



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release To PM's, JULY 5, 1957

REGULATIONS FRAMEWORK ESTABLISHED FOR HUNTING OF RAILS, GALLINULES, WOODCOCK, DOVES, AND BAND-TAILED PIGEONS

Certain revisions in bag limits and adjustments in seasons for some areas were announced today by the Department of the Interior in releasing the framework for State selections of hunting seasons for rails, gallinules, woodcock and doves in the United States and for certain sea ducks in the Northeast. Migratory bird seasons in Alaska were included in today's announcement.

The principal changes this year include an extension of the season and a slightly larger daily bag limit for mourning doves in the Eastern States, some liberalization in white-winged dove hunting in the western management zone, an increase in the daily bag and possession limits for rails except sora in the Atlantic Flyway, and an adjustment of seasons in Alaska.

This portion of the annual revision of the hunting regulations, as prepared by the Department's Fish and Wildlife Service, sets forth the "outside" dates for hunting these species, except woodcock, from September 1, 1957, through January 10, 1958, the same as last year. The framework for the woodcock seasons is October 1 to January 20. Within these sets of dates, the various State game departments may select their own seasons for hunting these birds. The specific dates will be published later after the States have notified the Service of their selections.

Although the regulation proposals released today contain those for the shooting of waterfowl, coots, and Wilson's snipe in Alaska where the season begins on September 1, Daniel H. Janzen, Director of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife stated that the detailed regulations for the hunting of migratory waterfowl and coots in the United States will not be issued until late in August.

The regulations by species are as follows:

Mourning Doves. Because the recently completed dove survey indicates that the 1957 dove breeding population continues in a very favorable condition, the

Service has concluded that a further slight liberalization in the length of the season may be permitted. This will afford opportunity for a reasonable harvest of this species throughout all States in the eastern group.

The framework for this species will remain the same as last year, extending from September 1, through January 10. Within this period all States east of the Mississippi River (but also including Arkansas and Louisiana) may submit recommendations for hunting seasons on mourning doves consisting of one of the following alternatives:

- (1) 45 consecutive full days,
- (2) two split seasons aggregating 45 full days,
- (3) 60 consecutive half days, or
- (4) two split seasons aggregating 60 half days.

This represents a lengthening of the mourning dove season in the eastern group of States by five full days, if the first or second alternative is chosen, or 5 half-days if either of the latter two alternatives is selected. The daily bag and possession limit is increased from 8 to 10.

From the relatively short seasons of 30 days, with a single bag and possession limit of 8 birds, which prevailed during the years between 1949 and 1953, a steady increase in the population of this species in the eastern group of States has permitted a lengthening of the season to what is now proposed for the 1957-58 season.

No change has been made in the bag and possession limits on mourning doves for the States west of the Mississippi River so a nationwide bag and possession limit of 10 will prevail in 1957-58.

For all States west of the Mississippi River (exclusive of Arkansas and Louisiana, and with certain exceptions in Texas), the season of 50 full days will continue in 1957 with the same options as last year.

Missouri, being on the dividing line between the eastern and western divisions, was placed in the latter region last year. This year Missouri will be given the opportunity to select either the eastern or the western season.

If seasons involving "half days" are selected by one or more States, such half days will begin at noon and end at sunset. "Full days" refer to a period beginning one-half hour before sunrise and ending at sunset. When a split season is selected by any State, the two hunting periods need not be of equal lengths.

White-winged Doves--Arizona, California and New Mexico. A white-winged dove season will be prescribed for Imperial, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties, California, and for Arizona and New Mexico which will conform to the mourning dove seasons set in these States.

In California, as last year, the bag and possession limit for white-winged and mourning doves will remain at 10, singly or in the aggregate of both kinds.

For the first time New Mexico will have an opportunity to harvest white-winged doves along with mourning doves. This provision has been made in recognition of the fact that white-winged doves are found in the western part of New Mexico in sufficient numbers to warrant an open season.

New Mexico will have the same bag and possession limit on white-winged and mourning doves as that provided for California.

The bag and possession limit on white-winged and mourning doves in Arizona has been increased from 15 to 25, provided such limit contains not more than 10 mourning doves. The addition of 10 birds to the bag and possession limit in Arizona recognizes that white-winged doves are available to hunters in that State for a relatively short time before these birds migrate across the border to Mexico.

Band-tailed Pigeons. The regulations of 1956 permitting the taking of this species in two zones in California and in Oregon and Washington will remain in effect during the 1957-58 season unless the interested States recommend an adjustment of hunting dates. Different hunting dates not exceeding a season length of 31 days may be recommended by those States within a framework of September 1, through January 10. The daily bag and possession limit will remain at 6.

Woodcock. Continuing last year's framework, a season of 40 consecutive days with a daily bag of 4 and possession limit of 8 will be in effect in the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Central Flyways. The "Outside" dates of October 1, through January 20, will remain the same as last year.

Since woodcock normally are not found in the Pacific Flyway States, no season on these birds has been set in that area.

Rails and Gallinules. As last year, open seasons on rails and gallinules are to be prescribed only for the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Central Flyways. The game departments of the States in these flyways may select a season of 70 consecutive days within the September 1, to January 10, framework. Last year the season also was 70 days.

Because of the lack of hunter interest in rails in the Pacific Flyway, no season has been set on this species for that region.

In the Atlantic Flyway where clapper rails have made a good recovery from the nesting losses suffered as the result of the 1955 hurricanes, the limits for rails (except sora) and gallinules have been increased to 15 daily and 30 in possession, singly or in the aggregate of both species. Last year the bag limit was 10 and the possession limit 20.

A bag and possession limit of 15 on rails (except sora) and gallinules has been fixed for the States in the Mississippi and Central Flyways. These are the same as last year.

A limit of 25 sora daily and in possession has been provided again this year for the three flyways where sora hunting is allowed.

Although no season for hunting gallinules is provided at this time in the Pacific Flyway, consideration will be given by the Service, when the waterfowl and coot seasons are established, to a plan for continuing the provision made last year wherein gallinules could be taken with coots to avoid technical violations.

Scoter, Eider, and Old-squaw Ducks. These regulations provide the same hunting opportunity as last year on these species in open coastal waters beyond outer harbor lines in certain Northeastern States: a season between September 1, 1957, and January 10, 1958, not to exceed $3\frac{1}{2}$ months, and a daily bag limit of 7 and a possession limit of 14, singly or in the aggregate.

Waterfowl, Coots, and Wilson's Snipe in Alaska. The season for waterfowl (except on the species noted below) and coots will begin on September 1, and continue through November 29, throughout the Territory to afford more equitable opportunity for Alaskan hunters to harvest these species. The closing date in 1956 was November 22.

The Alaska season for Wilson's snipe will begin on September 1, and extend through October 15. The 1956 season extended from September 1, through 30.

The season dates and bag limits for old-squaw, harlequin, scoter, eider, and American and red-breasted merganser ducks in specified areas of Alaska remains unchanged.

The bag and possession limits on waterfowl generally and on coots and Wilson's snipe in Alaska remain unchanged except for a reduction in the number of American and red-breasted merganser ducks which may be taken. The regulations in 1957 will provide a daily bag limit of 5 and a possession limit of 10 on these species which may be in addition to the limits prescribed on other ducks.

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