

September 11th, 2014 – Duck Numbers Hold Steady Despite Cooler Temperatures

The rain finally stopped and we were able to get in the air for the 2nd teal flight on Thursday, September 11th. A major rain event like this week (4-8 inches over the Illinois River watershed) makes our rivers jump drastically. Water levels at Havana jumped 6 feet in two days and the water is still rising. Certainly this flooding will destroy most of the duck food remaining in the Illinois Valley. Only wetlands protected behind major levee systems will be spared from flooding (i.e., Chautauqua NWR, Emiquon Preserve, and Hennepin & Hopper Lakes). On a brighter note, many duck clubs and public waterfowl areas along the river will save on pumping costs this year.

There were only minor changes in waterfowl abundance this week. Teal numbers in the Illinois River valley were up by 4,800 birds, and both blue-winged and American green-winged teal were near their 10-year averages (www.bellrose.org). Most of the increase was due to a small advance in the green-winged teal numbers in the Illinois Valley. Teal numbers on the Mississippi River were again low this week and only totaled 1,820 birds at census locations; 70% below 10-yr averages. Hopefully, cooler weather will increase duck numbers along both rivers before the last week of teal season. Teal season is scheduled to close at sunset on September 21st.

Stay tuned for more updates next week.....

Photo 1. Many wetlands along the Illinois and Mississippi rivers were deeply flooded following rainstorms on September 9th and 10th. Illinois River water was rapidly filling Spunky Bottoms south of Beardstown, IL, on September 11th.

