2012 HUNTING SEASON PART 1

WATERFOWL OPENS 9/22/12

SEASON OPENERS: BEAR SEASON 9.01–10.14 • EARLY CANADA GOOSE SEASON 9.01–9.21 • DEER HUNT (ARCHERY SEASON) 9.15–12.31

GROUSE, GRAY PARTRIDGE 9.15.12–1.1.13 • FALL TURKEY SEASON 9.29–10.28 • PHEASANT SEASON 10.13.12–1.1.13

60-day, 3-zone waterfowl season will open Sept. 22

Waterfowl hunters in southern Minnesota will have additional late season hunting opportunities under a new three-zone, 60-day season announced today by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Last year, the DNR split the state into two hunting zones with different season dates as part of an effort to provide additional hunting opportunity as birds migrate from north to south. The addition of a third zone furthers that approach.

"A third zone was supported in data collected as part of a hunter survey and a first-ever waterfowl hunter focus group," said Tom Landwehr, DNR commissioner. "This will extend the hunting season in southern Minnesota through the first weekend in December, which will appeal to hunters where waters have not yet frozen and migrating birds are still coming through."

The state's waterfowl season will open one-half hour before sunrise on Sept. 22 statewide. The daily bag limit of six ducks per day and a 60-day season are unchanged from last year. The mallard bag limit remains at four per day, including two hen mallards. The wood duck bag limit will remain at three per day. The daily limit for scaup is four, up from two last year. Possession limits remain at twice the daily bag limits. Youth Waterfowl Day will be Sept. 8, two weeks before the season opener.

Dennis Simon, DNR wildlife chief, said this year's opener is the earliest in 45 years. The Sept. 22 date was selected based on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service direction that enables states in the Mississippi Flyway to open their season on the Saturday nearest Sept. 24.

"The season opened on Sept. 24 last year," said Simon, "That too was an earlier-than-normal opener. We saw hunter satisfaction levels rise last year due, in part, to good early season wood duck and blue-winged teal hunting."

Duck season length is based on mallard counts from a continental survey, including Minnesota information. This year's estimate was 11 million mallards, which was above the average of 8.1 million mallards and the second highest count since 1992. Steve Cordts, DNR waterfowl specialist, said breeding duck numbers for all species were very good this year. He noted wetland conditions in the major waterfowl breeding areas were drier than last year but still near long-term averages.

"The population index of local breeding mallards in Minnesota was at their long-term average of 225,000 breeding mallards this spring," Cordt said. "Wetland conditions in Minnesota were drier this spring compared to last year, but improved in many areas in May and June."

DUCK SEASON

In the North Duck Zone (north of Highway 210), duck season will run from Saturday, Sept. 22-Tuesday, Nov. 20.

In the Central Duck Zone, duck season will run from Saturday, Sept. 22 to Sunday, Sept. 30 and Saturday, Oct.6-Sunday, Nov. 25.

In the South Duck Zone (south of Highway 212), duck season will run from Saturday, Sept. 22 to Sunday, Sept. 30 and Saturday, Oct. 13-Sunday, Dec. 2.

Shooting hours will be from one half hour before sunrise to 4 p.m. daily through Saturday, Oct. 6, and from one half hour before sunrise to sunset the remainder of the season.

Motorized decoys or other motorized devices designed to attract migratory waterfowl may not be used from the opening day of duck season through Saturday, Oct. 6. On water bodies and lands fully contained within state wildlife management area boundaries, a person may not use these devices at any time during the waterfowl season.

Waterfowl – see page 9b

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