

2023 MIGRATORY SEASON FORECAST

Wisconsin DNR



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The nesting period for ducks and geese was average to above average, but we are unsure of the overall impact of extended droughts during the brood rearing period. Depending on location, accessing areas where hunters historically pursued waterfowl may be a challenge. A lack of water could limit the use of waterfowl in some of these areas. Hunters will see some changes throughout the state based on increasing opportunities for the 2023 season.

Southern And Mississippi Goose Zones Will Continue To Have An Increased Bag Limit During Holiday Season This Year

The Southern and Mississippi Canada Goose Zones open on Sept. 16 and have a daily bag limit of three Canada geese during the first portion of the season and a daily bag limit of five Canada geese during the Holiday Hunt (Dec. 20-Jan. 4).

Scaup Bag Limit Restriction

Based on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's season framework, there will continue to be a scaup bag limit of one scaup per day for 15 days and two scaup per day for 45 days.

2023 SEASON DATES

DUCK

EARLY TEAL | Sept. 1-9

YOUTH WATERFOWL | Sept. 16-17

NORTHERN ZONE | Sept. 23 to Nov. 21

SOUTHERN ZONE | Sept. 30 to Oct. 8. | Oct. 14 to Dec. 3

OPEN WATER ZONE | Oct. 14 to Dec. 12

GOOSE

EARLY GOOSE | Sept. 1-15

NORTHERN ZONE | Sept. 16 to Dec. 16

SOUTHERN ZONE | Sept. 16 to Oct. 8 | Oct. 14 to Dec. 3
| Dec. 16 to Jan. 2, 2024

MISSISSIPPI ZONE | Sept. 16 to Oct. 8 | Oct. 14 to Dec. 3
| Dec. 16 to Jan. 2, 2024

MOURNING DOVE

STATEWIDE | Sept. 1 to Nov. 29

WOODCOCK

STATEWIDE | Sept. 23 to Nov. 6

DUCK FORECAST

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We expect another great season for duck hunters in Wisconsin. The Northern Zone will open one week earlier than the Southern Zone to provide better opportunity for our northern hunters before the winter. Additionally, the Open Water Zone will open two weeks later than the Southern Zone to allow for later hunting opportunities on Lake Michigan. Make sure to check the season dates before you head out into the field.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service breeding population estimates are not available until the end of August. The 2022 continental duck population estimate was 34.2 million birds, 12%

lower than the last year the survey was conducted (2019) but only 4% below the long-term average. The DNR was able to conduct its spring breeding waterfowl survey in 2023, and Wisconsin's breeding duck population estimate was 545,065 birds, slightly below last year's estimate but still 23% above the long term average (1973-2022).

Mallards are the most abundant duck in Wisconsin and make up 32% of the state's total duck harvest. Their 2022 population estimates were down compared to their 2019 numbers and are 9% below the long-term national average. Wisconsin's population is nearly exactly the same as 2022, and the mallard population remains within 1% of the long-term state average. Together, mallards, wood ducks, blue-winged teal and green-winged teal make up about 70% of game waterfowl in Wisconsin this fall.

WOODCOCK FORECAST

The woodcock population in Wisconsin remains stable. However, we have seen long-term declines at the national and regional levels based on estimates produced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

About 15,000 woodcock hunters enter the field each fall, harvesting roughly 40,000 birds. This typically ranks the state second in the country for woodcock harvest. For the best chance of finding woodcock, check the DNR's [FFLIGHT Tool](#) and head to the northern forests.



NPS

GOOSE FORECAST

Tom Koerner/USFWS



The U.S. boasts a goose population in the millions, and Wisconsin's resident goose population continues to increase. This fall, Wisconsin's roughly 47,000 goose hunters can expect another strong season with excellent hunting opportunities.

Last year was excellent for goose production, a trend that is expected to continue. The 2023 population estimate for Wisconsin-breeding Canada geese is nearly 170,000, nearly 60% higher than the long-term average, suggesting a continued increase in the state's goose population.

The goose season will run for 92 days and will include two splits in the Southern and Mississippi zones, allowing for an open season over the

Christmas and New Year's holidays. The Northern Zone will have no splits.

Additionally, new in 2023 is a change in the season structure to the Mississippi River Canada Goose Zone. The Mississippi River Zone will mirror the Southern Canada Goose Zone by opening on September 16th and utilizing a second split to incorporate a Holiday Hunt portion of the season. Both the Southern and Mississippi zones will have an increase to the Canada Goose bag limit in the during the Holiday Hunt portion of the season. The Canada goose bag limit will be three per day for the first portion of the season and five per day during the portion of the season that is open from Dec. 16 to Jan. 2, 2024. This increase in the bag limit will provide increased opportunity during a time of the year where we know additional harvest will focus primarily on resident Canada geese.

MOURNING DOVE FORECAST

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Estimates from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service indicate that about 11.7 million mourning doves were harvested nationally during the 2020-22 seasons. In Wisconsin, mourning dove hunting is a relatively new opportunity for hunters.

For new and seasoned dove hunters alike, state-planted dove fields can be a great option for finding birds and having a successful hunt. Across Wisconsin, field staff have been hard at work, planting 201 acres across 30 fields in food crop for mourning doves. Three fields are in wheat, one in sorghum and the remaining 26 are in sunflower. Find fields with [FFLIGHT](#).

