

December 1, 2023 Kentucky Waterfowl Ground Counts

This is the ground count survey for November 27-30, 2023. Kentucky has been very dry since late summer and this continued this week. 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 and even that is limited. Very low levels in the Ohio and Mississippi rivers means our waterfowl areas like Ballard, Boatwright and Doug Travis are struggling to keep water. Limited water is forcing us to limit hunting areas available on some of these WMAs.

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>11/30/2023</i>	22,709 ducks 3,300 WF goose	90% Mallard 1% Gadwall 6% Ring-necked, 1% Green wing, shoveler, pintail, bufflehead, mergansers	Major lakes and sloughs have good water, but it has been dry. We are pumping into hunt units where possible but need 18+ feet on river to use big pump. Rain expected 11/30 and 12/1. No hunting activity – youth/veteran weekend was Nov 18-19, regular season starts Dec 7.
Boatwright <i>11/30/2023</i>	302 ducks 130 CA goose	74% Mallard, 26% Other	Water levels are low, some moist soil is available but very little crop availability. Trying to flood unit but slow going due to low river levels. Warming temp

			over last 2 days, calling for rain night of 11/30. No hunting activity – between split, regular season begins Dec. 7.
Duck Island <i>11/29/2023</i>	2,600 ducks 38 CA goose	65 % mallard 15% gadwall 5% ringneck 5% GW teal 5% wigeon 3% shoveler 2% pintail	Habitat excellent. Water level/conditions are optimum.
Doug Travis WMA <i>11/30/2023</i>	500 Ducks	85% mallard 15% mixed dabblers.	This is a partial survey based on a ground count of locations accessible by vehicle. It is likely more ducks were present in flooded buckbrush and timber in the Beaver Pond Rest Area and the Town Creek Moist soil unit but were not estimated for this count. All 3 wells are running, and habitat conditions should improve, especially considering predicted rainfall over the 10-day forecast.
Sloughs WMA <i>11/27/2023</i>	7,115 ducks 24 CA goose 3,000 WF goose 2,600 Snow goose 17 Tundra Swan	85% mallard 15% Northern shoveler, gadwall and teal	Fair to good hunting success over the Thanksgiving split. Water conditions remain the same with most waterfowl concentrated around the Muddy Slough rest area.
Peabody WMA <i>11/30/2023</i>	44 ducks 92 CA goose	50% Mallard 50% gadwall	Moist soil plant growth over the summer was good. Low water levels continue through the WMA due to the lack of significant rainfall over

			the last couple of months.
Yellowbank WMA <i>11/29/2023</i>	265 Ducks	90% mallard 5% wood duck 5% gadwall	Excellent moist-soil plant response and crop production in waterfowl units. Both well 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>11/28/2023</i>	2,450 ducks 120 CA geese 155 Sandhill cranes	50% divers/50% dabblers High diversity cans, redhead, scaup, bufflehead, merganser/mallards, shovelers, widgeon, wood ducks, ringnecks, ruddy	Very dry conditions persist. Peters Creek MSU 10% full, Long Creek- Calvert Springs main unit 90% and units above and below the main spring 20%, MSUs off HWY 100 are 0% full. MSU plants in great condition, tenant farmer should be done harvesting this week at Long Creek. Lake level: 529.5'
Blue Grass Army Depot (all lakes and ponds)			<i>Not Surveyed</i>
Cave Run Lake <i>11/30/2023</i>	53 CA geese 16 Ducks 1 American Coot 2 Pied-billed Grebe	16 Hooded Merganser	Not much at this point in the way of waterfowl for the northeast.