

**Background Report**  
**Anticipated Changes to Migratory Bird Hunting Seasons, 2012-2013**  
**Consent Agenda Item 4**  
**September 5, 2012**

The federal schedule for setting migratory bird hunting regulations precludes 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. This report is to update the Commission on developments that have occurred recently, allowing us to anticipate changes in federal frameworks and our proposed rule changes for the 2012-2013 migratory bird seasons. The federal frameworks will not be final 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). If final federal frameworks differ from our predictions, the Executive Director will confer with the Commission Chairman regarding any necessary decisions, and any resulting rule changes will be made initially by executive order, followed by a corresponding rule change at the December Commission meeting. The attached tables depict proposed season dates and bag limits for Florida's migratory bird seasons. Please note that the 2012-2013 information on the tables is not final and is subject to change. In early October, staff will provide the Commission with updated tables after the final federal frameworks are available for all seasons.

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

There are no proposed changes to federal frameworks for dove, rail, gallinule, woodcock, and snipe seasons. Dates and bag/possession limits for the 2012-2013 seasons, based on proposed federal frameworks and Rule 68A-13.008, F.A.C., are as indicated in the attached tables (Tables 1 and 2).

**Special September Duck Season**

There are no proposed changes to federal frameworks for Florida's special September duck season. Dates and bag/possession limits for the 2012 season, based on proposed federal frameworks and Rule 68A-13.003, F.A.C., are as indicated in Table 3.

**Regular Waterfowl and Coot Season**

Proposed late season frameworks will be published in the Federal Register on or about August 20. We anticipate that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) will propose a 60-day season with a 6-bird bag limit again for 2012-2013 in Atlantic Flyway states, including Florida. The Atlantic Flyway Council Technical Section has endorsed this proposal.

There is one proposed change to the species' bag limit: increase the scaup daily bag limit from 2 to 4. This proposed change is in response to the current breeding populations for this species. Staff recommends changing FWC's rules to allow this change. If the Commission

agrees with this recommendation, we would make these changes by executive order in late September, followed by a corresponding rule change at the December Commission meeting. At this time, we expect that 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 anticipated season structure based on these expectations, recommendations, and Rule 68A-13.003, F.A.C. are provided in Table 4.

### **Canada Goose Season**

We anticipate a change to the federal frameworks for the regular Canada goose season. Florida currently has the option to divide the season into as many as 3 separate time periods, which may occur only between November 15 and February 15. Historically, FWC has opted to divide the regular Canada goose season into two periods, the first to coincide with the first phase of the regular waterfowl season in November and second to run from December 1 through January 30. This anticipated change to federal frameworks would allow the season to occur anytime between October 1 and March 10. The change is intended at least partly to provide for an earlier season to help states that are experiencing significant agricultural damage by Canada geese.

We recommend no change to the timing of Florida's current season, as Florida does not experience widespread significant agricultural damage from geese. Also, having the season continue to overlap largely with the regular waterfowl season helps with simplicity in regulations and allows for hunters to take all types of waterfowl while afield. Therefore, regardless of whether the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service finalizes the proposed change to the regular Canada goose season, staff recommends no change to our rules at this time. The attached table (Table 5) shows season dates and bag/possession limits for all phases of the statewide Canada goose season, based on the proposed federal frameworks and Rule 68A-13.003, F.A.C.

Table 1. Proposed (2012- 2013) and previous (2011-2012) season dates and bag and possession limits for migratory birds other than ducks and coots. Season dates and bag limits reflect anticipated federal frameworks. **Please note – these regulations are not final and are subject to change.**

Species	2011-2012	2012-2013	Bag/Possession
Mourning Dove and White-winged Dove	Oct. 1 – Oct. 24 <sup>1</sup> Nov. 12 – Nov. 27 Dec. 10 – Jan. 8	Oct. 6 – Oct. 29 <sup>1</sup> Nov. 10 – Nov. 25 Dec. 8 – Jan. 6	15/30 <sup>2</sup>
Rails and Gallinule	Sept. 1 - Nov. 9	Sept. 1 - Nov. 9	15/30 - Clapper Rail, King Rail, & Florida Gallinule; 25/25 - Virginia and Sora Rails
Snipe	Nov. 1 - Feb. 15	Nov. 1 - Feb. 15	8/16
Woodcock	Dec. 18 – Jan. 31	Dec. 18 – Jan. 31	3/6
Crow	Aug. 13 – Oct.30 <sup>3</sup> Nov. 11 – Feb. 18	Aug. 11 – Oct.28 <sup>3</sup> Nov. 11 – Feb. 18	None

<sup>1</sup> Shooting hours: noon until sunset.

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

<sup>3</sup> Saturdays and Sundays only.

Table 2. Proposed (2012- 2013) and previous (2011-2012) falconry season dates and bag and possession limits for migratory birds other than ducks and coots. Season dates and bag limits reflect anticipated federal frameworks. **Please note – these regulations are not final and are subject to change.**

Species	2011-2012	2012-2013	Bag/Possession
Mourning Dove and White-winged Dove	Oct. 1 – Jan. 15	Oct. 6 – Jan. 20	3/6
Rails	Sept. 1 – Dec. 16	Sept. 1 – Dec. 16	3/6
Gallinule	Sept. 1 – Dec. 14	Sept. 1 – Dec. 14	3/6
Snipe	Nov. 1 - Feb. 15	Nov. 1 - Feb. 15	3/6
Woodcock	Nov. 24 - Mar. 9	Nov. 24 - Mar.10	3/6

Table 3. Proposed (2012) and previous special September duck season dates and bag limits. Season dates and bag limits reflect anticipated federal frameworks. **Please note – these regulations are not final and are subject to change.**

2010	2011	2012	Bag/ Possession
Sept. 25-29	Sept. 24-28	Sept. 22-26	4/8 teal and wood ducks in the aggregate, no more than 2/4 of which may be wood ducks

Table 4. Proposed (2012-2013) and previous late-season dates for ducks, coots, and light geese (snow [including blue] and Ross' geese). Season dates and bag limits reflect anticipated federal frameworks. **Please note – these regulations are not final and are subject to change.**

Year	First Phase	Second Phase	Leon County <sup>1</sup>	Falconry <sup>2</sup>
2010-2011	Sat., Nov. 20 – Sun., Nov. 28 (Thanksgiving Nov. 25)	Sat., Dec. 11 – Sun., Jan. 30 Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days: Sat/Sun., Feb. 5-6, 2011	Thurs., Nov. 25 Fri., Nov. 26 Fri., Dec. 24 Sat. Dec. 25 Fri. Dec. 31 Sat. Jan. 1 Mon., Jan. 17	Oct. 30 – Nov. 12 Feb. 7 – Mar. 4
2011-2012	Sat., Nov. 19 – Sun., Nov.27 (Thanksgiving Nov. 24)	Sat., Dec. 10 – Sun., Jan. 29 Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days: Sat/Sun., Feb. 4 – 5, 2012	Thurs., Nov. 24 Fri. Nov. 25 Mon. Dec. 26 Mon. Jan. 2 Mon. Jan. 16	Oct. 30 – Nov. 12 Feb. 6 – Mar. 2
2012-2013	Sat., Nov. 17 – Sun., Nov.25 <sup>3</sup> (Thanksgiving Nov. 22)	Sat., Dec.8 – Sun., Jan. 27 <sup>3</sup> Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days: <sup>4</sup> Sat/Sun., Feb. 2 – 3, 2013	Thurs., Nov. 22 Fri., Nov. 23 Mon., Dec. 24 Tues., Dec. 25 Mon., Dec. 31 Tues., Jan. 1 Mon., Jan. 21	Oct. 30 – Nov. 12 Feb. 4 – Mar. 1

<sup>1</sup>In addition to Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

<sup>2</sup>Bag/Possession limits: ducks, coots, and light geese - 3/6, singly or in the aggregate.

<sup>3</sup>Bag/Possession limits: Ducks - 6/12. 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, 3 wood ducks, 4 scaup, 4 scoters, 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 - 15/30. Mergansers - 5/10, only 2/4 of which may be hooded mergansers. Light geese - 15/none.

<sup>4</sup>Bag/Possession limits: same as above; plus, common moorhen - 15/30.

Table 5. Proposed (2012-2013) and previous Canada goose season dates. Beginning in 2008-2009, the Canada goose season was opened statewide. Season dates and bag limits reflect anticipated federal frameworks. **Please note – these regulations are not final and are subject to change.**

Year <sup>1</sup>	September Season	First Phase	Second Phase
2010-2011	Sept. 4-29	Sat., Nov. 20 – Sun., Nov. 28 (Thanksgiving Nov. 25)	Wed., Dec. 1 – Sun., Jan. 30
2011-2012	Sept. 4-29	Sat., Nov. 19 – Sun., Nov. 27 (Thanksgiving Nov. 24)	Thurs., Dec. 1 – Mon., Jan. 30
2012-2013	Sept. 1-26	Sat., Nov. 17 – Sun., Nov. 25 (Thanksgiving Nov. 22)	Sat., Dec. 1 – Wed., Jan. 30

<sup>1</sup>Bag/Possession limits: 5/10