

MINNESOTA HUNTING REGULATIONS

WATERFOWL 2011

SAVE THE WETLANDS



MNDNR.GOV
1-888-646-6367



Turn in Poachers — 24-hour hotline 1-800-652-9093

(Verizon customers can type #TIP (847) to report violations)

MINNESOTA WATERFOWL HUNTING REGULATIONS



REAL MEN WEAR LIFE JACKETS.

Henry Freeman was the sole survivor of the Whitby (England) lifeboat disaster of 1861. Twelve other members of his crew drowned when their lifeboat capsized in mountainous seas attempting the rescue of a sinking schooner's crew. His escape from death was attributed to the newly-introduced cork life jacket he is wearing in this photograph. *Photo courtesy The Sutcliffe Gallery.*



TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| Harvest Information Program (HIP) | 5 |
| License information | 5 |
| General waterfowl regulations. | 8 |
| Illustrated ducks of Minnesota | 14 |
| Seasons and bag limits. | 20 |
| Youth waterfowl hunt. | 20 |
| Special goose hunts (early) | 21 |
| Blinds for hunters with disabilities. | 23 |
| State refuges open to goose hunting | 25 |
| Shooting hours (sunrise/sunset). | inside back cover |

This publication is partially funded through advertising revenue. The State of Minnesota and Department of Natural Resources can neither endorse the products or services advertised nor accept any liability arising from the use of these products or services.

ON THE COVER



Red-breasted Merganser
Painting by Kevin Nelson, Burnsville, MN

Funds raised through the sale of Minnesota state duck stamps pay for waterfowl research, management and habitat thereby improving conditions for the state's resident and migrating waterfowl.

Stop Invasive Hitchhikers!

These simple steps can help prevent the spread of invasive plants and animals on land.

BEFORE leaving...BEFORE returning:

- ✓ Inspect and remove mud, plants, and animals from equipment and vehicles.
- ✓ Brush seeds and mud from clothes, boots, gear, and pets.
- ✓ Burn local or certified firewood.
- ✓ Use local weed-free hay.

Help keep your favorite recreation areas healthy.



©2011, State of Minnesota, Department of Natural Resources

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is available to all individuals regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, age, sexual orientation, membership or activity in a local commission, or disability. Discrimination inquiries should be sent to MN-DNR, 500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155-4031; or the Equal Opportunity Office, Department of the Interior, Washington, DC 20240.

This document is available in alternative formats to individuals with disabilities by calling (651) 296-6157 (Metro Area) or 1-888-646-6367 (MN Toll Free) or Telecommunication Device for the Deaf/TTY: (651) 296-5484 (Metro Area) or 1-800-657-3929 (Toll Free TTY).

mndnr.gov

LICENSE INFORMATION

GENERAL

A resident waterfowl hunter 16 years or older and all nonresident waterfowl hunters⁺ must carry:

1. Minnesota Waterfowl Stamp* validation (\$7.50), (residents ages 18-64)
2. a federal Migratory Bird Hunting electronic validation (\$15) or pictorial Conservation Stamp signed in ink across the face (\$17) **
3. proof of Minnesota HIP registration and
4. one of the following licenses
 - \$19 Resident Small Game License
 - \$29.50 Resident Individual Sports License
 - \$38.50 Resident Combination Sports (small game hunting, husband-wife angling)
 - \$12.50 Resident Senior Citizen Small Game (65 years or older)
 - \$12.50 Youth Small Game (ages 16-17)
 - \$12.50 Nonresident youth small game (under 18)
 - \$84.50 Nonresident small game license
 - \$*** Lifetime Small Game License (federal, state waterfowl stamps required)
 - \$*** Lifetime Individual Sports License (federal, state waterfowl stamps required)

Prices shown do not include additional fees charged for issuing licenses.

There is no issuing fee for state stamps issued simultaneously with a license.

Special goose permit (ages 18-64) required for the September season. (\$4)

- * State stamp validations are not required for residents under age 18 or age 65 or older.
- ** An electronically-issued federal stamp is valid for 45 days. Pictorial stamps, when received by mail, must be signed and in the possession of the hunter.
- *** Price varies depending on age at purchase. Lifetime license applications are available by calling toll free 1-888-646-6367 or online at mndnr.gov
- + All hunters age 16 and older must have a federal migratory waterfowl stamp.

(Persons hunting waterfowl on commercial shooting preserves are required to have both a federal and a state duck stamp validation in addition to a small game license. The only exception is when taking only marked, pen-reared mallards.)

Notes:

- There are licensing exceptions for landowners, military personnel and others. See pages 15-16 and 33 of the 2011 Hunting Regulations Handbook for a complete listing of license requirements.
- Youth age 15 and under are required to obtain a free license before hunting small game, including waterfowl. HIP certification is also required to hunt waterfowl or migratory game birds.

YOU MUST BE HIP CERTIFIED

Before hunting waterfowl or migratory game birds (except sandhill cranes), you must be Harvest Information Program (HIP) certified by answering "yes" when asked whether you intend to hunt migratory birds at the time you buy your small game or sports license. If you don't, you can still answer "yes" at a later date at no cost by getting a HIP receipt at any electronic license sales location. Evidence of compliance will be noted on your license as "HIP Certified" and must be carried while hunting migratory birds.

WHY HIP?

Using information gathered with HIP, DNR waterfowl biologists and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) are developing more reliable estimates of the number of all migratory birds harvested throughout the country.

FIREARMS SAFETY CERTIFICATE

Anyone born after Dec. 31, 1979 must have a Firearms Safety Certificate, Apprentice Hunter Validation, a previous hunting license with a firearms safety indicator or other evidence of successfully completing a hunter safety course to obtain a license to take wild animals with firearms in Minnesota.

QUESTIONS ABOUT LICENSES

WHERE CAN I BUY A LICENSE OR STAMP?

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources issues licenses through 1,500 license agent locations throughout Minnesota—sporting goods stores, hunting and fishing supplies stores and some discount chains.

Federal migratory waterfowl stamps validations will be available at all of Minnesota's 1,500 electronic license vendors. The electronic validation for the federal stamp is valid for up to 45 days until the customer receives the pictorial stamp by mail, when it must be signed and kept in possession.

HOW DO I BUY A LICENSE ONLINE OR BY TELEPHONE?

Licenses may be purchased via the DNR website at mndnr.gov or by calling toll free (888) 665-4236. Additional convenience fees are added for sales via the internet or telephone.

SUGGESTED SHOT SIZE SELECTION FOR WATERFOWL

| | MINIMUM | TYPICAL HUNTING CONDITIONS | MINIMUM DESIRED PATTERN DENSITY (hits / 30-inch circle) |
|----------------------|------------------|----------------------------|---|
| SMALL / MEDIUM DUCKS | 6 steel* | 3 - 4 steel | 120 |
| | 6 bismuth | 4 - 6 bismuth | |
| | 6 tungsten alloy | 4 - 6 tungsten alloy | |
| LARGE DUCKS | 4 steel | 3 steel | 90 |
| | 6 bismuth | 4 bismuth | |
| | 6 tungsten alloy | 4 - 6 tungsten alloy | |
| SMALL GEESE | 2 steel | 1 - BB steel | 60 |
| | 4 bismuth | 2 bismuth | |
| | 4 tungsten alloy | 2 tungsten alloy | |
| LARGE GEESE | 2 steel | BB - BBB steel | 50 |
| | 2 bismuth | 1 - BB bismuth | |
| | 4 tungsten alloy | 2 - BB tungsten alloy | |

*Close range—less than 35 yards

Note: Small shot (#6) is excellent for swatter loads to kill waterfowl hit, but not dead on the water.

Pattern testing should be done at the distance typical of your hunting conditions. Pattern testing is as important for the waterfowl hunter as sighting in is for the deer hunter.

For Your Information

Carlos Avery WMA Controlled Hunt Zone—A special restricted access hunt will be held in the pool 2 portion of the sanctuary at Carlos Avery WMA in Anoka County. Two blinds will be available by drawing on Saturday and Tuesday mornings through the waterfowl season.

Applications will be accepted for groups of up to 4 with preference given to groups with at least one youth hunter (age 17 and under) or one senior hunter (age 65 and over). Minnesota Waterfowl Association will conduct drawings for blinds two weeks prior to each week of hunting. For rules, application form and dates go to:

<http://www.mndnr.gov/averyhunt>,

<http://www.mnwaterfowl.com/>, or

call Carlos Avery WMA Headquarters at 651-296-5200



GENERAL WATERFOWL REGULATIONS

NEW FOR 2011

General

- The regular waterfowl season will open Sept. 24.
- Shooting hours for ducks, sandhill crane, rail and snipe will be one-half hour before sunrise until 4 p.m. from Sept. 24 through Oct. 8 and until sunset thereafter.
- Duck hunting in the north duck zone will be open through Nov. 22 (page 20).
- Duck hunting in the south zone will be open Sept 24 and 25, then close from Sept. 26-30, resuming Oct. 1 through Nov. 27 (page 20).
- The daily bag limit has increased to two hen mallards and three wood ducks (page 20).
- Goose hunting in the north duck zone will be open Sept. 24 through Dec. 17 (page 21).
- Except in the Rochester goose zone, goose hunting in the south duck zone will be open Sept. 24 and 25 then close Sept. 26-30, resuming Oct. 1 through Dec. 22 (page 21).
- Goose hunting in the Rochester goose zone will be open Sept. 24 and 25 then close Sept. 26-30, resuming Oct. 1 through Nov. 27 then close Nov. 28-Dec. 7, resuming Dec. 8 through Jan. 1 (page 21).
- Other geese (White-fronted, light geese and Brant) may be taken only when and where the Canada goose season is open.
- Youth Waterfowl Day will be Sept. 10 (page 20).

LICENSE VALIDATION/APPRENTICE HUNTER

- License validations for state migratory waterfowl stamps are legal for hunting without the pictorial stamp. Purchasers can request the optional pictorial stamp for a fee but it is not required for hunting.
- Apprentice hunter validation is now available for Minnesota residents who would normally be required to possess a firearms safety certificate to hunt small game or deer. See pages 13 and 30 of the *2011 Hunting and Trapping Regulations Handbook* for details.

DEFINITIONS

- **“Migratory game birds”** means ducks, geese, mergansers, coots, moorhens (gallinules), woodcock, rails, snipe, and mourning doves.
- **“Migratory waterfowl”** means ducks, geese, and mergansers.
- **“Undressed bird”** means ducks with one fully feathered wing and head attached or geese with one fully feathered wing attached.

NON-TOXIC SHOT REQUIRED

It is unlawful to take geese, ducks, mergansers, coots, moorhens, or sandhill cranes with lead shot or while having any lead shot in possession. This restriction includes muzzle loading shotguns and taking pen-reared mallards on commercial shooting preserves. Only shot approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service may be used.

SHOOTING HOURS

Shooting hours for ducks, geese, sandhill cranes (NW zone only) rails and snipe are one-half hour before sunrise to 4 p.m. from Sept. 24 through Saturday Oct. 8, and until sunset thereafter. See sunrise/sunset tables inside back cover.

DON'T SHOOT A SWAN

Both tundra and trumpeter swans are found in Minnesota and are not legal game birds. All-white trumpeter swans weigh up to 23 pounds. Young swans are gray in color.



Trumpeter Swan

OPENING DAY POSSESSION LIMIT

On the opening day of the season, no person may possess more freshly killed migratory game birds than is allowed by the daily bag limit.

RETRIEVAL

A person may not kill or wound any migratory game bird without making a reasonable effort to retrieve the bird and include it in the daily bag limit.

TAKING IN OPEN WATER

A person may not take migratory waterfowl, coots, or rails in open water unless that person is:

- a) within a natural growth of vegetation sufficient to partially conceal the person or boat, or
- b) pursuing or shooting wounded birds (while in compliance with watercraft restrictions), or
- c) on a river or stream that is not more than 100 yards in width.

WATERCRAFT

- A person using watercraft to take migratory waterfowl must comply with the provisions for "Taking in Open Water."
- Migratory waterfowl may be taken from a floating watercraft if the craft is drifting, beached, moored, resting at anchor, or is being propelled by paddle, oars, or pole.
- Migratory waterfowl may be taken from a watercraft propelled by motor or sails only if the motor is shut off and the sails are furled and the watercraft has stopped.
- While on the water and traveling to or from a site the person intends to hunt, unloaded and uncased firearms may be transported in a boat or other watercraft capable of being propelled by motor or sail. Firearms must be transported unloaded and cased in such watercraft:
 - Within Anoka, Hennepin and Ramsey counties
 - Within the boundaries of a home rule, charter or statutory city with a population of 2,500 or more.
 - As otherwise restricted by game refuge, shining or night vision laws
- All watercraft (including boats used for duck hunting during the duck season) are required to carry and have readily accessible, one U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) approved **wearable** (Type I, II, or III) personal flotation device (PFD or life preserver) for each person on board. **In addition, boats 16 feet or longer** (except canoes and kayaks) must carry at least one USCG approved Type IV throwable device (boat cushion or ring buoy) for the boat. Due to change in federal requirements, **boat cushions are no longer acceptable as primary life saving devices.**
- During open waterfowl seasons, a person may not leave an unattended boat used for hunting waterfowl in public waters between sunset and one hour before sunrise unless the boat is adjacent to private land under control of the person and the water does not contain a natural growth of vegetation sufficient to partially conceal a hunter or a boat.
- A duck boat does not have to be licensed during the Waterfowl Hunting Season for waterfowl hunting only.
- Persons leaving waters of the state must drain boating-related equipment holding water and live wells and bilges by removing the drain plug before transporting the watercraft and associated equipment on public roads. Drain plugs, bailers, valves, or other devices used to control the draining of water from ballast tanks, bilges and live wells must be removed or opened while transporting watercraft on public roads.

BLINDS AND SINK BOXES

- No person may erect a blind in public waters or on public land more than one hour before the open season for waterfowl.
- No person may take migratory waterfowl, coots, or rails using a sink box or in public waters from a permanent artificial blind. A sink box is a structure that allows a hunter to partially hide beneath the water surface.
- Any blind on public land or in public waters when not in use is considered public and not the property of the person who constructed it. Any use of threat or force against another person to gain possession of a blind is unlawful.

DECOYS

- No person may place decoys on public lands or in public waters more than two hours before legal shooting hours for waterfowl.
- No person may leave decoys on public waters between sunset and two hours before legal shooting hours or leave decoys unattended during other times for more than three consecutive hours, except decoys may be left in waters adjacent to private land under control of the hunter where there is not sufficient natural vegetation growing in the water to partially conceal a hunter. A person may not leave decoys in public waters between sunset and one hour before shooting hours if the decoys constitute a navigational hazard.

MOTORIZED DECOY RESTRICTIONS

From the opening day of the duck season (and on Youth Waterfowl Day) through Saturday October 8, a person may not use a motorized decoy or other motorized device designed to attract migratory waterfowl. On water bodies and lands fully contained within state wildlife management area boundaries, a person may not use motorized decoys or motorized devices designed to attract migratory waterfowl at any time during the waterfowl season. This restriction applies whether the motor is running or not. Devices without motors, such as wind-powered spinning-wing decoys, are not restricted under this law. Radio or wirelessly controlled motorized decoys may not be used.

WHITEFISH NETTING SEASON OPEN

The whitefish netting season on Leech Lake and other lakes is open during duck season. Be careful when venturing near buoys.

POSSESSING AND TRANSPORTING MIGRATORY WATERFOWL AND GAMEBIRDS

A person may not possess or transport unlawfully taken migratory game birds. Migratory game birds must be transported in an undressed condition (ducks with head and wing attached; geese and all other migrating game birds with a fully-feathered wing attached) at all times until delivery to either the taker's residence or a commercial processing facility.

MIGRATORY WATERFOWL FEEDING AND RESTING AREAS

The following areas have been designated Migratory Waterfowl Feeding and Resting Areas. When posted as such during the open waterfowl season no person may use any motor-propelled watercraft except trolling motors with battery power of 12 volts or less on lakes as indicated by the asterisk (*) in the table below.

| COUNTY | LAKES |
|--|---|
| Beltrami Big Stone, Lac qui Parle and Swift | Puposky Lake* and Little Puposky Lake* Part of Marsh Lake, Thielke Lake |
| Blue Earth Carver Cass | Cottonwood Lake Tiger Lake* Big Rice, Goose, Mud Lakes |
| Clearwater Faribault Freeborn | Upper Rice Lake Part of Minnesota Lake* Bear Lake*, Upper Twin Lake* |
| Grant and Douglas Itasca Jackson | Part of Lake Christina Rice Lake (near Max) and Nature's (Squaw) Lake Part of South Heron Lake* and all of North Heron Lake* except Winzer Bay and North Marsh |
| Kandiyohi LeSueur McLeod | Wagonga Lake* and Lake Lillian* Dora, Diamond, Henry, Rice, Sanborn and Scotch lakes Bakers Lake* and the unnamed lake* in Sec. 28, Twp. 114N., R. 29 W. (Penn Twp.) |
| Nicollet Otter Tail | Oakleaf Lake That part of Lake Lizzie, also known as Rush Lake, located in Sec. 3-9, Twp. 136 N., R. 42 (Lida Twp.); and Mud Lake in Aastad Twp. |
| Polk Pope Scott Sibley Traverse | Turtle Lake* Lake Nelson* and Lake Johanna Pleasant Lake Washington Lake and Mud Lake in Washington Lake Twp. Part of Mud Lake* |

AIRBOATS PROHIBITED ON LAKES DESIGNATED FOR WILDLIFE USE

The use of airboats is prohibited at all times on the following lakes, which have been designated for wildlife management purposes, except as specifically authorized. Additional motorized restrictions may be posted at access points.

| LAKE | COUNTY | LAKE | COUNTY |
|---------------|---------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| White Elk | Aitkin | Towner | Grant |
| Fish | Anoka | Heron | Jackson |
| Cottonwood | Blue Earth | Sanborn | LeSueur |
| Perch | Blue Earth | Pierce | Martin |
| Eagle | Blue Earth | Onamia | Mille Lacs |
| Rice | Blue Earth | Maria | Murray |
| Hanska | Brown | Round | Murray |
| Patterson | Carver | South Badger | Murray |
| Tiger | Carver | North Badger | Murray |
| Big Rice | Cass | Swan | Nicollet |
| Augusta | Cottonwood | Little Rice | St. Louis |
| Dog | Crow Wing | Big Rice | St. Louis |
| Anka | Douglas | Sand | Sibley |
| Jennie | Douglas | Rice | Steele/Dodge |
| Christina | Douglas/Grant | Hassel | Swift |
| Rice | Faribault | Buffalo | Waseca |
| Minnesota | Faribault | Goose | Waseca |
| Bear | Freeborn | Willis | Waseca |
| Lower Twin | Freeborn | Pelican | Wright |
| Geneva | Freeborn | Smith | Wright |
| Upper Twin | Freeborn | Curtis | Yellow Medicine |
| Ash | Grant | Spellman (N. and S.) | Yellow Medicine |
| Denton Slough | Grant | | |

Note: *The use of outboard motors (including electric trolling motors) or motorized water vehicles (including amphibious vehicles) is prohibited on most wildlife management areas, waterfowl production areas or national wildlife refuges. See page 104 of the Minnesota Hunting and Trapping Regulations for more details.*

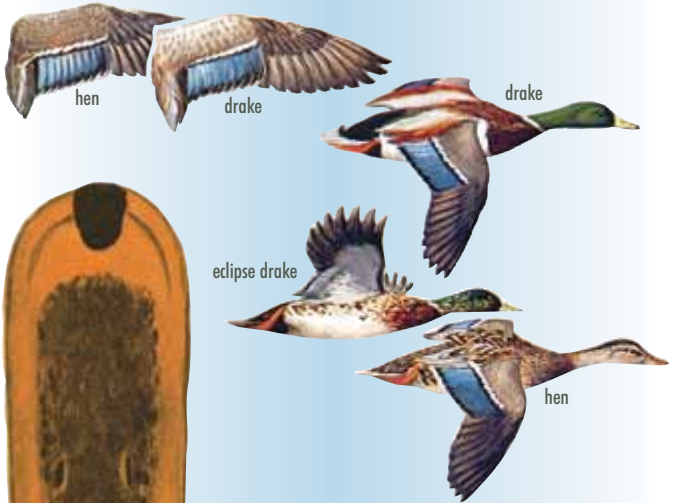
For Your Information

Report Your Bands. Call 1-800-327-BAND

Each year, state and federal waterfowl biologists mark thousands of waterfowl with numbered leg bands. Hunters who report recovered bands receive specific information on where and when the bird was banded while providing important information for waterfowl management. Bands may be reported by calling 1-800-327-BAND (2263) or online at www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBL.

MALLARD

Length—24"
Weight—2.75 lbs.



drake

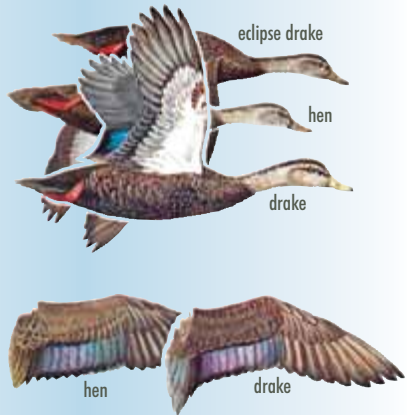


hen

The mallard is the state's most common duck. Typical Minnesota harvest: 270,000.

BLACK DUCK

Length—24"
Weight—2.75 lbs.



drake



hen

Primarily found in the Atlantic Flyway and, to a lesser extent, the Mississippi. There is a small breeding population in northeast Minnesota. Typical Minnesota harvest: 1,000.

GADWALL

Length—21"

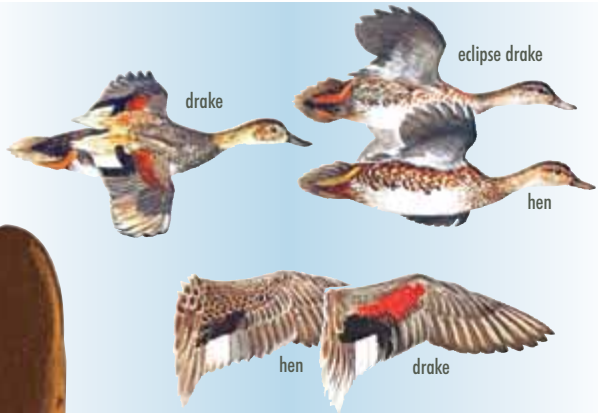
Weight—2 lbs.



drake



hen



Often called "gray mallards" or "gray ducks," gadwalls are one of the earliest migrants. Typical Minnesota harvest: 36,000.

WOOD DUCK

Length—18.5"

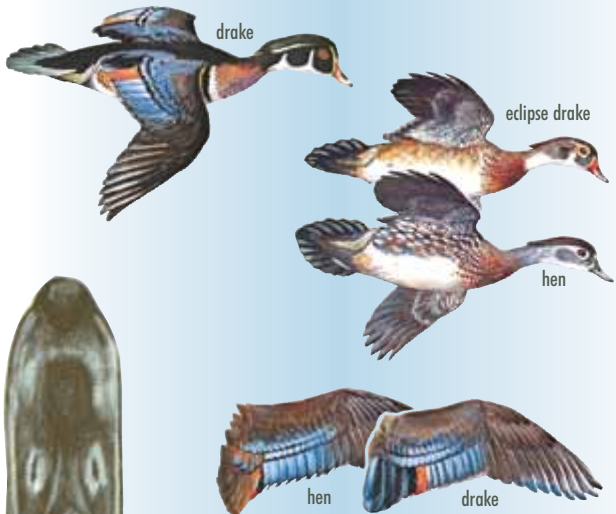
Weight—1.5 lbs.



drake



hen

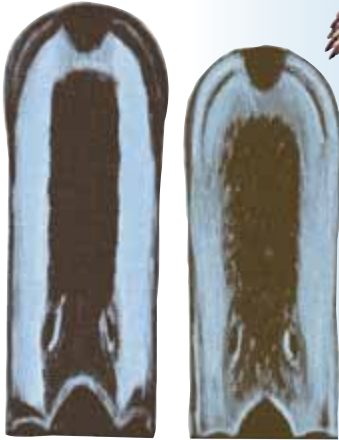


Found in all flyways; most numerous in the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyways. Typical Minnesota harvest: 125,000.

PINTAIL

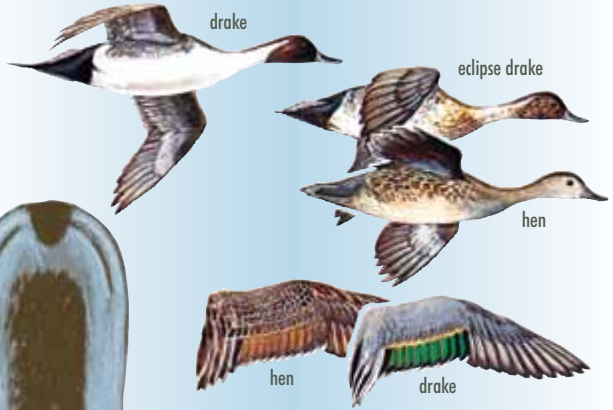
Length—26"

Weight—1.75 lbs.



drake

hen



drake

eclipse drake

hen

hen

drake

These ducks use all four flyways but are most plentiful in the west. Typical Minnesota harvest: 15,000.

HOODED MERGANSER

Length—18"

Weight—1.5 lbs.



drake

hen



eclipse drake

drake

hen

hen

drake

Often seen in pairs or very small flocks. Typical Minnesota harvest: 9,000.

SCAUP

Greater Length—18.5"
Weight—2 lbs.

Lesser Length—17"
Weight—1.75 lbs.



drake



hen



Except for the wing marks, greater and lesser scaup appear nearly identical in the field. The North American breeding population was at an all time low in 2005. Biologists continue to study the declining population. Typical Minnesota harvest: 30,000.

RINGNECK

Length—17"
Weight—1.5 lbs.



drake



hen



Similar in appearance to scaup but more often found in fresh marshes and wooded ponds. Flocks of up to 200,000 stage on north central Minnesota refuges. Typical Minnesota harvest: 80,000.

CANVASBACK

Length—22"

Weight—3 lbs.



drake



hen



drake



eclipse drake

hen



hen

drake

Tend to favor open-water areas.
Normally late to start south.
Typical Minnesota harvest:
3,000.

REDHEAD

Length—20"

Weight—2.5 lbs.



drake



hen



drake



eclipse drake

hen



hen

drake

Range coast to coast with the
largest numbers in the Central
Flyway. Often found associating
with canvasback. Typical Minnesota
harvest: 14,000.

CANADA GOOSE

Length—25-43"

Average annual Minnesota harvest: 249,000. About 36 percent of the harvest occurs during the September season.



Canada Goose

SNOW GOOSE

Length—25-38"

Black grin patch on bill is found only on Snow Geese.

BLUE SNOW GOOSE

Length—25-30"

The "Blue" goose is a variation of the Lesser Snow Goose species.

Average annual Minnesota harvest of snow geese and blue geese: 3,000.



Snow Goose

"Blue" Snow Goose

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE

Length—25-30"

The pinkish bill, white patch on front of head and dark bars on the belly identify this species. Uncommon in Minnesota, the average annual harvest is fewer than 200 birds.



White-Fronted Goose

2011 SEASON DATES AND BAG LIMITS

DUCKS/COOTS

DUCKS, COOTS, MERGANSERS, MOORHENS (GALLINULES)

SEASON DATES

North Zone
South Zone

See map, page 22

Sept. 24-Nov. 22
Sept. 24-25
Oct. 1-Nov. 27

Duck bag limits: 6 ducks daily; may not include more than any combination of the following:

4 mallards (2 hen mallard), 2 redheads, 2 scaup, 3 wood ducks, 2 pintails, 1 black duck, 1 canvasback. If not listed up to 6 ducks of a species may be taken. The possession limit is twice the daily bag limit.

Coot and moorhen (gallinule) bag limits: Daily bag limit is 15. The possession limit is twice the daily bag limit. Shooting hours are the same as for the regular waterfowl season.

Merganser bag limits: Daily bag limit is 5, no more than 2 of which may be a hooded merganser. The possession limit is twice the daily bag limit.

OTHER MIGRATORY BIRDS

| | SEASON DATES | DAILY LIMIT | POSSESSION LIMIT |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Mourning doves | Sept. 1 - Oct. 30 | 15 | 30 |
| Woodcock | Sept. 24 - Nov. 7 | 3 | 6 |
| Sora and Virginia rail | Sept. 1 - Nov. 7 | 25 (in aggregate) | 25 (in aggregate) |
| Common snipe (Wilson's or Jacksnipe) | Sept. 1 - Nov. 7 | 8 | 16 |
| Sandhill crane* | Sept. 3 - Oct. 9 | 2 | 4 |

* Northwest goose zone only, page 22

Youth Hunt: On Sept. 10, 2011, waterfowl hunters age 15 and younger, when accompanied by a non-hunting adult (age 18 and older, no license required) may take ducks, Canada geese, mergansers, coots and moorhens from one-half hour before sunrise to 4 p.m. Motorized decoy restrictions are in effect. Bag limits are the same as the regular duck season. Five Canada geese may be taken statewide. Hunters ages 13 to 15 must have a firearms safety certificate or apprentice hunter validation in their possession. All other migratory bird hunting regulations apply. **A free small game license and HIP certification are required for youth age 15 and under.**

SPECIAL FALCONRY SEASON

Dates:

- Ducks, coots and moorhens may be taken by falconry from Sept. 24, 2011 to Jan. 7, 2012.
- Geese may be taken by falconry during any open goose season. Woodcock, rails and snipe may be taken by falconry from Sept. 1 to Dec. 16.

Bag limits and hours:

- Three daily combined and six in possession combined.
- Falconry hours are one-half hour before sunrise to sunset, except after Sept. 24, when they are the same as the waterfowl shooting hours.

SHOOTING HOURS

NEW Shooting hours for sandhill crane, rail, snipe, ducks and geese are one-half hour before sunrise to 4 p.m. from the opening day of duck season through Saturday Oct. 8, and until sunset thereafter. See youth hunt and early goose season for additional hours.

GEESE

| | DATES | BAG LIMITS |
|---|--|--------------|
| NEW North Duck Zone Canada Light geese White-fronts and brant | Sept. 24-Dec. 17 | 3 20 1 |
| South Duck Zone Canada Light geese White-front and brant | Sept. 24-25; Oct. 1-Dec. 22 | 3 20 1 |
| Rochester zone Canada Light geese White-fronted geese | Sept. 24-25; Oct. 1-Nov. 27; Dec. 8-Jan. 1 | 3 20 1 |
| September (early) Canada | Sept. 3-22 | 5 |

The possession limit is twice the daily bag limit. Zone maps are on page 22.

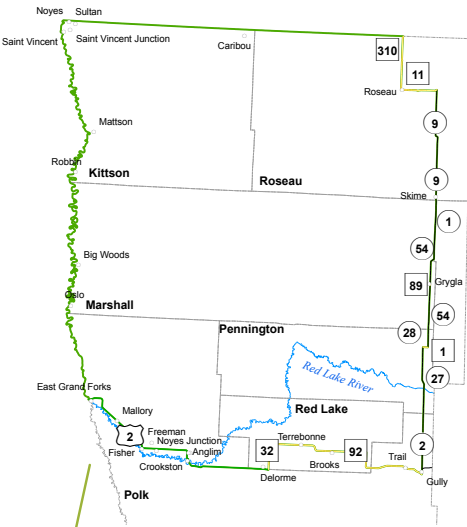
* A special \$4 permit is required to hunt Canada geese during the special September season. All persons must have the permit to participate in this hunt, except residents under age 18 or age 65 and older and persons hunting on their own property. The permit is available from ELS license agents and the DNR License Center or by telephone. There is no deadline for purchasing a permit.

Note: Shooting hours during the early goose seasons are one half hour before sunrise to sunset.

SURFACE WATER RESTRICTIONS

"Surface water" includes, but is not limited to wetlands, lakes, rivers and streams. Temporarily flooded cropland, pasture, or other temporarily flooded areas (unless contiguous with lakes, wetlands, rivers or streams) are not included. This restriction does not apply to youth participating in the youth waterfowl hunt or in other areas as specifically authorized by the commissioner.

See additional restrictions on page 22.

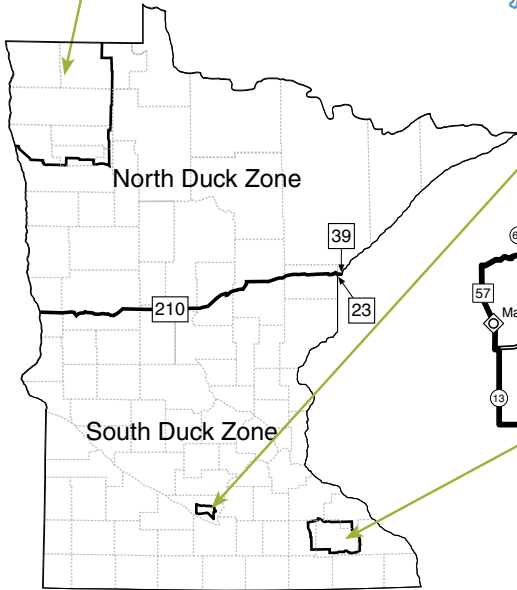
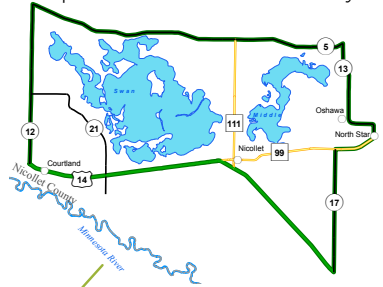


NORTHWEST GOOSE AND SANDHILL CRANE ZONE

Early season hunting near water prohibited within the boundary.

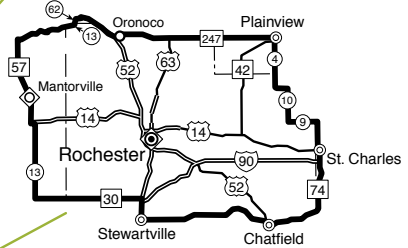
SWAN LAKE AREA

Early season hunting near water prohibited within the boundary.



ROCHESTER GOOSE ZONE

See page 21 for season dates.

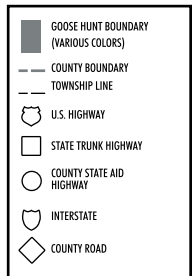


SURFACE WATER RESTRICTIONS

A person may not hunt geese during the September goose season within 100 yards of surface water in the following areas:

- Northwest surface water restriction
- Carlos Avery Wildlife Management Area
- Swan Lake Area
- Ocheda Lake Game Refuge

LEGEND





STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS

Invasive species such as faucet snails, purple loosestrife, Eurasian watermilfoil and zebra mussels can damage habitat for fish, waterfowl and other wildlife. It is illegal to transport most aquatic plants and zebra mussels in or on boats, trailers, or decoys in boats, when on public roads. However, waterfowl hunters may use emergent aquatic plants, such as cattails and bulrushes, cut above the waterline, for building blinds. How to help:

- Switch to elliptical, bulb-shaped or strap decoy anchors that won't easily collect submerged aquatic plants.
- Inspect and remove aquatic plants, zebra mussels, and mud that are attached to decoy lines or anchors and waders

lake access

Drain the water from boats, live wells, and equipment before leaving the



BLINDS FOR HUNTERS WITH DISABILITIES

The Lac qui Parle, Talcot Lake, Swan Lake and Whitewater Wildlife Management Areas have a number of duck or goose hunting blinds for hunters with disabilities. For more information, write to: Lac qui Parle WMA 14047 20th St. NW Watson, MN 56295; Nicollet area wildlife office (Swan Lake WMA) 501 Ninth St. Nicollet, MN 56074, Talcot Lake WMA, 40249 County Road 7, Dundee MN, 56131; Whitewater WMA 15035 Highway 74, Altura MN, 55910.

Hunt Southwest MN

MARSHALL MINNESOTA

For a Map

507-537-1865

info@visitmarshallmn.com

• Free 2010-2011
Southwest MN
Public Hunting Map

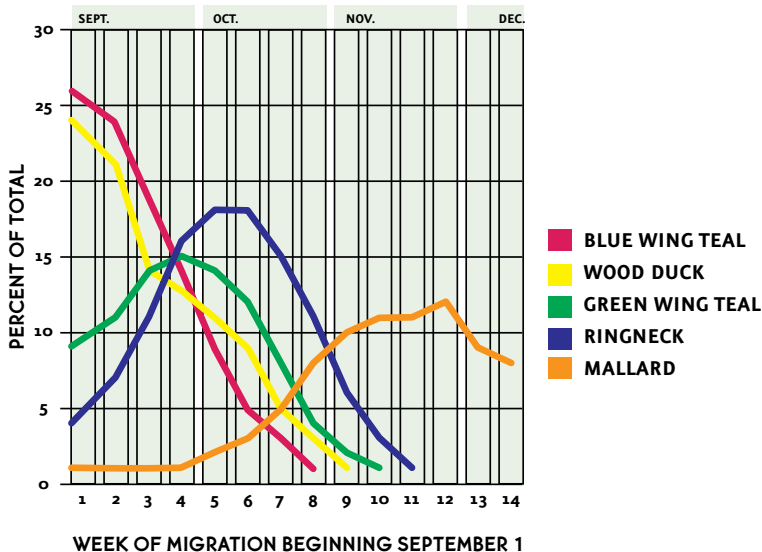
• Google Integrated
Website



swmnhunting.com

FALL MIGRATION

Upper Mississippi Region



MAKE THE SHOT

It's the responsible thing to do

Quick, clean, humane kills reduce unretrieved losses of waterfowl. Make the shot by following these five steps.

1.) Identify your effective range

Shoot crossing clay targets at predetermined distances. Your effective range is the distance at which you can consistently break six out of eight targets (75 percent).

2.) Pattern your gun

Pattern-testing shotguns and shot shells is as important to the waterfowl hunter as "sighting in" is to the deer hunter. Be sure to know how your equipment will perform at your effective range plus or minus ten yards.

3.) Know the distance

Learn to estimate distance over the barrel of your shotgun through subtending.

Subtending is simply knowing how much of a duck or goose is covered by the end of your barrel at various distances when the shotgun is mounted. The most important distance to be able to determine is your effective range.

4.) Focus on the bird

Flocks of waterfowl tend to confuse the eye and make it hard to concentrate on one bird. Focus on the head, or even just the bill, of a single bird.

5.) Set up for success

Plan decoys and pass shooting so birds drop in open water or open field rather than dense vegetation. Having only one or two hunters shooting at one time will also help. Rotate shooting opportunities among hunters in the blind.

STATE REFUGES OPEN TO GOOSE HUNTING

| COUNTY | REFUGE | OPEN SEASON |
|-------------------|---|--|
| Beltrami | Bemidji Game Refuge (except Lake Bemidji, Miss. River and Stump Lake) | Canada geese Sept. 3 - 22 |
| Benton | Sauk Rapids-Rice* Goose Refuge | Waterfowl hunting |
| Chisago | Linn Lake Game Refuge | Waterfowl hunting |
| Clay | Clay County Game Refuge | Canada geese Sept. 3 - 22 |
| Cottonwood | Talcot Lake Waterfowl Refuge | Goose hunters with disabilities. Contact refuge |
| Dakota | Vermillion Highlands Research, Recreation and WMA | Goose Dec. 12 - 22 |
| Dodge | Claremont Game Refuge | Goose hunting |
| Douglas | Douglas County Goose Refuge * Evansville Game Refuge | Waterfowl hunting Canada geese Sept. 3 - 22 |
| Freeborn | Moscow Game Refuge | Goose hunting |
| Isanti | Elizabeth Lake Game Refuge German Lake Game Refuge | Early goose season and youth participating in a designated hunting mentoring program only |
| Martin | Fox Lake Game Refuge** Mud-Bardwell Game Refuge** | Goose hunting Sept. 24, 25 and Oct. 1 Canada geese Dec. 16 - 22 Canada geese Oct. 29 - Dec. 22 |
| Mower | Austin Game Refuge | Waterfowl hunting |
| Nicollet | Swan Lake No. 2 Game Refuge (south island only) | Waterfowl hunting |
| Nobles | Ocheda Lake Game Refuge*** | Youth Waterfowl Day Canada geese Sept. 3 - 22, Dec. 3 - 22 |
| Olmsted | Rochester Game Refuge | Canada geese Sept. 3 - 22 |
| Otter Tail | Otter Tail County Goose Refuges * | Waterfowl hunting |
| Pine | Pine County Unit 2 Game Refuge | Waterfowl hunting |
| Sherburne | Sand Dunes Game Refuge | Waterfowl hunting |
| Stearns | Stearns County Game Refuge | Waterfowl hunting (south of Kimball) |
| Steele | Rickert Waterfowl Refuge except Myron Buelow Waterfowl Sanctuary WMA | Canada geese Sept. 3 - 22 |
| Stevens | Harstad Slough Waterfowl Refuge | Canada geese Sept. 3 - 22 |
| Washington | St. Croix River Game Refuge Stillwater Game Refuge | Waterfowl hunting Waterfowl hunting |
| Watsonwan | Saint James Game Refuge | Goose hunting Sept. 24 - 25 and Oct. 1 |

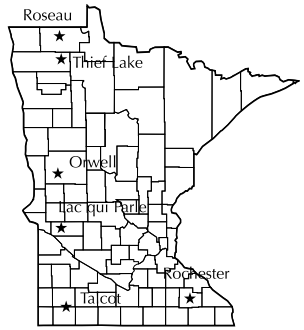
* No hunting from roads or rights of way

** No hunting within 100 yards of Fox, Temperance, Mud and Bardwell Lakes

*** No hunting within 100 yards of surface water during September season

CONTROLLED HUNTING ZONES

Waterfowl or small game hunting, as specified, is restricted to designated hunting stations in the portions posted as controlled hunting zones on or adjacent to the Lac qui Parle, Roseau River, Thief Lake, Talcot Lake, and Orwell Wildlife Management Areas, and the Rochester Game Refuge.



General Restrictions

The following regulations apply to persons within all the controlled hunting zones during the open Canada goose seasons or as otherwise specified:

- No more than one hunting party, consisting of no more than three hunters, may occupy any hunting station at one time.
- Waterfowl hunters must have their guns unloaded and cased except within 10 feet of a hunting station.
- The hunting and taking of migratory waterfowl is limited to a distance within 10 feet of each designated hunting station, except hunters may retrieve downed birds away from a posted station if they comply with all other refuge and trespass regulations.
- On public lands, dogs must be on a leash except within 10 feet of stations or while retrieving, and must be under control at all times.
- All persons occupying a hunting station must meet all license requirements to hunt waterfowl in Minnesota.
- No person may leave any refuse, offal, or feathers on public lands in the controlled hunting zone or in any parking lot or designated overnight use area on the management area.
- No alcoholic beverages may be consumed or possessed at any of the hunting stations on public lands.
- No person may loiter between the designated hunting stations on public lands.
- On public lands, after each party member has bagged a limit of Canada geese or expended their limit of shells (if applicable), the party must promptly leave the station.
- No trailers of any kind are allowed in designated parking lots.

LAC QUI PARLE

The following regulations apply to all persons in the Lac qui Parle Controlled Hunting Zone from Oct. 20-Nov. 30.

Reservations and Permits

- Waterfowl and small game hunters may reserve hunting stations in accordance with rules available at the Lac qui Parle Wildlife Management Area headquarters. For information, contact: Lac qui Parle WMA, 14047 20th St. NW, Watson, MN 56295.
- On public lands, no person may hunt migratory waterfowl or small game in the controlled hunting zone without first registering at the check station and obtaining an entry permit. There is a daily fee of \$3 per hunter 18 years and older.
- The transfer of entry permits to other hunters is prohibited.

Hunting Restrictions

- Hunters are limited to 12 shells per trip in possession.
- Within one hour of hunt completion, each party must return their entry permit to the check station and report number of geese harvested.
- Waterfowl and small game hunters must have guns unloaded and cased except within 10 feet of assigned hunting stations.
- Hunters are limited to one trip to the blinds before noon, and one trip after noon, per day.

The following regulations apply to waterfowl hunters in the Lac qui Parle Controlled Hunting Zone from December 1 through the close of the Canada goose season.

- Hunters must use designated hunting stations on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Hunters are limited to one trip to the blinds before noon, and one trip after noon, per day.
- Hunters are limited to 12 shells per trip in possession
- Hunters must have guns unloaded and cased except within 10 feet of assigned hunting stations.
- No person may park in or otherwise occupy any designated CHZ parking lot or occupy any hunting station from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m.

THIEF LAKE

The following regulations apply to waterfowl and small game hunters in the Thief Lake Controlled Hunting Zone (CHZ) during all open waterfowl seasons (including Early September and Youth Waterfowl Seasons). The restriction on

small game hunting in the CHZ applies from the opening of the regular waterfowl season through October 25.

- Hunters must use designated hunting stations on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Hunters are limited to one trip to the blinds before noon, and one trip after noon, per day.
- Hunters are limited to 12 shells per trip in possession.
- Hunters must have guns unloaded and cased except within 10 feet of the hunting stations.
- Selected blinds will be posted closed during the early September Canada Goose Season because of their proximity to open water.
- No person may park in or otherwise occupy any designated CHZ parking lot or occupy any hunting station from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m.

ORWELL

The following regulations apply to all persons in the Orwell Controlled Hunting Zone during the Regular Goose Season:

- Hunting, other than waterfowl, is prohibited.
- No person may enter the controlled hunting zone except when their vehicle is occupying a numbered parking stall in the designated parking lot in the controlled hunting zone.
- No persons other than those hunting at a station in the controlled hunting zone may occupy a numbered stall in a designated parking lot.
- Hunters must hunt only at the hunting stations having a number corresponding to their parking stall number.
- No person may park in or otherwise occupy any parking stall in the designated parking lot or occupy any hunting station during any two consecutive days or from one hour after the close of daily waterfowl shooting hours to 8 p.m.
- All guns must be unloaded and cased except within 10 feet of a hunting station.

ROCHESTER AND ROSEAU RIVER

The following regulations apply to all persons in the Rochester and Roseau River Controlled Hunting Zones during the open Goose Season:

- The wildlife manager may limit all persons to one day of hunting in every three. If hunting is limited, the manager will stamp the date on the Small Game Hunting License or Firearms Safety Certificate of every person at each restricted hunting station. Persons may hunt at any restricted station on the day stamped, but may not occupy a restricted station for the next two days. Restricted stations will be posted.
- No one may be in a hunting station or designated parking lot from one hour after the close of the daily waterfowl shooting hours to 8 p.m.

TALCOT LAKE

Closed Area

All waterfowl hunting is prohibited upon or from the 1.5 mile segment of State Trunk Highway 62 and its right-of-way along the south boundary of the Talcot Lake Waterfowl Refuge (between the Cottonwood County line on the west and County Highway 7 on the east).

The following regulations apply to all persons in the Talcot Lake controlled hunting zones during Canada Goose Seasons:

General Restrictions

- Hunting, other than waterfowl, is prohibited on public land in the East and West Side Controlled Hunting Zones.
- The wildlife manager may limit persons to one day of hunting in every three. The manager will stamp the date on the Small Game Hunting License or Firearms Safety Certificate of each person at a restricted hunting station. Persons may hunt at any restricted station on the day stamped, but may not occupy a restricted station for the next two days. Restricted stations will be posted.
- No persons may occupy a hunting station within a controlled hunting zone except when their vehicle is occupying a numbered parking stall in a designated parking lot in the controlled hunting zone. No persons other than those hunting at a hunting station may occupy a numbered stall or park in a designated parking lot.
- Waterfowl hunters must hunt only at the hunting stations having numbers corresponding to their parking stall number.
- No person may park in or otherwise occupy any parking stall in the designated parking lot or occupy any hunting station from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m.

For Your Information

Spring Snow Goose Season (Light Goose Conservation Action)

Minnesota again plans to participate in a cooperative light goose conservation action in March and April of 2012. This action is being taken in an attempt to reduce an overabundance of snow geese that is threatening their arctic breeding habitat. All participants must have a Light Goose Conservation Permit in their possession while attempting to take light geese. Details will be announced early in 2012.

SUMMARY OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS

In addition to state regulations, the following federal rules apply to the taking, possession, shipping, transporting and storing of migratory gamebirds.



Caution: The following material is a summary. Each hunter should also consult the actual federal regulations found in Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 20. More restrictive regulations may apply to national wildlife refuges and state wildlife management areas open to public hunting.

ILLEGAL HUNTING METHODS

You may not hunt migratory birds

...With a trap, snare, net, rifle, pistol, swivel gun, shotgun larger than 10 gauge, punt gun, battery gun, machine gun, fish hook, poison, drug, explosive or stupefying substance.

...From a sink box or any other low floating device that conceals you beneath the surface of the water.

...From a motorboat or sailboat, unless you shut the motor off or furl the sail and the vessel is no longer in motion.

...Using live birds as decoys.

...Using recorded or electrically amplified bird calls or sounds or imitations of these calls and sounds.

...While possessing any shot other than approved nontoxic shot. A list of approved shot is available online at: www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/currentbirdissues/nontoxic.htm

...With a shotgun that can hold more than three shells, unless you plug it with a one piece filler that cannot be removed without disassembling the gun.

...From or by means, aid, or use of any motor vehicle, motor-driven land conveyance, or aircraft (if you are a paraplegic or are missing one or both legs, you may hunt from a stationary car or other stationary motor-driven land vehicle or conveyance).

...By the aid of baiting or on or over a baited area where a person knows or reasonably should know that the area is or has been baited. A baited area is considered to be baited for 10 days after removal of bait.

POSSESSION LIMIT

No person shall possess more migratory game birds taken in the United States than the possession limit or the aggregate possession limit, whichever applies.

FIELD POSSESSION LIMIT

No person shall possess, have in custody or transport more than the daily bag limit or aggregate daily bag limit, whichever applies, of migratory game birds, tagged or not tagged at or between the place where taken and either (a) his automobile or principal means of land transportation; or (b) his

personal abode or temporary transient place of lodging; or (c) migratory bird preservation facility; or (d) a post office or (e) a common carrier facility.

WANTON WASTE

You must make a reasonable effort to retrieve all migratory game birds that you kill or wound and keep these birds in your actual custody while in the field. You must immediately kill any wounded birds that you retrieve and count those birds toward your daily bag limit. Birds must remain in your possession while in the field. You may not give your birds to another person in the field regardless of whether or not they are properly tagged.

TAGGING

You may not put or leave migratory game birds at any place or in the custody of another person unless you tag the birds with your signature, address, number of birds identified by species and the date you killed them.

RALLYING

You may not hunt migratory game birds that have been concentrated, driven, rallied or stirred up with a motorized vehicle or sailboat.

DRESSING

You may not completely field dress migratory birds, see page 11, before taking them from the field.

DUAL VIOLATION

A violation of a state migratory game bird regulation is also a violation of federal regulations.

PROTECTED BIRDS

Federal law prohibits the killing of nongame migratory birds.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Federal migratory game bird hunting regulations can be found in 50 CFR Part 20. If you have additional questions about waterfowl hunting and the law, contact Division of Law Enforcement, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Federal Building, P.O. Box 45, Fort Snelling, MN 55111. Telephone: (612) 713-5320.

Celebrating Minnesota's
great outdoors for 70 years



Sign up today.

Call 888-646-6367

or visit

www.mndnr.gov/magazine

WATERFOWL SEASON Q AND A WITH DNR COMMISSIONER TOM LANDWEHR

Q: What prompted the Minnesota DNR to make significant waterfowl regulation changes this year?

A: Minnesota has 40,000 fewer duck hunters than a decade ago. These changes reflect a commitment to maintaining our waterfowl hunting heritage by increasing hunting opportunity and satisfaction

Q: Why is this year's opening date Sept. 24? What impacts do you expect from this earlier opener?

A: The season has been moved up to provide more early-season hunting opportunity, especially for migrating wood duck and teal. Since 2005, state law prevented us from opening the waterfowl season earlier than the Saturday nearest Oct. 1, despite a federal framework allowing waterfowl seasons to open a week earlier than that. In July, the Minnesota state Legislature repealed that law, enabling to us to open the waterfowl hunting season at an earlier date. We expect this change to increase opportunities to harvest ducks throughout Minnesota.

Q: Is the DNR also addressing habitat issues?

A: Yes. Through partnerships with Ducks Unlimited, the Minnesota Waterfowl Association and state and federal agencies, the DNR is adding to the state's acreage of shallow lakes, grasslands and protected wetlands. All those are critical to raising ducks and providing habitat for migrating waterfowl. Much of the funding for these new initiatives is coming from Outdoor Heritage Fund, which gets a percentage of the sales tax initiative approved by voters in 2008.

Q: Why change opening day shooting hours from 9 a.m., which has been the norm since 2004, to one-half hour before sunrise?

A: Hunters told the DNR they support the change. To that end, we worked with state lawmakers during the 2011 legislative session to pass a law to change the hours. It should not have a negative impact on duck populations.

Q: Why change the mallard hen limit, which has been one since 2005, to two?

A: We believe that mallard populations can sustain additional harvest based on higher mallard populations in Minnesota and across the continent. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service allows all states in the Mississippi Flyway to set hen mallard bag limits at two per day. Most other states have a two hen mallard bag limit. We feel the two-hen limit is biologically-justified and will have the support of most duck hunters.

Q: Why change the wood duck bag limit from two per day to three per day?

A: We believe wood duck populations can sustain the slight increase in harvest that is likely to occur as a result of a higher bag limit and earlier opening date. In 2008, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service allowed states to raise their bag limits on wood ducks from two per day to three per day, and all other nearby states use a 3-bird bag.

Q: Why create north and south hunting zones?

A: We believe that utilizing two different duck zones can provide more opportunity for our hunters in different areas of the state, particularly with the early opening date. Because of differences in freeze-up and duck abundance across the state during the fall, the north duck zone, which has a consecutive 60-day season, should provide more opportunities early in the season when ducks are more abundant. In the south duck zone (where the season will open for two days, close for five days, and then reopen for an additional 58 days) the new structure will still provide opportunity early in the season with the early weekend but also accommodate duck hunters in southern Minnesota who want to hunt ducks through Thanksgiving weekend.

Q: Why is Youth Waterfowl Day Sept. 10, an earlier date than previous years?

A: Youth waterfowl day, an annual event since 1996, was moved to an earlier date because the regular waterfowl opener was moved to an earlier date. Youth Day will occur two weeks prior to regular opener on Sept. 24. The peak of the blue winged teal migration will occur during Youth Waterfowl Day, which should help increase positive introductory hunting experiences. The two-week buffer between youth day and the regular seasons should help minimize impact to opening day hunters.

Q: Do any of these changes impact goose regulations?

A: The overall goose season length and bag limit will remain the same as last fall with 85 days and a three Canada goose bag limit. But the dates for goose season will be different in the south and north duck zones and the Rochester goose zones. For example, when duck season is closed in the south duck zone, goose season also will be closed in that zone.

Q: What overall impact do you expect to see from all of these changes?

A: My hope is that it increases hunter satisfaction, duck harvest and duck hunter numbers while sustaining the overall health of our state and continental duck populations. That's the goal. I've asked wildlife staff to collect additional monitoring information from hunters after the season so we can better evaluate the changes.

Q: What can hunters do further the waterfowling tradition?

A: I encourage you to introduce someone new to waterfowl hunting or re-spark the interest of someone whose interest has waned. The next generation of waterfowl hunters will be formed largely by those who learned from and admired the skills of this generation. So please do your part to keep the legacy alive.

Waterfowl hunting focus group provides insights, input

A group of 15 dedicated duck hunters is providing input to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources this year.

Created by Commissioner Tom Landwehr, a first-ever waterfowl hunting focus group is offering input and insights on habitat, regulations, seasons, and other issues, including recruiting and retaining Minnesota's waterfowl hunter base.

"I formed the group because I wanted to meet face-to-face with hunters and hear what they had to say," explained Landwehr. "I'm glad I am doing it. It has provided another layer of insight beyond what we already collect, and allows hunters to discuss in a live setting the implications of different options."

The focus group is comprised of one representative from Delta Waterfowl, Ducks Unlimited, Minnesota Waterfowl Association, Minnesota Conservation Federation, Minnesota Outdoor Heritage Alliance, Izaak Walton League and the Minnesota Duck and Goose Callers Association, plus eight at-large waterfowl hunters who share perspectives from all corners of the state. Demographically, the group ranges in age from Gen Xers to Boomers. Four women are on the panel.

"These citizens deserve thanks for contributing their time, knowledge, and candor," said Landwehr. "I also thank those who are following their work and providing input via an on-line survey."

Focus group members are: Jim Bezat, Jeff Campbell, Danielle DeVito, John Devney, Rick Kezar, Alexandra Larson, Win Mitchell, Shawn Nelson, Brad Nylin, Bob Rialson, Steve Schaust, Louise Segreto, Andy Thill, Kelsie Thomas and Derek Wagner.

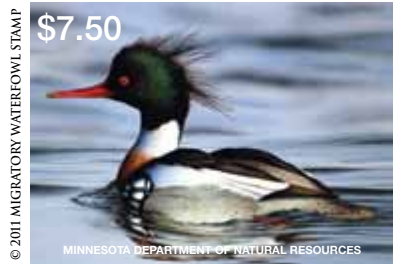
The focus group has met three times. A fourth and final meeting is set for September. The DNR will continue to explore new ways to engage hunters.

MINNESOTA'S OTHER GREENHEAD: The Red-Breasted Merganser

By Steve Cordts, DNR Waterfowl Specialist

Red-breasted mergansers are one of the least studied waterfowl species in North America. Often called "sawbills" or "fish ducks", they are a medium-sized sea duck that spend more time in salt water than fresh water. To most duck hunters, they often end up lumped together with their cousin the common merganser and are simply called "big mergs", which in many instances serves as a warning to keep the safety on since all mergansers have a reputation as poor table fare. Adult male red-breasted mergansers are a strikingly handsome bird but since they are uncommon in Minnesota during the fall and often get a free ride through decoy spreads, few hunters ever see one in hand. Because of the difficulty in distinguishing red-breasted from common mergansers during aerial surveys, they are recorded simply as "big mergansers", which makes it difficult to assess abundance and population status of red-breasted mergansers.

Adult males have a metallic green face (similar in color to a drake mallard head) and black elsewhere on their head, with feathers at the back of the head that form a long, double-pointed crest. Males have white neck rings, speckled reddish brown upper chests, and grayish sides. Adult females are generally grayish-brown with some white on their throats, breast, and belly.



Both sexes have long pointed serrated bills and black wings with large white patches.

A crude estimate of the population in North America is 250,000-300,000 birds. They generally nest in the arctic and subarctic regions in Canada and their breeding range extends from the Aleutian Islands of Alaska to the Atlantic coast. Some red-breasted mergansers nest in states surrounding the Great Lakes and the far northeastern U.S. Small numbers nest in northeast and north central Minnesota, but no reliable population estimate is available. At present, there is an ongoing survey called the Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas where all townships in the state are surveyed for breeding birds of all species. When completed in 2013, this should document a more locations of nesting red-breasted mergansers in Minnesota.

Red-breasted mergansers are unique compared to other ducks in that they

often nest in small colonies, females will lay eggs in another females nest (dump nesting), and ducklings from many broods often join together to form crèches of 30+ ducklings that are attended by a single adult female.

During the fall and winter, red-breasted mergansers migrate along both the Pacific and Atlantic coasts and to the Gulf of Mexico. Smaller numbers winter on the Great Lakes, Great Salt Lake in Utah, and on other large lakes in various states. In Minnesota, red-breasted mergansers are often present on Lake Superior from Duluth north and occasionally on other large lakes. In rare cases, they are observed with common mergansers or other ducks but mainly occur in small flocks with only red-breasted mergansers. During spring migration, red-breasted mergansers are much more common across Minnesota than during the fall. It's possible that red-breasted mergansers wintering in the Gulf of Mexico simply fly the shortest route back north to their breeding grounds in northern Canada.

Unlike common and hooded mergansers, which are both cavity nesters, red-breasted mergansers are ground nesters. From what little information is available, their nesting preferences are a bit unusual compared to other ground-nesting ducks. They often nest on rocky cliffs, in old burrows or dens, under overhanging branches, and even in abandoned igloos in Alaska.

Their diet varies, but consists mainly of small fish but they have been known to

forage on other aquatic invertebrates and amphibians. In Alaska, they sometimes follow migrating salmon during their spawning run and forage on salmon eggs.

For many hunters, both red-breasted and common mergansers fall into the "neighbor's mallard" category. If they shoot one by mistake, they ask the neighbor if they'd like some ducks for supper. Sport harvest in North America is low compared to other ducks and averages about 30,000/year. Harvest in Minnesota is typically a few hundred red-breasted mergansers each year.

A few hundred red-breasted mergansers have been banded in North America, compared to hundreds of thousands of mallards and other species of ducks. In Minnesota, only 5 have ever been banded and only 1 was recovered by a hunter in Nebraska the following year. Other than a unique story and band for one lucky Nebraskan (and perhaps a duck dinner for his neighbor) there isn't a lot of knowledge gained from that chance encounter.

So if you happen to see a red-breasted merganser while hunting this fall, consider yourself fortunate. If you happen to harvest one, consider yourself lucky as so few Minnesotan's ever have held one in hand. But don't expect to find any "jewelry" on their legs...since 1900, only 28 banded red-breasted mergansers have ever been recovered in North America and to date, not a single one has ever been recovered by a hunter in Minnesota.

SANDHILL CRANE HUNTING SEASON IN MINNESOTA

What is the population status of sandhill cranes in the state?

Two distinct populations of sandhill cranes occur in Minnesota. Sandhill cranes in NW Minnesota are part of the mid-continent population; sandhill cranes in the remainder of the state are part of the Eastern population.



Non-legal species.



Non-legal species.

Why is the season only open in NW Minnesota?

Sandhill cranes that breed and stage during fall in NW Minnesota are part of the midcontinent population. This population is managed via a cooperative management plan with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mississippi, Central, and Pacific Flyway Councils.

What types of hunting methods are most effective?

The most effective methods to hunt sandhill cranes involve scouting areas frequented by cranes and hunting either over decoys or by pass shooting. Sandhill crane decoys are commercially available and sandhill cranes will sometimes decoy to Canada goose field decoys. Pass shooting cranes can also be effective as birds fly from roosting areas to agricultural fields during the early morning or evening hours. Sandhill cranes will often respond to

calls. Hunters should be aware that most sandhill crane hunting will occur on private land so scouting and obtaining landowner permission is necessary.

What types of shot size are most effective?

Although sandhill cranes appear very large in flight (>5 foot wingspan), their average weight is about 8-9 lbs, which is smaller than most adult Canada geese. Typical loads and shot sizes (BB, 1, 2) used for Canada geese are effective on cranes.

Sandhill crane



©2010, Mike Blair



©2010, Mike Blair

Sandhill cranes are legal to harvest from Sept. 3 through Oct. 9 in a portion of northwest Minnesota.

Are there any other species that look like sandhill cranes?

As with any hunting activity, hunters should be 100% certain of their target before attempting to harvest a sandhill crane. Sandhill cranes are large birds and many other species of birds have been mistaken for sandhill cranes, including great blue herons, egrets, pelicans, and swans. Whooping cranes are a federally endangered species and although rare in Minnesota, have been observed throughout the state.

Whooping crane



©2010, Mike Blair

Whooping cranes are an endangered species the hunters may encounter. They may not be harvested.

Are there any other concerns hunters should be aware of?

Hunters using retrieving dogs should be aware that injured cranes have been known to inflict serious injuries to dogs from their stout bills.

What types of monitoring will be done to evaluate the hunt?

Sandhill crane hunters should receive a harvest survey from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

after the season. This survey will be used to monitor harvest levels and hunting activity. In addition, the DNR is developing a sandhill crane management plan.

SHOOTING HOURS

Shooting hours for ducks and geese are one-half hour before sunrise to 4 p.m. through Oct. 8, and until sunset thereafter.



Nine hunting time zones are shown on the Minnesota state map (left). Sunrise and sunset times to be used for hunting in the zone titled "In Table" are shown in the table (below). For other zones, add or subtract the minutes shown at the top of the map to the times shown in the table.

Source: U.S. Naval Observatory

Sunrise/Sunset Table

WHY DOES MINNESOTA SET EARLY-SEASON SHOOTING HOURS?

Early season shooting hours help manage duck harvest in areas with high harvest and high hunter numbers. They reduce harassment of newly arrived migrants, allow feeding and roosting patterns to be established and maintained, allow mixing of locally reared birds with lightly harvested migrants and extend hunting opportunity.

Note: Times shown in the tables vary by specific location. For the exact time in your area consult a local airport or check on line at mndnr.gov/sunrise-sunset

| DAY | SEPT. | | OCT. | | NOV. | | DEC. | |
|-----|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| | Rise AM | Set PM | Rise AM | Set PM | Rise AM | Set PM | Rise AM | Set PM |
| 1 | 6:35 | 7:51 | 7:11 | 6:54 | 7:51 | 6:02 | 7:31 | 4:33 |
| 2 | 6:36 | 7:49 | 7:12 | 6:52 | 7:53 | 6:00 | 7:32 | 4:33 |
| 3 | 6:37 | 7:47 | 7:13 | 6:51 | 7:54 | 5:59 | 7:33 | 4:33 |
| 4 | 6:38 | 7:45 | 7:14 | 6:49 | 7:55 | 5:58 | 7:34 | 4:32 |
| 5 | 6:39 | 7:44 | 7:16 | 6:47 | 7:57 | 5:56 | 7:35 | 4:32 |
| 6 | 6:41 | 7:42 | 7:17 | 6:45 | 6:58 | 4:55 | 7:36 | 4:32 |
| 7 | 6:42 | 7:40 | 7:18 | 6:43 | 6:59 | 4:54 | 7:37 | 4:32 |
| 8 | 6:43 | 7:38 | 7:19 | 6:41 | 7:01 | 4:53 | 7:38 | 4:32 |
| 9 | 6:44 | 7:36 | 7:21 | 6:40 | 7:02 | 4:51 | 7:39 | 4:32 |
| 10 | 6:45 | 7:34 | 7:22 | 6:38 | 7:04 | 4:50 | 7:40 | 4:32 |
| 11 | 6:47 | 7:32 | 7:23 | 6:36 | 7:05 | 4:49 | 7:41 | 4:32 |
| 12 | 6:48 | 7:30 | 7:25 | 6:34 | 7:06 | 4:48 | 7:42 | 4:32 |
| 13 | 6:49 | 7:28 | 7:26 | 6:32 | 7:08 | 4:47 | 7:43 | 4:32 |
| 14 | 6:50 | 7:27 | 7:27 | 6:31 | 7:09 | 4:46 | 7:44 | 4:32 |
| 15 | 6:51 | 7:25 | 7:28 | 6:29 | 7:10 | 4:45 | 7:44 | 4:32 |
| 16 | 6:53 | 7:23 | 7:30 | 6:27 | 7:12 | 4:44 | 7:45 | 4:32 |
| 17 | 6:54 | 7:21 | 7:31 | 6:25 | 7:13 | 4:43 | 7:46 | 4:33 |
| 18 | 6:55 | 7:19 | 7:32 | 6:24 | 7:14 | 4:42 | 7:46 | 4:33 |
| 19 | 6:56 | 7:17 | 7:34 | 6:22 | 7:16 | 4:41 | 7:47 | 4:33 |
| 20 | 6:57 | 7:15 | 7:35 | 6:20 | 7:17 | 4:40 | 7:48 | 4:34 |
| 21 | 6:59 | 7:13 | 7:36 | 6:19 | 7:18 | 4:39 | 7:48 | 4:34 |
| 22 | 7:00 | 7:11 | 7:38 | 6:17 | 7:20 | 4:39 | 7:49 | 4:35 |
| 23 | 7:01 | 7:09 | 7:39 | 6:16 | 7:21 | 4:38 | 7:49 | 4:35 |
| 24 | 7:02 | 7:08 | 7:40 | 6:14 | 7:22 | 4:37 | 7:50 | 4:36 |
| 25 | 7:03 | 7:06 | 7:42 | 6:12 | 7:24 | 4:36 | 7:50 | 4:37 |
| 26 | 7:05 | 7:04 | 7:43 | 6:11 | 7:25 | 4:36 | 7:50 | 4:37 |
| 27 | 7:06 | 7:02 | 7:44 | 6:09 | 7:26 | 4:35 | 7:51 | 4:38 |
| 28 | 7:07 | 7:00 | 7:46 | 6:08 | 7:27 | 4:35 | 7:51 | 4:39 |
| 29 | 7:08 | 6:58 | 7:46 | 6:07 | 7:28 | 4:34 | 7:51 | 4:39 |
| 30 | 7:09 | 6:56 | 7:48 | 6:05 | 7:30 | 4:34 | 7:51 | 4:40 |
| 31 | | | 7:50 | 6:03 | | | 7:51 | 4:41 |
| | | | | | | Jan. 1 | 7:52 | 4:42 |



*Drive 'em
Wild*

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT for Minnesota's natural resources.

When you purchase any of the four new license plates—or the popular loon plate—your \$30 annual contribution is matched dollar-for-dollar with private donations and DNR nongame wildlife checkoff funds. Together, these funds help purchase critical lands that improve habitat for fish, wildlife, and plants.

www.mndnr.gov