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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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INTERIOR ANNOUNCES WATERFOWL HUNTING FRAMEWORK

A closed season on redhead and canvasback ducks in all four flyways was provided in the National framework of waterfowl hunting seasons and bag limits for 1960-61, which were announced today by Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton.

The length of the season and the size of bag limits are generally the same as last year in the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Central Flyways, but the new regulations provide some reductions in both for the Pacific Flyway.

The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, which makes recommendations on waterfowl regulations to the Secretary, announced that reports from the breeding grounds indicated that late nesting success had apparently halted the downward trend of the past two years in the three eastern flyways. Only in the Pacific Flyway is the downward trend expected to continue this year.

In addition to the closed season on canvasback and redhead ducks, the new regulations provide for:

Shooting from half an hour before sunrise until sunset except on opening day as listed below (the half hour before sunrise start of shooting was the practice in recent years until the emergency of last season when shooting was not permitted until sunrise);

An experimental 30-day hunting season, January 1-30, 1961, on lesser sandhill (little brown) cranes in a limited section of western Texas and eastern New Mexico in an effort to solve a crop depredations problem created by these birds along their migration routes in Canada and the United States;

An increase in the bag and possession limits for coots in the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Central Flyways;

Bag and possession limits for ducks on these three flyways, the same as last year;

A new plan for the control of the harvest of one of the important Canada goose flocks in the Mississippi Valley;

An optional plan on seasons and bag limits for all flyways;

Split seasons of equal or unequal length with the customary 10 percent penalty in total shooting days.

Seasons and bag limits vary from flyway to flyway and according to the option chosen by the individual States. Data on these matters can be found in the summary by flyways.

The outside dates under which the States may select specific seasons are:

Waterfowl and coots, except brant in the Pacific Flyway--Friday, October 7, 1960, to Sunday, January 8, 1961, both dates inclusive;

Brant in the Pacific Flyway--Sunday, November 20, 1960, to Tuesday, January 31, 1961, both dates inclusive.

In Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, the outside dates are from Tuesday, November 1, 1960, to Wednesday, February 15, 1961, both dates inclusive.

Canvasback and redhead duck populations are at seriously low levels despite hunting restrictions which have been in force on these birds for the past two years, according to Ross Leffler, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife. The regulation last year which allowed but one of either of these birds in the bag in the three Eastern flyways and but two in the aggregate of these species in the Pacific flyway did not benefit their population comeback as was expected. Therefore, it was decided a complete closure in all flyways was necessary to effect their recovery, Assistant Secretary Leffler said.

Because there has been an unusual late season development of lush aquatic vegetation in the prairie potholes, where ducks nest in Canada, there is a good likelihood that an abundance of good over-water nesting habitat will be available next year for canvasback and redhead ducks. Thus, if water conditions are once again favorable, the prospects for improved production by these two species will be bright. To return as many canvasback and redhead ducks as possible to the prairies next spring is therefore most important, the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife reported.

Shooting hours basically will be from a half-hour before sunrise to sunset, Standard time. But on opening day for ducks and coots in all flyways and for gallinules in the Pacific Flyway, shooting is permitted only from 12 o'clock noon, Standard time, until sunset. When the season on geese, brant, and Wilson's snipe opens on the day duck season opens, shooting is permitted from 12 noon until sunset on these species, but if the season for these three species is in progress on the day duck season opens, then shooting of the three is permitted from one-half hour before sunrise until sunset.

The new goose harvest control program will be applied in six counties, three in Illinois and three in Wisconsin. The high concentration of goose hunting in these areas is resulting in a total kill which must be regulated for the proper management of the goose flock. When the total kill of Canada geese in Alexander, Union, and Williamson counties of Illinois reaches 14,000 birds, the Director of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife must close the season by notice through local informational media. Similarly, when the combined kill of Canada geese in Dodge, Fond du Lac, and Juneau counties of Wisconsin reaches 7,000 birds, the Director must close the season there. The quotas were established by the Mississippi Flyway Council after a careful study of the problem.

The Fish and Wildlife Service recommended an experimental hunting season on lesser sandhill cranes in a limited area in Texas and New Mexico after receiving an official request for such a season from the Canadian Wildlife Service. Increasingly serious crop depredations are being caused by these cranes in Saskatchewan, but it is not possible to control the birds there. The endangered whooping cranes also visit this Saskatchewan area, and shooting lesser sandhill cranes there would menace them. Juvenile whoopers cannot be readily distinguished from sandhill cranes.

For that reason, the Canadian Wildlife Service urged a hunting season on lesser sandhill cranes in a wintering area in the United States where lesser sandhill cranes are completely separate from the whoopers.

Recommendations for the 1960-61 regulations were made to the Secretary by the Fish and Wildlife Service after extensive studies of the breeding population and nesting success of all duck-producing areas in the Nation and Canada were made by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife and many cooperating agencies. These studies showed a considerably reduced number of adult ducks on the breeding grounds, poor nesting cover, and adverse weather conditions which essentially defeated early nesting efforts. Renesting, as well as first attempts by late nesting species, was done under more favorable conditions. The final nesting success of this smaller number of breeders was somewhat improved over the previous year and resulted in increased production. The net result was that the studies indicated that the flights to the Central, Mississippi, and Atlantic Flyways in the fall of 1960 would be about the same as in 1959 but that the flights on the Pacific Flyway would be appreciably smaller.

The ruddy duck, which with the redhead and the canvasback had special protection last year, no longer has that protection and will be included as a part of the regular duck bag. It is a late nester and nesting conditions were favorable in the latter part of the breeding season on the prairies.

A summary by flyways follows:

Atlantic Flyway

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--may select

concurrent open seasons on ducks (except canvasback and redhead) and coots of 40 consecutive days with a daily bag limit of 4 and a possession limit of 8 for ducks, and a daily bag limit of 6 and a possession limit of 12 for coots; or 50 consecutive days with a daily bag limit of 3 and a possession limit of 6 for ducks, and a daily bag limit of 6 and a possession limit of 12 for coots; or a split season (of equal or unequal length) in either option with a ten percent penalty in the number of shooting days.

The daily bag and possession limits may not include more than 2 wood ducks and 1 hooded merganser.

In addition to the bag limits on other ducks, the daily bag limit on American and red-breasted mergansers is 5 with a possession limit of 10, singly or in the aggregate of both kinds.

The States may select concurrent open seasons on brant and geese (except snow geese) of 60 consecutive days with a daily bag limit of 8 and a possession limit of 8 for brant, and a daily bag limit of 2 and a possession limit of 4 for geese; or a split season (of equal or unequal length) with a ten percent penalty in the number of shooting days.

Mississippi Flyway

The States in this flyway--Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee, and Wisconsin--may select concurrent open seasons on ducks (except canvasback and redhead) and coots of 40 consecutive days with a daily bag limit of 4 and a possession limit of 8 for ducks, and a daily bag limit of 6 and a possession limit of 12 for coots; or 50 consecutive days with a daily bag limit of 3 and a possession limit of 6 for ducks, and a daily bag limit of 6 and a possession limit of 12 for coots; or a split season in either option (of equal or unequal length) with a 10 percent penalty in the number of shooting days.

The daily bag and possession limits may not include more than one wood duck and one hooded merganser.

In addition to the bag limits on other ducks, the daily bag limit on American and red-breasted mergansers is 5 with a possession limit of 10, singly or in the aggregate of both kinds.

These States may select 70 consecutive days for geese with a bag and possession limit of 5; or split seasons (of equal or unequal length) with a 10 percent penalty in the shooting days.

In all States, except Illinois and Wisconsin, the bag and possession limits may not include, in the alternative, more than: (a) 2 Canada geese or subspecies; (b) 2 white-fronted geese; or (c) one Canada goose or its subspecies and one white-fronted goose.

In Illinois and Wisconsin, the bag and possession limits may not include, in the alternative, more than: (a) one Canada goose or its subspecies and 1 white-fronted goose; or (b) 2 white-fronted geese.

When the combined kill in the counties of Alexander, Union, and Williamson in Illinois reach 14,000 the season will be closed by the Director of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife by notice through local informational media. When the combined kill in the counties of Dodge, Fond du Lac and Juneau in Wisconsin totals 7,000 birds the shooting shall be similarly stopped.

Central Flyway

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 (except canvasback and redhead) and coots of 50 consecutive days with a daily bag limit of four and a possession limit of eight for ducks and a daily bag limit of six and a possession limit of 12 for coots; or 60 consecutive days with a daily bag limit of three and a possession limit of six for ducks and a daily bag limit of six and a possession limit of 12 for coots; or a split season (of equal or unequal length) in either option with a 10 percent penalty in the number of shooting days.

The daily bag and possession limits may not include more than one wood duck and one hooded merganser. But there is no open season on wood ducks in New Mexico. In addition to the daily bag and possession limits on other ducks, the daily bag limit on American and red-breasted mergansers is five with a possession limit of 10, singly or in the aggregate of both kinds. In Texas, there will be no open season on black-bellied tree ducks.

These States may select 75 consecutive days for geese, or a split season (of equal or unequal length) with a 10 percent penalty in the number of shooting days. The daily bag and possession limits on geese will be five. However, throughout all the States of the flyway the bag and possession limits on geese in no event may include more than: (a) two Canada geese or subspecies; or (b) one white-fronted goose; or (c) one Canada goose or its subspecies and one white-fronted goose. In Moffat County, Colorado, the daily bag and possession limit may not include more than one Canada goose or its subspecies. No open season is prescribed on snow and blue geese in all of Wyoming and in Beaverhead, Gallatin, and Madison counties in Montana.

Pacific Flyway

The States in this flyway--Arizona, California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington--may select concurrent open seasons on ducks (except canvasback and redhead), coots, and gallinules of 90 consecutive days with a daily bag limit of four and a possession limit of eight ducks and a daily bag and possession limit of 25 coots and gallinules, singly or in the aggregate of both kinds, or an optional daily bag and possession limit of five ducks and a daily bag and possession limit of 25 coots and gallinules, singly or in the aggregate of both kinds; or 75 consecutive days with a daily bag limit of five and a possession limit of 10 ducks and a daily bag and possession limit of 25 coots and gallinules, singly or in the aggregate of both kinds, or an optional daily bag and possession limit of six ducks and a daily bag and possession limit of 25 coots and gallinules singly or in the aggregate of both kinds; or a split season (of equal or unequal length) in either option with a 10 percent penalty in the number of shooting days.

The daily bag and possession limits may not include more than one wood duck and one hooded merganser.

In addition to the limits on other ducks, the daily bag limit on American and red-breasted mergansers is five with a possession limit of 10, singly or in the aggregate of both kinds.

These States will have 94 consecutive days for geese (except Ross's geese) with a daily bag and possession limit of six, except in Washington. In Washington, the daily bag and possession limit is three geese. The daily bag and possession limits may not include more than three of the dark species.

In Mohave and Yuma Counties, Arizona; in California Fish and Game District No. 22 (as defined in the California Fish and Game Code); in the entire State of Utah; and in the Nevada Counties of Clark, Douglas, Storey, Ormsby, and that portion of Washoe County lying south of the Flanigan-Sutcliffe-Wadsworth road, the daily bag and possession limits may not include more than one Canada goose or its subspecies.

In Bear Lake, Caribou, and Bonneville Counties, Idaho, the daily bag and possession limits may not include more than two Canada geese or subspecies.

In Clark County, Nevada; in Yuma and Mohave Counties, Arizona; and in California Fish and Game District No. 22, the season on the Canada goose or its subspecies will close at sunset December 18, 1960. No open season on snow geese is prescribed in the Idaho Counties of Clark, Fremont, Madison, and Teton.

These States may select a season for brant of 60 consecutive days between November 20, 1960 and January 31, 1961. The daily bag and possession limits on brant are three.