

## December 20, 2018 Kentucky Waterfowl Ground Counts

This is the winter-waterfowl ground count survey for December 17-21, 2018. Hunting reports were a little better last week, however mild temps and lots of rain has birds scattered once again. On the 17<sup>th</sup>, there were 309,420 total ducks reported on the Illinois and central Mississippi rivers, indicating that birds have started moving south. The report from Missouri Dept of Conservation lists 755,405 ducks in total across MO's managed public wetlands. Southern Illinois and Southeastern Missouri waterfowl areas are still not reporting large concentrations of ducks, however.

Most of the states wetlands are still in above average condition. Moist soil food is still in abundance across the state. Crops favored well in most places, although many areas struggled to get corn planted. Overall, conditions for ducks are good, and we are set to manage as needed throughout the season.

The Kentucky 2018-19 duck and goose seasons open Thursday, November 22. The first duck season segment closed on Sunday, November 25. The second segment of duck and season opened December 3 and the duck season will remain open until Sunday, January 27. The goose season will remain open until Friday, February 15, 2019. Good luck to all waterfowl hunters, and remember to be safe enjoy your time afield this hunting season.

| Location        | Number   | Species Composition  | Comments  |
|-----------------|--|--|---|
| Ballard WMA     | 23,244 Ducks<br>114 CA geese<br>6,500 WF geese<br>8,000 Snow geese | 96% Mallard, 2% Gadwall, & 2% wigeon, shoveler, scaup, ring-neck, goldeneye, ruddy duck and mergansers.                          |   |
| Boatwright WMA  |  | Survey not possible due to flooding.   |   |
| Duck Island     | Not surveyed   |  |   |
| Doug Travis WMA | 300 ducks***   | 90% Mallards and 10% assorted dabblers.<br><br>***Ground survey is an estimate, as the survey area is not accessible by vehicle. | Water is rising again with a predicted crest of 39.9' at the Cairo gage. If the river forecast holds, water will not cross Fish Lake Rd. Indian Camp Slough boat ramp is inaccessible due to flooding. Hunters are accessing blinds 18 and 19 by launching boats from Drew Rd at the base of the bluff. The road to blinds 16 and 17 is flooded before 16, although both spots are accessible via boat. |

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| Sloughs WMA           | <p>9,215 Ducks<br/> 105 CA geese<br/> 5,780 WF geese<br/> 6,500 Snow geese<br/> 168 Swans</p> | <p>90% mallards 10% mixed bag of green-winged teal, northern shoveler, gadwall, black ducks, and pintails.</p> | <p>Over the past week, we have experienced a significant warm up and three days of rain, bringing approximately 4 inches total. Headwater flooding in fields is providing new foraging habitat for ducks across the region, and has certainly spread the ducks across the landscape. Water levels in the Pond Creek marsh complex have risen substantially, limiting feeding opportunities for ducks in the marsh itself. The rising water has flooded extensive areas of timber across the refuge. Nearly all of the ducks observed on the count were in recently flooded stands of timber with water depths less than 20 inches. White fronted geese were scattered across the refuge between Muddy Slough and the Pond Creek marsh complex. All snow geese were found loafing in a single moist-soil impoundment and dry feeding in an adjacent field planted to winter wheat.</p> |
| Barren River Lake WMA | <p>3,434 Sandhill Cranes</p>  |  | <p>12/18 Lake Level: 538.8' and falling.</p>  |
| Peabody WMA           | <p>Not Surveyed</p>   |  |   |

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|-----------------------|---------------------------|---|---|
| Yellowbank WMA        | 475 Ducks                 | 85% mallard, 5% black duck, 5% gadwall, 5% other dabbling ducks   | Most moist-soil units are at 85% water capacity.  |
| Cave Run Lake         | 346 Ducks<br>125 CA goose | 93% divers<br><br>Dabblers: 11 unknown, 8 mallard, 5 gadwall, & 1 GW teal.<br><br>Divers: 130 hooded merganser, 100+ bufflehead, 75+ canvasback, 6 ring-necked duck and 10 unknown. | Hydrilla was treated with herbicide in many areas this year in an effort to control the nuisance species. The recent booms have been knocked back, leaving "normal" habitat conditions. The flats area of the lake, as well as some coves still have decent vegetation. |
| Blue Grass Army Depot | Not surveyed              |   |   |
| Herrington Lake       | Not surveyed              |   |   |