

December 12, 2018 – Aerial Waterfowl Inventory Blog

We flew the waterfowl survey on Tuesday, December 11th. Ice, Ice, Ice – It looked like the frozen tundra out there. Many of our wetlands exceeded 90% ice coverage, and the mallards finally started to head south, at least on the Illinois River. This week I estimated about 93,000 total ducks and 80,000 mallards along the Illinois River. These numbers were down 47% and 56% from last week, respectively, and both total ducks and mallards were <50% of the 10-yr average. Duck numbers (~493,000) on the Mississippi River were down 26% from last week, but there are still 400,000 mallards on the Mississippi, mostly between Quincy and Grafton, IL. The only other significant species on the Mississippi River was ring-necked ducks where we estimated over 41,000 on Swan Lake at Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge. I can't explain why those ring-necks are hanging around.

This year hunting has been less than average for many duck hunters along both rivers. In fact, several hunters have been skeptical of the big numbers on a few of the refuges. So this week I decided to post a photo of the Dardenne Refuge in St. Charles County, Missouri. I'm sorry for the sun's glare on the image. This photo shows a portion of the 135,000 ducks (primarily mallards) we observed this week in the moist-soil impoundment on the refuge. Levi Bauer, manager, of the Dardenne Duck Club takes great pride each year to provide the best moist-soil foods he can in the refuge. His work is usually acknowledged by an abundance of ducks! The second photo is at the Cuivre Refuge just a couple of miles from Dardenne. I hope you can zoom in and see an abundance of green-winged teal (lower-middle portion of the photo and along the edge of the wood vegetation) mixed in with the mallards.

For more information about the waterfowl survey, check out our webpage at www.bellrose.org. Stay tuned for more updates next week.....



