

## **October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2013 – Aerial Waterfowl Inventory Blog**

This weekend marks opening day of duck season in the north zone of Illinois. Nearly all refuges and hunting clubs along both rivers are pumping or moving water, duck blinds are brushed, and it appears everyone is ready for the opener. Hennepin & Hopper on the upper Illinois is the noteworthy area this fall. It is very similar to the Emiquon Preserve located downstream. Hennepin & Hopper was completely dewatered during 2012 for invasive carp removal; however, the basin is now full again and submersed aquatic vegetation (SAV) is back and plentiful. This type of vegetation grows under the water's surface and is the food of choice for many waterbird species including gadwall, American wigeon, lesser scaup, canvasbacks, and American coots. In fact, nearly 23,000 coots were observed on the site during this week's inventory.

I estimated 168,375 ducks on the Illinois River this week which was 83% above the most recent 10-yr average and 43% greater than last year's estimate (Oct. 15<sup>th</sup>). Northern pintail and American green-winged teal comprise nearly 60% of total ducks along the Illinois River. I also estimated over 77,000 ducks on the Mississippi River this week which was 23% above the 10-yr average; however, total ducks were only 6% greater than last year at this time. Like the Illinois River, Northern pintail and American green-winged teal comprised the majority (81%) of total ducks counted along the Mississippi River this week.

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