

November 25th, 2014 – Aerial Waterfowl Inventory Blog

We flew the waterfowl survey of the Illinois and Mississippi rivers on November 25th. Many of the wetlands along both rivers thawed with the warm rains. Despite open water, duck abundance for many species were well below their 10-yr averages (www.bellrose.org). On the Illinois River, we were basically down to mallards which represented 91% of the ducks observed, and total duck abundance was 32% below the 10-yr average. Mallards are able to withstand the colder temperatures and ice by field feeding on waste grains (i.e., corn). Other dabbling ducks are not as likely to field feed and generally head to warmer regions when our wetlands freeze. Mallards were also very abundant along the Mississippi River as they were nearly 50% above average. Diving ducks were still observed in large numbers along Pool 19 where we witnessed a 4-mile long raft below Nauvoo, IL. This huge raft was comprised primarily of canvasbacks which totaled nearly 177,000 birds. Canvasback numbers were 78% above average for this time of year. I am sure this raft is impressive as you drive along IL Route 96 from Hamilton to Nauvoo, IL.

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