

November 9th, 2015 – Aerial Waterfowl Inventory Blog

We flew the waterfowl survey on Monday, November 9th ahead of the windy weather system that blew through later in the week. Duck numbers along the Illinois River were down slightly (6%) from the previous week but were right at the 10-yr average totaling 283,315 ducks. We lost some of those fair weather ducks including northern pintails which dropped nearly 40%, and over 110,000 American coots headed south over the weekend. However, we picked up a few diving ducks, especially ring-necked ducks, from the previous week. Duck abundance (321,140) along the Mississippi River increased about 27% and was right at the 10-yr average. Diving ducks were starting to build on Pool 19 from Keokuk to Fort Madison. And, duck numbers (68,000) more than doubled at the Clarence Cannon National Wildlife Refuge near Annada, MO. For more information on the waterfowl surveys, check out our web page at www.bellrose.org.

Last week's blog photo got considerable attention, and one duck hunter commented that he liked the aerial perspective of the duck distribution in the photo. My tip for the week is to evaluate your decoy spread. Sometimes ducks distribute themselves evenly in wetlands and around beaver lodges (aka...duck blinds), but in many instances, I observe dabbling ducks concentrating along the perimeter of a wetland. They prefer to feed in the very shallow water along the wetland edge and form dense clusters of birds. The accompanying photo illustrates my point. If you have the resources to "black-stack" your decoys like the mallards, greenwings, and gadwall in the photo, you may just increase the number of birds in your daily bag!

Be safe and happy hunting! Stay tuned for more updates next week.....

