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OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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**GAME BIRD PROGRAM  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR 2015 -16  
UPLAND and MIGRATORY  
GAME BIRD SEASONS**

**SUPPLEMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR  
MIGRATORY GAME BIRD SEASONS**



**FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE OREGON FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION  
AUGUST 7, 2015**

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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 (Commission) direction concerning hunting seasons.*

## INTRODUCTION

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This is a supplemental package provided to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission), which outlines recommendations for waterfowl seasons. The lateness of the federal regulatory process in 2015 precluded developing many season recommendations until this time. Season recommendations for upland game birds and some migratory game birds were included in an earlier Commission packet and are not repeated here. New or updated information on population status and harvest surveys is included in this packet.

These proposals have been communicated to various hunting interests, including members of a waterfowl hunter email list, the Oregon Hunters Association, and Oregon Duck Hunters Association. Public comment between now and the Commission meeting may modify recommendations but most proposals are anticipated to have majority support from hunters, based on past public comment and seasons adopted by the Commission in recent years.

## PACIFIC FLYWAY POPULATION STATUS

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**Ducks and Mergansers:** In general, total ducks from major breeding areas in Alaska, Canada, Montana and the Dakotas were up 1% from the previous year and up 43% from the 1955-2014 long-term average. The estimate of 49.5 million breeding ducks is the second consecutive record for this region since surveys began in 1955. All common species except pintails and scaup remain above their long-term averages. Populations in areas which contribute the majority of their breeding waterfowl to the Pacific Flyway were mixed compared to 2014 with some species increasing and some declining. Habitat conditions in these areas were good or excellent with the exception of southern Alberta, where conditions deteriorated between May 2014 and 2015.

Oregon breeding waterfowl surveys were conducted from late April through late May. Statewide, total duck numbers were down 11% from last year but up 6% from the 1994-2014 long term average. The breeding mallard population was similar to 2014 and down 5% from the long-term average. Breeding waterfowl habitat conditions were poor in many areas of southeast Oregon, but fair to good in the Willamette Valley and areas of northeast Oregon. Production of young waterfowl this year is expected to be down in the southeast and average in other areas of the state.

**Geese:** Most goose populations in the Pacific Flyway remain healthy. Dusky Canada geese increased from last year with an estimate of 17,700 geese, which is one of the highest counts in the last 30 years. However, the 3-year average of 15,500 geese still remains below the goal of 20,000 outlined in the Pacific Flyway's Dusky Canada Goose Management Plan. For cackling geese, the estimated fall population is 340,000, which is a 21% increase from last season and the highest estimate since this survey was initiated in 1985. The 3-year average of 311,000 geese is above the population goal of 250,000. The table below summarizes the population status and objectives for geese in Oregon.

### Current Population Status and Objectives for Pacific Flyway Goose Populations

	Most Recent Population Indices	Most Recent 3- Year Average	Population Objective	Status Relative to Objective
<b>Cackling Canada Geese</b>	339,700	311,100	250,000	Above
<b>Dusky Canada Geese</b>	17,700	15,500	20,000	Below
<b>Aleutian Canada Geese</b>	189,100	166,000	60,000	Above
<b>Lesser &amp; Taverner's Canada Geese</b>	46,100	43,000	None	NA
<b>Pacific Western Canada Geese</b>	256,800	213,000	None	NA
Western Oregon Segment	7,100	6,300	8,000 geese - 14,000 geese	Survey change NA
Eastern Oregon Segment	43,200	40,000	36,000 geese - 60,000 geese	Survey change NA
<b>Brant</b>	136,500	157,700	162,000	Below
<b>Pacific Greater White-fronted Geese</b>	479,100	565,400	300,000	Above
<b>Wrangel Island Snow Geese</b>	240,000	200,000	120,000	Above
<b>Western Canadian Arctic Snow Geese</b>	420,000	NA	200,000	Above
<b>Ross' Geese</b>	1,000,000+	NA	100,000	Above

Habitat conditions for nesting geese were excellent in most of Alaska. Habitat conditions on Wrangel Island, Russia, were also excellent and production is predicted to be well above average.

**Coots:** The estimated continental breeding population was over 3 million in 2015, which is 23% lower than the 2014 estimate and 61% above the long-term (1955-2014) average.

**Wilson's Snipe:** There is little or no evidence to suggest that the Wilson's snipe population is other than stable in western North America according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey (BBS). Estimated annual change in the snipe population in the Western Region was -0.83% ( $\pm 0.5$ ) over the long-term (1966-2013) and -1.0% ( $\pm 1.1$ ) over the short-term (2003-2013).

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## 2014/15 HARVEST ESTIMATES

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**Harvest:** The Harvest Information Program (HIP), a cooperative harvest survey between the USFWS and states, was implemented in Oregon during 1995. The USFWS estimates effort and harvest by sampling hunters from records provided by the Oregon licensing system. This cooperative survey continues to be refined yearly.

### **Oregon Migratory Game Bird Hunter Effort and Harvest during the 2014/15 Hunting Season**

	Mourning Dove	Band-tailed Pigeon	Ducks	Geese	Coots	Snipe
Hunters	3,600	400	18,300	8,700	800	200
Hunter Days	8,000	1,100	125,900	52,200	3,300	700
Harvest	19,600	1,200	339,400	50,000	7,500	1,000

**Total Waterfowl Hunters:** HIP suggests last year there were 20,300 active waterfowl hunters in Oregon. Active waterfowl hunters are those hunters who went duck or goose hunting at least once last season. This estimate is down 6% from the previous 10-year average. However, the Department believes estimates in 2006 – 2008 were likely biased high.

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## 2015/16 MIGRATORY GAME BIRD SEASON PROPOSALS

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*Please note: All seasons for migratory game birds are established under 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. Additionally, all recommendations must fall within established frameworks (can be more conservative, but not more liberal) and all season selections by the Fish and Wildlife Commission are subject to approval by the USFWS.*

- **MOURNING DOVE**

Recommendation: Provided in previous materials.

Additional Public Comment: None.

- **BAND-TAILED PIGEON**

Recommendation: Provided in previous materials.

Additional Public Comment: None.

- **CROW**

Recommendation: Provided in previous materials.

Additional Public Comment: None.

- **DUCK AND MERGANSER**

Framework: A maximum season length of 107 days is allowed between the Saturday closest to September 24 (September 26) and the last Sunday in January (January 31, 2016); a daily bag limit of seven birds to include no more than three scaup, two hen mallards, two pintail, two redheads, and two canvasback. The season for scaup may only be open for 86 days during the general duck season. For all species the possession limit is three-times the daily bag limit. Shooting hours are from one half hour before sunrise to sunset. Zoning options approved by the USFWS may be retained. One split in season dates may occur in each zone. Two federal youth waterfowl days are allowed for ducks, mergansers, coots and geese. Youths 15 years of age and under may participate.

Recommendation: Adoption of maximum days and bag limits as allowed by framework. Maintain traditional shooting hours and adoption of a federal youth waterfowl weekend. The adoption of a youth waterfowl hunt weekend requires a reduction in regular waterfowl seasons by two days. This recommendation is identical to last season's except the canvasback bag limit is allowed to increase to 2 per day and the opening dates for Zone 1 and Zone 2 duck seasons would again be on consecutive Saturdays. In 2014 duck season in both zones opened on the same date to avoid opening Zone 2 on the same day as buck deer season opened.

Proposed Seasons:

<b>Statewide Youth Weekend:</b>	September 26 & 27
<b>Zone 1:</b> (Zone 1 is <i>western Oregon and Columbia Basin counties</i> )	October 17 – November 1 & November 4 – January 31, 2016 Scaup open from November 7 – January 31, 2016
<b>Zone 2:</b> (Zone 2 is remaining eastern Oregon counties)	October 10 – December 6 & December 9 – January 24, 2016 Scaup open from October 10 – December 6 & December 9 – January 5, 2016
<b>Daily Bag Limit (all seasons):</b>	7 total; with no more than 2 hen mallards, 2 pintails, 2 redheads, 2 canvasbacks and 3 scaup. Note: scaup may only be taken during the open season specific to them.
<b>Possession Limit:</b>	Three times the bag limit

Discussion: Allowed frameworks were developed cooperatively with the USFWS, states and all Flyway Councils under the Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM) program. AHM is a process that increases objectivity and efficiency in the annual process of setting duck hunting regulations. AHM improves upon past approaches by using clearly defined harvest-management objectives, a limited set of regulatory options, and robust data assessment procedures. It is important to note the AHM process is dynamic, and as new information is obtained decision criteria is modified. This year represents the eighth year of implementation of the Western Mallard Model under AHM. This model takes information from breeding duck surveys in Oregon, California and Alaska and guides the seasons for the entire Pacific Flyway. Work is currently underway to include information from Washington, and British Columbia.

The proposed season framework is nearly identical to last year and flyway biologists believe continued liberal harvest regulations are justified based on population information. Many duck populations have remained relatively abundant in recent years, especially the mallard, which is the most commonly harvested species. National harvest strategies are in place for pintail, scaup and canvasback. The breeding population estimate of canvasback was up from last year. As a result of this increase in population, the harvest strategy calls for a liberal season with a 2 bird daily bag limit. This 2 bird daily bag limit is an increase from last year's bag limit of 1 canvasback daily.

Adoption of a 105-day duck season will accommodate the federal youth waterfowl hunting weekend (105 + 2 = 107 day maximum) and should provide ample opportunity to hunt at preferred times. As opposed to last season, the Department is recommending a return to the traditional split opener between duck zones. Last year a concurrent opener was held to avoid conflicts with overlap of the opening weekend of rifle deer and Zone 2 ducks season.

Public Comment: Comments received support the seasons as outlined.

• **SEPTEMBER CANADA GEESE**

*Background:* A September Canada goose season, designed to focus harvest on resident western Canada geese, was initiated in 1990 to alleviate agricultural crop depredation and provide a recreational opportunity on a growing resident goose population occurring in the lower Columbia River area. In later years the September season was expanded statewide, however, this season has been closed in the South Coast Zone since 2006 due to a desire to hold late-winter Canada goose seasons in that Zone to address damage caused by Aleutian Canada geese.

*Framework:* The current federal framework for Oregon allows season dates from September 1 – 20 in northwest Oregon and September 1- 15 in the remainder of the state. Daily bag and possession limits are 5 and 15 Canada geese, respectively. Shooting hours for the September Canada goose hunt are one half hour before sunrise to sunset.

*Recommendation:* Staff recommends adoption of a September Canada goose season in all areas of the state except the South Coast Goose Zone. Staff recommends adoption of a bag limit of 5 Canada geese in all open areas with possession limits triple the daily bag limit. The traditional opener of the Saturday after the Labor Day weekend is recommended.

*Proposed Seasons:* (for zone descriptions see general goose and Northwest Permit Goose sections)

<b>Northwest Permit Zone:</b>	September 12 – 20
<b>Southwest Zone:</b>	September 12 – 15
<b>South Coast Zone:</b>	Closed
<b>All Eastern Oregon Zones:</b>	September 12 – 15
<b>Daily Bag Limit (all zones):</b>	5 Canada geese
<b>Possession Limit:</b>	15 Canada Geese

*Discussion:* Seasons are relatively short but cannot be longer because of the desire to hold long general goose seasons as well as avoid season overlap with the Labor Day holiday. Currently, all frameworks for regular goose seasons are 107 days, the maximum allowed under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Season days used for September Canada goose seasons require a subsequent reduction in other Canada goose seasons.

*Public Comment:* Comments received support the seasons as outlined.

- **REGULAR GOOSE SEASONS**

*Please Note: There are three separate frameworks regarding regular goose seasons; general fall/winter, Northwest Permit Goose, and black brant seasons.*

- **GENERAL FALL/WINTER GEESE**

Framework: A maximum season length of 107 days is allowed between the Saturday closest to September 24 (September 26) and the last Sunday in January (January 31, 2016) for Canada geese, except that the season for Canada geese in the South Coast Zone may extend through March 10, 2016. For white-fronted and white geese 107 days is allowed between the Saturday closest to September 24 (September 26) and March 10, 2016. Maximum daily bag limits are 4 Canada geese, 10 white-fronted geese, and 6 white geese, except that the white-front bag limit in Lake County may not exceed 1 per day, the Canada goose limit in the South Coast Zone may not exceed 6 per day, and the white goose limit after the last Sunday in January (January 31) may not exceed 20 per day. For all species the possession limit is three-times the daily bag limit. Shooting hours are from one half hour before sunrise to sunset. Two federal youth waterfowl days are allowed for ducks, mergansers, coots and geese. Youths 15 years of age and under may participate.

Recommendation: Adoption of maximum days and bag limits as allowed by framework. Maintain traditional shooting hours and adoption of a federal youth waterfowl hunt. The adoption of a youth waterfowl hunt weekend requires a reduction in regular waterfowl seasons by two days. This recommendation is identical to last season's except for date adjustments to align with the 2015/16 calendar.

Proposed Seasons:

<b>Statewide Youth Weekend:</b>	September 26 & 27
<b>Southwest Zone:</b> (all of Douglas, Coos, and Curry counties east of Hwy 101, and Jackson and Josephine counties.)	October 17 – November 1 & November 8 – January 31, 2016
<b>South Coast Zone:</b> (all of Douglas, Coos, and Curry counties west of Hwy 101)	October 3 – November 29 & December 19 – January 14, 2016 & February 20 – March 10, 2016
<b>Klamath, Lake, Harney &amp; Malheur Zone:</b> (Canada Goose Seasons only)	October 10 – December 6 & December 20 – January 31, 2016
<b>Klamath, Lake, Harney &amp; Malheur Zone:</b> (White-front and White Goose Seasons only)	October 10 – December 6 & January 24 – March 10, 2016
<b>Remainder of Eastern Oregon Zone:</b>	October 17 – November 1 & November 8 – January 31, 2016

<b>Daily Bag Limit (all zones unless noted):</b>	4 Canada geese 10 white-fronted geese 6 white geese
<i>Daily Bag Limit Exceptions</i>	
<b>South Coast Zone:</b>	6 Canada Geese
<b>Lake County:</b>	1 white-fronted Goose
<b>Klamath, Lake Harney &amp; Malheur Zone:</b>	20 white geese (February 1 – March 10)
<b>Possession Limit:</b>	Three times the Bag Limit

*Discussion:* Most goose populations have remained robust in recent years, increasing recreational opportunity throughout the state. Snow, Ross’s, Aleutian Canada, cackling Canada, Pacific western Canada, and Pacific white-fronted goose populations in the flyway are at or significantly above management goals. Numerous population and harvest surveys are in place to monitor population trends and harvest levels. Hunting days for duck and goose hunting will not always coincide in some counties due to boundary differences between duck and goose zones and the desire to offer September Canada goose seasons. However, in order to optimize opportunity, it is critical to utilize the full frameworks allowed. Extended frameworks allow later hunting opportunity, which is a common request by hunters. In order to utilize this opportunity, split seasons will be fully utilized similar to previous years.

*Public Comment:* Comments received support the seasons as outlined.

• **NORTHWEST PERMIT ZONE GEESE**

*Background:* Goose hunting seasons in Northwest Oregon have been restrictive since the 1950s to protect the dusky Canada goose which winters in this area. Dusky geese have a small population size (range 7,000 – 18,000 over the last 30 years) and are more vulnerable to harvest than other geese. Beginning in 1985, after steep declines in the dusky population, a quota based season was implemented which assigned a quota of dusky geese (recently 165) to Oregon, which if reached would mandate a closure of the goose season. This system allowed goose seasons to be long, as long as the dusky quota was not attained, but also required all successful goose hunters to bring their geese to check stations so dusky geese could be tallied toward the season quota.

When the season began only a small portion of the area was initially open for goose hunting (Sauvie Island Wildlife Area and adjacent private lands), however, over time this hunt program grew to encompass nearly the entire winter range of the dusky Canada goose in Oregon. The season has achieved its objectives of keeping dusky goose harvest minimal, while allowing long liberal seasons for other types of geese to provide agricultural depredation relief and hunting opportunities. Dusky goose subunit quotas have rarely been exceeded though overall goose harvest during the previous 10 seasons sometimes exceeded 10,000 geese a season; on average only 28 of those were dusky geese (previous 10 seasons).

However, the quota season had some significant drawbacks. It was generally disliked by the hunting community as it forced all hunters taking geese to drive to hunter check stations (sometimes over 20 miles from their hunting area), which were open limited hours. Additionally, the agricultural community was frustrated that goose hunting could not be allowed every day of the week. Hunting was limited to fewer than seven days a week since an entire new check station staff would be required to keep the stations open every day. Hunting geese everyday may help alleviate some of the depredation issues in this area. Lastly, as personnel costs have increased the program has become more costly for the Department to administer. Manning the nine check stations annually costs the agency approximately \$200,000, which traditionally has been funded by the sale of waterfowl validations. Additionally, in past years a special \$50,000 overtime contract has been in place with Oregon State Police to devote additional hours to enforcement, bring the total cost for administration of this season to \$250,000. Validation sales are approximately \$500,000 annually, so 50% of the waterfowl stamp budget was being used to administer for this season.

Over the past year and a half the Department has been working with the USFWS and our Pacific Flyway partners to revise the Flyway's Dusky Canada Goose Management Plan. A major discussion item was to review the quota based harvest strategy and determine if a different approach could obtain similar results without the negative aspects which accompany the quota system. The Flyway's revised harvest strategy calls for a closed dusky goose season in NW Oregon and SW Washington, the core wintering area for dusky geese. Since the season for dusky geese would be closed there would be no need to use check stations to monitor harvest toward a quota. Additionally, the strategy recommends seasons for other geese should follow the general goose season frameworks for the rest of the state. This new strategy applies to all of northwest Oregon (Northwest Permit and General Zones), not just that portion delineated as the Northwest Permit Zone. This is due to the fact that some dusky geese winter outside of the permit zone and the Flyway felt hunters in either area should be treated equally.

In recommending this new strategy, the Flyway did recognize there are some risks of moving to a closed season for dusky Canada geese. One concern the Flyway has is that without check stations there is no way to monitor the harvest of dusky geese, except in those cases where law enforcement detects a hunter with a dusky goose. The Department has committed to holding identification training workshops for law enforcement officers who will be working the goose season in northwest Oregon. The Department will also continue to work with Oregon State Police and USFWS law enforcement officers to promote the importance of hunter compliance checks during this season. Another concern is what to do if the dusky population begins to decline in the future. If that happens, the overall goose season may need to become more restrictive. If the dusky population falls below 7,500 geese, the plan calls for goose hunting to only be allowed over crops or pastures which could be damaged by geese.

Frameworks guided by this new strategy were adopted by the USFWS last week. Additionally, the states of Washington and Oregon are planning to enter into an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the USFWS which outlines all of the voluntarily actions the states intend to take to ensure hunters are equipped to identify the different types of geese in the hunt area and avoid inadvertently taking dusky geese. Additionally, the MOU would require the Department to continue to conduct surveys for neck collared dusky geese. These data will be used to estimate annual adult survival, which will be used as an index to determine if dusky harvest has possibly changed over current levels. Currently average annual adult survival for dusky geese is about 81% (2002 – 2014).

***Framework:*** A maximum season length of 107 days is allowed between the Saturday closest to September 24 (September 26) and March 10, 2016. Maximum daily bag limits are 4 Canada geese, 10 white-fronted geese, and 6 white geese, except that the season for dusky Canada geese is closed. For all species the possession limit is three-times the daily bag limit. Shooting hour frameworks are from sunrise to sunset.

***Recommendation:*** Adoption of maximum days and bag limits as allowed by framework. Adopt shooting hours of 15 minutes after sunrise to 15 minutes before sunset (the standard game bird shooting hours are 30 minutes before sunrise to sunset). Adopt a federal youth waterfowl weekend. The adoption of a youth waterfowl hunt weekend requires a reduction in regular waterfowl seasons by two days. This recommendation differs significantly from NW Permit Zone recommendations from the past 30 years.

***Proposed Seasons:***

<b>Northwest Permit Zone:</b> (all of Benton, Clatsop, Columbia, Clackamas, Lane, Linn, Marion, Multnomah, Tillamook, Washington, and Yamhill counties)	October 24 – November 1 & November 21 – January 12, 2016 & February 6, – March 10, 2016
<b>Daily Bag Limit:</b>	4 Canada Geese (except dusky Canada geese are closed to harvest) 10 white-fronted geese 6 white geese
<b>Sauvie Island Wildlife Area:</b> Eastside, Westside and Oak Island Only	Wildlife Area hunt days occurring from October 24 – November 1 & November 21 – January 12, 2016
<b>Daily Bag Limit:</b>	6 white geese
<b>Possession Limit (all areas):</b>	Three times the Bag Limit

*Additional Regulations and Proposed Changes from Previous Seasons:*

- Beginning this season, allow goose hunting during all days of the week. During previous seasons hunting was only allowed Saturdays – Wednesdays because of the need to operate check stations. Hunting all days of the week will allow hunters to hunt on their preferred days while allowing landowners suffering depredations to utilize hunting to address the damage whenever it occurs.
- Beginning this season, allow goose hunting during the federal youth waterfowl weekend. In previous seasons, youths hunting during this hunt could not harvest geese since regulations would have required check stations. Without the need to operate check stations youth hunters can be allowed to harvest geese. Additionally, dusky geese usually do not arrive in Oregon until mid to late October, so unintentional harvest of dusky geese during the youth hunt is unlikely.
- Beginning this season, the former Northwest Permit and Northwest General goose zones have been combined into one zone, the Northwest Permit Zone under Federal Frameworks. This change will ensure regulations, especially the dusky goose season closure, are consistent among areas.
- Beginning this season, increase the white goose bag limit in the Northwest Permit Zone to six per day. Previously the bag limit in the Permit Zone had been at four per day to keep harvest moderate these geese, which originate from the Wrangel Island population. New information suggest this population has grown significantly over the past five years and this increase will standardize the bag limit for white geese in all zones at six per day, except during the late hunt periods in south east Oregon.
- Maintain all private lands being open for goose hunting with the exception of Tillamook County where a small closure is in place on private lands to protect Semidi Island Aleutian geese. Maintain the goose hunting closures on state wildlife areas (Sauvie Island, Fern Ridge, and E. E. Wilson) except maintain the white goose hunting opportunity at Sauvie Island Wildlife Area. Wildlife Area closures are meant to hold most geese on public lands in an effort to reduce agricultural damage to neighboring private lands.
- Maintain the requirement that all hunters must possess a valid Northwest Oregon Goose Permit while hunting.
- Maintain the requirement that any hunter taking a dusky goose will have their Northwest Oregon Goose Permit invalidated for the remainder of the season and must retake the goose identification exam prior to hunting geese in the permit zone during subsequent seasons.
- Maintain the goose hunter education program for permit zone hunters. This will continue to improve knowledge of goose management issues and the role hunters play in this process. Online testing for the goose permit was made available to hunters for the first time in September 2006 and was very well received by permit test takers. Again this year, only online testing will be offered except by special appointment. Additionally, the education materials will be updated by staff to reflect the proposed regulations. All current permit holders will be encouraged to review the materials prior to hunting.

*Discussion:* After 30 years of the check station program, the Department and the Flyway believe it is time to try a new approach to dusky goose harvest management which is not as burdensome to the hunters, the agricultural producers, or the Department. Goose hunters in northwest Oregon have proven over the last 30 years that they can shift their harvest towards other Canada geese and avoid taking dusky geese. Although, managers will no longer have the check stations to monitor harvest of dusky geese, the Department has no reason to believe harvest of dusky geese will be any different under a closed season scenario with no check stations, than it was under a one per season scenario with check stations. Managers also believe the Flyway's Dusky Canada Goose Management Plan, has the necessary checks in place to make appropriate responses should the dusky goose population decline in the future.

*Public Comment:* Nearly all comments received support the proposed changes. The Department has been fielding comments for many years requesting a closure of dusky geese and closure of the check station program. We also received many comments regarding the Department's initial proposal requiring all current goose permit holders to retake the goose identification test prior to hunting this season. Due to this input and complications with making the necessary changes in the test system, we have not proposed this change to the Commission. However, all hunters will be asked to voluntarily review the updated materials. The Department has also received comments that opening all days to goose hunting may reduce the quality of this hunt.

- **BRANT**

*Framework:* A maximum season length of 16 days is allowed between the Saturday closest to September 24 (September 26) and December 15. Maximum daily bag limits are 2 brant. Shooting hours are from one half hour before sunrise to sunset. Additionally, in the past the Commission has supported brant seasons in Oregon which overlap completely with seasons in California.

*Recommendation:* Adoption of maximum days and bag limits as allowed by framework. This recommendation is identical to last season's except the season is proposed to open a week later than recent seasons. This is still within the framework dates and also within California's proposed season.

*Proposed Season:*

<b>Statewide:</b>	November 28 – December 13
<b>Daily Bag Limit:</b>	2
<b>Possession Limit:</b>	Three times the bag limit

*Discussion:* The brant season in Oregon is short in duration with restrictive bag limits. Oregon coastal bays are a minor wintering site for brant in the Flyway and likely provide more migration than wintering habitat. Human disturbance has been documented to have detrimental effects on brant populations in other areas of the Flyway. Expanding acres of oyster flats, which can destroy eelgrass beds, and other non-hunting recreational activities in Oregon, are of concern. Brant hunter numbers in Oregon are small with minimal harvest.

The Department continues to support a conservative approach to brant hunting adopted by the Commission nearly 20 years ago. Two objectives of the strategy were to overlap Oregon and California seasons whenever possible and maintain harvest in Oregon at a moderate level. The proposed season coincides with California's brant season. Also, the Department continues to support Flyway policies on managing populations based on breeding derivation rather than winter distribution of individual flocks.

Public Comment: Comments received support the seasons as outlined.

- **AMERICAN COOT**

Framework: Concurrent with duck season with a daily bag limit of 25.

Recommendation: Adoption of maximum days and bag limits as allowed by framework.

Proposed Season:

<b>Statewide:</b>	Concurrent with duck season
<b>Daily Bag Limit:</b>	25
<b>Possession Limit:</b>	Three times the Bag Limit

Public Comment: None

- **WILSON'S SNIPE**

Framework: A maximum season length of 107 days between September 1 and February 28, with a daily bag limit of 8. A two-way season split can be selected. Hunting zones may be selected by established duck hunting zones.

Recommendation: Adoption of maximum days and bag limits as allowed by framework.

Proposed Season:

<b>Duck Zone 1:</b>	November 7 – February 21, 2016
<b>Duck Zone 2:</b>	October 10 – December 6 & December 9 – January 24, 2016
<b>Daily Bag Limit:</b>	8
<b>Possession Limit:</b>	Three times the Bag Limit

Discussion: Snipe are a lightly hunted game bird species in Oregon. Federal surveys estimate on average of about 500 hunters pursue snipe in Oregon and they generally harvest about 1,200 snipe per season. Snipe season dates have varied over the years to a season concurrent with duck season to a season which opens later than duck season or has a split in December which allows some hunting into February, when duck season is closed. From 2005 – 2010 the season was concurrent

with duck season, but after several public requests in 2011 the Department recommended a season that opened later than duck season in Zone 1 only and closed in mid-February. Hunter effort and harvest estimates are difficult to generate accurately for lightly hunted species, so federal survey data cannot be used to gauge the impact of the season change. Some hunters do take advantage of the opportunity to hunt snipe during February.

*Public Comment:* One comment was received requesting an additional week of hunting be added in February. Since most duck, goose, coot, and snipe seasons are set to shift a week later due to normal calendar change; in effect the season will run nearly a week later than last year.

- **FALCONRY**

*Framework:* Maximum season length of 107 days, including those days when the gun season is open. Falconry daily bag and possession limits for all permitted migratory game birds shall not exceed 3 and 6, respectively, singly or in the aggregate. During that time when the season for dove, pigeons, crow and/or snipe, overlaps that for waterfowl, the falconer's bag may contain no more than 3 of all the federally regulated species.

*Recommendation:* Adoption of maximum days and bag limits as allowed by framework.

*Proposed Season:*

<b>Duck, Coot, Merganser, Crow and Snipe:</b>	Concurrent with gun seasons
<b>Geese:</b>	Concurrent with gun seasons except no hunting is allowed in the Northwest Permit Goose Zone or during any September Canada goose season.
<b>Mourning Dove and Band-tailed Pigeon:</b>	September 1 – December 16
<b>Daily Bag Limits:</b>	3 in the aggregate, though not more than 1 band-tailed pigeon or goose
<b>Possession Limits:</b>	Three times the Bag Limit

*Discussion:* There are approximately 130 licensed falconers in the state, not all of who fly their raptors after game. Their collective harvest of birds is small. Most migratory game bird season proposals are concurrent with gun seasons. Liberal 107-day general duck and goose seasons deny opportunities for falconers to hunt outside of normal gun seasons.

*Public Comment:* None