

November 18, 2022 Kentucky Waterfowl Ground Counts

This is the ground count survey for November 14-18, 2022. Conditions on the breeding grounds greatly improved this past spring/summer, allowing for some pretty good production following the severe drought from the previous year. We can expect to see more young birds from the prairie pothole region in the fall flight this season. Also, a major winter storm swept through the Dakotas over the weekend, that triggered a push of ducks and geese heading south, so hopefully we will have decent numbers to start the season out with a bang. That being said, we are still extremely dry here in Kentucky. On November 4, 99% of the state fell into the drought monitoring category of abnormally dry, 82% of the state was categorized as in a moderate drought, 39% of the state was experiencing a severe drought, and 4% of the state (far western KY) was categorized as extreme drought.

The good news is that although it was dry in late summer, we had a good growing season for our crops and moist soil habitats throughout most of the state. The bad news is that at the start of the waterfowl hunting season, habitat will mainly be limited to areas that have the capacity to pump water. Some timely rains have helped a little this week, but it will take a while to recharge water tables and rivers to a level that allows managers to hold water. It is important to remember that dry periods are as important as wet periods for the long-term productivity of wetlands. Dry conditions this year will help productivity in future years. The dry conditions also provided wetland managers a much chance to do work in areas that are typically inaccessible.

Avian Influenza is present in Kentucky, so hunters should use common sense when handling/cleaning harvested waterfowl. See page two of the [KY 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.

Duck season begins on Thanksgiving Day, with the first segment running from November 24 – 27. The second segment of duck season opens on December 7 and will run until January 31, 2023. Goose season opens November 24, 2022 and will remain open until February 15, 2023. New this year, youth season is Saturday, November 19, 2022, and Saturday, February 11, 2023. There is also a new veteran's hunt on Sunday, November 20, 2022, and Sunday February 12, 2023. All bag limits remain the same as last season. Check out the 2022-2023 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.

Location	Number	Species Composition	Comments
Ballard			<i>Not surveyed</i>
Boatwright			<i>Not surveyed</i>
Duck Island		<i>Not surveyed</i>	
Doug Travis WMA <i>11/17/2022</i>	1,445 Ducks	1,300 mixed dabblers 85% mallard 15% GW teal 145 wood ducks	Habitat across the WMA is fair to excellent. Most blind sites and walk-in units have shallow but

			hunnable water. Refuge is 10% flooded due to drought conditions.
Sloughs WMA <i>11/16/2022</i>	2,700 ducks 14 CA goose 1,750 WF goose 200 Snow goose 55 Tundra Swan	75% mallard 25% gadwall and widgeon	The region continues to be dry and cold with little rainfall forecast. Habitat conditions are poor with little available water except what has been pumped within the units and refuge. Water is available within most of the hunt units on the WMA and Jenny Hole. Birds were concentrated around Muddy Slough with areas of water. Pond creek marsh is completely dry.
Peabody WMA <i>11/16/2022</i>	7 ducks 192 CA goose	5 Mallard 2 ring-necked ducks	Conditions are much drier than usual. Lakes are very low and moist soil units are still without water at this time due to the lack of rain.
Yellowbank WMA <i>11/16/2022</i>	275 Ducks	75% mallard 15% wood duck 5% gadwall 5% black duck	Excellent moist-soil plant response and crop production in waterfowl units. Pumps are running but slowly gaining sheet water with the dry soil conditions. Most of the units are dry due to lack of substantial rainfall.
Barren River WMA <i>11/16/2022</i>	0 ducks 0 geese 44 Sandhill cranes		Very dry conditions persist. Peters Creek MSU 10% full, Long Creek- Calvert Springs main unit 10% and units above and below the main spring 0%, MSUs off HWY 100 are 0% full. Food in abundance, with both corn and

			moist soil plants in great condition. Lake level: 533.0'
Blue Grass Army Depot (all lakes and ponds)	Not surveyed		
Cave Run Lake 11/16/2022	195 Ducks 40 mergansers 275 CA geese 100 Coot	100 mallard, 30 buffelhead, 20 wood duck, 5 pintail, 15 common merganser, 25 hooded merganser.	Lake level: 725.6'