

# **2018-2019 Migratory Game Bird Seasons and Bag Limits Federal Frameworks and Staff Recommendations**

Public Comment Period  
February 12 – March 16, 2018

Listed below are the preliminary staff recommendations for migratory game bird seasons and bag limits for the 2018-2019 hunting seasons. Public comments on these proposals will be accepted from February 12 through March 16, 2018, at the following email address: [MigratoryGameBirdComments@dgif.virginia.gov](mailto:MigratoryGameBirdComments@dgif.virginia.gov).

After consideration of the public comments, final staff recommendation will be developed and presented to the Board at their April 12, 2018 meeting for final adoption.

# VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF GAME AND INLAND FISHERIES

## 2018-2019 MIGRATORY GAME BIRD HUNTING SEASONS – FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS AND STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS



Prepared by Bureau of Wildlife Resources  
January 2018

**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF GAME AND INLAND FISHERIES**

**PRELIMINARY FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS AND STAFF PROPOSALS FOR 2018-19  
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 based on the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS):  
10-yr (2007-2016): stable population trend.  
Long term (1966-2016): increasing trend.
- Dove Banding Study – Annual program (since 2003) to leg-band over 500 doves annually in VA, and 33,000 nationwide. Data provides estimates of movements, survival and harvest rates that are used to develop hunting regulations.
- Harvest Strategy: New Harvest Strategy adopted in 2014 allowed an increase from 70 to 90 days of hunting for doves. Daily bag limit remains at 15 birds (up from 12 in 2009).
- Data from HIP (past 3-yr avg.): Hunters = 16,100 Harvest = 195,100

## Recent Seasons

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates (all 70 days until extended to 90 days in 2014-15)</u>		
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
2000-2001	Sept. 2 – 30	Oct 7 – Nov. 4	Dec. 30 – Jan. 10
1999-2000	Sept. 4 – 25	Oct. 2 – Nov. 6	Dec. 25 – Jan. 5
1998-1999	Sept. 5 - 26	Oct. 3 – Nov. 3	Dec. 25 – Jan. 9
1997-1998	Sept. 1 – 27	Oct. 4 – Nov. 1	Dec. 24 – Jan. 6
1996-1997	Sept. 2 - 28	Oct. 4 - Nov. 2	Dec. 23 - Jan. 4
1995-1996	Sept. 2 - 30	Oct. 2 - Oct. 31	Dec. 23 - Jan. 2
1994-1995	Sept. 3 - 30	Oct. 1 - Oct. 29	Dec. 26 - Jan. 7

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## DOVE

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### **FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS**

**OUTSIDE DATES:** September 1, 2018 - January 15, 2019  
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 1 - October 28 (58 days)  
November 21 - November 28 ( 8 days)  
December 22 - January 14 (24 days)

**SHOOTING HOURS:** September 1 – September 7 Noon until sunset  
September 8 – October 28 ½ hr before sunrise to sunset.  
November 21 - November 28 ½ hr before sunrise to sunset.  
December 22 - January 14 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 NJ, NY, and other salt marsh areas.
- **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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 rail hunting season. The key to setting the season is to bracket the greatest number of high tides possible.
- **Harvest Data** - Avg. No. hunters = 490, Avg. Harvest = 4,300 (HIP, past 10-yr avg.)

## Past Seasons

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates (all 70 days)</u>	
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
1999	Sept. 10 – Oct. 12	Oct. 22 – Nov. 27
1998	Sept. 9 – Oct. 24	Nov. 2 – Nov. 25
1997	Sept. 15 - 27	Oct. 8 - Dec. 3
1996	Sept. 16 – Oct. 17	Oct. 24 - Nov. 30
1995	Sept. 11 – Oct. 14	Oct. 21 – Nov.25

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## **RAILS (Clapper, King, Sora, Virginia)**

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### **FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS**

**OUTSIDE DATES:** September 1, 2018 - January 31, 2019

**SEASON LENGTH:** 70 days, straight or 2 segments.

**BAG LIMIT:** Clapper/King 15 daily, 45 possession  
Sora/Virginia 25 daily, 75 possession

**SHOOTING HOURS:** ½ hour before sunrise until sunset daily

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**SEASON DATES:** September 8 - November 16 (70 days)

**BAG LIMIT:** Clapper/King: 15 - counted together daily, 45 poss.  
Sora/Virginia: 25 - counted together daily, 75 poss.

**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 and Snipe hunting in Virginia.

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# GALLINULE AND MOORHEN

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## **FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS**

**OUTSIDE DATES:** September 1, 2018 - January 31, 2019

**SEASON LENGTH:** 70 days, straight or 2 segments.

**BAG LIMIT:** 15 daily, 45 in possession (singly or in the aggregate)

**SHOOTING HOURS:** ½ hour before sunrise until sunset daily

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**SEASON DATES:** September 8 – November 16 (70 days).

**BAG LIMIT:** 15 daily, 45 in possession (singly or in the aggregate)

**SHOOTING HOURS:** ½ hour before sunrise until sunset



# Woodcock

## Background Information and Population Status

- Harvest Strategy revised in 2011, established 3 regulatory options (Liberal, Moderate and Restrictive). Annual regulation based on the 3-year mean of the singing ground survey index. For 2018-19, Harvest Strategy calls for Moderate Regulation (45 days/3 birds).
- Singing-ground survey (SGS) in Eastern Management Region:
  - 1 year trend (2016-2017): downward trend.
  - 10 year trend (2008-2017): 0.89% decline per year.
  - Long-term (1966-2017): 1.05 % decline per year.
- The 2016 recruitment index for the U.S. portion of the Eastern Region (1.42 jv/ad female) was 2.9% above the 2015 index and 12.4% below than the long-term index.
- Research suggests that hunting has little effect on population trend, but habitat is limiting.
- In Virginia, season split into two segments to provide some opportunity for early hunting in western areas, and later hunting in central and eastern areas.  
Avg. No. hunters = 1,430 Avg. Harvest = 2,337 (HIP, past 10-year avg.)

### Recent Seasons (bag limit has been 3 birds)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates</u>		<u>Days</u>
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
2004-2005	Oct. 30 – Nov. 13	Dec.18 – Jan. 1	30
2003-2004	Nov. 1 – 15	Dec. 20 – Jan. 3	30
2002-2003	Nov. 2 – 16	Dec. 21 - Jan. 4	30
2001-2002	Nov. 3 - 17	Dec. 22 - Jan. 5	30
2000-2001	Nov. 4 - 18	Dec. 23 - Jan. 6	30
1999-2000	Oct. 30 - Nov. 13	Dec. 18 - Jan. 1	30
1998-1999	Oct. 31 - Nov. 14	Dec. 19 - Jan. 2	30
1997-1998	Nov. 1 - Nov. 15	Dec. 20 - Jan. 3	30
1996-1997	Oct. 28 - Nov. 23	Dec. 18 - Jan. 4	45
1995-1996	Oct. 30 - Nov. 25	Dec. 20 - Jan. 6	45

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# WOODCOCK

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## **FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS**

**OUTSIDE DATES:** October 1, 2018 - January 31, 2019

**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:** October 27 – November 2 (7 days)  
December 8 – January 14 (38 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 10-yr avg.): No. hunters = 470, Harvest = 810

## Recent Seasons

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates (all 107 days)</u>	
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. 10 – 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

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# SNIPE

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## **FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS**

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1, 2018 - January 31, 2019

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: October 5 - October 8 (4 days)  
October 21 - January 31 (103 days)

BAG LIMIT: 8 daily, 24 in possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

## SEPTEMBER TEAL SEASON FACT SHEET

- 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.
- 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, there are not large numbers of teal, 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>
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
2001	Sept. 15 – 25	na
2000	Sept. 14 – 23	na
1999	Sept. 16 – 25	na

Average Annual Harvest: 860 teal

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## SEPTEMBER TEAL SEASON

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**FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS**

**OUTSIDE DATES:** September 1 – September 30, 2018

**SEASON LENGTH:** Up to 16 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 17 – September 30 (14 days)  
**HUNT AREA:** East of I – 95

September 21 – September 30 (10 days)  
**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 - 2018**

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- 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 ~133,800 ducks and ~55,800 Canada geese from 2012-2016, 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 16,100 and 12,333 respectively.
- Conditions during the 2016-2017 season were rather mild compared to the past five years but slightly better than the 2015-2016 season. This resulted in a slight increase in duck harvest, but still below the 5 year average. Estimated Canada goose harvest on the other hand was well above the previous year and the five year average.
- The total estimated duck harvest during the 2016-2017 season in Virginia (126,800) was 6% higher than the previous year (119,800) but still 5% below the past 5-year average (133,800).
- During the 2016-2017 season mallards were the most commonly harvested duck in Virginia, followed by wood ducks, gadwall, bufflehead and ring-neck duck, which compromised the top 5 harvested species. The mallard harvest in Virginia in 2016-2017 (39,272) increased by 6% from 2015-2016, and was 11% higher than the past 5-year average (35,250).
- The Canada goose harvest in Virginia in 2016-2017 (87,500) was more than double the previous season (40,027) and 57% higher than the past 5-year average (55,800).

## FACT SHEET - The Status of Ducks - 2018

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**Mid-Continent Areas:** Annual precipitation is the most important factor influencing the quantity and quality of nesting and brood rearing habitat for prairie-nesting birds. The number of ponds counted during the USFWS May breeding waterfowl survey is used as an index for assessing waterfowl nesting habitat. In 2017, the May pond count (6.1 million) was 22% above last year's count (5 million), and 17% above the long-term average (5.2 million).

The total duck breeding population (BPOP) estimate for the mid-continent area was 47.3 million ducks in 2017, similar to the 2016 estimate of 48.4 million and 34% higher than the long-term average (1955-2016). The Breeding population estimates (BPOP), along with the percent change from last year and the long-term average, are presented below for the 10 most common species.

Species	2017 BPOP	% Change from 2016	% Change from Long- Term Avg.
<b>Mallard</b>	10.5 million	-11%	+34%
<b>Blue-winged Teal</b>	7.9 million	+18%	+57%
<b>Green-winged Teal</b>	3.6 million	-16%	+70%
<b>Gadwall</b>	4.2 million	+13%	+111%
<b>Northern Shoveler</b>	4.3 million	+10%	+69%
<b>Northern Pintail</b>	2.9 million	+10%	-27%
<b>American Wigeon</b>	2.8 million	-19%	+6%
<b>Redhead</b>	1.1 million	-13%	+55%
<b>Scaup</b>	4.4 million	-12%	-13%
<b>Canvasback</b>	733,000	-1%	+25%
<b>Total Ducks</b>	47.3 million	-2%	+34%

**Eastern Breeding Areas:** Habitat conditions throughout the eastern breeding area were generally wetter in 2017 than 2016, with most areas experiencing above average rainfall, but limited flooding. Spring phenology was later in some areas raising concerns about early season productivity, but late season production should be better. Overall, duck production is expected to be good in eastern breeding areas.

- Breeding population estimates for the 6 most common species surveyed were generally similar to or higher than last year except for Black ducks (12% below average) and ring-necked ducks (19% below 2016, but near average). Mallards (445,000), Goldeneyes (401,000) and Green-winged teal (239,000) were similar to their long term averages.

**Virginia:** Habitat conditions in Virginia during the spring of 2017 started off rather poor with dry conditions, but significant precipitation later in the spring filled many wetlands and provided good nesting habitat. Cooler late spring temperatures may have delayed some nest initiation and may have inhibited some re-nesting efforts. Local duck and goose production is expected to be slightly below average.

- The breeding pair estimate for Mallards (19,131) decreased 10% from the previous year's estimate. Wood duck breeding pair estimates (15,167) decreased 21% from 2016. Canada goose breeding pair estimates (36,233) were 15% below the previous year's estimate.



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## YOUTH WATERFOWL DAY

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### **Guidelines for the proposed Youth 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.
2. The 2 days (no longer required to be consecutive) 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. The 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, 2 Canada geese (except in Canada Goose Zones where the bag limit is higher), and 1 tundra swan (if the youth 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.
6. A licensed adult at least 18 years of age or older must accompany the youth hunter into the field. This adult may not duck hunt, but may participate in other open seasons

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# DUCKS

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## FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

**Outside Dates:** September 22, 2018 - January 27, 2019

**Season Length:** 60 hunting days; plus 2 Youth Waterfowl Hunt Days, can be non-consecutive.

**Bag Limit:** Daily Bag limit of 6 ducks of any species except for the following restrictions: can include no more than 4 mallards (only 2 hens), 4 scoters, 4 long-tailed ducks and 4 eiders, 3 wood ducks, 2 scaup, 2 redheads, 2 canvasback, 2 black ducks, 2 **pintail**, 1 mottled duck, 1 fulvous whistling duck,.  
Closed season on harlequin duck.  
The possession limit is three times the daily bag limit.

NOTE: There is an option to include mergansers in the general duck bag or leave them as a separate bag (see Merganser framework page 10). If included in the general duck bag, the restriction on 2 hooded mergansers would apply.

**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 Waterfowl Hunting Day

**Season Dates:** October 5 - 8 (Black Duck closed) (4 days)  
November 14 – November 25 (12 days) December 15  
– January 27 (44 days)  
(60 days)  
October 20, February 2 - Youth Waterfowl Days

**Bag Limit:** Daily Bag limit: 6 ducks of any species except for the following restrictions: can include no more than 4 mallards (only 2 hens), 4 scoters, 4 long-tailed ducks and 4 eiders, 3 wood ducks, 2 scaup, 2 redheads, 2 canvasback, 2 black ducks (except closed Oct. 5 – 8), 2 **pintail**, 1 mottled duck, 1 fulvous whistling duck,.  
Closed season on harlequin duck.  
The possession limit is three times the daily bag limit.

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

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## **MERGANSER AND COOT**

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### **MERGANSER**

#### **FEDERAL FRAMEWORK**

##### **Option A**

**Season Length:** 60 hunting days  
**Outside Date:** September 22, 2018 - January 27, 2019  
**Bag Limit:** 5 birds daily, of which only 2 birds may be a hooded merganser (15 in possession, only 6 of which may be hooded mergansers)

##### **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, of which only 2 birds may be a hooded merganser (15 in possession, only 6 of which may be hooded mergansers)

### **AMERICAN COOT**

#### **FEDERAL FRAMEWORK**

**Season Length:** 60 hunting days  
**Outside Date:** September 22, 2018 - January 27, 2019  
**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)

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## **SPECIAL SEA DUCK SEASON IN SEA DUCK ZONE\***

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### **FEDERAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **SEA DUCKS (SCOTER, LONG-TAILED DUCK, AND EIDER)**

<u>Season Length:</u>	60 hunting days, run consecutively
<u>Outside Dates:</u>	September 15, 2018 - January 31, 2019
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	5 birds per day (15 in possession), may include no more than 4 scoters, 4 eiders or 4 long-tailed ducks.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

#### **SEA DUCKS (SCOTER, LONG-TAILED DUCK, AND EIDER)**

<u>Season Dates:</u>	November 10 – January 8 (60 days) In the Sea Duck Zone delineated below
<u>Bag Limit:</u>	5 birds per day (15 in possession), may include no more than 4 scoters, 4 eiders or 4 long-tailed ducks.

**\* Sea Duck Zone:** Those waters at a distance greater than 800 yards from any shore, island or emergent vegetation in the following area: the ocean waters of Virginia, the tidal waters of Northampton and Accomack Counties, and the Chesapeake Bay and each of its tributaries up to the first highway bridge. Back Bay and its tributaries are not included in the Sea Duck Zone.

**Note** - Sea ducks can be taken during the regular duck season (Oct. 5-8, Nov. 14–25 and Dec. 15 – Jan. 27) in areas outside the sea duck zone, and if taken outside the sea duck zone must be counted as part of the regular duck season bag limits.

## **FACT SHEET - The Status of Resident Canada Geese - 2018**

- The resident Canada goose population increased significantly in Virginia during the 1980's and 1990's, and peaked at 264,000 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 142,167 (+/- 30,000) in Virginia and near 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 portions of Virginia, and special "Goose Hunting Zones" has been established that allow more liberal seasons in areas with more resident Canada goose.
- 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 Airport, Agricultural, and Nest and Egg Depredation Orders have been implemented to help manage resident goose conflicts.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Population Estimate *</b>	<b>September Harvest</b>
2017	142,167 +/- 21%	Na
2016	158,200 +/- 19%	Na
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
1998	264,867 +/- 35%	12,200
1997	249,612 +/- 34%	10,500
1996	181,813 +/- 36%	10,000
1995	151,043 +/- 39%	5,500

\*3-year running average

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# SEPTEMBER CANADA GOOSE

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## **FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS**

**OUTSIDE DATES:** September 1 – September 25, 2018

**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 – 16: ½ hr before sunrise **to ½ hr after sunset.**

September 17 – 25: ½ hr before sunrise **to sunset.**

**West of I-95**

September 1 – 20: ½ hr before sunrise **to ½ hr after sunset.**

September 21 - 25: ½ hr before sunrise **to sunset.**

**NOTE:** Staff is not recommending the options of using electronic calls or unplugged shotguns for hunting geese in the September season.

## FACT SHEET- The Status of Migrant Canada Geese - 2018

- Migrant Canada geese from the Atlantic Population declined significantly from 1985-1995. The hunting season was closed in 1995 to allow the population to recover as quickly as possible. 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, hunting regulations were liberalized. The season was extended to 30 days in 2001, then 45 days in 2002, and 50 days in 2012. The bag limit was increased to 2 per day in 2004 and has remain at 2/day since then.
- The breeding population estimate for 2017 (161,200) was 16% lower than the 2016 estimate.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>NUMBER OF PAIRS</u>	
1988	118,031	
1993	91,307	
1994	40,086	
1995	29,302	(season closed)
1996	46,058	“ “
1997	63,216	“ “
1998	42,166	(season closed, incomplete survey)
1999	77,451	(season reopened, 6 days/1 bird)
2000	93,230	
2001	146,662	
2002	164,840	
2003	156,937	
2004	174,793	
2005	162,395	
2006	160,020	
2007	195,709	
2008	169,699	
2009	176,118	
2010	154,028	
2011	194,900	
2012	190,300	
2013	N/A	(survey not completed)
2014	191,234	
2015	161,302	
2016	191,526	
2017	161,200	

- Spring phenology was earlier than normal on the central and northern Quebec breeding grounds resulting in good habitat conditions. Production for 2017 is expected to be above last year and better than the past several years.

# **Canada Goose Populations and Hunt Zones**

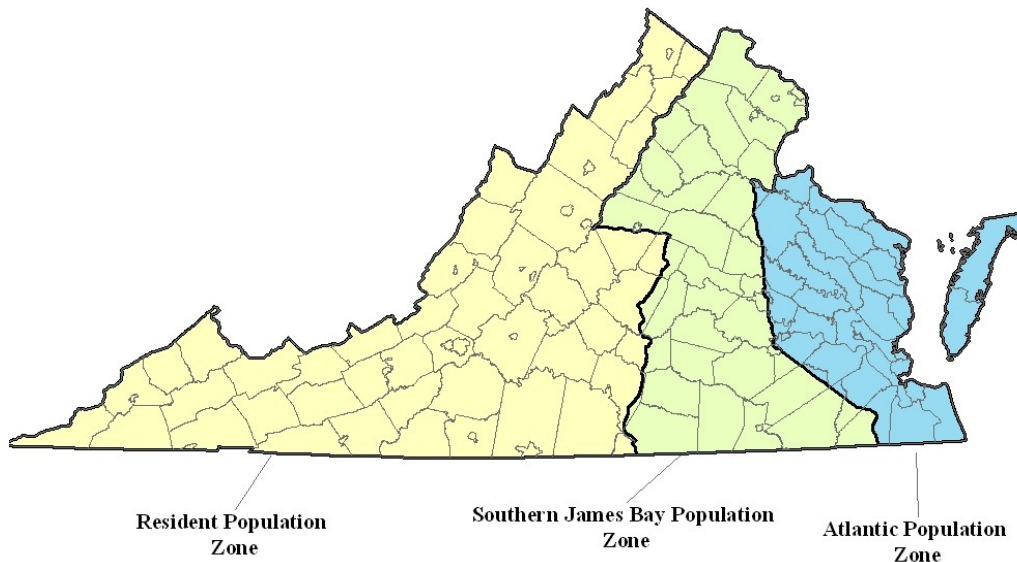
- There are 4 subpopulations of Canada geese in Virginia. These include the Atlantic Flyway Resident Population (RP) along with three migrant goose populations, the North Atlantic Population (NAP), the Southern James Bay Population (SJBP), and the Atlantic Population (AP). The majority of our migrant geese (~82%) are from the AP, about 18% are from the SJBP, and <1% are from the NAP.
- Recent research and banding analyses have enabled us to better delineate the distribution and migration corridors used by these different subpopulations, and to establish separate hunting zones based on the percentage of migrant geese in each zone. These zones include the:

**Atlantic Population (AP) Hunt Zone** – The area east of the Stafford/King George County line from the Potomac River south to the Rappahannock River, then west along the Stafford County line to Interstate 95, 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.

**Southern James Bay Population (SJBP) Hunt Zone** – The area to the west of the AP Hunt Zone boundary and east of the following line: the “Blue Ridge” (Loudoun County-Clarke County line) 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 Route 15, then south along Rt. 15 to the North Carolina line.

**Resident Population (RP) Hunt Zone** – The portion of the state west of the SJBP Hunt Zone.

## **Virginia's Canada Goose Hunt Zones**





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# CANADA GOOSE

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## **FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS**

### **ATLANTIC POPULATION ZONE (AP):**

<b><u>Season Length:</u></b>	50 hunting days
<b><u>Outside Dates:</u></b>	November 15 – February 5
<b><u>Bag Limit:</u></b>	2 birds daily (6 in possession)

### **SOUTHERN JAMES BAY POPULATION ZONE (SJBP)**

<b><u>Outside Dates and Season Length:</u></b>	
<b>Regular Season:</b>	November 15 – January 14 (up to 40 hunting days)
<b>Extended Season:</b>	January 15 – February 15
<b><u>Bag Limit:</u></b>	3/day (9 in possession) through January 14 5/day (15 in possession), January 15 to February 15

### **RESIDENT POPULATION ZONE (RP):**

<b><u>Outside Dates:</u></b>	November 15 – March 10
<b><u>Season Length:</u></b>	80 hunting days
<b><u>Bag Limit:</u></b>	5 birds daily (15 in possession)

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

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **ATLANTIC POPULATION ZONE: (AP)**

<b><u>Season Dates:</u></b>	November 14 – November 25 (12 days) December 21 – January 27 (38 days)
<b><u>Bag Limit:</u></b>	2 geese per day (6 in possession)
<b><u>Shooting Hours:</u></b>	1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

### **SOUTHERN JAMES BAY POPULATION ZONE (SJBP)**

<b><u>Season Dates:</u></b>	
<b>Regular Season:</b>	November 14 – November 25 3/day (12 days) December 18 – January 14 3/day (28 days)
<b>Extended Season:</b>	January 15 - February 15 5/day (32 days)
<b><u>Shooting Hours:</u></b>	1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

### **RESIDENT POPULATION ZONE: (RP)**

<b><u>Season Dates:</u></b>	November 14 – November 25 (12 days) December 15 - February 20 (68 days)
<b><u>Bag Limit:</u></b>	5 birds daily (15 in possession)
<b><u>Shooting Hours:</u></b>	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) - 2018**

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- The Greater Snow Goose population is monitored on spring staging areas along the St. Lawrence Valley in Quebec. The 2017 population estimate was 747,000 geese (+/- 11%), which is 18% lower than last year and similar to the long term average.
- The principal nesting areas for greater snow geese are on Bylot, Axel Heiberg, Ellesmere, and Baffin Islands, and on Greenland. These geese winter along the Atlantic Coast from New Jersey to North Carolina.
- Nesting phenology of greater snow geese at Bylot Island in 2017 was near average, despite later than average spring phenology due to thick winter snow pack and cool weather in June. Mean nest initiation and mean hatch dates were similar to the prior 20 year averages, however colony density and clutch size were lower than average. Predation levels were high during egg laying due to decreased lemming numbers.
- Over the last 30 years, snow goose populations have increased almost 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 boom has resulted in ecological degradation on their breeding, migration and wintering areas. It has also led to conflicts with agricultural interest. Snow geese can cause damage to these habitats by pulling up plant roots and denuding marshes of vegetation.
- 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, however, the population is still quite large and concerns remain about detrimental impacts these birds are having on breeding and wintering habitats.
- A Conservation Order (CO) season was established in 2009, and authorizes 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 in the Atlantic Flyway. The number of hunters participating in this season in Virginia has averaged 292 per year and the harvest has averaged 652 snow geese per year.

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# LIGHT GOOSE SEASONS

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## REGULAR LIGHT GOOSE SEASON

### FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

<b><u>Season Length:</u></b>	107 hunting days
<b><u>Outside Dates:</u></b>	October 1, 2018 - March 10, 2019
<b><u>Split Season Option:</u></b>	3-way split season
<b><u>Bag Limit:</u></b>	25 birds daily (no possession limit)

### STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

<b><u>Season Dates:</u></b>	October 17 – January 31	(107 days)
<b><u>Bag Limit:</u></b>	25 birds daily (no possession limit)	

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# LIGHT GOOSE CONSERVATION ORDER SEASON

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## 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 Season are required to monitor hunter participation, effort, and success.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

**Conservation Order Season Zone:** The same as the AP Canada Goose Zone - The area east of the Stafford/King George County line from the Potomac River south to the Rappahannock River, then west along the Stafford County line to Interstate 95, 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:** February 1 – April 5, 2019 (65 days)
- 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 Season **must register**, 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 - 2018

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- **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 Massachusetts to North Carolina.
- Breeding habitat conditions were variable in 2017 with good breeding success in some areas like Southampton Island, but not as good in other areas.
- The 2017 Mid-Winter Survey count of brant in the Atlantic Flyway (161,700) was 2% higher than the 2016 estimate and 19% higher than the 5-year average (135,344). There were 9,805 counted in Virginia, a slight increase from 2016 (8,446). The juvenile recruitment index in 2016 (25%) was higher than the long-term average (18%).
- The brant hunting season framework for 2018-19 will be based on the 2018 mid-winter count, which should be available near the end of January 2018.
- **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. Productivity in 2017 was expected to be similar to 2016.
- There were 119,300 eastern population tundra swans counted on the 2017 Mid-Winter Survey, which is 5% higher than the 2016 count (113,600) and above the long term-average. The three-year running average is 116,659 and frameworks for the tundra swan hunting season will be the same as last year.
- Eight 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 North Carolina and Virginia in the Atlantic Flyway.
- In the Atlantic Flyway, the allocation of hunt permits is split between the 2 states in approximate proportion to the number of swans in each state. Virginia winters ~6,000 swans. North Carolina winters ~70,000 swans (~65% of the population) and therefore is allowed a higher percentage of the swan hunting permits.
- For the 2018-19 hunting season, the number of permits available to hunters will remain the same as last year, 750 in Virginia, and 6,250 in North Carolina.
- 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.

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# ATLANTIC BRANT

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## “ANTICIPATED” FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

<b><u>Season Length:</u></b>	60 hunting days
<b><u>Outside Dates:</u></b>	September 22, 2018 - January 31, 2019
<b><u>Split Season Option:</u></b>	2-way split season
<b><u>Bag Limit:</u></b>	2 bird daily (6 in possession)

## STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

<b><u>Season Dates:</u></b>	November 14– November 25 December 15 - January 31
<b><u>Bag Limit:</u></b>	2 birds daily (6 in possession)

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# TUNDRA SWAN

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## FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

**Season Length:** 90 hunting days

**Outside Dates:** October 1, 2018 - January 31, 2019

Virginia may issue up to 750 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 14 - 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:** VDGIF will issue no more than 750 swan hunting permits to holders of a valid Virginia hunting license. Only hunters with a valid 2018-2019 tundra swan hunting permit issued by VDGIF 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 VDGIF 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, 2019.** Those who fail to submit their results are ineligible for future drawings.

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# FALCONRY

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## FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

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

## STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

<b><u>Dove:</u></b>	September 1 – October 28 November 21 – November 28 December 22 – January 31
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<b><u>Rail, Gallinule, Moorhen:</u></b>	September 8 – December 31
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<b><u>Woodcock:</u></b>	October 17 – January 31
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<b><u>Snipe:</u></b>	October 5 - 8 October 21 – January 31
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<b><u>Canada Goose:</u></b>	September 1 - September 25 November 14 – November 25 December 15 - February 20
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<b><u>September Teal:</u></b>	September 17 - September 30
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<b><u>Ducks, Mergansers, Coot:</u></b>	October 5- 8 November 14 – February 8
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<b><u>Brant and Snow Goose:</u></b>	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.