

December 8th, 2015 – Aerial Waterfowl Inventory Blog

We completed the waterfowl survey on Tuesday, December 8th following the fog on Monday. Water levels were elevated along the Illinois and Mississippi rivers, and several of the mallards were still located in the flooded timber; especially along the Illinois.

Illinois River numbers were stable from the preceding week at 190,910 total ducks and were 7% above the 10-yr average. However, mallards (130,350) were 16% below average for this time of year. We have had the same number of mallards in the Illinois Valley since before Thanksgiving and hunter harvest reflects this trend. Hunting reports from the field indicated the mallards were call, decoy, and blind shy so if you've been harvesting mallards, you're one of the lucky hunters along the Illinois River.

Once again the Mississippi River had more ducks than the Illinois River. Total duck abundance was (463,540); down 29% from the previous week, but still 87% ahead of the 10-yr average. It appeared to me that those big numbers of ducks at Louisa, Swan Lake, Long Lake, Dardenne, and Cannon refuges were down from the December 3rd flight. Also the canvasback numbers on Pool 19 dropped considerably (39%) from last week.

On a brighter note, I saw several big bunches of greater white-fronted geese and snow geese along both rivers. This should make the Illinois goose hunters happy.

For more information on the waterfowl surveys check out our web page at www.bellrose.org.

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

This photo from Spunky Bottoms on the lower Illinois River shows the muddy water where mallards were stirring up the substrate while feeding in the shallows. You might even find some fleeing greater white-fronted geese in the mix.

