

October 26, 2018 – Aerial Waterfowl Inventory Blog

We flew the waterfowl survey on Wednesday, October 24th. Most of the refuges and duck clubs were pumped up, and ducks are arriving. Actually, we had a big jump in duck abundance along both rivers this week. We estimated 283,025 ducks along the Illinois River, which was 45% above the 10-yr average and nearly double (+92%) what we had last week. The big increase this week was in mallards, northern pintail, gadwall, green-winged teal, and northern shoveler.

Similarly, duck numbers along the central Mississippi River were up this week when we estimated 115,585 birds. This estimate was 12% below the 10-yr average but 93% above last week's numbers. Floodwaters were beginning to recede, but there is so much flooding along the Mississippi I am sure the ducks are scattered all over. We won't know for sure until Missouri's north and middle hunting zones open on November 3rd forcing the ducks into the refuges. The most notable increases this week on the Mississippi River were in mallards, gadwall, and ring-necked ducks.

This week I wanted to highlight one of our research projects at the Bellrose Waterfowl Research Center. In August, we began capturing wood ducks to evaluate their postbreeding behaviors along the Illinois River. We radiomarked 105 wood ducks with bib-style transmitters at the Emiquon Preserve and Sanganois, Rice Lake, and Banner Marsh SFWAs. Currently these birds are scattered from Pekin to Beardstown. We locate these ducks 7 days/week both diurnally and nocturnally to document daily movements, habitat use, survival, departure dates, and proportional use of refuge and non-refuge wetlands. If you harvest one of our transmittered ducks, please call the Forbes Biological Station (217-332-3825) to provide some information about the bird. The transmitter and leg band are yours to keep! For more information, please email us at ayetter@illinois.edu.

Good luck on the Illinois central zone opener on October 27th. For more information about the waterfowl survey, check out our webpage at www.bellrose.org. Stay tuned for more updates next week.....



