



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

For Release August 17, 1989

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HUNTING REGULATIONS PROPOSED FOR 1989-90 WATERFOWL SEASONS

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is proposing to continue restrictions on duck hunting this fall in the wake of surveys showing that duck numbers remain low. Proposed regulations for some goose hunting seasons are more liberal than last year, however.

For ducks, proposed bag limits, season lengths, hunting zones, and split seasons remain the same as last year. The Service is proposing to permit shooting hours to begin at the traditional one-half hour before sunrise this year. Last year, shooting hours began at sunrise.

Another change in the duck hunting regulations is a proposal to permit states in the Mississippi and Central Flyways to select a conservative point system as an alternative to conventional bag limits. The point system option was not offered last year. The proposed point system option for this year is at least as restrictive as the conventional bag limits.

In addition, the Service is proposing to permit hunting of canvasback ducks in the Pacific Flyway only, in accordance with an existing management plan, following an increase in the western canvasback population. A limit of one canvasback would be allowed. Canvasback seasons were closed nationwide last year; this year's proposal would continue the closed season in the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Central Flyways. The Service is also proposing to suspend the liberalized October wood duck seasons in the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyways. Only two states, North Carolina and Virginia, selected this season last year.

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Significant changes in goose regulations include an increase in the aggregate bag limit for Canada, white-fronted, and snow geese from five to seven birds in the Mississippi Flyway. Restrictions would include two whitefronts (same as last year) and three Canadas (two last year). In the Atlantic Flyway, the bag limit for snow geese is proposed for increase to 5 per day, 10 in possession (4 and 8 last year). In the Central Flyway, the midcontinent snow goose season length is proposed for increase from 86 to 100 days.

In addition, a 40-percent increase in the harvest objective for Mississippi Valley population Canada geese would be permitted through specific state regulations. This population, which winters in Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, and west Tennessee, may number close to 1 million birds in this year's fall flight.

In Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia (except Back Bay), the Service is proposing to shorten the Canada goose season from 70 to 60 days and to end the season no later than January 20 rather than January 31, as last year. This Canada goose population has declined for 3 consecutive years and experienced poor production this summer.

The proposed waterfowl hunting regulations were published in the August 16 Federal Register. Public comments are requested by August 28 and should be addressed to the Director (MBMO), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, MS-634 Arlington Square, Washington, DC 20240. After consideration of public comments, the Fish and Wildlife Service will publish final Federal waterfowl hunting frameworks from which states will select individual hunting regulations. State regulations may be more restrictive, but may not be more liberal, than the Federal frameworks.

A summary of proposed waterfowl hunting frameworks by Flyway is attached.



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PROPOSED WATERFOWL HUNTING REGULATIONS--SUMMARY

The following is a summary of proposed waterfowl hunting regulations for 1989-90 by Flyway. It does not reflect many local exceptions and variations in hunting regulations and should not be used by hunters in place of complete hunting regulations. Those needing more information about proposed regulations should consult the August 16 Federal Register.

ATLANTIC FLYWAY

Ducks--Thirty days between October 7 and January 7. Daily bag limit is three and may include no more than one hen mallard, two wood ducks, two redheads, one black duck, one mottled duck, one pintail, and one fulvous tree duck. Season is closed on canvasbacks and harlequin ducks. No bonus scaup or teal option.

Geese--For Canada geese in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia, a 70-day season between October 1 and January 20 with a daily bag limit of three and possession limit of six; bag and possession limits are two and four respectively in Erie, Mercer, Butler, and Crawford counties in Pennsylvania. In Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia, a 60-day season between October 31 and January 20, with two geese daily and four in possession. Ninety-day seasons offered in some areas. Special resident Canada goose seasons offered in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Georgia. Canada goose season is closed in Florida. For snow geese, a 90-day season between October 1 and January 31 with daily bag and possession limits of 5 and 10 is proposed. For Atlantic brant, a 50-day season between October 1 and January 20 with bag and possession limits of two and four is proposed.

Swans--An experimental 90-day season for tundra swans is proposed in New Jersey, Virginia, and North Carolina. New Jersey may issue 200 permits, Virginia 600, and North Carolina 6,000, with each permittee authorized to take one swan and requirements for state monitoring of harvest and hunter participation.

FWS-F-062

For further information, contact:

Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Dept. of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240 202-343-5634

Please refer to FWS-F-062 when making inquiries.

MISSISSIPPI FLYWAY

Ducks--A 30-day season between October 7 and January 7. Daily bag limit of three with no more than two mallards (only one hen), one black duck, one pintail, two wood ducks, and one redhead. Alternatively, a point system as follows: 100 points--hen mallard, pintail, black duck, redhead, and hooded merganser; 50 points--drake mallard and wood duck; 35 points--all other ducks and mergansers. Canvasback season closed.

Geese--Between September 30 and January 21 (January 31 in Kentucky, Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama), a 70-day season for Canada and white-fronted geese and 80 days for snow (including blue) geese. Daily bag limit is seven, to include no more than three Canada and two white-fronted geese. Many exceptions.

CENTRAL FLYWAY

Ducks--From October 7 through January 7, a 39-day season in the Low Plains Unit and a 51-day season in the High Plains Unit (roughly west of the 100th meridian). Daily bag limit is three, to include no more than two mallards (only one hen), one mottled duck, one pintail, one redhead, one hooded merganser, and two wood ducks. Alternatively, a point system as follows: 100 points--hen mallard, pintail, redhead, hooded merganser, mottled duck; 50 points--drake mallard, wood duck; 35 points--all other ducks and mergansers. Canvasback season closed.

Geese--From September 30 through January 21 for dark geese (Canada and white-fronted geese); from September 30 through February 14 (February 28 in New Mexico) for light geese (all others). Numerous state and local variations in season lengths and bag limits.

Tundra swans--A tundra swan season is proposed for Montana (500 permits); North Dakota (1,000 permits); and South Dakota (500 permits).

PACIFIC FLYWAY

Ducks--A 59-day season (with exceptions) between October 7 and January 7. Bag limit is four, to include no more than three mallards (only one hen), one pintail, one canvasback, and either two redheads or one canvasback and one redhead in combination.

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Geese and Brant--A 93-day season between September 30 and January 21, with daily bag and possession limit of six, with a daily bag limit of three light geese (snow, including blue, and Ross' geese) and three dark geese (all others). In Washington and Idaho, the daily bag and possession limits are three and six geese, respectively. For brant, a 16-consecutive-day season in Washington and Oregon and 30 consecutive days in California, with daily bag and possession limits of two and four. Season closed on Aleutian Canada geese. Season closed on cackling Canada geese in California, Oregon, and Washington. Closures on Canada and dark geese in some regions of California. Many local variations in seasons and bag limits.

Tundra swans--A 93-day season between September 30 and January 21 in Utah (2,500 permits); Nevada (650 permits); and Montana (500 permits).

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FACTS ABOUT THE WHOOPING CRANE

The whooping crane is North America's tallest--and one of its most endangered--birds. A typical adult stands 4 to 5 feet tall with white plumage and black wing tips. The birds are renowned for their graceful flight and ritualistic courting dances.

Since the 1940's, the United States and Canada have worked cooperatively to recover whooping crane populations. In 1985, a memorandum of understanding was signed identifying the joint stewardship role of the two nations.

Record Lows Recorded in 1940's

Historically, migratory whooping cranes generally nested from Iowa and Illinois north into Canada. But as suitable nesting habitat began to shrink due to increased development and cultivation, the population began to decline. The last U.S. nest was seen in 1889.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1916 prohibited crane hunting which, along with specimen collection, was contributing to the species' decline.

In 1937, the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge on the Texas Gulf

FWS- F-063

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Coast was established to protect the wintering grounds of the only remaining wild flock of migrating whooping cranes.

In 1941, the total whooping crane population reached a low of 21 birds. Six birds were remnants of a non-migratory flock located in Louisiana, and 15 were in the remnant flock which migrates 2,600 miles between Canada and Texas.

In 1954, the nesting grounds for this flock were discovered by a helicopter pilot while flying over Canada's Wood Buffalo National Park. The park had been established in the Northwest Territories in 1922 to protect the wood buffalo.

Listed as Endangered, Captive Flock Established

In 1969, the whooping crane was one of the first species listed as endangered following passage of the Endangered Species Act. A captive breeding flock of whooping cranes was started in 1967 at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Maryland, through a cooperative agreement between the United States and Canada. The flock was established using eggs taken from the nesting grounds at Canada's Wood Buffalo National Park. No loss of wild cranes results from taking the second egg of a clutch for artificial incubation. This is because normally only one chick survives to fledging age.

The Patuxent flock is the only captive flock of whooping cranes in the world. Currently consisting of 54 birds, the flock will be divided in November 1989 to protect the population from an epidemic or other disaster. The International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wisconsin, will manage the second captive flock to be made up of 24 birds (22 from Patuxent Wildlife Research Center and 2 already at ICF).

Grays Lake Experimental Flock

In 1975, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Canadian Wildlife Service, and other cooperating agencies began another effort to increase whooping crane numbers. It involved establishment of an experimental wild population of whooping cranes at the Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Idaho. Using sandhill cranes as foster parents, researchers began placing whooping crane eggs in sandhill nests. The intent was to establish a wild flock with the same migration route as the sandhill cranes, which migrate from Idaho to New Mexico, a much shorter distance and less hazardous than the 2,600-mile route of the remnant wild flock.

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Although 85 chicks have fledged, only 13 adults (12 of the 85 and 1 from Patuxent) survive and no breeding has occurred. A decision about the future of the project will be made in the fall of 1989.

Plans are also being considered to establish a non-migratory wild flock of whooping cranes in the Southeastern United States. Cranes from the captive flocks would be used for this purpose.

Future Looks Brighter

As of August 1989, well over 200 whooping cranes are known to exist. The Wood Buffalo/Aransas flock numbers approximately 140 adults, plus perhaps 15-20 young-of-the-year. The Grays Lake flock consists of 13 birds, and Patuxent's captive flock currently numbers 54. In addition, there is one whooping crane at the San Antonio Zoo, and two are housed at the International Crane Foundation's facilities in Baraboo, Wisconsin. As whooping crane populations reach new highs this year, the future of this species--rescued from the brink of extinction--grows brighter and assures its continued existence as part of America's wildlife heritage.

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