

October 28th, 2013 – Aerial Waterfowl Inventory Blog

Well, we made it through the central zone opener and from what I hear it was pretty good overall. Opening day is always met with a huge amount of optimism; however, in reality, it isn't one of the days that stand out over the course of the season. I have word from the Mississippi River Area that they harvested nearly 2,600 ducks; 31% above the long term average and 2.13 birds per hunter. Hunters at the Emiquon complex also found similar success at just under 2 birds each. Other Illinois River public sites boasted average to above average harvests, and several private duck clubs in the Havana area harvested 10-15 ducks per blind. If your hunt wasn't as successful, don't get discouraged. As one hunter told me, "it's just the start buddy."

We usually have a major jump in the number of waterfowl observed in the Illinois River valley after the central zone opener due to the fact that ducks are concentrated on the refuges after being forced out of hunted wetlands. This trend continued again this year; however, the number was so staggering, we must have had a movement of ducks into Illinois. Total duck numbers in the IRV jumped from nearly 361,000 total ducks on October 23rd to over 595,000 on October 28th. This was a 65% increase over the 5-day period. Similar to last week, non-mallard dabblers are accounting for the majority of total ducks along both the Illinois and Mississippi rivers with northern pintail, gadwall, and American green-winged teal contributing greatly to the overall total. Mississippi River hunters should be encouraged because lesser scaup have started trickling in on Pool 19. This year has the potential to be a banner year for waterfowl hunters along both rivers. Let's hope the trend continues as the migration progresses.

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