



Report number 62

Proposals to Amend the *Canadian Migratory Birds Regulations*

**Hunting Seasons
2026-27 and 2027-28**



Environment and
Climate Change Canada

Environnement et
Changement climatique Canada

Canada

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"Northward Bound – Greater Scaup" by Ken Ferris.

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www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/migratory-bird-conservation.html

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Proposals to Amend the Canadian Migratory Birds Regulations

Consultation Document Hunting Seasons 2026–2027 and 2027–2028

Canadian Wildlife Service Waterfowl Technical Committee CWS Migratory Birds Regulatory Report - Number 62

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Consultation

The public consultation period is from January 17 to February 15, 2026. During this period, public comments are solicited on the proposed amendments to the *Migratory Birds Regulations* for the establishment of the 2026–2027 and 2027–2028 migratory game birds hunting regulations.

Comments regarding the 2026–2027 and 2027–2028 proposed hunting regulations, the regulation-setting process or other concerns relating to national migratory birds should be sent to the Director of Wildlife Management and Regulatory Affairs Division at the National Office of the Canadian Wildlife Service of Environment and Climate Change Canada at the following postal address:

351 St. Joseph Boulevard, Gatineau QC K1A 0H3 or by email:

MbregsReports-Rapports-Omregs@ec.gc.ca

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Background

Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) is responsible for the conservation of migratory birds in Canada and the management of the sustainable hunting of migratory game birds. The hunting regulations for migratory game birds are reviewed and amended biennially by ECCC, with input from provinces and territories, as well as from various other stakeholders. The population status of migratory game birds is assessed on an annual basis to ensure that the regulations are appropriate, and amendments can be made between review periods, if necessary, for conservation reasons.

As part of the regulatory process to amend the hunting regulations, the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) produces a series of regulatory reports:

The first report, *Population Status of Migratory Game Birds in Canada*, contains population and other biological information on migratory game birds and thus provides the scientific basis for informing management decisions that ensure the long-term sustainability of their population. Every two years, ECCC reviews hunting regulations and publishes the population status report. However, CWS analyzes population trends on a yearly basis to evaluate the status of migratory game bird populations.

The second report, *Proposals to Amend the Canadian Migratory Birds Regulations*, outlines the proposed changes to the hunting regulations for the next two hunting seasons, as well as proposals to amend the overabundant species regulations and other proposed amendments to the *Migratory Birds Regulations*. Proposals for hunting regulations are developed in accordance with the Objectives and Guidelines for the Establishment of National Regulations for Migratory Game Bird Hunting (see Appendix A to this report or visit (www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/migratory-game-bird-hunting/consultation-process-regulations/establishing-national-objectives-guidelines.html)). The consultation document is published every second year, concurrently with the revision of the hunting regulations.

The third report, *Migratory Birds Regulations in Canada*, summarizes the hunting regulations that were approved for the next two hunting seasons. The report is published every second year, concurrently with the revision of hunting regulations.

The three reports are distributed to organizations and individuals with an interest in migratory bird conservation, to provide an opportunity for input on the development of hunting regulations in Canada. They are also available on the ECCC website: www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/migratory-game-bird-hunting/consultation-process-regulations/report-series.html.

Regulatory proposals described in the current document, if approved, would be in place starting in August 2026 and remain in effect through July 2028.

Schedule for the development of hunting regulations

The schedule for the development of hunting regulations is based on the requirement to have the hunting regulations come into force in June.

- September through November – The *Population Status of Migratory Game Birds in Canada* report, containing biological information on migratory game birds, is developed. In January, it is distributed and posted on the Government of Canada's website.
- October and November – CWS regional offices develop proposals for the hunting regulations in consultation with the provinces and territories and interested stakeholders.

- January – The *Proposals to Amend the Canadian Migratory Birds Regulations* report containing the regulation proposals is posted on the Government of Canada's website and distributed to allow for public consultation.
- June – Hunting regulations come into force.
- July – The *Migratory Birds Regulations in Canada* report, containing the approved hunting regulations, is distributed and posted on the Government of Canada's website.
- August – Summaries of migratory birds hunting regulations are available on the Government of Canada's website and with the physical Migratory Game Bird Hunting Permits when bought at Canada Post outlets and independent vendors.

Migratory game bird hunters are made aware of the migratory game bird hunting regulations when they the hunting regulations summaries, which summarizes the information on hunting season dates and bag and possession limits, when they purchase their hunting permits.

American Black Duck International Harvest Strategy

The American Black Duck International Harvest Strategy was adopted in 2012 by the CWS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The objectives of the Strategy, based on the principles of adaptive harvest management, are to:

- maintain an American Black Duck population that provides consumptive and non-consumptive use commensurate with habitat carrying capacity
- maintain societal values associated with the hunting tradition, and
- maintain equitable access to the American Black Duck resource

As such, the Strategy is designed to identify appropriate American Black Duck harvest levels in Canada and the United States based on the size of the breeding populations of American Black Ducks while maintaining equity in American Black Duck harvests between the two countries. However, recognizing incomplete control of harvest through regulations, it allows the realized harvest in either country to vary between 40% and 60% of the annual continental harvest. In 2023, the parity constraint was further adjusted so that when one country is already using its most liberal hunting option, but harvest remains below parity threshold, the other country is not unfairly restricted, ensuring that regulations remain balanced and consistent with the original intent of the policy.

The Strategy, used to determine the appropriate American Black Duck harvest regulations, was first implemented in 2013–2014. It consists of four pre-defined regulatory approaches in Canada and three in the United States. Country-specific harvest opportunities are determined from a set of expected harvest rate distributions defined as regulatory alternatives. Canada developed four regulatory packages (liberal, moderate, restrictive and closed) with the Canadian moderate alternative defined as the 1997 to 2010 mean harvest rate (the reference package). The Canadian packages are as follows:

- Liberal: 30% increase in harvest rate over the 1997 to 2010 mean harvest rate
- Moderate: 1997 to 2010 mean harvest rate (3.5% per year [mean harvest rate for adult males])
- Restrictive: 30% decrease in harvest rate below the 1997 to 2010 mean harvest rate, and
- Closed: no American Black Duck harvest allowed

Each regulatory package can be amended, however, a regulatory package must be implemented for at least three years before additional changes can be considered, due to variability in annual harvest rates.

The optimal Canadian policy recommendation for the 2026–2027 hunting season is the liberal regulatory package. This recommendation is based on long-term trends in American Black Duck breeding populations in eastern Canada as well as the estimated effects of hunting on the American Black Duck population. According to data collected by the CWS and USFWS, the current level of harvest has only a low effect on population levels. The liberal package is therefore the optimal alternative. The CWS and USFWS will continue to monitor harvest rates in addition to the breeding population to ensure that the Strategy continues

to meet the objectives stated above.

Management of overabundant geese

Regulatory proposals for 2026–2027 and 2027–2028

- Spring special measures season for overabundant Snow Geese in Quebec

It is proposed to restrict the opening season dates and reduce the daily bag limit for Snow Geese during the Special Measures (spring harvest) season in Quebec hunting districts A, C, D, E, and F. The open season dates for the Special Measures will be reduced to opening on April 10 and closing on May 18 of the calendar hunting season year for hunting districts C, D, E, and F, but will remain unchanged for hunting district A. In addition, the daily bag limit would decrease from 20 to 12 Snow Geese per day in all the aforementioned districts. Spring harvest would continue to be restricted to farmland areas only, where the restriction currently applies. This reduction is in response to a declining spring population over the last 10 years, as monitored by the spring staging survey, as well as declining productivity, as measured through the number of juveniles banded on the breeding grounds. This reduction will allow less disturbance to spring migrating geese, thereby improving their body condition before arriving on the breeding grounds. Birds in better body condition are more likely to breed, which should lead to higher productivity and more young being produced. These changes would be implemented for the spring of 2027 Special Measure season.

- Spring special measures season for overabundant Snow Geese & Ross's Geese in Ontario

It is proposed to restrict the opening season dates and reduce the daily bag limit for Snow Geese and Ross's Geese during the spring Special Measures Season in Wildlife Management Units 65, 66, 67, and 69B in Ontario. The open season dates for the spring Special Measures Season will be shortened to opening on April 1 and closing on April 30 of the calendar hunting season year. In addition, the daily bag limit would decrease from 20 to 12 Snow Geese and Ross's Geese, combined, per day. Spring harvest would continue to be restricted to farmland only, where the restriction currently applies. This reduction is in response to a declining spring population over the last 10 years, as monitored by the spring staging survey, as well as declining productivity, as measured through the number of juveniles banded on the breeding grounds. This reduction will allow less disturbance to spring migrating geese, thereby improving their body condition before arriving on the breeding grounds. Birds in better body condition are more likely to breed, which should lead to higher productivity and more young being produced. These changes would be implemented for the spring 2027 Special Measures Season.

Proposed changes to hunting regulations for the 2026–2027 and the 2027–2028 seasons

The Canadian Wildlife Service and the provinces and territories have jointly developed the regulatory proposals presented here. To facilitate the comparison of changes proposed in this text with current regulations, the summaries of the 2025–2026 Migratory Birds Hunting Regulations are available in Appendix B to this report and at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/migratory-game-bird-hunting/regulations-provincial-territorial-summaries.html>.

Newfoundland and Labrador

No regulatory changes are proposed for the 2026–2027 and 2027–2028 hunting seasons.

Prince Edward Island

It is proposed to set the American Woodcock hunting season on Prince Edward Island to fixed dates. Those dates are proposed to be September 26 to December 10. This proposed change will conform the entire Atlantic Region to fixed-date seasons, which will eliminate potential for confusion and errors. Further, by opening on the fixed-date of September 26, American Woodcock seasons will open the same date as Prince Edward Island's upland provincial game seasons, thus reducing potential errors and enforcement concerns.

Nova Scotia

It is proposed to delay the regular goose hunting season in Zone 2 by 7 days. The proposed dates are October 23 to January 22. This proposed change will allow for closer consistency between open goose and duck hunting seasons and reduce potential confusion and errors around what season is open in areas where both geese and ducks may occur. The change in timing of this season is not expected to significantly impact goose populations or harvest rates.

New Brunswick

No regulatory changes are proposed for the 2026–2027 and 2027–2028 hunting seasons.

Quebec

- Spring special measures season for Overabundant Snow Geese in Quebec

See the Management of Overabundant Geese Section for more details.

- Daily bag limit restriction for Canada Geese in hunting districts A, C, D and F

It is proposed to remove the daily bag limit restriction from September 26 to October 31 for Canada Geese in hunting districts A, C, D, and F. This restriction was first put in place for the 2020–2021 hunting season, based on the optimal harvest policy recommended for Canada under the former Atlantic Population Canada Goose Harvest Strategy. The Harvest Strategy has since been updated and includes a prediction of the number of breeding pairs in the population for the next year. According to this updated strategy, the recommended harvest policy for Canada for the 2026–2027 hunting season is the liberal package. As such, the daily bag limit will return to five (5) geese per day for the duration of the season starting on September 26. Season length and possession limits remain unchanged.

- Establishing a Sandhill Crane hunting season

It is proposed to establish a Sandhill Crane hunting season in Quebec in hunting districts C and D beginning in fall 2026. The season will open on the first Saturday after September 11. The season length will be 14 days. The daily bag limit will be one (1) crane, and the possession limit will also be one (1) crane. The season will be open to Canadian residents only, and hunting activities will be restricted to farmlands. Non-toxic shot must be used. A similar proposal is under consideration in the province of Ontario (see below).

As a person or organization interested in the management of migratory game bird hunting in Canada, your comments are invited on this proposal. Your comments can be forwarded to the following address: MbregsReports-Rapports-Omregs@ec.gc.ca

ECCC published a Notice of Consideration in 2024 to consult people of Canada on their perspectives

regarding a potential Sandhill Crane hunting season in Quebec and Ontario. The feedback received following the publication of the Notice of Consideration supported moving forward with the proposal for the establishment of a new season. As a result, ECCC conducted further work to evaluate long-term data sets and review recent studies to assess Sandhill Cranes population status and trends, harvest potential, and information needs for the conservation and management of the species in Quebec. A summary of the findings is provided below, and the complete assessment is available upon request at the following address: MbregsReports-Rapports-Omregs@ec.gc.ca.

1. The Eastern Population of Sandhill Crane has been monitored through an annual fall survey coordinated by the USFWS since 1979 (Pierce and Fronczak, 2023). In accordance with the Eastern Population management plan and harvest strategy, limited harvest may occur when the total population index is above 30,000 individuals, and additional harvest is permitted when the index is greater than the management threshold of 60,000 individuals (Ad Hoc Eastern Population Sandhill Crane Committee, 2010). The most recent 3-year average (2022 to 2024) from the USFWS fall survey is 103,098 cranes (Garrettson and Seamans, 2025), 72% above the upper management threshold of 60,000 individuals set by the harvest strategy. The Eastern Population of Sandhill Cranes is currently sustainably harvested in three states: Kentucky, Tennessee, and Alabama.
2. The Eastern Population harvest strategy is allocating Sandhill Crane harvest to each jurisdiction based on a proportion of their respective fall staging populations. ECCC conducted fall staging surveys in both Quebec and Ontario in 2024 and obtained a minimum count of 54,500 cranes (ECCC, unpublished data), which would result in a harvest allocation of 3,270 birds for both provinces combined.
3. ECCC conducted an analysis of expected Sandhill Crane harvest in Ontario and Quebec based on known hunter behaviour in both provinces and hunting success in the Canadian Prairies. The model estimated that harvest could range between 393 (low hunting success) and 1,343 (high hunting success) Sandhill Cranes harvested for both provinces combined, which is below the harvest allocation established by the Eastern Population harvest strategy.

Based on these results, ECCC concluded that the Eastern Population of Sandhill Crane can sustain additional harvest from Quebec and Ontario, and that establishing a hunting season is biologically justifiable and will not pose any additional risk for other migratory bird species or their habitats. Population and harvest monitoring programs are in place to ensure that harvest levels remain sustainable.

Literature Cited

Ad Hoc Eastern Population Sandhill Crane Committee. 2010. Management Plan for the Eastern Population of Sandhill Cranes. Report prepared for the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyway Councils. Minneapolis, MN. 36 pp.

Garrettson, P.R. and Seamans, M.E. 2025. Status and harvests of sandhill cranes: Mid-Continent, Rocky Mountain, Lower Colorado River Valley, and Eastern Populations. Administrative Report, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Laurel, Maryland and Lakewood, Colorado, U.S.A. 46 pp.

Pierce, R. and Fronczak, D. 2023. Fall Survey of the Eastern Population of Greater Sandhill Cranes 2022 – Final Report. <https://www.fws.gov/media/eastern-population-greater-sandhill-crane-fall-2022-survey>.

Ontario

- Spring special measures season for overabundant Snow Geese & Ross's Geese in Ontario

See the Management of Overabundant Geese Section for more details.

- Daily bag limit restriction for Canada Geese in Wildlife Unit 65

It is proposed to remove the daily bag limit restriction from late September to the end of October for Canada Geese in Wildlife Management Unit 65. This restriction was first put in place for the 2020–2021 hunting season, based on the optimal harvest policy recommended for Canada under the former Atlantic Population Canada Goose Harvest Strategy. The Harvest Strategy has since been updated and includes a prediction of the number of breeding pairs in the population for the next year. According to this updated strategy, the recommended harvest policy for Canada for the 2026–2027 hunting season is the liberal package. As such, the daily bag limit will return to five (5) Canada Geese per day for the duration of the regular season starting on the fourth Saturday in September.

- Administrative change

It is proposed to reinstate the restriction to hunting on “farmland only” during the spring Special Measures Season for Overabundant Species in Ontario. During the reformatting of Schedule 3 – Open Season, Limits and Special Measures in 2022, this restriction was erroneously removed. As such, it is being reinstated during the spring Special Measures Season for Overabundant Snow Geese and Ross’s Geese in Wildlife Management Units 65, 66, 67, and 69B in Ontario.

- Changes to regulations associated with the Canada Goose season starting the 4th Saturday in February

It is proposed to establish a 7-day Canada Goose hunting season in Wildlife Management Units 69A, 70–73, 77–81, and 86–93 beginning on the fourth Saturday in February by shortening the regular Canada goose season by 7 days. The regular goose season would now start the Saturday following the 4th Saturday in September and end on the first Wednesday after December 25 in Wildlife Management Units 69A, 70 to 73, 77 to 81, and 86 to 93. With the addition of this 7-day winter hunting season, ECCC will remove all reference to municipal Sunday hunting that was previously used to determine where the winter Canada Goose hunting could occur. Additionally, hunting for Snow Geese and Ross’s Geese will be permitted during this winter season, although special measures will not be permitted in these Wildlife Management Units during the winter season. All reference to municipal Sunday hunting will be removed. This proposal is in support of concerns expressed by hunters regarding the loss of winter Canada Goose hunting opportunity due to municipalities implementing changes to firearm discharge prohibitions affecting Sunday hunting. This proposal will also provide greater clarity regarding where and when Canada Goose hunting is allowed in southern Ontario. Additionally, harvest of Canada Geese during this season is focused on temperate-breeding Canada Geese, providing an additional tool to help mitigate human-goose conflicts associated with this population. It should be noted that, while overall the proposal will increase winter Canada Goose hunting opportunity across much of southern Ontario, municipalities that prohibit Sunday hunting in Wildlife Management Unit 82 would no longer have a winter Canada Goose hunting season starting the fourth Saturday in February under this proposal.

- Establishing a Sandhill Crane hunting season

It is proposed to establish a Sandhill Crane hunting season in Ontario in the Hudson and James Bay District as well as portions of the Northern (Wildlife Management Units 23, 24, 27 to 30, 36, 37, 39, 40, 41, and 45) and Central Districts (Wildlife Management Units 42, 43, 47, and 48). The season will open on September 1 in the Hudson and James Bay District and will open the first Saturday after September 11 in the Northern and Central Districts. The season length will be 14 days. The daily bag limit is one (1) crane, and the possession limit is also one (1) crane. Non-toxic shot must be used. This season is open to Canadian residents only and hunting activities can only occur on farmland in the Northern and Central Districts. A similar proposal is under consideration in the province of Quebec (see above).

As a person or organization interested in the management of migratory game bird hunting in Canada, your comments are invited on this proposal. Your comments can be forwarded to the following address: MbregsReports-Rapports-Omregs@ec.gc.ca

ECCC published a Notice of Consideration in 2024 to consult the people of Canada on their perspectives regarding a Sandhill Crane hunting season in Ontario. The feedback received after the publication of the Notice of Consideration supported moving forward with a season. As a result, ECCC conducted additional work to evaluate long-term population data sets and review recent studies to further assess Sandhill Cranes population status and trends, harvest potential, and to identify information needs for conservation and management of Sandhill Cranes in Ontario. A summary of the findings is provided below, and the complete assessment can be provided upon request at the following address: MbregsReports-Rapports-Omregs@ec.gc.ca.

1. The Eastern Population of Sandhill Crane has been monitored by an annual fall survey coordinated by the USFWS since 1979 (Pierce and Fronczak, 2023). In accordance with the Eastern Population management plan and harvest strategy, limited harvest can occur when the total population index is above 30,000 individuals, and additional harvest is possible when the index is greater than the management threshold of 60,000 individuals (Ad Hoc Eastern Population Sandhill Crane Committee, 2010). The most recent 3-year average (2022 to 2024) for the USFWS fall survey is 103,098 cranes (Garrettson and Seamans, 2025), 72% above the upper management threshold of 60,000 set by the harvest strategy. The Eastern Population of Sandhill Cranes is currently sustainably harvested in three states: Kentucky, Tennessee and Alabama.
2. The Eastern Population harvest strategy is allocating Sandhill Crane harvest to each jurisdiction based on a portion of their own fall staging populations. ECCC conducted fall staging surveys in both Quebec and Ontario in 2024 and obtained a minimum count of 54,500 Sandhill Cranes (ECCC, unpublished data), which would result in a harvest allocation of 3,270 birds for both provinces combined.
3. ECCC conducted an analysis of expected Sandhill Crane harvest in Ontario and Quebec based on known hunter behaviour in both provinces and Sandhill Crane hunting success in the Canadian Prairies. The model estimated that harvest could range between 393 (low hunting success) and 1,343 (high hunting success) Sandhill Cranes for both provinces combined, which is below the harvest allocation of the Eastern Population harvest strategy.

Based on these results, ECCC concluded that the Eastern Population of Sandhill Crane could sustain additional harvest from Ontario and Quebec and that establishing a hunting season is biologically sustainable and would not pose any additional risk for other migratory bird species or their habitats. Population and harvest monitoring programs are in place to ensure that harvests remain at sustainable levels.

Literature cited

Ad Hoc Eastern Population Sandhill Crane Committee. 2010. Management Plan for the Eastern Population of Sandhill Cranes. Report prepared for the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyway Councils. Minneapolis, MN. 36 pp.

Garrettson, P.R. and Seamans, M.E. 2025. Status and harvests of sandhill cranes: Mid-Continent, Rocky Mountain, Lower Colorado River Valley, and Eastern Populations. Administrative Report, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Laurel, Maryland and Lakewood, Colorado, U.S.A. 46 pp.

Pierce, R. and Fronczak, D. 2023. Fall Survey of the Eastern Population of Greater Sandhill Cranes 2022 – Final Report. <https://www.fws.gov/media/eastern-population-greater-sandhill-crane-fall-2022-survey>.

Manitoba

- Reduction in dark goose bag limit in Game Hunting Area 38

It is proposed to reduce the 12-bird bag limit for dark geese in Game Hunting Area 38 (around Winnipeg) to an 8-bird bag limit to align with the rest of Manitoba. The dark goose bag limit in this zone was increased from September 1 to 24 to determine if the liberalization could increase harvest rates of temperate breeding Canada Geese. Based on band recovery data (CWS, unpublished data), harvest rates have not increased, and Manitoba's proportion of temperate-breeding Canada Geese harvest has decreased. Due to development in this near-urban area and restrictions on firearm discharge, the amount of huntable land continues to decline. This change will improve the clarity of the regulations for hunters. The effects of the regulation change will continue to be monitored using band-recovery data.

- Removal of afternoon restriction for dark goose hunting in Southern Manitoba

It is proposed to remove the restriction on afternoon goose hunting for non-Canadian residents. Currently, the open season includes only that part of day from one half-hour before sunrise until noon, local time from the opening date up and including the second Sunday of October in southern Manitoba, and, after that period, from one half-hour before sunrise until one half-hour after sunset. Allowing all-day hunting for dark geese for the entire season would be consistent with the hunting times for all other species of migratory game birds in Manitoba. The restriction was implemented decades ago to reduce hunting pressure on migrating geese to encourage them to stage longer, but increases in goose populations over the past decades, combined with recent regulatory restrictions on non-Canadian residents have diminished the usefulness of this restriction. This change will simplify the regulations and provide more opportunities for the limited number of non-residents that can hunt migratory birds in Manitoba. The effects of the regulation change will be monitored through the National Harvest Survey and through survival and harvest rates derived from banding efforts.

- Changes in Woodcock season dates and bag and possession limits

It is proposed to run the woodcock season in Game Bird Hunting Zones 3 and 4 from September 1 to December 6 and to increase the bag limit for non-residents of Canada to eight (8) per day with a 24-bird possession limit. The current bag limit for residents is already eight (8) per day with a 24-bird possession limit. When the season was established, it was aligned with the opening of the provincial upland game bird hunting season (September 8). The province of Manitoba has advised that they plan to open the upland game bird season on September 1 in the future, so this change will ensure that the two seasons will continue to be aligned. Since the inception of the season in 2012, an average of only 53 hunters per year have successfully hunted woodcock in Manitoba. With current provincial restrictions on numbers of non-resident Canadians that hunt migratory game birds, and a low harvest, these changes are considered sustainable and will be monitored using annual harvest statistics from the National Harvest Survey.

- Simplification of migratory game bird season dates for residents and non-residents of Canada

It is proposed to simplify the opening and closing dates in many Game Bird Hunting Zones to improve clarity of the regulations and to reduce the risk of officially induced errors in federal and provincial regulations and hunting summaries. Over the years, as new seasons have been established and other regulatory amendments have occurred, the table describing open season and daily bag and possession limits has become long and overly complex. While the simplification of the opening and closing dates may result in some seasons now being slightly extended, the additional harvest as a result of the extended season is expected to be negligible. The below table describes the proposed open seasons and bag and possession

limits for residents and non-residents of Canada for both fall hunting seasons and spring conservation seasons.

Residents of Canada

Game Bird	Game Bird Hunting Zone	Season Dates	Bag Limit		
			Daily	Possession	
Duck, Coots, Snipe	GBHZ 1, 2, 3, & 4	Sept. 1- Dec. 6	Ducks	8	24
			Coots	8	24
			Snipes	10	30
Woodcock	GBHZ 3 & 4	Sept. 1- Dec. 6		8	24
Dark Geese (Canada, White-front, Brant and Cackling)	GBHZ 1, 2, 3, & 4	Sept. 1- Dec. 6		8	24
White Geese (Snow, Blue and Ross's)	GBHZ 1	Aug 15- Dec. 6		50	no limit
	GBHZ 2, 3 & 4	Sept. 1- Dec. 6			
Spring Conservation Goose (Snow, Blue and Ross's)	GBHZ 1, 2, 3, & 4	Mar. 15- June 15		50	no limit
Spring Conservation Goose (Canada Goose)	GBHZ 3 & 4	Mar. 1- Apr. 10		8	24
Sandhill Cranes	GBHZ 1, 2, 3, & 4	Sept. 1- Dec. 6		5	15

Non-residents of Canada

Game Bird	Game Bird Hunting Zone	Season Dates	Bag Limit		
			Daily	Possession	
Duck, Coots, Snipe	GBHZ 1, 2, 3, & 4	Sept. 1- Dec. 6	Ducks	8*	24**
			Coots	8	24
			Snipes	10	30
Woodcock	GBHZ 3 & 4	Sept. 1- Dec. 6		8	24
Dark Geese (Canada, White-front, Brant and Cackling)	GBHZ 1	Sept. 1- Dec. 6		8	24
Dark Geese (Canada, White-front, Brant and Cackling)	GBHZ 2, 3, & 4	Sept. 1- Dec. 6		5	15
White Geese (Snow, Blue and Ross's)	GBHZ 1	Aug 15- Dec. 6		50	no limit
	GBHZ 2, 3 & 4	Sept. 1- Dec. 6			
Spring Conservation Goose (Snow, Blue and Ross's)	GBHZ 1, 2, 3, & 4	Mar. 15- June 15		50	no limit
Spring Conservation Goose (Canada Goose)	GBHZ 3 & 4	Mar. 1- Apr. 10		8	24
Sandhill Cranes	GBHZ 1, 2, 3, & 4	Sept. 1- Dec. 6		5	15

* (In Game Bird Hunting Zone 4, not more than 4 may be Redheads or Canvasbacks in any combination)

** (In Game Bird Hunting Zone 4, not more than 12 may be Redheads or Canvasbacks in any combination)

- Considering the establishment of a Mourning Dove hunting season in Manitoba

A proposal for the establishment of a Mourning Dove hunting season in Manitoba in Game Bird Hunting Zones 3 and 4 is under consideration for a future round of amendments. An evaluation by ECCC determined that Mourning Doves could be hunted sustainably in Manitoba. The earliest possible implementation date

for the season would be fall 2028. A summary of the evaluation is provided below. A similar proposal is also being considered for Alberta and Saskatchewan.

As a person or organization interested in the management of migratory game bird hunting in Canada, your comments are invited on this proposal. Your comments can be forwarded to the following address : MbregsReports-Rapports-Omregs@ec.gc.ca

Introduction

Mourning Doves are one of the most abundant and widely distributed birds in North America. The fall population estimate for the United States in 2024 was 337 million birds (Seamans, 2025). This species breeds from southern Canada throughout the United States, all Caribbean Islands, and into Mexico. Although at the northern part of their breeding range, Mourning Doves are a common bird of rural and urban areas throughout most of southern Canada. The Mourning Dove is listed as a migratory game bird under the *Migratory Birds Convention*; it is thus subject to federal protection and may be hunted if permitted in regulations in both Canada and the United States. In the United States, Mourning Doves are hunted in 40 of 50 states, where approximately 1 million hunters harvest 14 to 20 million Mourning Doves each year, typically representing 5% to 10% of the estimated fall population (Seamans, 2025). In Canada, Mourning Dove hunting is less common, and harvest is much lower than in the United States. Currently, three provinces in Canada (British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec) have Mourning Dove hunting seasons. The Mourning Dove hunting season in British Columbia was established in 1960, and Ontario and Quebec established a Mourning Dove hunting season in 2013 and 2016, respectively.

Population status of Mourning Doves in Manitoba

Mourning Dove breeding population estimates were derived from 2007 to 2015 Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data for each state and province and various ecoregions in North America (Partners in Flight, 2020). According to BBS-based estimates, there were approximately 6.5 million breeding Mourning Doves in Canada during 2007 to 2015. The Manitoba breeding population was estimated to be 1 million birds using 2007 to 2015 BBS data, representing about 15% of the Canadian population. Although Mourning Doves breed throughout most of southern Manitoba, an estimated 77% of the Manitoba breeding population occurs within the prairie pothole region, or Bird Conservation Region (BCR) 11. Since 1970, there has been no detectable long-term trend in the abundance of Mourning Dove's in Manitoba's portion of BCR 11, which is the core of the species range in the province. However, the BBS shows a significant short-term increase (1.8% per year, 2012 to 2022) in the number of breeding Mourning Doves in the Manitoba portion of BCR 11.

Sustainable harvest management and proposed framework

Using the most recent BBS-based adult population estimates, and published adult survival (Schulz et al. 1996) and recruitment estimates (Martin and Sauer, 1993; Tomlinson and Dunks, 1993), the fall flight of Mourning Doves originating in Manitoba is estimated to be between 2.3 and 2.9 million birds. Using hunter participation and harvest estimates from Ontario between 2013 and 2023, the harvest of Mourning Doves in Manitoba is predicted to be 3,000 doves/year, or 0.3% of the breeding population and 0.16% of the estimated fall flight. This would represent an extremely small harvest rate, especially compared to those for other less abundant species of migratory game birds currently being harvested sustainably in Manitoba. Collectively, these estimates indicate that Mourning Doves in Manitoba would face low harvest pressure, representing only a small fraction of their annual mortality, and therefore would not be at risk of overharvest. The season would be open in Game Bird Hunting Zones 3 and 4 from September 1 to December 6, to align with other migratory game bird hunting seasons in Manitoba, and the daily bag limit would be 15 Mourning Doves, and the possession limit would be 45 Mourning Doves

Potential non-target species

The only wild species which could reasonably be confused with Mourning Doves by hunters is the Eurasian Collared Dove, which is an introduced species that has colonized parts of North America since its introduction to the Bahamas in the 1970s. It is much larger than Mourning Doves, and remains quite uncommon in Manitoba, although it is expanding throughout Canada. ECCC therefore considers the risk of harvesting non-target species during Mourning Dove hunting activities to be relatively low.

Benefits associated with opening a hunting season for Mourning Doves

The opening of a Mourning Dove hunting season would provide Canadian hunters with an opportunity to sustainably harvest a species that has been expanding its range and increasing in population size for many years, and which is currently harvested extensively in the United States. This hunting season could also serve as an important hunter recruitment opportunity, considering the abundance of the species, low amount of gear and investment required, and their extensive distribution throughout the southern portion of Manitoba.

Harvest and population monitoring

The BBS will be used to monitor status and trends of Manitoba's breeding Mourning Dove population. At a larger geographic scale, North American Mourning Dove harvest management will roughly conform to the frameworks adopted at the management unit level. Monitoring harvest and hunter numbers is important for making informed decisions about annual hunting regulations. The National Harvest Survey currently collects data on Mourning Dove harvest for provinces with a hunting season. The National Harvest Survey questionnaire asks hunters to indicate the number of birds killed and retrieved during the hunting season, so there is a mechanism already in place to track harvest and successful Mourning Dove hunter numbers. This information will be used to assess the harvest framework, ensuring that Mourning Dove numbers in Manitoba remain at a sustainable level.

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- Considering the establishment of a Tundra Swan hunting season in Manitoba

A proposal for the establishment of a Tundra Swan hunting season in Manitoba in Game Bird Hunting Zones 1–4 is under consideration for a future round of amendments. An evaluation by ECCC determined that Tundra Swans could be hunted sustainably in Manitoba. The earliest possible implementation date for the season would be fall 2028. A summary of the evaluation is provided below. A similar proposal is also being considered for Alberta and Saskatchewan.

As a person or organization interested in the management of migratory game bird hunting in Canada, your comments are invited on this proposal. Your comments can be forwarded to the following address: MbregsReports-Rapports-Omregs@ec.gc.ca

Introduction

Tundra Swans are widely distributed across North America and divided into two sub-populations for management purposes (Eastern and Western Populations). The Eastern Population's breeding range extends across the arctic and sub-arctic regions of Canada, including northern Manitoba, and the North slope of Alaska. The population migrates south and eastward towards the lower Great Lakes and mid-Atlantic coastal region of the United States. In Canada, migration occurs broadly through the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and parts of the Yukon, northeastern Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Manitoba is a major staging ground for the Eastern Population of Tundra Swans migrating to breeding grounds and on their return flight to wintering grounds. The Tundra Swan is listed as a migratory game bird under the *Migratory Birds Convention*; it is thus subject to federal protection and may be hunted if permitted in regulations in both Canada and the United States.

Population status of Tundra Swans in Manitoba

Not all waterfowl are adequately surveyed using breeding ground surveys because of issues related to distribution, density and timing of surveys relative to arrival of birds on breeding grounds. Tundra Swans are one such species that are better monitored on their wintering grounds given the extent of their breeding range. The primary survey used to monitor the Eastern Population of Tundra Swan is the annual mid-winter survey that takes place in southern Ontario, and portions of the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyways. Mid-winter surveys conducted in important wintering areas of swans cover a high proportion of the swans wintering grounds specifically to ensure relatively complete counts of each population segment. According to the Management Plan for the Eastern Population of Tundra Swan (hereafter the "management plan"; Ad Hoc Eastern Population Tundra Swan Committee, 2007), the population goal is to maintain a population index of at least 80,000 swans based on a 3-year of mid-winter surveys in the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyways. The current 3-year average population index (2023 to 2025) is 92,755. The history of harvest and population surveys suggest that harvest of Tundra Swans is not population-limiting and recent stabilizing of Tundra Swan populations trends may indicate the population is at carrying capacity. At both federal and provincial levels, Tundra Swans are ranked as Secure (Government of Canada, 2020).

Sustainable harvest management and proposed framework

Tundra Swan are not currently harvested in Canada. However, the management plan for the species designates an allocation of hunting permits with 11% of the hunting permits reserved for the Prairie Provinces and Ontario, and 30% for the Northern Territories. Because there is no Tundra Swan season in Canada, the Canadian portion of the hunting permits have been used in the United States for several decades. The re-allocation of the Canadian portion of harvest to Canada would require a notice to the Atlantic and the Central Flyways, where swans are currently being harvested, at a minimum a year in advance.

The management plan originally set a maximum harvest rate of 10% of the Eastern Population of Tundra Swan. In practice, the harvest rate averaged about 3.7% (2015 to 2022) and exceeded 5% only twice since 1983. Annual harvest estimates are based solely on data from the five states where the species is legally harvested. The size of the mid-winter population appears to be independent of the harvest rate. Subsistence harvest and other mortality occurs but are not well measured. A small amount of subsistence harvest is believed to occur near Churchill, Manitoba.

Prairie Canada's (and Ontario) allocation of tags is 11% of the total allocation (1,056 permits). There is interest in Tundra Swan hunting in other prairie Provinces, so an initial allocation of 400 permits for Manitoba is proposed. The daily bag limit would be one (1) Tundra Swan per permit, with a possession limit of one (1) Tundra Swan, and individuals could only obtain one (1) permit per season. The open season dates would be the same as the existing waterfowl hunting seasons and all Game Bird Hunting Zones would be open. Using an average success rate of 37% and an allocation of 400 permits, the predicted annual Tundra Swan harvest would be of 148 individuals. Although the predicted harvest would be relatively small, it is estimated to be similar to the existing harvest of some species in Manitoba and larger than two of the six states with existing Tundra Swan seasons.

Potential non-target species

Concerns over the accidental killing of Trumpeter Swans during the Tundra Swan hunting season have been expressed. In certain parts of North America, the species overlap in migration corridors, staging areas, and wintering habitat. To respond to concerns about the incidental killing on Trumpeter Swans in the United States, two states in the Central Flyway collect bill measurements of harvested swans to identify the species, based on differences in bill measurements. Bill cards are given to hunters and are returned anonymously to maintain higher compliance rate. To date, accidental Trumpeter Swan take has been consistently below 2% of the total swan harvest in South Dakota and Montana, based on bill card information (J. Hansen and R. Murano, Pers. Comm.). There are some potential biases in bill card data due to the voluntary compliance in returning cards, which may bias low the reporting rate of accidentally killed Trumpeter Swans.

There are several populations of Trumpeter Swans in North America, and those nesting in Manitoba and eastern Saskatchewan belong to the Interior Population. This population has experienced a high rate of growth despite migrating through several states with Tundra Swan hunting seasons (North Dakota and South Dakota; Beyersbergen, 2007; Groves, 2017). The average annual growth rates of Interior Trumpeter Swans exceeded 14% between 1968 and 2015 (Groves, 2017), and according to BBS data, Trumpeter Swans in Manitoba continue to grow rapidly, especially in recent years although according to Bird Atlas data, their distribution is not extensive in the province. Trumpeter Swan populations continue to grow even where migration routes overlap with Tundra Swan hunting zones. This indicates that, at current levels, Tundra Swan hunting poses minimal risk to colonizing Trumpeter Swans and is not limiting their population growth (Vaa et al., 1999).

The Management Plan for the Eastern Population of Tundra Swans recognizes the potential for incidental harvest of Trumpeter Swans, but advises that the co-occurrence of the species should not preclude a hunting season for Tundra Swans. This policy is consistent with other management plans for Trumpeter Swans and Tundra Swans.

Given the low rate of incidental harvest reported in the United States and the limited distribution of Trumpeter Swans in Manitoba, ECCC considered the risk of incidental harvest impacting the Trumpeter Swan population during an open season for Tundra Swans to be relatively low. Consideration will be given to establish a photographic reporting requirement to determine the level of incidental take of Trumpeter Swan (more details below).

Benefits associated with opening a hunting season for Tundra Swans

A hunting season for Tundra Swans would provide additional and unique hunting opportunities for existing game bird hunters, and additional marketing opportunities for outfitting businesses, without any additional harvest pressure occurring on the population (due to the reallocation of permits).

Harvest and population monitoring

To meet the requirements of the management plan, Manitoba would allocate 400 Tundra Swan permits using an electronic licensing system, likely through a random draw application process, which is used extensively for allocating other hunting licences and associated tags in the province. All Canadians would have access to the permit lottery, and the province of Manitoba would be responsible for determining the mechanism around the issuance of permits to non-Canadian hunters. As a requirement of the licence, hunters will be required to complete a mandatory harvest survey following the close of the season, which will also be implemented by the province of Manitoba. Consideration will be given to establishing a provincial reporting requirement wherein a photograph of the harvested swan must be emailed by the hunter to the province of Manitoba within 24 hours from the time of harvest, to determine the level of incidental take of Trumpeter Swans as well as the age ratio of harvested Tundra Swans. The season would be considered experimental for the following 2 regulatory cycles after the season opening and information on participation rates, success rates, and incidental harvest rates would be considered in decisions around longer-term establishment of the hunting season.

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Saskatchewan

- Considering the establishment of a Mourning Dove hunting season in Saskatchewan

A proposal for the establishment of a Mourning Dove hunting season in Saskatchewan is under consideration for a future round of amendments. An evaluation by ECCC determined that Mourning Doves could be hunted sustainably in Saskatchewan. The earliest possible implementation date for the season would be fall 2028. A summary of the evaluation is provided below. A similar proposal is also being considered for Alberta and Manitoba.

As a person or organization interested in the management of migratory game bird hunting in Canada, your comments are invited on this proposal. Your comments can be forwarded to the following address: MbregsReports-Rapports-Omregs@ec.gc.ca

Introduction

Mourning Doves are one of the most abundant and widely distributed birds in North America. The fall population estimate for the United States in 2024 was 337 million birds (Seamans, 2025). This species breeds from southern Canada throughout the United States, all Caribbean Islands and into Mexico. Although at the northern part of their breeding range, Mourning Doves are a common bird of rural and urban areas throughout most of southern Canada. The Mourning Dove is listed as a migratory game bird under the *Migratory Birds Convention*; it is thus subject to federal protection and may be hunted if permitted in regulations in both Canada and the United States. In the United States, Mourning Doves are hunted in 40 of 50 states, where approximately 1 million hunters harvest 14 to 20 million Mourning Doves each year, typically representing 5% to 10% of the estimated fall population (Seamans, 2025). In Canada, Mourning Dove hunting is less common, and harvest is much lower than in the United States. Currently, three provinces in Canada (British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec) have Mourning Dove hunting seasons. The Mourning Dove hunting season in British Columbia was established in 1960, and Ontario and Quebec established a Mourning Dove hunting season in 2013 and 2016, respectively.

Population status of Mourning Doves in Saskatchewan

Mourning Dove breeding population estimates were derived from 2007 to 2015 Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data for each state and province and various ecoregions in North America (Partners in Flight, 2020). According to BBS-based estimates, there were approximately 6.5 million breeding Mourning Doves in Canada from 2007 to 2015. The Saskatchewan breeding population was estimated to be 2.1 million birds using 2007 to 2015 BBS data, representing 32% of the Canadian population. An estimated 85% of the Saskatchewan breeding population occurs within the prairie pothole region, or Bird Conservation Region (BCR) 11. The BBS shows both a significant short-term increase (3.8% per year, 2012 to 2022) and long-term increase (2.5% per year, 1970 to 2022) in the number of breeding Mourning Doves in Saskatchewan, although the number in BCR 6 has declined slightly.

Sustainable harvest management and proposed framework

Using the most recent BBS-based adult population estimates, and published adult survival (Schulz et al., 1996) and recruitment estimates (Martin and Sauer, 1993; Tomlinson and Dunks, 1993), the fall flight of Mourning Doves originating in Saskatchewan is estimated to be between 4.63 million and 6.05 million birds. Using hunter participation and harvest estimates between 2013 and 2023, in Ontario, the harvest of Mourning Doves in Saskatchewan is predicted to be approximately 6,250 doves/year, representing approximately 0.3% of the breeding population 0.1% of the estimated fall flight. This represents an extremely small harvest rate, especially compared to those for other less abundant species of migratory game birds currently being harvested sustainably in Saskatchewan. Collectively, these estimates indicate that Mourning Doves in Saskatchewan would face low harvest pressure, representing only a small fraction of their annual mortality, and therefore would not be at risk of overharvest. The season offered in Saskatchewan would include Hunting Bird Districts No. 1 and 2, and would be open from September 1 to December 16 to align with other migratory game bird seasons in Saskatchewan. The daily bag limit would be 15 Mourning Doves and possession limit would be 45 Mourning Doves.

Potential non-target species

The only wild species which could reasonably be confused with Mourning Doves by hunters is the Eurasian Collared Dove, which is an introduced species that has colonized parts of North America since its introduction to the Bahamas in the 1970s. It is much larger than Mourning Doves, and remain quite uncommon in Saskatchewan with a population estimate of 7,600 (0.4 % of the Mourning Dove Population; Partners in Flight, 2020), although the population is increasing throughout Canada. Therefore, ECCC considers the risk of harvesting non-target species during Mourning Dove hunting activities to be relatively low.

Benefits assessment

The opening of a Mourning Dove hunting season would provide Canadian hunters with an opportunity to sustainably harvest a species that has been expanding its range and increasing in population size for many years, and which is currently harvested extensively in the United States. This hunting season could also serve as an important hunter recruitment opportunity, considering the abundance of the species, low amount of gear and investment required, and their extensive distribution throughout the southern portion of Saskatchewan.

Harvest and population monitoring

The BBS will be used to monitor status and trends of Saskatchewan's breeding Mourning Dove population. At a larger geographic scale, North American Mourning Dove harvest management will roughly conform to the frameworks adopted at the management unit level. Monitoring harvest and hunter numbers are important for making informed decisions about annual hunting regulations, and the National Harvest Survey currently collects data on Mourning Dove harvest for provinces with a hunting season. The National Harvest Survey questionnaire asks hunters to indicate the number of birds killed and retrieved during the hunting season, providing a mechanism to track harvest and successful Mourning Dove hunter numbers. This information will be used to assess the harvest framework, ensuring that Mourning Dove numbers in Saskatchewan remain at a sustainable level.

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Smith, A.C., Hudson, M-A.R. Aponte, V.I., English, W.B., and Francis, C.M. 2024. North American Breeding Bird Survey - Canadian Trends Website, Data-version 2023. Environment and Climate Change Canada, Gatineau, Quebec, K1A 0H3

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- Considering the establishment of a Tundra Swan hunting season in Saskatchewan

A proposal for the establishment of a Tundra Swan hunting season in Saskatchewan is under consideration for a future round of amendments. An evaluation by ECCC determined that Tundra Swans could be hunted sustainably in Saskatchewan. The earliest possible implementation date for the season would be fall 2028. A summary of the evaluation is provided below. A similar proposal is also being considered for Alberta and Manitoba.

As a person or organization interested in the management of migratory game bird hunting in Canada, your comments are invited on this proposal. Your comments can be forwarded to the following address: MbregsReports-Rapports-Omregs@ec.gc.ca

Introduction

Tundra Swans are widely distributed across North America and divided into two sub-populations, Eastern and Western Populations. The Eastern Population's breeding range extends across the arctic and sub-arctic regions of Canada and the North slope of Alaska. The population migrates south and eastward towards the lower Great Lakes and mid-Atlantic coastal region of the United States. In Canada, migration occurs broadly through the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and parts of the Yukon, northeastern Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Saskatchewan is a major staging ground for the Eastern Population of Tundra Swans migrating to breeding grounds and on their return flight to wintering grounds. Although it is possible that some of the Western Population may pass through Saskatchewan, the vast majority of birds migrating through Saskatchewan originate from the Eastern Population. The Tundra Swan is listed as a migratory game bird under the *Migratory Birds Convention*; it is thus subject to federal protection and may be hunted if permitted in regulations in both Canada and the United States.

Population status of Tundra Swans in Saskatchewan

Not all waterfowl are adequately surveyed using breeding ground surveys because of issues related to distribution, density and timing of surveys relative to arrival of birds on breeding grounds. Tundra Swans are one such species that are better monitored on their wintering grounds given the extent of their breeding range. The primary survey used to monitor the Eastern Population of Tundra Swans is the annual mid-winter survey that takes place in southern Ontario, and portions of the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyways. Mid-winter surveys conducted in important wintering areas of swans cover a high proportion of the swan wintering grounds to ensure relatively complete counts of each population segment. According to the

Management Plan for the Eastern Population of Tundra Swan (hereafter the “management plan”; Ad Hoc Eastern Population Tundra Swan Committee, 2007), the population goal is to maintain a population index of at least 80,000 swans based on a 3-year average from mid-winter surveys in the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyways. The current 3-year average population index (2023 to 2025) is 92,755. The history of harvest and population surveys suggest that harvest of Tundra Swans is not population-limiting and recent stabilization of Tundra Swan population trends may indicate the population is at carrying capacity. At both federal and provincial levels, Tundra Swans are ranked as Secure (Government of Canada, 2020).

Sustainable harvest management and proposed framework

Tundra Swans are not currently harvested in Canada. However, the management plan for the species designates an allocation of hunting permits with 11% reserved for the Prairie Provinces and Ontario, and 30% for the Northern Territories. Because there is no Tundra Swan season in Canada, the Canadian portion of the hunting permits have been used in the United States for several decades. The re-allocation of the Canadian portion of harvest to Canada would require a notice to the Atlantic and the Central Flyways, where swans are currently being harvested, a minimum of a year in advance.

The management plan originally set a maximum harvest rate of 10% of the Eastern Population of Tundra Swan. In practice, the harvest rate averaged about 3.7% (2015 to 2022) and exceeded 5% only twice since 1983. Annual harvest estimates are based solely on data from the five U.S. states where the species is legally harvested. The size of the mid-winter population appears to be independent of the harvest rate. Subsistence harvest and other mortality occurs but are not well measured. Prairie Canada’s (and Ontario) allocation of tags is 11% of the total allocation (1,056 permits). There is interest in Tundra Swan hunting in other prairie provinces, so an initial allocation of 600 permits for Saskatchewan is proposed. The daily bag limit would be one (1) Tundra Swan per permit, with a possession limit of one (1) Tundra Swan, and individuals could only obtain one (1) permit per season. The open season dates would be the same as the existing migratory game bird hunting seasons, from September 1st to December 16th for the entire province. Using an average success rate of 37% and an allocation of 600 permits, the predicted annual Tundra Swan harvest would be of 222 individuals. The predicted harvest would be relatively small compared to harvest of other migratory game birds in Saskatchewan.

Potential non-target species

Concerns over the accidental killing of Trumpeter Swans during the Tundra Swan season have been expressed. In certain parts of North America, the species overlap in migration corridors, staging areas, and wintering habitat. To respond to concerns about the incidental killing of Trumpeter Swans, two states in the Central Flyway collect bill measurements of harvested swans to identify the species, based on differences in bill measurements. Bill cards are given to hunters and are returned anonymously to maintain higher compliance rate. To date, accidental Trumpeter Swan take has been consistently below 2% of the total swan harvest in South Dakota and Montana, based on bill card information (J. Hansen and R. Murano, Pers. Comm.). There are some potential biases in bill card data due to the voluntary compliance in returning cards, which may bias low the reporting rate of accidentally killed Trumpeter Swans.

There are several populations of Trumpeter Swans in North America, and those nesting in Manitoba and Saskatchewan belong to the Interior Population. This population has experienced a high rate of growth despite migrating through several states with Tundra Swan hunting seasons (North Dakota and South Dakota; Beyersbergen, 2007; Groves, 2017). The average annual growth rates of Interior Trumpeter Swans exceeded 14% between 1968 and 2015 (Groves, 2017). Although there are accounts of breeding Trumpeter Swans in Saskatchewan, the population does not appear to be experiencing the same high rate of growth as it is in other jurisdictions and detections are low, such that BBS does not currently report on any trend information for Trumpeter Swans in Saskatchewan. Trumpeter Swan populations continue to grow even where migration routes overlap with Tundra Swan hunting zones. This indicates that, at current levels, Tundra Swan hunting poses minimal risk to colonizing Trumpeter Swans and is not limiting their population growth (Vaa et al., 1999).

The Management Plan for the Eastern Population of Tundra Swan recognizes the potential for incidental harvest of Trumpeter Swans but advises the co-occurrence of the species should not preclude a hunting season for Tundra Swans. This policy is consistent with other management plans for Trumpeter Swans and

Tundra Swans. Given the relatively low number of Trumpeter Swans in Saskatchewan, ECCC considered the risk of incidental harvest impacting the Trumpeter Swan population during an open season for Tundra Swans to be relatively low.

Benefits associated with opening a hunting season for Tundra Swans

A hunting season for Tundra Swans would provide an additional and unique hunting opportunity for existing game bird hunters, and potentially an additional marketing opportunity for outfitting businesses, without any additional harvest pressure occurring on the population (due to the reallocation of permits from United States jurisdiction as per the management plan).

Harvest and population monitoring

To meet the requirements of the management plan, Saskatchewan would allocate 600 Tundra Swan permits using an electronic licensing system, likely through a random draw application process, which is used extensively for allocating other hunting licences and associated tags in the province. All Canadians would have access to the permit lottery, and the province of Saskatchewan would be responsible for determining the mechanism around the issuance of permits to non-Canadian hunters if permits were made available to outfitting businesses. As a requirement of the licence, hunters would be required to complete a mandatory harvest survey following the close of the season, which would also be implemented by the province of Saskatchewan. The season would be considered experimental for the following 2 regulatory cycles after the season opening and information on participation rates, success rates, and incidental harvest rates would be evaluated to inform decisions around longer-term establishment of the hunting season.

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Alberta

- Administrative change to include Provincial Wildlife Management Unit 247 in Zone 1

It is proposed to add Provincial Wildlife Management Unit (PWMU) 247 to Zone 1 and include an open season for Sandhill Crane. In 2022, PWMU 248 that surrounds the city of Edmonton was separated into two PWMUs to separate the east side from the west side to facilitate firearm discharge by-laws and big game management. The PWMU 247 was created because of this split. As it was previously comprised within PWMU 248, the same hunting regulations that apply to PWMU 248 now apply to PWMU 247, including the open season for Sandhill Cranes.

- Expanding Alberta's Sandhill Crane hunting season

It is proposed that Alberta's hunting season for Sandhill Crane be expanded geographically by adding 14 provincial wildlife management units (PWMU's) including: 336, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 514, 515, and 841 which represents a 25% increase in the total number of PWMUs. The hunting season in the new PWMUs will be open from September 1 to December 16 to align with the existing Sandhill Crane hunting season in Alberta Zone No. 1. Additional PWMUs were chosen to avoid commonly used Whooping Crane migratory routes while targeting areas of recent Sandhill Crane use and crop damage concerns. Since 2020, Whooping Crane descriptions have been published online and in the Alberta Guide to Hunting Regulations to reduce the risk of incidental harvest.

The Mid-Continent Population of Sandhill Cranes is monitored through surveys in late March in Central Flyway states and includes an annual photo-corrected aerial transect survey both along and outside Nebraska's Central Platte River Valley. Ocular transect surveys (using a 3-year average) are used to track population trends. The population indices from this survey indicate an increasing population trend since 1982. The latest 3-year average (2023 to 2025) of 1,057,546 birds is above the objective of 350,000 to 475,000 birds established in the Management Guidelines for the Mid-Continent Population for Sandhill Cranes (Garretson and Seamans, 2025; Central Flyway Council 2018). The current Mid-Continent Population (3-yr average) has more than doubled since 2000.

Sandhill Cranes are harvested throughout their range, including most jurisdictions in the Central Flyway. Harvest of migratory game birds is allocated based on a 50/50 ratio between Canada and the United States. Canada's most recent harvest estimate (2017) of Mid-Continent Sandhill Cranes estimates that Canada is responsible for 31% of the total continental harvest. Alberta's addition of a Sandhill Crane hunting season in 2020 has increased harvest by less than 5%, well below suggested management targets. Given Alberta's low harvest of Sandhill Crane and the population level being well over twice that of the population objective, ECCC considers the risk of opening a Sandhill Crane season in additional PWMUs to be low. Hunter numbers and harvest of Sandhill Crane will continue to be monitored by the National Harvest Survey, which estimates Canadian harvest of migratory game birds annually and Alberta's online game harvest survey. Alberta's online survey is mandatory for all hunters and provides harvest estimates by PWMU.

The proposed addition to the Sandhill Crane season provides additional hunting opportunities in Alberta and a mechanism to deal with crop depredation issues caused by cranes in these new areas. This continues to be a subject of repeated requests by both resident and non-resident hunters as well as Alberta's agricultural producers.

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Mountain, Lower Colorado River Valley, and Eastern Populations. Administrative Report, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Laurel, Maryland and Lakewood, Colorado, U.S.A. 46 pp.

- Considering the establishment of a Mourning Dove hunting season in Alberta

A proposal for the establishment of a Mourning Dove hunting season in Alberta is under consideration for a future round of amendments. An evaluation by ECCC determined that Mourning Doves could be hunted sustainably in Alberta. The earliest possible implementation date for the season would be fall 2028. A summary of the evaluation is provided below. A similar proposal is also being considered for Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

As a person or organization interested in the management of migratory game bird hunting in Canada, your comments are invited on this proposal. Your comments can be forwarded to the following address: MbregsReports-Rapports-Omregs@ec.gc.ca

Introduction

Mourning Doves are one of the most abundant and widely distributed birds in North America. The fall population estimate for the United States in 2024 was 337 million birds (Seamans, 2025). This species breeds from southern Canada throughout the United States, all Caribbean Islands and into Mexico. Although at the northern part of their breeding range, Mourning Doves are a common bird of rural and urban areas throughout most of southern Canada. The Mourning Dove is listed as a migratory game bird under the *Migratory Birds Convention*; it is thus subject to federal protection and may be hunted if permitted in regulations in both Canada and the United States. In the United States, Mourning Doves are hunted in 40 of 50 states, where approximately 1 million hunters harvest 14 to 20 million Mourning Doves each year, typically representing 5% to 10% of the estimated fall population (Seamans, 2025). In Canada, Mourning Dove hunting is less common, and harvest is much lower than in the United States. Currently, three provinces in Canada (British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec) have Mourning Dove hunting seasons. The Mourning Dove hunting season in British Columbia was established in 1960, and Ontario and Quebec established a Mourning Dove hunting season in 2013 and 2016.

Population status of Mourning Doves in Alberta

Mourning Dove breeding population estimates were derived from 2007 to 2015 Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data for each state and province and various ecoregions in North America (Partners in Flight, 2020). According to BBS-based estimates, there were approximately 6.5 million breeding Mourning Doves in Canada during 2007 to 2015. The Alberta breeding population was estimated to be 430,000 birds using 2007 to 2015 BBS data, representing about 7% of the Canadian population. Although Mourning Doves breed throughout southern Alberta, an estimated 88% of the Alberta breeding population occurs within the prairie pothole region, or Bird Conservation Region (BCR) 11. The BBS shows a significant increase in the number of breeding Mourning Doves in the Alberta portion of BCR 11, with the population index more than tripling since 1970.

Sustainable harvest management and proposed framework

Using the most recent BBS-based adult population estimates, published adult survival (Schulz et al., 1996) and recruitment estimates (Martin and Sauer, 1993; Tomlinson and Dunks, 1993), the population of Mourning Doves originating in Alberta in the fall is estimated to be between 0.95 and 1.4 million birds. Using hunter participation and harvest estimates from Ontario between 2013 and 2023, the harvest of doves in Alberta is predicted to be 10,000 doves per year, or 2% of the breeding population and 0.71% of the estimated population available for harvest in the fall. This represents an extremely small harvest rate, especially compared to those for other less abundant species of migratory game birds currently being harvested sustainably in Alberta. Collectively, these estimates indicate that Mourning Doves in Alberta would face low harvest pressure, representing only a small fraction of their annual mortality, and therefore would not be at risk of overharvest. The season would be offered in Game Bird Hunting Zone 1 from September 1 to December 16, and in Game Bird Hunting Zone 2 from September 8 to December 23, to align with other migratory game bird hunting seasons in Alberta. The daily bag limit would be 15 Mourning Doves and the possession limit would be 45 Mourning Doves.

Potential non-target species

The only wild species which could reasonably be confused with Mourning Doves by hunters is the Eurasian Collared Dove, which is an introduced species that has colonized parts of North America since its introduction to the Bahamas in the 1970s. It is much larger than Mourning Doves, and remains quite uncommon in Alberta, although it is expanding throughout Canada. ECCC therefore considers the risk of harvesting non-target species during Mourning Dove hunting activities to be relatively low.

Benefits associated with opening a hunting season for Mourning Doves

The opening of a Mourning Dove hunting season would provide Canadian hunters with an opportunity to sustainably harvest a species that has been expanding its range and increasing in population size for many years, and which is currently harvested extensively in the United States. This hunting season could also serve as an important hunter recruitment opportunity, considering the abundance of the species, low amount of gear and investment required, and their extensive distribution throughout the southern portion of Alberta.

Harvest and population monitoring

The BBS will be used to monitor status and trends of Alberta's breeding Mourning Dove population. At a larger geographic scale, North American Mourning Dove harvest management will roughly conform to the frameworks adopted at the management unit level. Monitoring harvest and hunter numbers are important for making informed decisions about annual hunting regulations, and the National Harvest Survey currently collects data on Mourning Dove harvest for provinces with a hunting season. The National Harvest Survey questionnaire asks hunters to indicate the number of birds killed and retrieved during the hunting season, so there is a mechanism already in place to track harvest and successful Mourning Dove hunter numbers. This information will be used to assess the harvest framework, ensuring that Mourning Dove numbers in Alberta remain at a sustainable level.

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- Considering the establishment of a Tundra Swan hunting season in Alberta

A proposal for the establishment of a Tundra Swan hunting season in Alberta is under consideration for a future round of amendments. An evaluation by ECCC determined that Tundra Swans could be hunted sustainably in Alberta. A summary of the evaluation is provided below. A similar proposal is also being considered for Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

As a person or organization interested in the management of migratory game bird hunting in Canada, your comments are invited on this proposal. Your comments can be forwarded to the following address: MbregsReports-Rapports-Omregs@ec.gc.ca

Introduction

Tundra Swans are widely distributed across North America and divided into two sub-populations for management purposes (Eastern and Western Populations). The Western Population breeding range is limited to western Alaska and is separated from the western extent of the Eastern Population's breeding range by the Brooks mountain range. The Western Population of Tundra Swans migrate south using two primary routes. Most of the Western Population of Tundra Swans migrate along an interior route with an important staging stopover in southern Alberta. The remainder of the Western Population of Tundra Swans migrate south using a more western route along the Pacific coast. The routes converge on wintering areas in the Willamette Valley of Oregon and the Sacramento Valley of California. Alberta is a major staging ground for the Western Population of Tundra Swans migrating to breeding grounds and on their return flight to wintering grounds. The Tundra Swan is listed as a migratory game bird under the *Migratory Birds Convention*; it is thus subject to federal protection and may be hunted if permitted in regulations in both Canada and the United States.

Population status of Tundra Swans in Alberta

The primary surveys used to monitor the Western Population of Tundra Swans is the Waterfowl Breeding Population and Habitat Survey and the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Coastal Zone Survey. The population is also monitored by the Pacific Flyway Winter Tundra Swan Survey. According to the Management Plan for the Western Population of Tundra Swans (hereafter "the management plan"; Pacific Flyway, 2017), the population objective is to maintain a 3-year average population index of at least 60,000 Tundra Swans and measures will not be taken to reduce harvest in states with a Tundra Swan season until the population index drops below 60,000. The current 3-year average population index (2022 to 2024) is 82,500. The history of harvest and population surveys suggest that harvest of Tundra Swans is not population-limiting and recent stabilizing of Tundra Swan population trends may indicate that the population is at carrying capacity. At both federal and provincial levels, Tundra Swans are ranked as Secure (Government of Canada, 2020).

Sustainable harvest management and proposed framework

Due to the limited breeding area and relatively narrow migration route and wintering area, the Western Population of Tundra Swans has been managed through the management plan established by the Pacific Flyway Council that includes federal representatives from both the United States and Canada (Western Population Tundra Swan subcommittee; Pacific Flyway Study Committee, 2017). Regulated harvest of the Western Population of Tundra Swans began in Utah in 1962, Nevada in 1969, the Pacific Flyway portion of Montana in 1970, Alaska in 1988, and Idaho in 2021.

Since harvest of the Western Population of Tundra Swans was first allowed, the three-year population average has remained above the population goal. This is evidence that the Tundra Swan harvest is fully sustainable under the current management plan. Because of the relatively limited population of Tundra Swans, traditional daily bag limit systems for all licensed waterfowl hunters could result in greater harvest than is sustainable. Therefore, like many management systems for large ungulates, harvest of swans is limited and regulated through a limited draw system to issue a set number of permits (i.e., tags) in many jurisdictions with existing swan hunting seasons.

The harvest strategy for the Western Population of Tundra Swans outlined in the management plan allows for a daily bag limit of one (1) swan and up to three (3) swans per season. A non-transferable permit may be issued by the province or state. In the United States, a non-reusable tag system is used and attached to the swan upon harvest. Current permit allocations are 500 permits for Montana, 2,750 permits for Utah and 750 permits for Nevada. Idaho added a swan hunt in 2021 with 50 permits available through a limited draw. In Alaska, the hunting of Tundra Swans requires a registration permit which allows up to 3 swans per season. Alaskan subsistence harvest of Western Population Tundra Swans is difficult to estimate but is

reported in the Western Population management plan from 2004 to 2014 and ranges from 3,368 to 7,542. Alberta proposes an initial allocation of 500 permits. The daily bag limit would be of one (1) Tundra Swan per permit with a possession limit of one (1) Tundra Swan, and individuals could only obtain one (1) permit per season. The open season dates would be from September 1st to December 16th in Zone No.1 and from September 8 to December 23 in Zone No. 2, the same as the existing migratory game bird hunting seasons in Alberta. Using an average success rate of 37% and an allocation of 500 permits, the predicted annual Tundra Swan harvest would be 185 individuals. Although the projected harvest would be relatively small, it is estimated to be similar to the existing harvest of some species in Alberta and larger than three of the five states with existing Tundra Swan seasons.

Potential non-target species

Concerns over the accidental killing of Trumpeter Swans during the Tundra Swan hunting season have been expressed. In certain parts of North America, the species overlap in migration corridors, staging areas, and wintering habitat. Because of the similarities in appearance, Trumpeter Swans can be mistaken for Tundra Swans by hunters and a small number of Trumpeter Swans are accidentally harvested by Tundra Swan hunters in the United States each year (Vaa et al., 1999). Five states currently harvest Tundra Swans in the Pacific Flyway. To respond to concerns about the incidental killing of Trumpeter Swans, two states collect bill measurements of harvested swans to identify the species, based on differences in bill measurements. Bill cards are given to hunters and are returned anonymously to maintain higher compliance rate. To date, accidental Trumpeter Swan take has been consistently below 2% of the total swan harvest in South Dakota and Montana, based on bill card information (J. Hansen and R. Murano, Pers. Comm.). There are some potential biases in bill card data due to the voluntary compliance in returning cards, which may bias low the reporting rate of accidentally killed Trumpeter Swans. In Utah, Nevada and Idaho, all harvested swans, or their species-determinant parts, must be examined by either state or federal personnel for the purpose of species classification. Utah currently has a quota of 20 and Nevada a quota of 10 Trumpeter Swans accidentally harvested. Once the quota is reached the swan hunting season is immediately closed. Alaska does not discriminate harvested swans since trumpeter swans do not frequent areas with a swan hunting season.

There are several populations of Trumpeter Swans in North America, and those nesting in Alberta belong to the Rocky Mountain Population. This population has experienced a high rate of growth despite migrating through several states with Tundra Swan hunting seasons where minimal rate of accidental killing occur (Beyersbergen, 2007; Groves, 2017). Trumpeter Swan populations continue to grow even where migration routes overlap with swan hunting zones. This indicates that, at current levels, Tundra Swan hunting poses minimal risk to colonizing Trumpeter Swans and is not limiting their population growth (Vaa et al., 1999).

The management plan recognizes the potential for incidental harvest of Trumpeter Swans, but advises that hunting seasons should be directed toward Tundra Swans and designed to minimize take of Trumpeter Swans. The Pacific Flyway is most concerned with the small United States' breeding segment of the Rocky Mountain Population of Trumpeter Swans and whether the Tundra Swan hunt is negatively impacting that population segment. The Canadian breeding segment of that population has consistently had an annual growth rate of more than 11% from 1968 to 2015 (Groves, 2017). A Tundra Swan harvest in Alberta would have no effect on the United States's breeding segment of the Rocky Mountain Population of Trumpeter Swans and minimal effect on the Canadian segment. Given the low rate of incidental harvest reported in the United States, ECCC considered the risk of incidental harvest impacting the Trumpeter Swan population during an open season for Tundra Swans to be relatively low. Consideration will be given to establish a reporting requirement to determine the level of incidental take of Trumpeter Swan (more details below).

Benefits associated with opening a hunting season for Tundra Swans

A hunting season for Tundra Swans would provide additional and unique hunting opportunities for existing game bird hunters, and additional marketing opportunities for outfitting businesses, with little additional harvest pressure occurring on the population.

Harvest and population monitoring

To meet the requirements of the management plan, Alberta proposes an initial allocation of 500 Tundra Swan permits using an electronic licensing system, likely through a random draw application process, which

is used extensively for allocating other hunting licences and associated tags in the province. All Canadians would have access to the permit lottery, and the province of Alberta would be responsible for determining the mechanism around the issuance of permits to non-Canadian hunters. As a requirement of the licence, hunters will be required to complete a mandatory harvest survey following the close of the season, which will also be implemented by the province of Alberta. Consideration will be given to establishing a provincial reporting requirement wherein a photograph of the harvested swan must be emailed by the hunter to the province of Alberta within 24 hours from the time of harvest to determine the level of incidental take of Trumpeter Swans as well as the age ratio of harvested Tundra Swans. The season would be considered experimental for the following 2 regulatory cycles after the season opening and information on participation rates, success rates, and incidental harvest rates would be considered in decisions around longer-term establishment of the hunting season.

Moreover, to meet requirements of the management plan, informational materials should be made available to hunters on swan management, occurrence of Trumpeter Swans in hunt areas, swan species identification, and swan harvest reporting requirements. The following are requirements for a state to hold a swan hunt in the Pacific Flyway (Pacific Flyway, 2017). Alberta could also adhere to this process.

1. Implement a harvest monitoring program to measure species composition of harvest. In some instances, this involves a registration system with biological staff
2. All harvest must be reported to agency personnel within five days of the date of kill by methodologies developed by the administering agency
3. Use appropriate measures to maximize hunter compliance with minimum 80% compliance rate
4. Following each hunting season, provide the following information to the Western Tundra Swan Subcommittee for compilation into an annual report:
 - (a) number of applications received for permits,
 - (b) number of permits issued
 - (c) percent of permittees that actively hunted
 - (d) estimated number of hunter-days afield
 - (e) estimated retrieved harvest
 - (f) estimated unretrieved kill
 - (g) percent gray (immature) swans in the harvest
5. Harvest trends will be included in the annual Western Tundra Swan Subcommittee reports and will identify season dates and lengths, numbers of permits, hunter activity, and swan harvest for each state conducting swan hunts.

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British Columbia

No regulatory changes are proposed for the 2026–2027 and 2027–2028 hunting seasons.

Yukon Territory

No regulatory changes are proposed for the 2026–2027 and 2027–2028 hunting seasons.

Northwest Territories

- Considering the establishment of a Sandhill Crane hunting season in the Northwest Territories

A proposal for the establishment of a Sandhill Crane hunting season in the Northwest Territories is under consideration for a future round of amendments. An evaluation by ECCC determined that Sandhill Crane could be hunted sustainably in the Northwest Territories. Sandhill Cranes are currently hunted in Canada's three prairie provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba) and in the Yukon. The population is also hunted in multiple states (Colorado, Kansas, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Wyoming, Alaska, Arizona, and Minnesota). The earliest possible implementation date for the season would be fall 2028.

A Sandhill Crane hunting season would provide a new harvesting opportunity for hunters in the Northwest Territories. The introduction of a Sandhill Crane hunting season has been the subject of requests from the public as well as from Indigenous partners interested in outfitting.

As a person or organization interested in the management of migratory game bird hunting in Canada, your comments are invited on this proposal. Your comments can be forwarded to the following address: MbregsReports-Rapports-Omregs@ec.gc.ca

Population status of Sandhill Cranes in the Northwest Territories

There are two main populations of Sandhill Crane in Canada: The Mid-Continent Population and the Eastern Population. The Mid-Continent Population numbers close to a million individuals, and its range covers Alaska, northern Canada, and the central states/provinces of North America. The core breeding area for the Eastern Population is the Great Lakes region, and its range does not extend into the Northwest Territories.

Mid-Continent Population of Sandhill Cranes breed throughout the mainland of the Northwest Territories as well as on the arctic islands including Banks Island and Victoria Island. Approximately 99% of Sandhill Cranes breeding in the Northwest Territories winter in Texas. The Mid-Continent Population of Sandhill Crane is monitored at major spring migration staging areas in the United States. The 3-year average spring index of this population was 1,057,546 birds for 2023 to 2025, well above the management objective of 350,000 to 475,000 cranes (Garretson and Seamans, 2025; Central Flyway Council, 2018; Thorpe, 2025).

Data from the Canadian breeding grounds is very limited due to the large area over which the species breeds and the dispersed nature of breeding pairs. However, aerial survey data from a 12,742 km² area of the mainland Inuvialuit Settlement Region indicated an annual average of 3,500 adults between 1989–1993 and those numbers remained relatively stable over a 20-year period (CWS, unpublished data). No new data has been collected since 2008.

Sustainable harvest management and proposed framework

ECCC believes that it is possible to implement a Sandhill Crane hunting season in the Northwest Territories that would be consistent with the levels prescribed by the harvest strategy outlined in the Guidelines for cooperative management of Mid-Continent Population Sandhill Cranes (Central, Mississippi and Pacific Flyway Councils, 1981, 1993, 2006, and 2018).

The guidelines state that current harvest opportunities be maintained while the Mid-Continent Population is at objective levels (maintaining a 3-year average population index within a range of 350,000 to 475,000 cranes in the Mid-Continent Population). Following these guidelines and considering that this population is estimated to exceed a million individuals, we predict a small and sustainable harvest from the Northwest Territories.

ECCC is proposing a daily bag limit of five (5) Sandhill Cranes, a possession limit of 15 and season dates that span the period of September 1 to December 10. These regulations would be similar to those already in effect in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, and season dates that are consistent with the current waterfowl hunting season in the Northwest Territories.

Potential non-target species

Few species can be confused with the Sandhill Crane, given its size, morphology and particular ecology. The three main species that could be confused with the Sandhill Crane are the Whooping Crane, the Great Blue Heron, and the Canada Goose.

The Whooping Crane is designated as endangered under the *Species at Risk Act* and the larger Wood Buffalo – Aransas population breeds exclusively in northern Alberta and southern Northwest Territories, including in Wood Buffalo National Park. Its larger size, white plumage and black wing tips make it easily distinguishable from other species, including Sandhill Cranes. Mitigation strategies to protect Whooping Cranes already exist in Alberta and will be considered and potentially adapted to address concerns in the Northwest Territories. Great Blue Herons are rare visitors to the Northwest Territories so the likelihood of encounter with this species is deemed very low. Canada Geese can be legally hunted in the Northwest Territories. ECCC therefore considers the risk of harvesting non-target species during Sandhill Crane hunting activities to be relatively low. ECCC will develop identification tools to be provided to hunters to help them differentiate Sandhill Cranes from non-target species.

Benefits associated with opening a hunting season for Sandhill Cranes

The opening of a Sandhill Crane hunting season would provide hunters in the Northwest Territories with an opportunity to sustainably harvest a species that has a large and increasing population size. This hunting season could also bring additional marketing opportunities for outfitting businesses. ECCC does not expect a hunting season, as proposed, to decrease the current population size or influence the distribution of cranes in the territory, and as such no negative impacts on Indigenous subsistence harvest are predicted.

Harvest and population monitoring

Sandhill Crane harvest monitoring will be carried out via the National Harvest Survey, as is done in other

provinces and territories.

Population monitoring will be conducted on southern spring staging areas when the cranes congregate before undertaking their northward migration (Thorpe, 2025).

Monitoring of hunting season implementation

If implemented, the proposed hunting season will be monitored closely for the two regulatory cycles following implementation. ECCC will collect data on harvest (number of active hunters, hunting success, total harvest, etc.) as well as information on hunter behavior via the National Harvest Survey. This information will be used to assess the harvest framework, ensuring that Sandhill Crane numbers in the Northwest Territories and throughout Canada remain at a sustainable level. At the end of the four-year open season, modifications to the framework may be made to ensure the desired objectives are achieved, including a cancellation of the season if harvest is deemed unsustainable.

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Nunavut

- Considering the establishment of a Sandhill Crane hunting season in Nunavut

A proposal for the establishment of a Sandhill Crane hunting season in Nunavut is under consideration for a future round of amendments. An evaluation by ECCC determined that Sandhill Crane could be hunted sustainably in Nunavut.

Sandhill Cranes are currently hunted in Canada's three prairie provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba) and in the Yukon. The population is also hunted in multiple states (Colorado, Kansas, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Wyoming, Alaska, Arizona, and Minnesota). The earliest possible implementation date for the season would be September 2028.

A Sandhill Crane hunting season would provide a new harvesting opportunity for hunters in Nunavut. The introduction of a Sandhill Crane hunting season has been the subject of requests from the public as well as from Indigenous partners interested in outfitting.

As a person or organization interested in the management of migratory game bird hunting in Canada, your comments are invited on this proposal. Your comments can be forwarded to the following

address: MbregsReports-Rapports-Omregs@ec.gc.ca

Population status of Sandhill Cranes in Nunavut

There are two main populations of Sandhill Crane in Canada: The Mid-Continent Population and the Eastern Population. The Mid-Continent Population numbers close to a million individuals, and its range covers Alaska, northern Canada, and the central states/provinces of North America. The core breeding area for the Eastern Population is the Great Lakes region, and does not extend into Nunavut.

Sandhill Cranes breed throughout the mainland of Nunavut as well as on the arctic islands including Baffin Island and Victoria Island. Approximately 99% of Sandhill Cranes breeding in Nunavut winter in Texas. The Mid-Continent Population of Sandhill Crane is monitored at major spring migration staging areas in the United States. The 3-year average spring index of this population was 1,057,546 birds for 2023 to 2025, well above the management objective of 350,000 to 475,000 cranes (Garretson and Seamans, 2025; Central Flyway Council, 2018; Thorpe, 2025). Data from the Canadian breeding grounds is very limited due to the large area over which the species breeds and the dispersed nature of breeding pairs.

Sustainable harvest management and proposed framework

ECCC believes that it is possible to implement a Sandhill Crane hunting season in Nunavut that would be consistent with the levels prescribed by the harvest strategy outlined in the Guidelines for cooperative management of Mid-Continent Population Sandhill Cranes (Central, Mississippi and Pacific Flyway Councils, 1981, 1993, 2006, and 2018).

The guidelines state that current harvest opportunities be maintained while the Mid-Continent Population is at objective levels (maintaining a 3-year average population index within a range of 350,000 to 475,000 cranes in the Mid-Continent Population). Following these guidelines and considering that this population is estimated to exceed a million individuals, we predict a small and sustainable harvest from Nunavut.

ECCC is proposing a daily bag limit of five (5) Sandhill Cranes, a possession limit of 15 and season dates that span the period of September 1 to December 10. These regulations would be similar to those already in effect in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and season dates that are consistent with the current waterfowl hunting season in Nunavut.

Potential non-target species

Few species can be confused with the Sandhill Crane, given its size, morphology and particular ecology. The three main species that could be confused with the Sandhill Crane are the Whooping Crane, the Great Blue Heron, and the Canada Goose.

The Whooping Crane is designated as endangered under the *Species at Risk Act*. Its larger size, white plumage and black wing tips make it easily distinguishable from other species, including Sandhill Cranes. It does not occur regularly in Nunavut so the risk of incidental harvest is deemed to be very low. Great Blue Herons are rare visitors to Nunavut so the likelihood of encountering this species is deemed very low. Canada Geese can be legally hunted in Nunavut. ECCC therefore considers the risk of harvesting non-target species during Sandhill Crane hunting activities to be relatively low. ECCC will develop identification tools to be provided to hunters to help them differentiate Sandhill Cranes from non-target species.

Benefits associated with opening a hunting season for Sandhill Cranes

The opening of a Sandhill Crane hunting season would provide hunters in Nunavut with an opportunity to sustainably harvest a species that has a large and increasing population. This hunting season could also bring additional marketing opportunities for outfitting businesses. ECCC does not expect a hunting season,

as proposed, to decrease the current population size or influence the distribution of cranes in the territory, and as such no negative impacts on Indigenous subsistence harvest are predicted.

Harvest and population monitoring

Sandhill Crane harvest monitoring will be carried out via the National Harvest Survey, as is done in other provinces and territories. Population monitoring will be conducted on southern spring staging areas when the cranes congregate before undertaking their northward migration (Thorpe, 2025).

Monitoring of hunting season implementation

If implemented, the proposed hunting season will be monitored closely for the two regulatory cycles following implementation. ECCC will collect data on harvest (number of active hunters, hunting success, total harvest, etc.) as well as information on hunter behavior via the National Harvest Survey. This information will be used to assess the harvest framework, ensuring that Sandhill Crane numbers in Nunavut remain at a sustainable level. At the end of the four-year open season, modifications to the framework may be made to ensure the desired objectives are achieved, including a cancellation of the season if harvest is deemed unsustainable.

Literature cited

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Gendron, M.H. and A.C. Smith. 2024. National harvest Survey website. Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Ottawa, Ontario

Garrettson, P.R. and Seamans, M.E. 2025. Status and harvests of sandhill cranes: Mid-Continent, Rocky Mountain, Lower Colorado River Valley, and Eastern Populations. Administrative Report, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Laurel, Maryland and Lakewood, Colorado, U.S.A. 46 pp.

Thorpe, P.P. 2025. Coordinated Spring Survey of Mid-Continent Sandhill Cranes 2025. U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Broomfield, Colorado.

Proposal to amend the baiting prohibition to allow baiting up to 14 days before the duck hunting season

It is proposed to amend the baiting prohibition in the *Migratory Birds Regulations, 2022* to allow baiting up to 14 days before the start of the duck hunting season across all of Canada. Historically, this prohibition was tied to the opening of the duck and goose hunting seasons, with duck season traditionally being the first migratory game bird season to open in most provinces. In practice, hunters could therefore deposit bait up to 14 days before the start of the duck hunting season. With the rapid increase of temperate-breeding Canada Goose populations in southern Canada, Canada Goose hunting seasons have now been advanced to begin earlier than the duck season in an effort to increase harvest and mitigate growing human-goose conflicts. In addition, new hunting seasons for other migratory gamebird species have been introduced (i.e., Mourning Dove) or advanced (i.e., woodcock), resulting in some hunting seasons now opening before the

duck hunting season. As a result, the current baiting prohibition no longer aligns with the policy intent, which was to permit duck hunters to bait up to 14 days prior to the opening of the duck hunting season. ECCC will consider regulatory amendments that would allow duck hunters to bait up to 14 days before the start of the duck hunting season, while also avoiding situations in which other species could be harvested over bait. As part of this regulatory framework, hunters who deposit bait may be required to post signage to ensure that other hunters do not inadvertently hunt migratory birds over or near the baited area.

As a person or organization interested in the management of migratory game bird hunting in Canada, your comments are invited on this proposal. Your comments can be forwarded to the following address: MbregsReports-Rapports-Omregs@ec.gc.ca

Proposal to phase out the physical Migratory Game Bird Hunting Permit and physical hunting summaries

It is proposed to phase out physical (hard copy) Migratory Game Bird Hunting (MGBH) permits and issue 100% of MGBH permits electronically to align with [Canada's Digital Ambition 2024-25](#) and [Greening Government Strategy](#), and to increase the efficiency of the MGBH program. This will also ensure that all permit holder information is correctly included in the permit database, thus improving the accuracy of harvest estimates from the National Harvest Survey. This proposal includes gradually making physical MGBH Permits less available, until they are fully phased out as early as the beginning of the 2027–2028 hunting season starting on August 1, 2027.

It is also proposed to phase out physical hunting summaries, as most hunters now use the online [Hunting regulations for migratory birds: provincial and territorial summaries](#) which are compatible both on mobile and desktop devices.

As over 90,000 hunters purchased physical permits during the 2023–2024 hunting season and were provided a physical hunting summary, phasing out the printing of these hunting summaries would represent an important efficiency for the MGBH program.

Your comments on these two proposals can be forwarded to the following address: CWSPermit.PermisSCF@ec.gc.ca.

Migratory Game Bird Hunting Permit – Optimizing availability to all Canadians

Point of sale options for MGBH permits have evolved over time in order to increase service and optimize availability to hunters. The MGBH permit along with the Canadian Wildlife Habitat Conservation Stamps can be purchased:

1. Electronically at www.permis-permits.ec.gc.ca/en/
2. At select Canada Post corporation outlets (physical permit) - <https://www.canadapost.ca>
3. At some independent vendors (physical permit) - <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/migratory-game-bird-hunting/list-vendors.html>

The MGBH e-Permitting system provides hunters additional convenience and benefits compared to the traditional outlets. The system is accessible to hunters 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Hunters can purchase a permit including the Canadian Wildlife Habitat Conservation stamp online from home, download immediately from the checkout complete page as well as receive electronic copies of the stamp and permit

by email. They can print the permit anywhere and, once signed, is valid immediately. MGBH permits that were purchased online can also be reprinted if lost or damaged. There have been versions of the MGBH e-Permitting system since 2014 and every year the number of permits purchased online continues to increase. The current version was successfully launched on August 1, 2019, and since then there have been additional enhancements to increase user satisfaction and to promote a robust MGBH e-Permitting system.

It should also be noted that the MGBH e-Permitting purchasing system makes it easier for hunters to respond to the questions on the permit, which helps inform the National Harvest Survey. Data from this and other CWS surveys are used to assess the status of migratory game bird populations in Canada, their productivity, their survival rates, and the amount of harvest they can sustain. This information also provides data to inform hunting regulations and harvest management plans for future years.

Physical MGBH permits continue to be distributed and sold through some Canada Post outlets and a select number of independent vendors. Canada Post is the original MGBH permit vendor and continues to offer them in over 4,000 postal outlets. ECCC works closely with Canada Post to promote communication with outlets and manage inventory and distribution. There are also approximately 50 independent vendors across seven provinces that sell the physical MGBH permits. Examples of vendors include Canadian Tire and Bass Pro Shops/Cabela's as well as small local convenience stores and registry offices.

Please Report Bird Bands

- North American Bird Banding Program

The North American Bird Banding Program is jointly administered by Canada's Bird Banding Office and the United States' Bird Banding Laboratory. The program relies on the public to report their observations or recoveries of bird bands and other bird markers to the Bird Banding Office. These data help scientists and wildlife managers better understand, monitor and conserve migratory bird populations by providing information on the distribution and movement of species. Although over 1.2 million birds are banded in the United States and Canada each year, only about 10% of game bird bands are recovered. Your contribution is important!

- How to report band

If you see a marked bird you may contribute to the program by reporting birds [online](#) or call toll-free 1-800-327-BAND (2263) to leave a message. Visit the [Report a Banded Bird web page](#) for more details or contact the Bird Banding Office at:

Bird Banding Office
National Wildlife Research Centre.
Environment and Climate Change Canada
Carleton University
1125 Colonel By Drive (Raven Rd)
Ottawa, ON K1A 0H3

Email: bbo@ec.gc.ca
Telephone: 613-998-0524

- Certificate of appreciation

After your information has been submitted, you will receive a certificate of appreciation by email which will

tell you the species of bird, where and when it was banded, its age, whether it was male or female, and who banded it. We will tell the bander where and when the bird or band was found and its condition.

Appendices

Appendix A. Objectives and guidelines for the establishment of national regulations for migratory game bird hunting

A. Description of regulations

The *Migratory Birds Regulations, 2022* are part of the regulations respecting the protection of migratory birds in general, as mandated by the *Migratory Birds Convention*. According to the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994*, the Governor in Council may make regulations providing for:

1. The periods during which, or the geographic areas in which, migratory birds may be killed.
2. The species and number of migratory game birds that a person may kill in any period when doing so is permitted by regulation.
3. The manner in which migratory game birds may be killed and the equipment that may be used.
4. The periods in each year during which a person may have in their possession migratory game birds killed during the season when the taking of such birds was legal, and the number of birds that may be possessed.

This document deals with these four aspects of regulation, although the *Migratory Birds Regulations, 2022* deal with other areas as well.

B. Guiding principles

Guiding principles for migratory bird hunting regulations include those laid out in the Guidelines for Wildlife Policy in Canada as approved by the Wildlife Ministers at the Wildlife Ministers Conference, September 30, 1982. In particular, the most relevant principles are:

1. The maintenance of viable natural wildlife stocks always takes precedence over their use.
2. Canadians are temporary custodians, not the owners, of their wildlife heritage.
3. Canadians are free to enjoy and use wildlife in Canada, subject to laws aimed at securing its sustainable enjoyment and use.
4. The cost of management essential to preserving viable populations of wildlife should be borne by all Canadians; special management measures required to permit intensive uses should be supported by the users.
5. Wildlife has intrinsic, social and economic values, but wildlife sometimes causes problems that require management.
6. Conservation of wildlife relies upon a well informed public.

C. Objectives of the migratory game birds hunting regulations

1. To provide an opportunity for Canadians to hunt migratory game birds, by establishing hunting seasons. Guidelines for hunting regulations are described in Section D. Briefly, regulations should be based on a number of features specific to the geographic area under consideration. Factors such as the timing of arrival and departure of migrating birds, the status of local breeding populations, fledging of local broods and completion of the moult of successfully breeding females, and other special issues such as the status of species, should be used to determine the most effective hunting regulations. Sometimes regulations may need to be based on the species of highest conservation concern.
2. To manage the take of migratory game birds at levels compatible with the species' ability to sustain

healthy populations consistent with the available habitat throughout their range.

3. To conserve the genetic diversity within migratory game bird populations.
4. To provide hunting opportunity in various parts of Canada within the limits imposed by the abundance, migration and distribution patterns of migratory bird populations, and with due respect for the traditional use of the migratory game bird resource in Canada.
5. To limit the accidental killing of a migratory game bird species requiring protection because of poor population status, where there is a reasonable possibility that a hunter might confuse that species with another for which there is an open season.
6. To assist, at times and in specific locations, in the prevention of damage to natural habitat or depredation of agricultural crops by migratory game birds.

D. Guidelines for the regulations on migratory game bird hunting

1. Regulations shall be established according to the requirements of the *Migratory Birds Convention* and the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994*.
2. Regulations shall address the principles of Section B and the objectives of Section C.
3. Unless needs dictate otherwise, hunting regulations will be changed as little as possible from year to year.
4. Regulations should be simple and readily enforceable.
5. Where a conflict arises between allocation of harvest among jurisdictions and the conservation of migratory game bird populations, the conservation objective shall take precedence.
6. When uncertainty exists about the status of a migratory game bird population, a precautionary approach will be taken in establishing sustainable hunting regulations.
7. Hunting regulations may not discriminate among Canadian hunters based on their province or territory of residence. This guideline does not preclude recognition of Aboriginal rights.
8. Regulations should be consistent in jurisdictions where important concentration areas for staging waterfowl straddle borders.
9. Where possible, regional, national and international harvest strategies will be developed among management agencies that share populations. Regulations will be designed to meet mutual targets for harvest, harvest rate or population size.
10. Specific regulation changes will be developed through a process of co-management and public consultation with other interested groups and individuals.
11. Hunting regulations should be consistent with terms of agreements in Aboriginal land claim settlements.

E. Biennial regulatory process

Regulations may be established in one of two ways: selection of a regulatory package from a pre-established set of possible packages, or through a biennial regulatory consultation process.

Pre-established sets of regulatory alternatives:

Regulatory alternatives may be preestablished according to the guidelines outlined in Section D, with the selection made in any year based on a predetermined set of conditions. For example, a set of three regulatory approaches with decreasing harvest rates could be described: liberal, moderate and restrictive. The criteria for selection among the alternatives could be based on the results of population surveys. This method would reduce the time required to conduct the usual process, simplify the implementation of multijurisdictional harvest strategies, and increase the predictability of regulations.

Regulatory process:

As a policy decision, the hunting regulations for migratory game birds are reviewed and amended biennially. To ensure that the regulations are made with the best possible advice, a broad process of consultation must be carried out. Reports produced as part of this process may be obtained from Regional Directors, Canadian Wildlife Service, or the Director of Wildlife Management and Regulatory Affairs Division at the national office of the Canadian Wildlife Service.

1. The National office of the Canadian Wildlife Service publishes a status report on migratory game bird populations in January. This report describes the biological information available to determine the status of each population.
2. Regional officials (biologists and management) of the Canadian Wildlife Service and provincial and territorial wildlife officials consult with non-governmental organizations and interested individuals on issues related to hunting regulations, and every two years the CWS prepares regulatory submissions to amend the regulations. To ensure that all parties have access to the best possible biological information, the Population Status of Migratory Game Birds in Canada report may be used as an aid.
3. The initial suggestions for regulation changes will be developed through regional consultation processes. These processes may vary among regions, but should include active participation by provincial and territorial wildlife agencies, wildlife co-management boards and affected stakeholders. The changes, with rationale and predicted effect (Section F), are described in a regulation report issued at the beginning of January from the national office entitled *Proposals to Amend the Canadian Migratory Birds Regulations*. This report allows interregional and international consideration of proposed changes.
4. Public and organizational comments on the proposals outlined in the *Proposals to Amend the Canadian Migratory Birds Regulations* report should be sent to the appropriate Regional Director, or the Director of Wildlife Management and Regulatory Affairs Division at the national office of the Canadian Wildlife Service.
5. Final regulation proposals, incorporating input from the consultations, are submitted from the Regional Directors to the Director of Wildlife Management and Regulatory Affairs Division at the national office of the Canadian Wildlife Service, by the end of February.
6. The regulation proposals are moved, by the national office, through the regulatory process for consideration by the government in June.
7. Population surveys are carried out throughout the year. From time to time, these surveys may show an unexpected change in migratory game bird populations that require a sudden revision to the national regulation proposals.
8. The final regulations, as approved by the Governor in Council, are described in a report entitled *Migratory Game Bird Hunting Regulations in Canada*, which is distributed to all involved parties in July. Each purchaser of a migratory game bird hunting permit receives a summary of the regulations for that province.

F. Items to be addressed in regulatory proposals

Proposals to change migratory game bird hunting regulations should address the following questions:

1. What is the goal of the regulatory change?
2. How does the change address the objectives and guidelines set out in this document?
3. What is the predicted effect of the proposal? An analysis based on existing data sources should be included.
4. How will the actual effect of the regulatory change be measured?

The proposals should be as concise as possible, while still including the required elements. A simplified rationale would apply for regulations that carry out previously negotiated harvest strategies and agreements.

Appendix B. Summaries of migratory birds hunting regulations by Province and Territory, 2025–2026 hunting season

The hunting summaries are also available on the Government of Canada's website:

[Hunting regulations for migratory birds: provincial and territorial summaries - Canada.ca](#)