

AGFC personnel conducted aerial waterfowl surveys 7 November through 13 November in the following regions: Northeast, Grand Prairie and East Central, Northwest Arkansas River Valley, Southwest, and Southeast. Weather conditions were clear to partly cloudy during the survey period with relatively warm temperatures ranging from lows in the upper 40s and lower 50s to highs in the upper 70s. Visibility was good during all surveys. This survey was conducted at a similar time as last year.

Habitat conditions across the state were slightly improved from last year, but portions of the state remain extremely dry. Abundance of flooded habitat was above average in the Arkansas River Valley and very high in the Northeast. However, habitat conditions were dry in the East Central region, slightly below average in the Southeast, and dry in the Southwest. A wet October has led to excellent habitat conditions in the Northeast, but rainfall does not appear to have been of sufficient duration and intensity to flood large amounts of habitat (particularly WMAs) in the balance of the state. Recent rains likely led to saturated soils that could make pumping of fields less costly. Farmers in the Southwest and Southeast regions were actively flooding fields during the survey period.

A regional listing of survey totals is found in Table 1. Survey totals this November were much higher than last year, but still well below the long-term average (Figure 1). The statewide total duck count of 285,187 represents a 78% increase from last year's count of 159,905 but remains well below the 1985–2006 November survey average of 579,224.

The mallard count of 106,823 is a 147 percent increase from last November's count of 43,085 but, like total duck numbers, remains well below the long-term average of 282,611 (Figure 2). It is not surprising that about 75 percent of the mallards observed during this survey were counted in Northeast Arkansas where the greatest amount of habitat is available. Breeding grounds estimates for gadwalls were very high this year and our survey data appears to match these increased numbers. Gadwall numbers (90,210) approached that of mallards and were nearly twice as high as last year's 52,512 bird total. Snow goose numbers (332,850, up from 61,175 last year) were extremely high this year with large concentrations of birds observed on flooded fields in the Northeast and Southeast regions. Numbers of white-fronted geese were up slightly, totaling 31,905 compared to last year's estimate of 21,105.

Although the November 2006 survey totals are up from 2005, they remain low. These numbers represent the fifth lowest total duck count since 1985 and the second lowest total mallard count since 1987, second only to November 2005. Reduced early numbers are undoubtedly due to low habitat availability in the state resulting from persistent drought conditions. A series of cold fronts during late October and November appears to have moved waterfowl down the flyway, as evidenced by observations of snow geese migrating through the state and high snow goose totals in this survey. Even so, mallard numbers are low and continued cold fronts across the U.S. and rain within Arkansas will be needed to increase waterfowl abundance and improve hunting opportunity.

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

Species	Northwest	Southwest	Northeast	East Central	Southeast	Statewide
Mallard	9828	4175	76,400	2800	13,620	106,823
Black Duck	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gadwall	16,140	5685	46,400	2025	22,960	93,210
Wigeon	600	35	1100	0	45	1780
G.W. Teal	9770	925	12,980	150	11,100	34,925
B.W. Teal	0	0	0	0	0	0
N. Shoveler	1200	80	13,720	0	2257	17,257
N. Pintail	0	0	23,025	0	1270	24,295
Wood Duck	165	10	0	655	220	1050
ALL DABLERS	37,703	10,910	173,625	5630	51,472	279,340

Species	Northwest	Southwest	Northeast	East Central	Southeast	Statewide
Ruddy	0	0	50	0	0	50
Redhead	0	32	50	0	0	82
Canvasback	10	0	0	0	10	20
Scaup	1650	0	200	0	0	1850
Ring-necked	100	0	10,085	0	3070	13,255
Bufflehead	0	0	10	0	0	10
Mergansers	20	0	150	0	0	170
ALL DIVERS	1780	32	10,545	0	3080	15,437

Species	Northwest	Southwest	Northeast	East Central	Southeast	Statewide
Snow/Ross' Geese	3000	30	201,500	30,200	98,120	332,850
White-fronted Geese	100	40	15,000	0	16,765	31,905
Canada Geese	480	45	35	0	50	610
ALL GEESE	3580	115	216,535	30,200	114,935	365,365

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

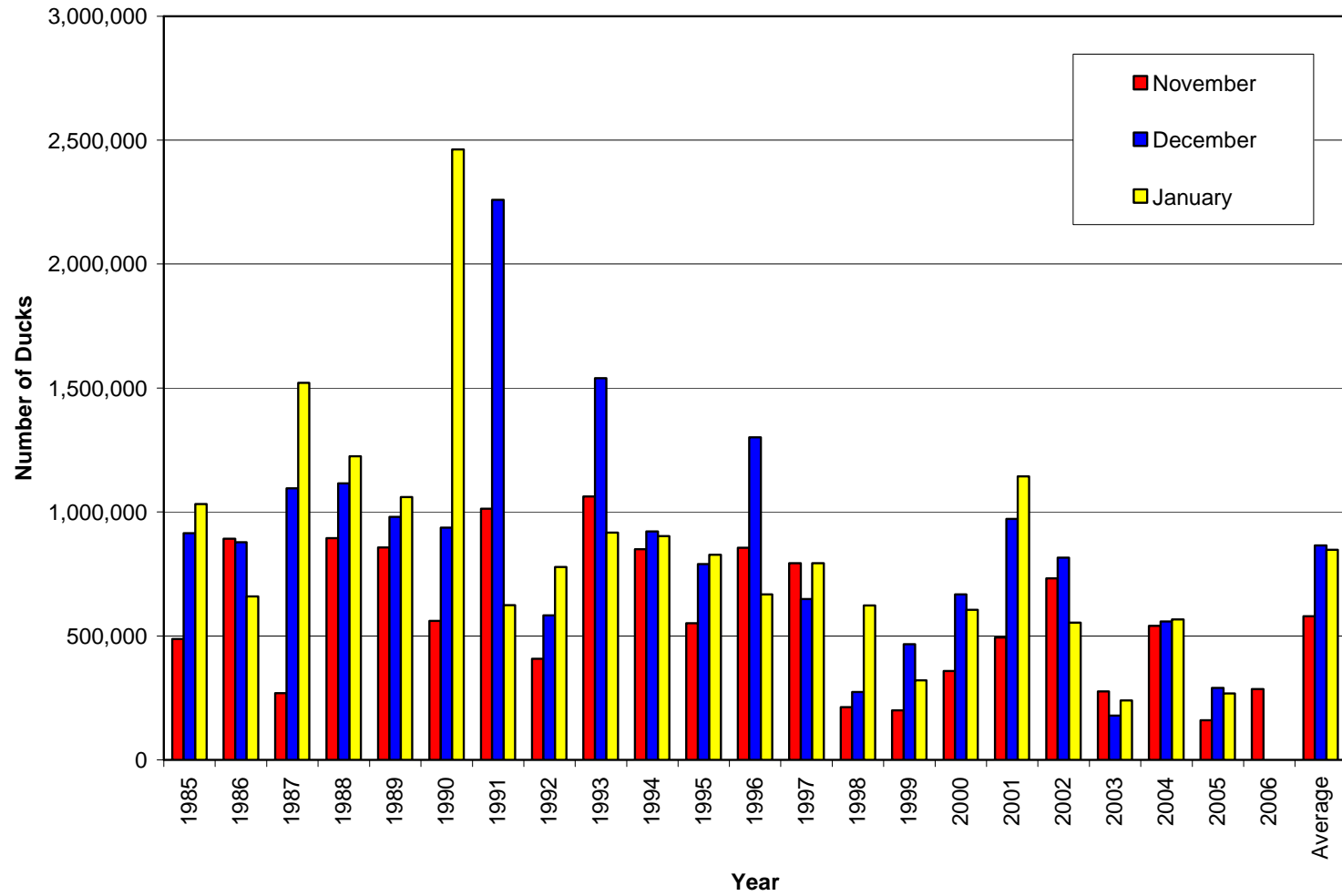


Figure 2. Aerial Waterfowl Survey Statewide Totals for Mallards, 1987-2006

