



MDWFP Aerial Waterfowl Survey Report

January 19 - 23, 2021



WATERFOWL PROGRAM

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The fourth and final MDWFP aerial waterfowl survey of the season was flown January 19 – 23, 2021. As has been the case most of the fall and winter, wetland habitat availability across the Mississippi Delta was below normal levels for this time of year. Although shallow, managed water has increased since November, the Mississippi River and interior Delta river systems have remained well below flood stage. These river systems have provided little or no natural, overbank flooding throughout the hunting season and river levels have fallen significantly over the past week. As usual, wetland habitat availability generally increased as survey transects moved further northeast in the Delta region.

Although an increase resulting in peak mallard numbers was observed during this survey, total duck estimates remained similar to the previous two surveys. Estimates for mallards, other dabbling ducks, diving ducks, and total ducks all remained below their respective long-term averages for late January (Tables 1 and 2). Mallards and other dabblers made up over 85% of all duck observations, while diving duck estimates remained low after peaking in December. Mallards were the most abundant species observed, followed by gadwall. Scaup and ruddy ducks were the most abundant diving duck species observed. The northeastern portion of the Delta held the greatest abundances of mallards, other dabbling ducks, and total ducks overall. The greatest abundances of diving ducks were observed in the southeastern region.

Mallards and other dabblers were most observed using flooded agriculture fields; however, a high proportion of ducks were again observed using forested wetlands. As usual, most diving ducks were observed using aquaculture ponds and deep, permanent water bodies. In agricultural fields, ducks were commonly observed in large complexes with multiple flooded fields. Contrasting to the previous surveys, ducks were more evenly distributed across available wetland habitat, which is typical of late-season behavior. Observations of light geese (snow, blue, and Ross') and greater white-fronted geese (commonly called specklebellies) remained high and were still fairly well distributed during this survey.

The final week of Mississippi's regular waterfowl hunting season has arrived, but hunters are reminded to take advantage of the additional waterfowling opportunities for youth, veterans, and active military personnel February 6 – 7. Abundant hunting opportunities also remain during the light goose conservation order February 1 – 5 and February 8 – March 31. Local weather conditions are predicted to be warm and rainy in the coming days, but potential exists for snow and ice accumulations across portions of the Midwest as waterfowl seasons come to a close.

For more information on waterfowl and wetland habitat, visit the MDWFP Waterfowl Program website at <http://www.mdwfp.com/waterfowl>.

Table 1. Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the late January survey periods, 2008-2021.

	Mallards	Dabblers	Divers	Total Ducks
2008	110,476	182,869	70,396	363,741
2009	262,235	318,638	232,878	740,591
2010	234,937	333,240	112,167	680,344
2011	247,913	454,578	215,821	918,313
2012	278,205	436,996	199,926	915,127
2013	146,782	273,905	83,119	503,806
2014	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2015	162,098	356,993	82,733	596,092
2016	307,177	482,843	206,983	997,003
2017	267,078	483,037	106,419	815,903
2018	334,140	516,240	45,587	895,968
2019	151,742	309,696	74,525	532,413
2020	252,276	507,754	106,770	839,005
2021	183,868	209,731	44,407	438,006
Average	226,071	374,348	121,672	710,486

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

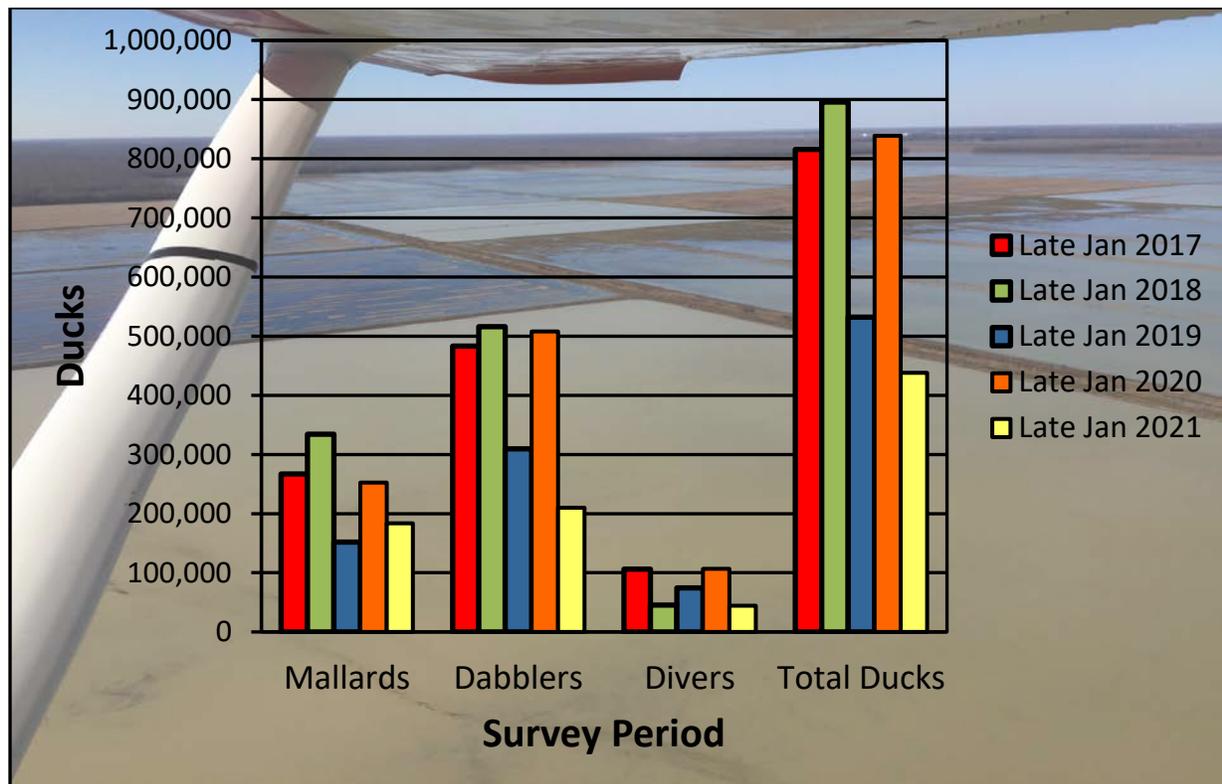
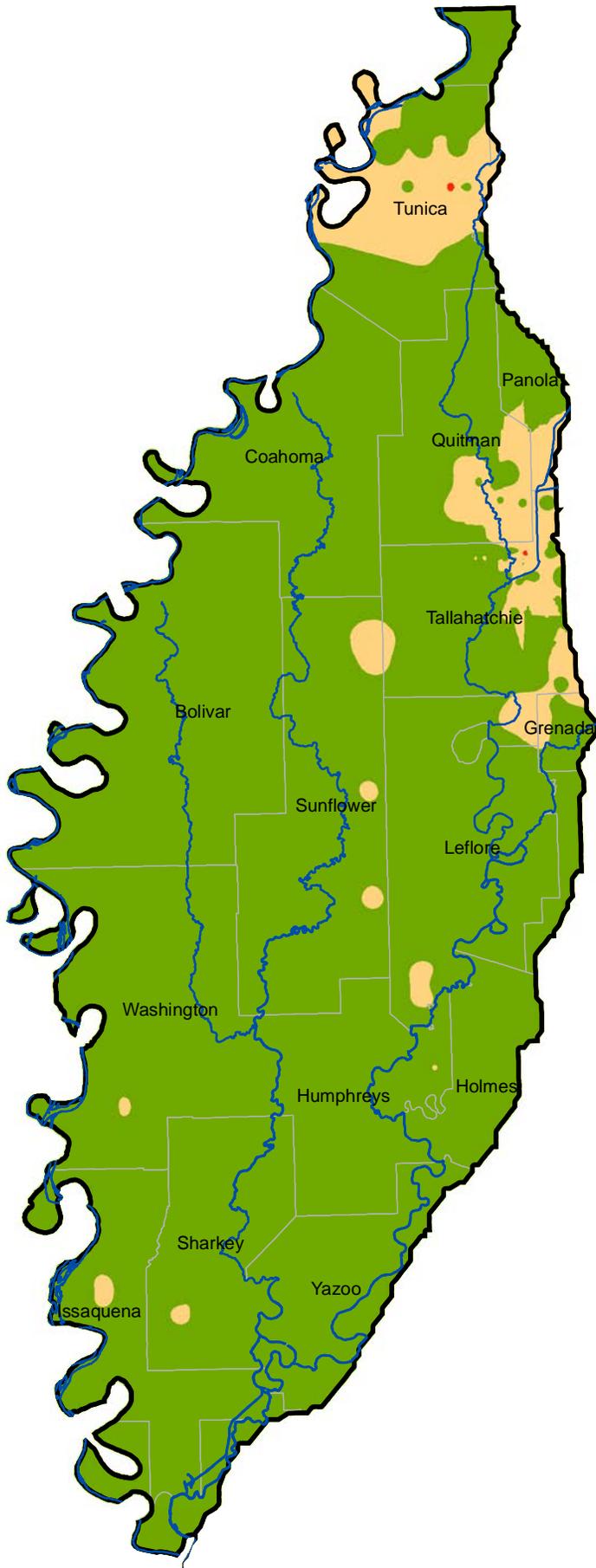


Table 2. Comparison of late January 2021 aerial waterfowl survey estimates to the long-term average (LTA) for late January survey estimates.

Species Group	Late Jan 2021	Late Jan LTA	% Change from LTA
Mallards	183,868	226,071	-18.7%
Other Dabblers	209,731	374,348	-43.9%
Diving Ducks	44,407	121,672	-63.5%
Total Ducks	438,006	710,486	-38.3%

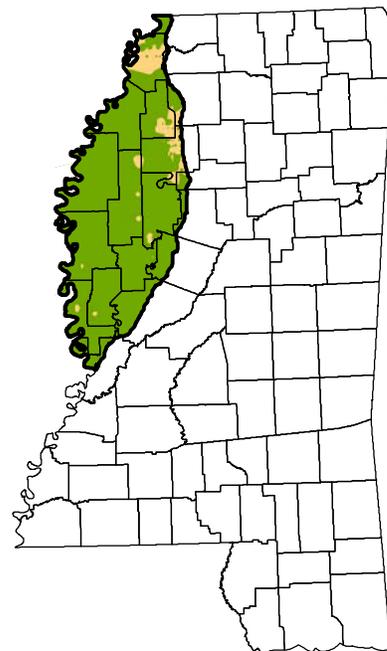
Distribution of Mallards in the Mississippi Delta

Jan. 19 - 23, 2021

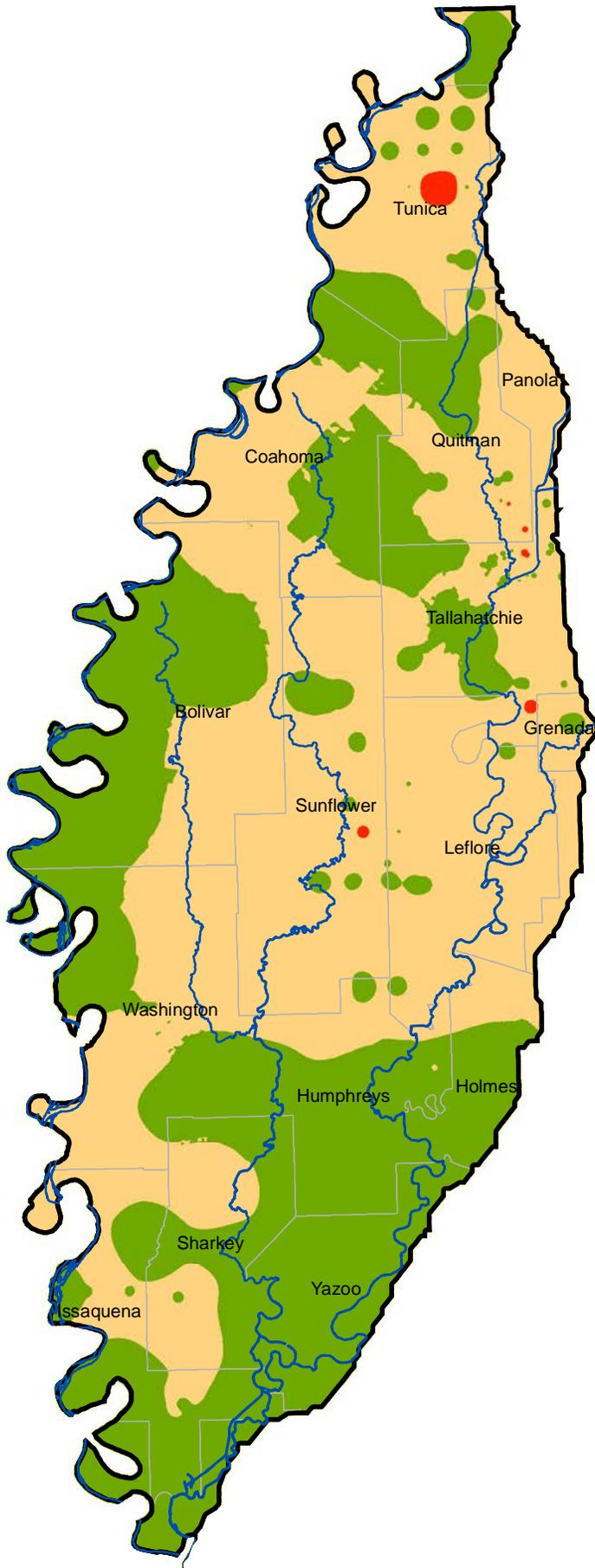


Description

- Low (<12/mi²)
- Medium (12-115/mi²)
- High (>115/mi²)

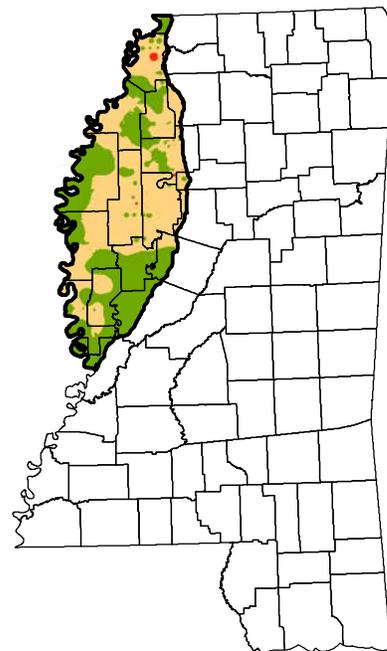


Distribution of Total Ducks in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 19 - 23, 2021



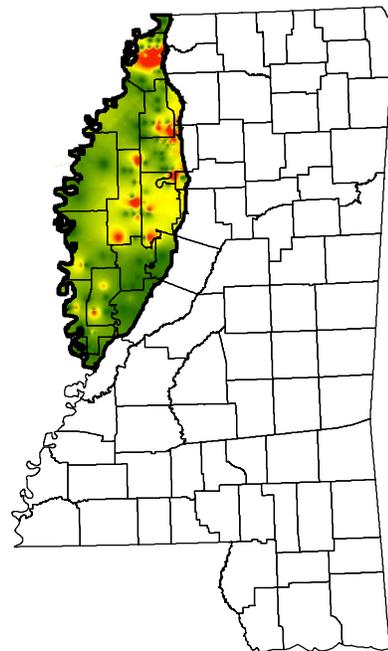
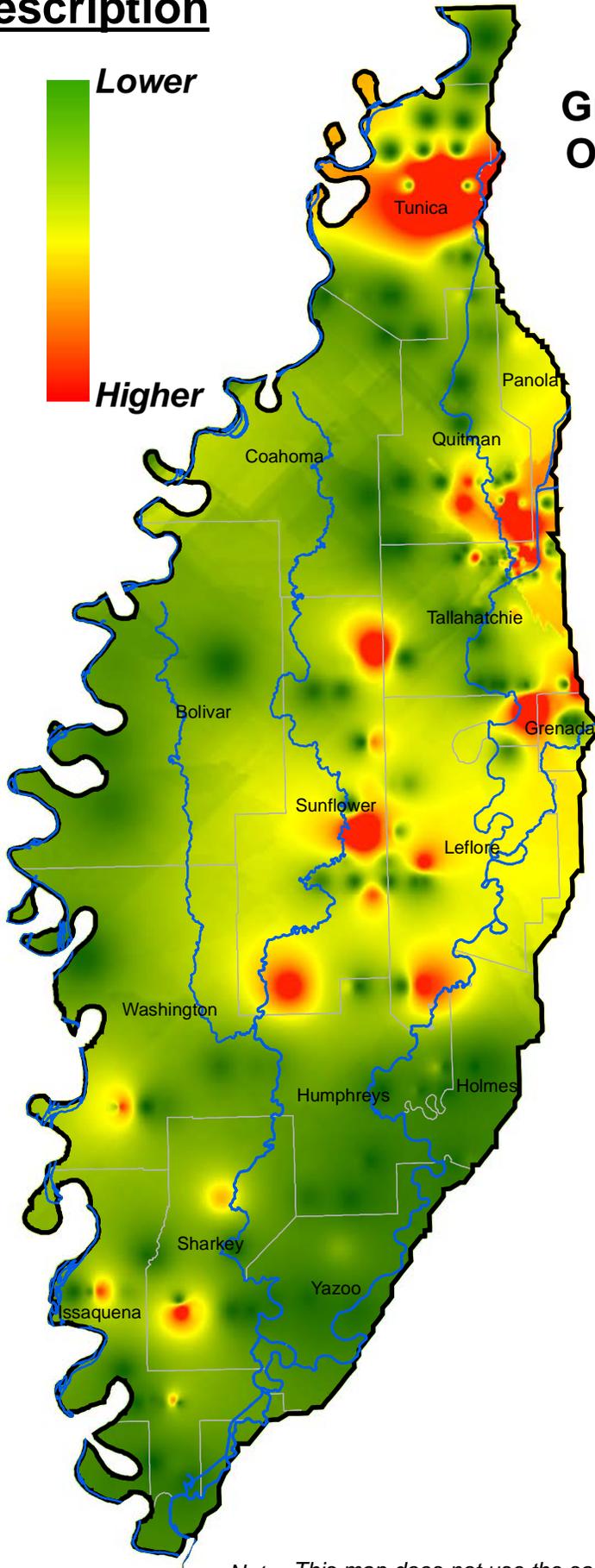
Description

- Low (<12/mi²)
- Medium (12-115/mi²)
- High (>115/mi²)



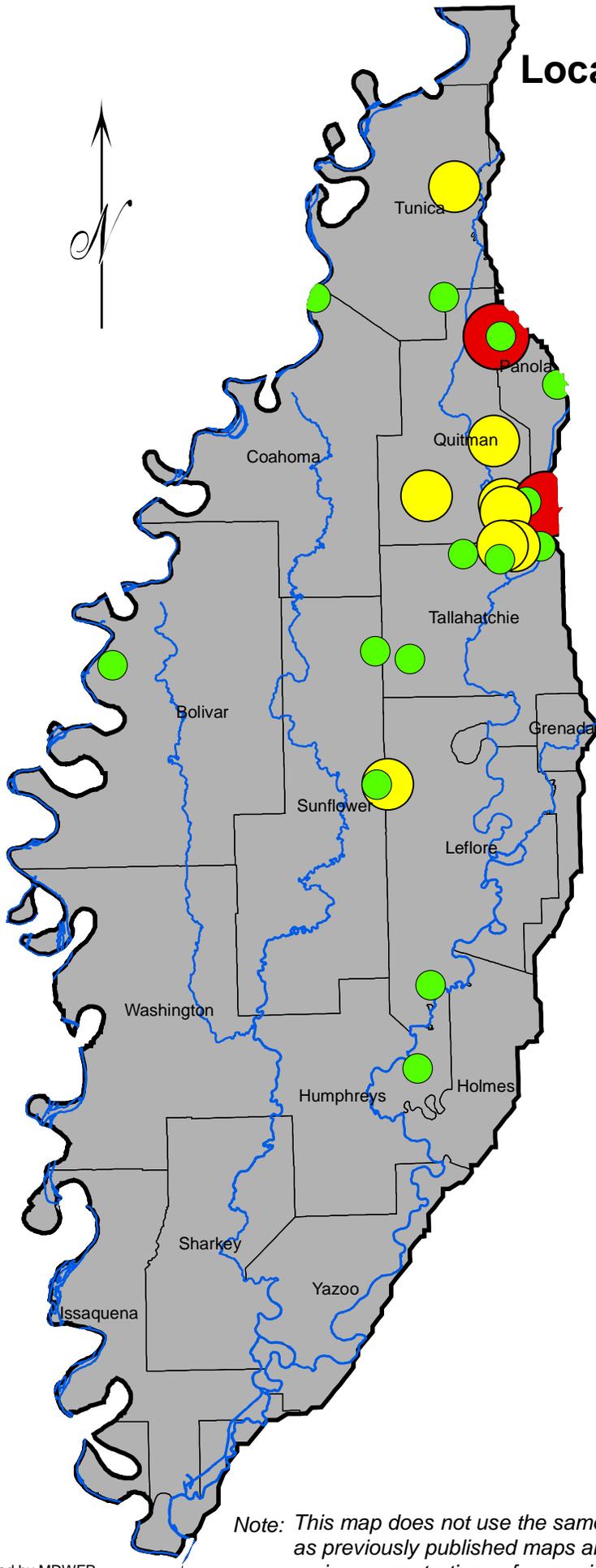
Description

Greatest Concentrations of Ducks Observed in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 19 - 23, 2021

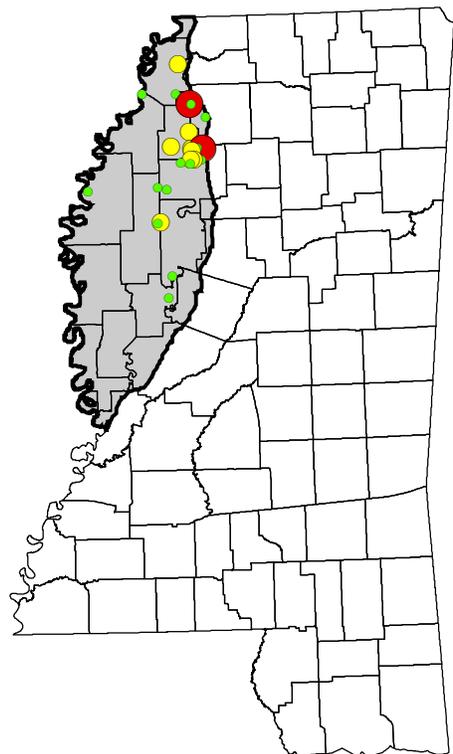
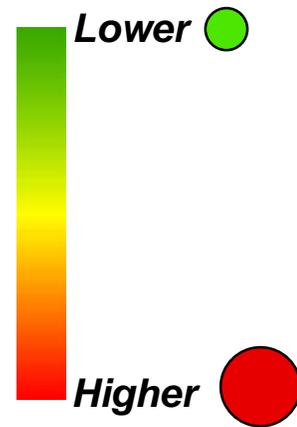


Note: This map does not use the same area calculations as previously published maps and is intended to illustrate major concentrations of ducks in the Mississippi Delta.

Locations and relative size of light goose flocks in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 19 - 23, 2021



Description



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.