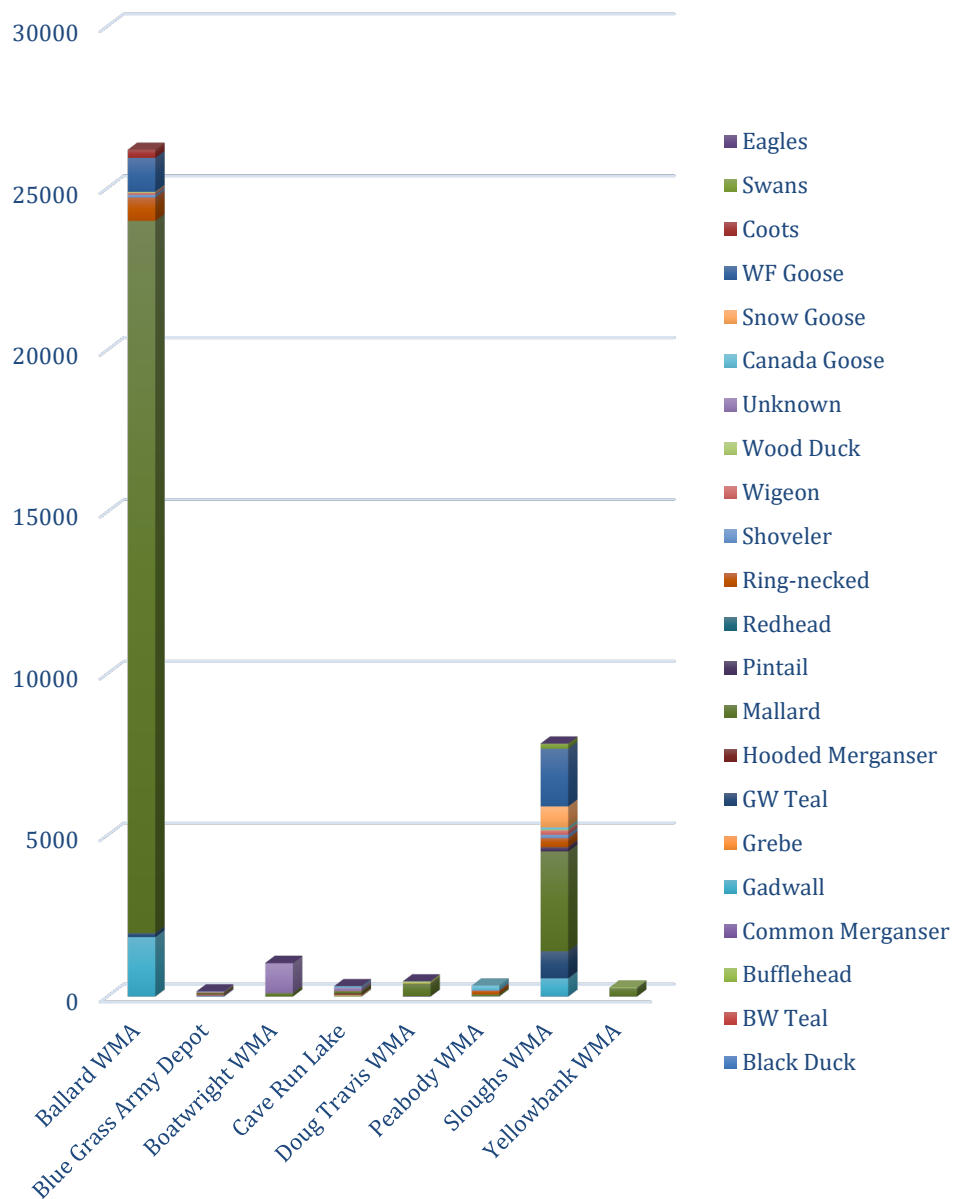
The second segment of duck season will open on Sunday December 7, 2025 and run until January 31, 2026. Goose season opened on Thursday November 27, 2025 and will run until February 15, 2026. All bag limits will remain the same as the previous season, except that hunters may now harvest three pintails 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.

Highly pathogenic avian influenza is present in Kentucky. As of November 20, 2025, it has only been detected in raptors for the 2025-26 migratory season. Visit the [KDFWR Avian Influenza webpage](#) to view an up-to-date map of detections. Hunters should use common sense when handling/cleaning harvested waterfowl. See page two of the 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. Please let WMA staff know if you observe any sick or dead birds.

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

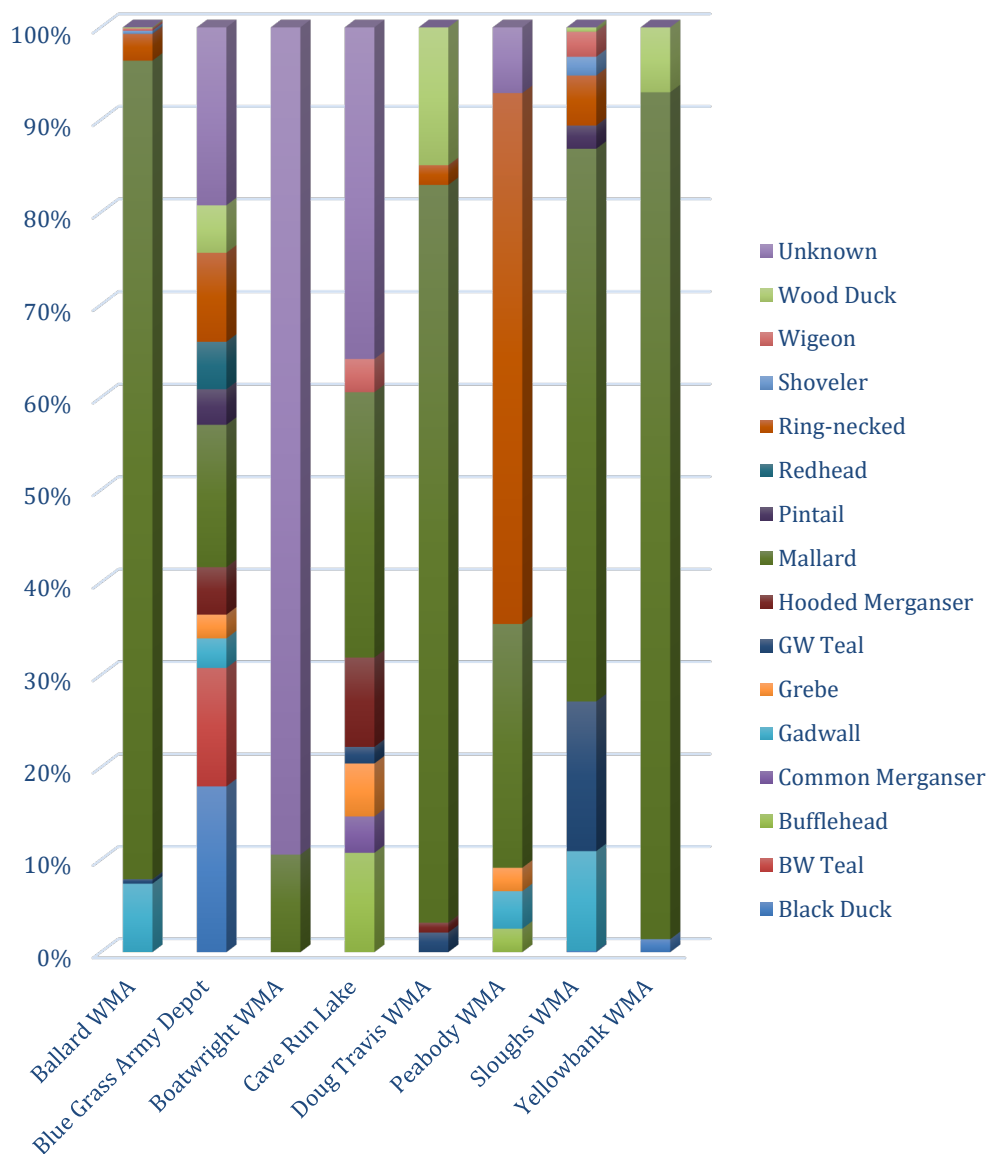


Figure 1. Aerial photo of flood tract units at Yellowbank WMA on December 3, 2025.

