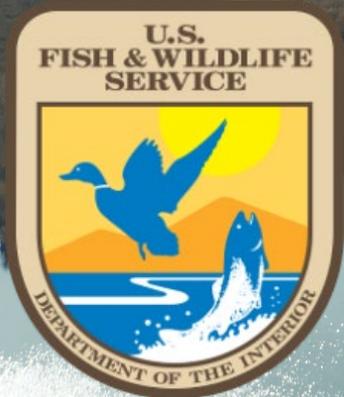


Proposed Migratory Game Bird Hunting Seasons for 2026-27



Helpful Terms



- **AHM: Adaptive Harvest Management**
- **IPM: Integrated Population Model**
- **LTA: Long Term Average**
- **AFC: Atlantic Flyway Council**
- **AFBWS: Atlantic Flyway Breeding Waterfowl Survey**
- **BSS: Breeding Bird Survey**

2025 Habitat Conditions

- Surveys and annual pre-season waterfowl banding efforts were conducted normally.
- Snow and ice cover maps from satellite photography.

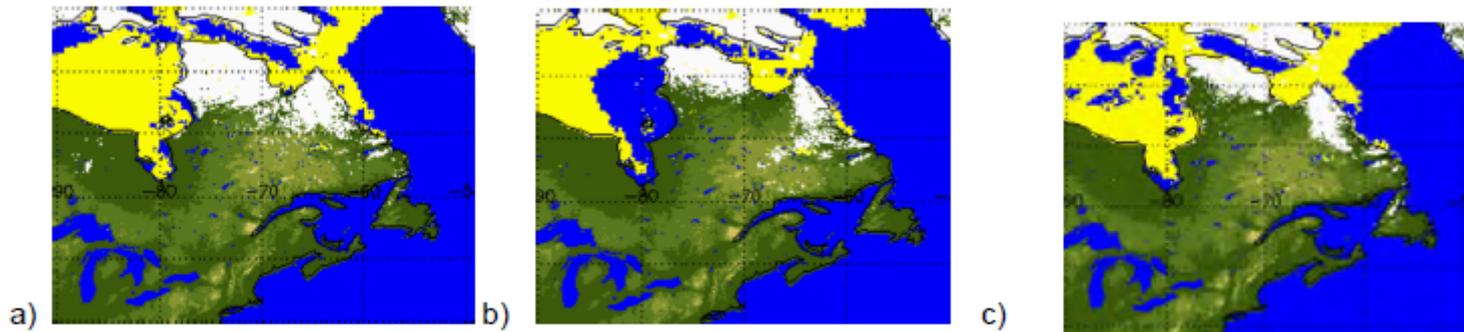


Figure 2. Snow depth and ice cover maps for northern Quebec from the last day of May in a) 2025, b) 2024, c) 2023



Eastern Survey Area Population Estimates



2025 Breeding Ducks in the Eastern Survey Area (millions)

Species	2025	2024	% Change from 2024	% Change from LTA
Mallard	1.14	1.14	similar	-10%
Black Duck	0.79	0.84	similar	similar
Wood Duck**	0.90	0.90	similar	similar
Green-winged Teal	0.34	0.45	-24%	similar
Ring-necked Duck	0.76	0.70	similar	similar
Common Goldeneye	0.72	1.0	-25%	+28%

* Average from 1998-2025

** Wood Duck estimate from AFBWS and BBS

Multi-Stock Harvest Management



- Models 4 species representing birds important to hunters/harvest and different habitat types in the Atlantic Flyway, used to determine the general duck season.
- Replaced Eastern Mallard AHM in 2018
- Optimal choice for the 2026-27 Atlantic Flyway duck season is the liberal regulatory alternative (60 days/6 birds).



Traditional Survey Area Population Estimates



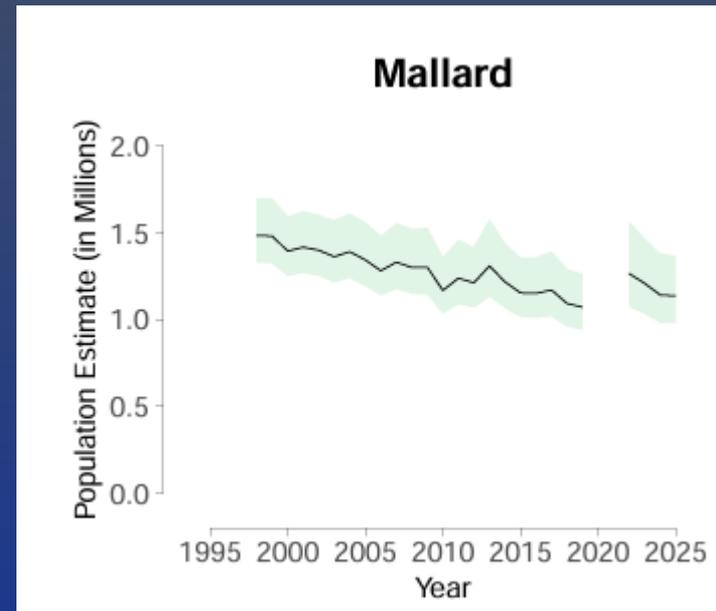
Species	2025	2024	% Change from 2024	% Change from LTA
	(In Millions)			
Mallard	6.6	6.6	similar	-17%
Gadwall	2.4	2.3	similar	similar
American wigeon	3.2	2.9	similar	+22%
Green-winged teal	2.6	3.0	similar	similar
Blue-winged teal	4.4	4.6	similar	-13%
Northern shoveler	2.8	2.6	similar	similar
Northern pintail	2.2	2.0	similar	-41%
Redhead	0.9	0.8	similar	+25%
Canvasback	0.7	0.6	similar	similar
Scaup	3.7	4.1	similar	-25%



Eastern Mallards



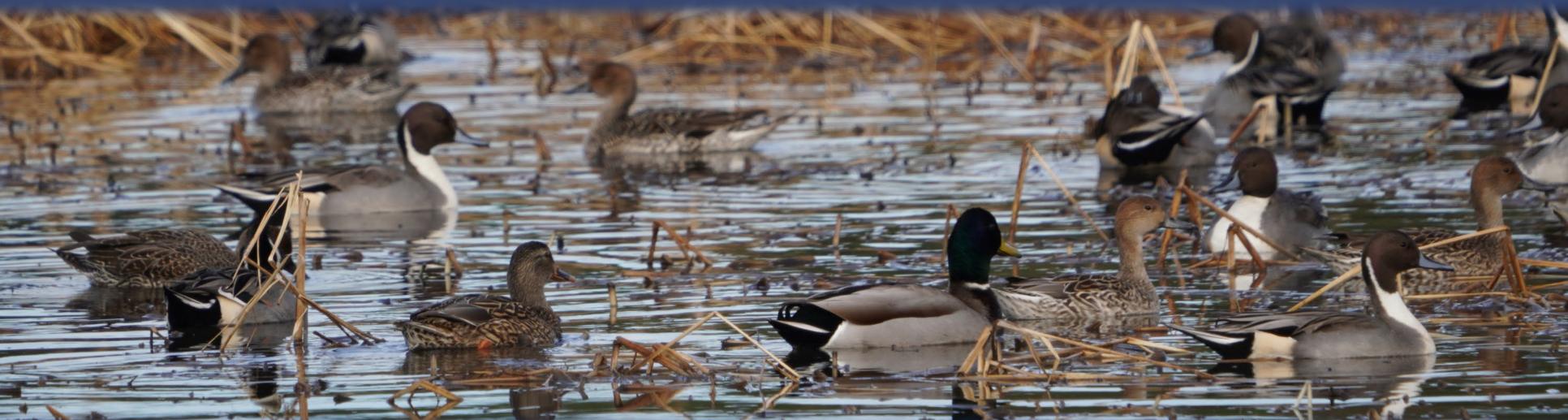
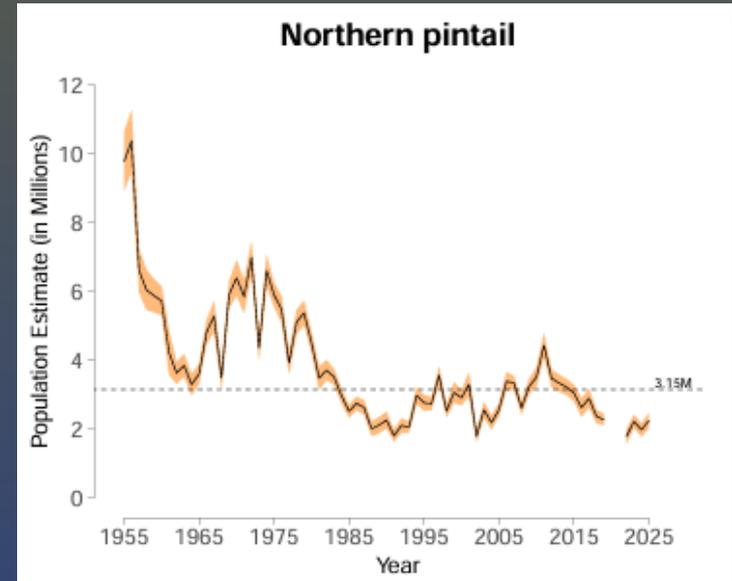
- Integrated Population Model, independent of Multi-stock AHM.
- Liberal: 4/day (2 Hens) Moderate: 2/day (1 hen) Restrictive: 1/day
Closed
- Harvest strategy recommends a liberal framework in 2026-27 (60/4 with 2 hens).



Interim Pintail Harvest Strategy



- Interim Pintail Harvest Strategy in effect 2025-2026 season
- Atlantic Flyway: 3 – bird bag unless season is closed
- 2026-2027 season recommendation: 3 bird daily bag



2025 Atlantic Population Canada Goose Monitoring



- **Breeding Pair Survey** conducted normally in mid-June.
- **Pre-season Banding**
 - Conducted in 2025 (2,520 birds banded).
 - ~563 GPS/GSM solar powered neck collars deployed over last 4 yrs.
 - 2025 young to adult ratio was 0.59 and lower than the LTA (1.28).

Highlights of the AP CAGO Management Strategy



- **The 3 year running average of the pair estimate, formerly used to determine the hunt package, was replaced by an IPM in 2021.**
- **The IPM makes better use of all the available demographic data on AP Canada geese and is capable of making out-year (i.e. advance) predictions of the number of breeding pairs.**
- **Use of the out-year prediction allows for a quicker response to population change under the current regulatory system.**
- **Revised AP Canada Goose Harvest Strategy is more conservative in all packages and requires a bag limit of 1 per day in all U.S. AP hunt zones when the restrictive package is recommended.**

Atlantic Population Canada Goose Harvest Strategy



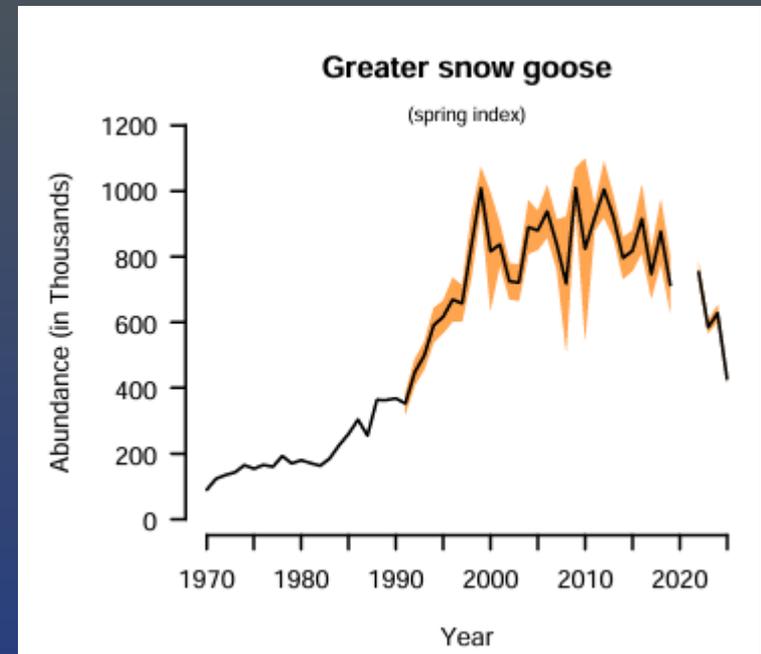
- AP Canada goose IPM predicts 163,500 (95% CI = 113,000–227,500) breeding pairs for June 2026.

Population Thresholds (Breeding Pairs)	Harvest Package	Target Adult Harvest Rate	Packages for Chesapeake Region AP Areas	Packages for Mid-Atlantic and New England Region AP Areas
> 160,000	Liberal	7%	45 days and 2 geese/day	45 days and 3 geese/day
≤ 160,00 and > 125,000	Moderate	5%	30 days and 2 geese/day	30 days and 3 geese/day
≤ 125,000 and ≥ 60,000	Restrictive	3%	30 days and 1 goose/day	30 days and 1 goose/day
< 60,000	Closed	0%	Closed	Closed

Snow Geese



- 2025 spring index 428,000.
- -32% from 2024.
- 23% juvenile to adult ratio in 2025.
(LTA 23%, 24% in 2024)



Notes Relevant to Season Selection Process



- MD DNR's Migratory Game Bird Hunting Season proposals must remain within the guidelines provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Federal Frameworks.
- MD DNR does not have the authority to legalize Sunday Hunting for Migratory Game Birds. That authority rests with the Maryland General Assembly.
- DNR will collect public comment (from the online forum, email, mail, telephone, etc.) for review by the Migratory Game Bird Advisory Committee and Wildlife Advisory Commission.
- Adjustments to seasons and bag limits will be considered at this time.
- Final season selections will be forwarded to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by April 15.

September Teal Season



Federal Framework:

A **9-day** season may be held between Sept. 1 and Sept. 30 with a 6 bird daily bag limit. Teal season may not run concurrently with other seasons that allow special considerations (resident Canada goose) such as modified shooting hours or unplugged guns.

Proposed Dates:

Sept. 17, 2026 – Sept. 26, 2026

Daily Bag Limit: 6 blue-winged or green-winged teal, singly or in aggregate, per day



Note: Early Resident Goose is Sept 1-15

“Regular” Duck Hunting Season



Federal Framework:

60-day season between Saturday nearest Sept. 24 and January 31 with a daily bag limit of 6 ducks (species restrictions).

Eastern Duck Zone	Western Duck Zone
Oct. 10, 2026 – Oct. 17, 2026	Oct. 3, 2026 – Oct. 17, 2025
Nov. 14, 2026 – Nov. 27, 2026	Nov. 21, 2026 – Nov. 27, 2026
Dec. 15, 2026 – Jan. 30, 2027	Dec. 15, 2026 – Jan. 30, 2027

Daily Bag Limit:

6 per day (including mergansers) but no more than 4 sea ducks (3 long-tailed ducks, 3 scoters, 3 eiders), 4 mallards (2 hens), 3 wood ducks, 3 pintails, 2 redheads, 1 scaup*, 2 canvasbacks, 2 black ducks (during black duck season), 1 mottled duck, and 1 fulvous tree duck.

Scaup hybrid season: Daily bag limit is 1 except between Jan. 8, 2027 and Jan. 30, 2027 when 2 scaup per day may be harvested.



Youth/Military Waterfowl Hunting Days



Federal Framework: States can hold 2 youth/military personnel days outside of regular duck season but within 14 days of the end framework dates (Sept. 21 and Jan. 31). Must be on weekends, holidays, or other non-school days.

Proposed Dates: Nov. 7, 2026 and Feb. 6, 2027

Daily Bag Limit: 6 ducks (certain species bag restrictions), 2 Canada geese in the AP Zone or 5 Canada geese in the late RP Zone, 1 brant, 25 Light geese, 2 scaup and 15 coots.

Requirements: Youth hunter must be 16 years of age or younger and accompanied by an unarmed adult at least 21 years old. The adult may assist in calling, setting decoys, and retrieving downed birds. Military veterans (as defined in Section 101 of title 38, United States Code) of any age and members of the armed forces on active duty, including members of the National Guard and Reserves on Active duty (other than for training) can participate in these two hunt days.



Atlantic Population (AP) Canada Goose Hunting Season



Federal Framework:

A 45-day season may be held between Nov. 15 and Feb. 5 with a 2 bird daily bag limit. The season may be divided into no more than 2 segments.

Proposed Season:

Nov. 24, 2026 – Nov. 27, 2026

Dec. 15, 2026 – Jan. 30, 2027

Daily Bag Limit: 2 per day



AF Resident Population Canada Goose Hunting Season

(AFRP Zone)



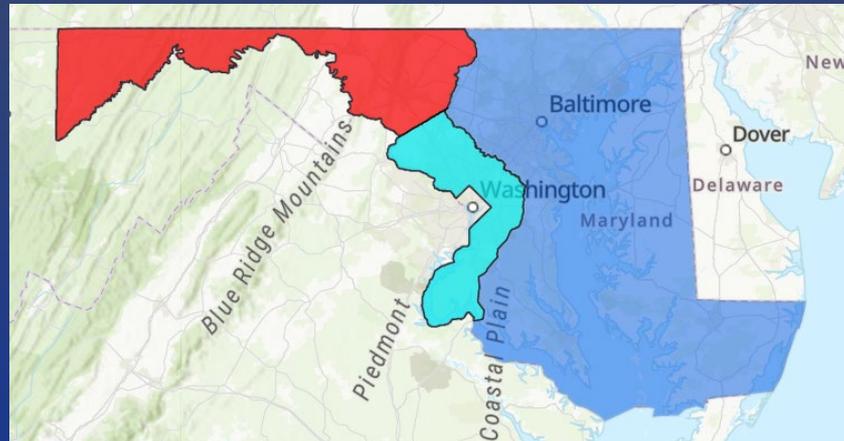
Federal Framework:

80-day season between Nov. 15 and Mar. 10

Daily Bag Limit: 5 per day

Late Southern Maryland Goose Zone

Proposed Season Dates	Daily Bag Limit
Nov. 21, 2026 - Nov. 23, 2026	5 per day
Nov. 24, 2026 - Nov. 27, 2026	2 per day
Dec. 15, 2026 – Jan. 30, 2027	2 per day
Feb. 1, 2027 – Mar. 10, 2027	5 per day



AF Resident Population Canada Goose Hunting Season

(AFRP Zone)



Federal Framework:

80-day season between Nov. 15 and Mar. 10

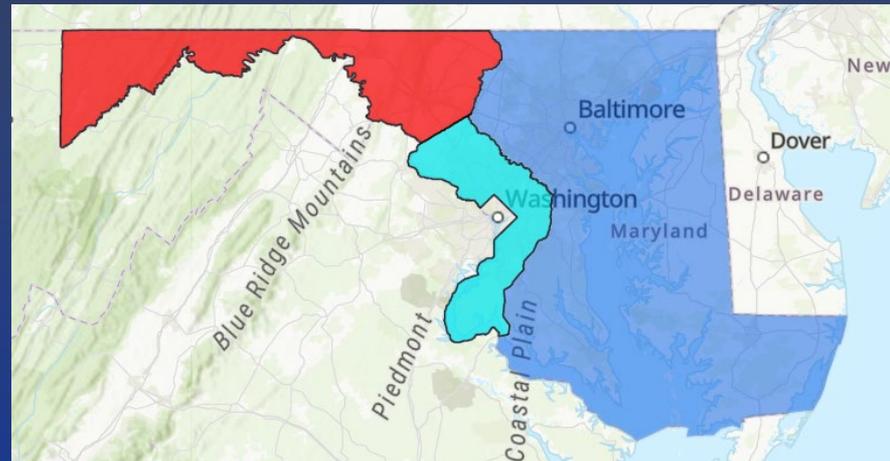
Daily Bag Limit: 5 per day

Late Western Maryland Goose Zone

Proposed Season Dates: Nov. 21, 2026 – Nov. 27, 2026

Dec. 15, 2026 – Mar. 10, 2027

Daily Bag Limit: 5 per day



Atlantic Brant Hunting Season



Federal Framework:

30-day season between the Saturday nearest Sept. 24 and Jan. 31 with a 1-bird daily bag limit.

Proposed Season:

Dec. 28, 2026 – Jan. 30, 2027

Daily Bag Limit: 1 per day



Light Goose Hunting Season

Corrections have been made to this slide on 2/16/2026



Federal Framework:

107-day season between Oct. 1 and Mar. 10 with a 25-bird daily bag limit and no possession limit.

Proposed Season:

Nov. 5, 2026 - Nov. 27, 2026 Statewide

Nov. 30, 2026 – Feb. 6, 2027 Statewide

Feb. 8, 2027 – March 10, 2027 *Eastern Zone Only **Special Methods

Daily Bag Limit: 25 per day No Possession Limit

*Eastern Zone Description: Hunt Area: Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Harford, Howard, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, St. Mary's, Talbot, Wicomico and Worcester Counties; and that portion of Carroll County east of Route 31 to the intersection of Route 97, and east of Route 97 to the Pennsylvania line; that portion of Prince George's County east of Route 3 and Route 301; and that portion of Charles County east of Route 301 to the Virginia line. The Special Sea Duck Zone is excluded from this hunt area.

**The following special methods may be used from February 8, 2027 – March 10, 2027: (1) Hunters may use shotguns capable of holding more than three shotshells; and (2) Hunters may use electronic calls with recordings of light geese.

Light Goose Conservation Order Hunting Season



Federal Framework:

The Conservation Order allows extended shooting hours for light geese (one-half hour after sunset) and imposes no daily bag limits for light geese. The CO may only open when all waterfowl (including light goose) and crane hunting seasons (excluding falconry) are closed.

Proposed Season:

*Light Goose Conservation Order season potential to be evaluated by Fall 2026

Daily Bag Limit: No bag limit
No possession limit

Mourning Dove Season



Federal Framework:

States may select a 90 day season between Sept. 1 – Jan. 31 with 15 birds/day. There can be no more than 3 season segments.

Proposed Season:

Sept. 1, 2026 – Oct. 17, 2026

Oct. 24, 2026 – Nov. 27, 2026

Dec. 19, 2026 – Jan. 9, 2027

Daily Bag Limit: 15 birds/day



Woodcock Season



Federal Framework:

States may select a 45-day season between October 1 and January 31 with a 3-bird daily bag limit. States may split their seasons into two segments.

Proposed Season:

Oct. 24, 2026 – Nov. 27, 2026

Jan. 11, 2027 – Jan. 27, 2027

Daily Bag Limit: 3 birds/day

