



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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STATES AND FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE SET EARLY HUNTING REGULATIONS FOR CERTAIN MIGRATORY BIRDS

Early season migratory bird hunting regulations for 1983-1984 have now become final with publication in the Federal Register by the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Federal frameworks and more specific selections by State wildlife agencies of dates and bag limits. Early seasons are those that open before October 1 for certain migratory birds.

Selection by the States of seasons, times, and limits was published in the August 26 Federal Register and was made from within broader Federal frameworks that were published on August 3. The Federal frameworks set outer limits for dates and times when hunting may begin and designate hunting areas and bag and possession limits. State selections may be more restrictive.

The "early season" regulations cover mourning doves, white-winged doves, band-tailed pigeons, rails, woodcock, common snipe, gallinules, sandhill cranes, and ducks and Canada geese in various parts of the country where hunting may begin in September. Teal, for instance, may be hunted in portions of the Mississippi and Central Flyways during special September sessions; sea ducks in designated areas of the Atlantic Flyway; and all ducks during limited experimental September seasons in Florida, Iowa, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Also included are falconry seasons in certain States where Federal falconry standards are met.

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Regulation changes in the 1983 - 1984 season for this group of birds include a modification of the mourning dove season framework to provide an option for a 60-day season with a daily bag limit of 15 birds as an alternative to a 70-day season with a daily limit of 12 birds.

In 1982, the opening of woodcock season in the eastern region was delayed from September 1 to October 5. This was done in response to an indicated 20 percent decline from 1981 in the eastern region breeding woodcock population due to a severe April blizzard. The woodcock breeding population index showed a partial recovery this year and the restriction is being somewhat relaxed by changing the opening from October 5 to October 1.

Michigan is being provided an opportunity to harvest Canada geese migrating through 10 western counties in the Upper Peninsula during late September. A season opening on September 26 will provide more equitable opportunity to hunt these geese.

Numerous changes have been made in the sandhill crane frameworks for portions of the Central Flyway in terms of hunting areas, season frameworks, and season lengths. These extensions are based on increased crane numbers and improved information about crane biology, migration, and habitat use. The seasons implement some of the strategies of the Mid-Continent Sandhill Crane Management Plan.

Two experimental seasons are continued for sandhill cranes in southwestern New Mexico, and sandhill cranes and Canada geese in portions of Lincoln County, Wyoming. The latter is to reduce local populations and alleviate crop depredations.

Additional information on the Federal early hunting season frameworks is available from the Service's Office of Migratory Bird Management in Washington, D.C. (202/254-3207) and the agency's regional offices. Because States may choose to make further restrictions than the limits prescribed in the Federal frameworks, hunters are advised to check their State regulations carefully.