



State of Illinois
Illinois Department of Natural Resources



Digest of Waterfowl Hunting Regulations 2011-2012

**Illinois
Best of Show
National First Place Winner
2011 Federal Junior
Duck Stamp
Contest**



Ring-necked Ducks

by Abraham Hunter



Illinois
Department of
Natural
Resources

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NEW REGULATIONS FOR 2011-2012

New Regulations are shaded.

New Waterfowl Zones4-5, 7-9, 11-13

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Thank you for reviewing the 2011-2012 edition of the *Digest of Waterfowl Hunting Regulations* – an important resource for every waterfowl hunter – with information on season dates, hunting hours, bag limits, reporting requirements and other facts.

Here in Illinois, our goals in developing waterfowl regulations and setting season dates are to maximize hunter satisfaction by maximizing days afield and waterfowl numbers available to hunters – and establishing seasons that help retain and recruit waterfowl hunters. A recent decision by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) provides us with a new way to achieve those goals.

The USFWS has approved giving states more flexibility in setting duck hunting zones for 2011-2015, which for Illinois will mean four zones instead of the three-zone configuration we have used for many years. In a state that stretches 430 miles from north to south, setting season dates in four zones should help us increase hunting opportunity and hunter satisfaction in Illinois.

Adding a fourth zone is a huge win for Illinois waterfowl hunters. Thanks to all of the hunters who attended meetings, sent letters or emails, and made phone calls in support of a fourth zone. Thanks to Governor Pat Quinn who pressed our case with federal officials. And thanks to our state waterfowl professionals and their colleagues in other states and Flyway Councils, all of whom made a compelling case for allowing more flexibility in setting duck zones and splits.

Based on the new four-zone alignment, our 2011-2012 Illinois season dates have been set following a thorough review of results of aerial waterfowl surveys, weather data, duck harvest data, and the results of the annual survey of hunter preferences.

Thanks again for your support of our Illinois hunting heritage and IDNR programs – and good luck during the 2011-2012 Illinois waterfowl season.

Marc Miller
Director
Illinois Department of Natural Resources

HARVEST INFORMATION PROGRAM

Harvest Information Program (HIP) – Required. This important program is designed to produce more accurate federal harvest estimates which will ultimately improve our ability to maximize hunting opportunity without detriment to the waterfowl resource. You can help preserve your sport by registering with HIP at the license vendor when you purchase your hunting license and state duck stamp. Remember, registration is **MANDATORY**, not optional.

OVERVIEW AND OUTLOOK FOR 2011

Dear Illinois Waterfowl Hunter,

Many Illinois duck hunters experienced a below average hunting season last year. Locally, some hunters had good hunting but weather caused problems for others. For the fourth consecutive year, floodwaters negatively impacted waterfowl habitat in the Illinois River valley and other areas of the state. June 2010 was the second wettest on record. Summer flooding reduced available food in many other areas of Illinois as well. The North Zone lost about 2 weeks of duck hunting opportunity to early freeze up while portions of the Central Zone lost a month or more to early ice conditions. Areas at the north end of the South Zone froze up after only 10 days into the season causing some of the largest public duck hunting areas in the state to lose up to 50 days of duck hunting opportunity. In general duck migration was late and when it did occur, freeze up came shortly thereafter in the Central and South zones. Well that's enough about last year. Let's take a look at what is in store for us this fall.

You will find a great deal of information about our upcoming waterfowl seasons in the paragraphs below. Conditions on the duck breeding grounds were excellent this year. There were 8.1 million ponds in prairie Canada and northern U.S. breeding areas. This was 22% more than last year and 62% above the long term average of 5.0 million ponds. This was the second highest number of ponds ever recorded. This is the 15th year in a row we have been offered a liberal 60-day duck season. We anticipate an excellent fall duck flight due to unprecedented continuing good water levels over a large portion of the breeding grounds. MVP Canada goose breeding numbers are down from last year due to poor production during the previous two springs. Breeding conditions were better than last year and production is expected to be average. However, giant Canada geese are doing well in our flyway and should provide good hunting.

In closing, we encourage each of you to take a new young hunter along with you this season. Remember, hunters who come to appreciate and value wildlife at an early age are the foundation upon which the future of wildlife will be built.

We hope you find the information in this digest useful and we wish you a safe and memorable 2011-2012 waterfowl season!

Sincerely,



John Buhnerkempe
Chief, Division of Wildlife Resources



Ray Marshall
State Waterfowl Biologist

DUCKS

Duck Populations – Duck Populations – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) annual survey of key nesting areas indicated a record 46 million breeding ducks, 11% higher than last year and 35% above the 1955-2010 long-term average. This is the highest breeding population since 1955! Excellent water levels on the breeding grounds contributed to this record population.

Mallards – The mid-continent mallard fall flight forecast (minus Alaska mallards) is 11.9 million, which is 1.6 million more than last year. The fall flight index predicts two million young mallards will fly south this year compared to 1.7 million last year. Young mallards are generally twice as vulnerable to hunting as adults. This should be the best fall flight in 10 years.

Pintails – The northern pintail population of 4.4 million was 26% higher than last year. Pintails have finally reached their long-term average and this was the highest breeding population since 1980! The daily bag limit will remain at 2.

Canvasbacks and Redheads – The canvasback population was slightly higher than last year at 700,000 and was 21% above the long-term average. The redhead breeding population of 1.4 million was a record; the highest since 1955.

Scaup – Scaup population estimates of 4.3 million were similar to last year but are 15% below the long-term average. This was the highest population since 1999.

Teal – The green-winged teal breeding population is 2.9 million which is 47% above the long-term average and is the 5th highest recorded since estimates began in 1955. Blue-winged teal breeding populations were at an all time record of 8.9 million which is 41% higher than last year and 91% above the long-term average. The old record of 7.4 million was set in 2000.

2010 Duck Harvest – The preliminary state duck harvest estimate of 354,859 was 11% lower than in 2009 (399,555) and was 20% lower than the previous 5-year average. The North Zone harvested an estimated 62,241 ducks while the Central took 183,849 and the South took 103,859. Most of the decline in harvest occurred in the South Zone where harvest was 28% lower than 2009. This was likely due to the very early freeze up that occurred. Wood duck harvest was 39,611 which was similar to 2009.

2011 Duck Hunting Outlook – The wetland habitat conditions for breeding waterfowl in the U.S. and Canada is the second best in history. The estimate of May ponds for Prairie Canada was 4.9 million compared to 3.7 million last year. This was 31% better than last year and 43% above the long-term average. Ponds in the U.S. were at 3.2 million which was similar to last year and 102% above the long-term average. There should be a record number of ducks in the fall flight this year. Abundant moisture and delayed farming operations benefitted early nesting ducks and the extremely high breeding populations combined with some of the best habitat conditions on record should contribute to an excellent year of reproduction and a great fall flight of ducks. Although continental duck populations are in good shape, hunters should be aware that local food, water and weather can influence individual success more than the total number of ducks coming down the flyway. Illinois has had an unusually wet spring and summer again. Many areas along the Illinois River and reservoirs such as Lake Shelbyville, Carlyle Lake, and Rend Lake may not get the high water off of shallow areas in time for crops or moist-soil plants to produce good food conditions for ducks. If the weather cooperates and allows seed production for the rest of the summer and early fall, these areas may be in better shape. At the time of this printing it appears that we are in much better shape than last year but still below average. But hunters need to watch local flooding conditions to get an idea of where food may or may not be plentiful enough to attract ducks this fall.

2011 Duck Season Timing and Zone Lines – When deciding on season dates we examine the following factors. Each year we survey approximately 5,000 waterfowl hunters (around 10% of all our hunters) to gather information about the previous season's duck harvest and get hunters opinions on a variety of factors regarding season timing, bag limits, etc. In addition, we conduct a variety of aerial duck surveys on a weekly or bi-weekly basis over major duck concentration areas throughout the state. This information is tabulated to determine which 60-day period in each zone holds the most ducks with the assumption that hunters would want their season open during the time when the most ducks are available to hunt. We also use climatic information to determine the average date that most water bodies in each zone will freeze up each fall/winter to determine when it is likely that hunting opportunity will be mostly eliminated for some hunters. We also look at harvest data to determine when and where ducks have been taken during previous seasons.

Because 2011 is the year when states are allowed to change duck zone lines for the next 5 years the DNR also conducted 5 public open houses in June of 2011 where almost 500 hunters attended. These open houses were conducted to gather more localized information from hunters regarding proposed duck season dates and zone lines for the next 5 years. We also provided an internet address called DNR.ducktalk where hunters could send in their opinions regarding season dates and zone lines. Over 336 comments were received from DNR.ducktalk.

Once we determine which time periods will generally maximize duck numbers via the aerial duck survey data, the most important factor used to set duck season dates is hunter preference. No matter what dates are selected, some hunters will not be satisfied, but as long as dates are used that coincide with peak duck migration, most hunters should get reasonable opportunities within a 60-day season. Hunters hunt in a variety of habitats ranging from very shallow water that freezes up early to cooling lakes and large rivers that may never freeze or in fields that might attract mallards all winter in some areas. Thus, hunter preference varies not only by geography (northern hunters generally prefer earlier seasons than southern hunters) but also largely by the habitats being hunted.

Preliminary results of the 2010 Illinois Waterfowl Hunter Survey (IWHS) indicated that 25% of North Zone hunters preferred an opening date of Oct. 15 while 15% preferred Oct. 22, 15% preferred Oct. 29 and 13% preferred Oct. 8.

An analysis of aerial surveys conducted annually on the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers since 1948 indicated that this portion of the Central Zone would hold similar numbers of ducks for the 60 days after a starting date that is set any time between Oct. 16 and Nov. 6. Preliminary results from the 2010 IWHS indicated that 27% of Central Zone duck hunters prefer an opening date of Oct. 29 while 21% preferred Oct. 22. Over 43% of Central Zone duck hunters prefer an opening date of Oct. 22 or earlier while 31% want an opening date of Nov. 5 or later. A number of waterfowl hunters that hunt public shallow water areas near the Mississippi River wanted an Oct. 22 opener. Many public waterfowl hunting areas in the Central Zone near the Illinois River also freeze up so early that an Oct. 29th opener may result in lost opportunity on several of these in late December. The earlier opener will also offer a lot more opportunities to hunt early migrants such as wood ducks and teal.

The analysis of aerial duck survey data for the main duck concentration areas in the new **South-Central Zone** (Carlyle Lake, Keck's Marsh and Rend Lake combined) indicated that a season that starts any time between Oct. 26 and Nov. 18 and runs for the next 60 days would result in essentially the same number of duck use days for the new **South-Central Zone**. At the June public waterfowl open houses 85 hunters who hunt in this area preferred the dates proposed for the new **South-Central Zone** (Nov. 12 opener) while only 7 preferred earlier dates and 8 wanted later dates.

The analysis of aerial duck survey data for the major duck concentration areas in the **new South Zone** (Crab Orchard Lake, Cache River, Union County Refuge and Horseshoe Lake combined) indicated that a season that starts any time between Nov. 11 and Dec. 4 and runs for the next 60 days would result in essentially the same number of duck use days for the South Zone. At the June public waterfowl open houses 33 hunters who hunt in this area preferred the proposed dates for the South Zone while 10 preferred **South-Central** dates. A Thanksgiving opener is the latest possible dates allowed by federal rules for 2013 and 2014. We decided to use Thanksgiving as the opener for the next 5 years in the South Zone. This will be better for public areas such as Union County, Horseshoe Lake and Cache River that might freeze up in late January. During the past couple of years there was considerable freeze up resulting in lost hunting opportunity in mid- to late-January in these areas. In addition, the earlier opener will offer more opportunities to hunt early migrants such as wood ducks and teal.

CANADA GEESE

2011 Spring Survey Results – Spring aerial surveys found 269,840 breeding Mississippi Valley Population (MVP) Canada geese, a decrease of almost 70,000 from 2010. This was about 25% below average. There were only 300,208 total geese which are almost 60,000 less than last year. The reduced total flock size is not surprising considering the poor productivity in 2009 and 2010. An average spring in 2011 resulted in average snowmelt and ice breakup during breeding season over most of Hudson Bay Lowlands in Ontario. Biologists found an average breeding effort and much lower levels of nest depredation than in the previous two years. Hunting for MVP geese should be better than last year due to improved production of young geese.

The 2011 giant Canada goose survey in Illinois produced a population estimate of 104,900 (compared to 107,850 in 2010 and 133,550 in 2009). The 2011 estimate for Mississippi Flyway Giant Population (MFGP) Canada geese was a record 1.63 million birds and this estimate is about 2% higher than the 2010 estimate.

2010 Canada Goose Harvest – The preliminary state Canada goose harvest estimate during the regular season of 99,422 was much lower than the previous 3 years which averaged 142,300. North Zone hunters took 29,472 Canada geese compared to 48,306 in the Central Zone and 19,433 in the South Zone. The Central Zone experienced the largest decline in harvest from 2009 with over 25,000 fewer birds taken.

Based on band returns, MVP Canada geese comprise about 52 percent of the Illinois harvest during the regular waterfowl season. Giant Canada geese comprise about 44 percent (21 percent from Illinois, with the remainder from other Mississippi Flyway states and provinces, primarily Wisconsin [9%] and Minnesota [8%]). Eastern Prairie Population Canada Geese (EPP) which nests in northern Manitoba comprise 4 percent of Illinois' goose harvest and cackling geese comprise less than one percent.

During the September season hunters took an estimated 17,115 Canada geese compared to 16,212 in 2009. Harvest by zone in September was 7,967 North Zone, 7,859 in the Central Zone and 1,289 in the South Zone.

2011 Canada Goose Season Dates

North Zone: The 2010-11 season was Oct. 16 - Jan. 8. Preliminary results from the 2010 IWHS indicated that 68% of North Zone Canada goose hunters felt that these dates were about right, while 18% thought they were too early and 8% thought they were too late. This year's season is only one day earlier than last year. In Cook, Will and Grundy counties a number of goose hunters asked for a later goose season in the area south of I-80 because many geese feed in this area in January from the nearby big rivers and cooling lakes. Therefore, this portion of the north duck zone has been placed in the Central goose zone to allow the season to end Jan. 31 instead of Jan. 7. Goose season will not be open during the first week of the North Zone duck season in this area in order to accomplish this later season.

Central Zone: The 2010-11 Canada goose season dates were Oct. 30 - Nov. 14 and Nov. 24 - Jan. 31. Preliminary results of the 2010 IWHS indicated that 78% of Central Zone goose hunters felt that these dates were about right, while 13% thought they were too early and 6% said they were too late.

South Central Zone: Canada goose season opens with duck season for 16 days and then closes for 15 days to reopen late enough to reach Jan. 31 within the 66 days allowed by federal rule for this zone. This allows the season to be open during the Thanksgiving Day, 4-day holiday weekend which is a very popular time for adults and youths who are out of school to hunt.

South Zone: Canada goose season opens with duck season for 4 days to coincide with the Thanksgiving Day weekend and then closes for 3 week days. It reopens on December 1st to be able to run through the end of January within the 66 days allowed in this zone by federal rules.

SNOW GEESE

During the 2011 Midwinter Survey, biologists counted a record 3,175,200 light geese, 19% more than in 2010. Overall, information suggests an average fall flight of MCP snow geese containing an average proportion of young. An estimated 65,987 snow geese were harvested during the 2010 Conservation Order snow goose season in Illinois, a 23% decrease over 2009.

WHITE-FRONTED GEESE

During the fall 2010 survey in Saskatchewan and Alberta, biologists counted 709,800 Mid-continent Population (MCP) white-fronted geese (a.k.a. "specs"), 127,000 more than during the previous survey. This was 22% above last year but the 3-year average declined 3% and the 3-year average is what is used to determine the hunting regulations. Therefore the white-fronted season will remain moderate with a maximum of 74 days for states that choose a bag limit of 2. The new white-fronted goose management plan added 2 days to the season for 2011 to allow states to add another weekend during split seasons.

2011-2012 WATERFOWL HUNTING INFORMATION

New Regulations are Shaded.

LICENSES, STAMPS AND HIP

Hunters must have a current, valid hunting license, Harvest Information Program (HIP) registration/certification and Federal and State Migratory Waterfowl Stamps in their possession at all times when afield. Federal stamps must be signed in ink across the face of the stamp. Please refer to the **2011-2012 Digest of Hunting & Trapping Regulations** for exemptions and further information.

Annual Fees Are *(including agent's fees)*:

Resident Hunting License	\$12.50
Non-resident Hunting License 5-day/regular	\$35.75 / \$57.75
Resident Senior Hunting License	\$6.50
Apprentice Hunting License (Resident or Non-resident)	\$7.50 *
State Waterfowl Stamp	\$15.50
Federal Waterfowl Stamp	\$15.00 **
Sportsman's License (hunt-fish)	\$26.25

* This is a one-time, non-renewable license. It allows those age 17 and under to hunt with a validly licensed parent, grandparent or guardian.

Those age 18 and older can hunt with any valid license holder who is over 21. No hunter safety course required.

** Does not include agent's fee which may be 50¢ or 75¢.

A State Habitat Stamp is **NOT** required to hunt waterfowl.

IF YOU WANT TO HUNT WATERFOWL IN ILLINOIS AND YOU ARE:

YOU NEED:	under 16	16 – 64	65 & Older	Disabled ¹	Service-man ¹	Land-owner ¹
Hunting License ^a	X	X	X			
Federal Waterfowl Stamp		X	X	X	X	X
State Waterfowl Stamp		X	X			
Harvest Information Program (HIP) Registration/Certification ^b	X	X	X			

^a Hunters born on or after January 1, 1980 must show proof that they have successfully completed a Hunter Education Course by Illinois DNR or their resident state or must show a previous hunting license.

^b To hunt migratory game birds (doves, ducks, geese, coots, mergansers, woodcock, snipe and rails). Lifetime license holders are automatically registered in HIP.

¹ For the purpose of this section, "DISABLED" = disabled American veterans with at least 10% service-related disabilities or disabled persons certified under the Illinois Identification Card Act as having a Type 1 or Type 4, Class 2 disability. "SERVICEMAN" = persons on leave from the Armed Services, having entered the military as an Illinois resident. "LANDOWNER" (or tenant) = those persons and their children, parents, brothers and sisters **permanently residing** on their land and **hunting on that land**.

HARVEST INFORMATION PROGRAM (HIP) Waterfowl, Dove and Other Migratory Gamebird Hunters

Registration with **HIP** (National Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program) is required **annually** to hunt migratory game birds in Illinois. For waterfowl, dove and other migratory gamebird hunters, register with HIP at the license vendor when you purchase your hunting license and state duck stamp. Hunters can register with HIP online at www.dnr.illinois.gov or by calling **1-888-6PERMIT** (1-888-673-7648). A \$3.08 convenience fee will be charged for phone sales if you do not register for HIP at the time of license purchase. If you get your HIP certification by phone, record the transaction number on your license.

DUCKS & EARLY CANADA GEESE

SPECIES	DATES (Inclusive)	HOURS	DAILY BAG LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMIT
Teal	Sept. 3-Sept. 18 (Statewide)	Sunrise to Sunset	4	8
Ducks	North Zone Oct. 15 – Dec. 13	1/2 hour before sunrise to sunset	6 (See section on Bag Limits)	12 (See section on Bag Limits)
	Central Zone Oct. 22 – Dec. 20		5 (See section on Bag Limits)	10 (See section on Bag Limits)
Mergansers	South Central Zone Nov. 12 – Jan. 10		15	30
Coots	South Zone Nov. 24 – Jan. 22		5	10
Early Canada Geese*	Sept. 1 – Sept. 15 (North and Central Zones)*		2	4
Early Canada Geese*	Sept. 1 – Sept. 15 (South Zone only)*			

*Zone lines for the Sept. goose season will still follow the zone lines used in 2010 and can be found in the Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations 2011-2012 on page 4. See <http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/hunting/Pages/huntrapdigest.htm> for details.

Bag Limit – DUCKS – Bag limits on ducks are as follows: The basic daily bag limit shall be 6 ducks of any species including all teal species, (except mergansers); however, no more than 4 shall be mallards (no more than 2 hen mallards) and not more than 3 wood ducks, 2 redheads, 2 scaup, 2 pintails, and not more than 1 black duck and 1 canvasback. The daily bag limit for all mergansers is 5, only 2 of which may be a hooded merganser. The possession limit for ducks and mergansers is twice the daily bag limit by species and sex.

YOUTH WATERFOWL HUNTING DAYS*

SPECIES	DATES	HOURS	DAILY BAG LIMIT
Ducks	North Zone Oct. 8 – 9	1/2 hour before sunrise to sunset	6 (See section on Bag Limits)
Mergansers			5 (See section on Bag Limits)
Coots	15		
Canada Geese	South Central Zone Nov. 5 – Nov. 6		2
Snow Geese	South Zone Nov. 12 – Nov. 13		20
White-fronted Geese			2
Brant		1	

*Youth Waterfowl Hunting Day Regulations

- Youth hunters must be 15 years of age or younger and must have a hunting license and HIP registration/certification unless hunting on property where they reside. No stamps are required for youths under 16.
- Only geese, ducks, mergansers and coots may be taken in addition to other game in season.
- An adult at least 18 years of age must accompany the youth hunter into the field. This adult cannot hunt geese, ducks, coots or mergansers but can participate in other open seasons.
- Zone lines for Youth Waterfowl Hunt follow duck zone lines.

GEESE

DATES (Inclusive)		HOURS	DAILY BAG LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMIT
Canada Geese		1/2 hour before sunrise to sunset	2	4
North Zone	Oct. 15 – Jan. 7			
Central Zone	Oct. 22 – Nov. 6 & Nov. 24 – Jan. 31			
South Central Zone	Nov. 12 – 27 and Dec. 13 – Jan. 31			
South Zone	Nov. 24 – 27 and Dec. 1 – Jan. 31			
Snow/Blue & Ross' Geese and Brant			20 Snow/Blue & Ross' Geese 1 Brant	Unlimited Snow/Blue & Ross' Geese 2 Brant
North Zone	Oct. 15 – Jan. 7			
Central Zone	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31			
South Central Zone	Nov. 12 – Jan. 31			
South Zone	Nov. 24 – Jan. 31			
White-fronted Geese		2	4	
North Zone	Oct. 26 – Jan. 7			
Central Zone	Nov. 19 – Jan. 31			
South Central Zone	Nov. 12 – 27 and Dec. 5 – Jan. 31			
South Zone	Nov. 24 – Jan. 31			

CONSERVATION ORDER LIGHT GOOSE SEASONS

DATES (Inclusive)		HOURS	DAILY BAG LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMIT
(Snow/blue and Ross' Goose)		1/2 hour before sunrise to 1/2 hour after sunset	None	None
North Zone	Jan. 8 – March 31			
Central Zone	Feb. 1 – March 31			
South Central Zone	Feb. 1 – March 31			
South Zone	Feb. 1 – March 31			

CONSERVATION ORDER SEASON REGULATIONS

1. Unplugged shotguns may be used. There is no limit to the number of shells that may be placed in a shotgun.
2. Electronic calling devices may be used.
3. No federal duck stamp required.
4. State duck stamp and hunting license required.

DON'T SHOOT A SWAN

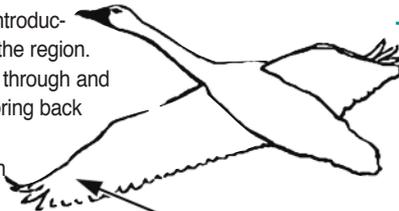
DON'T MAKE A MISTAKE! ALL WILD SWANS ARE PROTECTED IN ILLINOIS

Several Midwestern states are reintroducing the native Trumpeter Swan to the region. Some of these birds are migrating through and wintering in Illinois. You can help bring back this magnificent swan by:

- Learning the difference between swans and snow geese.
- Reporting observations of marked swans with wing tags, neck collars, bands.
- Protecting wetland habitat.
- Reporting any harassment of Trumpeter Swans.

Please report swan sightings to:

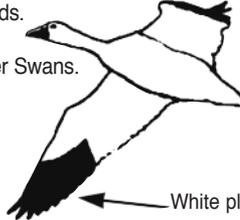
**Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Waterfowl Program,
700 South 10th Street,
Havana, IL 62644
309/543-3065**



TRUMPETER SWAN

Protected Species.
Long neck
Length: 4 ft.
Wingspan: 7 ft.
Weight: 20 - 30 lbs.

ALL WHITE PLUMAGE



SNOW GOOSE

Legally hunted.
Short neck
Length: 1 1/2 ft.
Wingspan: 3 1/2 ft.
Weight: 3 - 6 lbs.

White plumage, but BLACK WING TIPS.

CAUTION-White Pelicans have black wing tips, but their wingspan is 8-9 1/2 ft.

FIREARMS SAFETY DEPENDS ON YOU

1. Be sure of your target and what's beyond it before you pull the trigger.
2. Do not shoot towards homes, buildings, people or animals that may be hit by your shot, especially when using large shot sizes.
3. Use caution when shooting over water or ice to avoid ricochet.
4. Set up a safe shooting corridor in front of your blind and do not shoot outside it.
5. You are responsible for what your shot strikes. Hunters who damage property or injure others can be charged with reckless conduct and face criminal and financial penalties.

WATERFOWL BANDS

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service offers a toll-free number for reporting waterfowl bands. If you take a banded bird, please report the band number online at www.reportband.gov or call **1-800-327-BAND** (2263), with information about when and where you shot the bird. From September 1 through February 28, you can call this number 24 hours a day, seven days a week. From March 1 through August 31, services are available from 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. CDT. You will be able to print out a Certificate of Appreciation with information about when and where the bird was banded. Your cooperation on reporting band numbers gives waterfowl biologists a wealth of useful information that allows them to manage the resource in a way that provides hunters with maximum recreational opportunities while protecting waterfowl populations. You may report any band to this number, even if it is an old band that does not have the 1-800 number inscribed on it.

PROMOTE DIVERSE WETLAND VEGETATION FOR WATERFOWL

A popular conception among waterfowlers in Illinois and elsewhere is that wetland management should rely heavily on agricultural grains, specifically corn, to attract ducks to hunting areas even though many duck species rarely eat corn. While row crops have their place in the management of migrating and wintering waterfowl, wetlands with diverse plant communities, especially moist-soil plants, provide excellent foraging habitat for both spring- and fall- migrating waterfowl. Further, crop foods are high in energy but lack important nutrients found in moist-soil plant seeds; in fact, research indicates that ducks fed exclusively corn will actually lose weight over a period of weeks. Moist-soil management for ducks and other wildlife has long been recognized for producing high quality forage, and a recent investigation by the Illinois Natural History Survey and IDNR found that when water conditions were favorable moist-soil seed production at state waterfowl areas exceeded conservation goals set by the US Fish and Wildlife Service by 34%.

Many hunters typically consider moist-soil plants as weeds with little value to ducks; however, the opposite is generally true. Some public waterfowl hunting areas along the Illinois River that rely exclusively on moist-soil and natural vegetation averaged > 2 ducks/hunter trip when compared with an average of 0.9 ducks/hunter trip for 52 IDNR sites during the 2009-2010 duck season. Interestingly, during fall 2010 at The Emiquon Preserve which only promotes natural vegetation, waterfowl surveys indicated the abundance of blue-winged teal, gadwall, and American green-winged teal were the highest ever recorded for a single location in the Illinois River valley (IRV) and northern pintail were the 3rd highest in the IRV since inventories began in 1948. Amazingly, the hunter success rate at The Emiquon Preserve in 2010 averaged over 2.6 ducks/hunter trip!

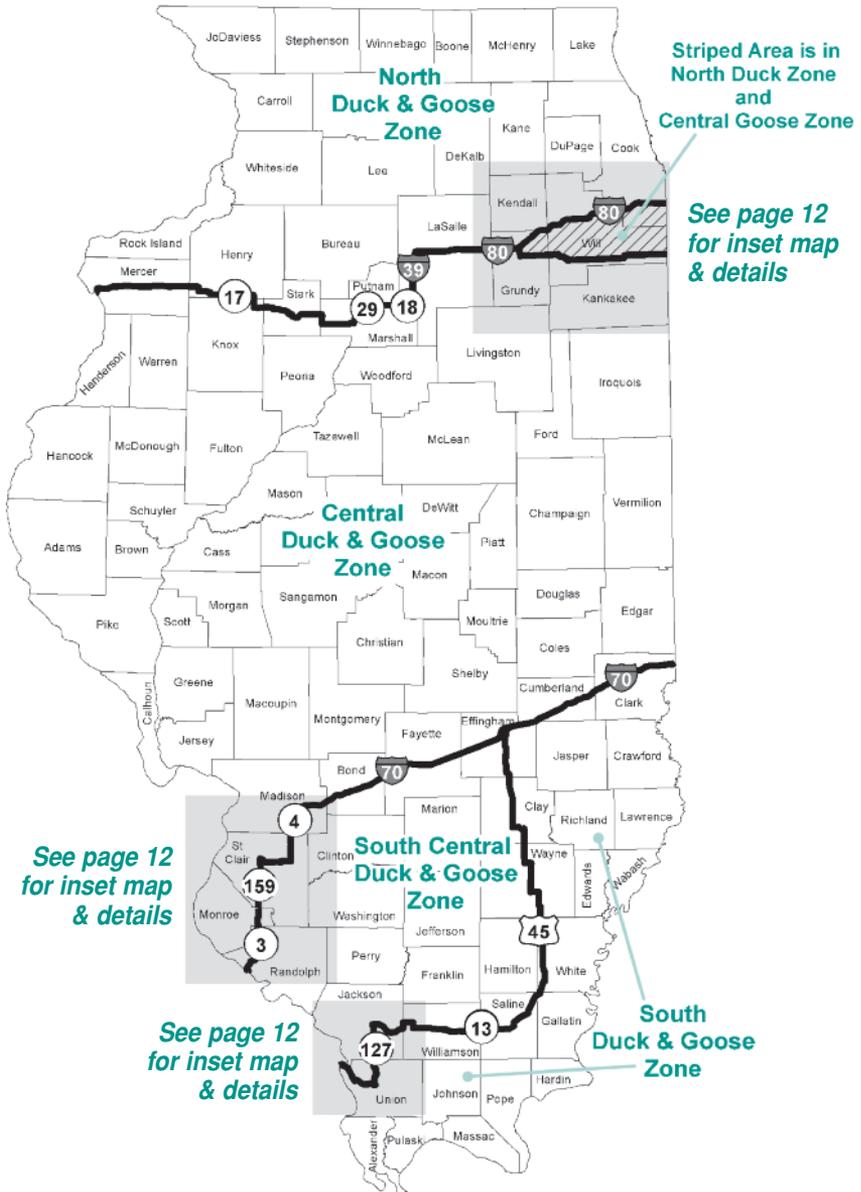
Ideally, managing for natural vegetation with interspersed row crops may provide diverse foods for many wildlife species—high energy grains and nutritious moist-soil plant seeds. A combination of cereal grains and moist-soil plants at hunting areas and refuges should provide better quality duck hunting than could be expected with cereal grains alone. In fact, when conditions permit, row crops and moist-soil vegetation may be grown together. Widely spaced rows allow moist-soil plants to germinate offering the best of both worlds, providing waterfowl with excellent forage during critical stopover periods.

Finally, moist-soil wetlands support far more aquatic invertebrates, which are important duck foods, than flooded agricultural wetlands without the associated costs of planting. In these times of budgetary shortfalls and cutbacks, moist-soil management offers an economical alternative to row crops. Some common moist-soil plants considered highly valuable as waterfowl forage include: wild millets (both common and Walter's millet), rice cutgrass, smartweeds, sprangletop, sedges, panic grass, teal grass, duck potato, and beggarticks.

ILLINOIS WATERFOWL ZONES

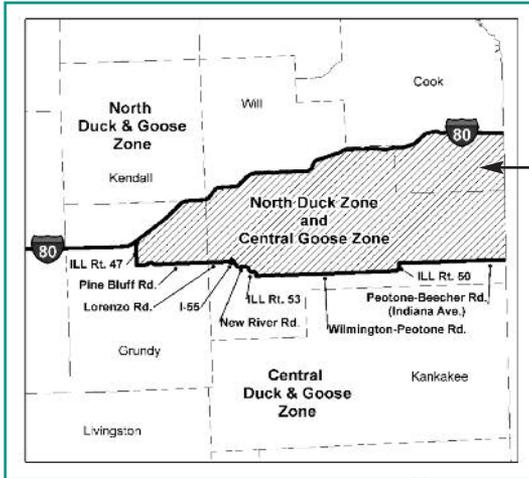
new for 2011

Inset maps for zone borders are found on page 12.



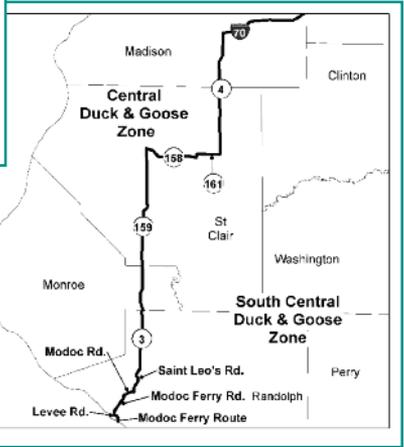
ILLINOIS WATERFOWL ZONES

Inset Maps

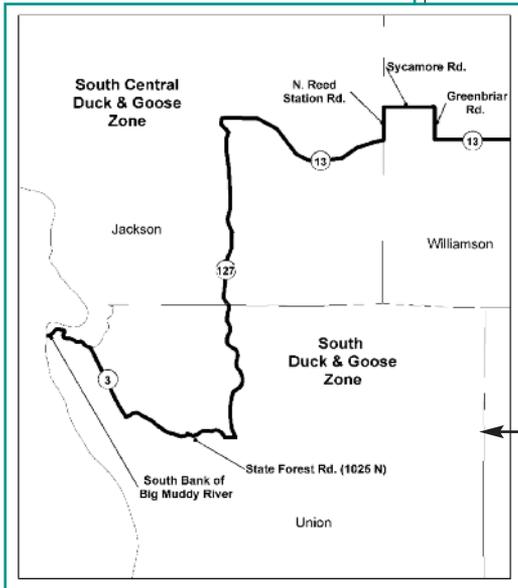


Striped Area is in the North Duck Zone and Central Goose Zone

Boundary for the Central Duck & Goose Zone and the South Central Duck & Goose Zone



Boundary for the South Central Duck & Goose Zone and the South Duck & Goose Zone



WATERFOWL HUNTING ZONE DESCRIPTIONS

Ducks (Including Mergansers) and Coots

North Zone: That portion of the state north of a line extending west from the Indiana border along Peotone-Beecher Road to Illinois Route 50, south along Illinois Route 50 to Wilmington-Peotone Road, west along Wilmington-Peotone Road to Illinois Route 53, north along Illinois Route 53 to New River Road, northwest along New River Road to Interstate Highway 55, south along I-55 to Pine Bluff-Lorenzo Road, west along Pine Bluff-Lorenzo Road to Illinois Route 47, north along Illinois Route 47 to I-80, west along I-80 to I-39, south along I-39 to Illinois Route 18, west along Illinois Route 18 to Illinois Route 29, south along Illinois Route 29 to Illinois Route 17, west along Illinois Route 17 to the Mississippi River, and due south across the Mississippi River to the Iowa border.

Central Duck Zone: That portion of the state south of the North Duck Zone line to a line extending west from the Indiana border along I-70 to Illinois Route 4, south along Illinois Route 4 to Illinois Route 161, west along Illinois Route 161 to Illinois Route 158, south and west along Illinois Route 158 to Illinois Route 159, south along Illinois Route 159 to Illinois Route 3, south along Illinois Route 3 to St. Leo's Road, south along St. Leo's road to Modoc Road, west along Modoc Road to Modoc Ferry Road, southwest along Modoc Ferry Road to Levee Road, southeast along Levee Road to County Route 12 (Modoc Ferry entrance Road), south along County Route 12 to the Modoc Ferry route and southwest on the Modoc Ferry route across the Mississippi River to the Missouri border.

South Duck Zone: That portion of the state south and east of a line extending west from the Indiana border along Interstate 70, south along U.S. Highway 45, to Illinois Route 13, west along Illinois Route 13 to Greenbriar Road, north on Greenbriar Road to Sycamore Road, west on Sycamore Road to N. Reed Station Road, south on N. Reed Station Road to Illinois Route 13, west along Illinois Route 13 to Illinois Route 127, south along Illinois Route 127 to State Forest Road (1025 N), west along State Forest Road to Illinois Route 3, north along Illinois Route 3 to the south bank of the Big Muddy River, west along the south bank of the Big Muddy River to the Mississippi River, west across the Mississippi River to the Missouri border.

South Central Duck Zone: The remainder of the state between the south border of the Central Zone and the North border of the South Zone.

Geese

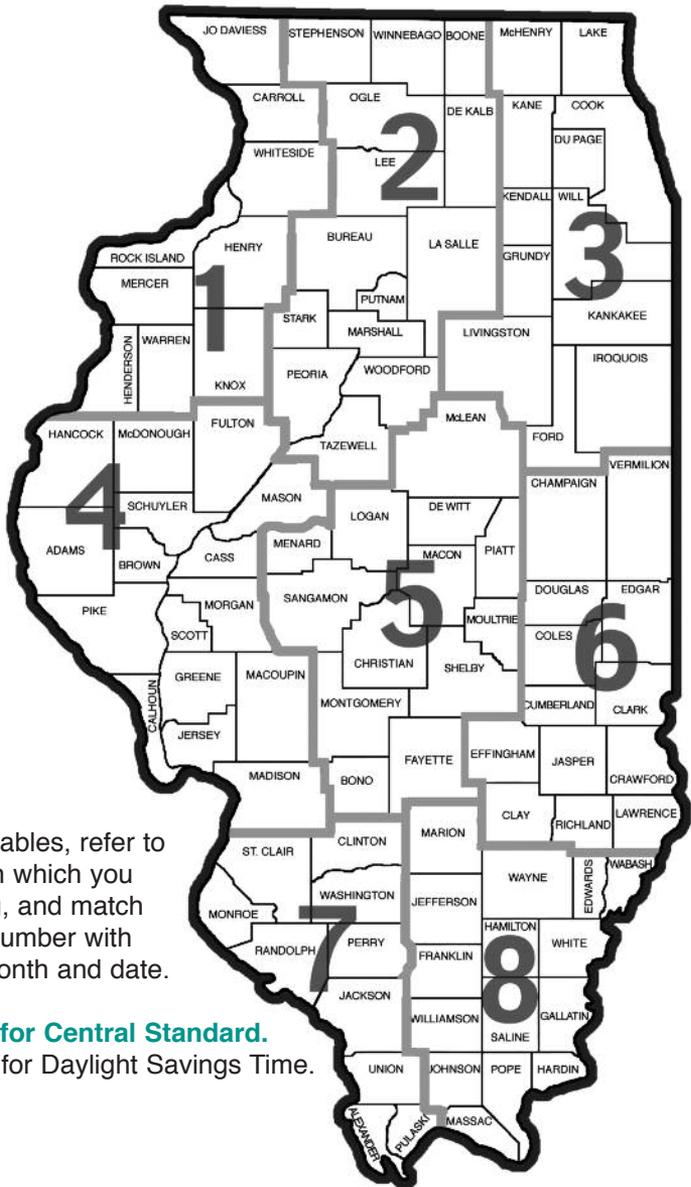
North Goose Zone: That portion of the state north of a line extending west from the Indiana border along Interstate 80 to I-39, south along I-39 to Illinois Route 18, west along Illinois Route 18 to Illinois Route 29, south along Illinois Route 29 to Illinois Route 17, west along Illinois Route 17 to the Mississippi River, and due south across the Mississippi River to the Iowa border.

Central Goose Zone: That portion of the state south of the North Goose Zone line to a line extending west from the Indiana border along I-70 to Illinois Route 4, south along Illinois Route 4 to Illinois Route 161, west along Illinois Route 161 to Illinois Route 158, south and west along Illinois Route 158 to Illinois Route 159, south along Illinois Route 159 to Illinois Route 3, south along Illinois Route 3 to St. Leo's Road, south along St. Leo's road to Modoc Road, west along Modoc Road to Modoc Ferry Road, southwest along Modoc Ferry Road to Levee Road, southeast along Levee Road to County Route 12 (Modoc Ferry entrance Road), south along County Route 12 to the Modoc Ferry route and southwest on the Modoc Ferry route across the Mississippi River to the Missouri border.

South Goose Zone: Same zones as for ducks.

South Central Goose Zone: Same zones as for ducks.

SUNRISE AND SUNSET TIMES BY REGION IN ILLINOIS



To use these tables, refer to map for region which you will be hunting, and match that region's number with appropriate month and date.

All times are for Central Standard.
Add one hour for Daylight Savings Time.

OCTOBER

REGION

SUNRISE
SUNSET

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All times are for Central Standard Time.

Add one hour for Daylight Savings Time Oct. 1-31

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NOVEMBER

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All times
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Add 1
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Nov.1-5

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DECEMBER

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SUNRISE
SUNSET

All times are for Central Standard Time.

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JANUARY

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SUNRISE
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All times
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All times
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MARCH

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All times
are for
Central
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Time.

Add one
hour for
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Mar. 11 -
31, 2012.

Placeholder for 2006 NONTOXIC SHOT LETHALITY TABLE©

The 2006 Nontoxic Shot Lethality Table, created and ©Copyright 2006 by Tom Roster, is not contained in this downloadable document.

To view the table you must order a hard copy of Illinois Digest of Waterfowl Hunting Regulations: 2011-12 from the IDNR Publications website at the following web address:

<http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/publications>

SUMMARY OF STATE AND FEDERAL REGULATIONS

In addition to statewide regulations, the following regulations apply to MIGRATORY WATERFOWL HUNTERS (ducks, geese, mergansers, coots).

NOTE: Material below is only a summary. Each hunter should also consult Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 20, Chapter 520 of the Illinois Compiled Statutes and IL Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations - 2011-2012, or talk with a local Conservation Police Officer or a Division of Wildlife Resources Biologist. For additional information on federal regulations call the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in Springfield, Illinois at 217-793-9554.

Non-Toxic Shot Requirements

Non-toxic shot currently approved by the USFWS includes: (note some brand names are listed in parenthesis for convenience), steel (Federal Black Cloud + all other steel shot), bismuth-tin, iron-tungsten, iron-tungsten-nickel (Environ-Metal: HEVI-13, Rem. HEVI-Shot, HEVI-Duck, new HEVI-Steel, Classic Doubles and Federal Heavyweight), tungsten-bronze (Remington Wingmaster HD), tungsten-iron-copper-nickel (Win. Extended Range Hi-Density), tungsten-matrix ([Kent] Impact), tungsten-polymer, tungsten-tin-iron (Fed. UltraShok High Density), tungsten-tin-bismuth, tungsten-tin-iron-nickel (Environ-Metal Dead Coyote!), tungsten-iron-polymer (Tundra Composites TIF Shot). Other approved brand names of non-toxic shot are "Nice Shot" and "Ballistic Products ITX Shot".

Shot Size Requirements

It is unlawful to hunt with or have in your possession while hunting waterfowl a shotgun shell with shot larger than steel size T or larger than BBB of any other non-toxic shot.

Hunting Devices & Ammunition Restrictions

It is unlawful to use a trap, snare, net, crossbow, rifle, pistol, shotgun larger than 10-gauge, punt gun, battery gun, machine gun, fishhook, poison, drug, explosive or stupefying substance.

It is unlawful to hunt with a shotgun capable of holding more than three shells, UNLESS it is plugged with a one-piece filler which limits its total shell capacity to three and which is incapable of removal without disassembling the gun. This does not apply during Conservation Order light goose seasons (snow/blue and Ross' geese) that occur after Canada goose season has closed. (see page 9).

Hunting From Floating Blinds, Boats & Scull Boats

It is unlawful to hunt from a floating blind that is not anchored EXCEPT a scull boat may be used on certain public waters and waterfowl may be taken from a boat not mechanically powered and not camouflaged or disguised. A boat merely painted camouflage is not considered camouflaged.

Live Decoys

It is unlawful to hunt by the use or aid of live decoys. All live, tame or captive ducks and geese shall be removed for a period of 10 consecutive days prior to hunting and confined within an enclosure which substantially reduces the audibility of their calls and totally conceals such birds from the sight of migratory waterfowl.

Electronic Calling Devices

It is unlawful to use a recording or electronic calling device to hunt migratory birds other than crows, except during Conservation Order light goose seasons that occur after Canada goose season such electronic call devices may be used to hunt snow/blue and Ross' geese. (see page 9).

Shooting Crippled Waterfowl From Boats

It is unlawful to hunt waterfowl from a moving watercraft propelled by mechanical power or sails. NOTE: However, waterfowl hunters may have an uncased and unloaded gun in their boat for the purpose of pursuing crippled migratory waterfowl incapable of normal flight in an attempt to reduce said bird to possession, provided that the attempt is made immediately upon downing the bird and is done within 400 yards of the blind from which the bird was downed. The gun cannot be loaded unless the motor has been completely shut off and the crippled birds may not be shot from such a boat until the motor has been completely shut off and its progress therefrom has ceased.

Driving or Chasing Birds

It is unlawful to hunt by driving, rallying or chasing birds with any motorized conveyance or any sailboat to put them in the range of the hunters.

Permits Required for Leased Lands and Commercial Clubs

It is unlawful to commercially control land or water, or both, in whole or in part for the taking of migratory waterfowl, unless first obtaining a permit from the Department. NOTE: A person is "commercially controlling land or water, or both" when he directly or indirectly receives compensation from persons in exchange for the opportunity to enter onto that land or water.

Possession of Live Birds

It is unlawful to retain live waterfowl taken while hunting. Every migratory game bird wounded by hunting and reduced to possession by the hunter shall be immediately killed and become part of the daily bag limit.

Field Possession Limit

It is unlawful to possess, have in custody, or transport more than one daily bag limit tagged or not tagged while in the field or while returning from the field to one's car, hunting camp, home, etc.

Wanton Waste – Retrieval of Downed Game Birds

It is unlawful to kill or cripple any migratory game bird without making a reasonable effort to retrieve the bird and retain it in your actual custody, at the place where taken or between that place and your automobile or personal abode or temporary place of lodging or a migratory bird preservation facility or a post office or a common carrier facility. ***Birds must remain in your possession while in the field.*** NOTE: You need permission to enter private property.

Tagging Requirements

It is unlawful to give, put or leave any migratory game birds at any place (other than his personal abode) or in the custody of another person UNLESS the birds are tagged by the hunter with the hunter's signature and address, the total number of birds involved, by species, and the dates such birds were killed.

Gift of Migratory Game Birds

No person may receive, possess, or give to another, any freshly-killed migratory game bird as a gift, except at the personal abode of the donor or donee, unless such birds have a tag attached (see tagging requirements).

Custody of Birds of Another

It is unlawful to receive or have in custody any migratory game birds belonging to another person UNLESS such birds are properly tagged.

Species Identification Requirement

It is unlawful to completely field dress any migratory game bird (except doves) and then transport the birds from the field. The head or one fully-feathered wing must remain attached to all such birds while being transported from the field to one's home or commercial preservation facility.

Termination of Possession

The possession of birds taken by any hunter ceases when such birds have been delivered by him to another person as a gift; or have been delivered by him to a post office, a common carrier, or a migratory bird preservation facility and consigned for transport by the Postal Service or a common carrier to some person other than the hunter.

Shipment – Marking Package

It is unlawful to ship migratory game birds UNLESS the package is marked clearly and conspicuously on the outside with the name and address of the person sending the birds, the name and address of the person to whom the birds are being sent, and the number of birds, by species, contained in the package.

Importation

It is unlawful to import migratory game birds killed in any foreign country, except Canada, UNLESS such birds are dressed (except as required below), drawn and the head and feet are removed. NOTE: One fully-feathered wing must remain attached to all migratory game birds being transported between a port of entry and one's home or to a migratory bird preservation facility. No person shall import migratory game birds belonging to another person. For information regarding the importation of migratory birds killed in another country, hunters should consult 50 CFR 20.61 through 20.66.

Sink Box

It is unlawful to hunt from a sink box (a low floating device, having a depression affording the hunter a means of concealment beneath the surface of the water).

ADDITIONAL CANADA GOOSE HUNTING REGULATIONS ON NON-COMMERCIAL AREAS IN ALEXANDER, FRANKLIN, JACKSON, JEFFERSON, UNION AND WILLIAMSON COUNTIES

On any property where the principal use is to take wild geese in Alexander, Franklin, Jackson, Jefferson, Union and Williamson counties, other than property operated under a Commercial Migratory Waterfowl Hunting Area Permit, all of the following restrictions shall be observed but only during Canada goose season:

- (1) No person may take wild geese except from a blind or pit and it shall be illegal to take or attempt to take geese from the base of standing timber except when immediately adjacent to an open field.
- (2) No person may establish or use a blind or pit within 100 yards of the boundary of the property on which the blind or pit is located unless the minimum yardage requirement cannot be met, in which case one blind or pit may be permitted only if there is a minimum of 200 yards between that pit or blind and the nearest pit or blind.
- (3) No person may establish or use a blind or pit for the taking of wild geese within 200 yards of any wildlife refuge boundary or public road right-of-way adjacent to any State or Federal waterfowl refuge. If a blind or pit has been established for more than 10 years and it was believed by both the landowner and the Department during that time to meet the minimum yardage requirements of this paragraph (3), then the blind or pit may remain in place even though a survey or other evidence may indicate that the minimum yardage requirements are not met.

STATE AND FEDERAL BAITING REGULATIONS

Federal baiting regulations define key terms for hunters and land managers, and clarify conditions under which you may legally hunt waterfowl and other migratory game birds. As a waterfowl hunter or land manager, it is your responsibility to know and obey all Federal and State laws that govern the sport. Rules that affect waterfowl hunting also apply to hunting coots and all references to waterfowl encompass these birds as well. Federal regulations are more restrictive for waterfowl hunting than for dove hunting.

For further information, go to www.fws.gov/le/huntfish/waterfowl_baiting.htm.

Definitions from Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 20.11

Normal agricultural planting, harvesting, or post-harvest manipulation means a planting or harvesting undertaken for the purpose of producing and gathering a crop, or manipulation after such harvest and removal of grain, that is conducted in accordance with official recommendations of State Extension Specialists of the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Normal agricultural operation means a normal agricultural planting, harvesting, post-harvest manipulation, or agricultural practice, that is conducted in accordance with official recommendations of State Extension Specialists of the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Normal soil stabilization practice means a planting for agricultural soil erosion control or post-mining land reclamation conducted in accordance with official recommendations of State Extension Specialists of the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture for agricultural soil erosion control.

Baited area means any area on which salt, grain, or other feed has been placed, exposed, deposited, distributed, or scattered, if that salt, grain, or other feed could serve as a lure or attraction for migratory game birds to, on, or over areas where hunters are attempting to take them. Any such area will remain a baited area for 10 days following the complete removal of all such salt, grain, or other feed.

Baiting means the direct or indirect placing, exposing, depositing, distributing, or scattering of salt, grain, or other feed that could serve as a lure or attraction for migratory game birds to, on, or over any areas where hunters are attempting to take them.

Manipulation means the alteration of natural vegetation or agricultural crops by activities that include but are not limited to mowing, shredding, discing, rolling, chopping, trampling, flattening, burning, or herbicide treatments. The term manipulation does not include the distributing or scattering of grain, seed, or other feed after removal from or storage on the field where grown.

Natural vegetation means any non-agricultural, native, or naturalized plant species that grows at a site in response to planting or from existing seeds or other propagules. The term natural vegetation does not include planted millet. However, planted millet that grows on its own in subsequent years after the year of planting is considered natural vegetation.

Excerpts from Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 20.21(i)

No persons shall take migratory game birds:

- (i) By the aid of baiting, or on or over any baited area, where a person knows or reasonably should know that the area is or has been baited. However, nothing in this paragraph prohibits:
 - (1) The taking of any migratory game bird, including waterfowl and coots, on or over the following lands or areas that are not otherwise baited areas —
 - (i) Standing crops or flooded standing crops (including aquatics); standing, flooded, or manipulated natural vegetation; flooded harvested croplands; or lands or areas where seeds or grains have been scattered solely as the result of a normal agricultural planting, harvesting, post-harvest manipulation or normal soil stabilization practice;
 - (ii) From a blind or other place of concealment camouflaged with natural vegetation;
 - (iii) From a blind or other place of concealment camouflaged with vegetation from agricultural crops, as long as such camouflaging does not result in the exposing, depositing, distributing or scattering of grain or other feed; or
 - (iv) Standing or flooded standing agricultural crops where grain is inadvertently scattered solely as a result of a hunter entering or exiting a hunting area, placing decoys, or retrieving downed birds.

What Part 20.21(i) of the Code of Federal Regulations Means

You cannot hunt waterfowl or any other migratory game bird by the aid of baiting or on or over any baited area where you know or reasonably should know that the area is or has been baited. Baiting is the direct or indirect placing, exposing, depositing, distributing, or scattering of salt, grain, or other feed that could lure or attract migratory game birds to, on, or over any areas where hunters are attempting to take them. A baited area is any area on which salt, grain, or other feed has been placed, exposed, deposited, distributed, or scattered, if that salt, grain, or feed could serve as a lure or attraction for migratory game birds.

The 10-Day Rule

A baited area remains off limits to hunting for 10 days after all salt, grain, or other feed has been completely removed. Waterfowl will habitually still be attracted to the same area even after the bait is gone. The 10-day rule recognizes that removing bait does not remove the lure created and that waterfowl will still be attracted to the area.

What is Legal?

You can hunt migratory game birds, including waterfowl, on, over, or from:

- Standing crops or flooded standing crops, including aquatic plants.
- Standing, flooded, or manipulated natural vegetation.
- Flooded harvested croplands.
- Lands or areas where grains have been scattered solely as the result of a normal agricultural harvesting or normal agricultural post-harvest manipulation.
- Lands or areas where top-sown seeds have been scattered solely as the result of a normal agricultural planting, or a planting for agricultural soil erosion control or post-mining land reclamation.

- From a blind or other place of concealment camouflaged with natural vegetation.
- From a blind or other place of concealment camouflaged with vegetation from agricultural crops, provided your use of such vegetation does not expose, deposit, distribute or scatter grain or other feed. You should be aware that seeds or grains from such vegetation could create a baited area.
- On or over standing, or flooded standing agricultural crops where grain is inadvertently scattered solely as the result of hunters entering or leaving the area, placing decoys, or retrieving downed birds. Hunters are cautioned that while conducting these activities, any intentional scattering of grains will create a baited area.

Waterfowl Hunting on Agricultural Lands

Agricultural lands offer prime waterfowl hunting opportunities. You can hunt waterfowl in fields of unharvested standing crops. You can also hunt over standing crops that have been flooded. You can flood fields after crops are harvested and use these areas for waterfowl hunting.

The presence of seed or grain in an agricultural area rules out waterfowl hunting unless the seed or grain is scattered solely as the result of a normal agricultural planting, normal agricultural harvesting, normal agricultural post-harvest manipulation, or normal agricultural soil stabilization practice. A normal agricultural planting, normal agricultural harvesting, or normal agricultural post-harvest manipulation means a planting or harvesting undertaken to produce **and** gather a crop, or manipulation after such harvest and removal of grain. These activities must be conducted in accordance with official recommendations of the State Extension Specialists of the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Planting and Harvesting

A normal agricultural planting is undertaken for the purpose of producing **and** gathering a crop. Normal agricultural plantings do not involve the placement of seeds in piles or other concentrations. Relevant factors include recommended planting dates, proper seed distribution, seed bed preparation, application rate, and seed viability. A normal soil stabilization practice means a planting for agricultural soil erosion control or post-mining land reclamation conducted in accordance with official recommendations of USDA State Extension Specialists. Lands planted by means of top sowing or aerial seeding can **only** be hunted if seeds are present solely as the result of a normal agricultural planting or normal soil stabilization practice. Lands planted as part of normal soil stabilization practices may be hunted over even if there is no intent to gather a crop.

Seeds that remain on the surface of the ground as the result of planting wildlife food plots, planting a “goose field,” or planting for erosion control on a construction site are examples of activities that constitute baiting since they are not plantings undertaken for the purpose of producing and gathering a crop, agricultural soil erosion control, or post-mining land reclamation. You cannot hunt waterfowl over such areas.

A normal agricultural harvest is undertaken for the purpose of gathering a crop. The arrangement of harvested grain in long rows or piles should raise questions about the legality of the area for waterfowl hunting. A normal post-harvest manipulation first requires a normal agricultural harvest and removal of grain before any manipulation of remaining agricultural

vegetation, such as corn stubble or rice stubble. You should be aware that although you can hunt doves over manipulated agricultural crops, you cannot hunt waterfowl over manipulated agricultural crops except after the field has been subject to a normal harvest and removal of grain (i.e., post-harvest manipulation).

If, for whatever reason, an agricultural crop or a portion of an agricultural crop has not been harvested (i.e., equipment failure, weather, insect infestation, disease, etc.) and the crop or remaining portion of the crop has been manipulated, then the area is a baited area and cannot be hunted for waterfowl. For example, no hunting could occur on or over a field of sweet corn that has been partially harvested and the remainder manipulated. To be considered normal, an agricultural planting, agricultural harvesting, and agricultural post-harvest manipulation must be conducted in accordance with official recommendations of USDA State Extension Specialists. However, the Service will continue to make final determinations about whether official recommendations were followed.

Hunting Over Natural Vegetation

Natural vegetation is any non-agricultural, native, or naturalized plant species that grows at a site in response to planting or from existing seeds or other propagules. Natural vegetation does not include planted millet because of its use as both an agricultural crop and a species of natural vegetation for moist soil management. However, planted millet that grows on its own in subsequent years is considered natural vegetation.

If you restore and manage wetlands as habitat for waterfowl and other migratory birds, you can manipulate the natural vegetation in these areas and make them available for hunting. Activities that fall within the definition of “manipulation” include mowing, shredding, discing, rolling, chopping, trampling, flattening, burning, and herbicide treatments.

Natural vegetation is not intended to include plants grown as agricultural crops.

Problem Areas

Feeding waterfowl. Many people feed waterfowl for the pleasure of birdwatching. It is illegal to hunt migratory game birds in an area where such feeding has occurred that could lure or attract birds to, on, or over any area where hunters are attempting to take them. The 10-day rule applies to such areas, and any salt, grain, or feed must be gone 10 days before hunting. The use of sand, shell grit, and artificial corn is not prohibited.

Distance. How close to bait can you hunt without breaking the law? There is no set distance. Court rulings vary depending on the circumstances. The influence of bait will increase or decrease depending on such factors as topography, weather, and waterfowl flight patterns. The question of distance can only be answered on a case-by-case basis. Remember, however, that the law prohibits hunting if bait is present that could lure or attract birds “to, on, or over areas where hunters are attempting to take them.”

Manipulation of crops and other agricultural practices. Although you can hunt waterfowl over natural vegetation that has been manipulated, you cannot hunt waterfowl over any manipulations of agricultural crops that occur before harvest and removal of grain. You cannot hunt waterfowl on or over areas where farmers feed grain to livestock, store grain, or engage in other normal agricultural practices. You cannot hunt waterfowl on or over ponds or other waters where fish farmers feed food to their fish, or on or over areas where wildlife is being fed.

The Hunter's Responsibility

As a hunter, you are responsible for determining whether your proposed hunting area is baited. Before hunting, you should:

- Familiarize yourself with Federal and State migratory game bird hunting regulations.
- Ask the landowner, your host or guide, and your hunting partners if the area has been baited.
- Suspect the presence of bait if you see waterfowl feeding in a particular area in unusual concentrations or displaying a lack of caution.
- Look for grain or other feed in the water, along the shore, and on the field. Pay particular attention to the presence of spilled grain on harvested fields and seeds planted by means of top-sowing.
- Confirm that scattered seeds or grains on agricultural lands are present solely as the result of a normal agricultural planting, normal agricultural harvesting, normal agricultural post-harvest manipulation, or normal soil stabilization practice by consulting with USDA State Extension Specialists.
- Abandon the hunting site if you find grain or feed in an area and are uncertain about why it is there.

Other Responsibilities

If you prepare lands for hunting, participate in such preparations, or direct such preparations, it is important for you to know and understand what practices constitute baiting. You should know **prior to hunting** what activities constitute baiting and when lands or other areas would be considered baited. If you bait or direct that an area be baited and allow hunting to proceed, you risk being charged with an offense that carries significant penalties.

Strict Liability

For years, courts in most parts of this country had historically applied a strict liability standard to baiting offenses. Under this standard, law enforcement officers did not have to prove that hunters knew bait was present in order to prove a violation had occurred. However, on October 30, 1998, Public Law 105-312 eliminated strict liability for baiting offenses and instead made it unlawful for anyone to hunt with the aid of bait "if the person knows or reasonably should know that the area is a baited area." The Service has incorporated this "knows or reasonably should know" standard in the baiting regulation to promote public understanding of the new law. As in the past, however, hunters are responsible for ensuring that no bait is present before they begin hunting. They should thoroughly inspect the field or marsh, question landowners and guides, and take other reasonable steps to verify the legality of their hunt.

Penalties

Legislators increased the maximum fine for hunting over bait from \$5,000 to \$15,000. They also made the placement of bait a violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act punishable by a fine up to \$100,000 for an individual or \$200,000 for an organization, a prison term of up to one year, or both. In the past, individuals who baited fields were charged with "aiding and abetting," that is, helping someone else commit the crime of hunting over bait. They face stiffer penalties under the new law.

Contacting a Conservation Police Officer

The Department of Natural Resources' Office of Law Enforcement developed the "Target Illinois Poachers" program to encourage any concerned citizen who witnesses a poaching offense to report the violation. The toll-free number is 1-877-2DNRLAW (1-877-236-7529). Simply defined, "poaching" is the illegal taking or possession of game and non-game animals, fish or other resources. Hunting out of season and hunting at night with spotlights are two of the most obvious signs of poaching. Hunters and fishermen possessing more than the legal limit is another. Slow moving or partially hidden vehicles, shots heard at unusual hours or game being concealed are all suspect.

But there is another serious problem that affects everyone: pollution. DNR is teaming up with the Illinois Attorney General and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to investigate and bring to prosecution those who would intentionally pollute our land, water and air. If you are aware of improper dumping of discarded chemical or petroleum barrels or of any other potential environmental crime, please report it. If you locate an environmental hazard, keep a safe distance and call the TIP hotline with the details at 1-877-2DNRLAW (1-877-236-7529).

Remember good law enforcement is everybody's responsibility. If you see a violation, report it. **Let's Target Illinois' Poachers and Polluters!**

T.I.P.



Target Illinois



POACHERS

Call Toll-Free

1-877-2DNR-LAW

1-877-236-7529

Operates 24 hrs./day - 7 days/week.



The Department of Natural Resources is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Ameritech Relay 1-800-526-0844 for the deaf and hearing impaired.

For all other requests for an Illinois Conservation Police Officer (CPO) after regular business hours, contact your Illinois State Police District HQ dispatch Center.



Equal opportunity to participate in programs of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and those funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies is available to all individuals regardless of race, sex, national origin, disability, age, religion or other non-merit factors. If you believe you have been discriminated against, contact the funding source's civil rights office and/or the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer, DNR, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271; (217) 785-0067; TTY (217) 782-9175.

This information may be provided in an alternative format if required. Contact the DNR Clearinghouse at 217/782-7498 for assistance.

Distributed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife Resources, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271, Telephone (217) 782-6384, TTY (217) 782-9175.

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