

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FRAMEWORKS FOR EARLY MIGRATORY BIRD HUNTING SEASONS PROPOSED

Regulations setting the hunting frameworks for certain migratory birds for the 1977-78 hunting seasons have been proposed by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Lynn A. Greenwalt, Director, announced today.

Generally the frameworks are the same as last year except for a few minor changes which affect local areas or regions.

The proposal, published in the July 1, 1977, Federal Register, sets forth the species to be hunted, the daily bag and possession limits, the shooting hours, the season lengths, the earliest opening and latest closing season dates, and special closures, from which State conservation agency officials may select open season dates.

Interested persons have until July 14, 1977, to comment on the proposal. This is the fourth rulemaking notice dealing with the 1977-78 migratory bird hunting season issued by the Service. The short comment period for this proposed rulemaking is necessary in order to permit publication of final rulemaking on July 22, allow the States to develop their regulations within this framework, and publish final regulations for these categories by August 8.

Species included in this proposal are mourning doves, white-winged doves, band-tailed pigeons, rails, woodcock, snipe, and gallinules; teal in the Mississippi and Central Flyways during September; sea ducks in

(over)

certain defined areas of the Atlantic Flyway; and waterfowl, coots, snipe, and cranes in Alaska.

Shooting hours except where noted would be allowed from one-half hour before sunrise until sunset. Although no changes in shooting hours or season frameworks are proposed at this time, both matters are presently under review and evaluation by the Service. Environmental assessments are in preparation and will be completed and made available for public comment in the near future. Final decisions on these matters will be deferred until the evaluations and assessments have been completed. These assessments may result in final frameworks which differ somewhat from those currently being proposed.

The proposal includes a maximum 107-day falconry season in certain States. This option would be offered only to those States which designate and publish special falconry hunting regulations, and which agree to obtain data useful for evaluating the experimental extended seasons. It would afford falconers additional opportunity to participate in the sport but would not result in any substantial increase in overall migratory game bird harvest.

As in the past, hunting regulations this year are designed to remove or alleviate chances of conflict between seasons for migratory game birds and the protection of endangered species.

Additional details regarding the proposals are available from the Service's Washington or Regional Offices.

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