

December 22, 2023 Kentucky Waterfowl Ground Counts

This is the ground count survey for December 27 – December 29, 2023. Many locations were not surveyed due to the holidays. Kentucky has been very dry since late summer however we did get some rain the first couple weeks of December. We had a good growing season for our crops and moist soil habitats throughout most of the state. At the start of the waterfowl hunting season habitat is mainly limited to areas that have the capacity to pump water, which is limited, due to the low levels in the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. This means our waterfowl areas like Ballard, Boatwright and Doug Travis are struggling to keep water. Limited water is forcing us to limit hunting areas available on some of these WMAs.

Avian Influenza is present in Kentucky, so hunters should use common sense when handling/cleaning harvested waterfowl. See page two of the [KY Waterfowl Guide](#) for recommendations for the safe handling and disposal of your birds. After cleaning waterfowl, hunters are encouraged to place the remains in trash bags and dispose of them through trash collection or a permitted landfill. Bald eagles and other raptors are particularly susceptible to avian influenza. This simple action could help prevent bald eagle and other raptor mortalities.

The second segment of duck season opens on December 7 and will run until January 31, 2024. Goose season opened Thanksgiving Day and will remain open until February 15, 2024. The second day of Special Youth Waterfowl Season is Saturday, February 11, 2024. The second day of Special Veteran's Waterfowl Season is on Sunday February 11, 2024. All bag limits remain the same as last season. Check out the 2023-2024 Waterfowl hunting guide or visit the waterfowl hunting web page for more details. Good luck hunting this year. Be safe and enjoy your time afield.

Good luck hunting this year. Be safe and enjoy your time afield and Happy Holidays!

Location	Number	Species Composition	Comments
Ballard <i>Not surveyed</i>			
Boatwright <i>Not surveyed</i>			
Duck Island <i>Not surveyed</i>			
Doug Travis WMA <i>12/27/2023</i>	1,450 ducks	83% mallard 10% green-winged teal 7% wood ducks, mergansers, gadwall	Still fighting drought conditions, but recent rainfall has helped conditions in Beaver Pond Rest Area and Town Creek Impoundment. Well #1 has raised water levels in Willow Slough and at Blind 17, and should help Blind 16

			soon. A breakdown on Well 2 resulted in losing water over the Christmas holiday, but that has hopefully been rectified and water levels should recover at Blinds 11, 12, 13, and 14.
Sloughs WMA <i>Not surveyed</i>			
Peabody WMA 12/28/2023	29 ducks 177 CA geese	80% mallard, 20% ring-necked	Rising river levels has provided some backwater habitat, although most shallow water areas are still lack water.
Yellowbank WMA <i>Not surveyed</i>			
Barren River WMA <i>Not surveyed</i>			
Blue Grass Army Depot (all lakes and ponds) <i>Not surveyed</i>			
Cave Run Lake 12/27/2023	40 Ducks 10 CA geese 18 other	40% bufflehead, 60% hooded merg. 66% pied-billed grebes, 34% common loon	