

Survey numbers support Another Ducky Season

High duck numbers lead to lengthy hunting seasons, increased possession limits

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is again allowing long duck hunting seasons with some possession limits increased. Spring breeding ground surveys indicated that most migratory ducks were at high numbers, and while the year started out dry in key areas, late spring rains recharged many of those wetlands, benefiting late-nesting ducks.

In the breeding ground survey area, which includes the northcentral United States, southcentral and northern Canada, and Alaska, the total duck population was estimated at 45.6 million, close to last year's record 48.6 million, second highest since the survey began in 1955, and 33 percent above the long-term average. Total pond count for the United States and Canada was 6.9 million, a 24-percent increase over the previous year and 35 percent above the long-term average.

Seven of the 10 duck species surveyed came in similar to last year's record counts, including mallards at 10.6 million, 36 percent above the long-term average. Wigeon were 23 percent above last year. But two northern species—scaup and pintail—were below long-term averages and management goals.

The Service works with states in the four flyways to establish regulatory frameworks for hunting, and the proposed frameworks allow duck season lengths of 60 days in both the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyways, 74 days in the Central Flyway (with an additional 23 days in the High Plains), and 107 days in the Pacific Flyway. A full season for pintails and canvasbacks was also proposed, with a two-bird daily bag limit nationwide. Possession limits for ducks and geese may be raised to three times the daily bag limit.

Each state still sets its own seasons



Photo by Ryan Vince

and limits within those frameworks, and while overall duck numbers are strong, where and when hunters see ducks depends mostly on local factors. Weather, food, and water conditions always influence duck abundance, and, ultimately, hunter success.

The full survey may be viewed at: www.ducks.org/2013ducknumbers

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VT Adds 2nd Bear Season

Vermont now has two bear hunting seasons. The early hunt, which requires a special tag, started September 1 and continues through November 15. The late season opens November 16 and continues through November 24. The tag that comes with a hunting license is valid during this late season, which also has been extended four days. The early season tag cost an extra \$5 for residents and \$15 for nonresidents. If a hunter buys this extra tag, he still may only take one bear total during the year.

Vermont's bear population is now

estimated at more than 6,000, higher than the objective in Vermont's Big Game Management Plan for 2010-2020.

"Twenty-five years ago, Vermont's bear population was less than 3,000, and bears existed primarily in the mountains and in the northeastern quarter," a release quoted state wildlife biologist Forrest Hammond. "We are now seeing more incidents of bears doing damage, primarily where they are attracted to foods such as bird seed."

Hunters took 618 bears last year in Vermont. A report listing the number of bears taken in each town is available at: vtfishandwildlife.com

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Non-Toxic for KS Doves

Kansas now requires non-toxic shot at its managed dove fields. The fields attract a lot of hunters, and this concentrates a large amount of spent lead shot in small areas. This lead can be toxic to birds that may pick it up. Fields requiring non-toxic shot are posted.