

Background Report
Summary of Changes to Migratory Bird Hunting Seasons, 2016-2017
Consent Agenda Item 1
April 13, 2016

In the past, the federal schedule for setting migratory bird hunting regulations precluded the Commission from taking timely conforming action to modify Rules 68A-13.003, F.A.C., Hunting Regulations for Ducks, Geese, and Coots, and 68A-13.008, F.A.C., Hunting Regulations for Migratory Birds other than Ducks and Coots. The federal frameworks were not finalized until late August for early-season migratory bird hunting regulations (dove, rail, gallinule, woodcock, snipe, and special early waterfowl seasons) and mid-September for the late-season migratory bird hunting regulations (regular waterfowl and coot season and limited Canada goose season). Changes to migratory bird rules were initially established through executive order followed by a corresponding rule change at the December Commission meeting.

The process for setting migratory bird hunting seasons was changed last year by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Beginning with the 2016-17 season, a new schedule for setting frameworks for all migratory birds began in early October 2015. The proposed federal frameworks for all migratory bird seasons for 2016-2017 were advertised in the Federal Register in early December; the finalized frameworks will be advertised no later than April 1.

The attached tables depict proposed season dates and bag limits for Florida's migratory bird seasons based on the federal frameworks.

Migratory Bird Seasons (other than Ducks, Geese, and Coots)

There are no changes to federal frameworks for dove, rail, moorhen, snipe, and woodcock seasons. Dates and bag/possession limits for the 2016-2017 seasons, based on federal frameworks and Rule 68A-13.008, F.A.C., are as indicated in Table 1.

Special September Duck Season

There are no changes to Florida's special September duck season within the federal frameworks. Dates and bag/possession limits for the 2016 season, based on federal frameworks and Rule 68A-13.003, F.A.C, are as indicated in Table 2.

Regular Waterfowl and Coot Season

The frameworks have a 60-day season with a six-bird bag limit again for 2016-2017 in Atlantic Flyway states, including Florida.

There is one change to the species' bag limits: the daily bag limit for eiders and long-tailed ducks is reduced from six to four. This change is in response to concern for breeding populations for these species. Staff recommends changing FWC's rules to allow this change. If the rule amendment is approved for both advertisement and final adoption, Commission staff will file the rule for adoption as allowed by s. 120.54(3), F.S., without further public hearing.

All other daily bag limits will remain the same as last year and as currently contained in Rule 68A-13.003, F.A.C. Details for Florida's season structure based on this required change and Rule 68A-13.003, F.A.C. are provided in Table 3.

Canada Goose Season

There are no changes to federal frameworks for the regular Canada goose season. Dates and bag/possession limits for all phases of the 2016-2017 statewide Canada goose season, based on the federal frameworks and Rule 68A-13.003, F.A.C., are as indicated in Table 4.

Table 1. Previous (2015-2016) dates and proposed (2016-2017) dates, bag and possession limits for seasons for migratory birds other than ducks and coots. The 2016-2017 season dates and bag and possession limits reflect federal frameworks.

Species	2015-2016	2016-2017			
		Dates	Bag/Possession	Falconry Dates	Falconry Bag/Possession
Mourning Dove and White-winged Dove	Sep. 26 – Oct. 26 ¹ Nov. 14 – Dec 7 Dec. 12 – Jan. 15	Sept. 24 – Oct. 24 ¹ Nov. 12 – Dec. 5 Dec. 12 – Jan. 15	15/45 ²	Sept. 24 – Oct. 24 ¹ Nov. 12 – Dec. 5 Dec. 12 – Feb. 1	3/9
Rails and Common Moorhen	Sept. 1 - Nov. 9	Sept. 1 - Nov. 9	15/45 - Clapper Rail, King Rail, & Common Moorhen; 25/75 - Virginia and Sora Rails	Sept. 1 – Dec. 16	3/9
Snipe	Nov. 1 - Feb. 15	Nov. 1 - Feb. 15	8/24	Nov. 1 – Feb. 15	3/9
Woodcock	Dec. 18 – Jan. 31	Dec. 18 – Jan. 31	3/9	Nov. 24 – Mar. 10	3/9
Crow	Aug. 13 – Oct. 30 ³ Nov. 11 – Feb. 18	Aug. 13 – Oct. 30 ³ Nov. 11 – Feb. 18	None	N/A	N/A

¹ Shooting hours: noon until sunset.

² The daily bag limit of doves is mourning and white-winged doves in the aggregate.

³ Saturdays and Sundays only.

Table 2. Previous (2015) dates and proposed (2016) dates, bag and possession limits for the special September duck season. The 2016 season dates and bag and possession limits reflect federal frameworks.

Species	2015	2016	Bag/ Possession
Wood duck and teal	Sept. 19-27	Sept. 17-25	6/18 teal and wood ducks in the aggregate, no more than 2/6 of which may be wood ducks; wood ducks may not be taken Sept. 22-25

Table 3. Previous (2015-16) dates and proposed (2016-2017) dates and bag and possession limits for ducks, coots, mergansers, and light geese (snow [including blue] and Ross' geese). The 2016-2017 season dates and bag and possession limits reflect federal frameworks.

Year	First Phase	Second Phase	Leon County ¹	Falconry ²
2015-2016	Sat., Nov. 21 – Sun., Nov. 29 (Thanksgiving Nov. 26)	Sat., Dec. 12 – Sun., Jan. 31 Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days: Sat/Sun., Feb 6-7, 2016	Thurs., Nov. 26 Fri., Nov. 27 Thurs., Dec. 24 Fri., Dec. 25 Thurs., Dec. 31 Fri., Jan. 1 Mon., Jan. 18	Nov. 3 – Nov. 12 Feb. 8 – Mar. 4
2016-2017	Sat., Nov. 19 – Sun., Nov 27 ³ (Thanksgiving Nov. 24)	Sat., Dec. 10 – Sun., Jan. 29 ³ Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days: ⁴ Sat/Sun., Feb. 4-5, 2017	Thurs., Nov. 24 Fri., Nov. 25 Mon., Dec. 26 Mon., Jan. 2 Mon., Jan. 16	Nov. 3 – Nov. 12 Feb. 6 – Mar. 3

¹In addition to Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

²Falconry dates presented are in addition to days available during regular season dates; Bag/Possession limits: ducks, coots, and light geese - 3/9, singly or in the aggregate.

³Bag/Possession limits: Ducks - 6/18. The 6-duck limit shall consist of no more than 1 black duck; 1 mottled duck, 1 fulvous whistling-duck, 2 pintail, 1 canvasback, 2 redheads, 2 scaup, 3 wood ducks, 4 scoters, 4 eiders, 4 long-tailed ducks, and 4 mallards (no more than 2 of which may be females). All other species of duck (except harlequin ducks) may be taken up to the 6-duck daily limit. Coots - 15/45. Mergansers - 5/15, only 2/6 of which may be hooded mergansers. Light geese - 15/none.

⁴Bag/Possession limits: same as above; plus, common moorhen - 15/45.

Table 4. Previous (2015-16) dates and proposed (2016-2017) dates and bag and possession limits for the Canada goose season. The 2016-2017 season dates and bag and possession limits reflect federal frameworks.

Year	September Season	First Phase	Second Phase
2015-2016	Sept. 5-27	Sat., Nov. 21 – Sun., Nov. 30 (Thanksgiving Nov. 26)	Tues., Dec. 1 – Sat., Jan. 30, 2016
2015-2016 ¹	Sept. 3-25	Sat., Nov. 19 – Sun., Nov. 27 (Thanksgiving Nov. 24)	Thurs., Dec. 1 – Mon., Jan. 30, 2017

¹Bag/Possession limits: 5/15