

Dept. of Natural Resources: Fall waterfowl hunting season openers just around the corner

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MADISON, Wis. – Duck hunters in the Northern Zone will begin another fall duck hunt on Saturday, Sept. 26. Southern and Mississippi River Zones open Saturday, Oct. 3.

Due to health concerns related to COVID-19, no waterfowl breeding surveys were conducted this spring. However, feedback from the public and Department of Natural Resources staff indicated excellent duck production throughout the entire state. Additionally, statewide precipitation was at or above average throughout the summer, improving waterfowl hunting conditions for the fall in many areas.

“Even with promising breeding indications, local conditions and scouting will be the most important factors when pursuing ducks this fall,” said Taylor Finger, DNR Migratory Game Bird Ecologist. “Because parts of the state have experienced wet conditions leading up to the duck season and some areas of the state remain dry, scouting this fall will be particularly important to identify the areas that are holding birds.”

The Northern Zone duck season will run Sept. 26 to Nov. 24. The Southern and Mississippi River Zone seasons have a five-day split, running Oct. 3-11 and Oct. 17 to Dec. 6. Opening day shooting hours will begin one-half hour before sunrise.

Waterfowl hunters should note that the goose season in the southern portion of the Exterior zone will also be closed during the five-day split from Oct. 12-16. Also, hunters should note that goose season in the Mississippi River Subzone opens Oct. 3 and is closed Oct. 12-16.

Duck bag limits

The daily bag limit statewide is six ducks, including no more than:

- four mallards, of which two may be a hen (new for 2020);
- two black duck;
- two canvasbacks;
- three wood ducks;
- one pintail; and
- two redheads.

Per U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regulations, there has been a change in the daily scaup bag limit for 2020. The daily scaup bag limits by zone are:

- North: 1 scaup/day – Sept. 26-Oct. 10 and 2 scaup/day Oct. 11-Nov. 24
- South: 1 scaup/day – Oct. 3-Oct. 11, Oct. 17-Oct. 22 and 2 scaup/day Oct. 23-Dec. 6
- Mississippi River: 1 scaup/day – Oct. 3-Oct. 11, Oct. 17-Oct. 22 and 2 scaup/day Oct. 23-Dec. 6

Five mergansers may be harvested daily, of which no more than two may be hooded mergansers. Fifteen coots may be harvested daily.

Licenses and stamps required for duck hunting include a Wisconsin small game license (included in the Conservation Patron and Sports packaged licenses), a Wisconsin waterfowl stamp and a federal migratory bird stamp. The federal duck stamp costs \$25 and can be purchased at a U.S. Post Office. Hunters will also have the option of purchasing the federal stamp privilege at DNR license vendors for an additional \$3 surcharge. The purchase will be noted on their license, but the stamp itself will arrive several weeks later in the mail.

Waterfowl and other migratory bird hunters must also register each year with the federal Harvest Information Program, which places them on a list of hunters that may receive a mailing asking them to provide a summary of their harvest. HIP registration is free and can be done at the time hunters purchase their licenses. It can also be added later if a hunter decides they'd like to pursue migratory game birds.

State licenses and stamps, permits and HIP registration are all available through [Go](#)

[Wild](#). For more information regarding waterfowl hunting in Wisconsin, visit [the DNR website](#).

Regular Goose Season

With resident Canada goose numbers holding steady and average production of the Ontario breeders, hunters will have ample opportunity to enjoy another full 92 days of hunting in the Exterior Zone with a three-bird daily bag limit.

Regular Canada goose season structure is as follows:

- Northern Zone: Sept. 16 to Dec. 16;
- Southern Zone: Sept. 16 to Oct. 11; Oct. 17 to Dec. 6; and Dec. 22 to Jan. 5, 2021; and
- Mississippi River Subzone: Oct. 3- Oct. 11 and Oct. 17 to Jan. 5, 2021.

While afield, goose hunters must carry their Canada goose harvest permit. Early and regular season goose permits may be printed on regular white paper rather than green thermal paper. Acceptable methods of proof include a paper copy, department-approved PDF displayed on a mobile device, Wisconsin driver's license or Go Wild Conservation Card. As a reminder to Canada goose hunters, registration of Canada geese and in-field validation of the Canada goose hunting permit is no longer required.

To learn more about the 2020 migratory bird season framework, visit the DNR [webpage here](#).