

November 10th, 2016 – Aerial Waterfowl Inventory Blog

The weather was perfect for a waterfowl survey on Monday, November 7th. We estimated 213,465 total ducks in the Illinois River valley (IRV) which was up 7% from the previous week; however, due to above average temperatures across the Midwest, we are running well below average (41% low) for the second week of November. The central Mississippi River valley (CMRV; 253,375 ducks) is doing much better in relation to the 10-yr average (4% low), and duck abundance was up 28% from the previous week. However, this increase was likely due to the middle zone duck season opener in Missouri on November 5th. Ducks were dispersed around the duck clubs in St. Charles County prior to opening day and were forced into the refuges after the season started.

The current weather pattern is at least part of the problem with our duck numbers along both rivers. The species distribution usually starts to change by the second week of November when we shift from the non-mallard dabblers (northern pintail, gadwall, American wigeon, American green-winged teal, and northern shoveler) to mallards. In fact, our mallard numbers this week were 67% and 38% below average along the IRV and CMRV, respectively. In many years, Veteran's Day weekend brings some gusty winds and colder temperatures, and this year's forecast may bring some north winds and freezing lows. Some of you might even remember the Armistice Day blizzard on November 11, 1940. We could sure use some "ducky" weather, but we don't need a repeat of 1940.

Since my flight, I have heard reports of new migrants along both rivers. Migrant mallards and some snow geese were noticed in the Louisiana, MO, area earlier in the week, and I am hearing more gunshots this morning from my office as I write this blog. Good luck hunting and enjoy the Veteran's Day Holiday. To all the active duty military and veterans out there, Thank You for your service!

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

This painting by David Hagerbaumer from Quincy, IL, depicts the blizzard and the duck hunting on that fateful day, November 11, 1940, when many duck hunters lost their lives. If you have never heard the story, you should "Google it", or better yet, ask an elderly hunter to recount the memories from that day.

