



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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DOVE CENSUS, FIRST STEP IN FORMING REGULATIONS, IN PROGRESS

Operations are now under way to determine the production and status of the mourning dove as a basis for next fall's hunting regulations, the Department of the Interior reports.

Between the period of May 20 and June 10, the Department's Fish and Wildlife Service personnel and State cooperators are working more than 700 census routes determining the trend of dove population. The data so gathered will be sent to the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife in Washington.

The same routes are worked each year, the Fish and Wildlife Service said. In many instances, the same personnel cover the same routes several years in succession.

The second phase of the task of forming the dove regulations will come on June 26. On that date, the Service's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife will meet with interested organizations to discuss the results of the annual call count and to evaluate the status of both the mourning and the white-winged dove. Regional representatives of game and fish commissioners associations and private conservation associations have been invited to attend. The meeting will give individuals and organizations interested in dove management an opportunity to share information on the status of the mourning and white-winged doves. It will also give the Bureau a chance to hear suggestions which will be helpful in developing the Bureau's recommendations for the 1961-1962 dove regulations.

Research completed about two years ago indicated that there are three mourning dove production-harvest units in the United States. That is, there are three areas which are relatively independent of each other as far as the production and harvesting of the doves are concerned. This means that each area can be managed as a unit independent from the others and shooting days, hours, and bag limits in one area need not necessarily apply to the others. Last year was the first time dove hunting regulations were based upon production-harvest units.

Previously management was on a national basis. The units generally are east of the Mississippi River, from the River to the Rocky Mountains, and west of the Rockies to the Pacific coast.

During July, outside hunting dates and bag limits for doves in each of the three units will be established by the Department. States within each unit will then select hunting seasons and bag limits within that framework.

Dove hunting is a major sport in the southeastern States. It is also a major sport in Texas and southern California. Last year, eighteen States and the District of Columbia did not allow mourning dove shooting. These were in the northern part of the country from Montana, and Wyoming eastward, including North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine.

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