

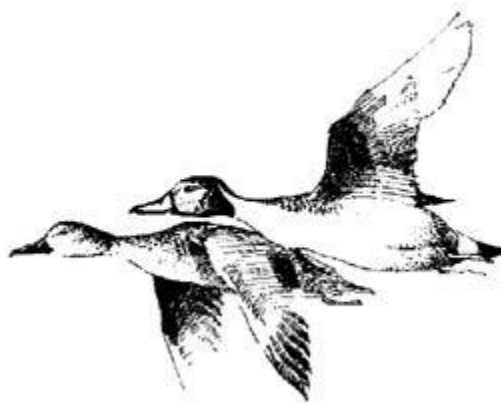
2024 Waterfowl Recommendations



Eric Fowler/Nebraskaland Magazine/NGPC

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2024
SEASON RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR
WATERFOWL SEASONS
CROWS
FALCONRY



NEBRASKA GAME AND PARKS COMMISSION
MARCH 8, 2024

The recommendations presented here were formulated to meet federal framework requirements being biologically sound and incorporating hunter preferences to provide regulations that permit a reasonable harvest of available surpluses.

2024-2025 Calendar

July 2024							August 2024							September 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6					1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
28	29	30	31				25	26	27	28	29	30	31	29	30					
October 2024							November 2024							December 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5						1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
27	28	29	30	31			24	25	26	27	28	29	30	29	30	31				
January 2025							February 2025							March 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4							1							1
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
26	27	28	29	30	31		23	24	25	26	27	28		23	24	25	26	27	28	29
														30	31					
April 2025							May 2025							June 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5					1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
27	28	29	30				25	26	27	28	29	30	31	29	30					

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2024/25 WATERFOWL AND CROW SEASONS

EARLY TEAL

Low Plains: 7 – 22 Sept (16 days).

High Plains: 7 – 15 Sept (9 days).

Daily Bag Limit: 6 **Possession Limit:** Three times the daily bag.

YOUTH HUNTING SEASON*

Zone 1: 5 – 6 Oct (2 days).

Zone 2: 28 - 29 Sept (2 days).

Zone 3: 19 – 20 Oct (2 days).

Zone 4: 12 – 13 Oct (2 days).

Daily Bag and **Possession Limit** same as regular seasons.

*Youth Hunt Season dates are dependent on duck season dates.

VETERANS and ACTIVE MILITARY PERSONNEL HUNTING SEASON*

Zone 1: 5 – 6 Oct (2 days).

Zone 2: 28 - 29 Sept (2 days).

Zone 3: 19 – 20 Oct (2 days).

Zone 4: 12 – 13 Oct (2 days).

Daily Bag and **Possession Limit** same as regular seasons.

* Dates are dependent on duck season dates and concurrent with youth season.

DUCKS and COOTS

Zone 1: 12 Oct – 24 Dec (74 days).

Zone 2: 5 Oct – 17 Dec (74 days) and 8 – 29 Jan (High Plains portion, 22 days).

Zone 3: 26 Oct – 7 Jan (74 days) and 8 – 29 Jan (High Plains portion, 22 days).

Zone 4: 19 Oct – 31 Dec (74 days).

Daily Bag Limit: Tier I: 6 – with restrictions. Tier II: 3 ducks any species, any sex. **Possession Limit:** Three times the daily bag.

DARK GEESE

Niobrara Unit: 28 Oct (Mon) – 9 Feb (Sun) (105 days).

North Central Unit: 5 Oct (Sat) – 17 Jan (Fri) (105 days).

Platte River Unit: 28 Oct (Mon) – 9 Feb (Sun) (105 days).

Daily Bag Limit: All units – 5 geese. **Possession Limit:** Three times the daily bag.

WHITE-FRONTED GEESE

Statewide: 5 Oct – 15 Dec (72 days) and Jan 25 – 9 Feb (16 days) – 40 day split.

Daily Bag Limit: Two (2) geese. **Possession Limit:** Three times the daily bag.

LIGHT GEESE – REGULAR SEASON

Statewide: 5 Oct – 1 Jan (89 days) and 25 Jan – 9 Feb (16 days) – 23 day split.

Daily Bag Limit: Fifty (50) geese. **Possession Limit:** None.

LIGHT GEESE – CONSERVATION ORDER

East Zone: 10 Feb – 15 April (65 days).

West Zone: 10 Feb – 5 April (55 days).

Rainwater Basin Zone: 10 Feb – 5 April (55 days).

Daily Bag Limit: None. **Possession Limit:** None.

CROWS

Statewide: 12 Oct - 12 Dec (62 days) and 11 Jan - 13 March (62 days).

FALCONRY

Concurrent with teal, youth, and regular duck season dates, plus the following dates:

Zone 1: 25 Feb – 10 March.

Zone 2:

Low Plains: 25 Feb – 10 March.

High Plains: Concurrent with all duck season dates in the High Plains Zone (107 days).

Zone 3:

High Plains: Concurrent with all duck season dates in the High Plains Zone (107 days).

Zone 4: 25 Feb – 10 March.

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
2024 WATERFOWL AND CROW SEASONS**
Recommended Changes from Last Year:

EARLY TEAL:

Calendar date adjustment to account for hunter preference of opening the first Saturday in September.

YOUTH SEASON:

No change, adjusted for opening dates of regular duck seasons.

VETERANS and ACTIVE MILITARY PERSONNEL SEASON

A new special season proposed to run concurrently with the youth waterfowl season.

DUCKS and COOTS:

Zone 1: No change, calendar date adjustment.

Zone 2: Calendar date adjustment. High Plains days begin two days earlier.

Zone 3: Calendar date adjustment. High Plains days begin two days earlier.

Zone 4: No change from previous years staff recommendations, calendar date adjustment.

DARK GEESE:

Niobrara Unit: No change.

North-Central Unit: No change, calendar date adjustment.

Platte River Unit: No change.

WHITE-FRONTED GEESE:

No change, calendar date adjustment.

LIGHT GEESE – Regular Season:

No change, calendar date adjustment.

LIGHT GEESE – Conservation Order:

No change.

CROWS:

No change, calendar date adjustment.

FALCONRY:

No change.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2023/24 WATERFOWL AND CROW SEASONS

EARLY TEAL

Low Plains: 2 – 17 Sept (16 days).

High Plains: 2 – 10 Sept (9 days).

Daily Bag Limit: 6 **Possession Limit:** Three times the daily bag.

YOUTH HUNT SEASON*

Zone 1: 7 – 8 Oct (2 days).

Zone 2: 30 Sept – 1 Oct (2 days).

Zone 3: 21 – 22 Oct (2 days).

Zone 4: 21 – 22 Oct (2 days).

Daily Bag and **Possession Limit** same as regular duck season.

*Youth Hunt Season dates are dependent on duck season dates.

DUCKS and COOTS

Zone 1: 14 Oct – 26 Dec (74 days).

Zone 2: 7 Oct – 19 Dec (74 days) and 10 – 31 Jan (High Plains portion, 22 days).

Zone 3: 28 Oct – 9 Jan (74 days) and 10 – 31 Jan (High Plains portion, 22 days).

Zone 4: 28 Oct – 9 Jan (74 days).

Daily Bag Limit: Tier I: 6 – with restrictions. Tier II: 3 ducks any species any sex. **Possession Limit:** Three times the daily bag.

DARK GEESE

Niobrara Unit: 28 Oct (Sat) – 9 Feb (Fri) (105 days).

North Central Unit: 7 Oct (Sat) – 19 Jan (Fri) (105 days).

Platte River Unit: 28 Oct (Sat) – 9 Feb (Fri) (105 days).

Daily Bag Limit: All units – 5 geese. **Possession Limit:** Three times the daily bag.

WHITE-FRONTED GEESE

Statewide: 7 Oct – 17 Dec (72 days) and Jan 25 – 9 Feb (16 days) – 38 day split.

Daily Bag Limit: Two (2) geese. **Possession Limit:** Three times the daily bag.

LIGHT GEESE – REGULAR SEASON

Statewide: 7 Oct – 3 Jan (89 days) and 25 Jan – 9 Feb (16 days) – 21 day split.

Daily Bag Limit: Fifty (50) geese. **Possession Limit:** None.

LIGHT GEESE – CONSERVATION ORDER

East Zone: 10 Feb – 15 April (66 days).

West Zone: 10 Feb – 5 April (56 days).

Rainwater Basin Zone: 10 Feb – 5 April (56 days).

Daily Bag Limit: None. **Possession Limit:** None.

CROWS

Statewide: 14 Oct - 14 Dec (62 days) and 13 Jan - 14 March (62 days).

FALCONRY

Concurrent with teal, youth and regular duck season dates, plus the following dates:

Zone 1: 25 Feb – 10 March.

Zone 2:

Low Plains: 25 Feb – 10 March.

High Plains: Concurrent with all duck season dates in the High Plains Zone (107 days).

Zone 3:

High Plains: Concurrent with all duck season dates in the High Plains Zone (107 days).

Zone 4: 25 Feb – 10 March.

2023-2024 Season Dates

2024 SEPTEMBER TEAL SEASON DATES

Dates: Low Plains: Sept. 7 – 22, 2024 (16 days)
High Plains: Sept. 7 – 15, 2024 (9 days)

Limits: Daily: Six (6) birds singly or in the aggregate of either sex of either blue-winged, green-winged or cinnamon teal.
Possession: Three times the daily limit.

Shooting Hours: 30 minutes before sunrise to sunset.

Area Open: In open zone, all areas except Federal or State refuges, unless otherwise specified. See attached map.

2021 Duck Season Date Preference Survey – Teal Season Dates

A preference date survey was sent out to 28,055 recipients that had registered for HIP between 2018-2020 and provided an email address. Approximately 9% (n=2,630) responded. Among respondents, most indicated no preference (29.5%, see below), followed closely by first Saturday in September (23.1%, see below). Harvest Information Program (HIP) Part Collection Survey (PCS) and hunter diary data indicate hunter participation and harvest is higher the earlier teal season starts (see figure below).

Table. 1 Number and percentage of respondents ($n = 1,478$) indicating preferences for the start of the September teal season by residency. Because respondents could select more than one option sample sizes among responses may not total the total sample size and (column) percentages may not sum to 100.

	Indicate your preference for when the opening day of the September teal season should occur.		
	Overall	Resident	Non-resident
n	1478	1222	256
First Saturday in September	342	288	54
	23.1%	23.6%	21.1%
First weekend after Labor Day	326	280	46
	22.1%	22.9%	18.0%
September 1-16 every year	328	281	47
	22.2%	23.0%	18.4%
Other	69	60	9
	4.7%	4.9%	3.5%
Does not matter to me	436	333	103
	29.5%	27.3%	40.2%

Normalized proportion of harvest and participation during teal season 2012-2019

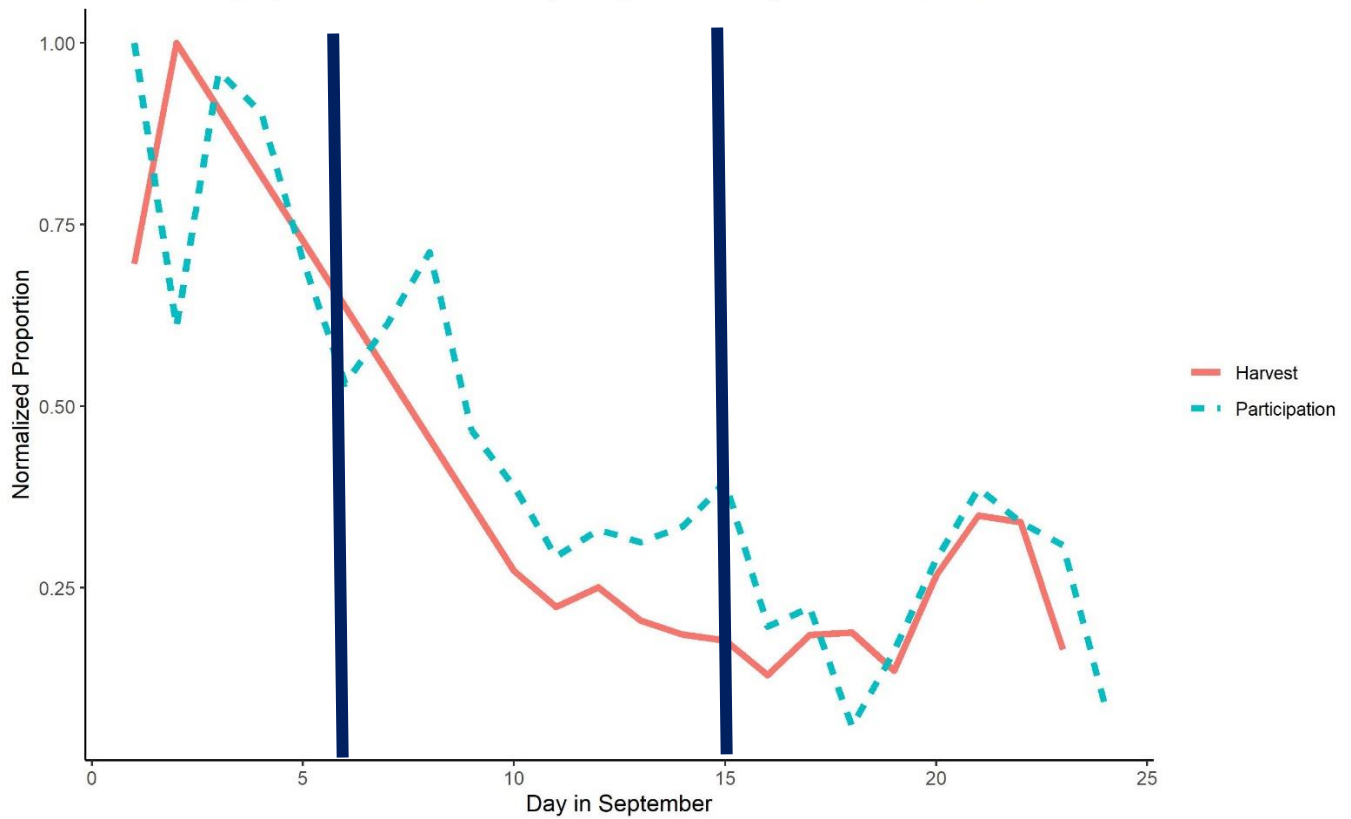


Figure 1. Normalized proportion of harvest and participation using HIP data during the teal season in 2012-2019. Dark blue vertical lines indicate proposed season dates.

2024-2025 TEAL ZONES



Federal Frameworks:

There were no changes in federal frameworks for September Teal Seasons. States may establish a September Teal Season with the following guidelines:

- Must be held between September 1 and September 30.
- Includes all species of teal (blue-winged, green-winged, and cinnamon).
- Hunting season length cannot exceed 16 consecutive days when blue-winged teal populations are ≥ 4.7 million; and 9 consecutive days when populations are $\geq 3.3 - 4.7$ million.
- Daily bag limit is 6 teal, possession limit is 18 teal.
- Shooting hours are one-half hour before sunrise to sunset.
- Teal season days contribute to the 107 exposure days allowed under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The High Plains zone reaches the 107 total days with the extra High Plains days in January, thus they have a 9-day teal season.

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Status of Ducks – 2023 and Justification for Hunting Season Recommendations

Habitat and Population Status

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) 2023 Status of Waterfowl report, a mid-spring phenology was reported for both the Canadian and U.S. prairies. Overall habitat conditions in Canada declined during spring 2023 but increased slightly in the U.S. relative to 2022. Below average precipitation was recorded across much of Canada which resulted in numerous Spring and Summer wildfires. Due to several late winter snowstorms, northern U.S. prairies improved greatly. Areas dominated by semi-permanent and permanent wetlands were rated good while most prairie and parkland regions were at fair-good for waterfowl production. The total pond estimate (Prairie Canada and U.S. combined) in 2023 was 5.0 ± 0.1 million, similar to the 2022 estimate of 5.5 ± 0.2 million, and similar to the long-term average of 5.2 ± 0.03 million.

Wetland conditions in the Nebraska Sandhills in spring 2023 were poor, similar to 2022 conditions, despite above average snow fall across much of the Sandhills. Early spring precipitation was minimal resulting in many wetlands continuing to struggle from an ongoing drought affecting most of the central Great Plains. Most smaller wetlands were dry, but larger lakes remained inundated. However, late spring and early summer rains along the western portion of the Sandhills did provide fair to good habitat for brood survival and migrating waterfowl. Moderate drought continues to persist through much of Nebraska, which will likely impact nesting conditions in spring 2024. Production in the Sandhills will likely continue to be below average in 2024.

In the traditional survey area, the total duck population estimate (which excludes scoters, eiders, long-tailed ducks, mergansers, and wood ducks) was 32.3 million birds in 2023. This estimate declined 7% from the 2022 estimate (34.7 million), and 9% lower than the long-term average (1955–2022). For ducks important in Nebraska's harvest, mallard abundance in 2023 (6.1 million) was 23% below the long-term average (7.9 million) and the lowest number observed in nearly 30 years. The estimated abundance of green-winged teal in 2023 was 2.5 million. Blue-winged teal were estimated at 5.3 million birds. Estimated abundances of gadwall, northern shoveler, and readheads were all above their long-term average but decreased from 2022. American wigeon abundance decreased from 2022 and they remain below their long-term average. Canvasback numbers increased from 2022 and remain 5% above their long-term average. Scaup abundance was similar to 2022 but remains below their long-term average.

According to the Service's preliminary statistics from the Harvest Information Program (HIP), total duck harvest in the Central Flyway (of which Nebraska is a member) increased slightly in 2022 from 2021, with approximately 1.97 million ducks harvested. In Nebraska, total duck harvest decreased in 2022 from 2021 (93,600 vs. 126,400). According to federal estimates, mallard harvest in Nebraska decreased significantly in 2022 from 2021 (31,221 vs 53,240). Average seasonal duck bag per hunter for Nebraska decreased in 2022 from 2021 (8.4 vs. 9.4).

Current Issues

Duck Stamp Modernization Act of 2023

This legislation will simplify the Federal Duck Stamp process by allowing hunters to have an electronic duck stamp on their smartphone for the entirety of the hunting season. Prior to this legislation passing, when a hunter purchased an electronic Duck Stamp, the e-stamp was only valid for a period of 45 days to allow for an actual stamp to be mailed. Once the actual stamp was received, hunters were required to have the actual stamp on their possession while hunting. Flyways and numerous NGOs are advocating for the USFWS to implement this Act prior to the 2024-2025 waterfowl hunting season.

Avian Influenza (commonly referred to as bird flu)

Avian Influenza, particularly Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), continues to be a concern for the waterfowl community. The outbreak initially began in 2021 and increased in severity during 2022. Preliminary reports since the summer of 2023 show a possible decline in the number of large-scale waterfowl mortality events as compared to previous years. However, hunters are still encouraged to follow state and federal guidelines relating to HPAI.

Two-tier regulation system. – A two-tier duck regulation system was approved by the Service for Nebraska and South Dakota for the 2021-24 hunting seasons. The two-tier system will allow duck hunters a choice between a full 6-bird daily bag limit with all species- and sex-specific regulations, or a 3-bird daily bag limit with no restrictions. The intention of the two-tier system was to increase waterfowl hunter participation by removing the barrier of waterfowl identification to new or novice hunters. An evaluation plan has been coordinated with other flyways and the Service. Monitoring efforts for both hunter participation and duck harvest are contained in the evaluation plan.

Waterfowl Hunter Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation. – Besides the two-tier system, the Flyways along with other pertinent partners are increasing efforts in recruiting, retaining and reactivating waterfowl hunters. These efforts are in concert with national efforts on all hunters, but recent objectives in the revised North American Waterfowl Management Plan on hunters has placed emphasis on this for the waterfowl management community.

Re-examining Mid-continent Mallard Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM). – Since 1995, AHM has been used to set duck hunting seasons in the Central and Mississippi Flyways. A number of changes have occurred since 1995 that elicited a re-examination of all facets of AHM, including objectives, other stocks of ducks, and eventually season length and daily bag limit packages. Different from the initial structure of AHM in 1995 is an increased emphasis on hunter preferences and opinions regarding their hunting experiences. Representatives from the Mississippi and Central Flyways, with the Service, have been meeting to discuss and work through various parts of AHM. Although progress on this matter has slowed, potential changes in AHM may ultimately affect daily bag and season length options available to states.

Examination of other duck stocks. – As part of the effort to re-evaluate mid-continent mallards AHM, harvest strategies and subsequent regulations for other duck stocks other than mallards are being examined. Pintails, scaup, canvasbacks, and wood ducks all have separate harvest strategies or approaches that need to be aligned with any potential changes in mallard AHM as well as potentially aligned regulations (i.e., daily bag limits) with those species. Initial work began in 2019 with representatives from all four flyways and the service. Significant progress has been made in developing a pintail Integrated Population Model (IPM). The new predictive model better integrates information from waterfowl population surveys, banding programs, parts collection surveys, and the Harvest Information Program. Utilizing the new IPM, implementation of a revised harvest strategy for pintails could begin as early as Fall 2025.

Nebraska Waterfowl Re-zoning & Season Date Preliminary Timeline

2024

- **August:** Flyways discuss criteria.
- **Sep./Oct.:** SRC meets to consider criteria for approval.
- **November:** NGPC seeks first round of input for 30 days.
- **December:** NGPC analyzes first round of input.

2025

- **January:** NGPC seeks second round of input for 30 days, update provided at commission meeting.
- **February:** NGPC analyzes second round of input.
- **March:** Staff make season recommendations for current zones and continue to work on zone boundary changes (if any). Potential changes are cleared with USFWS.
- **April:** Staff make final 2026/2027 zone boundary action item proposal at commission meeting.
- **August:** New zone boundaries must be submitted to the USFWS.
- **August:** Staff begin estimating harvest, participation, and migration chronology for new zones.
- **October:** A hunter preference survey is sent out seeking input on season dates for new zones.
- **Fall/Winter** of 2025/2026: New zones appear in federal register for additional public comment.

2026

- **January:** Staff preview hunter preference survey with commission.
- **March:** Staff propose season date recommendations for new zones.
- **March:** New zones proposed in orders along with season dates.
- **May 1:** State season date selections due to USFWS.
- **October:** Waterfowl hunting season begins under new zone configuration.

Midcontinent Lesser Snow Goose Population Trends

The Light Goose Conservation Order was established in 1999 with the objective to reduce snow and Ross's goose populations (combined, known as light geese) that were damaging subarctic and arctic breeding habitats, as well as wintering and migration areas. Using methods and regulations not allowed during regular waterfowl seasons, participants began pursuing light geese in an unprecedented fashion. Understanding of the midcontinent population status of lesser snow geese is complex. A decade ago, population estimates were as high as 20 million birds with no sign that the conservation order was having the desired effect. However, recent estimates put the population below 10 million birds and declining. This recent decline is not believed to be a result of the conservation order, as harvest rates remain low and adult survival is high. Preliminary research suggests that multiple limiting environmental factors are contributing to low production and recruitment. Several flyways and partners are funding projects to better understand the current trend.

2024/2025 WATERFOWL SEASON RECOMMENDATIONS DUCK HUNTING SEASON

Federal Framework:

The same regulatory packages under AHM for the 2024 season were used for 2023. Currently, the optimum season, based on pond numbers in prairie Canada, the mallard breeding population, and models of mallard population dynamics, have selected the liberal alternative for 2024. The daily bag limit for wood duck, pintail, scaup, and canvasbacks are not selected by the formal AHM process but on the basis of other harvest strategies or models that take into account various biological parameters associated with those species. This year will mark the fourth year of the experimental Two-tier regulation system first implemented in 2021. This is a four-year pilot study in Nebraska and South Dakota to determine the feasibility of providing a choice of a different bag limit (Tier II) to those who may have trouble identifying ducks. The goal of this study is to determine if offering a less restrictive bag limit option can help recruit, retain, or reactivate waterfowl hunters.

Daily Bag Limit:

Tier I: (Conventional bag limit) Six (6) ducks (including mergansers), may include no more than: Five (5) mallards of which two (2) can be females, three (3) wood ducks, one (1) scaup, two (2) redheads, one (1) pintail, and two (2) canvasbacks.

Tier II: Three (3) ducks. May include three (3) ducks (including mergansers) of any species regardless of sex.

Possession Limit: Three times the daily bag.

Shooting Hours: 30 minutes before sunrise to sunset.

Season Dates and Length (Statewide): Seventy-four (74) days between September 21, 2024 (Saturday nearest Sept. 24th) and January 31, 2025. Beginning in 2012, there are 4 duck zones that can have independent season dates with no split season. The High Plains portion of Nebraska has additional days that must be the same across zones (see High Plains below).

Zone and split season configuration options: 1) Statewide seasons with three segments (two splits), 2) Two zones with up to three season segments in each zone (two splits), 3) Three zones with up to two season segments in each zone (one split), or 5) Four zones with a continuous season (i.e. no segments/splits).

Additional High Plains Days.— An additional 12, 23, and 23 days may be taken in the High Plains Mallard Management Unit during the restrictive, moderate, and liberal alternatives, respectively. These days must be taken starting no earlier than the Saturday nearest December 10 (December 7, 2024), must be consecutive, and taken after the regular season. A closed period (split) between the regular season days and the additional days is permitted and does not count as a split allowed within the regular season.

Staff Recommendations – Duck and Coot Seasons

Information Used in Developing Staff Recommendations

Duck Season Date Preference Survey

The main objective of this survey was to determine season date preferences of duck hunters in all four duck zones. The 2022 survey was sent to all HIP respondents from 2019-2021 that provided an email address. We had 4,566 responses out of 31,938 recipients for a response rate of 14.3%.

Duck Harvest, Hunter Participation, and Migration Chronology Analysis

Nebraska duck harvest data from 2012-2019 were extracted from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) Parts Collection Survey dataset. The Service asks randomly selected hunters across the country to mail in one wing from each duck they harvest, as well as provide information about the date and location of their hunts. Harvest data from Nebraska were examined for all ducks in each zone to determine the times of year that hunters typically shoot the most birds. Results suggest harvest is highest in mid to late October to early November, regardless of zone.

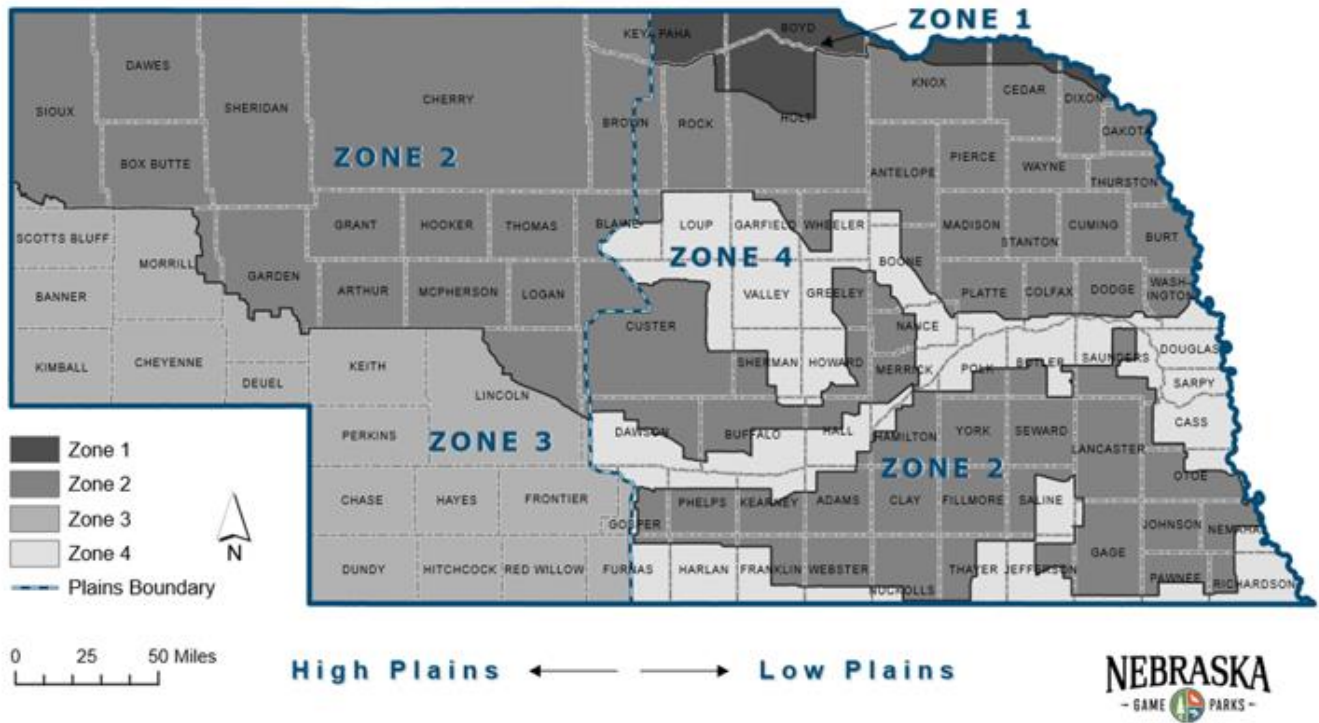
Nebraska hunter participation data from 2012-2019 were extracted from the Service's Diary Survey dataset. The Service asks randomly selected hunters across the country to record when they go waterfowl hunting during the season, as well as provide information of location and how many birds they harvested, if any. Results suggest participation throughout the season varies by zone.

Migration chronology for each of Nebraska's duck zones was estimated using e-Bird relative abundance data derived from the Adaptive Spatio-Temporal Exploratory Model (AdaSTEM; Fink et al. 2013, Fink et al. 2014) using checklists from 2006-2020. Data were first run through statistical and machine learning models to account for variation in environmental factors and biases associated with citizen science data. Once habitat associations are made, AdaSTEM scales up abundance estimates across spatio temporal extents.

Recommendations for Nebraska's duck hunting season dates are in accordance with the Services' proposed framework, duck harvest, hunter participation, hunter preference information, e-Bird migration chronology, and other considerations to maximize hunting opportunity for Nebraska's waterfowl hunters. Opportunity relates to total harvest of ducks, regardless of species. Any opening or closing days other than Saturday and closing days other than Sunday are noted in season dates. In 2024, Veteran's Day is Monday, November 11, Thanksgiving is November 28, and Christmas and New Year's days are on a Wednesday.

Season date recommendations were based on hunter preference, participation, migration chronology, and estimated effects of changes on harvest. Staff recommendations reflect a balance between hunter preference and estimated harvest.

2024-2025 Duck and Coot Zones



Duck Seasons

Season Dates:

Zone 1: 12 Oct – 24 Dec (74 days).

This area includes the portion of Nebraska along the Missouri River near South Dakota and includes Lewis and Clark Lake. Survey information indicated a slight season date preference for a mid-October opener, which pushes the end of season to mid to late December (see below). Relative abundance of ducks peak in late October, with a peak in harvest and participation shortly after. By mid-December harvest bottoms out. Duck harvest data indicates a peak in overall harvest with an early to mid-October opener and a general decrease in harvest with later season dates.

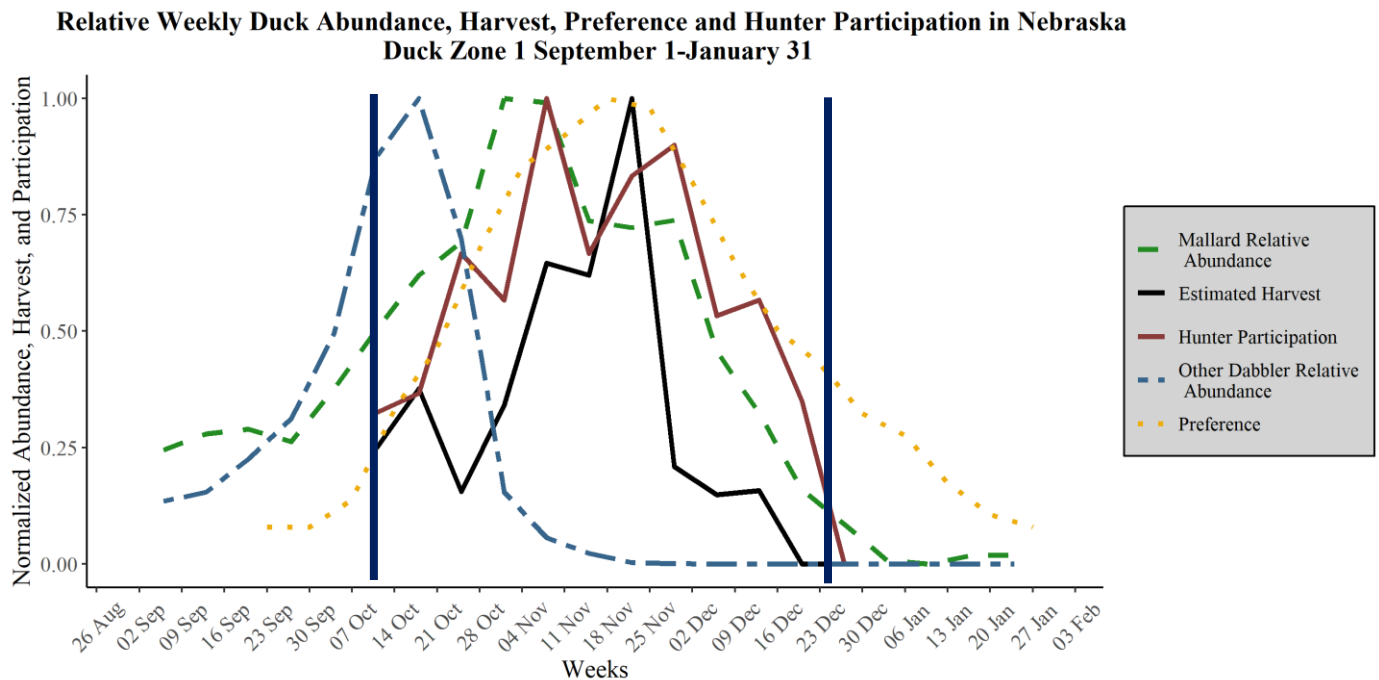


Figure 2 Graph depicting migration chronology, hunter harvest, hunter preference and hunter participation in Nebraska. Dark vertical lines represent recommended season dates for 2024-2025.

Zone 2 (Low Plains): 5 Oct – 17 Dec (74 days).

Zone 2 (High Plains): 5 Oct – 17 Dec (74 days) and 8 – 29 Jan (22 days).

This zone includes the Sandhills and portions of northeastern Nebraska, and the Rainwater Basins. The Zone 2 staff recommendation reflects the early season hunting opportunity contained in these areas. The most important weeks for hunting to be open is from late October through Thanksgiving. Duck harvest information indicates hunters have very low participation and harvest by mid-December, so having later start dates that allow the regular season to run past mid-December does not provide opportunities that are being utilized by hunters. The additional 23 days allowed in the High Plains must be taken beginning no earlier than the Saturday nearest 10 December (7 December, 2024) and must be the same as those in Zone 3. Also, the additional days must be taken in a continuous season and after the regular season. One day must be removed from the High Plains season to accommodate the Youth Waterfowl Hunting Season.

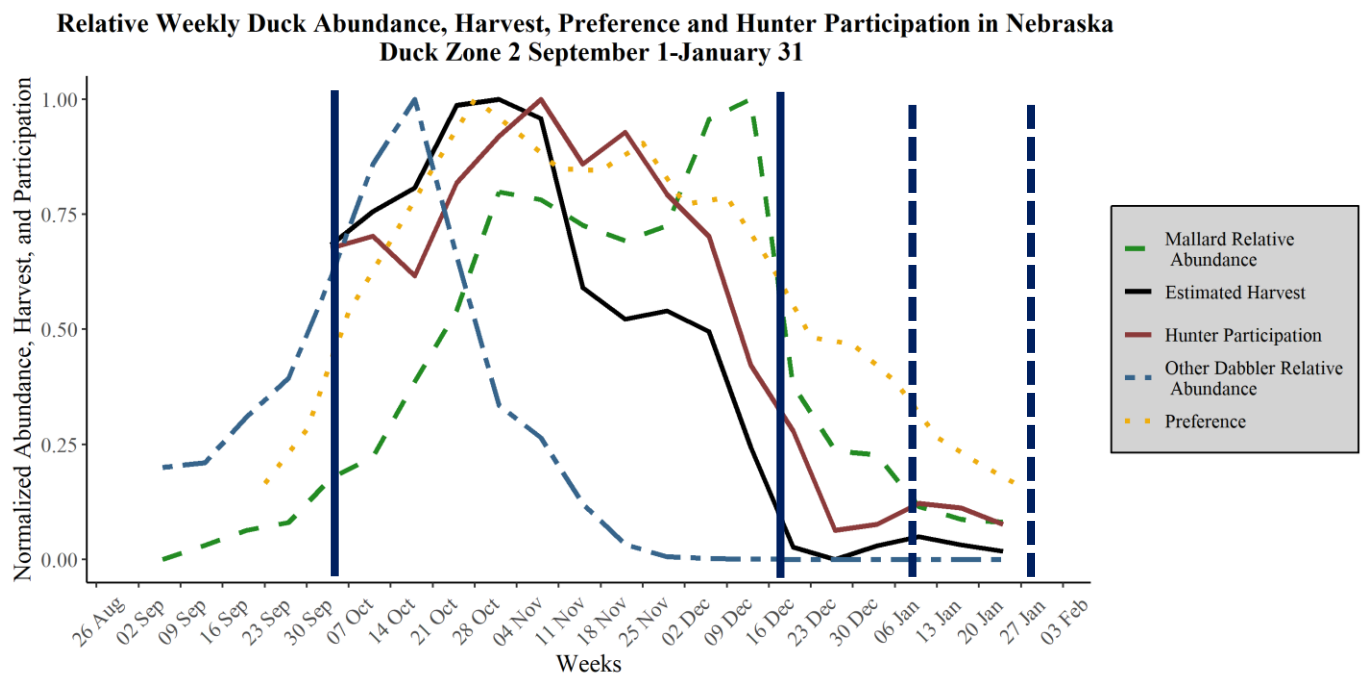


Figure 3 Graph depicting migration chronology, hunter harvest, hunter preference, and hunter participation in Nebraska. Dark vertical lines represent recommended season dates for 2024-2025, dashed vertical lines are High Plains extra days.

Zone 3 (High Plains): 26 Oct – 7 Jan (74 days) and 8 – 29 Jan (22 days).

Zone 3 comprises most of the Platte River as well as other important river systems. The additional 23 days allowed in the High Plains must be taken beginning no earlier than the Saturday nearest 10 December (7 December 2024) and must be the same as those in Zone 2. Also, the additional days must be taken in a continuous season and after the regular season. Season date preference indicated that a late October opener had the highest preference, and later openers would decrease harvest. One day must be removed from the regular season to accommodate the Youth Waterfowl Hunting Season.

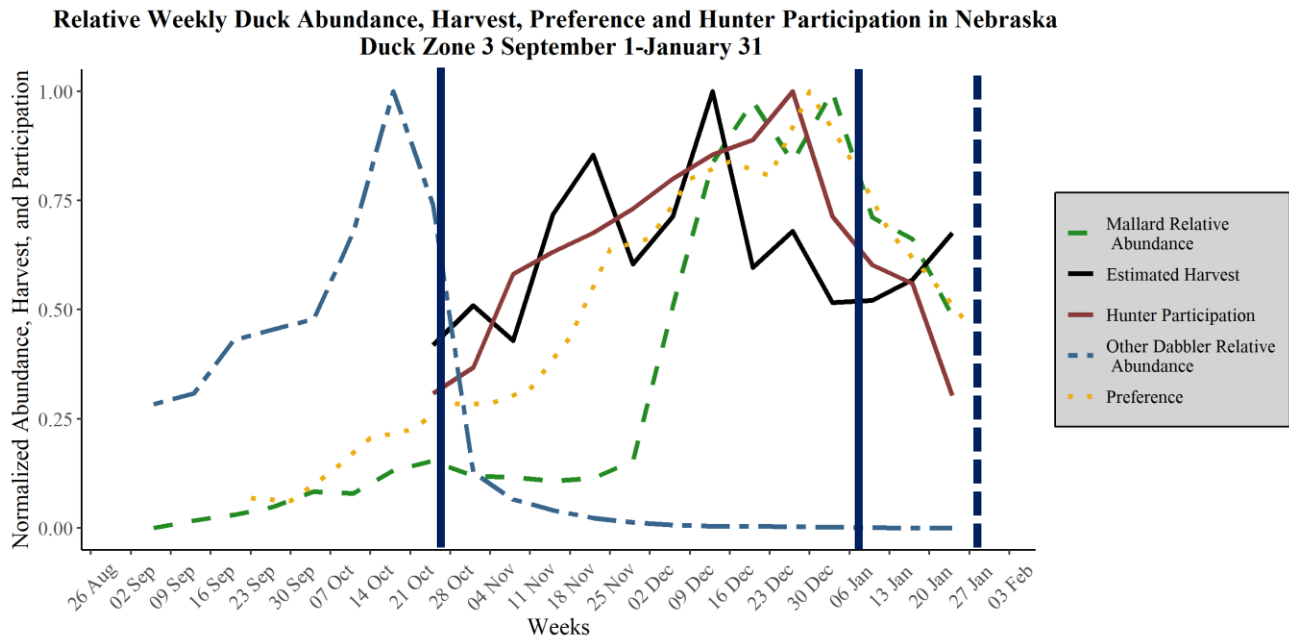


Figure 4 Graph depicting migration chronology, hunter harvest, and hunter participation in Nebraska. Dark vertical lines represent recommended season dates for 2024-2025, dashed vertical lines are High Plains extra days.

Zone 4: 19 Oct – 31 Dec (74 days).

This zone consists of all of the Zone 3 Low Plains unit from the 2019/2020 season. Preference for this zone indicated a strong preference for later dates, similar to what this area had in the 19/20 season when it was the Zone 3 Low Plains. Harvest shows an inverse trend from participation, in that participation generally shows an increasing trend throughout the season, while harvest declines. Participation peaks around Christmas, and then sharply declines after, with harvest being lowest during the last week of the season, and highest in the late October to mid-November. Opportunity, success, and participation is severely limited past January 1st.

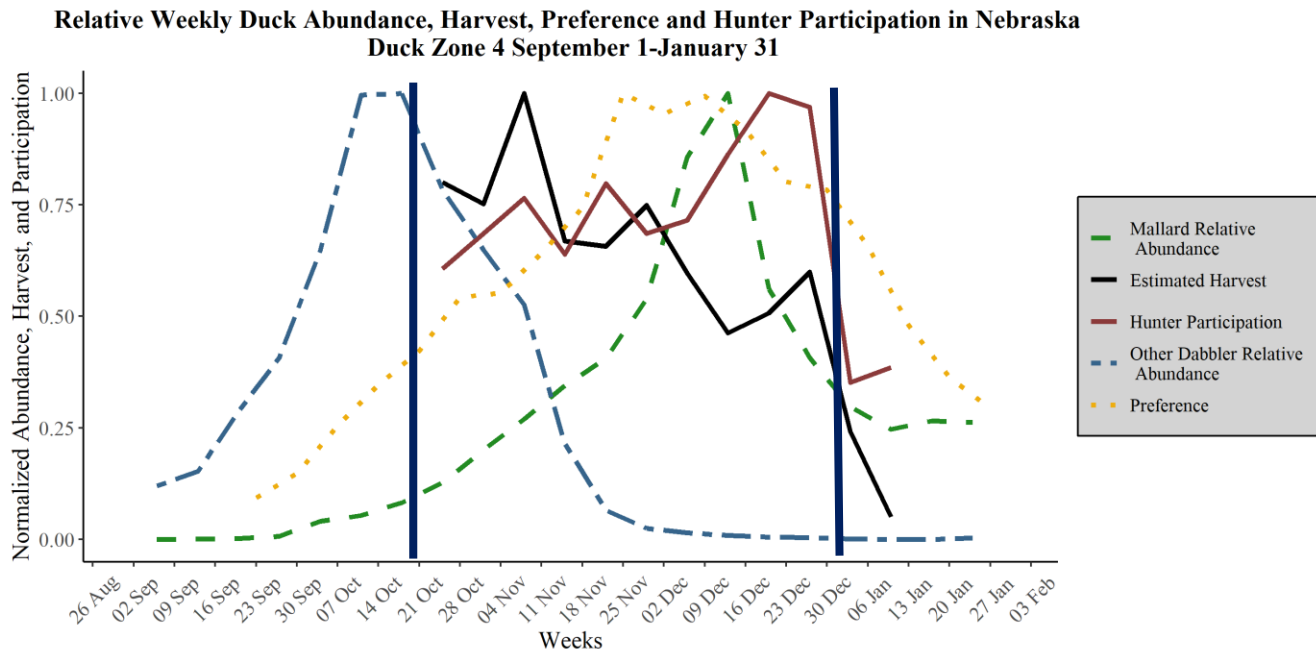


Figure 5 Graph depicting migration chronology, hunter harvest, and hunter participation in Nebraska. Dark vertical lines represent recommended season dates for 2024-2025.

Coot Season

Federal Framework:

Open Season Dates: Concurrent with duck season dates.

Limits: Daily – 15
Possession – 45 (three times the daily bag)

Shooting Hours: 30 minutes before sunrise to sunset

Staff Recommendations: Seasons conform to season dates for ducks

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Status of Geese – 2024 and Justification for Hunting Season Recommendations

Status

Canada Geese

Three managed populations of Canada geese are present in Nebraska: Central Flyway Arctic Nesting (CFAN) geese, the Western Prairie (WPP) and Great Plains (GPP) population, and the Hi-Line (HLP) population. The CFAN population is comprised of small, Arctic-nesting birds (formerly comprised of the Tall Grass and Short Grass Prairie populations) currently recognized as Cackling geese. The WPP/GPP and HLP are comprised of medium sized and large geese with the HLP occurring in the furthestmost western portions of the state and the WPP/GPP from Garden County east. These populations of Canada geese occur throughout the state from widely scattered breeding areas stretching from Montana and Alberta to southern Saskatchewan, North Dakota, South Dakota and Nebraska.

The three-year average for CFAN and WP/GP Canada geese are 93,919 and 434,539 birds respectively. The latest three-year average (2017-2019) CFAN Lincoln estimate available is 2,640,314. These estimates are all above population objectives. In addition, harvest rates are below the 10% three-year average threshold outlined in the CFAN management plan.

In Nebraska, the monitoring of the Canada goose restoration program remains strong, and activities are at a high level. Nebraska consistently leads the Central Flyway in number of geese banded. In late June 2023, Canada geese were captured on lakes in Lancaster, Dakota, Dixon, Cass, Madison, Jefferson, Hall, Saunders, Colfax, and Dodge counties in eastern Nebraska, and Box Butte, Deuel, Scotts Bluff, Cheyenne, Garden, Sheridan, Red Willow, Wheeler, Cherry, Knox, Antelope, and Holt counties in western and north-central Nebraska. Other states in the Central Flyway are also banding Canada geese to monitor population demographics and harvest characteristics across the flyway.

In Nebraska during 2022, approximately 69,815 Canada geese were harvested, compared to 91,232 in 2021 (Service estimates from HIP). Over 90% of Canada geese harvested in Nebraska are HLP or WPP/GPP birds. Just over 368,693 Canada geese were harvested in the Central Flyway in 2022.

White-fronted Geese

White-fronted geese harvest packages have been determined by a threshold of the point estimate of the three-year average harvest rate. The most recent three-year average harvest rate is below the 6% threshold. Nebraska harvest estimates of white-fronted geese have been highly variable over the last several decades, but the long-term average is just under 1,000 birds (1999-2022). Harvest estimates for 2022 increased from 2021 (659 versus 287; USFWS estimates from HIP).

Light Geese

Light geese are comprised of lesser snow and Ross's goose populations. Nebraska has two populations of lesser snow geese, the Mid-Continent Population (MCP) and the Western Central Flyway population (WCF) that migrate through in fall and spring. Beginning in 2019, partner agencies began estimating the abundance of light geese via the Lincoln method. Most recent estimates indicate the population is just below 8 million and declining. However, updated Lincoln estimates will be available in summer 2024 as the process relies on band recovery data from the previous season.

Regular season harvest estimates for Nebraska in 2022 decreased to 1,756 from 6,886 in 2021, with the 1999-2022 average less than 5,000 birds. Estimates from the 2023 Light Goose Conservation Order (LGCO) were approximately 144,680 light geese harvested, up from 2022's harvest of 91,647. Nebraska maintains one of the highest annual harvest estimates during the LGCO as compared to other Central Flyway states.

2024/2025 Federal Frameworks for Goose Hunting Seasons

Changes to Dark Goose Frameworks from 2023

No change.

Changes to White-fronted Goose Frameworks from 2023

No change.

Changes to Light Goose Seasons/Conservation Order Frameworks from 2023

No change.

Federal Framework:

Dark Geese (Canada, brant and all other goose species, except white-fronted geese and those included as light geese).

Season Date and Length: Saturday nearest September 24 (Sept 21, 2024) through the Sunday nearest February 15 (February 16, 2025). Season length (statewide) is 107 days. Different open season dates may be selected for the different goose units. A single split or closed period is allowed within each Unit. Two days must be afforded to the Youth Waterfowl Hunting Season.

Daily Bag Limit: Eight (8) geese.

Possession Limit: Three (3) legal daily bags.

Shooting Hours: 30 minutes before sunrise to sunset.

White-fronted geese

Season Dates and Length: Saturday nearest September 24 (September 21, 2024) until the Sunday nearest February 15 (February 16, 2025). Season length (statewide) of either 74, 88, or 107 days, with different daily bag limits with each option (see below). There are no zones or management units for white-fronted geese, but a single split or closed period is allowed.

Daily Bag Limit: Three (3) geese under 74-day option; two (2) under the 88-day option, and (1) under the 107-day option.

Possession Limit: Three (3) legal daily bags.

Shooting Hours: 30 minutes before sunrise to sunset.

Light Geese – Regular Season (snow, blue and Ross' geese)

Season Dates and Length: Saturday nearest September 24 (Sept 21, 2024) through March 10, 2025 (special regulations apply in the Rainwater Basin Zone and along the Platte River if regular season extends into February, see Light Goose Conservation Order frameworks). Season length (Statewide) is 107 days. There are 3 zones for light geese, but they are not recognized for the regular season. A single split or closed period is allowed. Two days must be afforded to the Youth Waterfowl Hunting Season.

Daily Bag Limit: Fifty (50) geese.

Possession Limit: None.

Shooting Hours: 30 minutes before sunrise to sunset.

Light Geese – Conservation Order (snow, blue and Ross' geese)

Season Dates and Length: None for dates or length, except that all regular waterfowl seasons, including Sandhill cranes, must be closed. Special regulations apply in the Rainwater Basin Zone and along the Platte River (see below). There are 3 zones for the light geese during the conservation order (see below).

Daily Bag Limit: None.

Possession Limit: None.

Shooting Hours: 30 minutes before sunrise to 30 minutes after sunset.

Rainwater Basin Zone: That area within and bounded by, beginning at the intersection of NE Highway 92 and NE Highway 15; south along NE 15 to NE Highway 4; west along NE 4 to US Highway 34; west along US 34 to US Highway 283; north along US 283 to US Highway 30; east along US 30 to NE Highway 14, south to NE Highway 66, east to US Highway 81, and east along NE 92 to the beginning.

West Zone: That area west of U.S. Highway 81, from the Nebraska-Kansas border to the Nebraska-South Dakota border, excluding the area contained within the Rainwater Basin Zone as described above.

East Zone: The remainder of the state not included in the Rainwater Basin or West Zones.

Within the Rainwater Basin Zone:

The Light Goose Conservation Order (LGCO) will be open 7 days/week.

All U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs), except Harvard and Cottonwood WPAs, will be closed to LGCO activities. Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) remain open.

LGCO special regulations begin on 10 February 2025.

Platte River Buffer (applies to both Rainwater Basin and West Zones):

- February 10 – February 17: ½ mile from the outer channel of the Platte River between NE Highway Spur 10D (Shelton) to NE Highway 14.
- February 17 – March 10: ½ mile from the outer channel of the Platte River between NE Highway Spur L24B (Overton) to NE Highway 14.
- March 10 – April 1: 3 miles from the outer channel of the Platte River from NE Highway Spur L24B (Overton) to U.S. Highway 281 and ½ mile from outer channel of the Platte River between U.S. Highway 281 to NE Highway 14.

2024/2025 WATERFOWL SEASON RECOMMENDATIONS GOOSE HUNTING SEASONS

Canada, Brant, and all other goose species (except white-fronted geese and those included as light geese).

Daily Bag Limit: Five (5) geese.

Possession Limit: Three (3) legal daily bags.

Shooting Hours: 30 minutes before sunrise to sunset.

Season Dates: By Management Unit.

Information Used in Developing Staff Recommendations

2020 and 2021 Canada Goose Season Date Preference Survey

The main objective of the survey was to determine season date preferences of goose hunters in all dark goose units. Goose hunters selected to receive a season date preference survey were based on those individuals that had indicated they had hunted ducks or geese from 2017-2019 on the Harvest Information Program (HIP) survey. The initial sample sizes for hunters with emails was 13,714 hunters, and for hunters with only a postal address was 9,953 hunters. At the close of the survey we received 2,385 responses from email invitees, and 77 responses from postcard invitees (2,462 total responses).

Respondents for most units expressed a clear preference for later seasons (see charts after each unit recommendation. Staff recommendations reflected the greater preference later season dates.

The 2021 survey was sent to all HIP respondents from 2018-2020 that provided an email address. We had 2,630 responses out of 28,055 recipients for a response rate of 9.4%. Related to Canada geese, the 2021 survey asked specifically about preferences for the North Central Canada goose Unit.

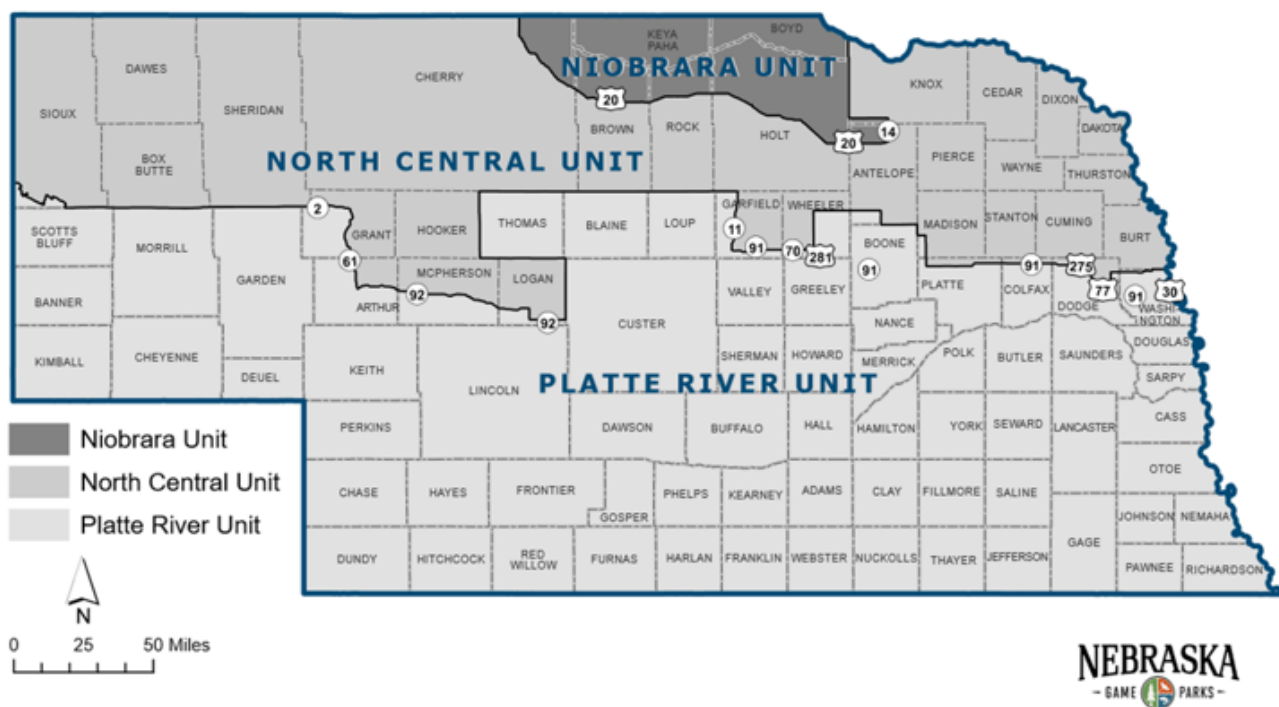
Canada Goose Harvest Distribution Analysis

Nebraska Canada harvest data from 2015-2019 was extracted from the Service's Parts Collection Survey dataset. The Service asks randomly selected hunters across the country to mail in the tail feathers from each goose they harvest, as well as provide information about the date and location of their hunts. Harvest data from Nebraska were examined for Canada geese to determine the times of year that hunters typically shoot the most birds by unit. Banding data from 2010-2020 was also used to determine harvest chronology. Results suggest the harvest of Canada geese varies by unit. In the Platte River unit, harvest increases throughout the season, and is greatest in February. The Niobrara unit peaks in late November and declines thereafter. The North-Central unit has many peaks and valleys throughout the season, with a slight negative trend in harvest as season progresses. Season date preferences encompassed most of this time period of peak harvest.

Recommendations for Nebraska's dark goose hunting season dates are in accordance with the Services' proposed framework, goose harvest and hunter preference information, and other considerations to maximize hunting opportunity for Nebraska's waterfowl hunters.

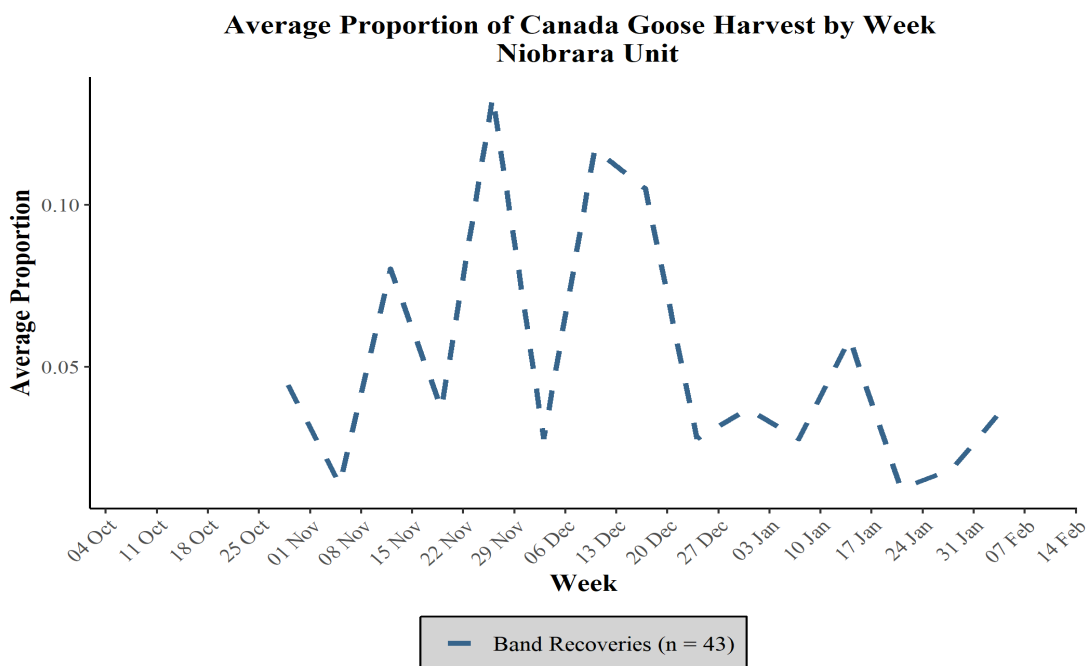
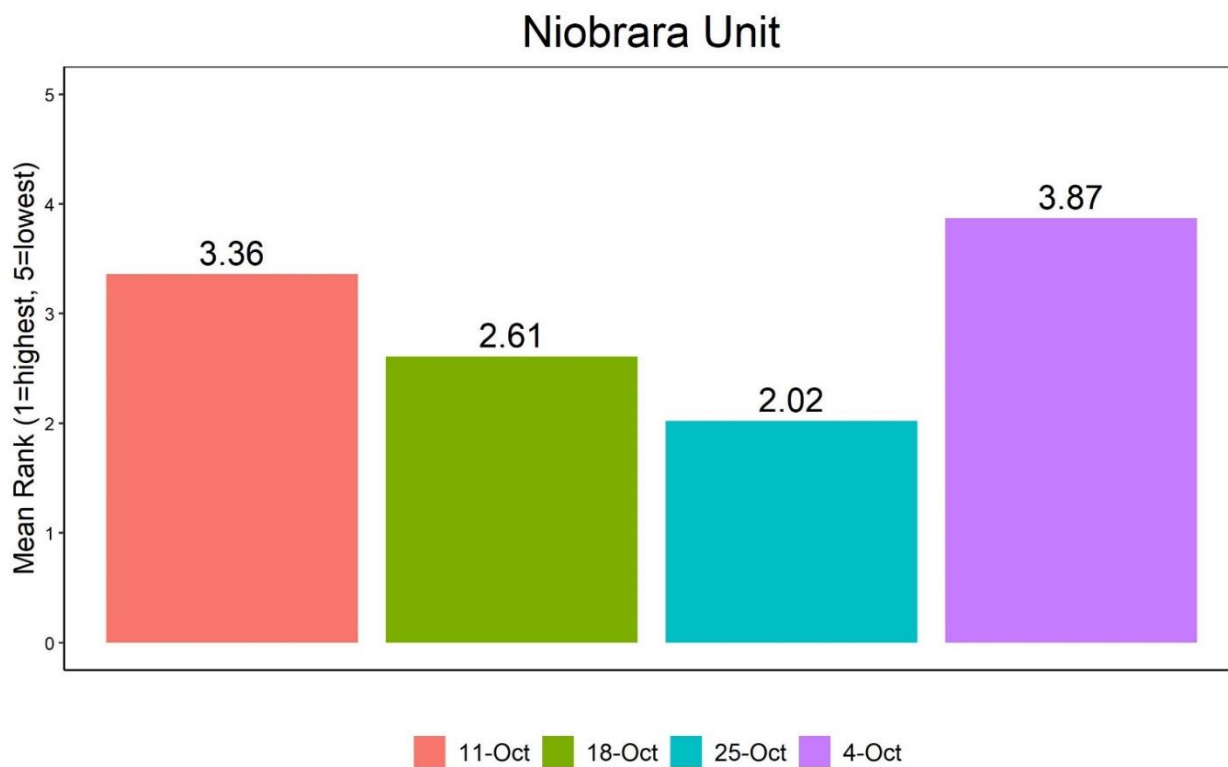
Harvest during October would be primarily directed at Nebraska's resident flocks of Canada geese and the migrant small races of Canada geese. Few large Canada geese migrants are in the state at that time. A slight reduction or stabilization of the resident flock in eastern Nebraska is desirable to reduce the number of nuisance complaints that are being received by the agency. Season dates encompassing late November to early February are targeted primarily at migratory geese. All recommended goose seasons encompass the Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's holidays.

2024-2025 Dark Goose Units



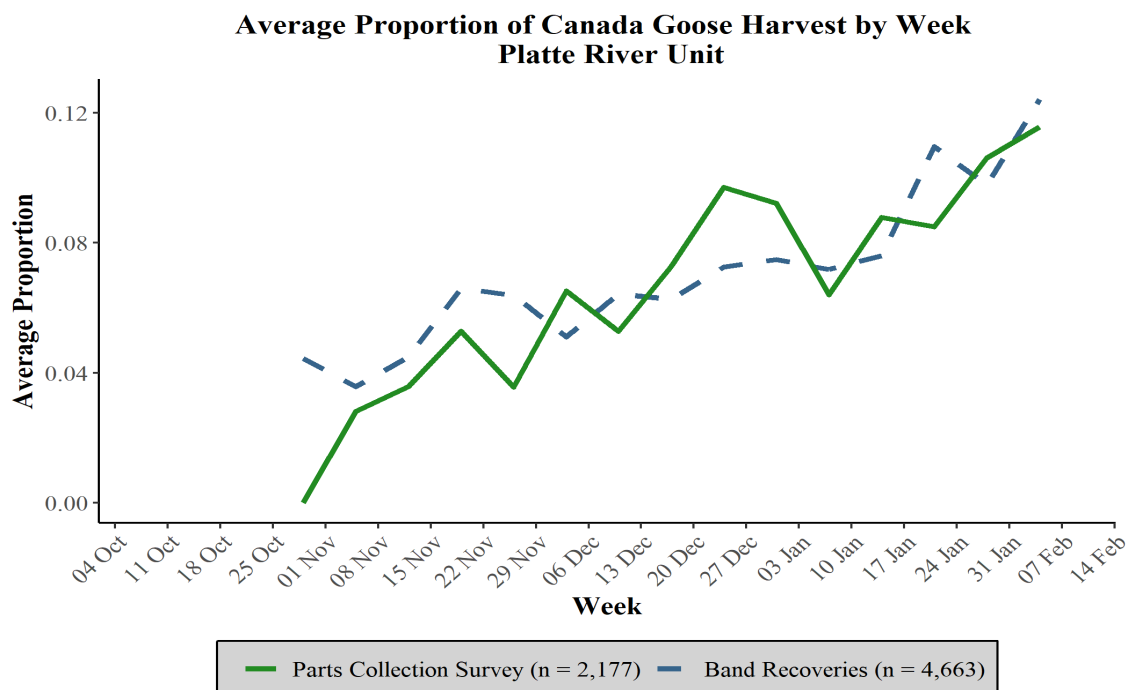
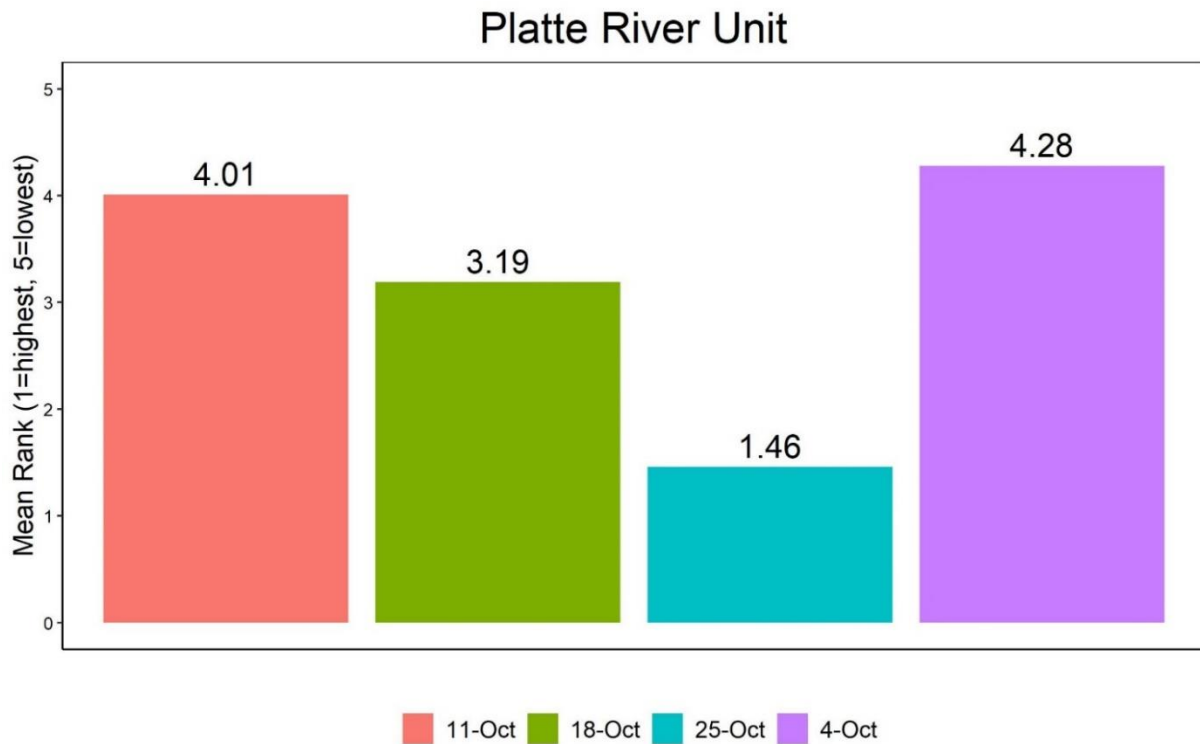
Niobrara Unit: 28 Oct (Mon) – Feb 9 (Sun; 105 days).

The recommended season dates are those most preferred by hunters (see below). In terms of harvest, these season dates cover the majority of harvest.



Platte River Unit: 28 Oct (Mon) – 9 Feb (Sun; 105 days).

This unit has been the most important in terms of Nebraska's Canada goose harvest in recent decades. Staff recommendations reflect preference for later season dates. Harvest data indicated that these season dates will cover the vast majority of harvest in this unit.



North Central Unit: 5 Oct (Sat) – 17 Jan (Fri) (105 Days).

This unit has a much greater likelihood for early goose hunting opportunity than exists later. Season date preferences were for a later opener from the 2020 survey, however harvest opportunity does not increase later in the season. Staff recommendation allows the Canada goose season to be open with duck Zone 2, thus maximizing hunting opportunity. Preferences from hunters in the most recent survey (2021) indicated a strong preference for the same opener as duck in zone 2 (see table on next page).

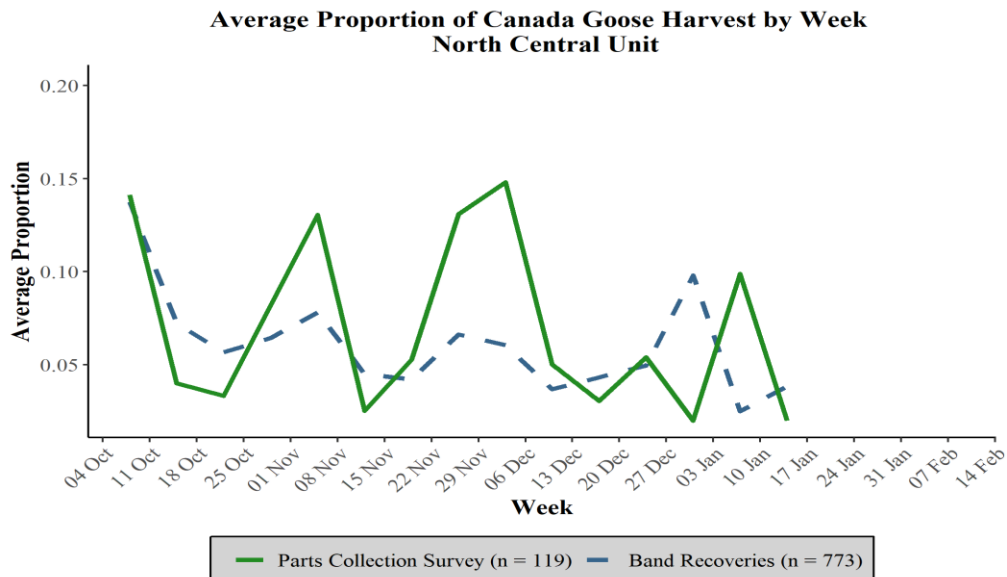
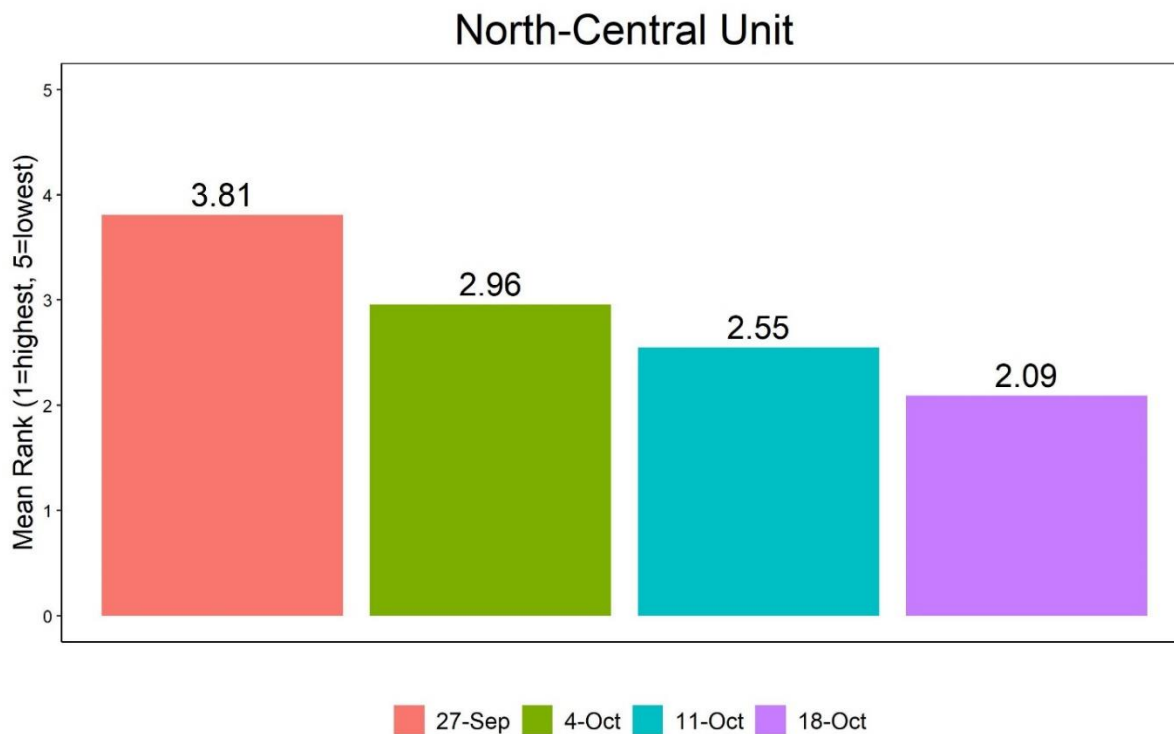


Table 1 – Preferences for opening date of the North Central Canada goose Unit.

	If you hunt or plan to hunt geese in the North-Central unit, what is your preference for season opening dates?		
	Overall	Resident	Non-resident
n	2101	1667	434
Open the same Saturday as the duck opener in Zone 2	613	521	92
	29.2%	31.3%	21.2%
Open a different Saturday than the duck opener in Zone 2	204	187	17
	9.7%	11.2%	3.9%
No preference for season opening date	680	497	183
	32.4%	29.8%	42.2%
Do not hunt or plan to hunt in the North-Central unit	604	462	142
	28.7%	27.7%	32.7%

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2024/2025 Staff Recommendations

White-fronted Geese

Season Dates: 5 Oct – 15 Dec (72 days) and 25 Jan – 9 Feb (16 days) – 40 day split.

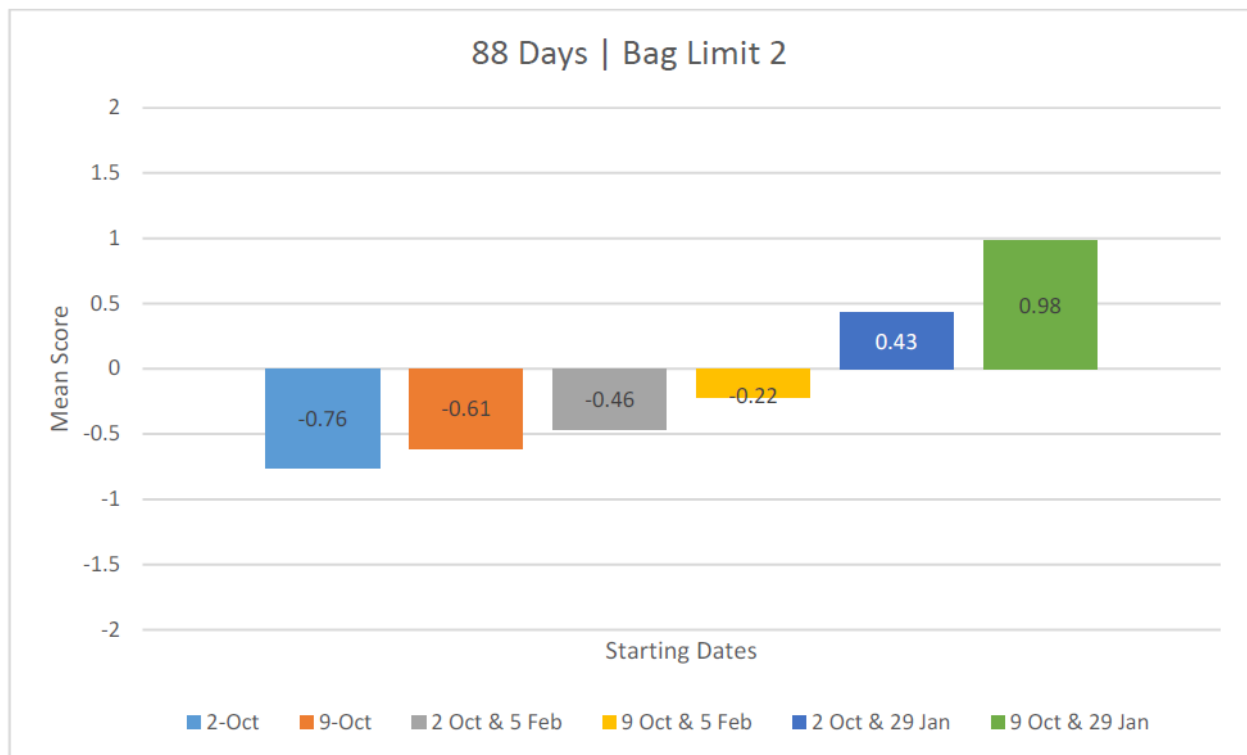
Daily Bag Limit: Two (2) geese.

Possession Limit: Three (3) legal daily bags.

Shooting Hours: 30 minutes before sunrise to sunset.

This recommendation encompasses the expected migration period for white-fronted geese (around mid- to late October) and hunter preferences (see below). In addition, it allows the white-fronted goose season to be open with the recommended season dates for ducks in Zone 2 when white-fronts are migrating through the state. The primary area of white-fronted goose harvest occurs in the Rainwater Basin region.

Strongly Support = 2, Support = 1, No Preference = 0, Oppose = -1, Strongly Oppose = -2



2024/2025 Staff Recommendations Light Geese (Regular Season)

Season Dates: 5 Oct – 1 Jan (89 days) and 25 Jan – 9 Feb (16 days) – 23 day split.

Daily Bag Limit: Fifty (50) geese.

Possession Limit: None.

Shooting Hours: 30 minutes before sunrise to sunset.

There are few snow geese in the state as early as 1 October or as late as 28 December, but this segment of the season encompasses the entire period when light geese will likely be migrating through Nebraska. The split season allows for take of light geese if migration is early into the state prior to the close of the dark goose season. The regular season for light geese must accommodate two (2) days to allow Light Geese to be legal game during the Youth Waterfowl Hunting Season.

2025 Staff Recommendations Light Geese (Conservation Order)

Dates:

East Zone: 10 Feb – 15 April (65 days).

West Zone: 10 Feb – 5 April (55 days).

Rainwater Basin Zone: 10 Feb – 5 April (55 days).

Daily Bag Limit: None.

Possession Limit: None.

Shooting hours are 30 minutes before sunrise to 30 minutes after sunset. The frameworks for the Rainwater Basin and Platte River represent a compromise between staff and the Service as to the management of light geese and other waterfowl populations using the Rainwater Basin area. This strategy will be continued until changing conditions warrant modification.

LIGHT GOOSE ZONES



Table 1. Nebraska duck season dates for each zone from 2012-2023.
 Dates for 2024/2025 are proposed.
 Nebraska implemented a 4-zone, no split configuration in 2012.

Zone/Year	Season Dates
Zone 1	
2012	Oct. 13 – Dec. 25
2013	Oct. 12 – Dec. 24
2014	Oct. 11 – Dec. 23
2015	Oct. 10 – Dec. 22
2016	Oct. 15 – Dec. 27
2017	Oct. 14 – Dec. 26
2018	Oct. 13 – Dec. 25
2019	Oct. 12 – Dec. 24
2020	Oct. 10 – Dec. 22
2021	Oct. 16 – Dec. 28
2022	Oct. 15 – Dec. 27
2023	Oct. 14 – Dec. 26
2024	Oct. 12 – Dec. 25
Zone 2	
2012	Oct. 6 – Dec. 18 (and Jan. 2-23 in High Plains)
2013	Oct. 5 – Dec. 17 (and Jan. 5-26 in High Plains)
2014	Oct. 4 – Dec. 16 (and Jan. 4-25 in High Plains)
2015	Oct. 3 – Dec. 15 (and Jan. 6-27 in High Plains)
2016	Oct. 8 – Dec. 20 (and Jan. 9-29 in High Plains)
2017	Oct. 7 – Dec. 19 (and Jan. 8-28 in High Plains)
2018	Oct. 6 – Dec. 18 (and Jan. 7-27 in High Plains)
2019	Oct. 5 – Dec. 17 (and Jan. 6-27 in High Plains)
2020	Oct. 3 – Dec. 15 (and Jan. 4-25 in High Plains)
2021	Oct. 9 – Dec. 21 (and Jan. 5-26 in High Plains)
2022	Oct. 1 – Dec. 13 (and Jan. 4-24 in High Plains)
2023	Oct. 7 – Dec. 19 (and Jan. 10-31 in High Plains)
2024	Oct. 5 – Dec. 17 and Jan. 8-29 (High Plains)
Zone 3	
2012	Oct. 20 – Jan. 1 (and Jan. 2-23 in High Plains)
2013	Oct. 23 – Jan. 4 (and Jan. 5-26 in High Plains)
2014	Oct. 22 – Jan. 3 (and Jan. 4-25 in High Plains)
2015	Oct. 24 – Jan. 5 (and Jan. 6-27 in High Plains)
2016	Oct. 27 – Jan. 8 (and Jan. 9-29 in High Plains)
2017	Oct. 26 – Jan. 7 (and Jan. 8-28 in High Plains)
2018	Oct. 25 – Jan. 6 (and Jan. 7-27 in High Plains)
2019	Oct. 24 – Jan. 5 (and Jan. 6-27 in High Plains)
2020	Oct. 22 – Jan. 3 (and Jan. 4-25 in High Plains)
2021	Oct. 23 – Jan. 4 and Jan. 5-26 (High Plains)
2022	Oct. 22 – Jan. 3 and Jan. 4-25 (High Plains)
2023	Oct. 28 – Jan. 9 and Jan. 10-31 (High Plains)
2024	Oct. 26 – Jan. 7 and Jan. 8-29 (High Plains)
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Zone/Year	Season Dates
Zone 4	
2012	Oct. 6 – Dec. 18
2013	Oct. 5 – Dec. 17
2014	Oct. 4 – Dec. 16
2015	Oct. 3 – Dec. 15
2016	Oct. 8 – Dec. 20
2017	Oct. 7 – Dec. 19
2018	Oct. 6 – Dec. 18
2019	Oct. 5 – Dec. 17
2020	Oct. 3 – Dec. 15
2021	Oct. 30 – Jan. 11 (Zone boundary changed)
2022	Oct. 22 – Jan. 3
2023	Oct. 28 – Jan. 9
2024	Oct. 19 – Dec. 31

Table 1a. Nebraska duck season dates for the Low Plains Early Zone from 1999-2011.

Year	Season Dates
1999	Oct. 2 – Dec. 12 and Dec. 18-19
2000	Sept. 30 – Dec. 10 and Dec. 16-17
2001	Sept. 29 – Dec. 9 and Dec. 15-16
2002	Sept. 28 – Oct. 6 and Oct. 12 – Dec.15
2003	Oct. 4 – Dec. 14 and Dec. 20-21
2004	Oct. 2 – Dec. 12 and Dec. 18-19
2005	Oct. 1 – Dec. 11 and Dec. 17-18
2006	Oct. 7 – Dec. 17 and Dec. 23-24
2007	Oct. 6 – Dec. 16 and Dec. 22-23
2008	Oct. 11 – Dec. 21 and Dec. 27-28
2009	Oct. 10 – Dec. 20 and Dec. 26-27
2010	Oct. 2 – Dec. 12 and Dec. 18-19
2011	Oct. 8 – Dec. 18 and Dec. 23-24

Table 1b. Nebraska duck season dates for the Low Plains Late Zone 1999-2011.

Year	Season Dates
1999	Oct. 9 – Dec. 19 and Dec. 25-26
2000	Oct. 14-15 and Oct. 21 – Dec. 31
2001	Oct. 13-14 and Oct. 20 – Dec. 30
2002	Oct. 12-13 and Oct. 19 – Dec. 29
2003	Oct. 18-19 and Oct. 25 – Jan. 4, 2004
2004	Oct. 16-17 and Oct. 23 – Jan. 2, 2005
2005	Oct. 15-16 and Oct. 22 – Jan. 1, 2006
2006	Oct. 21-22 and Oct. 27 – Jan. 7, 2007
2007	Oct. 20 – Jan. 1, 2008
2008	Oct. 18-19 and Oct. 25 – Jan. 4, 2009
2009	Oct. 17-18 and Oct. 24 – Jan. 3, 2010
2010	Oct. 16-17 and Oct. 23 – Jan. 2, 2011
2011	Oct. 15-16 and Oct. 22 – Jan. 1, 2012

Table 1c. Nebraska duck season dates for the High Plains Zone 1999-2011.

Year	Season Dates
1999	Oct. 2 – Dec. 13 and Dec. 17 – Jan. 9, 2000
2000	Sept. 30 – Dec. 10 and Dec. 15 – Jan. 7, 2001
2001	Sept. 29 – Dec. 9 and Dec. 14 – Jan. 6, 2002
2002	Sept. 28 – Dec. 8 and Dec. 13 – Jan. 5, 2003
2003	Oct. 4 – Dec. 14 and Dec. 20 – Jan. 12, 2004
2004	Oct. 2 – Dec. 12 and Dec. 18 – Jan. 10, 2005
2005	Oct. 1 – Dec. 11 and Dec. 17 – Jan. 9, 2006
2006	Oct. 7 – Dec. 17 and Dec. 23 – Jan. 15, 2007
2007	Oct. 6 – Dec. 16 and Dec. 22 – Jan. 14, 2008
2008	Oct. 11 – Jan. 14, 2009
2009	Oct. 10 – Jan. 13, 2010
2010	Oct. 9 – Jan. 12, 2011
2011	Oct. 8 – Jan. 11, 2012

2024/2025 EXTENDED FALCONRY DUCK SEASON RECOMMENDATIONS

Zone 1*: 25 Feb – 10 March.

Zone 2*:

Low Plains: 25 Feb – 10 March.

High Plains: Concurrent with all duck season dates in the High Plains Zone (107 days).

Zone 3*:

High Plains: Concurrent with all duck season dates in the High Plains Zone (107 days).

Zone 4*: 25 Feb – 10 March.

*Regular season falconry dates are concurrent with teal, youth & regular duck season dates.

Bag Limits: Daily: Three (3) birds singly or in the aggregate of either sex.

Possession: Three times the daily limit (falconry limits are not in addition to other waterfowl seasons).

Hours: 30 minutes before sunrise to sunset.

Area Open: Statewide, but according to management units and zones as for the regular duck gun season and except Federal or State refuges, unless otherwise specified.

Changes from 2023 Season: None.

Background and Justification:

Aligning falconry season dates with management units and zones in the early season ensures that the 107-day limitation on migratory bird hunting has not been exceeded. When a liberal (74-days) regular duck season is allowed, falconry dates for the High Plains Unit **must** coincide with the dates for September teal and youth waterfowl to ensure that this limitation is not exceeded. Proposed season dates are reflective of a liberal season to ensure the maximum number of days can be allowed during the regular duck season.

All falconry season dates must coincide with all duck, merganser and coot seasons when a liberal season is allowed. The extended season dates provide falconers the opportunity to realize the full recreational potential available to them under Federal regulations and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. However, this early season also provides falconers the opportunity to fly their birds on additional days in those areas closed to early teal season (i.e., north of Highway 30).

Federal Framework, Falconry Seasons:

- For all hunting methods combined, the combined length of the extended season, regular season, and any special or experimental season shall not exceed 107 days.
- Each extended season may be divided into a maximum of 3 segments.
- Seasons must fall between September 1 and March 10.
- Regular season bag and possession limits do not apply to falconry. The falconry bag limit is not in addition to firearm limits.