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OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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**GAME BIRD PROGRAM  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR 2009-2010 GAME BIRD  
SEASONS – UPLAND GAME  
BIRDS AND MIGRATORY  
GAME BIRDS**

FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE OREGON FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION  
AUGUST 7, 2009

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*The recommendations in this packet are based on public correspondence (including telephone and e-mail communications), Pacific Flyway Study Committee and Council discussions, discussions with field personnel, federal regulatory requirements and past Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission direction concerning hunting seasons.*

# UPLAND GAME BIRDS

## POPULATION STATUS AND HARVEST

**Production:** Upland game bird season recommendations are not based on annual production surveys. It is natural for upland game bird populations to fluctuate from year to year. Much of this short-term fluctuation in populations can be attributed to weather. Upland bird populations in 2009 are expected to continue their recovery from the low numbers experienced in 2007. The low production in 2007 was likely the result of drought conditions, with SE Oregon spring precipitation at less than 20 percent of normal. In 2008, upland bird production increased. The 2008-09 winter was near average, with below average snow pack early, but recovering late. By June, snow pack was near or above average for most of the state. Winter survival for most species was typical. A more complete briefing will be provided to the Commission on August 7.

**Stamp Sales:** In 2008, resident Oregon upland game bird validation (stamp) sales were 68,301 which is a half percent decline from 2007. However, the proportion of validation holders that actually hunted in 2008 increased 12 percent as compared to 2007 (likely because of improved bird numbers). Total 2008 nonresident game bird stamps (valid for both waterfowl and upland game bird hunting) sales in 2008 was 6,401.

**2008-09 Harvest Surveys:** Results from the 2008-09 harvest survey for pheasants, quail, partridge, and grouse are found in Table 1 (pg 5). Harvest surveys for sage-grouse and turkeys are conducted separately and were as follows:

**Sage-grouse** - Statewide, 1,175 permits were authorized during 2008, 956 were drawn, and 740 permits were purchased. Hunters harvested an estimated 712 sage-grouse and returned at least one wing from 443 birds (and more than 400 blood samples for WNV testing). These wings were examined at the annual sage-grouse wing bee. Examination of wings confirmed improved production over 2007. Wings indicated 1.6 chicks per hen in the harvest, which is slightly above the 16 year average of 1.5. Blood samples were tested by the National Wildlife Health Center and all were negative for WNV.

**Fall turkey** – For 10 counties in W. Oregon, 3,000 permits were authorized (first-come, first-served) during the 2008 season. A total of 2,535 permits were issued and 1,655 hunters spent 6,419 days afield harvesting 616 turkeys. Tag sales were up 13 percent, hunter numbers were up 11 percent and harvest was up 11 percent as compared to 2007. Hunter success was 37 percent for the general fall season. The five eastern Oregon controlled fall turkey hunts were fully subscribed with 725 successful applicants. Tags were issued to 567 hunters, of which 426 went hunting and bagged an estimated 219 turkeys for a success rate of 51 percent.

**Spring Turkey** – Surveys for the 2009 season are not complete at this time, but final results are expected by August 7th. Following consecutive years of decline, preliminary

surveys suggest that turkey harvest is up (approximately 10 percent) statewide, but still below the peak spring harvest of 2006. The third youth spring turkey hunt appears to have been popular and well received.

<b>Table 1. 2008-09 Oregon Upland Game Bird Expanded Harvest by Harvest Unit<sup>1</sup></b>										<b>% Change From 2007-08</b>
<b>Species</b>	<b>Indices</b>	<b>Area 1</b>	<b>Area 2</b>	<b>Area 3</b>	<b>Area 4</b>	<b>Area 5</b>	<b>Area 6</b>	<b>Area 7</b>	<b>Total</b>	
<b>Blue Grouse</b>	<b>Hunters</b>	6469	5195	1470	2058	3136	686	686	13329	20.8%
	<b>Days</b>	37925	34968	10052	10788	19022	3375	4560	12069	-0.4%
	<b>Harvest</b>	5780	4219	3120	2704	2834	377	373	0	-13.6%
<b>Ruffed Grouse</b>	<b>Hunters</b>	8919	6665	1862	3038	2744	980	686	15486	16.5%
	<b>Days</b>	45530	40253	10196	12451	18464	3546	4287	13472	-6.3%
	<b>Harvest</b>	9183	12752	2819	3160	3889	335	441	7	-35.9%
<b>Mt. Quail</b>	<b>Hunters</b>	2940	3234	882	980	392	490		8037	30.2%
	<b>Days</b>	17420	18166	4242	1328	2075	260		43491	-5.2%
	<b>Harvest</b>	3187	10860	1379	1006	794	310		17536	-14.2%
<b>CA Quail</b>	<b>Hunters</b>	2352	2450	2254	1666	980	784	2352	10095	48.4%
	<b>Days</b>	15849	12482	8625	4187	3930	1740	16928	63741	36.9%
	<b>Harvest</b>	2099	3565	6079	2884	2548	4199	26145	47519	77.8%
<b>Chukar</b>	<b>Hunters</b>			1666	1470	1274	588	4312	7743	-11.9%
	<b>Days</b>			9806	7474	5410	1620	25198	49522	6.1%
	<b>Harvest</b>			5023	2549	5795	660	30749	44796	7.4%
<b>Gray Partridge</b>	<b>Hunters</b>			686	294	588		392	980	-37.6%
	<b>Days</b>			4395	1244	1620		1862	9121	-23.1%
	<b>Harvest</b>			942	356	660		178	2136	-59.0%
<b>Ring-necked Pheasant</b>	<b>Hunters</b>	1960	784	6077	882	1568	784	3920	9703	7.8%
	<b>Days</b>	4921	1025	20190	3008	2215	3326	17648	52333	15.3%
	<b>Harvest</b>	1951	251	13944	2020	984	1805	12767	33722	33.9%

**Note:** These data are derived from a survey of 4200 upland game bird validation holders.

30,089 Hunted upland game birds statewide Up 12.3% from 2007

402,331 State upland hunting days Up 6.1% from 2007

- <sup>1</sup> Harvest Units
- Area 1 - Includes Lane Co. and all Cos N., W. of crest of Cascades
  - Area 2 - All of SW OR counties west of crest of Cascades
  - Area 3 - North Central OR Cos. (Hood, Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, Morrow, & Umatilla).
  - Area 4 - Central OR Cos. (Deschutes, Crook, Jefferson, Wheeler & Grant).
  - Area 5 - NE OR Cos. (Wallowa, Union, & Baker).
  - Area 6 - Klamath and Lake Cos.
  - Area 7 - Harney and Malheur Cos.

# UPLAND GAME BIRDS

## ➤ SEASON FRAMEWORKS

In 2004, the Commission adopted the 2005-2010 Upland Game Bird Hunting Season Framework which provide standardized upland game bird seasons for September 1, 2005 through August 31, 2010. The framework includes seasons for ring-necked and Sichuan pheasants; chukar and Hungarian (Gray) partridge; California quail; mountain quail; “blue” and ruffed grouse; sage grouse; and fall and spring turkey. The seasons listed in the draft 2009-10 Game Bird Regulations reflect season criteria adopted by the Commission.

## ➤ 2009 PROPOSAL TO EASE BURDEN OF HIGH FUEL PRICES

Most upland game bird hunting activity occurs on the east side of the state while the majority of the human population resides in western Oregon. Consequently, many hunters spend a considerable amount of time and money driving to hunt upland game birds. Fuel prices are likely to remain high in the coming years, so the department is examining ways in which regulations can be changed to ease the burden of high fuel prices. At their August 2008 Commission meeting, the Commission approved a proposal for the 2009 pheasant season to open concurrent with chukar and California quail season. In the past, the chukar and California quail season opened one week earlier than the statewide pheasant season. This may necessitate two trips for those interested in hunting both of the opening weekends. Moving the pheasant opener one week earlier would create a concurrent opener for pheasant, quail, and partridge (chukars) allowing hunters to make just one trip.

## ➤ 2009 CONTROLLED SAGE-GROUSE HUNT

*Note: In December 2007, a federal court remanded the 2005 decision not to list greater sage-grouse back to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A new finding about whether sage-grouse warrant listing under the federal Endangered Species Act was expected in December 2008, then was expected in May 2009. However, the USFWS negotiated with the plaintiffs and the courts and have settled on a date February 26, 2010 to announce the decision. All parties agreed this will be the final date and will not be pushed back again.*

At the time of this writing, the 2009 lek survey data has not been completely analyzed and production surveys have not been initiated. Improved production in 2008 suggested that lek attendance in 2009 should increase. Preliminary data does suggest that lek numbers will increase in the core range of sage-grouse in Oregon. More information will be presented at the August 7, 2009 Commission meeting. At this time, permit number recommendations are being evaluated for any changes. **Proposed sage-grouse season dates for 2009 are September 12-20.** Permit numbers are determined annually based on mathematical formula combining spring lek count information and results from the

analysis of wings taken during the previous hunting season. Spring lek surveys are conducted and the number of leks and males/lek are counted to estimate the adult male breeding population. Based on a sage grouse sex ratio of females per male, the adult breeding population is then estimated. A chick/adult ratio is estimated and then applied to the adult breeding population to estimate the total sage grouse fall population. The formula is designed to authorize the take of five percent or less of the estimated fall population.

Analysis of last year’s wings (2008) indicated 54 percent young in the sample which is above average and much improved over 2007. (2007 was among the lowest observed over the past 16 years). For all management units combined, preliminary summary of lek counts this spring indicated increasing populations as compared to 2008, however, lek counts did vary by area.

Mortality of sage-grouse due to West Nile virus was detected for the first time in Oregon during 2006. The extent of mortality is unknown, but in at least one location near Burns Junction in southern Malheur County more the 60 mortalities were likely due to the disease. This area was searched and sampled in 2007 and 2008. During 2006, sage-grouse hunters were given instructions and sample materials for collecting blood from one bird. The response rate was very good with more than 310 samples received – all useable. The National Wildlife Health Center (NWHC) analyzed the samples and found them all to be negative for WNV. The effort was expanded in 2007 and 2008 by sending all successful applicants materials to collect two blood samples. To date more than 1000 blood samples have been submitted by hunters over the past three years. Staff is proposing to obtain hunter-collected blood samples again in 2009 and work with the NWHC on the analysis. The NWHC has been testing live sage-grouse and other birds in Oregon since 2003 as part of a WNV surveillance effort.

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### **SAGE GROUSE PERMIT RECOMMENDATIONS**

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<b><u>Management Unit</u></b>	<b><u>2009 Recommendations</u></b>	<b><u>2008 Permits</u></b>	<b><u>2007 Permits</u></b>
Sumpter	Not available at this time	10	10
Lookout Mountain	“	10	10
Beulah	“	150	150
Malheur River	“	100	100
Owyhee	“	75	75
Whitehorse	“	225	225
Steens	“	100	100
Beatys Butte	“	175	175
Juniper	“	100	100
Silvies	“	20	20
N. Wagontire	“	40	40
S. Wagontire	“	20	20
Warner	“	150	150
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,175</b>	<b>1,175</b>

In Oregon, sage grouse have been hunted under a limited season since 1949. During that 58 year period, the season was closed for 17 years, primarily due to low population abundance and productivity in specific years. Research conducted in other states has shown that up to 25 percent of the fall population of sage grouse can be harvested each year without impacting the population, but published guidelines recommend a harvest rate of 10 percent or less. Oregon's season is designed to harvest no more than five percent of the estimated fall population. In practice, Oregon's harvest is about three percent of the estimated fall population.

An important benefit to hunting sage grouse is collection of essential biological information (see above about hunter-collected blood samples in 2008). Each hunter is provided two wing envelopes and asked to send in one wing from each bird harvested. Analysis of these wings provides an estimate of overall production, hatching chronology, and pre-winter sex and age composition of the population. The sex and age composition allows the prediction of breeding population trends for the following year. Without this information it would be very difficult to determine how sage grouse populations are performing through time. It will become even more critical to have this information as land managers implement habitat improvement treatments designed to benefit sage grouse.

Of the western states where sage grouse are hunted, Oregon has the most conservative sage grouse season. Under current harvest strategies, population data indicate a stable to increasing population trend for the last 20 years, despite declines observed 2005-08. The controlled hunt process allows us to manage harvest and hunters and collect important information. Other means to collect this information would be costly and impractical.

## ➤ **2009 GENERAL FALL TURKEY SEASON**

### **Background**

Fall turkey seasons allow an either sex bag limit and are good tools for management of populations and addressing turkey nuisance/damage issues. For the past six years the general fall turkey season in 10 counties of western Oregon have offered 3,000 tags on a first come first served basis. At no time were all 3,000 tags issued. There appears to be less interest for fall turkey hunting as compared to spring turkey hunting. However, some hunters enjoy the fall season, and would harvest more than one bird if given the opportunity. Responding to the general trend of increasing numbers of turkeys and damage complaints, the department proposes to expand the general fall turkey season in western Oregon by offering the opportunity to purchase two general season fall turkey tags, though the daily bag limit would remain at one turkey per day. In addition, the department proposes to increase the number of available tags from 3,000 to 4,000.

The department is also proposing to change the County based open area for the general fall turkey season to a Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) based open area. The primary reason is to align the open area with the harvest surveys, where harvest is reported by WMU. This will have the secondary effect of increasing the area open to the general fall turkey season, particularly for the Willamette and Santiam units. The relatively large area



will help disperse hunters and provide more private landowners with the option of allowing turkey hunters to address their damage concerns.

**Recommendation:** Expand the general fall turkey hunting opportunities in western Oregon by allowing two turkeys per season and increasing the available tags from 3,000 to 4,000.

General Fall Turkey Season:

**Open area includes only the following Wildlife Management Units:** Trask, Willamette, Santiam, Stott Mt., Alsea, McKenzie, Siuslaw, Indigo, Dixon, Melrose, Tioga, Sixes, Powers, Chetco, Applegate, Evans Creek, and Rogue.

**Season Dates:** October 15 through December 31.

**Daily Bag/Season Limits:** One turkey of either sex **daily, and two per season.**

**Tags:** Limited to 4,000 and distributed on a first come, first served basis.

**Tag Sale Deadline:** Hunters may purchase tags beginning on Sep 22 through the end of the season or until the tag limit is reached.

It is unlawful to obtain and possess more than one 2009 controlled fall turkey tag or two general fall turkey tags. At time of harvest, a hunter must validate their tag immediately by removing the triangle in its entirety for the appropriate month and day of harvest and attach the tag securely to the carcass. See page 12 of 2009-10 Game Bird Regulations for legal hunting methods. Dogs may be used during the fall turkey season. See shooting hours table on page 13.

## ➤ 2009 SEPTEMBER YOUTH PHEASANT HUNTS

Special youth hunts for pheasants began at E.E. Wilson Wildlife Area in the early 1950s, and have since been expanded to 12 other areas throughout the state.

The hunts provide a controlled opportunity for young hunters to experience bird hunting without competition from adult hunters. Youths ages 17 and younger are eligible to participate. The program has been popular and well received. In recent years, approximately 1,200 youth hunters participate annually in the program. In addition, sporting clay trailers were used to conduct youth shotgun skill clinics in association with many of the hunts. These provide instruction and a challenging opportunity to learn how to hit flying targets and to use a shotgun more effectively. In addition to the blaze orange hat and vest required of all participants, including adults, beginning this year shooting glasses (eye protection) will also be required.

These hunts draw considerable community interest and generally good publicity from the news media. Volunteers from sportsmen's clubs, the Hunter Education Program and interested individuals assist with the hunts, some providing and handling dogs for youths and their parents.

Proposed hunt dates and maximum allowable hunters at any one time are listed in the table below.

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**PROPOSED YOUTH PHEASANT HUNTS**

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<u>Hunt Area</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Hunter Limitation</u>
Baker City Area (private land)	Sept. 19 & 20	50
Denman Wildlife Area	Sept. 19 & 20	85
E.E. Wilson Wildlife Area	Sept. 19, 20, 26 & 27	70
Fern Ridge Wildlife Area	Sept. 05 & 06	75
Heppner	Sept. 20	30
Irrigon Wildlife Area	Sept. 26 & 27	60
John Day Area (private land)	Sept. 12 & 13	30
Klamath Wildlife Area	Sept. 12 & 13	80
Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area	Sept. 19 & 20	35
Mid-Columbia (The Dalles area)	Sept. 12 & 13	20
Ontario (Paul Parker Memorial Hunt)	Sept. 12 & 13	75
Sauvie Island Wildlife Area	Sept. 12 & 13	50
Willow Creek (Prineville Area)	Sept. 19 & 20	80

➤ **2009 WESTERN OREGON FEE PHEASANT HUNTS**

**Background**

For the last 19 years the department has offered special western Oregon fee pheasant hunts on public hunting areas. Initially the Oregon Legislature directed the department to offer these hunts, which have been very popular with a segment of hunters living in western Oregon metropolitan areas. In 2008, a record number of 4,551 fee pheasant tags were sold. The hunts are offered on the following four wildlife areas in western Oregon: E. E. Wilson, Sauvie Island, Fern Ridge and Denman.

In these hunts pheasants are purchased from private breeders and released (typically daily) on hunt areas throughout the season. Each participant in the hunt must possess an \$11.50 pheasant tag, good for two birds, in addition to a hunting license and upland game bird validation. Tags are purchased from license outlets, and the revenues applied toward the cost of the program. Additional tags can be purchased throughout the season.

While the intent of the program is to cover costs with tag revenue, the balance between annual program costs and hunter participation is difficult to predict with precision. Therefore, pheasant tags pay the bulk of the program costs, and any short fall is paid with upland game bird stamp revenue. Due to increased fuel and feed prices the price of the birds increased by about 35 percent over the past three years. Consequently, staff does expect a disparity between cost and revenue for 2009. Fee Pheasant Hunt tag prices have remained unchanged since 1991.

Hunters are generally supportive of this program with the main complaint being they would like to see more birds stocked. However, due to the increasing cost of birds, increasing the total number of birds released will increase program costs.

**Recommendation:** Based on performance of past seasons, staff is proposing a 2009 season similar to that held in 2008. An \$11.50 pheasant tag, obtainable through license agents, allowing hunters two birds would again be required. Proposed season dates are: **Fern Ridge Wildlife Area Sept 07 – Oct 04; Sauvie Island WA, Sept 14 – 27; Denman WA, September 21 – October 9; and E.E. Wilson Wildlife Area, October 1-31.**

➤ **YOUTH AND HUNTERS WITH DISABILITIES RABBIT HUNTS**

A youth rabbit hunt on the E.E. Wilson Wildlife Area, to be sponsored by the Marys Peak Hound Club, is proposed for continuation. The hunt would take place on **February 20 & 21, 2010** and be open to youths aged 17 and younger, with each accompanied by a non-hunting adult 21 years or older. The hunt will be limited to 20 youths per day and the wildlife area will begin taking reservations **February 1, 2010.**

A rabbit hunt for people with disabilities is proposed for **February 6, 2010**, and is also sponsored by the Marys Peak Hound Club. Pre-registration is requested and the maximum number of hunters is limited to 50.

➤ **2009 PHEASANT HUNTING CLINICS**

Proposed is a **2-day Becoming an Outdoors Woman pheasant hunting clinic to be offered September 19 & 20, 2009** at the **Klamath Wildlife Area**. This pheasant hunt is designed for new hunters who want help developing the skills necessary to learn to hunt on their own. Day one will consist of gun handling instructions, safety talks, skeet shooting, and an afternoon pheasant hunt using dogs. Day two will consist of a morning pheasant hunt and lunch. This workshop is limited to 25 individuals. General season regulations will apply.

Proposed is a **one-day adult pheasant hunting clinic at E. E. Wilson Wildlife Area on September 25, 2009.** This is an introductory pheasant hunting clinic designed for adults who would like to learn about pheasant hunting. Topics will include safe gun handling, improving shooting skills, and an afternoon pheasant hunt.

## 2009-10 Upland Game Bird Falconry Seasons

### Background

The use of falcons for the take of upland game birds is very limited in Oregon. All falconers are licensed and staff coordinates with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the monitoring of falconry activities in the state.

### Recommendation

No changes in seasons from last year are proposed.

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#### PROPOSED UPLAND GAME BIRD FALCONRY SEASON

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**Open Season:** September 1, 2009 – March 31, 2010

**Daily Bag Limit:** One pheasant (either sex), two California quail, two Hungarian (Gray) partridge, two chukar partridge, two ruffed grouse, and two blue grouse.

**Possession Limit:** Double the daily bag limit.

**Sage Grouse Season:** September 1, 2009 – January 31, 2010

**Daily Bag Limit:** One sage grouse

**Season Limit:** Two sage grouse

**Open Areas for Sage Grouse:** Sumpter, Lookout Mt., Beulah, Malheur River, Owyhee, Whitehorse, Steens Mt., Beatys Butte, Juniper, Silvies, Wagontire, and Warner Management Units

There are about 75 licensed falconers within the state. While the season is long, harvest surveys indicate minimal harvest of upland species. A conservative sage-grouse season and limit is proposed. The falconry season for sage-grouse closes at the end of January, just prior to the time birds begin gathering on leks where they are more vulnerable.

# MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS

## POPULATION STATUS

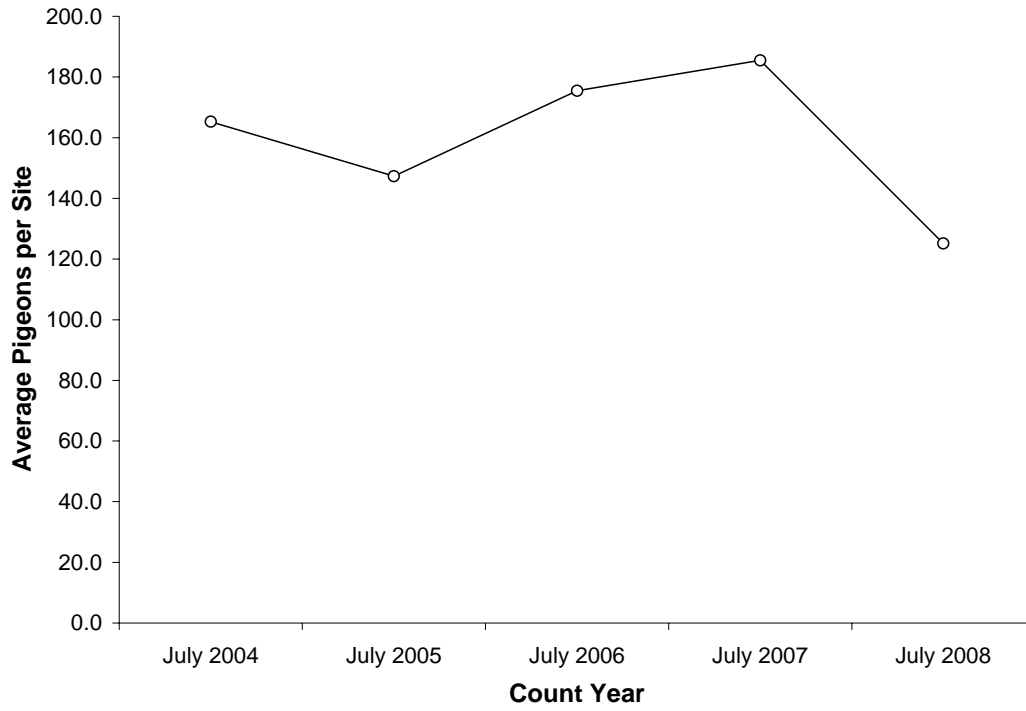
**Ducks:** Oregon breeding waterfowl surveys were conducted from late April through mid-May. Statewide, the breeding mallard population was down six percent compared to last year and down 25 percent compared to the 1994-2008 long-term average. Total duck numbers were down 17 percent from last year and down 32 percent from the long term average. USFWS population estimates will be provided at a later date.

**Geese and Swans:** No status has been presented to date by the USFWS. In Oregon, the breeding Canada goose population was unchanged from the previous year.

**Mourning Doves:** In recent years the average number of doves heard in annual call counts has been relatively unchanged in the Western Management Unit. However, long-term declines in dove populations remain a concern nationwide. In 2009, the trend estimate for mourning doves heard during call counts in Oregon was up 22.2 percent over 2008 and from 2000 – 2009 this trend has increased an average of 2.1 percent per year. Efforts are currently underway between the flyways and USFWS to reassess and develop new harvest strategies for mourning doves. The primary goal of a harvest strategy would be to develop a predictable regulatory harvest system based on the current biological understanding of mourning doves in the Western Management Unit and improve the biological understanding of factors regulating populations in the unit. Significant restrictions on mourning dove harvest in the Western Management Unit last occurred in 1987.

**Band-tailed Pigeons:** During the last several years, new survey methodologies have been implemented in British Columbia, Washington, Oregon and California. These surveys were implemented as a standardized method to survey the pigeon population and make trend estimates comparable between states and provinces. Oregon counts were conducted for the first time using the new protocol during 2004. The department continued to conduct its August pigeon surveys for data comparison purposes and beginning last year, the August surveys were discontinued in favor of the coordinated July surveys. Since 2004, the July surveys have shown a 5.6 percent per year decrease in the number of pigeons counted at mineral springs. Although the trend is negative, the estimate is not statistically significant. USFWS analysis of the 2009 population survey information will not be completed before the August Commission meeting.

### AVERAGE OREGON BAND-TAILED PIGEON COUNTS DURING THE COORDINATED JULY SURVEYS



# MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS

## 2008-09 HARVEST SURVEYS

### Introduction

The Harvest Information Program (HIP), a cooperative harvest survey between the USFWS and states, was implemented in Oregon during 1995. Harvest is calculated by the USFWS from sampling hunters from databases provided by the Oregon licensing system. This cooperative survey will continue to be refined yearly.

**Stamp Sales:** State of Oregon waterfowl validation (stamp) sales to resident hunters in 2008 totaled 49,921, a two percent increase from 2007. Total 2008 nonresident game bird stamps (valid for both waterfowl and upland game bird hunting) sales were 6,401, down slightly from 6,415 in 2007.

**Ducks and Geese:** No information provided to date.

**American Coots:** No information provided to date

**Mourning Doves:** Preliminary results from the HIP suggest during the 2008 hunting season, 5,800 Oregon hunters spent 14,600 days hunting mourning doves and they harvested 45,500 doves.

**Band-tailed Pigeons:** Preliminary results from the HIP suggest during the 2008 hunting season, 200 Oregon hunters spent 500 days hunting band-tailed pigeons and they harvested 500 pigeons.

**Wilson's Snipe:** No information provided to date

# MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS

## 2009-10 SEASON PROPOSALS

*Please note: All seasons for migratory game birds are established under U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) frameworks. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife works through the Pacific Flyway Council process and the USFWS regulatory process to make recommendations on these federal frameworks. All recommendations must meet established framework guidelines and all season selections by the Fish and Wildlife Commission are subject to approval by the USFWS. The Commission should note that most duck and goose season recommendations are not presented at this time. Final determinations for many seasons won't occur until July 31<sup>st</sup>; after federal regulatory meetings.*

### ➤ MOURNING DOVES

#### **Framework**

Oregon is allowed a 30-consecutive-day season between September 1, 2009 and January 15, 2010, with a daily bag and possession limit of 10 and 20, respectively.

#### **Recommendation**

In most years the effective length of Oregon's dove season is governed by the first cool temperatures or early storms that precipitate southern migration, which usually occurs in early September. The following season provisions are recommended in accordance with the proposed federal framework and represent no change from traditional seasons.

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#### PROPOSED MOURNING DOVE SEASON

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<b>Open Season:</b>	September 1 - 30, 2009
<b>Open Area:</b>	Entire State
<b>Daily Bag Limit:</b>	10 doves
<b>Possession Limit:</b>	20 doves

#### **Public Comment**

No public comment has been received.

### ➤ BAND-TAILED PIGEONS

#### **Framework**



Oregon is allowed a season up to nine days in length, which may not begin earlier than September 15, with a two bird daily bag and four bird possession limit.

### **Recommendation**

Although there has been concern over the status of the pigeon population in recent years, hunting restrictions have reduced hunter numbers and harvest to minimal levels, which are believed to have no significant impact on the population. Both British Columbia and Washington have re-opened band-tailed pigeon seasons in recent years in response to increasing populations. The Flyway has recently considered proposing to increase bag limit and/or season length frameworks and is currently in the process of updating its band-tailed pigeon management plan which will assist this effort. Similar to the brant permit, the department implemented a band-tailed pigeon permit in 2005. The intent of the permit is to allow the USFWS to more accurately identify pigeon hunters for harvest survey purposes. This permit also improves the ability to obtain pigeon wings from successful hunters so that the age composition of the harvest may be monitored.

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#### **PROPOSED BAND-TAILED PIGEON SEASON**

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<b>Season Dates:</b>	September 15 - 23, 2009
<b>Open Area:</b>	Entire State
<b>Daily Bag Limit:</b>	2 pigeons
<b>Possession Limit:</b>	4 pigeons

### **Public Comment**

Some hunters have asked for consideration of increased bag limits

## **➤ SEPTEMBER CANADA GOOSE SEASONS**

### **Background**

Resident western Canada goose populations are established in nearly all areas of suitable habitat in Oregon, including northwest Oregon. Goose harvest regulations have been severely restrictive in that portion of the state since 1984 because of the status of several subspecies of wintering Canada geese, especially the dusky. Since identification of goose subspecies is difficult for the average hunter, harvest restrictions essentially have limited the take of the more abundant subspecies wintering in Oregon. These restrictions, combined with high productivity for resident western Canada geese, have contributed to a widely distributed goose population, which includes populations established in many urban areas.

A September Canada goose season, designed to focus harvest on resident western Canada geese, was initiated in 1990 to assist in the alleviation of agricultural crop depredation and provide a recreational opportunity on a growing resident goose population occurring in the lower Columbia River area. By 1993, the September season was expanded into all northwest Oregon counties. The season occurs before the fall migration of other Canada geese into the state, thus minimizing concern about the taking of other subspecies of Canada geese. In later years the September season was expanded statewide.

Population monitoring of resident goose populations continue to be used to evaluate September and general fall goose season impacts. Most resident goose populations throughout the Pacific Flyway are at levels that warrant continuation of current seasons. However, the 2007 population estimate for eastern Oregon was slightly below the level which calls for harvest restrictions in the flyway management plan. In response, the bag limit was lowered to three geese during the September season in all of eastern Oregon beginning in 2007. The 2008 and 2009 population estimates for eastern Oregon were at levels which have increased the 3-year average slightly above the Flyway's restriction level. However, because of year to year variability in population estimates, this population still warrants concern.

The Pacific Flyway Council in March 1998 adopted a goose depredation plan for northwest Oregon and southwest Washington. This plan recognizes the need to focus on increasing harvest rates on populations in northwest Oregon. Since western Canada goose populations still remain at viable levels, staff proposes to retain last season's bag limits and season length. This is an ongoing process to assist landowners with depredation control.

In addition, goose populations are established throughout all suitable habitats in southwestern Oregon. Complaints have been received from landowners in many areas. Even with liberal fall seasons, breeding populations of Canada geese continue to maintain themselves at viable population levels.

### **Framework**

The current federal framework for Oregon allows outside dates of September 1 – 20 in N.W. Oregon and September 1- 15 in the remainder of the state. Daily bag and possession limits are five and 10 Canada geese, respectively. Shooting hours for the September Canada goose hunt are sunrise to sunset.

### **Recommendation**

September Canada goose seasons are proposed statewide except in the Klamath County and South Coast goose zones, which have been closed since 2006. Seasons are relatively short but cannot be longer because of requirements of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. No major law enforcement problems with this season have been noted and no conflicts observed between goose hunters and other non-hunting recreational activity during this earlier than usual time frame for waterfowl hunting. A bag limit of five Canada geese with 10 geese in possession is recommended for western Oregon and a bag limit of three Canada geese with six in possession is recommended for Eastern Oregon.

During the past several years seasons have generally opened the weekend following Labor Day. However, because Labor Day is on September 7<sup>th</sup> this year, federal frameworks would only allow four days of opportunity in eastern and southwestern Oregon if the season opened the weekend after Labor Day. Staff feel opening the season on the weekend prior to Labor Day will allow the most opportunity for goose hunters.

Additionally, staff recommends changing the legal shooting hours for this season to one-half hour before sunrise to sunset. There is not expected to be any adverse population impact due to this change and it will serve to avoid confusion as all other waterfowl hunts except the highly regulated Northwest Permit Zone season have shooting hours from one-half hour before sunrise to sunset.

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**PROPOSED SEPTEMBER CANADA GOOSE SEASONS\***

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**A:**   **Season Dates:**       September 5-14, 2009  
      **Daily Bag Limit:**     5 Canada geese  
      **Possession Limit:**  10 Canada geese

**Open Area:** All of Clatsop, Columbia, Multnomah, Clackamas, Washington, Tillamook, Yamhill, Marion, Polk, Benton, Lincoln, Linn, and Lane counties.

**B:**   **Season Dates:**       September 5-14, 2009  
      **Daily Bag Limit:**     5 Canada geese  
      **Possession Limit:**  10 Canada geese

**Open Area:** All of Douglas, Coos, and Curry counties east of Hwy 101, and all of Jackson and Josephine counties.

**C:**   **Season Dates:**       September 5-14, 2009  
      **Daily Bag Limit:**     3 Canada geese  
      **Possession Limit:**  6 Canada geese

**Open Area:** All eastern Oregon counties except Klamath.

*\*These seasons remain closed for small subspecies (Aleutian and cackling) of Canada geese. Area closures apply. See draft game bird regulations.*

### **Public Comment**

Past hunter polls show mixed hunter opinions on the best time to open the season, but many support the opening dates as proposed. Some hunters would like to see Klamath County reopened during this season. There have been requests from the public to expand the shooting hours for this hunt.

### **➤ DUCK AND MERGANSER**

#### **Framework**

Based on duck numbers and habitat conditions, it is anticipated that duck seasons will once again be 107 days. Outside dates are the Saturday closest to September 24 to the last Sunday in January. Shooting hours are from one half hour before sunrise to sunset. Zoning options approved by the USFWS may be retained. Two federal youth waterfowl days are allowed for ducks, mergansers, coots and geese. The two youth days must be consecutive. Youths 15 years of age and under may participate.

Because of incomplete information, no recommendation is presented at this time but will be provided shortly before the August Commission meeting. The final recommendation will be based on the Western Mallard model which was implemented for the first time last year.

➤ **FALL GEESE**

No recommendations are presented at this time. Season selections are dependent on duck season selections.

➤ **BLACK BRANT**

No recommendation is presented at this time. However, because of the extremely low harvest of brant in Oregon, little change in allowed frameworks is anticipated.

➤ **WILSON'S SNIPE**

No recommendations are presented at this time. Normally snipe seasons are concurrent with duck seasons. A few members of the public have requested a split snipe season in western Oregon.

➤ **AMERICAN COOT**

No recommendation is presented at this time. Normally coot seasons are concurrent with duck seasons.

➤ **CROW**

**Framework**

Liberal seasons are offered outside of months when nesting may occur. A 124 day season is allowed during a calendar year. Depredation and nuisance birds can still be taken outside of established hunting seasons.

**Recommendation**

Adoption of maximum days allowed.

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**PROPOSED CROW SEASON**

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**Statewide:** October 1, 2009 – January 31, 2010

General crow seasons are required because of a treaty negotiation with Mexico. Crow hunting in Oregon is likely minimal with more crows being taken on depredation complaints.

**Public Comment**

No public comment has been received.

➤ **FALCONRY**

No recommendations are presented at this time. Proposed falconry dates are dependent on approved gun seasons.

# GAME BIRD REGULATIONS

## 2009-10 REGULATION CHANGE PROPOSALS

### ➤ **FALCONRY REGULATIONS**

#### **Current Rule**

Falconers must possess a valid falconry license, a hunting license, a federal waterfowl stamp, state validation(s) and HIP validation before hunting wildlife.

#### **Recommendation**

Staff recommends changing requirement for possession of a federal waterfowl stamp, state validation(s) and HIP validation to all applicable permits, validations and stamps for wildlife they will be hunting. This is inline with OAR 635-055-0100(2). This will allow falconers who do not wish to hunt certain game birds from having to purchase permits, stamps, or validations for those species. In the event that a licensed falconer's raptor kills a species of wildlife for which the season is closed or the falconer does not possess the required permit, stamp, or validation; OAR 635-055-0075 requires the wildlife be promptly turned over to the department or Oregon State Police.

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#### **PROPOSED RULE MODIFICATION**

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Falconers must possess a valid falconry license, an Oregon hunting license, and all applicable permits, validations and stamps for wildlife they will be hunting. See page 9 for permit, validation, and stamp requirements.

#### **Public Comment**

This rule change was proposed at the request of the public.

### ➤ **WASTE**

#### **Current Rule**

All game birds killed or crippled must be retrieved, if possible, and kept by the hunter in the field. All crippled birds reduced to possession must be immediately killed. Waste means to allow any edible portion of any game bird to be rendered unfit for human consumption, or to fail to retrieve edible portions except internal organs of such game birds from the field.

## **Recommendation**

Staff recommends inserting the word “immediately” preceding the word retrieved in the first sentence of this rule. This rule change is intended to prevent the loss of shot game birds by hunters who wait before attempting to retrieve downed game birds. In many instances hunters are unable to recover downed game birds after waiting to retrieve them because crippled birds often move away from the spot they fell or hunters forget precisely where downed birds fell. It is also intended to be a deterrent to hunters who continually take shots at birds which are out of shotgun range. In some cases birds are hit but do not immediately fall and travel some distance before doing so. This rule change will obligate those hunters to immediately go after these birds.

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### **PROPOSED RULE MODIFICATION**

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All game birds killed or crippled must be immediately retrieved, if possible, and kept by the hunter in the field. All crippled birds reduced to possession must be immediately killed. Waste means to allow any edible portion of any game bird to be rendered unfit for human consumption, or to fail to retrieve edible portions except internal organs of such game birds from the field.

## **Public Comment**

No public comment has been received.

# **OTHER GAME BIRD RELATED ISSUES**

## **WILDLIFE AREA RULES**

### **Background**

For many years department staff and the Oregon State Police have searched for ways to address high shooting, also known as skybusting, of waterfowl on state managed wildlife areas. This practice often leads to wounded and lost birds and results in dissatisfaction to those hunters sharing the hunt area who are waiting for close ethical shots. However, rules regulating shooting distance are nearly impossible to implement because of the difficulty in precisely judging the distance a hunter is from his target, when both are likely some distance from the enforcement officer. The department has implemented shooting clinics at wildlife areas and other venues to address this issue as well as making educational materials available. However, the continued complaints from other hunters as well as observations from field staff show the problem has not declined. The department hopes with the adoption of the amended waste rule preceding this section and adoption of the proposed rule below we will have a tool to reduce the amount of high shooting occurring on the wildlife areas and create a more enjoyable hunting experience for the majority of hunters utilizing the area.

### **Current Rule**

**635-008-0050(8)**

**Fish and Wildlife Commission to Post and Enforce Rules**

(8) Any person may be evicted from the area when continued presence of that person could cause a threat to the rights and safety of others or property.

**Recommendation**

Staff recommends inserting language allowing the department to evict a person from a wildlife area if that person violates any department rule or regulation.

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**PROPOSED RULE MODIFICATION**

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(8) The department may evict any person from the area for violation of any department rules or regulations or when continued presence of that person could cause a threat to the rights and safety of others or property.

**Public Comment**

No public comment has been received.

## **PUBLIC HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES**

**Columbia Basin Regulated Hunt Area Program:** Little change is anticipated for this program. A final briefing will be given to the Commission on August 7.

**Waterfowl Youth Hunts:** In addition to the federal waterfowl youth hunt weekend, there are other areas and dates set aside for youth only hunting. Youth waterfowl hunts provide an opportunity for hunters 17 years of age and younger to have a hunting area set aside for their use. Each young person is accompanied by an adult 21 years or older, who is not allowed to hunt. Hunts occur on the Sauvie Island, Fern Ridge and Klamath Wildlife areas.

**Upland Cooperative Access Program:** Private landowners in the Columbia Basin have provided hunter access to their lands for many years. However, landowner/hunter relationships are sometimes difficult to manage based on the needs of the landowner and the public. There has been some concern expressed by hunters that not enough information is given to hunters to assist in finding access points. However, the majority of landowners want to participate but will not authorize the widespread public release of their names and phone numbers. This is understandable but so is the frustration of some hunters. In January of 2005, a task force was convened to evaluate the UCAP program. Members of the task force included hunters, landowners, and ODFW Staff. While no structural changes to the program were advocated, the task force made several



recommendations for improving public outreach about the program. The suggested changes were implemented during the 2005-06 season, including the creation of a new brochure. About 104,000 acres were enrolled in the UCAP program for the 2008-09 season.