

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release August 1, 1974

Kenney 202/343-5634

SURVEYS PREDICT GOOD DOVE AND WOODCOCK NUMBERS

Seasons, bag limits, and shooting hours will be about the same as last year for hunting mourning doves, band-tailed pigeons, woodcock, snipe, rails, and gallinules according to Lynn A. Greenwalt, Director of Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The hunting recommendations were submitted to the Director by the Shore and Upland Migratory Game Bird Committee, a conference of representatives from various technical committees and councils, state game departments, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and several national wildlife conservation organizations. The Committee met in Washington, D.C., on June 25.

Breeding populations of mourning doves have been monitored by state and Federal wildlife agency personnel since 1953. This spring, population levels were below average in the East, but substantially above average in the West. Similar surveys for woodcock show the 1974 breeding population levels to approximate the long-term average. Greater numbers of woodcock, however, were found west of the Appalachians than to the east of this range.

Some serious problems, however, have developed in recent years in key white-winged dove nesting areas of south Texas where a population explosion of grackles has occurred. The large black birds prey heavily on the eggs of nesting doves. Populations of common (Wilson's) snipe, band-tailed pigeons, rails, and gallinules are predicted to be about the same as last year.

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The following limitations, approved by the Secretary, form a framework within which each state game department sets its own hunting regulations:

Mourning dove hunting in the states east of the Mississippi River, including all of Louisiana, will be on a half-day basis with the shooting hours beginning at noon and ending at sunset. The daily bag limit will be 12, and the possession limit 24 doves. West of the Mississippi, except for Texas, full days will be allowed but the bag limit will be 10 and the possession limit 20 birds.

Daily bag limits for band-tailed pigeons will be 5 in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah, and 8 in California, Oregon, and Washington.

King and clapper rail daily bag limits were set at 10, singly or in the aggregate, in the mid-Atlantic States, and 15 in the south-Atlantic and Gulf Coast States. Bag limits for sora and Virginia rails were set at 25 birds daily, singly or in the aggregate, except that no rail season was prescribed in the Pacific Flyway.

Daily bag limits of woodcock were set at 5 with a possession limit of 10.

Hunters of common (Wilson's) snipe will have a daily bag limit of 8 and a possession limit of 16 birds throughout the country. States west of the Rockies must run their snipe season concurrently with the waterfowl hunting season.

For gallinules, a daily bag limit of 15 has been set with a possession limit of 30.

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