

AGENDA

Board of Wildlife Resources
7870 Villa Park Drive
Henrico, Virginia 23228

March 19, 2026
9:00 am

Call to Order and Welcome –

1. Recognition of Employees and Others
2. Approval of the January 22, 2026, Board Meeting Minutes **Final Action**
3. Public Comments – Non-Agenda Items
4. Committee Meeting Reports:

Wildlife and Boat Committee:

- Migratory Game Bird Seasons and Bag Limits Proposals **Final Action**

Finance, Audit & Compliance Committee:

Law Enforcement Committee:

Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee:

5. Director's Report
6. Chairman's Report
7. Additional Business/Comments
8. Next Meeting Date: Thursday, May 21, 2026
9. Closed Session
10. Adjournment

Draft Board Meeting Minutes

Board of Wildlife Resources
7870 Villa Park Drive
Henrico, VA 23228

January 22, 2026
9:00 am

Present: Mr. George Terwilliger, **Chair;** Mr. Michael Formica, **Vice Chair;** **Board Members:** Mr. Lynwood Broaddus, Mr. Will Wampler, Mr. Jon Cooper, Mr. James Edmunds, Mr. Parker Slaybaugh, Ms. Marlee Dance, Ms. Laura Walters, Mr. Woody Woodall, Mr. James Maclin; **Executive Director:** Mr. Ryan J. Brown; **Deputy Directors:** Ms. Becky Gwynn and Mr. Darin Moore; **Director's Working Group:** Dr. Mike Bednarski, Mr. Bob Smet, Mr. George Braxton, Mr. Michael Lipford, Ms. Stacey Brown, Ms. Rebecca Lane, Ms. Shelby Crouch, Mr. Paul Kugelman

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:00 am. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Chair noted for the record that a quorum was present.

The Chair called on Ms. Walters to read the Mission Statement.

The Chair led the Pledge to the Flag.

Ms. Kelci Block, Assistant Attorney General attended the Board meeting Virtually.

Recognition of Employees and Others: The Chair called on Mr. Ryan Brown for recognitions.

Director Brown called on and recognized Mr. Jon Cooper to receive his Chairman's Plaque from 2025.

Director Brown called on and recognized Mr. Cale Godfrey for receiving the SEAFWA C W Watson Award.

Director Brown called on Mr. Michael Lipford to recognize Ms. Jackie Rosenberger for the AFWA Mark Reef Award.

Director Brown called on Dr. Gray Anderson to recognize the Lands and Access Employee of the Year, Mr. Curtis Chandler. Mr. Anderson also introduced Brandon Prehn, Caity Blackburn, and Retired Kent Burtner who are part of the Forestry team.

Director Brown called on Mr. Michael Lipford who introduced Ms. Emily Purcell with Duck's Unlimited. Ms. Purcell who spoke concerning the Partnerships, Ducks Unlimited has had with DWR employees through many years.

Chair George Terwilliger read a Resolution on behalf of Board Secretary, Frances Boswell's retirement with the Department of Wildlife Resources. It was seconded by Mr. Formica. Ayes: Slaybaugh, Woodall, Edmunds, Cooper, Maclin, Walters, Wampler, Broaddus, Dance, Terwilliger, Formica

Approval of the October 23, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes:

The minutes of the October 23, 2025, Board meeting minutes have been distributed and posted to website for review. The Chair called for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Woodall made a motion to approve the October 23, 2025, Board Meeting minutes. It was seconded by Mr. Edmunds. Ayes: Terwilliger, Formica, Slaybaugh, Woodall, Edmunds, Cooper, Maclin, Walters, Wampler, Broaddus, Dance

Public Comments – Non-Agenda Items: The Chair called for speakers on Non-Agenda Items.

- Mr. Chris Patton spoke regarding the hound hunting
- Mr. Mike Carter spoke regarding hound hunting
- Mr. Gary Kimberlin spoke regarding hound hunting
- Mr. Mike Hicks spoke regarding hound hunting
- Mr. Bryan Morris spoke regarding hound hunting
- Mr. Greg Austin spoke regarding hound hunting
- Mr. John Balasa spoke regarding hound hunting
- Philippa DeRamus spoke regarding hound hunting
- Laurie Allen spoke regarding hound hunting
- Ms. Robin Klevins spoke regarding hound hunting (virtual)
- Mr. Tyler Edmunds spoke regarding hound hunting (virtual)
- Mr. Sjerry Brown spoke regarding hound hunting (virtual)
- Mr. W. K. Franklin spoke regarding hound hunting (virtual)
- Mr. Mike Hayes spoke regarding hound hunting (virtual)
- Mr. Judge Charlton spoke regarding hound hunting (virtual)
- Mr. Cyrus Baird spoke regarding Delta Waterfowl (virtual)
- Mr. Mike Hayes spoke regarding hound hunting (virtual)

Committee Reports:

Wildlife and Boat Committee:

The Chair called on Mr. Jon Cooper for an update of the Wildlife and Boat Committee meeting.

Mr. Cooper gave a report on the Wildlife and Boat Committee meeting from January 21, 2026.

- Migratory Game Bird Season and Bag Limits Proposals Proposal.

Mr. Cooper made a motion; I move that the Board of Wildlife Resources approve the preliminary 2026-2027 Migratory Game Bird Season and Bag Limit recommendations as presented by staff. It was seconded by Mr. Edmunds.

Ayes: Terwilliger, Formica, Slaybaugh, Woodall, Edmunds, Cooper, Maclin, Walters, Wampler, Broaddus, Dance

Mr. Wampler made a motion to correct the starting date to September 5, 2026, for the Dove Season Dates. It was second by Mr. Edmunds. Ayes: Terwilliger, Formica, Slaybaugh, Woodall, Edmunds, Cooper, Maclin, Walters, Wampler, Broaddus, Dance.

- Smallmouth Bass Management Plan - Mr. Cooper gave the Smallmouth Bass Management Plan.

Mr. Cooper made a motion; I move that the Board of Department of Wildlife Resources adopt the Smallmouth Bass Management Plan. It was seconded by Mr. Edmunds.

Ayes: Terwilliger, Formica, Slaybaugh, Woodall, Edmunds, Cooper, Maclin, Walters, Wampler, Broaddus, Dance

Mr. Cooper reported that Mr. David Norris gave an EPA Grant Update, Ms. Stacey Brown gave an Annual USCG Report, Ms. Amy Martin gave an update on Virginia's Second Breeding Bird Atlas: A Citizen Science Informed Conservation Tool and staff updates were presented by Mr. Michael Lipford gave a Wildlife Division Report, Dr. Michael Bednarski, a Fishery's Report, Ms. Stacey Brown, a Boating report, Ms. Amy Martin, a Non-Game report.

The Chair thanked Mr. Cooper for his report of the Wildlife and Boat Committee meeting of January 21, 2026.

After comments and questions, The Chair thanked Mr. Cooper for his report.

Finance, Audit, & Compliance Committee Report:

The Chair called on Mr. Woody Woodall for an update on the Finance, Audit, and Compliance Committee meeting from January 21, 2026.

Mr. Woodall gave an update on the Finance, Audit and Compliance Committee meeting of January 21, 2026. Mr. Woodall reported Mr. Darin Moore and Mr. Tim Springer gave a Second Quarter Finance Report and Budget Update. He reported that Ms. Stephanie Adams, the Procurement Manager gave a Procurement Update.

Law Enforcement Committee Report:

The Chair called on Mr. Will Wampler for an update on the Law Enforcement Committee meeting of January 21, 2026.

Mr. Wampler gave an update on the Law Enforcement Committee meeting of January 21, 2026.

Mr. Wampler reported that Captain Jody Blackwell gave a Law Enforcement Training Overview and Captain Kopelove gave an Update on the Recruitment and Hiring Process, and Colonel John Cobb gave the Chief's Update.

The Chair thanked Mr. Wampler for his update on the Law Enforcement Committee meeting of January 21, 2026.

Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee Report:

The Chair called on Ms. Laura Walters for an update on the Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee meeting of January 21, 2026.

Ms. Walters gave an update on the Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee Report of January 21, 2026.

- Ms. Walters had 1 Action Item – Governance Manual, Code of Ethics and Conduct and Committee Charter Reviews

Ms. Walter made a motion for the Board to adopt the Staff recommendations for the Governance Manual, Code of Ethics and Conduct and five Committee Charter Reviews. It was seconded by Mr. Wampler and Mr. Slaybaugh. Ayes: Terwilliger, Formica, Slaybaugh, Woodall, Edmunds, Cooper, Maclin, Walters, Wampler, Broaddus, Dance

Ms. Walters reported Mr. Michael Lipford, Mr. Max Goldman and Mr. David Hennaman spoke on DCR/DWR Cooperative Effort to control deer population on natural heritage sites, and Mr. David Murr and Mr. Max Goldman gave an update on Explore the Wild 2.0, and Mr. Bob Smet gave his Outreach Division Report.

The Chair thanked Ms. Walters for her update on the Education, Planning, and Outreach Committee meeting of January 21, 2026.

Next Meeting Date: The Chair announced that the next meeting date will be Thursday, March 19, 2026.

Closed Session: The Chair announced the Board would go into Close Session at 11:25 am.

Ms. Walters read the Close Session Motion; it was seconded by Mr. Wampler.

Ayes: Terwilliger, Formica, Slaybaugh, Woodall, Edmunds, Cooper, Maclin, Walters, Wampler, Broaddus, Dance

Closed Meeting Motion, January 22, 2026

Mr. Chairman,

I move that the Board go into a closed meeting:

First, Pursuant to Section 2.2-3711.A.1 of the Code of Virginia for discussion or consideration of employment, assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of the Department of Wildlife Resources, specifically regarding the performance of the Director.

Second, pursuant to Section 2.2-3711.A.3 of the Code of Virginia, for discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or of the disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body, specifically regarding real estate located in the City of Suffolk.

This closed meeting will be attended only by members of the Board. However, pursuant to Section 2.2-3712(F), the Board requests the Department Director, the Deputy Directors, and the Real Property Manager to also attend this meeting, as it believes their presence will reasonably aid the Board in its consideration of topics that are the subject of the meeting.

It was second by Mr. Cooper. Ayes: Terwilliger, Woodall, Edmunds, Cooper, Maclin, Slaybaugh, Walters, Wampler, Broaddus, Formica.

The Board reconvened from Closed Session at 1:20 pm

Certification of Closed Meeting

January 22, 2026

WHEREAS, the Board of Wildlife Resources conducted a closed meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom Information Act; and

WHEREAS, Section 2.2-3712.D of the Code requires a certification by this Board that such closed meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Wildlife Resources hereby certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge, only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certification resolution applies, and only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered by the Board.

The Board Secretary called a Roll Call vote: Ayes: Mr. Woodall, Mr. Slaybaugh, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Cooper, Mr. Maclin, Ms. Walters, Mr. Wampler, Mr. Broaddus, Ms. Dance, Mr. Terwilliger, Mr. Formica

The Chair called on Mr. Woodall for a motion. I move that the Board of the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources authorize the Director to accept a donation of a conservation easement which includes +/- 744 acres in the City of Suffolk, VA including the procurement of certain due diligence items. It was seconded by Mr. Formica, Ayes: Mr. Woodall, Mr. Slaybaugh, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Cooper, Mr. Maclin, Ms. Walters, Mr. Wampler, Mr. Broaddus, Ms. Dance, Mr. Terwilliger, Mr. Formica

Director's Report: The Chair called on Director Ryan Brown for his report.

- General Assembly Season update
- Budget update
- Challenge coin from Cumberland Access Easement in Buchanan, VA

Chairman's Report: The Chair, thanked the public who attended and welcomed their remarks.

- Thanked Board Secretary, Frances Boswell for all her help and work to this Board.
- Mentioned bills that are in General Assembly that are on Hunting with Hounds and the agency
- Addressing the financial situation, DWR is a Wildlife environment that the public is enjoying, hats off to Director Ryan Brown and our Outreach and staff for making the effort to include the public in all our events.

Additional Business/Comments: The Chair asked if any additional business or comments.

Mr. Edmunds thanked Frances Boswell for all her work.

He spoke about the use of hound training collars, will help the problems with hound hunting on other people's property.

Concerned that DWR doesn't know how many hunters DWR has, and we are losing Federal money, ask the board members to contact their legislators to support the \$3.00 license for hunters who do not have to purchase a license now.

The Chair asked if anyone had any further comments, hearing none, he adjourned the Board meeting at 1:40 pm

Respectfully submitted,
/s/ Frances Boswell

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES

2026-27

MIGRATORY GAME BIRD HUNTING SEASONS – FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS AND STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS



Prepared by Wildlife Division
January 2026

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES

PRELIMINARY FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS AND STAFF PROPOSALS FOR 2026-27
MIGRATORY GAMEBIRD SEASON DATES AND BAG LIMITS

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Doves

Mourning Dove Background Information and Population Status

There are three dove management units (or flyways) across the country, including the Eastern (EMU), Central (CMU) and Western (WMU) Management Units. Virginia is in the EMU.

- Population trends in the EMU:
 - 10-yr (2016-2025): Stabilized population trend.
 - Long term (1966-2025): Historically declining population trend.
- Dove Banding Project – Annual program since 2003 to leg-band over 500 doves annually in VA, and 33,000 nationwide. Data used to provide estimates of movements, survival and harvest rates, and is the main monitoring program used to develop annual hunting regulations.
- Harvest Strategy: Revised Harvest Strategy adopted in 2014 allows for a standard dove hunting season of 90 days with a bag limit of 15 birds/day when appropriate.
- Data from HIP (past 3-yr avg.): Hunters = 19,160 Harvest = 247,462

Recent Seasons

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates (all 70 days until extended to 90 days in 2014-15)</u>		
2025-2026	Sept. 1 – Oct. 19	Nov. 22 – Nov. 30	Dec. 19 – Jan. 19
2024-2025	Sept. 2 – Oct. 20	Nov. 23 – Dec. 01	Dec. 20 – Jan. 20
2023-2024	Sept. 2 – Oct. 22	Nov. 18 – Nov. 26	Dec. 22 – Jan. 20
2022-2023	Sept. 3 – Oct. 23	Nov. 19 – Nov. 27	Dec. 23 – Jan. 21
2021-2022	Sept. 4 – Oct. 27	Nov. 20 – Nov. 28	Dec. 22 – Jan. 17
2020-2021	Sept. 5 – Oct. 28	Nov. 21 – Nov. 29	Dec. 24 – Jan. 19
2019-2020	Sept. 2 – Oct. 27	Nov. 27 – Dec. 4	Dec. 24 – Jan. 18
2018-2019	Sept. 1 – Oct. 28	Nov. 21 – Nov. 28	Dec. 22 – Jan. 14
2017-2018	Sept. 2 – Oct. 29	Nov. 22 – Nov. 29	Dec. 23 – Jan. 15
2016-2017	Sept. 3 – Oct. 30	Nov. 19 – Nov. 27	Dec. 24 – Jan. 15
2015-2016	Sept. 5 – Nov. 1	Nov. 21 – Nov. 29	Dec. 24 – Jan. 15
2014-2015	Sept. 1 – Oct. 31	Nov. 22 – Nov. 30	Dec. 27 – Jan. 15
2013-2014	Sept. 2 – Oct. 14	Oct. 19 – Nov. 2	Dec. 31 – Jan. 11
2012-2013	Sept. 1 – Oct. 13	Oct. 17 – Oct. 27	Dec. 28 – Jan. 12
2011-2012	Sept. 3 – Oct. 10	Oct. 25 – Nov. 5	Dec. 26 - Jan. 14
2010-2011	Sept. 4 – Oct. 11	Oct. 20 – Nov. 6	Dec. 27 – Jan. 8
2009-2010	Sept. 5 - 26	Oct. 7 – Nov. 7	Dec. 25 – Jan. 9
2008-2009	Sept. 1 - 27	Oct. 4 – Oct. 31	Dec. 27 – Jan. 10
2007-2008	Sept. 1 – 29	Oct. 5 – Oct 27	Dec. 26 – Jan. 12
2006-2007	Sept. 2 – 23	Oct. 7 – Nov. 4	Dec. 28 – Jan. 15
2005-2006	Sept. 3 – 24	Oct. 8 – Nov. 5	Dec. 27 – Jan. 14
2004-2005	Sept. 4 – 25	Oct. 9 – Nov. 6	Dec. 28 – Jan. 15
2003-2004	Sept. 1 – 27	Oct. 8 – Nov. 8	Dec. 31 – Jan. 10
2002-2003	Sept. 2 - 28	Oct. 9 – Nov. 9	Jan. 1 – Jan. 11
2001-2002	Sept. 1 - 29	Oct 13 – Nov. 10	Dec. 29 – Jan. 9

DOVE

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1, 2026 - January 31, 2027
Hunting dates may run consecutively or be split into no more than three (3) segments.

SEASON LENGTH: Not more than 90 days.

BAG LIMIT: 15 daily and 45 in possession. Daily bag limit can be composed of mourning doves and white-winged doves, singly or in combination

SHOOTING HOURS: Between ½ hour before sunrise and sunset daily (State may select ½ day shooting in any segment).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: September 5 - October 24 (50 days)
November 21 - November 29 (9 days)
December 19 - January 18 (31 days)

SHOOTING HOURS: September 5 Noon until sunset
September 6 – October 24 ½ hr before sunrise to sunset.
November 21 – November 29 ½ hr before sunrise to sunset.
December 19 - January 18 ½ hr before sunrise to sunset.

BAG LIMIT: 15 daily and 45 in possession. Composed of mourning doves and white-winged doves, singly or in combination

Rails

Background Information and Population Status

- **Harvest** – Comprised predominantly of clapper rails (85%), some sora (14%), and small number of Virginia rails taken. Clappers are mostly local VA birds, some are migrants from NY, NJ, and other coastal states.
- **Nesting** - Clapper rails nest from May through June, with re-nesting in July/August. Late nesting rails have broods that do not reach flight stage until August or September. This occurs in years when 1st nests are flooded by spring storms/tides and re-nests contribute significantly to production. Therefore, we generally wait until the second week of September to open the hunting season. The key to setting the season is to bracket the greatest number of high tides possible.
- **Harvest Data** - Avg. No. hunters = 290, Avg. Harvest = 3,300 (HIP, past 5-yr avg.)

Past Seasons

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates (all 70 days)</u>	
2025	Sept. 6 – Oct. 25	Nov. 11 – Nov. 30
2024	Sept. 14 – Nov. 3	Nov. 13 – Dec. 1
2023	Sept. 11 – Nov. 5	Nov. 13 – Nov. 26
2022	Sept. 9 – Nov. 17	
2021	Sept. 7 – Nov. 15	
2020	Sept. 9 – Nov. 17	
2019	Sept. 7 – Nov. 15	
2018	Sept. 8 - Nov. 16	
2017	Sept. 9 – Nov. 17	
2016	Sept. 10 - Nov. 18	
2015	Sept. 8 - Nov. 16	
2014	Sept. 8 – Nov. 16	
2013	Sept. 7 - 28	Sept. 30 – Nov. 16
2012	Sept. 8 – 29	Oct. 1 – Nov. 17
2011	Sept. 10 – Oct. 1	Oct. 3 – Nov. 19
2010	Sept. 8 – Oct. 2	Oct. 4 – Nov. 17
2009	Sept. 8 – Oct. 3	Oct. 5 – Nov. 17
2008	Sept. 10 – Nov. 18	
2007	Sept. 10 – Nov. 17	
2006	Sept. 8 – Nov. 16	
2005	Sept. 12 – Nov. 19	
2004	Sept. 13 – Nov. 20	
2003	Sept. 10 – Nov. 18	
2002	Sept. 9 - Nov. 16	
2001	Sept. 11 – Nov. 19	
2000	Sept. 13 – Oct. 2	Oct. 11 – Nov. 29

RAILS (Clapper, King, Sora, Virginia) & Gallinules (Common, Purple)

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1, 2026 - January 31, 2027

SEASON LENGTH: 70 days, straight or 2 segments.

DAILY BAG LIMIT: Clapper/King - 15, in aggregate.
Sora/Virginia - 25, in aggregate.
Gallinules - 15, in aggregate.

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset daily

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: September 5 – October 24 (50 days)
November 10 – November 29 (20 days)

DAILY BAG LIMIT: Clapper/King: **10** - in aggregate, only 1 can be a King Rail.
Sora/Virginia: 25 - in aggregate.
Gallinules: 15 - in aggregate.

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

NOTES: - This recommendation provides 30 days of 3-ft or greater lunar tides.
- Non-Toxic shot is required for Rail, Snipe and Gallinule hunting in Virginia.

Woodcock

Background Information and Population Status

- Harvest Strategy includes 3 regulatory options (Liberal, Moderate and Restrictive). Annual regulation based on the 3-year mean of the call count survey. For 2026-27, Harvest Strategy calls for Moderate Regulations (45 days/3 birds).
- Singing-ground survey (SGS) in Eastern Management Region from most recent survey:
 - 1 year trend (2024-2025): 0.72% decrease
 - 10 year trend (2015-2025): 0.05% decline per year.
 - Long-term (1968-2025): 0.74% decline per year.
- The 2024 recruitment index for the U.S. portion of the Eastern Region (1.14 jv/ad female) was 25% less than the 2023 index and 29.5% lower than the long-term index.
- Research suggests that habitat loss is the major factor of the long-term population decline.
- Virginia participated in a Flyway-wide study of woodcock movements and habitat use for the past several years. GPS transmitters are tracking woodcock migration routes and chronology, and this data is being used to better inform woodcock management strategies and hunting seasons.
- Federal regulations prohibit zones for woodcock hunting, however, we are permitted to split the season into two segments. In Virginia, this allows us to provide both early and late opportunities for hunters across the state.

Recent Seasons (bag limit has been 3 birds)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates</u>		<u>Days</u>
2025-2026	Nov. 11 – Nov. 30	Dec. 26 – Jan. 19	45
2024-2025	Nov. 11 – Nov. 30	Dec. 27 – Jan. 20	45
2023-2024	Nov. 10 – Nov. 27	Dec. 26 – Jan. 21	45
2022-2023	Nov. 11 – Dec. 3	Dec. 27 – Jan. 17	45
2021-2022	Nov. 11 – Dec. 8	Dec. 27 – Jan. 12	45
2020-2021	Nov. 7 – Nov. 30	Dec. 24 – Jan. 13	45
2019-2020	Nov. 20 – Dec. 8	Dec. 21 – Jan. 15	45
2018-2019	Oct. 27 – Nov. 2	Dec. 8 – Jan. 14	45
2017-2018	Nov. 20 – Dec. 8	Dec. 21 – Jan. 15	45
2016-2017	Oct. 29 – Nov. 4	Dec. 9 – Jan. 15	45
2015-2016	Nov. 23 – Dec. 5	Dec. 15 – Jan. 15	45
2014-2015	Nov. 24 – Dec. 6	Dec. 15 – Jan. 15	45
2013-2014	Oct. 26 – Nov. 1	Dec. 5 – Jan. 11	45
2012-2013	Oct. 27 – Nov. 2	Dec. 6 – Jan. 12	45
2011-2012	Oct. 29 – Nov. 12	Dec. 16 – Jan. 14	45
2010-2011	Oct. 30 – Nov. 13	Dec. 27 – Jan. 10	30
2009-2010	Nov. 7 – 21	Dec. 26 – Jan. 9	30
2008-2009	Nov. 8 – 22	Dec. 20 – Jan. 3	30
2007-2008	Oct. 27 – Nov. 10	Dec. 22 – Jan. 5	30
2006-2007	Nov. 4 – 18	Dec. 23 – Jan. 6	30
2005-2006	Nov. 12 – 26	Dec. 17 – Dec. 31	30

Avg. No. hunters = 3,200. Avg. Harvest = 5,500 (Estimates for 2024-2025 Season.)

WOODCOCK

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 13, 2026 - January 31, 2027

SEASON LENGTH: 45 days, straight or 2 segments.

BAG LIMIT: 3 daily, 9 in possession.

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset daily.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: November 11 – December 1 (21 days)
December 26 – January 18 (24 days)

BAG LIMIT: 3 daily, 9 in possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

Snipe

Background Information

- Season generally set to overlap duck season. There are relatively few snipe hunters in VA and most snipe are taken opportunistically by other migratory bird hunters.
- Harvest Data (HIP, past 5-yr avg.): No. hunters = 225, Harvest = 550

Recent Seasons

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates (all 107 days)</u>	
2025-2026	Sept. 29 – Nov. 30	Dec. 19 – Jan. 31
2024-2025	Sept. 30 – Dec. 1	Dec. 19 – Jan. 31
2023-2024	Sept. 25 – Nov. 26	Dec. 19 – Jan. 31
2022-2023	Sept. 26 – Nov. 27	Dec. 17 – Jan. 29
2021-2022	Oct. 8 – Oct. 11	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2020-2021	Oct. 9 – Oct. 12	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2019-2020	Oct. 11 – Oct. 14	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2018-2019	Oct. 5 – Oct. 8	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2017-2018	Oct. 6 – Oct. 9	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2016-2017	Oct. 7 – Oct. 10	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2015-2016	Oct. 9 – Oct. 12	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2014-2015	Oct. 10 – Oct. 13	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2013-2014	Oct. 11 – Oct. 14	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2012-2013	Oct. 4 – Oct. 8	Oct. 22 - Jan. 31
2011-2012	Oct. 6 – Oct. 10	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2010-2011	Oct. 7 – Oct. 11	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2009-2010	Oct. 8 – Oct. 12	Oct. 21 – Jan. 30
2008-2009	Oct. 9 – Oct. 13	Oct. 22 – Jan.31
2007-2008	Oct 4 – Oct. 8	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2006-2007	Oct 4 – Oct. 9	Oct. 23 – Jan. 31
2005-2006	Oct 5 – Oct.10	Oct. 24 – Jan. 31
2004-2005	Oct 7 – Oct 11	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2003-2004	Oct. 8 – Oct 11	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2002-2003	Oct 9 – Oct 12	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2001-2002	Oct. 10 - Oct. 13	Oct. 22 - Jan. 31
2000-2001	Oct. 11 - Oct. 14	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31
1999-2000	Oct. 6 - Oct. 9	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31
1998-1999	Oct. 7 - Oct. 10	Oct. 20 - Jan. 30
1997-1998	Oct. 8 - Oct. 11	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31
1996-1997	Oct. 9 - Oct. 12	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31
1995-1996	Oct. 11 - Oct. 14	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31

SNIPE

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1, 2026 - January 31, 2027

SEASON LENGTH: 107 days, straight or 2 segments

BAG LIMIT: 8 daily, 24 possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: September 28 – November 29 (63 days)
December 19 – January 31 (44 days)

BAG LIMIT: 8 daily, 24 in possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

SEPTEMBER TEAL SEASON FACT SHEET - 2026

- Special teal seasons were initiated in late 1960's to provide harvest opportunities on blue-winged and green-winged teal. When the blue-winged teal breeding population (BPOP) is above 3.3 million, a 9-day season can be offered. If the BPOP exceeds 4.7 million, a 16-day season can be offered. The blue-winged teal BPOP estimate for 2025 is 4.4 million which corresponds to a 9-day teal season for the 2026-2027 hunting season.
- Blue-winged teal are one of the earliest migrants. Many pass through Virginia from late August through October, prior to the opening of the late duck season.
- Green-winged teal are also early migrants and arrive in September and October. However, some Green-wings remain through the winter depending on weather conditions.
- Virginia has held a special September teal season since 1999 (see dates listed below). The season was initially held only in the area east of I-95 because there are greater numbers of teal and teal hunters in the coastal plain. Even in the coastal plain, teal are not widespread, and the harvest has been relatively small. The season was expanded in 2011 to provide some teal hunting opportunity in the area west of I-95.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates</u> <u>East of I-95</u>	<u>Season Dates</u> <u>West of I-95</u>
2025	Sept. 20 – 28	Sept. 23 - 28
2024	Sept. 16 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2023	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2022	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2021	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2020	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2019	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2018	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2017	Sept. 16 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2016	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2015	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2014	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 22 - 30
2013	Sept. 16 – 30	Sept. 23 - 30
2012	Sept. 17 – 29	Sept. 24 - 29
2011	Sept. 19 – 30	Sept. 26 - 30
2010	Sept. 20 – 30	na
2009	Sept. 21 – 30	na
2008	Sept. 20 – 30	na
2007	Sept. 17 – 26	na
2006	Sept. 15 – 25	na
2005	Sept. 16 – 24	na
2004	Sept. 16 – 25	na
2003	Sept. 13 – 23	na
2002	Sept. 14 – 24	na

Average Annual Harvest: 600 teal

SEPTEMBER TEAL SEASON

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1 – September 30, 2026

SEASON LENGTH: Up to 9 days

BAG LIMIT: 6 daily, 18 in possession (Blue-winged and Green-winged teal only)

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise to sunset

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: September 19 – September 27
HUNT AREA: East of I – 95

September 22 – September 27
HUNT AREA: West of I – 95

BAG LIMIT: 6 daily, 18 in possession (Blue-winged and Green-winged teal only).

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise to sunset

FACT SHEET - Waterfowl Hunters and Harvests – 2026

- Liberal duck seasons (60 days, 6 bird bag limit) and resident goose seasons have resulted in high waterfowl harvests in Virginia during the past ten years. Harvest has averaged ~151,993 ducks and ~41,855 Canada geese from 2022-2024, compared to 114,770 ducks and 25,000 geese during the 1990's. The long season length and liberal bags offer greater opportunity and a greater cumulative harvest over the course of the season.
- Waterfowl hunter numbers in Virginia have been generally stable since the late 1990's. Since 1999, the Harvest Information Program (HIP) has been used to estimate hunter effort and harvest. The average number of duck and goose hunters over the past 3 years, as measured by HIP, was 16,800 and 10,555 respectively.
- Conditions during the 2024-2025 season were colder for most of the season but puddle duck harvest was lower than the previous year. Buffleheads were the most harvested duck in Virginia, followed by mallards, green-winged teal, black ducks and gadwall.

FACT SHEET - The Status of Ducks - 2026

- Waterfowl harvest in the Atlantic flyway is managed by the stocks of four different species of eastern waterfowl populations (wood ducks, American green-winged teal, ring-necked ducks and goldeneyes). In 2025 estimated breeding population size for wood ducks was 0.95 million (SE = 0.12 million), 0.34 million (SE = 0.08 million) for American green-winged teal, 0.76 million (SE = 0.18 million) for ring-necked ducks and 0.72 million (SE = 0.24 million) for goldeneyes.
- The total 2025 mid-continent mallard breeding population is predicted to be 6.56 million (SE = 0.26 million)

Virginia: Habitat conditions in Virginia during the spring of 2025 were average with slightly drier conditions towards the end of the breeding season that could have potentially impacted brood rearing habitat.

- The 2025 Virginia breeding pair estimate for mallards (15,100) was lower than last year (21,033). Estimated black duck pairs (64) decreased from last year (629). The number of Wood duck pairs (6,245) was lower than last year (9,259). The breeding pair estimate for Canada geese (25,230) was also lower than the 2023 estimate (44,516).

Mallard Bag Limit in the Atlantic Flyway

The mallard has been one of the most abundant duck species in eastern North America. However, mallard numbers in the Northeastern U.S. declined about 40% from the late 1990's through around 2019. About 60% of the mallards harvested in Atlantic Flyway states, and around 80% of those harvested in Virginia, are derived from the Northeastern U.S. Mallard numbers in Eastern Canada were stable or slightly increasing during this same time period, but overall, the breeding mallard population in eastern North America had declined. This decline prompted waterfowl managers to enact harvest restriction on mallards in the Atlantic Flyway in 2019. The bag limit was reduced from 4 to 2 mallards daily, with a limit of 1 hen mallard. Those restrictions were in place for the past 4 hunting seasons.

Since 2019, Eastern Mallard numbers have increase 15%. In addition, a new Eastern Mallard Harvest Strategy and Population Model was developed based on recent population dynamics. This Strategy was put in place for 2023-2024 hunting season regulation process, and allows for a return to a 4-mallard bag limit (2 hens). Projections from the new harvest strategy indicate that under current conditions, Atlantic Flyway regulations should allow for a liberal mallard bag limit (4 mallards total, only 2 hens) around 80% of the time.

YOUTH and VETERANS WATERFOWL DAYS

Guidelines for the Youth Days and Veterans Days include:

1. States may select 2 days per duck-hunting zone, designated as "Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days," in addition to their regular duck seasons. States may also select 2 days per duck-hunting zone designated as "Veterans Waterfowl Hunting Days" in addition to their regular duck seasons. The Youth and Veterans days could be combined and held on the same day or could be held separately.
2. Youth Days must be held outside of any regular duck season on a weekend, holidays, or other non-school days when youth hunters would have the maximum opportunity to participate.
3. Youth and Veterans Days could be held up to 14 days before or after any regular duck season frameworks or within any split of a regular duck season.
4. The daily bag limit is the same as that allowed in the regular season and includes ducks, mergansers, coots, moorhens, gallinules, 1 Canada geese (except in Canada Goose Zones where the bag limit is higher), and 1 tundra swan (if the hunter possesses a tundra swan permit). Flyway species restrictions remain in effect.
5. Youth hunters must be 15 years of age or younger. Youth 12 years of age and older will need a valid Virginia state hunting license. A licensed adult at least 18 years of age or older must accompany youth hunters into the field. This adult may not duck hunt but may participate in other open seasons.
6. Those allowed to participate in the special **Veterans Days** include Veterans (as defined in section 101 of title 38, United States Code) and members of the Armed Forces on active duty, including members of the National Guard and Reserves on active duty (other than for training).

DUCKS

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

Outside Dates: September 27, 2026 - January 31, 2027

Season Length: 60 hunting days; plus 2 Youth/Veterans Waterfowl Hunt Days.

Bag Limits: **Daily Bag limit of 6 ducks, with the following restrictions:**
Can include no more than 4 mallards (only 2 hens), 3 wood ducks, 2 black ducks, 2 canvasbacks, scaup: 1/day for 40 days and 2/day for 20 days, 2 redheads, 3 pintails, 1 mottled duck, 1 fulvous whistling duck, 4 total sea ducks (no more than 3 scoters, 3 eider (only 1 hen), 3 long-tailed ducks). Closed season on harlequin duck. Possession limit is three times the daily bag limit.

Split Season Options: 3-way split season, no zones

Shooting Hours: 1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Season Length: 60 hunting days; plus 2 Youth/Veterans Waterfowl Hunting Day

Season Dates: October 9 - 12 (Black Duck closed) (4 Days)
November 18 – November 29 (12 Days)
December 19 – January 31 (44 Days)
October 24, February 6 – Youth/Veterans Waterfowl Days

Bag Limit: **Daily Bag limit of 6 ducks, with the following restrictions:** can include no more than 4 mallards (only 2 hens), 3 wood ducks, 2 black ducks (except closed Oct. 9–12), 2 redheads, 2 canvasbacks, 3 pintails, 1 mottled duck, 1 fulvous whistling duck, scaup: 1/day from October 9-12, November 18-November 29, December 19 - January 11, and 2/day from January 12-31. Sea Ducks: 4 total sea ducks to include no more than 3 scoters, 3 eiders (only 1 hen), 3 long-tailed ducks. Closed season on harlequin ducks. The possession limit is three times the daily bag limit.

Shooting Hours: 1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

MERGANSER AND COOT

MERGANSER

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

Option A

Season Length: 60 hunting days.
Outside Date: September 27, 2026 - January 31, 2027.
Bag Limit: 5 birds daily.
15 in possession.

Option B

To be included into the general duck bag. If included in the general duck bag, the restriction on 2 hooded mergansers would apply.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Option A

Season Dates: To coincide with general duck season
Bag Limit: 5 birds daily, 15 in possession.

AMERICAN COOT

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

Season Length: 60 hunting days
Outside Date: September 27, 2026 - January 31, 2027
Bag Limit: 15 birds daily (45 in possession)

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Season Dates: To coincide with general duck season.
Bag Limit: 15 daily (45 in possession)

FACT SHEET - The Status of Resident Canada Geese - 2026

- The resident Canada goose population increased significantly in Virginia during the 1980's and 1990's, and peaked at 260,000 geese in the late 1990's. This population caused significant conflicts with human and wildlife populations, and management actions were taken to reduce their numbers. The current population estimate is 158,605 (+/- 25%) in Virginia and over 1 million in the Atlantic Flyway.
- Special resident goose hunting seasons were initiated in 1993 to help manage this population and to provide recreational opportunities for hunters. These seasons occur prior to the arrival of most migrant geese (~Sept. 25 in Virginia), or in areas where there are fewer migrant geese. The Federal Framework allows Virginia to conduct a statewide September Resident Goose season from September 1-25.
- There are fewer migrant geese in the western portion of Virginia, and special “Goose Hunting Zones” have been established that allow more liberal seasons in areas with a greater percentage of resident geese.
- Special resident goose hunting seasons have been very popular and have increased hunter participation and resident goose harvests. These seasons have been very effective in managing resident goose populations and helping to meet our statewide population objectives.
- In areas where hunting is not feasible, other options including special Depredation Orders for Airports, Agricultural areas, and Nest and Egg removal have been implemented to help manage resident goose conflicts.

Year	Population Estimate *	September Harvest
2024	143,529 +/- 29%	n/a
2023	161,747 +/- 24%	n/a
2022	170,540 +/-26%	3,300
2021	177,056 +/-29%	6,300
2020	163,198 +/- 24%	13,000
2019	125,966 +/-20%	6,300
2018	132,633 +/- 24%	5,600
2017	142,167 +/- 21%	5,500
2016	158,200 +/- 19%	900
2015	150,651 +/- 22%	6,100
2014	130,503 +/- 26%	7,500
2013	144,910 +/- 26%	10,700
2012	158,267 +/- 28%	9,700
2011	165,022 +/- 28%	14,700
2010	147,313 +/- 29%	15,600
2009	145,019 +/- 29%	16,800
2008	157,560 +/- 29%	17,500
2007	154,030 +/- 27%	13,600
2006	136,700 +/- 27%	11,100
2005	129,486 +/- 26%	10,100
2004	143,741 +/- 25%	17,000
2003	186,753 +/- 23%	14,800
2002	218,719 +/- 24%	14,300
2001	218,384 +/- 27%	11,800
2000	227,164 +/- 32%	10,800
1999	261,554 +/- 34%	11,400

*3-year running average

SEPTEMBER CANADA GOOSE

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1 – September 25, 2025

BAG LIMIT: 15 daily, 45 in possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise to sunset (except as provided for in special hunting options *)

* SPECIAL HUNTING OPTIONS: Allows the use of electronic calls, unplugged shotguns and extended shooting hours (1/2 hr after sunset) when **no other** waterfowl seasons are open.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: September 1 – September 25 (25 days)

BAG LIMIT: 10 daily, 30 in possession

HUNT AREA: Statewide

SHOOTING HOURS:

East of I-95

September 1 – 18: ½ hr before sunrise to ½ hr after sunset.

September 19 – 25: ½ hr before sunrise to sunset.

West of I-95

September 1 – 21: ½ hr before sunrise to ½ hr after sunset.

September 22 - 25: ½ hr before sunrise to sunset.

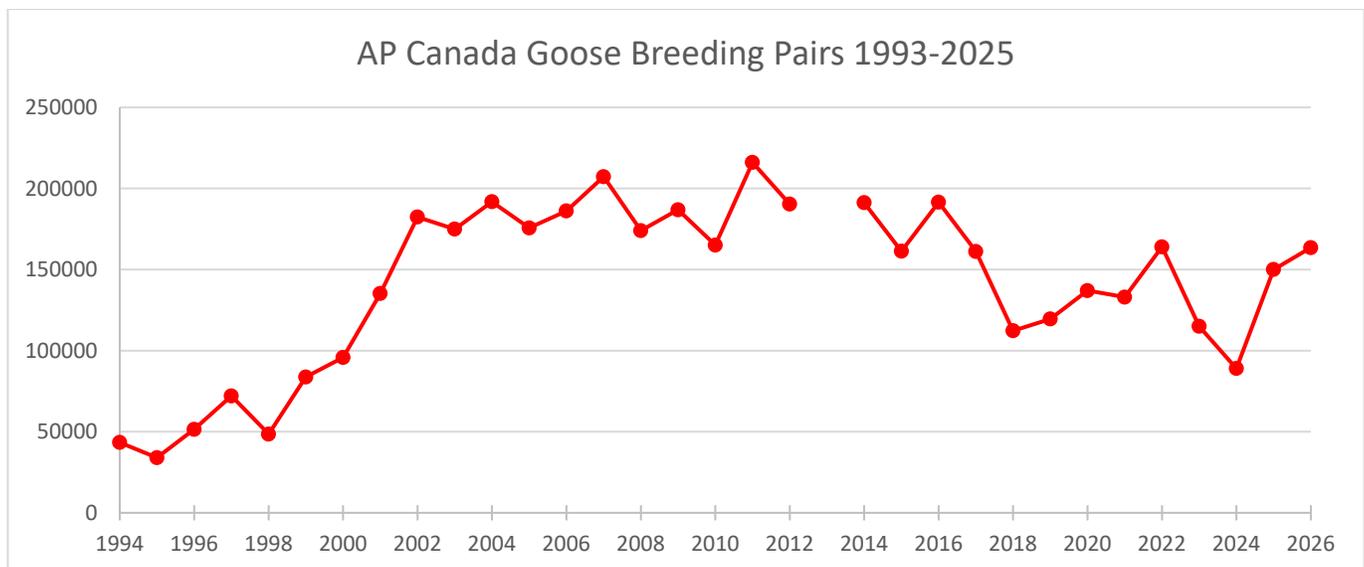
NOTE: Shotguns capable of holding more than 3 shells may be used when no other waterfowl seasons are open (September 1-18 East of I-95 and September 1-21 West of I-95).

Staff is **not** recommending the options of using electronic calls.

FACT SHEET- History and Status of Migrant Canada Geese - 2026

- Migrant Canada geese from the Atlantic Population (AP) declined significantly from 1985-1995. The hunting season was closed in 1995 to allow the population to recover. Goose numbers rebounded quickly and a limited season (6 days with a 1-bird bag) was held in both 1999 and 2000. As the population increased, the season was extended to 30 days in 2001, then 45 days in 2002, and 50 days from 2012-2018.
- As the population increased, hunting regulations were liberalized. The season was extended to 30 days in 2001, then 45 days in 2002, and 50 days in 2012. The AP bag limit was increased to 2 per day in 2004. In 2019 the AP bag limit was again reduced to 1 per day with a 30-day season. This was the result of several years of poor conditions on the arctic breeding grounds.
- After several years of below average productivity, two concurrent above average breeding seasons led to an increase in AP Canada goose production. This led to liberal harvest regulations for the 2022-2023 hunting season. Unfortunately, this was followed by a poor production year in 2023 and 2024 where the observed pair estimates (115,300 in 2023) and (89,000 in 2024) were down significantly from 2022 (164,000). The 2026 predicted number of breeding pairs based on the integrated population model was 163,500 which is above the 160k pair threshold for which liberal harvest regulations are recommended in the AP Canada goose Harvest Strategy. The 2026-2027 harvest recommendation is the liberal package which is a 45-day season and a 2 bird bag limit in the AP zone.

Figure 1. Atlantic Population Canada Goose Breeding Pair survey estimates 1993-2025.

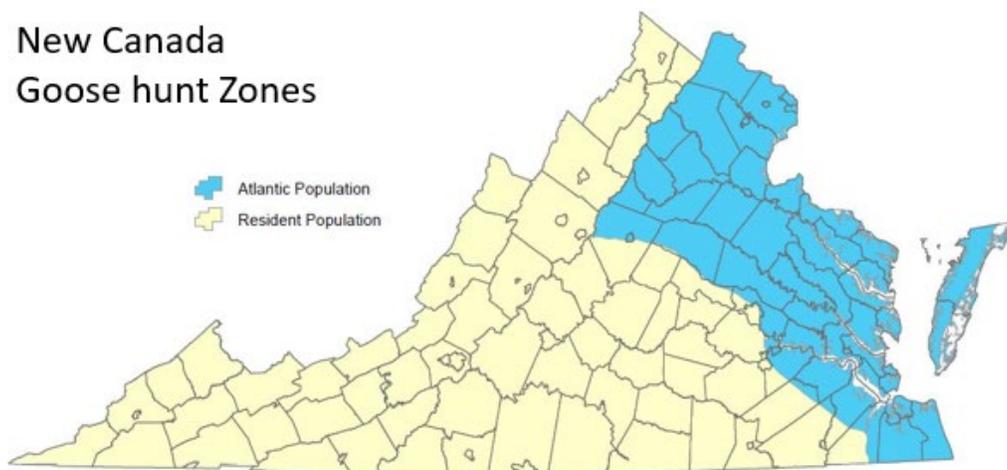


Canada Goose Populations and Hunt Zones

- In 2020 there was a change in the way the Atlantic Flyway, the Mississippi Flyway and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are defining and managing the different “Migrant” Canada goose populations in the Eastern United States. The Southern James Bay Population (SJBP) is no longer recognized as a separate population, and the eastern portion of this population is now considered part of the Atlantic Population (AP). The Atlantic Population along with the North Atlantic Population (NAP) are now the only recognized subpopulations of “migrant” Canada geese in the Atlantic Flyway. Nearly all the migrant geese that winter in Virginia are from the Atlantic Population, with only ~1% from the NAP.
- Due to this change, during the 2023-2024 season Virginia had to eliminate the SJBP Hunting Zone in Virginia. Some of this former zone (predominantly the northern portion) has been placed in the AP Zone, while the remainder of the area, where fewer migrant geese are located, has been included in the Resident Population Zone (RP).
- The hunting regulations for those areas that are now part of a different zone have changed significantly, so hunters need to make sure they are aware of the new zone boundaries. The description and map of these new Canada geese hunt zones is shown below.

Atlantic Population (AP) Hunt Zone – The area to the east of the following line: the “Blue Ridge” (Loudoun County-Clarke County border) at the West Virginia-Virginia Border, south to Interstate 64 (the Blue Ridge line follows county borders along the western edge of Loudoun-Fauquier-Rappahannock-Madison-Greene-Albemarle and into Nelson Counties), then east along Interstate Rt. 64 to Interstate 95 in Richmond, then south along I-95 to Route 460 in Petersburg, then southeast along Route 460 to Route 32 in the City of Suffolk, then south to the North Carolina border.

Resident Population (RP) Hunt Zone – The portion of the state west of the above AP Zone boundary.



CANADA GOOSE

FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

ATLANTIC POPULATION ZONE (AP):

Outside Dates: November 15, 2026 – February 5, 2027
Season Length: 45 hunting days
Bag Limit: 2 birds daily (6 in possession)

RESIDENT POPULATION ZONE (RP):

Outside Dates: November 15, 2026 – March 10, 2027
Season Length: 80 hunting days
Bag Limit: 5 birds daily (15 in possession)

NOTE – All seasons also include White-fronted geese along with Canada geese.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

ATLANTIC POPULATION ZONE: (AP)

Season Dates: November 24 – November 29 (6 days)
December 24 – January 31 (39 days)
Bag Limit: 2 geese per day (6 in possession)
Shooting Hours: 1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

RESIDENT POPULATION ZONE: (RP)

Season Dates: November 18 – November 29
December 19 - February 21
Bag Limit: 5 geese daily (15 in possession)
Shooting Hours: 1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

NOTE – All seasons also include White-fronted geese along with Canada geese.

FACT SHEET - Status of Light Geese (Greater and Lesser Snow Geese, and Ross's Geese) - 2026

- The majority (95%) of the “Light” geese found in the Atlantic Flyway are Greater Snow Geese, while less than 5% are Lesser Snow Geese, with even smaller numbers of Ross’s Geese.
- The principal nesting areas for greater snow geese are on Bylot, Axel Heiberg, Ellesmere, and Baffin Islands, and on Greenland. They winter along the Atlantic Coast from New Jersey to North Carolina.
- The Greater Snow Goose population is monitored on spring staging areas along the St. Lawrence Valley in Quebec. The 2025 population estimate was 428,000 geese. This estimate was lower than the population objective of 500,000 for the first time since the early 1990’s.
- Banding crews at the major snow goose breeding colony on Bylot Island reported above average nest densities and low levels of nest predation.
- Over the last 30 years, snow goose populations increased nearly ten-fold. A shift from feeding almost exclusively in marshes to feeding more on agricultural grains has allowed them to expand their range and habitat use. This shift has also allowed them to return to their breeding habitats in better physical condition, which has led to increased productivity.
- This population has generally stabilized over the past 5 year, however concerns about habitat degradation on their breeding, migration and wintering areas still remain. Snow geese can cause damage to these habitats by pulling up plant roots and denuding marshes of vegetation. Snow geese can also cause conflicts with agricultural interest by pulling up green grains including wheat and barley.
- Current hunting regulations for snow geese are as liberal as Federal Frameworks will allow and include a 107-day season that runs from October to January, and a bag limit that was increased from 15 to 25 in 2010. Liberal seasons have helped increase the harvest, and the population has recently dropped below the population objective of 500,000.
- In addition to the regular hunting season, a Conservation Order (CO) was established in 2009 that authorizes additional snow goose hunting after the end of the regular season frameworks. The CO allows the use of alternative management strategies (unplugged shotguns, electronic calls, shooting to ½ hour after sunset, no daily bag limit) to further increase the harvest of snow geese. The snow goose harvest in Virginia has averaged around 300 birds during the regular season and 600 birds during the Conservation Order over the past 5 years. A decision on the future of the CO will be made in the fall of 2026.

LIGHT GOOSE SEASONS

REGULAR LIGHT GOOSE SEASON

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

<u>Season Length:</u>	107 hunting days
<u>Outside Dates:</u>	October 1, 2026 - March 10, 2027
<u>Split Season Option:</u>	3-way split season
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	25 birds daily (no possession limit)

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

<u>Season Dates:</u>	November 24 – March 10, 2027	(106 days)
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	25 birds daily (no possession limit)	

LIGHT GOOSE CONSERVATION ORDER

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

Outside Dates:

When no other waterfowl seasons are open

Bag Limit:

No daily or possession limit

Special Hunting Methods:

Electronic calls, unplugged shotguns and extended shooting hours to one-half hour after sunset **only in areas and at times when other waterfowl seasons are closed.**

Special Requirements:

States participating in the Conservation Order are required to monitor hunter participation, effort, and success.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Conservation Order Zone: The same as the new AP Canada Goose Zone - The area to the east of the following line: the “Blue Ridge” (Loudoun County-Clarke County border) at the West Virginia-Virginia Border, south to Interstate 64 (the Blue Ridge line follows county borders along the western edge of Loudoun-Fauquier-Rappahannock-Madison-Greene-Albemarle and into Nelson Counties), then east along Interstate Rt. 64 to Interstate 95 in Richmond, then south along I-95 to Route 460 in Petersburg, then southeast along Route 460 to Route 32 in the City of Suffolk, then south to the North Carolina border.

Season Dates:

TBD

Bag Limit:

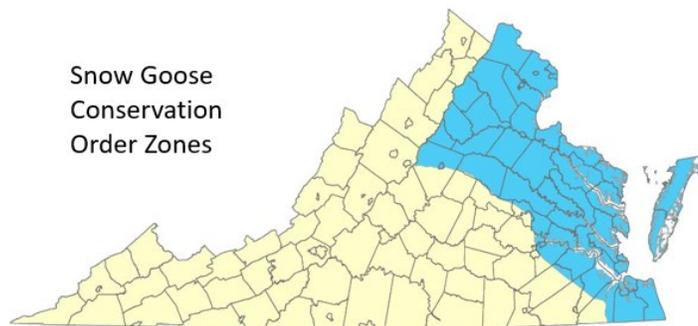
No daily or possession limit

Special Hunting Methods:

Electronic calls, unplugged shotguns and extended shooting hours to one-half hour after sunset.

Special Requirements:

Hunters participating in the Conservation Order **must register with DWR**, keep a record of their harvest and participation, and return a harvest report form within two weeks following the close of the season.



FACT SHEET - Status of Atlantic Brant and Tundra Swan - 2026

- **BRANT**. The main breeding areas for Atlantic Brant are in the Eastern Canadian Arctic on Baffin, Southampton, and Ellesmere Islands. Most brant winter along the Atlantic Coast from MA to NC.
- The 2025 mid-winter survey count for brant was 132,306, which was higher than the previous year's count (121,000) and higher than the previous 3-year average (122,736). The Atlantic brant productivity estimate was 8.6%. Which was lower than the previous year's estimate (16.7%) and the long-term average.
- The annual brant hunting regulation is now based on the Atlantic Brant Integrated Population Model (IPM) that was adopted by the Atlantic Flyway in 2021 and provides an index to the brant population. The model prediction for 2026 is 115,000. As per the Brant Harvest Strategy, this estimate calls for a 2026-2027 harvest regulation of 30 days with a 1-bird daily limit.
- **TUNDRA SWANS**. The Eastern Population of tundra swans nest in arctic tundra areas from Alaska, east to Hudson Bay and Baffin Island. These birds winter in coastal areas from Maryland to North Carolina.
- Estimated productivity of eastern population tundra swans in 2024 was 11% immature birds. This estimate is higher than the 2023 estimate (10%) and similar to the long-term average (11%).
- There were 66,528 eastern population tundra swans counted in the Atlantic Flyway on the 2025 Mid-Winter Survey. This count was 36% higher than last year, but still below the past 10-year average (2016-2025: 87,226)
- Nine states in the U.S. hunt tundra swans including Alaska, Utah, Montana and Nevada in the Pacific Flyway, North Dakota and South Dakota in the Central Flyway, and Delaware, Virginia and North Carolina in the Atlantic Flyway.
- There are no changes in the total number of hunting permits allowed for EP tundra swans this year (9,600 across the U.S., with 5,600 of those in the Atlantic Flyway) as the population estimate is still within the 70,000 to 110,000 range. In the Atlantic Flyway, the allocation of hunt permits is split between the 3 states in approximate proportion to the number of swans in each state. The 5,600 permits available in the Atlantic Flyway for the 2026-2027 season will be distributed as follows: NC– 4,853, VA-475, and DE-272.
- The tundra swan hunting season in Virginia is authorized and conducted as specified in the Atlantic Flyway Tundra Swan Management Plan and Hunt Plan, with limits and guidelines as specified under an MOU with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

ATLANTIC BRANT

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

<u>Season Length:</u>	30 hunting days
<u>Outside Dates:</u>	September 23, 2026 - January 31, 2027
<u>Split Season Option:</u>	2-way split season
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	1 bird daily (3 in possession)

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

<u>Season Dates:</u>	December 19 – December 31 (13 days)
	January 15 – January 31 (17 days)
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	1 bird daily (3 in possession)

TUNDRA SWAN

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

Season Length: 90 hunting days

Outside Dates: October 1, 2026 - January 31, 2027

Virginia may issue up to 475 permits and must obtain harvest and hunter participation data. Each permittee is authorized to take one (1) tundra swan per season.

Bag Limit: One per permittee per season

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Season Dates: November 15 - January 31

Bag Limit: One per permittee per season

Hunt Area: All counties and portions of counties east of U.S. Route I- 95 and south of the Prince William/Stafford county line in Chopawamsic Creek at Quantico Marine Corps Base.

NOTE: VDWR will issue no more than 475 swan-hunting permits to holders of a valid Virginia hunting license. Only hunters with a valid 2026-2027 tundra swan-hunting permit issued by VDWR shall be authorized to hunt tundra swans. Each permittee will be authorized to take one tundra swan during the season. Swan hunting permits are non-transferable and are valid for use only by the person to whom issued. Permits must be in the immediate possession of the permittee while swan hunting. Immediately at the time and place of kill, successful hunters must permanently record the month and day of kill on their permit and attach it to their swan. The VDWR is required to obtain hunter participation and harvest information to offer this Tundra Swan hunting season. **Hunters are required to complete the tundra swan hunt questionnaire (survey) and submit their results to the Department by February 15, 2027.** Those who fail to submit their results are ineligible for future drawings.

FALCONRY

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

<u>Season Length:</u>	No more than 107 on any species (Gun and Falconry combined)
<u>Outside Dates:</u>	September 1 - March 10
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	3 daily (9 in possession)
<u>Hawking Hours:</u>	½ hour before sunrise until sunset.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

<u>Dove:</u>	September 5 – October 23 November 21 – November 29 December 19 – January 31
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<u>Rail, Gallinule, Moorhen:</u>	September 5 – December 20
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<u>Woodcock:</u>	October 17 – January 31
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<u>Snipe:</u>	October 1 – December 2 December 19 – January 31
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<u>Canada Goose:</u>	September 1 - September 25 November 18 – November 29 December 19 - February 21
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<u>September Teal:</u>	September 16 - September 30
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<u>Ducks, Mergansers, Coot:</u>	October 9 - 12 November 18 – February 7
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<u>Brant and Snow Goose:</u>	October 17 – January 31
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NOTE: Recommended dates based on adoption of preceding gun season proposals; if amended, staff requests permission to calculate permissible dates for each species within the allowable federal framework.