



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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ANNOUNCE WATERFOWL HUNTING FRAMEWORK FOR 1957-58

Hunters of wild ducks and geese can expect the flight of migratory game birds this fall to be "about the same as last year," Acting Secretary of the Interior Hatfield Chilson said today in announcing new hunting regulation proposals which again will give American sportsmen generous opportunities to harvest waterfowl.

Shooting seasons and bag and possession limits which will be in effect during the coming 1957-58 hunting period will be substantially the same as last year in all flyways except in the Pacific Flyway where the season will be longer but the bag and possession limits on ducks will be reduced.

The new Federal proposals specify by flyways the length of the shooting seasons, bag and possession limits, and shooting hours, but do not include the specific season dates for the various States. These will be announced at a later date after the States have made their selections.

Based on the number of days allotted to each flyway, the specific dates will be selected by State game administrators within a general framework of October 1, 1957, to January 15, 1958. The "outside dates" of this year's framework are the same as last year with the exception of brant in the Pacific Flyway.

Salient points of the 1957-58 regulations are as follows:

LENGTH OF SEASONS

For the third successive year the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyways will have a 70-day season for waterfowl and coots, and the Central Flyway a 75-day season on ducks and coots. With certain special conditions designed to protect the Great Basin Canada goose, the Central Flyway generally again will have a 60-day season on geese. The Pacific Flyway will receive a 15-day increase in season length bringing the total to 95 days.

Split seasons have again been offered as options to the States, subject to the usual 10 percent penalty. Split seasons again may be divided into unequal lengths.

SHOOTING HOURS

Shooting hours approved for this year remain at one-half hour before sunrise to sunset in all flyways except the Mississippi where variations will occur from State to State, depending upon whether a particular State in the flyway will have a closed season on wood ducks or will have the privilege of including one wood duck in the daily bag and possession limits. The hunters of those States in the Mississippi Flyway which are permitted to include one wood duck in the daily bag and possession limits will be required to stop shooting all species of waterfowl and coots at one-half hour before sunset to afford some measure of protection to wood ducks during the late hours of the day when they are more vulnerable to gun pressure.

The framework within which the States are permitted to recommend open season dates on ducks, geese, and coots are stated below by flyways:

Atlantic Flyway States

The States in this flyway--Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia--can select concurrent open seasons on waterfowl and coots of 70 consecutive full days, or two seasons aggregating 63 full days, beginning on or after October 1, 1957, and ending not later than January 15, 1958. The daily bag and possession limits on ducks remain fixed at 4 and 8, respectively, and on geese (except snow geese) at 2 and 4. A single bag and possession limit of 10 coots will again prevail in this flyway.

Mississippi Flyway States

All the States in this flyway--Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee, and Wisconsin--can have concurrent open seasons on waterfowl and coots of 70 consecutive full days, or two seasons aggregating 63 full days, within the framework of October 1, 1957, to January 15, 1958. Daily bag and possession limits on ducks will remain at 4 and 8, respectively, with a daily bag and possession limit of 5 on geese. These limits on geese may not include, in the alternative, more than 2 Canada geese or its subspecies; 2 white-fronted geese; or 1 Canada goose or its subspecies and 1 white-fronted goose. The single bag and possession limit of 10 coots will remain unchanged.

Central Flyway States

The States in this flyway--Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming--may select concurrent open seasons on ducks and coots of 75 consecutive full days, or two seasons aggregating 68 full days, within the established framework of October 1 to January 15. The daily bag and possession limits on ducks remain at 5 and 10, respectively.

Except for the special conditions designed to protect Great Basin Canada geese in the States of Colorado, Montana, and Wyoming, the States in this flyway may select open seasons on geese (except Ross's geese) of 60 consecutive full days, or two seasons aggregating 60 full days subject to the condition that the goose season may not be split into two equal or unequal hunting periods unless a comparable split season for ducks is selected.

The seasons on geese recommended by each State game department must be within the opening and closing dates of any consecutive-day or split seasons, respectively, recommended by any State for ducks and coots.

The daily bag and possession limits on geese, generally, will be increased from 5 to 6, but these limits may not include, in the alternative, more than 1 white-fronted goose; 2 Canada geese or its subspecies; or 1 Canada goose or its subspecies and 1 white-fronted goose.

Based on the recommendations of the Central Flyway Council, special provisions for the protection of Great Basin Canada geese will be in effect as follows:

1. Colorado: In Moffat County the season will be closed.
2. Montana: In the area west of the Continental Divide, the season will be limited to 45 consecutive days, falling within the outside dates of October 1 to January 15. In this area the bag limits on geese may not include more than 1 Canada goose or its subspecies. A closed season will be provided on snow geese in the Counties of Beaverhead, Gallatin, and Madison.
3. Wyoming: In all of Wyoming, except Teton and Goshen Counties and that part of Lincoln County within the drainages of the Salt, Grey's, Snake, and Bear Rivers, the season on geese will be limited to the last 60 days of the duck and coot season recommended by this State. The bag limits on geese in this general area may not contain more than 1 Canada goose or its subspecies. In Teton County and that part of Lincoln County within the drainages of the Salt, Grey's, Snake, and Bear Rivers, the goose season will be 75 consecutive full days running concurrently with the Wyoming duck season. The bag limits on geese in this area may not contain more than 1 Canada goose or its subspecies. In Goshen County the goose season and the bag and possession limits on geese will be comparable to those prevailing elsewhere in the Central Flyway. The season on snow geese will be closed throughout the State of Wyoming.

Throughout the Central Flyway the season on coots will conform to the hunting dates recommended for ducks, with last year's bag and possession limit of 10 coots.

Pacific Flyway States

The States in this flyway--Arizona, California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington--may recommend concurrent open seasons on ducks, geese (except Ross's geese) and coots of 95 consecutive full days, or two seasons aggregating 86 full days, within the framework of October 1 to January 15.

This longer season is being granted to these States because the 80-day seasons which have been in effect in this flyway during the past three years have not resulted in an excessive harvest and it is expected that the reserve of breeding stocks which remained at the end of last year's season will send to this flyway this fall flights of ducks in numbers comparable to those of last year.

Since the status of waterfowl in this flyway generally continues to be good, the recommendation of the Pacific Flyway Council for an increase of 15 days in the length of season has been adopted to allow the States greater latitude in choosing hunting dates which will distribute the hunting opportunity as equally as possible in the face of wide variations in terrain and climatic conditions which prevail to a notable extent in this flyway. Full recognition has also been given to the crop depredation problem caused annually by pintails and widgeons.

However, to guard against any possibility of an excessive kill of ducks as the result of the lengthened season, the bag and possession limits on ducks have been reduced, respectively, by one and two.

With this change the Pacific Flyway States again are afforded the option of selecting a single bag and possession limit of 6 ducks, which may be increased to 9, provided such increased limit contains not less than 3 pintails, 3 widgeons, or 3 of these "depredation birds" in the aggregate of both kinds; or they may select a daily bag limit of 5 ducks and a possession limit of 10, which limits may be increased to 8 and 13, respectively, provided such increased limits contain not less than 3 pintails, 3 widgeons, or 3 of these species in the aggregate of both kinds.

The daily bag and possession limit on geese (except Ross's geese) remains at 6 with the usual limitation that not more than 3 of the dark species of geese may be included in such limits.

Additional restrictions on the daily bag and possession limit for Canada geese in certain designated areas in Arizona, California, Idaho, Nevada, and Utah will be provided to protect Great Basin Canada geese which may be endangered unless the bag limit is restricted in the areas designated.

The season for coots in the Pacific Flyway will conform to the season on ducks and geese, with the usual bag and possession limit in this flyway of 25 coots.

SEASONS ON SPECIAL SPECIES

Brant--In the Atlantic Flyway the season for taking brant will conform to the season for ducks, geese, and coots with a daily bag and possession limit of 6 brant. In the Pacific Flyway, to afford the State game departments greater flexibility in recommending season dates on brant which will enable their hunters to take advantage of flights arriving before December 1, the outside dates within which these States may recommend a season of 70 consecutive days on brant have been fixed at November 1 to February 15. The bag and possession limit will be 3 birds.

Coots--In all four flyways the seasons for coots will conform to the shooting dates recommended by the States for their duck seasons, with daily bag and possession limits remaining the same as the 1956 season--25 coots in the Pacific Flyway and 10 in the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Central flyways.

Gallinules in the Pacific Flyway--Continuing last year's provision, the 1957-58 regulations will provide that gallinules may be taken with coots in the Pacific Flyway with a bag and possession limit of 25, singly or in the aggregate of both kinds. This practice is followed in the Pacific Flyway in lieu of a separate open season on gallinules comparable to those provided in the other three flyways in order to avoid technical violations which otherwise would arise through the inability of hunters to distinguish gallinules from coots where both occur in the same habitat in the Pacific Flyway.

Wood Ducks--In the Mississippi Flyway last year the season on this species was closed. This year the season will remain closed in Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin at the request of the game departments of these States. Continued studies by biologists of the State game departments in this flyway and by biologists of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife indicate that the wood duck populations in the northern portion of the flyway still need protection. Last year's closing time, however, will be modified and the shooting hours for waterfowl will begin one-half hour before sunrise and continue to sunset in those States where the wood duck season is closed.

In the States comprising the southern portion of this flyway--Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Ohio, and Tennessee--1 wood duck can be included in the daily bag and possession limits for other ducks this year. This decision has been reached because of the fact that the local breeding populations of wood ducks in the southern States are augmented substantially by flights from Ontario and the Atlantic Flyway. To guard against the possibility of an excessive kill during the late hours of the day when wood ducks are particularly vulnerable to shooting, the shooting hours for all waterfowl in the southern portion of this flyway will be fixed at one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour before sunset.

Since there is no indication of any decline in the wood duck populations in the other three flyways, last year's bag and possession limits will continue in effect for wood ducks taken during the regular seasons on other ducks. The daily bag and possession limits on ducks in the Central and Pacific Flyways, therefore, may include 1 wood duck. In the Atlantic Flyway, the daily bag limit on ducks may include 1 wood duck and the possession limit may include 2 wood ducks.

Mergansers--Following the practice observed for many years, in each of the four flyways the daily bag and possession limits on other ducks may include one hooded merganser.

Because the populations of American and red-breasted mergansers are lightly harvested and are in good condition throughout all four flyways, this year's regulations will allow hunters to take 5 American and red-breasted mergansers daily and retain 10 in possession (singly or in the aggregate of both kinds) in addition to the bag and possession limits on other ducks.

Wilson's Snipe--Since the snipe population remains relatively stable, and hunter interest in this species is not great, a season of 30 consecutive days within the outside dates for waterfowl will again be provided in all four flyways, with last year's proviso that the season shall not begin earlier than the opening date of the waterfowl season recommended by each State.

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