

## **November 30, 2018 – Aerial Waterfowl Inventory Blog**

We flew the waterfowl survey on Thursday, November 29<sup>th</sup>. So much for thawing out! Many of our wetlands were >90% iced over. It has been a roller coaster ride this fall. Last Sunday's blizzard (Nov. 25<sup>th</sup>) and subsequent frigid temperatures froze most of the refuges again along both the Mississippi and Illinois rivers. The ducks were found in very concentrated clusters on small patches of open water. Most of the non-mallard ducks have headed south for warmer climates; however, we still have a bunch of mallards along both rivers. I estimated about 144,000 mallards along the Illinois River and 441,000 mallards on the Mississippi. These numbers were 11% below and 69% above average for late November, respectively. It looks like we might thaw out over the weekend with warmer temperatures and rains; however, I believe it will be short lived, as our low temperatures will plummet into the teens again late next week. I am trying to be optimistic about duck hunting opportunities with a lot of the season left, but these mallards have been here for a while and are becoming increasingly hard to hunt. That said I had a few friends that shot limits of mallards today after cutting a big hole in the ice. To be successful, I think we will need to try different approaches and decoy spreads in the coming weeks. If you are a diver hunter, I believe the canvasback migration has passed us. I counted very few canvasbacks (18,300) on Pool 19 yesterday, and reports of canvasbacks on the upper Mississippi River Pools 4–13 are slim.

This week I decided to put up a couple photos of the ducks packed into the ice. They include Emiquon Preserve, Swan Lake (Two Rivers NWR), Cuivre Refuge, Clarence Cannon, and Ted Shanks. Good luck and happy hunting out there, and be careful battling the ice! For more information about the waterfowl survey, check out our webpage at [www.bellrose.org](http://www.bellrose.org). Stay tuned for more updates next week.....



Emiquon Preserve – Ducks, Geese, and Swans.



Swan Lake (Two Rivers NWR) – Mallards, Northern Pintails, and Ring-necked Ducks.



Cuivre Refuge – Ice Ducks.





Mallards and Gadwall.



Clarence Cannon Refuge.





Ted Shanks Conservation Area.



Ted Shanks Conservation Area – Mallards.