

## TENTATIVE NEW JERSEY 2015-16 MIGRATORY BIRD SEASON DATES SET

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Fish and Wildlife (Division) and Fish and Game Council proposed tentative 2015-16 migratory bird hunting season dates at their May 12 meeting.

The Division and Fish and Game Council are responsible for adopting migratory bird seasons within the frameworks prescribed in the Code of Federal Regulations promulgated by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service (Service).

The status of migratory birds is annually measured through the completion of numerous, continent-wide population monitoring surveys. Following review of these survey results and with consultation with the four Flyway Councils, hunting season frameworks for migratory birds are annually promulgated by the Service. Hunting season frameworks include season length, bag limits, and outside opening and closing dates for a particular season.

Hunters should note that there is uncertainty at this time whether the 2015-16 Atlantic brant (brant) season will be closed or 30 days in length. The population status of brant has been relatively poor in recent years. Over the past 3 winters, the Atlantic Flyway-wide brant count during the annual Mid-Winter Waterfowl Survey has averaged only about 119,000 birds with the most recent (January 2015) count at only 111,400 birds. The 2015 brant count is only slightly above the threshold in the Atlantic Brant Management Plan for a closed season. These recent winter surveys are down from an average of 150,000 brant in the five years before 2012. The poor population status of brant appears to be driven by persistent poor young production on arctic breeding grounds. Fall field surveys based on plumage characteristics done in New Jersey and New York indicate that that brant population during autumn has been comprised of less than 10% young during each of the last three years. Although annual brant young production fluctuates significantly, as it does for all arctic nesting geese, the brant fall flight averages 18% young and it is unprecedented in the historical data going back to 1976 to have 3 consecutive years with less than 10% young in the fall flight. The mechanism for the poor young production is still uncertain, but recent studies on a breeding colony on Southampton Island, Nunavut conducted collaboratively by the University of Delaware, Canadian Wildlife Service, and other partners, suggest that competition between brant and other goose species (predominantly cackling geese and snow geese) may be partially responsible. The final decision on whether there will be a closed or 30-day season will be made in August following reports of conditions on arctic breeding grounds and consultations between the Atlantic Flyway Council and US Fish and Wildlife Service.

The tentative 2015-16 New Jersey migratory bird hunting season dates and bag limits follow. Although these regulation selections are expected to be within the frameworks proposed by the Service, they will not be formally finalized through the Federal Register process until the conclusion of the public comment period in late summer. This year's season selections are similar to last year.

The *Migratory Bird Regulations* will be available on the Division's web site during August and paper copies will be available at Division offices, license agents and sporting goods stores throughout the state in September.

## TENTATIVE NEW JERSEY 2015-16 MIGRATORY BIRD SEASONS

May 12, 2015

**NOTE:** Although the following selections are expected to be within the frameworks proposed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, they will not be formally finalized through the Federal Register process until the conclusion of the public comment period in September 2015.

### PRIMARY WATERFOWL SEASONS

*Ducks:* 60 days with 6 bird bag limit (*Species restrictions to be determined*)

*Brant:* **CLOSED SEASON** or 30 days with 2 bird bag limit. Final determination following August 2015 Atlantic Flyway Council and US Fish and Wildlife Service meetings.

*Canada goose:* (Regular season): To be determined but presumed to be 50 days with 3 bird bag; contingent on results of June Ungava survey

*Youth days:* 2 days with same bag limits as regular seasons

### NORTH ZONE

Ducks:	Oct. 10 – Oct. 22	Nov. 14 – Jan. 9	
Brant:	Nov. 14 – Nov. 28	Dec. 22 – Jan. 9	<b><u>OR CLOSED SEASON</u></b>
Canada geese:	Nov. 14 – Nov. 28	Dec. 12 – Jan. 23	
Youth days:	Oct. 3 & Oct. 31		

### SOUTH ZONE

Ducks:	Oct. 17 – Oct. 24	Nov. 14 – Jan. 14	
Brant:	Oct. 17 – Oct. 24	Nov. 14 – Dec. 10	<b><u>OR CLOSED SEASON</u></b>
Canada geese:	Nov. 14 – Nov. 28	Dec. 12 – Jan. 23	
Youth days:	Oct. 10 & Nov. 7		

### COASTAL ZONE

Ducks:	Oct. 31 – Nov. 3	Nov. 26 – Jan. 30	
Brant:	Nov. 26 – Dec. 5	Dec. 19 – Jan. 12	<b><u>OR CLOSED SEASON</u></b>
Canada geese:	Nov. 26 – Dec. 5	Dec. 15 – Jan. 30	
Youth days:	Nov. 7 & Feb. 13		

### CANADA GEESE

**September Season** (Statewide)

Sept. 1 - Sept. 30

*Daily bag limit: 15 Canada geese*

The following special regulations apply:

1. Electronic calls permitted
2. Shotguns capable of holding no more than 7 shells (including magazine and chamber) are permitted.
3. Hunting hours: 1/2 hour before sunrise to **1/2 hour after sunset.**

**NOTE: THESE SPECIAL REGULATIONS ONLY APPLY TO THE SEPTEMBER CANADA GOOSE SEASON**

**Special Winter Season** (Two Distinct Zones; see Migratory Bird Regulations)

Jan. 25 – Feb. 15

*Daily bag limit: 5 singly or in aggregate to include cackling and white-fronted geese*

**SEA DUCKS; SEA DUCK AREA ONLY (107 days)**

Sept. 29 – Jan 30

*Daily bag limit: 7 singly or in aggregate to include long-tailed ducks, eiders and scoters; except no more than 4 scoters*

**LIGHT GEESE**

**Regular Season (107 days)**

Statewide: Oct. 17 – Feb. 15

*Daily bag limit: 25, singly or in aggregate to include greater and lesser snow geese and Ross's geese*

**Conservation Order**

Statewide: Feb. 16 – Apr. 9

*Daily bag limit: None; includes greater and lesser snow geese and Ross's geese*

The following special regulations apply:

1. Electronic calls permitted
2. Shotguns capable of holding no more than 7 shells (including magazine and chamber) are permitted.
3. Hunting hours: 1/2 hour before sunrise to **1/2 hour after sunset.**

***NOTE: THESE SPECIAL REGULATIONS ONLY APPLY TO THE LIGHT GOOSE CONSERVATION ORDER***

**WOODCOCK (36 days)**

North Zone: Oct. 17 – Nov. 21

South Zone: Nov. 7 – Nov. 28

Dec. 19 – Jan. 1

*Daily bag limit: 3*

**RAILS AND MOORHEN (70 days)**

Sept. 1 – Nov. 7

*Daily bag limit: Sora and Virginia rails 25 total or aggregate; moorhen and clapper rail 10*

**SNIPE (107 days)**

Sept. 18 – Jan. 2

*Daily bag limit: 8*

**CROWS (Mon., Thur., Fri., & Sat.)**

Aug. 10 – Dec. 5

Dec. 14 – Mar. 19

*Daily bag limit: None*