

Arkansas Game & Fish Commission

Wildlife Management Division

AGFC personnel conducted aerial waterfowl surveys 4 December through 7 December in the Northeast, Grand Prairie and East Central, Southwest, and Southeast regions and on 12 December in the Northwest Arkansas River Valley. Weather conditions ranged from mostly clear to cloudy during the survey period with cool temperatures ranging from lows in the 20s and lower 30s to highs in the 40s and 50s. Visibility was good during all surveys. This survey was conducted at a similar time as last year.

Habitat conditions were variable across the state, with excellent habitat conditions persisting in the Northwest and Northeast survey regions. Abundance of flooded habitat increased from the November survey in the East Central region, but conditions remain dry. Habitat conditions remained below average in both the Southeast and Southwest regions. In fact, less flooded habitat was available in southern Arkansas during December than in November.

A regional listing of survey totals is found in Table 1. Waterfowl numbers this December were higher than last year but still well below the long-term average (Figure 1). The statewide total duck count of 333,294 represents a 15% increase from last year's count of 289,598 but remains well below the 1985–2006 December survey average of 841,628.

The mallard count of 173,510 is a 5% percent decrease from last December's count of 182,702 and, like total duck numbers, remains well below the long-term average of 538,978 (Figure 2). It is not surprising that nearly 70% of the mallards observed during this survey were counted in the Northeast region where quality habitat conditions persist. Snow goose numbers (237,155 down from 332,850 in November) remain high this year although some large concentrations of birds moved out of Northeast Arkansas during the recent cold front when many fields temporarily froze. Numbers of white-fronted geese dropped slightly from last month, totaling 25,325 compared to last month's estimate of 31,905.

Although the December 2006 survey totals are up from 2005, they remain low. Despite two strong cold fronts prior to this survey mallard numbers also remain well below average. Habitat conditions continue to be poor in the southern part of the state and rainfall has not been sufficient to flood large amounts of habitat in the East Central region. Extensive rainfall leading to natural flooding in conjunction with cold fronts may be necessary to attract and hold large concentrations of mallards in the state.

Table 1. Numbers of waterfowl observed during the December 2006 Arkansas Aerial Waterfowl Survey

Species	Northwest	Southwest	Northeast	East Central	Southeast	Statewide
Mallard	25,660	5220	118,980	6060	17,590	173,510
Black Duck	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gadwall	10,835	1435	29,745	1830	15,400	59,245
Wigeon	50	10	0	0	25	85
G.W. Teal	3100	2025	5600	50	8335	19,110
B.W. Teal	0	0	0	0	0	0
N. Shoveler	700	250	7300	0	3495	11,745
N. Pintail	700	0	42,225	100	790	43,815
Wood Duck	0	4	0	250	20	274
ALL DABLERS	41,045	7994	203,850	8290	45,655	306,834

Species	Northwest	Southwest	Northeast	East Central	Southeast	Statewide
Ruddy	0	0	20	0	0	20
Redhead	40	0	0	0	0	40
Canvasback	50	10	120	0	75	155
Scaup	0	150	120	0	200	470
Ring-necked	800	30	12,600	0	2250	15,680
Bufflehead	0	45	0	0	0	45
Mergansers	0	0	100	0	0	100
ALL DIVERS	890	135	12,960	0	2525	16,510

Species	Northwest	Southwest	Northeast	East Central	Southeast	Statewide
Snow/Ross' Geese	0	950	117,450	41,100	77,655	237,155
White-fronted Geese	0	40	8550	0	16,735	25,325
Canada Geese	450	95	320	0	100	965
ALL GEESE	450	1085	126,320	41,110	94,490	263,445

Figure 1. Aerial Waterfowl Survey Statewide Totals for All Ducks, 1985-2006

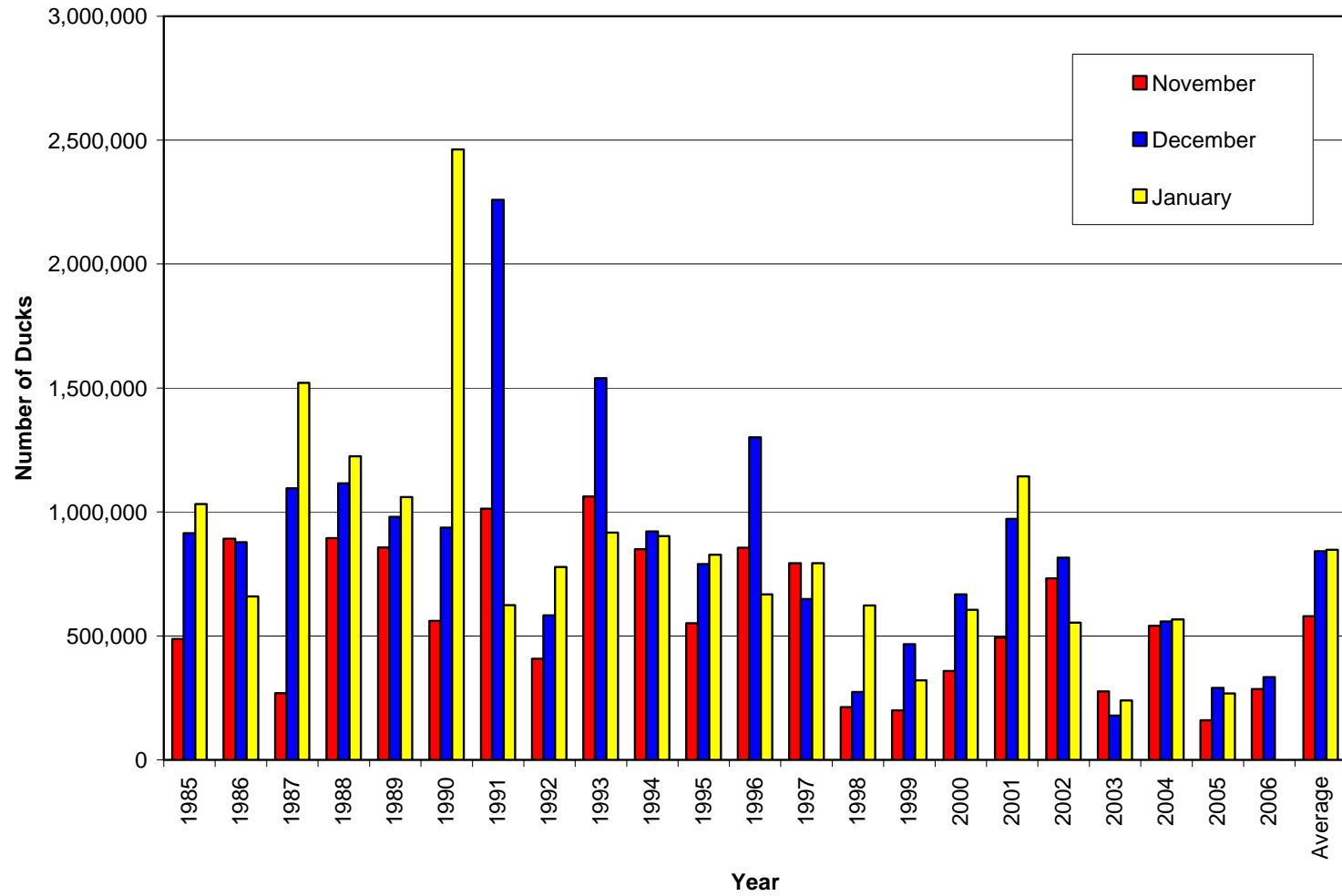


Figure 2. Aerial Waterfowl Survey Statewide Totals for Mallards, 1987-2006

