

## December 20, 2019

### Kentucky Waterfowl Ground Counts

This the waterfowl ground survey for December 16-20, 2019. The Ohio and Mississippi River levels are rising again, but are not as bad as in early December. Doug Travis and Boatwright WMA's will have some roads effected by backwater, but not all. The rain earlier this week provided ample sheet water across the landscape. Smaller rivers such as the Rolling Fork, have provided a tremendous amount of habitat that is usually not available. The cold snap this week also brought our first real ice. Most shallow water, and water bodies protected from wind were frozen yesterday and today. Unfortunately.... Mild weather is predicted to follow. As weather and habitat conditions change, look for birds to adapt as well.

Habitat across the state varies from excellent to poor, with most areas on the high side of the scale. Many areas along the big rivers or at Duck Island do not have grain crops for waterfowl food plots this year. The flooding persisted so long that crops either could not be planted or did not do well by being planted so late. Again, this varies. Most areas were able to plant some crops, and several stands did well... but there are many spots that the crops either were not planted were out competed by native moist soil vegetation. The extreme weather did however invigorate the moist soil vegetation that grows naturally in these wet areas. Moist soil plants, which are the backbone of waterfowl management, thrived this year! Wild Millets, Panic grass, Sprangletop, sedges, smartweeds and toothcup thrived, leaving impressive amounts of food available this winter. Moist soil plants provide more protein and amino acids than any crop can produce. The bugs and invertebrates that inhabit these plants are also extremely important forage. Wetland conditions and food availability are set for a productive waterfowl season.

Duck season began on Thanksgiving Day, with the first segment running from November 28 – December 1. The second segment of duck season opened on December 7<sup>th</sup>, and NEW THIS YEAR, will run until January 31, 2020. Goose season opened November 28, 2019 and will remain open until February 15, 2020. The western zone youth hunt will be February 1-2, 2020. Also new this year, is the daily bag limit reduction from 2 birds to 1 for Northern Pintail. 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  <i>12/20/2019</i>	46,438 ducks 96 CA geese 2,650 WF geese	96% Mallard, 1% Gadwall, 1% Ring-neck, 2% Scaup, Shoveler, Wigeon, GW Teal, Pintail, Black Duck, Hooded Merganser, Wood Duck and Ruddy	Birds sitting in large numbers holding water holes open. Moist soil habitat is abundant, higher ridge crops are good.  Currently watching river forecast for flooding. Hunting has been slow since Wednesday, hoping for a weather change to get birds moving.
Boatwright  <i>12/20/2019</i>	14,901 Ducks	87% Mallard, 11% Ring-neck, Scaup and Canvasback, 2% Pintail, GW Teal, Gadwall, Wigeon, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser and Black Duck.	Below freezing temps last few days have frozen over many shallow water spots and some larger bodies of water.

			<p>River is on the rise again, supposed to crest at 38.5 ft early next week.</p> <p>There is a great abundance of moist soil vegetation with the river flooding fallow fields. Row crops are available as well.</p>
<p>Duck Island</p> <p><i>12/4/2019</i></p>	2300 ducks	<p>98% Mallards 2% Pintail, Ringneck, Canvasback, Bufflehead, Gadwall</p>	<p>Water conditions are good. Habitat this year is fair. Very late flood followed by a drought resulted in poor response even by normally reliable natural vegetation. 40 acres of Japanese millet was seeded, but germination and growth was poor.</p>
<p>Doug Travis WMA</p> <p><i>12/19/2019</i></p>	10,300 Ducks	98% Mallard, 1% pintail and mixed divers	<p>Most ducks are concentrated in the Indian Camp Rest Area east of Fish Lake, with small numbers in the Willow Slough and Town Creek areas. Skim ice was prevalent on much of the WMA 12/19, although most of the lakes had sections of open water. The river is forecast to rise to 38.0 at Cairo next week, this will likely flood the gravel road to blinds 16 &amp; 17, but should not flood Fish Lake Road.</p>
<p>Sloughs WMA</p> <p><i>12/16/2019</i></p>	<p>10,700 ducks 162 CA geese 1,850 WF geese 3,220 snows 210 Tundra swans</p>	<p>92% Mallard, 5% Gadwall, 3% greenwing teal, widgeon, black ducks and pintail</p>	<p>The survey at sloughs WMA was held on a Dreary, rainy Monday for the region. Birds were active most of the day with a low ceiling and heavy cloud cover. A cold</p>

			<p>weather front is pushing through the region with lows expected in the lower 20's midweek.</p> <p>Habitat on Sloughs is still looking very good with Pond Creek Marsh elevated making food readily available. During our survey period, birds were seen over much of the refuge. White Fronted Geese and Snow geese continue to trade back and forth in the area feeding on waste grain and adjacent fields with an abundance of each using the area at any given time. River Stages had receded from previous flood conditions but are increasing and predicted to steadily increase up until December 24. Happy hunting.</p>
<p>Peabody WMA</p> <p>12/19/2019</p>	<p>793 ducks 177 Canada geese 2 Swans</p>	<p>75% Mallards, 25% gadwall &amp; ring-necked ducks.</p>	<p>All moist soil units are full of water.</p>
<p>Yellowbank WMA</p> <p>12/16/2019</p>	<p>600 Ducks</p>	<p>85% Mallard, 5% pintail, 10% gadwall.</p>	<p>Excellent moist soil plant response and standing corn in most units. All units are at maximum capacity.</p>
<p>Barren River Lake WMA</p> <p>12/12/2019</p>	<p>275 ducks 55 CA geese 787 Sandhill Cranes</p>	<p>80/20 dabblers and divers Mallards, shovelers, wood ducks, redheads and hooded mergansers noted.</p>	<p>Lake level is 540.1 (+12.4). Peters Creek MSU 80% full, Long Creek- Calvert Springs</p>

			main unit 100%, other units 75-80% full.
Blue Grass Army Depot (all lakes and ponds)	<i>not surveyed</i>		
Herrington Lake	<i>not surveyed</i>		
Cave Run Lake  12/17/2019	230 ducks	45 Bufflehead, 50 Canvasback. 2 scaup, and 13 mergansers. 120 unknown species rafted on the lake.  (12/20 found 200-300 Mallards, and large groups of CA geese at the dam.	Lake level is 733.3, providing lots of flooded habitat in the backs of coves. All the small lakes and ponds are froze (12/20/2019).