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WATERFOWL HUNTING SEASONS TO BE CURTAILED

Unfavorable weather and habitat conditions have reduced the production of wild ducks on their important northern breeding areas this year to such an extent that restrictive measures are necessary to preserve an adequate breeding stock for the future, the Department of the Interior said today in releasing the framework for State selections of 1959-60 seasons for hunting waterfowl.

The hunting rules which will be in effect for the coming season are the most restrictive since 1947 when the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyways each had 30 days and the Central and Pacific 35 days. Restrictions were necessary in that season: "To stem the noticeable decrease in waterfowl which had occurred during the past three years."

During the days of the "duck depression" brought on by the drought of the mid-thirties, the season nationwide was 30 days in 1936, 1937, and 1938. Better breeding ground conditions in 1939 resulted in the lengthening of the season in 1939 to 45 days and to 60 days in 1940 and 1941. By 1944 and 1945, the season was 80 days. In 1946, the "most drastic hunting rules since 1938" were issued, with hunting cut back to 45 days.

"Because of the capriciousness of Nature in withholding water which is so vitally important to duck nesting in the pothole country of the United States and the plains in central Canada, the reproductive success of waterfowl this year has been at a very low level. As a result, American duck hunters must face a drastic curtailment in seasons, shooting hours, and bag and possession limits during the 1959-60 season," said Daniel H. Janzen, Director, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Fish and Wildlife Service.

"Our objective is to cut the duck kill by one third to one-half in all flyways except the Pacific. In that flyway, because of better production than last year in Alaska, Montana, and Wyoming, reducing somewhat there the impact of failure of the important western prairie waterfowl crop, the decline in the fall flight of ducks this year is expected to be less drastic. Even though certain restrictions are essential, we have attempted to spread the shooting so that some hunting can be provided for all hunters across the country."

The "outside dates" within which the States may select specific seasons for hunting waterfowl and coots will be Wednesday, October 7, 1959, through Friday, January 8, 1960. Last year the framework extended from October 1, 1958, through January 15, 1959.

The reduction in shooting days during 1959-60 by flyways for ducks and coots, compared to last year, can amount to 20 days in the Atlantic Flyway, 30 in the Mississippi, and 40 in the Central, depending upon what option is exercised.

In 1958 the only cutback from 1957 was 10 days to 60 days, in the Atlantic Flyway for waterfowl and coots; the Mississippi continued to have a 70-day season; the Central was offered an option of extending its 75-day season by 15 days with a reduction of one bird in the daily bag and 2 in possession; and the Pacific Flyway remained at 95 days except that the brant season was cut to 70 days, and a 105-day season was permitted on coots and gallinules.

In 1958 the shooting hours remained the same as in 1957, one-half hour before sunrise to sunset in all flyways except in the Mississippi where variations occurred from State to State depending on whether the season on wood ducks was closed.

This year the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Central Flyways also are being offered an optional plan for selection of seasons and bag limits.

In addition, the privilege of selecting split seasons is again being offered to the States, subject to the customary 10 percent penalty in shooting hours. Split seasons may again be divided into unequal lengths.

Because goose production is more favorable, there is no restriction for these birds over last year. Therefore, longer shooting seasons for geese than for ducks are permitted in the three eastern flyways. It will be permissible to open the goose season in a State at a different time than the duck season.

Last season's shooting hours of one-half hour before sunrise to sunset have been changed this year as follows: On the first day of either the straight or split seasons for ducks and coots, shooting shall begin at 12 o'clock noon. The same hours apply to geese, brant and Wilson's snipe only when such seasons open concurrently with the duck season. On any other starting day for the hunting of geese, brant, and Wilson's snipe, shooting hours will begin at sunrise and end at sunset. On all other shooting days for ducks, coot, geese, brant, and Wilson's snipe, the hours will be from sunrise to sunset.

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

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 and coots of 40 consecutive days with a bag and possession limit of 4 and 8 for ducks and 4 and 8 for coots, or 50 consecutive days with a bag and possession limit of 3 and 6 for ducks and 3 and 6 for coots. Or, they may select a split season in either option (of unequal length if desired) with a 10 percent penalty in the number of shooting days. Only 1 canvasback, or 1 redhead, or 1 ruddy duck may be included in the bag or in possession. (One of these three species may not be included in a subsequent bag as long as the hunter has one of them in possession.)

The daily bag limit on ducks may include 2 wood ducks and the possession limit may include 2 of this species.

The daily bag and possession limit on ducks may include 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.

For geese except snow geese, the States may select a season of 60 consecutive days with a bag and possession limit of 2 and 4. The split season option, with the 10 percent penalty in shooting days, also applies for geese.

The brant season will extend for 60 consecutive days, with a bag and possession limit of 6 and 6, or a split season (of unequal length if desired) with the 10 percent penalty in shooting days.

In the States of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, and Rhode Island, the season for taking scoters, eiders, and old-squaw ducks beyond outer-harbor lines will be from October 1 through January 8. In areas other than those beyond outer-harbor lines, in these States and in all other State in the Atlantic Flyway, scoters, eiders, and old-squaw ducks may be taken only during the open season for other ducks. The daily bag and possession limits, singly or in aggregate of scoters, eiders, or old-squaw ducks, is 7 and 14, respectively.

All States in the Atlantic Flyway will be permitted to select a snipe season of 30 consecutive days between the earliest and latest open dates for ducks, with bag and possession limit of 8 and 8.

Mississippi Flyway

All 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 and coots of 40 consecutive days with a bag and possession limit of 4 and 8 for ducks and 4 and 8 for coots, or 50 consecutive days with a bag and possession limit of 3 and 6 for ducks and 3 and 6 for coots. Or, they may select a split season in either option (of unequal length if desired) with a 10 percent penalty in the number of shooting days. Bag and possession limit may include only 1 canvasback, or 1 redhead, or 1 ruddy duck. (As long as a hunter has one of these three species in possession, he may not include one in a subsequent bag.)

The daily bag limit and possession limit on ducks may include 1 wood duck 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 possession limit of 10, singly or in the aggregate of both kinds.

States in this flyway may select 70 consecutive days for geese with a bag and possession limit of 5 and 5. Split seasons are optional. The bag and possession limits may not include, in the alternative, more than (a) 2 Canada geese or its subspecies, (b) 2 white-fronted geese, or (c) 1 Canada goose or its subspecies and 1 white-fronted goose.

All States will be permitted to select a snipe season of 30 consecutive days between the earliest and latest open dates for ducks with bag and possession limit of 8 and 8.

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 and coots of 50 consecutive days with a bag and possession limit of 4 and 8 for ducks and 4 and 8 for coots, or 60 consecutive days with a bag and possession limit of 3 and 6 for ducks and 3 and 6 for coots. Or, they may select a split season in either option (of unequal length if desired) with a 10 percent penalty in the number of shooting days. Bag and possession limit may include only 1 canvasback, or 1 redhead, or 1 ruddy duck. (As long as a hunter has one of three species in possession, he may not include one in a subsequent bag.)

The daily bag and possession limits for ducks may include 1 wood duck and 1 hooded merganser. There will be 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 5, possession limit 10, singly or in the aggregate of both kinds. In Texas there will be a closed season on black-bellied tree ducks.

For geese, the season in the Central Flyway will be 75 days on all species, or the States may select a split season (of unequal length if desired) with a 10 percent penalty in the number of shooting days.

The daily bag and possession limit on geese shall be 5: Provided, That throughout all the States of the Flyway the bag and possession limit on geese in no event may include more than (a) 1 white-fronted goose, or (b) 2 Canada geese or its subspecies, or (c) 1 Canada goose and 1 white-fronted goose. In Wyoming the bag limit will be 1 Canada goose, with the exception of Goshen County which will have a bag limit of 2 Canada geese or 1 Canada goose and 1 white-fronted goose. There will be a closed season on Canada geese, or subspecies thereof, in Moffat County, Colorado. There will be a closed season on snow and blue geese in all of Wyoming, and in Beaverhead, Gallatin, and Madison Counties in Montana.

All States in the Central Flyway will be permitted to select a snipe season of 30 consecutive days between the earliest and latest open dates for ducks with bag and possession limit of 8 and 8.

Pacific Flyway

The States in this flyway--Arizona, California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington--will have an open season on ducks, geese (except Ross's geese), coots, and gallinules not to exceed 94 days between October 7, 1959, and January 8, 1960, inclusive.

These States also are afforded the option of selecting a single bag and possession limit of 6 ducks or they may select a daily bag limit of 5 ducks and a possession limit of 10. In either case the bag and possession limit may include only 2 canvasbacks, or 2 redhead, or 2 ruddy ducks, or 2 of these species in the aggregate.

The daily bag and possession limits on ducks may include 1 wood duck and 1 hooded merganser.

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

The daily bag and possession limits for coots and gallinules (singly or in the aggregate) is 25.

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

To afford continued protection to the Great Basin Canada geese, the following restrictions will apply: In Bear Lake, Caribou, and Bonneville Counties, Idaho; in Clark County, Nevada; in Mohave and Yuma Counties, Arizona; in California Fish and Game District No. 22 (as defined in the California Fish and Game Code); and in

the entire State of Utah, the daily bag and possession limit may include 1 Canada goose or its subspecies. In Clark County, Nevada; in Yuma and Mohave Counties, Arizona; and in California Fish and Game District No. 22, the season shall close at sunset on December 13, 1959. In Clark, Fremont, Madison, and Teton Counties in Idaho, the season on snow geese will be closed.

Because of the continuing decline in the number of brant in the Pacific Flyway, a season of 60 consecutive days may be selected between October 7, 1959, and January 8, 1960. The bag and possession limit will be 3 and 3.

All States in the Pacific Flyway will be permitted to select a snipe season of 30 consecutive days between the earliest and latest open dates for ducks, with bag and possession limit of 8 and 8.

The specific season dates, as selected by the various States, will be announced later this month.

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