



# MDWFP Aerial Waterfowl Survey Report

November 14 - 18, 2022



## WATERFOWL PROGRAM

Prepared by:

**Houston Havens**

Waterfowl Program Coordinator  
and

**Darrin Hardesty**

Waterfowl Program Biologist  
MS Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks  
601-432-2199

[Houston.Havens@wfp.ms.gov](mailto:Houston.Havens@wfp.ms.gov)

[Darrin.Hardesty@wfp.ms.gov](mailto:Darrin.Hardesty@wfp.ms.gov)

The first MDWFP aerial waterfowl survey of the season occurred November 14 – 18, 2022. Similar to last November, wetland habitat availability was well below average across the Mississippi Delta. Shallow, seasonal water was not widely distributed, which is typical for this time of year in Mississippi. However, permanent and semi-permanent wetlands like oxbow lakes and sloughs also held very low water levels. Public lands are currently providing a large proportion of intensively managed waterfowl habitat. As a result, waterfowl were observed responding to these areas, often in high numbers relative to the rest of the Delta. Ducks were also observed using areas with large complexes of managed water across multiple private properties. As a result of the dry fall, most harvested agricultural fields have been disked, which will result in reduced food availability for waterfowl if the fields are eventually flooded. Much opportunity remains for landowners and managers to capture rainfall with water control structures as fall and winter continue along, and as more waterfowl migrate south into the state. As in most years, flooded habitat availability was greatest in the northeast portion of the Delta.

Last week's duck abundance estimates for the Mississippi Delta were below the November long-term averages for mallards, other dabbling ducks, diving ducks, and total ducks (Tables 1 and 2). Dabbling ducks other than mallards comprised 53% of all duck observations. Gadwall and mallards were the two most abundant duck species observed overall, respectively. Scaup and ring-necked ducks were the most abundant diving duck species observed. The northeastern portion of the Delta contained the greatest abundances of all duck categories recorded: mallards, other dabblers, diving ducks, and total ducks overall.

During this survey, mallards and other dabbling ducks were most commonly observed using shallowly flooded agricultural fields, likely due to the below-freezing temperatures creating a need for higher carbohydrate intake for quick energy sources. It should be noted that very few agricultural fields were flooded during this survey, but available flooded fields were highly attractive to ducks. And as usual, the greatest abundances of diving ducks were observed on aquaculture complexes. In general, ducks were not evenly distributed across available wetland habitat. Instead, ducks were observed together in relatively large groups, which is typical of early-season behavior in areas with managed complexes of diverse wetland habitat. Biologists expect ducks to begin to distribute further as new wetland habitats become available throughout the winter. Much of the state is forecast to receive some rainfall over the Thanksgiving holidays and weekend. Very few concentrations of light geese (snow, blue, and Ross') and greater white-fronted geese (commonly called specklebellies) were observed during this survey, but recent reports suggest that numbers are increasing.

The regular duck hunting season is set to open Friday, November 25, and MDWFP biologists are optimistic that state WMAs will continue to attract and hold waterfowl for an enjoyable start to the season. Despite relatively low duck numbers overall, WMAs with water management capabilities can often have great early season hunting success. Low temperatures during and immediately following the November survey likely produced conditions strong enough to increase waterfowl migration into southern latitudes, as recent field reports would suggest.

Weekly waterfowl reports will begin the week following the duck season opener, and will include updates from Mississippi hunting reports, as well as weather and habitat conditions. For

weekly waterfowl reports and more information on the MDWFP Waterfowl Program, visit our website at <http://www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl>.

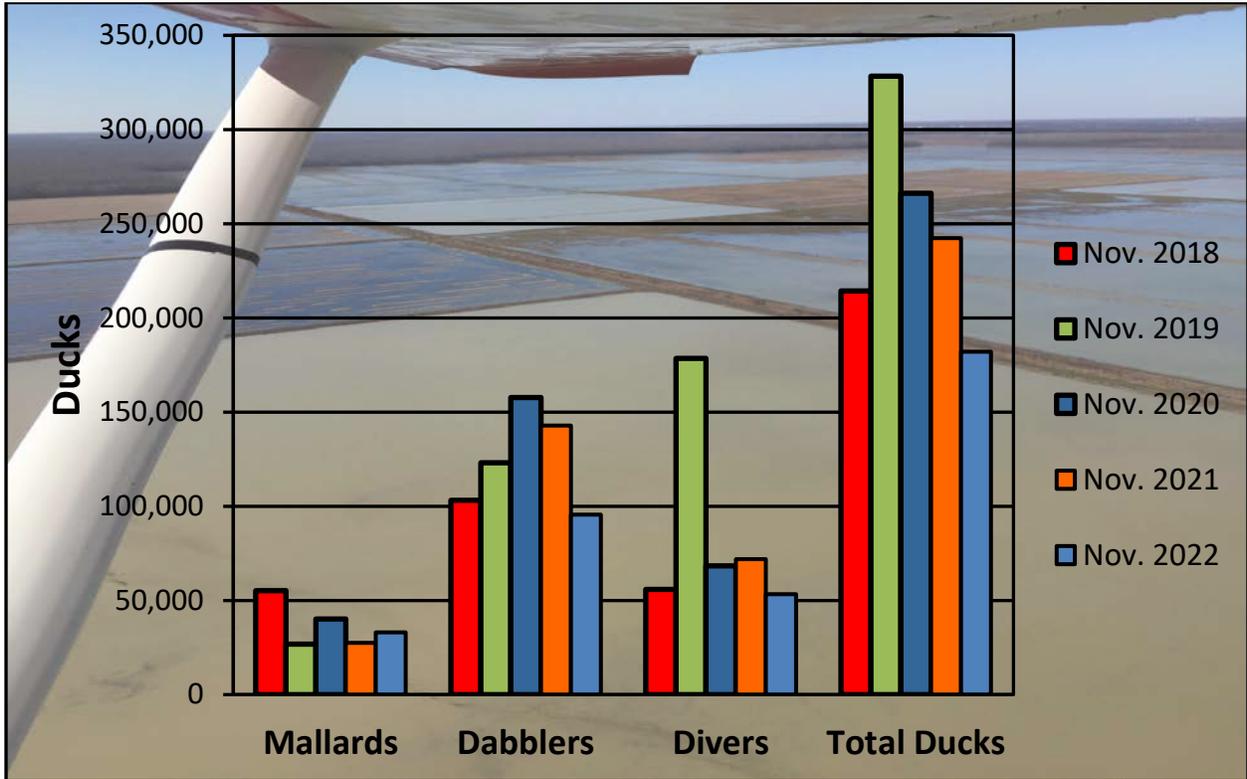
**Table 1.** Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the November survey periods, 2007-2022.

	<b>Mallards</b>	<b>Dabblers</b>	<b>Divers</b>	<b>Total Ducks</b>
2007-08	25,872	34,241	27,992	88,106
2008-09	30,748	96,245	105,089	232,081
2009-10	24,281	137,996	77,839	240,117
2010-11	10,481	70,123	100,740	181,344
2011-12	43,845	183,823	80,928	308,596
2012-13	No survey	No survey	No survey	No survey
2013-14	No survey	No survey	No survey	No survey
2014-15	88,005	229,810	79,400	397,215
2015-16	30,933	57,702	54,167	142,802
2016-17	36,540	212,469	124,240	373,249
2017-18	88,019	303,472	109,101	500,591
2018-19	55,258	103,181	55,932	214,371
2019-20	26,866	123,036	178,488	328,390
2020-21	40,100	157,750	68,343	266,194
2021-22	27,462	142,941	71,940	242,344
2022-23	33,149	95,574	53,346	182,069
<b>Average</b>	<b>40,111</b>	<b>139,169</b>	<b>84,825</b>	<b>264,105</b>

**Table 2.** Comparison of November 2022 aerial waterfowl survey estimates to the long-term average (LTA) for November survey estimates.

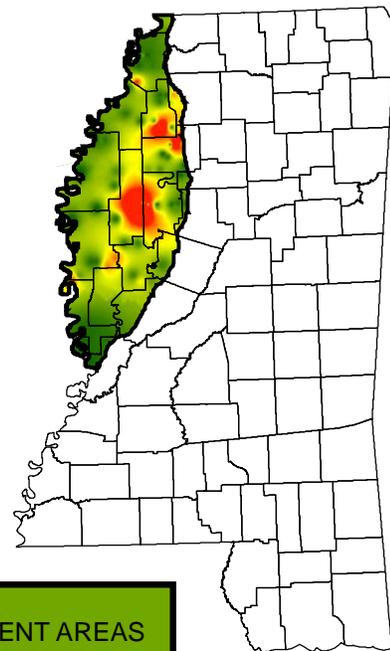
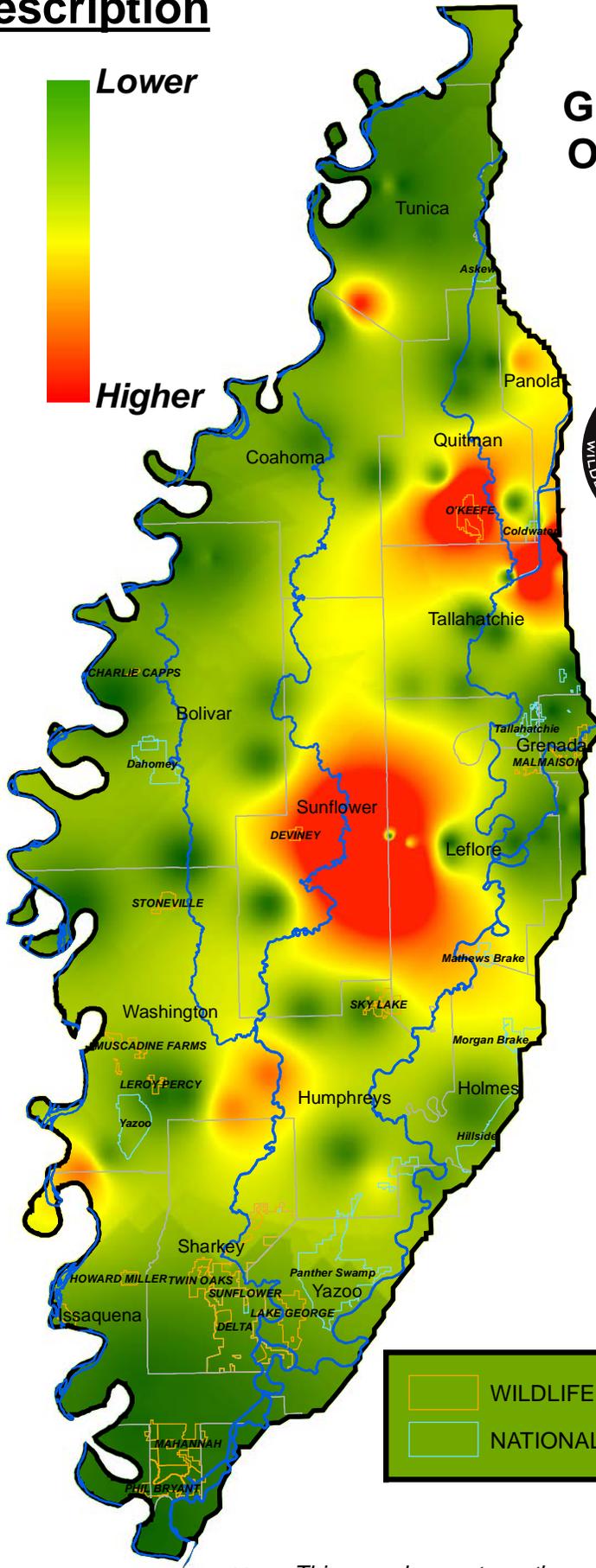
Species Group	November 2022	November LTA	% Change from LTA
Mallards	33,149	40,111	-17.4%
Other Dabblers	95,574	139,169	-31.3%
Diving Ducks	53,346	84,825	-37.1%
<b>Total Ducks</b>	<b>182,069</b>	<b>264,105</b>	<b>-31.1%</b>

**Figure 1.** Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the five most recent November survey periods.



# Description

## Greatest Concentrations of Ducks Observed in the Mississippi Delta Nov. 14-18, 2022



	WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS
	NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

*Note: This map does not use the same area calculations as previously published maps and is intended to illustrate major concentrations of ducks in the Mississippi Delta.*

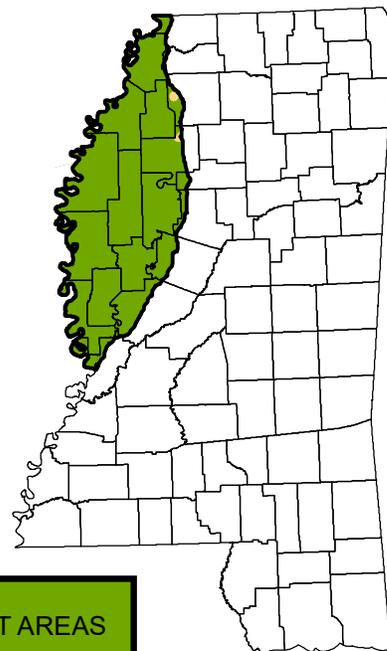
# Distribution of Mallards in the Mississippi Delta

## Nov. 14-18, 2022



### Description

- Low (<math>< 12/mi^2</math>)
- Medium (<math>12-115/mi^2</math>)
- High (<math>> 115/mi^2</math>)



- WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS
- NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

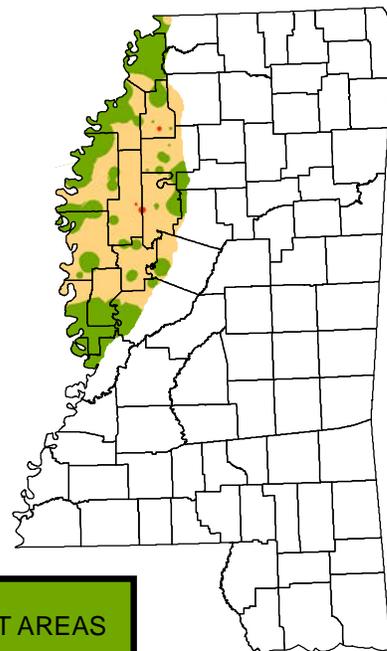
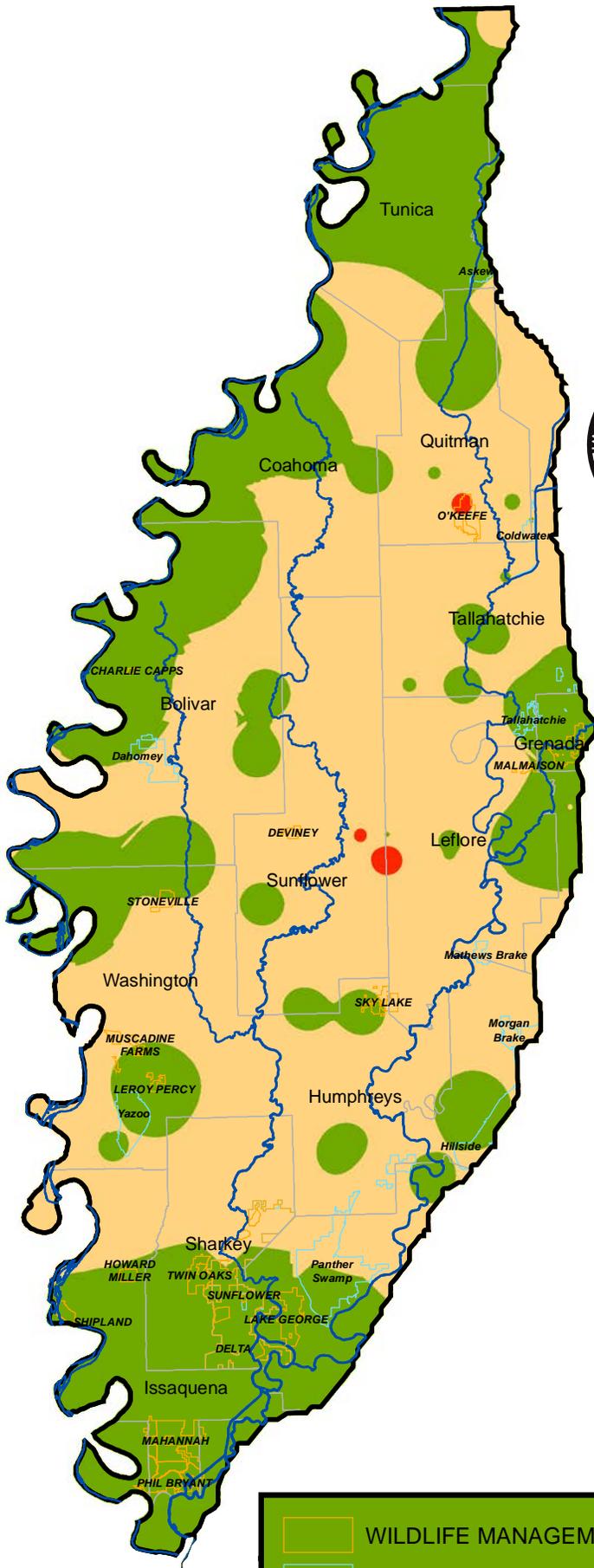
# Distribution of Total Ducks in the Mississippi Delta

## Nov. 14-18, 2022



### Description

- Low (<12/mi<sup>2</sup>)
- Medium (12-115/mi<sup>2</sup>)
- High (>115/mi<sup>2</sup>)

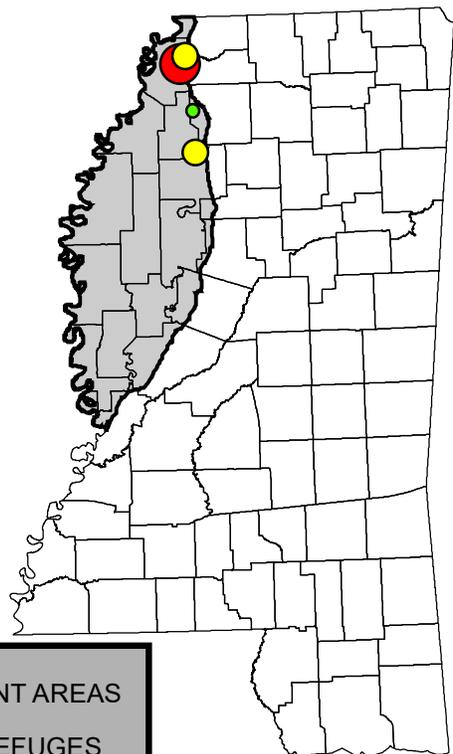
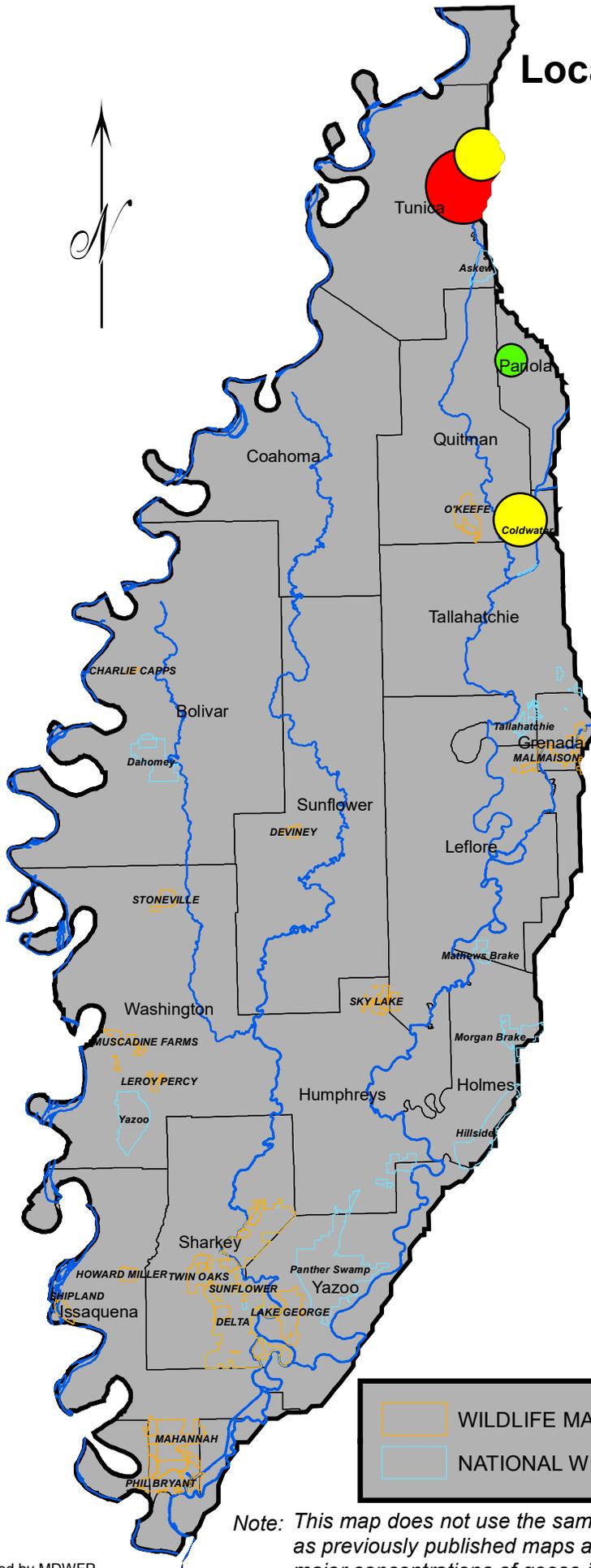
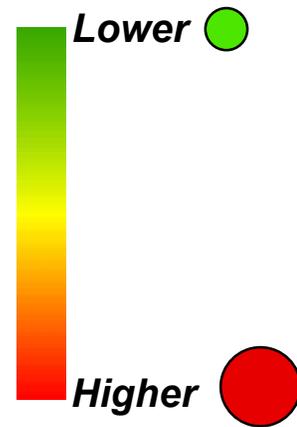


- WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS
- NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

# Locations and relative size of light goose flocks in the Mississippi Delta Nov. 14 -18, 2022



## Description



WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS  
 NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

*Note: This map does not use the same area calculations as previously published maps and is intended to illustrate major concentrations of geese in the Mississippi Delta.*