

December 18, 2020 Kentucky Waterfowl Ground Counts

This is the ground count for December 14-18, 2020. Missouri counted on Monday the 14th, reporting nearly 700,000 ducks and 141,000 geese (mostly snows). Reports from the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers are ~50% above the long-term average for this time of year. We did finally get some freezing temps this week, concentrating birds to open water and making them easier to count on those days.

Habitat across the state continues to look excellent in moist soil units and good to excellent habitat over all. Water levels are mostly right where we want them, but we are adding water where possible to keep food available in the hunt units. Overall, wetland conditions and food availability are excellent.

Duck season began on Thanksgiving Day, with the first segment running from November 26 – 29. The second segment of duck season opened on December 7, and will run until January 31, 2021. Goose season opened November 26, 2020 and will remain open until February 15, 2021. The western zone youth hunt will be February 6-7, 2021. Also new this year, is the daily bag limit reduction for Scaup (blue bills). The new Scaup bag limit is one bird November 26-29, and December 7-18, 2020 and two birds December 19, 2020 through January 31, 2021. All other bag limits remain the same.

We wish everyone great luck this year. Be safe, and enjoy your time afield.

Location	Number	Species Composition	Comments
Ballard 12/17/2020	17,749 ducks 10 CA goose 4,000 WF goose	86% Mallard, 8% Ring-neck, 3% Gadwall, 3% Green wing, Wood Duck, Wigeon and Hooded Merg.	After a warm first week, the temps have changed to below freezing, icing over most shallow impoundments. Birds are sitting in groups keeping holes open. There is an abundance of moist soil and crop on the area. The wells are running and units look great, we just need more birds.
Boatwright 12/17/2020	3,779 Ducks	74% Mallard, 18% Green wing, 6% Ring-neck, 2% Wood Duck, Canvasback, Hooded Merg and Pintail.	Habitat is looking great. Water depths are looking good overall. Large water was frozen on the edges and open where birds are sitting. All shallow impoundments were frozen. Hoping for a weather system up north that will get birds moving in.

Duck Island <i>11/18/2020</i>	3,950 ducks 60 Canada geese	75% Mallards 25% gadwall, GW teal, pintail, ringneck, shoveler, wigeon, ruddy duck, black duck and wood duck.	Habitat conditions are excellent. Planted crops and moist soil plants did well this summer.
Doug Travis WMA <i>12/15/2020</i>	840 Ducks	85% Mallard, 12% mixed dabblers, 3% divers	Local hunting reports suggests there are more ducks using the area than what the count shows.
Sloughs WMA <i>12/14/2020</i>	2,670 ducks 0 CA goose 7,450 WF goose 9,000 Snow goose 129 Tundra Swan		Water conditions and habitat is still good to excellent across the area with area rivers at normal to below normal levels. Cypress slough systems including Jenny Hole and most moist soil units are at normal conditions and have available water. During the survey, Birds were concentrated in heavy cover and within safe areas of the refuge of the Sauerheber unit. Fewer duck numbers were present while an increase in White Fronted Geese and Snow Geese were observed from the previous survey. Geese can be spotted along Muddy Slough off Highway 268.
Peabody WMA <i>12/14/2020</i>	785 ducks 56 CA goose	75% Ring neck, 20% Mallard, 5% other	

Yellowbank WMA <i>12/9/2020</i>	350 Ducks	65% mallard, 20% wood duck, 5% gadwall, 5% black duck, 5% diver ducks	Excellent moist soil plant response in most units. Pumps are filling units where crops have been harvested. Upper Flood MSU still has soybeans to be harvested.
Barren River WMA <i>12/15/2020</i>	225 ducks 40 CA geese 1,953 Sandhill Cranes	50/50 dabblers and divers. Ring necks, Redheads, Scaup, Wood ducks and Mallards	Peters Creek MSU 60% full, Long Creek- Calvert Springs main unit 100% and units above and below the main spring 60-100%, MSUs off hwy 100 are 60-100% full, with corn/soybeans and MSU plants in great condition, rain and cooler temps in the 10 day forecast should bring/hold more waterfowl <i>12/15: Lake 531.3'</i>
Blue Grass Army Depot (all lakes and ponds)	Not surveyed		
Herrington Lake	Not surveyed		
Cave Run Lake <i>12/14/2020</i>	150 Ducks, 106 CA geese 30 coots	46% bufflehead, 39% ruddy duck, 15% mallard, redhead, canvasback & ring neck duck.	Lake level – 724.4'