

Illinois Waterfowl Hunting Updates

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SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) is reminding waterfowl hunters of key dates and other information regarding the 2020–2021 waterfowl seasons and beyond.

Public Duck and Goose Hunting Permits

The application periods for Illinois Public Duck and Goose Hunting Area Permits are open, with a deadline of Aug. 31 to apply for the first lottery, and application periods of Sept. 1–14 for the second lottery, and Sept. 15–28 for the third lottery. Permits remaining after the third lottery will be available on a first-come, first-served basis online starting Oct. 1. Permits are no longer mailed to successful participants but will be emailed, and participants can check the status of their permit application online and print their permit.

Hunters should note several changes to the Duck and Goose Hunting Area Permits. In anticipation of required changes at Duck and Goose Hunting Area Permit sites due to the coronavirus pandemic, permit allotments have been increased at several sites. IDNR anticipates not being able to hold daily standby drawings at sites for unallocated permits or no-show permit holders. Permit allotments have been increased to equal the total number of hunting stakes/blinds at these sites. Local hunters accustomed to hunting these sites via standby drawings should apply for permits to ensure they can hunt these sites this season.

More information, including online applications, instructions and a list of participating sites is available on the IDNR website at:

<https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/hunting/waterfowl/Pages/OnlinePermitApplication.aspx>

Permit sites with anticipated changes to standby hunting include: Banner Marsh SFWA, Rice Lake SFWA, Double T SFWA, Anderson Lake SFWA, Mermet Lake SFWA, Horseshoe Lake SFWA (Alexander Co), and Union Co SFWA. One new site added to the permit system this year is field goose hunting at the Black Crown Marsh Unit of Moraine Hills State Park in Lake County. Goose hunting at Black Crown Marsh will be available to one party of hunters per day four days per week.

Additional changes at waterfowl hunting sites

Changes to daily procedures at other waterfowl hunting sites are anticipated in response to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Please watch for additional IDNR press releases outlining changes and check with sites for specific procedures. Through responsible actions, hunters can help ensure that IDNR can continue to offer outdoor recreation opportunities.

2020-2021 Waterfowl Seasons

Illinois waterfowl hunters are reminded of the season dates and bag limits for the 2020–2021 seasons.

The September 2020 early Canada goose season is Sept. 1–15 with a daily limit of five (5) and a possession limit of fifteen (15) geese in the North and Central zones, and a daily limit of two (2) and a possession limit of six (6) geese in the South Central and South zones.

Illinois' 16-day 2020 statewide teal hunting season is Sept. 5–20 with a daily limit of six (6) and a possession limit of eighteen (18). Shooting hours for the September teal season are different from the regular season, starting at sunrise (one-half hour later than regular season) until sunset.

The regular seasons include 60-day duck seasons in each of the state's four waterfowl hunting zones, along with 107 days of Canada goose hunting opportunity in the North and Central zones (15 days in September, two days of youth hunting and 90 days of "regular" goose season), 96 days of Canada goose hunting opportunity in the South Central Zone, and 84 days of Canada goose hunting opportunity in the South Zone. Goose season lengths are shorter in the South Central and South zones to coincide with duck season dates and to match hunter preferences.

The 2020–2021 Illinois season dates are the last year of a five-year plan that was developed in 2015. This year, Illinois will open the regular duck, Canada goose, and snow goose seasons on Oct. 17 in the North Zone, Oct. 24 in the Central Zone, Nov. 14 in the South Central Zone, and Nov. 26 in the South Zone. White-fronted goose (specklebelly) seasons will open Oct. 19 in the North Zone, Nov. 5 in the Central Zone, and on the same date as duck season in the South Central (Nov. 14) and South zones (Nov. 26).

The daily duck bag limit is six (6) and may include no more than four (4) mallards (two hens), three (3) wood ducks, two (2) redheads, two (2) black ducks, two (2) canvasback, one (1) pintail, and one (1) mottled duck. Scaup (bluebills) will have a bag limit of two (2) for the first 45 days of the season in each zone and one (1) for the last 15 days of the season in each zone. The daily bag limit of mergansers is five (5), only two of which may be hooded mergansers. The possession limit for ducks and mergansers is three times the daily bag limit by species and sex.

During the regular season, Canada goose limits will be three (3) with a possession limit of nine (9). White-fronted goose daily bag limits will be two (2) with a possession limit of six (6). The snow goose daily bag limit is 20 birds, with no possession limit, during the fall and winter season. The spring Light Goose Conservation Order will open Jan. 17 in the North Zone and Feb. 1 in the Central, South Central, and South zones, ending April 30 in all zones. There is no daily bag or possession limit on snow, blue, and Ross' geese during the spring conservation order.

The IDNR 2020–2021 season dates are outlined below.

Illinois Waterfowl Season Dates for 2020–21

September Canada Goose: Statewide Sept. 1 – 15

September Teal: Statewide Sept. 5 – 20

North Zone Youth Hunt Duck Canada Goose

2020–21 Oct. 10 – 11 Oct. 17 – Dec. 15 Oct. 17 – Jan. 14

Central Zone

2020–21 Oct. 17 – 18 Oct. 24 – Dec. 22 Oct. 24 – Nov. 1 and Nov. 12 – Jan. 31

South Central Zone

2020–21 Nov. 7 – 8 Nov. 14 – Jan. 12 Nov. 14 – Jan. 31

South Zone

2020–21 Nov. 14 – 15 Nov. 26 – Jan. 24 Nov. 26 – Jan. 31

Illinois 2020–21 Snow Goose and White-Fronted Goose Season Dates

North Zone

Snow Geese

Regular Season: Oct. 17 – Jan. 14

White-fronted Geese: Oct. 19 – Jan. 14

Central Zone

Snow Geese

Regular Season: Oct. 24 – Jan. 31

White-fronted Geese: Nov. 5 – Jan. 31

South Central Zone

Snow Geese

Regular Season: Nov. 14 – Jan. 31

White-fronted Geese: Nov. 14 – Jan. 31

South Zone

Snow Geese

Regular Season: Nov. 26 – Jan. 31

White-fronted Geese: Nov. 26 – Jan. 31

The Illinois waterfowl hunting zone maps and season dates for the 2016–2020 seasons are available on the IDNR website at: <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/hunting/waterfowl/Documents/WaterfowlZonesDatesFinal20162020.pdf>

The Illinois waterfowl hunting zone maps and anticipated season dates for the 2021–2025 seasons are available on the IDNR website at: <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/news/Documents/IDNR-Waterfowl-2021-2025.pdf>

Additional details on the duck, goose, and other migratory bird hunting seasons are available on the IDNR website at <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/Pages/default.aspx> and in the Illinois Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations 2020–21, available on the IDNR website at <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/hunting/Documents/HuntTrapDigest.pdf>

Note that sunrise and sunset times are not included in the Hunting and Trapping Digest this year. Hunters should refer to this website for their local sunrise and sunset: https://aa.usno.navy.mil/data/docs/RS_OneYear.php