



Report number 63

Migratory Birds Regulations in Canada – 2026

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



Environment and
Climate Change Canada

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Changement climatique Canada

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[Migratory birds - Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/en/migratory-birds)

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There are temporary restrictions on importing or exporting harvested meat from migratory game birds hunted in areas affected by HPAI. For more information, consult the [CFIA – Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Zones, Permits and conditions needed for movement control, Bringing food, plant and animal products into Canada](#) and [Animal Health Status of Regions](#) (United States Department of Agriculture, available in English only).

The migratory game bird hunting regulations that will be in effect in 2026 and 2027 can be viewed at: [Hunting regulations for migratory birds: provincial and territorial summaries - Canada.ca](#)

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Migratory Birds Regulations in Canada 2026

2026–2027 and 2027–2028 Hunting Seasons

Canadian Wildlife Service Waterfowl Technical Committee CWS Migratory Birds Regulatory Report — Number 63

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Comments

Comments regarding 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 in the Wildlife Management Directorate 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:

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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 and rights holders. 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 migratory game bird 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 the 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, 2022*. Proposals for hunting regulations are developed in accordance with the 'Objectives and Guidelines for the Establishment of National Regulations for Migratory Game Bird Hunting' (for more information, please see: [Establishing national regulations for migratory game bird hunting: objectives and guidelines - Canada.ca](#)). 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 the migratory game bird hunting regulations in Canada. They are also available on the ECCC website at: [Migratory birds regulatory report series](#).

The process for developing regulations in Canada requires that any change be in the form of a final proposal by late February during years of regulatory changes. That means that regulations must be set without knowing about the breeding conditions and production forecasts for the coming year. This does not usually present difficulties because the hunting regulations are based on trends over several years, but in some cases the results from recent harvest surveys or breeding population surveys conducted in May and June will indicate that changes in the national approach are needed to ensure the conservation of migratory game birds. In these cases, ECCC will proceed with a regulatory amendment and issue a bulletin updating these regulations.

Regulatory changes described in the current document will start in June 2026 and remain in effect for two hunting seasons (2026–2027 and 2027–2028).

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 various stakeholders and rights holders.
- 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 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 with the hunting regulations summaries published online or distributed when hunters purchase their hunting permit. The hunting summaries present the information on hunting season dates and bag and possession limits for each province/territory.

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 population of American Black Ducks while maintaining equity in American Black Duck harvest 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 implementing its most liberal hunting option, but harvest remains below the 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 the long-term trend for the American Black Duck breeding population in eastern Canada as well as the estimated effects of hunting on the population. According to data collected by the CWS and USFWS, the current level of harvest has only a low effect on the American Black Duck population. The liberal package is therefore the optimal alternative for Canada. 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.

2025 Fall ECCC regional stakeholder meetings regarding the hunting regulation for the 2026–2027 and 2027–2028 seasons

In fall of 2025, biologists from ECCC met with their provincial and territorial counterparts, as well as other various stakeholders and rights holders, in technical committees to discuss new information on the status of migratory game bird populations, and how it compares to annual/long-term trends. These regional technical committees used survey information from international, national and regional bird population surveys, species-specific studies, and information received from migratory game bird hunters and non-government organizations to identify concerns with population levels of migratory game bird species. In order to address these concerns and ensure a sustainable harvest for migratory game birds, hunting season dates, daily bag limits and possession limits required adjustment for certain species for the 2026–2027 and 2027–2028 hunting seasons.

Summary of the comments received during public consultations held in winter 2026 regarding the hunting regulations for the 2026–2027 and 2027–2028 seasons

A [Notice of Intent](#) was published in Part I of the *Canada Gazette* on January 17, 2026, advising Canadians of the publication of the consultation document [Proposals to amend the Canadian Migratory Birds Regulations - 2026: consultation document, hunting seasons 2026-2027 and 2027-2028](#) and of a 30-day public comment period being held from January 17, 2026, to February 15, 2026.

As well as being posted online, the consultation document and the [Population Status of Migratory Game Birds in Canada — 2025](#) report were distributed by email to a list of over 500 partners and stakeholders, including biologists in the federal governments of Canada and the United States and provincial and territorial governments, as well as Indigenous communities and organizations and individual migratory game bird hunters. The documents were also distributed to many national and provincial hunting and outfitting organizations as well as other non-governmental organizations interested in migratory bird conservation.

During the public consultation period, ECCC received more than 630 written comments on the proposals for the 2026–2027 and 2027–2028 seasons. Most comments were from individuals, however, 9% of comments were from organizations such as conservation groups, hunting associations and clubs, outdoor outfitters, environmental associations, ornithology and naturalist clubs, and agricultural societies. In addition, about 28% of comments received were linked to letter writing campaigns. The largest campaign was led by a waterfowl conservation organization, with over 160 members expressing support for various regional proposals that result in increased hunting opportunities.

The following presents a summary of comments received during the public consultation outlined on a regional basis.

Canada-Wide

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

Comments regarding the amendment to the baiting provision were mixed. Supporting comments came from hunting groups, outfitters, and individual hunters who view the change as a return to a practical regulation that would benefit goose and duck hunting. Although generally supportive, some comments from individual hunters raised concerns about the need for greater clarity and operational concerns such as the risk that hunters could unintentionally hunt over bait or lose hunting opportunities because of other hunters baiting on public land. Opposing comments from individual hunters also raised enforcement challenges and concerns about the potential risk of spreading avian influenza with a concentration of birds in a single area. In addition, one conservation organization and several individuals' comments opposed the use of baiting in principle.

ECCC will not move forward with the proposed baiting prohibition amendments at this time and will take more time to review and refine the amendments to ensure future changes are clear, consistent, and enforceable.

Atlantic Region

All comments received supported the proposals to delay the regular goose hunting season in Zone 2, Nova Scotia, by 7 days and to modify American Woodcock hunting season on Prince Edward Island to fixed dates.

Quebec Region

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

Most comments supported the proposal to remove the temporary restriction to the daily bag limit for Canada Geese and Cackling Geese in hunting districts A, C, D and F. Hunting organizations and agricultural producers welcomed the change, citing increased management flexibility and benefits for addressing local population pressures. One non-profit nature organization also supported the proposal, while emphasizing the importance of continued monitoring to distinguish between resident geese and the migratory Atlantic Population to ensure the long-term sustainability of Atlantic Population of Canada Geese. Two comments opposed removal of the temporary restriction, citing concerns about the potential for overharvest and a general opposition to hunting.

The Atlantic Population of Canada Geese is closely monitored through multiple monitoring activities which contribute to the population model developed with the Atlantic Flyway Council. This model projects an increase in the number of breeding pairs, indicating that the population can sustain increased hunting pressure. ECCC will continue to monitor the population and will amend the hunting provisions for Canada Geese as needed.

- Establishing a Sandhill Crane hunting season

Some hunting organizations and individual hunters expressed support for the new hunting opportunity, citing Sandhill Crane population growth and the potential opportunity to control damage to surrounding

agricultural crops. However, most comments opposed the new season. Opposing comments from naturalist and conservation organizations highlighted that hunting will not be able to reduce agricultural damage meaningfully and raised concerns that this new season, combined with other existing options for lethal control measures (e.g. through Damage and Danger permits), would cause excessive mortality. One comment raised concerns about long-term reliability of the monitoring data collected by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and United States Geological Survey due to the funding uncertainty of these organizations, and highlighted the need for reliable monitoring of the Eastern Sandhill Crane population. Other comments opposed the Sandhill Crane seasons in both Quebec and Ontario, raising concerns about low historic Sandhill Crane population levels in eastern Canada, where the population nearly disappeared. Individuals raised concerns that allowing hunting could cause cumulative pressure, due to already established hunting seasons in the United States, and the population could become threatened again due to low reproductive potential caused by life history factors such as delayed age of maturity, monogamous mating strategy, producing a small number of eggs, and low chick survival rates. Comments also pointed out the 'charismatic nature' of the sandhill crane and the social importance of the species to birdwatchers and nature enthusiasts, identifying concerns that the proposed harvest would reduce encounters and sightings.

A managed harvest of Sandhill Cranes could slow or stabilize population growth and potentially minimize crop damage. While the Eastern Population is surveyed through a fall staging survey coordinated by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the main methods of tracking the population for harvest management in Quebec rely on surveys led by ECCC, conducted both in fall and during the breeding season. Combined with data from Canada's National Harvest Survey, these three surveys will ensure that the Sandhill Crane harvest is sustainable and provide the necessary information to evaluate the needs for regulatory adjustments. The harvest strategy accounts for Sandhill Crane life history and low productivity by allowing only a very limited harvest. The daily bag limit is intentionally set below the level the Eastern Population can sustainably support. Based on its current size, the population is still expected to grow, although more slowly than if there were no harvest. As a result, the new Sandhill Crane hunting season should not reduce opportunities for people to see and enjoy Sandhill Cranes during activities like birdwatching and photography. Based on this assessment and a review of current population trends, ECCC determined that the Sandhill Crane hunting season in Quebec is consistent with the harvest strategy outlined in the Eastern Population Sandhill Crane Management Plan. A summary of the findings is provided below, and the complete assessment is available upon request at the following address: Mbreports-Rapports-Omregs@ec.gc.ca.

- Spring special measures season for Overabundant Snow Geese in Quebec

Most comments supported the reduced hunting opportunities during the spring special measures season for overabundant Snow Geese, with some comments from individuals and an outfitter organization suggesting an even greater reduction in the daily bag limit than what was proposed. One comment opposed the proposal to reduce the length of the special measures for overabundant species season and suggested that the bag limit should be reduced to 15 rather than 12 to protect agricultural production from damage throughout the month of May.

The intent of this proposal is to minimize disturbance to migrating Snow Geese during spring, given that human disturbance can be a contributing factor in recent population declines, while maintaining reasonable harvest pressure to mitigate agricultural conflicts. The daily bag limit is being reduced from 20 to 12 birds, but not further, because the conditions that caused the population to increase remain unchanged. As with most geese populations, this population could rebound quickly and create overabundance issues if control measures are relaxed too much. ECCC will continue to monitor the population and will amend the hunting provisions for Snow Geese as needed.

Ontario Region

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

No comments were received on the proposal to lift a temporary restriction to the daily bag limit for Canada Geese and Cackling Geese in Provincial Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) 65.

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

Most comments supported the proposal to add a 7-day Canada Goose and Cackling Goose season. Several hunting and agricultural organizations welcome the additional late-winter opportunity, citing high goose populations, agricultural damage mitigation, and improved regulatory clarity and consistency between Provincial WMUs as a result of removing references to municipal Sunday hunting restrictions. Among the supporting comments, some also suggest a longer February season, possibly extended into January, and extending hunting areas to additional Provincial WMUs 85 and 94. Most opposing comments came from individual hunters who objected to the loss of the week in September, which they view as prime goose hunting opportunity, aligned with the duck season open dates, and accessible for youth and senior hunters. Opposing comments also argued that February hunting is impractical or ineffective in some Provincial WMUs due to harsh winter conditions and lack of geese at that time of the year. Commenters included alternative suggestions such as hunting days removed from the end of the regular season or from the middle of the season, possibly aligning with the deer hunting season. One comment suggested shortening the end of the season in December by 14 days and create a spring hunt that overlaps with the spring turkey season in the central Hunting District.

The additional week in February will provide new goose hunting opportunities in portions of southern Ontario where Canada Geese are relatively abundant throughout the winter. With the addition of the 7-day winter hunting season, the need to consider municipal Sunday hunting restrictions in some municipalities was eliminated. Any reference to municipal Sunday hunting is removed, which simplifies the MBR, 2022 and provides clarity for migratory game bird hunters. It is also anticipated that the new season will increase the harvest of temperate-breeding Canada Geese in southern Ontario, helping to mitigate human-goose conflicts associated with this population. While there will be 7 fewer days at the end of September for the Canada Goose open season in select WMUs, there remains significant September hunting opportunities for many migratory game bird species within all Provincial WMUs in the southern Ontario district.

- Establishing a Sandhill Crane hunting season

The new hunting season for Sandhill Cranes generated the most comments of all proposals in Ontario. Comments were evenly divided between support and opposition. Supporting comments came from individual hunters, waterfowl conservation organizations and their members, hunter associations, regional agricultural groups, and farmers. These comments referred to significant and increasing crop damage, a perception of rapidly growing Sandhill Crane populations, and confidence that a regulated hunting season would be sustainable. Many supportive comments from farmers and agricultural societies focused on the harm Sandhill Cranes can cause to agricultural landscapes, and claimed increasing populations will have a greater impact, while opposing comments highlighted insufficient evidence linking overabundance of Sandhill Cranes to crop damage. While supportive of the new season for Sandhill Cranes, comments from individual hunters suggested that the low daily bag and possession limits would be insufficient to motivate hunters. To better align the MBR, 2022 with the scale of the crop damage, suggestions included increases in daily bag limits, higher possession limits, and expansion of the proposed hunting area. A few comments offered by individuals suggested alternative harvest systems, such as a tag system or a spring hunting season to address issues with crop damage.

Opposing comments were received from an animal welfare advocacy organization, local ornithology and naturalist groups, birdwatchers, a First Nation, and individuals. As described above in the summary for

comments from Quebec region, some comments raised life history traits of Sandhill Cranes such as low reproductive rates, delayed age of maturity, monogamy, and low chick survival as a reason for their vulnerability to harvest. Many comments argued that the historic low numbers of the Eastern Population of Sandhill Cranes present a high risk of reversing this population recovery. Other comments raised concerns around limited number of staging and breeding areas, making Sandhill Cranes vulnerable to localized harvest pressure and suggested there could be an elevated risk for Sandhill Cranes due to their high susceptibility to Avian influenza, as there were large die-offs in the United States in 2025. Concerns were also raised by individuals and a naturalist club about species identification issues with Whooping Crane, Trumpeter Swan, and Great Blue Heron. Other concerns were raised about the lack of mandatory reporting, potential risks to Whooping Cranes, and lack of demonstrated efficacy of the proposed hunting season in reducing crop damage. Similar to comments received about establishing a Sandhill Crane season in the Quebec region, individuals thought of 'the charismatic nature' of the Sandhill Crane and the social importance to birdwatchers, nature enthusiasts, and local tourism, identifying concerns over the proposed harvest risk reducing encounters and sightings.

Six comments were received from individuals self-identifying as Indigenous and one response was received from a First Nation. Comments questioned the certainty of current population estimates and modelling for the new hunting season for Sandhill Crane in Ontario and expressed concerns because of spiritual and cultural connections with cranes (ajijak). The First Nation also noted a lack of meaningful Indigenous consultation. There was one comment from an Indigenous individual in support of the proposal.

Other than in the Hudson and James Bay Hunting District where farmland is limited, the proposal limits hunting to farmland and to Provincial WMUs where agricultural conflicts are well documented. A managed harvest of Sandhill Cranes could slow or stabilize population growth and potentially minimize further expansion of crop damage. The hunting season is timed for the peak of Sandhill Crane migration through these areas. The increase in the number of birds available during this time will reduce harvest pressure on local-breeding Sandhill Cranes. As in Quebec region, the harvest strategy accounts for life history traits and low productivity by allowing only a very limited harvest. The daily bag limit is intentionally set below the level the eastern population can sustainably support. Based on its current size, the population is still expected to grow, although more slowly than if there were no harvest. As a result, the harvest should not reduce opportunities for people to see and enjoy Sandhill Cranes during activities like birdwatching and photography. This harvest framework will allow ECCC to carefully monitor the harvest in the first four years of implementation, while having a minimal impact on the Eastern Population. Non-target species such as Great Blue Heron, Swans, and Whooping Cranes are easily distinguishable from Sandhill Cranes well beyond shooting range, limiting concerns of unintentional harvest. To further limit risk of accidental harvest of non-target species, ECCC will develop educational tools on how to differentiate Sandhill Cranes from non-target species. Furthermore, observations of Whooping Cranes in Ontario are extremely rare and there have been no observations of Whooping Cranes in the areas considered for a Sandhill Crane hunting season. ECCC conducts surveys to provide fall staging counts as well as age ratio and productivity data for Sandhill Cranes. ECCC will also contribute counts to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service coordinated survey to inform overall population size and trend information for the entire Eastern Population.

The National Harvest Survey will be used to monitor harvest, and a volunteer photo survey of harvested Sandhill Cranes is also being considered to examine age ratios in the harvest. ECCC continues to closely monitor and track any effects and spread of avian influenza in wild bird populations, and management actions will be adjusted if needed. Based on this assessment and a review of current population trends, distribution, and a restrictive harvest framework, ECCC determined that it is possible to establish a Sandhill Crane hunting season in Ontario that is sustainable and consistent with the levels prescribed by the harvest strategy outlined in the Eastern Population Sandhill Crane Management Plan. 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.

With regard to the cultural and spiritual significance of Sandhill Cranes, ECCC's analyses (described above) indicate that the population is still expected to grow, and therefore the new hunting season should not

negatively impact the species. In March 2026, ECCC had an informal follow-up discussion with the First Nation that provided comments to better understand their concerns. They emphasized that the primary concern was the lack of perceived effort and time from ECCC to consult with them on the new Sandhill Crane hunt. Concerns were somewhat eased when ECCC described steps it had taken to inform Indigenous peoples about the proposal. ECCC is in the process of reviewing the consultation process for the biennial hunting regulation amendments, to strengthen meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities on the harvest and management of migratory game birds in the future.

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

Two comments were received, both in opposition. The comments raised concerns about the population status of Snow Geese and Ross's Geese in Ontario, with one suggesting a hunting moratorium.

The purpose of the reduced harvest opportunity is to decrease disturbance to migrating Snow Geese and Ross's Geese in Ontario during spring, addressing a potential factor in recent population declines, while maintaining reasonable harvest pressure to mitigate agricultural conflicts. ECCC plans to adapt its harvest management strategy as required to reflect available resources for monitoring migratory game bird harvest.

Manitoba

ECCC participated in several meetings with the province of Manitoba to ensure alignment between federal and provincial regulations. However, the province of Manitoba has decided to not move forward with any regulatory changes for this regulatory cycle. As such, ECCC is also not moving forward with proposals to amend the MBR, 2022 in the province of Manitoba to avoid misalignment between the MBR, 2022 and provincial regulations. The decision not to move forward with the Manitoba proposals was based solely on the Province of Manitoba's decision not to move forward and was not informed by the public comments received.

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

Most comments opposed the proposal to simplify migratory game bird open season dates for residents and non-residents of Canada. The comments came from hunt clubs, individual hunters, and an environmental non-governmental organization. The major concerns included increased competition from U.S. hunters, reduced access to private lands, re-emerging waterfowl harassment issues, and erosion of Canadian hunter retention. Comments included arguments that early September has always been a critical, low-competition period reserved for residents of Canada only, promotes young hunter recruitment, family hunting traditions, and equitable access. Many comments highlighted that this change conflicts with Manitoba's 2023 Waterfowl Modernization Strategy, which restricted non-resident access specifically to protect resident of Canada opportunities. There were three supportive comments based on simplification to the MBR, 2022.

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

Most comments opposed removing the afternoon restriction for dark goose hunting in Southern Manitoba. The comments argue that the change would reduce resident Canada hunting opportunities through reduced access to hunting areas due to increased competition from heavily funded U.S. hunters. One opponent also commented that this proposal would undermine youth hunter recruitment and family hunting opportunities and recreate the high hunting pressure that is suggested to have caused dark geese to migrate prematurely in the past. A few supportive comments were also received that generally highlighted the benefit of the regulatory simplification that was proposed.

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

Few comments were received about the reduction in dark goose bag limit in Game Hunting Area 38. Three comments support the change, with one highlighting the benefit of simplifying the regulations. Two comments opposed the change, citing the loss of liberalized daily bag limits as an effective population management tool, especially as the Mississippi Flyway temperate breeding Canada Geese are still overabundant.

- Changes in Woodcock season dates and daily bag and possession limits

Comments about changes in Woodcock season dates and daily bag and possession limits were mixed, with general support for aligning Woodcock season with provincial grouse season, but mixed support for increasing the daily bag limits for non-residents of Canada hunters. Supporting comments emphasize regulatory clarity and consistency while an opposing comment expressed their scientific concerns about increasing hunting pressure without an updated population survey. The individual cited the United States Fish and Wildlife Service [American Woodcock Population Status, 2024](#) as evidence of woodcock population decline and raise broader ecological concerns (e.g. habitat loss, avian influenza, cumulative effects).

Alberta

- Expanding Alberta's Sandhill Crane hunting season

Comments from individuals, a conservation organization, and an animal rights group predominantly opposed the expansion of the geographic hunting areas and mainly related to concerns about the risk to endangered Whooping Cranes through misidentification. Several comments pointed out that expansion into Provincial WMUs 501, 506, 509, and 510 will extend hunting into known Whooping Crane breeding habitat, based on evidence from the breeding bird atlas, and further into their autumn migratory pathway.

Other comments raised concerns regarding uncertainty about population size, wetland habitat loss threatening breeding success and limiting stopover locations, and risk of avian influenza. Other comments highlight that no evidence for agricultural crop damage in these additional Provincial WMUs is presented. A minority of comments support the expansion, generally citing improved hunting opportunity, simplification of the regulations, and confidence in identification skills.

ECCC selected the range of expansion to avoid commonly used Whooping Crane migratory routes while targeting areas of recent Sandhill Crane use to mitigate crop damage concerns raised by Alberta agricultural producers. Since 2020, Whooping Crane descriptions have been published online and in Alberta's guide to hunting regulations. Sandhill Crane hunting has occurred in adjacent areas of Saskatchewan for many years without any detrimental effects to Whooping Crane populations, even though migration routes of the two species overlap throughout much of that province. Although the Alberta Parklands fall within the historical breeding range of Whooping Cranes, no nesting has been documented south of Wood Buffalo National Park since 1914. Additional proposed Provincial WMUs are over 500 km away from current breeding habitat of Whooping Cranes.

In addition, the Mid-Continent Population of Sandhill Crane is monitored each spring through aerial and ground surveys and has increased steadily since 1982. The most recent three-year average (2023–2025) is approximately 1.06 million cranes, which is well above the management targets and more than double their level in 2000. ECCC continues to closely monitor and track any effects from the loss of breeding habitat and the spread of avian influenza in wild bird populations, and management actions will be adjusted if needed.

Migratory game birds hunting regulations for the 2026-2027 and 2027-2028 seasons

The Canadian Wildlife Service and the provinces and territories have jointly developed the hunting regulation amendments presented here. They were approved by Cabinet and published in the *Canada Gazette*, Part II on July 1st, 2026.

The following section summarizes the hunting regulations amendments by province and by territory during this regulatory cycle.

The complete set of regulations that will be in effect in fall 2026 and winter/spring 2027 are posted on the Government of Canada's website: [Hunting regulations for migratory birds: provincial and territorial summaries](#).

Management of overabundant geese

- Spring special measures season for overabundant Snow Geese in Quebec

In District A, the daily bag limit for Snow Geese is reduced from 20 to 12. In districts C, D, E and F, during the special measures for overabundant species season, the daily bag limit is reduced from 20 to 12, and the special measures for overabundant species season is shortened by 53 days (from March 1 to May 31, to April 10 to May 18). Spring harvest continues 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 will be implemented for the spring 2027 Special Measures Season.

Table 1: Amendments to Special Measures for Overabundant Species in Quebec for hunting seasons 2026–2027 and 2027–2028

Species	Previous Open Season Dates	New open Season Dates	Previous Daily Bag Limit	New Daily Bag Limit
District A				
Snow Geese	N/A	N/A	20	12
District C, D, E and F				
Snow Geese	March 1 to May 31	April 10 to May 18	20	12

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

In Provincial WMUs 65, 66, 67 and 69B, the daily bag limit for Ross's Geese and Snow Geese is reduced from 20 to 12, and the special measures for overabundant species season is shortened by 62 days (from March 1 to May 31 to April 1 to April 30). Spring harvest continues 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 will be implemented for the spring 2027 Special Measures Season.

Table 2: Amendments to Special Measure Seasons for Overabundant Species in Ontario for the hunting seasons 2026–2027 and 2027–2028.

Species	Previous Open Season Dates	New open Season Dates	Previous Daily Bag Limit	New Daily Bag Limit
Southern District (only on WMUs 65, 66, 67 and 69B)				
Snow Geese	March 1 to May 31	April 1 to April 30 on farmland only	20	12

Other special conservation measures for Snow Geese, Ross's Geese and the Manitoba Temperate-breeding population of Canada Geese that were implemented in past regulatory cycles will continue to be in effect in spring 2027. They are included in the hunting regulation summary posted on the Government of Canada's website: [Hunting regulations for migratory birds: provincial and territorial summaries - Canada.ca](https://www24.international.gc.ca/migratory-birds/migratory-birds-provincial-and-territorial-summaries-Canada.ca)

Newfoundland and Labrador

No regulatory changes have been made for the 2026–2027 and 2027–2028 hunting seasons

- Administrative changes
- Harlequin ducks are now listed separately in the Schedule 3 tables to clarify that there is no open season for Harlequin ducks in Newfoundland and Labrador

Prince Edward Island

- Fixed calendar date for Woodcock

The Woodcock season in Prince Edward Island is changed from a generic date to a fixed calendar date from September 26 to December 10. This change conforms the entire Atlantic Region to fixed-date seasons and aligns with Prince Edward Island's upland provincial game seasons, thus reducing potential for confusion and errors.

Table 3: Amendment to a fixed date season for Woodcock in Prince Edward Island for hunting seasons 2026–2027 and 2027–2028

Species	Previous Open Season	New Open Season
Woodcock	The last Monday of September to the second Saturday of December	September 26 to December 10

- Administrative changes
- Harlequin ducks are now listed separately in the Schedule 3 tables to clarify that there is no open season for Harlequin ducks in Prince Edward Island

Nova Scotia

- Later start to the combined goose hunting season

The regular goose hunting season in Zone 2 is pushed to start 7 days later. The season now runs from October 23 to January 22, rather than October 16 to January 15. This change does not impact the length of the open season and will allow for closer consistency between open goose and duck hunting seasons and reduce potential confusion and errors.

Table 4: Amendments to goose open season dates in Nova Scotia for hunting seasons 2026–2027 and 2027–2028

Species	Previous Open Season	New Open Season
Zone No 2		
All Geese, combined	October 16 to January 15	October 23 to January 22

- Administrative changes
- Harlequin ducks are now listed separately in the Schedule 3 tables to clarify that there is no open season for Harlequin ducks in Nova Scotia

New Brunswick

No regulatory changes have been made for the 2026–2027 and 2027–2028 hunting seasons

- Administrative changes
- An error is corrected in the geographic coordinates of two islands in Bathurst Harbour.
 - Harlequin ducks are now listed separately in the Schedule 3 tables to clarify that there is no open season for Harlequin ducks in New Brunswick

Quebec

- Increase in daily bag limit for Canada Geese in hunting districts A, C, D and F

The temporary restriction to the daily bag limit for Canada Geese and Cackling Geese, combined, from September to the end of October in districts A, C, D and F is removed. 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 returns to five (5) geese per day for the duration of the season starting on September 26. Season length and possession limits remain unchanged.

Table 5: Amendments to Canada Geese and Cackling Geese daily bag limits in Quebec for hunting seasons 2026–2027 and 2027–2028

Species	Previous Daily Bag Limit	New Daily Bag limit
District A, C, D and F		

Canada Goose and Cackling Goose, combined	3	5
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- New hunting season for Sandhill Crane (for residents of Canada only)

A new season for Sandhill Cranes (for residents of Canada only) in Districts C and D, only on farmland is established. The new season allows for a daily bag and possession limit of one (1) Sandhill Crane, starting on the first Saturday after September 11 for a total season length of 14 days. Establishing a new hunting season for Sandhill Cranes 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.

Table 6: Amendments to establish a season for Sandhill Cranes in Quebec for hunting seasons 2026–2027 and 2027–2028

Species	New Open Season	New Daily Bag limit and Possession Limit
District C and D		
Sandhill Crane	The first Saturday after September 11 to the first Friday after September 24 for residents of Canada only (only on farmland)	1

- Administrative changes
- Harlequin ducks are now listed separately in the Schedule 3 tables to clarify that there is no open season for Harlequin ducks in Québec

Ontario

- Increase in daily bag limit for Canada Geese and Cackling Geese in Wildlife Management Unit 65

The temporary restriction to the daily bag limit for Canada Geese and Cackling Geese, combined, from September to the end of October in Provincial Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) 65 is removed. 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 returns to five (5) geese per day for the duration of the season starting on the fourth Saturday in September. Season length and possession limits remain unchanged.

Table 7: Amendment to the Canada Geese and Cackling Geese daily bag limits in Ontario for the hunting seasons 2026–2027 and 2027–2028.

Species	Previous Daily Bag Limit	New Daily Bag limit
Southern district (WMU 65 only)		
Canada Goose and Cackling Goose, combined	3	5

- 7-day goose hunting season in February

A 7-day Canada Goose and Cackling Goose hunting season added in Provincial WMUs 69A, 70–73, 77–81, and 86–93 beginning on the fourth Saturday in February to the following Friday. The regular Canada Goose season in these Provincial WMUs is shortened by 7 days, now starting the Saturday following the 4th Saturday in September and ending on the first Wednesday after December 25. Hunting for Snow Geese and Ross's Geese will be permitted in these Provincial WMUs 69A, 70–73, 77–81, and 86–93 at the same time, starting the Saturday following the 4th Saturday in September and ending on the first Sunday after January 5. With the addition of the 7-day Canada Goose hunting season beginning on the fourth Saturday in February to the following Friday, ECCC removed all reference to municipal Sunday hunting that was previously used to determine where winter Canada Goose hunting could occur. This change provides greater clarity regarding where and when Canada Goose hunting is allowed in southern Ontario. Additionally, the harvest of Canada Geese during this season is focused on temperate-breeding Canada Geese, providing an additional tool to help mitigate human-geese conflicts associated with this population.

Table 8: Amendments to add a 7-day winter season for Canada Geese, Cackling Geese, Snow Geese and Ross's Geese and shorten the regular season length by 7-days in Ontario for hunting seasons 2026–2027 and 2027–2028 in select Wildlife Management Units.

Species	Previous Open Season and Bag Limit	New Open Season and Bag Limit
Southern District		
Canada Geese and Cackling Geese, combined	(i) The Thursday after the first Monday of September to the second Sunday after that Monday (excluding Sundays in municipalities where hunting with guns on Sunday is not permitted by provincial regulations)	(i) The Thursday after the first Monday of September to the second Sunday after that Monday
	(ii) The fourth Saturday in September to the first Wednesday after December 25 (excluding Sundays in municipalities where hunting with guns on Sundays is not permitted by provincial regulations)	(A) The fourth Saturday in September to the first Wednesday after December 25 (in Provincial WMUs 60 to 68, 69B, 74 to 76, 82 to 85, 94 and 95) (B) The Saturday following the fourth Saturday in September to the first Wednesday after December 25 (in Provincial WMUs 69A, 70 to 73, 77 to 81 and 86 to 93)
	(iii) The first Thursday after December 26 to the first Saturday after January 4, excluding Sundays, in municipalities where hunting with guns on Sundays is not permitted by provincial regulations	(iii) The Saturday following the fourth Saturday in September to the first Wednesday after December 25 (in Provincial WMUs 69A, 70 to 73, 77 to 81 and 86 to 93)
	(iv) The fourth Saturday in February to the following Saturday, excluding Sundays, in municipalities where hunting with guns on Sunday is not permitted by provincial regulations (not an open season in	(iv) The fourth Saturday in February to the following Friday, (in Provincial WMUs 69A, 70 to 73, 77 to 81 and 86 to 93)

Species	Previous Open Season and Bag Limit	New Open Season and Bag Limit
	Provincial Wildlife Management Unit 94)	
Snow Geese and Ross's Geese, combined	(i) The fourth Saturday in September to the first Sunday after January 5 (excluding Sundays in municipalities where hunting with guns on Sundays is not permitted by provincial regulations)	(i) The fourth Saturday in September to the first Sunday after January 5 (in Provincial WMUs 60 to 68, 69B, 74 to 76, 82 to 85, 94 and 95), and (ii) The Saturday following the fourth Saturday in September to the first Sunday after January 5 (in Provincial WMUs 69A, 70 to 73, 77 to 81 and 86 to 93)
	(ii) The fourth Saturday in February to the following Saturday, excluding Sundays, in municipalities where hunting with guns on Sundays is not permitted by provincial regulations)	(iii) The fourth Saturday in February to the following Friday (in Provincial WMUs 69A, 70 to 73, 77 to 81 and 86 to 93)

- New hunting season for Sandhill Crane (for residents of Canada only)

A new hunting season for Sandhill Cranes (for residents of Canada only) in all areas of the Hudson and James Bay District (District 1) and on farmland only in the Northern and Central Districts (Districts 2 and 3) in Provincial WMUs 23, 24, 27-30, 36, 37, 39–43, 45, 47 and 48 is established. The new season allows for a daily bag and possession limit of one (1) Sandhill Crane, starting on September 1st in the Hudson and James Bay District and on the first Saturday after September 11 in the Northern and Central Districts for a total season length of 14 days. Establishing a new hunting season for Sandhill Cranes 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.

Table 9: Amendments to establish a hunting season for Sandhill Cranes in Ontario for hunting seasons 2026–2027 and 2027–2028.

Species	New Open Season	New Daily Bag limit and Possession Limit
Hudson and James Bay district		
Sandhill Crane	September 1 to September 14 for residents of Canada only	1
Northern District		
Sandhill Crane	The first Saturday after September 11 to the first Friday after September 24 for residents of Canada only (only on farmland) in Provincial WMUs 23, 24, 27 to 30, 36, 37, 39 to 41 and 45	1
Central District		
Sandhill Crane	The first Saturday after September 11 to the first Friday after September 24 for residents of Canada only (only on farmland) in Provincial WMUs 42, 43, 47 and 48	1

- Administrative changes
- The restriction to hunting on “farmland only” during the spring Special Measures Season for Overabundant Species in Ontario is reinstated. During the reformatting of Schedule 3 — Open Season, Limits and Special Measures in 2022, this restriction was erroneously removed. As such, it is 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.
- Harlequin ducks are now listed separately in the Schedule 3 tables to clarify that there is no open season for Harlequin ducks in Ontario.

Manitoba

No regulatory changes have been made for the 2026–2027 and 2027–2028 hunting seasons.

Saskatchewan

No regulatory changes have been made for the 2026–2027 and 2027–2028 hunting seasons.

Alberta

- Expansion of Alberta's Sandhill Crane hunting season

The geographic hunting area for Sandhill Cranes is expanded into Provincial WMUs 247, 336, 501 to 510, 514, 515, and 841. The hunting season in the new Provincial WMUs is 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. The current and projected harvest rate of Sandhill Crane in Canada remains below the suggested management targets established in the Management Guidelines for the Mid-Continent Population for Sandhill Cranes.

Table 10: Amendments to expand hunting areas for Sandhill Cranes in Alberta for hunting seasons 2026–2027 and 2027–2028

Species	Previous Open Season	New Open Season
Zone No 1		
Sandhill Crane	September 1 to December 16 (in Provincial WMUs 200, 202 to 204, 206, 208, 220, 222, 226, 228, 230, 232, 234, 236, 238, 240, 242, 244, 248, 250, 252, 254, 256, 258, 260 and 500)	September 1 to December 16 (in Provincial WMUs 200, 202 to 204, 206, 208, 220, 222, 226, 228, 230, 232, 234, 236, 238, 240, 242, 244, 247, 248, 250, 252, 254, 256, 258, 260, 336, 500 to 510, 514, 515 and 841)

- Administrative changes
- The Provincial WMU 248 was divided into two Provincial WMUs (247 and 248) by the Province. Schedule 3 now includes WMU 247, located in Zone 1.

British Columbia

No regulatory changes have been made for the 2026–2027 and 2027–2028 hunting seasons.

Yukon

No regulatory changes have been made for the 2026–2027 and 2027–2028 hunting seasons.

Northwest Territories

No regulatory changes have been made for the 2026–2027 and 2027–2028 hunting seasons.

Nunavut

No regulatory changes have been made for the 2026–2027 and 2027–2028 hunting seasons.

Migratory Game Bird Hunting Permit

Point of sale options for Migratory Game Bird Hunting permits have evolved over time to increase service and optimize availability to hunters. The Migratory Game Bird Hunting permit along with the Canadian Wildlife Habitat Conservation Stamps can be obtained:

1. Electronically on the [Regulatory Services Platform](#)
2. At select [Canada Post](#) outlets (physical permit)
3. At some [independent vendors](#) (physical permit)

Starting on August 1, 2026, the electronic Migratory Game Bird Hunting permit will be available on the [Regulatory Services Platform](#) and accessible to hunters 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Like the previous electronic permitting system, one or more permits may be obtained at a time, including for multiple hunters. Upon completing their order, hunters can immediately download, print or store on an electronic device the electronic Migratory Game Bird Hunting permit. The Regulatory Services Platform includes a dashboard that allows hunters to recover their electronic permit and view previous orders. The permit no longer requires a signature to be valid.

It should also be noted that obtaining the electronic Migratory Game Bird Hunting permit online makes it easier for hunters to respond to the questions on hunting history, 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.

The physical Migratory Game Bird Hunting permit will gradually become less available, until it is fully phased out as early as the beginning of the 2027–2028 hunting season starting on August 1, 2027. Once the physical permits is phased out, the Migratory Game Bird Hunting permit will be issued 100% electronically to align with [Canada's Digital Ambition 2024–25](#) and [Greening Government Strategy](#), and to increase the efficiency of the Migratory Game Bird Hunting 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.

Physical hunting summaries will also be phased out as of 2027–2028 hunting season, 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.

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 Geological Survey's 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 Canada and the United States 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](http://www.reportband.gov) at www.reportband.gov 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.