

January 23, 2026

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.

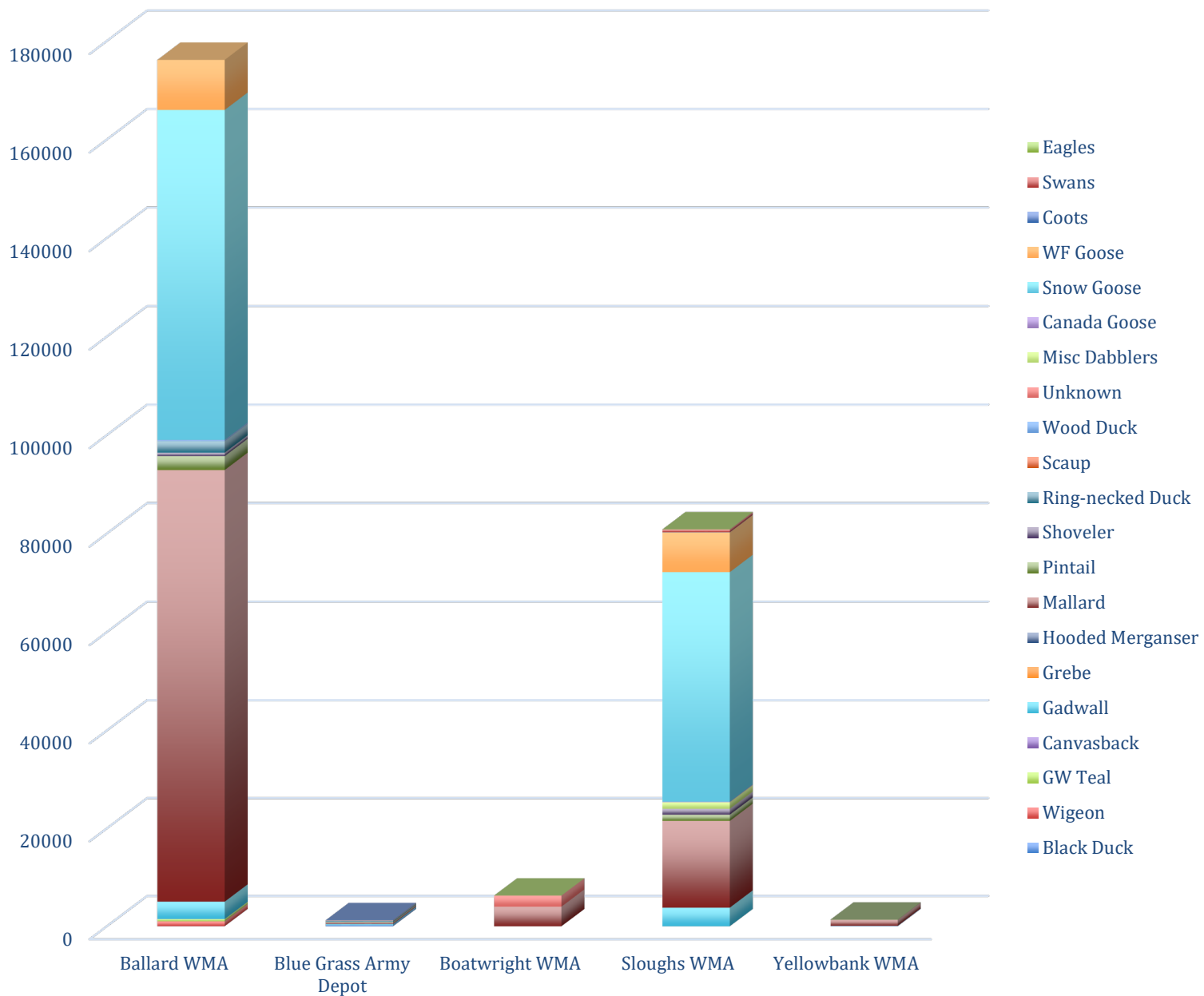
Highly pathogenic avian influenza is present in Kentucky. As of January 8, 2026, it has been detected in waterfowl in Mercer, Green, Warren, and Henderson counties for the 2025-26 migratory season. Visit the KDFWR Avian Influenza webpage to view an up-to-date map of detections. Hunters should use common 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	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

