



Early crop harvest may impact dove hunt

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With the Sept. 1 dove season opener just days away, many area hunters are concerned that an early crop harvest may bring an premature end to much of the better action.

As more crops are removed from the fields, it is possible that doves typically concentrated at many popular hunting areas will spread out to feed in these harvested fields. This will make finding good hunting spots much more difficult.

Still, hunters seeking good gunning locations during the early days of the season will again find numerous public sites promising excellent action.

Veteran dove hunters often spend as much time traveling the back roads searching for concentrations of doves as they actually do hunting. Fresh cut silage and recently harvested wheat fields often serve as huge dove magnets. Feeding doves will swarm to these areas during the late afternoon and evening hours.

Gaining access to these types of hunting areas can be fairly simple if the landowners are approached in an appropriate manner. In fact, many times they may wish to join in on the hunt.

Good action can also be found at many federal and state managed public hunting areas. Most of the top public hunting areas offer gunning over carefully groomed sunflower fields. On state-managed areas alone, hunters bagged more than 61,000 doves during a previous season.

Though regulations at many public sites require permits for the first few days of the season, a limited number of standby opportunities are usually available. In addition, many sites offer hunting on a first-come or daily draw basis after the opening-day crowds disappear.

Rules at most public hunting areas permit hunters to use only shotgun shells containing shot sizes 7 1/2, 8 or 9, or number 6 or smaller steel. Hunters using shells containing bismuth shot must use size 7 1/2 or smaller.

Some public areas including Des Plaines, Green River, Horseshoe Lake State Park, Kankakee River, Mr Vernon Game Farm, Sangchris Lake and Silver Springs also require the use of shells containing only non-toxic shot. Hunters should always check for site specific regulations before planning a trip to any public hunting area.

The annual split-season dove hunt begins Sept. 1 and continues through Nov. 14. It then temporarily closes and reopens from Dec. 26 to Jan. 9. Daily bag limits are 15 doves with 30 in possession after opening day.

The IDNR says in order to hunt dove in Illinois, a person needs to have a valid hunting license, a state habitat stamp and must be registered with HIP, unless exempt by law. They say hunters can purchase a license and the state habitat stamp online through DNR Direct, over the counter from a license vendor or by calling [\(888\)673-7648](tel:(888)673-7648).

Restrictions requiring certain hunting devices, ammunition and garment requirements can be found in the 2017 Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations. They also say ammunition size and type is very important when hunting doves in Illinois, especially on public areas.

Special Dove Hunting Regulations

As mentioned, Illinois hunters are required to possess a valid Illinois hunting license, 2017 State Habitat Stamp and register with the IDNR's Harvest Information Program (HIP) if they intend to hunt migratory birds, including doves. This HIP number is available at license vendors or through the IDNR website at dnr.state.il.us.

Though hunters not required to purchase a license are exempt from the HIP procedure, all others must register before hunting any migratory birds.

In the past, selected hunters received hunter report cards before or during the hunting seasons. They were asked to record the information and return the completed cards at the end of the hunting seasons.

That survey enables the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the states to more accurately determine the status of our migratory birds. Biologists say that better information is needed to fully understand the impact of hunting on wildlife resources.