Attachment 3

GAME BIRD PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

for 2026–27

UPLAND and MIGRATORY GAME BIRD SEASONS

FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE OREGON FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION
April 24, 2026

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

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Winning artwork for the 2026 Oregon Waterfowl Stamp Art Contest, Blue-winged Teal by Richard Clifton.

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The recommendations in this packet are based in part on public correspondence (including telephone and e-mail communications), Pacific Flyway Study Committee and Council discussions, discussions with field personnel, federal regulatory requirements, and past Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) direction concerning hunting seasons.

Proposed season dates are for calendar year 2026 unless otherwise noted.

Season Frameworks

During the April 2025 adoption of the Game Bird Regulations, the Commission approved the 2025-2030 Upland Game Bird Hunting Season Framework; a policy document that guides the development of standardized upland game bird seasons for a period of 5 years (September 1, 2025 through August 31, 2030). Standardized regulation frameworks are biologically sound management tools that help the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (department) provide consistent, stable regulations that reduce confusion, assist hunters with planning trips, and lower administrative costs. The framework includes season structure for ring-necked pheasant, chukar, Hungarian (gray) partridge, California quail, mountain quail, "blue" and ruffed grouse, greater sage-grouse, and spring and fall wild turkey seasons. The Commission will consider adoption of the draft 2026-27 Game Bird Hunting Regulations within the criteria of the 2025-2030 Upland Game Bird Hunting Season Framework. The framework does not preclude mid-term regulations proposals that may arise due to unforeseen circumstances or opportunities.

Population Status and Harvest

The following information about the population status and harvest of Oregon's upland game birds is presented to provide additional background and context for the 2026-27 regulations proposals.

Upland Game Bird Trends

Upland game birds are short-lived species that have high reproductive potential and populations often fluctuate annually. These short-term population changes can often be attributed to high or low nest success, often as a result of short term weather events and the seasonal effect of weather and climate on habitat. These changes should not be the basis for setting annual hunting seasons because for many upland game bird populations, hunting mortality tends to be more compensatory rather than additive to other causes of mortality. Generally, it is unnecessary to modify seasons and bag limits for the recovery of upland game bird populations from short term declines because favorable weather conditions during nesting and brood rearing will result in most game bird populations recovering rapidly with no change in hunting regulations. In addition, hunting pressure on upland game bird populations is generally density dependent, i.e., when populations go down, hunting pressure decreases. Long-term population trends are most often related to changes in the quality and quantity of habitat and can justify regulation adjustments. Potential impacts from harvest are evaluated annually.

Long-term trends in harvest are shown in Figure 1 for all upland species combined, except wild turkey. After peaking in 2005, upland game bird populations, particularly chukar and California quail, declined sharply in 2007 due to a severe drought. From 2007-2015 (2011 was an

exception) precipitation was below average and consequently suppressed upland game bird populations, especially chukar in eastern Oregon. Weather in the winter of 2016-2017 included deep persistent snow cover that caused mortality in some areas, reducing breeding populations, but populations rebounded over time. Hunter effort has been slightly increasing over the past decade in response to improving upland game bird populations. Increasing harvest is largely driven by exceptional chukar populations which have been on the rise since 2020, peaking in 2024.

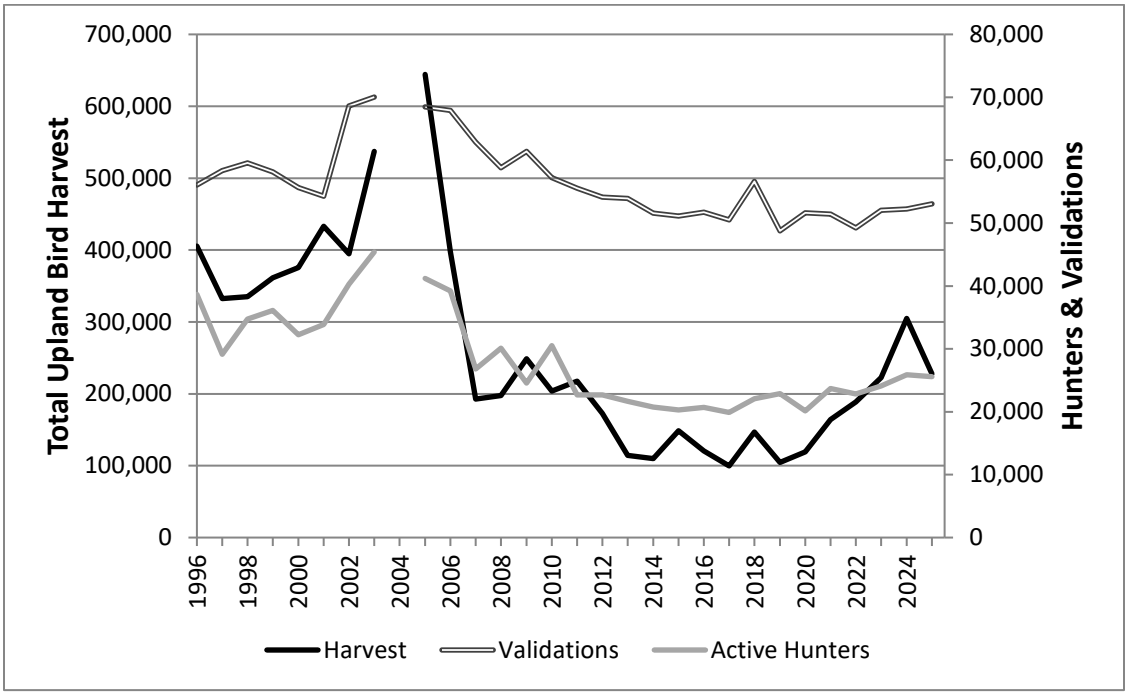

Figure 1. Long-term trend of upland game bird harvest, hunters, and upland validation (stamp) sales obtained through phone (2020 and prior) and email surveys (2021 to present). No survey was conducted in 2004.

Upland Game Bird Production

Upland game bird season recommendations are not based on annual production surveys, but it is still important to collect this information to determine the status, trends, and to provide accurate hunting season forecasts. Most birds in the fall harvest are hatched in the same year, so reproductive success is an important predictor of hunter success. Peak hatch for most upland game birds in Oregon is mid-May through mid-June. Upland game bird chicks develop quickly but are still susceptible to cold and wet weather conditions until they can thermoregulate independently.

The winter of 2024-25 was mild with adequate snowpack. In early spring, a series of severe storms, heavy rainfall, and rapid snowmelt caused flooding and landslides. April of 2025 was the warmest and driest in Oregon's recorded history. May was a combination of cool and wet followed by recording breaking heat in parts of the state, including some severe thunderstorms.

During the summer of 2025, eastern Oregon experienced moderate temperatures and regular

precipitation, followed by the warmest fall on record. Despite conditions, the wildfire season was relatively mild in eastern Oregon. The Cram Fire near Madras was the largest (95,736 acres), followed by the Black Rock Fire near Fossil in Wasco County (43,842 acres). Total acres burned totaled approximately 350,000 acres, below the long-term average (~680,000 acres) and significantly below the record-breaking fire year of 2024 (1.14M acres). Western Oregon experienced a very warm summer, and the hottest fall on record, with consistently high average temperatures across the Willamette Valley and coastal regions in the summer.

This extreme weather appears to have had a negative effect on nest initiation rates, nest success, and/or brood survival. Summer production surveys indicated that chukar, mountain quail, and ring-necked pheasant densities were above the 5-year average, while California quail and gray partridge abundance was down slightly. However, the production index (chicks/adult) were down significantly for all quail, partridge, and pheasant. Sample sizes for other species were not adequate to evaluate.

Upland Game Bird Harvest Surveys

A random email survey of upland game bird validation holders with 9,599 responses was used to estimate 2025-26 upland game bird harvest (Table 1).

For ruffed and blue grouse, hunter numbers, harvest effort, and overall harvest were up from the previous year, and when compared to the 5-year average. Blue grouse harvest was up 43%, and ruffed grouse harvest was up 22%, when compared to the 5-year average.

For the quail species, California quail hunters, harvest, and effort were down from the previous year, but similar to the 5-year average. Mountain quail effort was similar to the previous year, but up from the 5-year average. Mountain quail harvest was down from the previous year, but 46% above the 5-year average.

Chukar, gray partridge, and ring-necked pheasant were down across every category when compared to the very successful hunting season of 2024-25, however, chukar harvest, hunters, and effort far exceeded the 5-year average. Gray partridge and pheasant harvest was below the 5-year average.

Chukar were the most harvested upland game bird in the 2025-26 season, followed by ruffed grouse, and California quail. Gray partridge were the least harvested species, followed by mountain quail.

Separate harvest surveys are conducted for sage-grouse (Table 2) and wild turkeys (Table 3). Wild turkey harvest surveys are included under the mandatory reporting system while sage-grouse harvest estimates are based on a combination of email and direct mailing of survey questionnaires to successful controlled hunt applicants.

Table 1. Results of 2025-26 upland game bird harvest surveys in Oregon in comparison to the previous season and previous 5-year average.

		Total Harvest 2025-26	% Change 2024-25	5-Year Average	% Change from 5-Year Average
Blue Grouse	Hunters	8,077	3%	7,892	2%
	Days	79,364	3%	67,478	18%
	Harvest	19,134	8%	13,395	43%
Ruffed Grouse	Hunters	13,131	5%	12,300	7%
	Days	132,175	10%	112,922	17%
	Harvest	36,767	25%	30,086	22%
Mountain Quail	Hunters	4,557	1%	3,972	15%
	Days	38,619	9%	31,261	24%
	Harvest	12,951	-16%	8,893	46%
California Quail	Hunters	6,813	-15%	6,374	7%
	Days	44,181	-16%	42,700	3%
	Harvest	36,270	-34%	38,749	-6%
Chukar	Hunters	9,137	-11%	6,959	31%
	Days	59,316	-10%	46,718	27%
	Harvest	95,775	-30%	76,333	25%
Hungarian (Gray) Partridge	Hunters	3,587	-18%	2,754	30%
	Days	20,296	-35%	18,361	11%
	Harvest	9,623	-63%	11,717	-18%
Ring-necked Pheasant	Hunters	6,610	-6%	6,066	9%
	Days	25,531	-22%	27,914	-9%
	Harvest	16,795	-28%	18,100	-7%

Greater Sage-Grouse

A long history of greater sage-grouse *(Centrocercus urophasianus)* conservation efforts in Oregon and throughout the West has resulted in plans, executive orders, and agreements that provide direction for sage-grouse management in the state, prioritize research, and coordinate the many state, federal, and non-governmental organization partners involved. A brief history of the most relevant actions is summarized below.

On March 5, 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced its determination that listing the greater sage-grouse range-wide under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) was warranted but precluded by higher-priority listing actions. This finding prompted the development of the Oregon Sage-Grouse Conservation Partnership (SageCon), a collaborative effort to leverage funding across Oregon's sage country and building agreements to balance natural resource protection with local livelihoods. Concurrently, the department's Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon (2011) laid the groundwork for sage-grouse management in the state and identified the core areas critical to development of SageCon's Oregon Sage-Grouse Action Plan (2015), a collaborative framework for sage-grouse conservation in Oregon. Governor Brown then issued Executive Order 15-18 (2015), directing state agencies to implement the Oregon Sage-Grouse Action Plan.

The sage-grouse controlled hunt is addressed in the Action Plan and has been managed according to the agreed-upon objectives and action items (pp 191-192). Specifically, the Action Plan does not propose additional restrictions on the hunt due to the already restrictive and conservative management of the season. The Action Plan directs the continuation of two related conservation actions for sage-grouse hunting seasons: no more than 5 percent of the fall population is to be harvested annually, and no harvest is allowed in WMUs where the estimated spring population is <100 males in consecutive years.

On September 22, 2015, the USFWS determined greater sage-grouse did not warrant protection under the ESA because unprecedented landscape-scale conservation efforts across the western United States had significantly reduced the threats to the species. This collaborative, science-based strategy for greater sage-grouse is likely the largest conservation effort in U.S. history. The determination found that the main threats to sage-grouse range wide were, and continue to be, 1) habitat loss, fragmentation, and modification, and 2) inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms, particularly in relation to energy and other development actions. In Oregon, two of the largest threats are invasive species (non-native annual grasses and conifer encroachment) and wildfire. The USFWS also evaluated the "utilization" (e.g., hunting) of sage-grouse and concluded, "the greater sage-grouse is not threatened by over-utilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes now or in the foreseeable future."

In September 2025, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission approved the updated Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon, which included an updated population model for tracking sage-grouse populations.

Sage-grouse are intensively monitored in Oregon. The primary monitoring method is spring lek

counts which provide year-by-year comparisons in lek attendance by male sage-grouse. Other demographic information such as nest success, sex ratios, and age ratios are obtained through hunter-collected wings, and through specific academic research projects. Hunter effort and success rates are obtained through the annual sage-grouse harvest survey.

In addition to annual monitoring, the department supports academic research projects to answer specific questions about sage-grouse biology, demographics, and habitat. These projects have examined the impacts of feral horses on brood survival and summer habitat, post wildfire recovery, juniper removal, invasive annual grass treatment, nest-site selection, the impact of raven predation, and the effects of legal harvest on sage-grouse. Each research project is designed to inform managers of best practices to improve sage-grouse conservation outcomes by recommending actions based on the study results. For example, Dr. Andrew Olsen (Oregon State University) found that large-scale juniper removal starting in 2012 (Warner Unit) increased sage-grouse population growth rates by 12 percent as compared to the control areas, but the effect took 5-6 years. These results justify the continued effort and expense of stopping the invasion of western juniper in sagebrush habitats.

Sage-grouse Survey Results— During the 2025 greater sage-grouse breeding season, 1,614 ground and 46 aerial lek surveys were conducted at 771 individual lek sites comprising 482 lek complexes. Surveys were conducted at 60.9% of known lek sites and 56.6% of known lek complexes in Oregon. Access to sage-grouse leks was moderate to good in most areas during the 2025 breeding season, although statewide lek survey effort was slightly below the 10-year average (2015–2024) for the proportion of known leks surveyed (10 yr. $\bar{x}$ = 63.1%) and the proportion of known complexes surveyed (10 yr. $\bar{x}$ = 60.8%).

In 2025, ODFW updated the methodology used to calculate Oregon's sage-grouse population size estimates and trends through development of an N-mixture population model by the U.S. Geological Survey. Under this new model, results from the 2025 lek surveys indicate the sage-grouse spring breeding population increased by +17.8% between 2024 and 2025, to an estimated 50,912 birds (95% CI: 40,841– 64,628 birds), the highest estimate recorded in Oregon since 2017. Results from 2025 lek surveys suggest Oregon's sage-grouse populations are still trending upward in the current population cycle. The 2025 population estimate was -2.7% below the adjusted 2003 baseline population estimate of 52,348 birds. Additionally, population abundance estimates (2017–2025) were calculated for each sage-grouse Priority Area for Conservation (PAC) using the new model. Increasing population trends between 2024 and 2025 were seen in 21 PACs, with decreasing trends in only 2 PACs, the Baker PAC (-13.3%) and Beatys PAC (-4.5%). Population increases ranged from +1.5% (Cow Lakes PAC) to +48.1% (Juniper Mountain PAC).

Lastly, ODFW contracted aerial services for lek searches by helicopter in the Steens PAC and low-density habitat north of the Sheepshead PAC during spring 2025. The aerial survey documented over 19 locations where sage-grouse have not previously been known to display. Of these potential new lek locations, 7 leks were confirmed active by a ground observer in 2025 following the aerial survey, 6 in the Steens PAC and 1 lek in the low-density habitat north of the Sheepshead PAC. The remaining potential new lek locations in the Steens PAC and surrounding

low-density habitat will need to be verified on the ground during the next several breeding seasons before they can be confirmed as new lek locations and added to the database. A full review of sage-grouse monitoring efforts can be found in the annual population report.

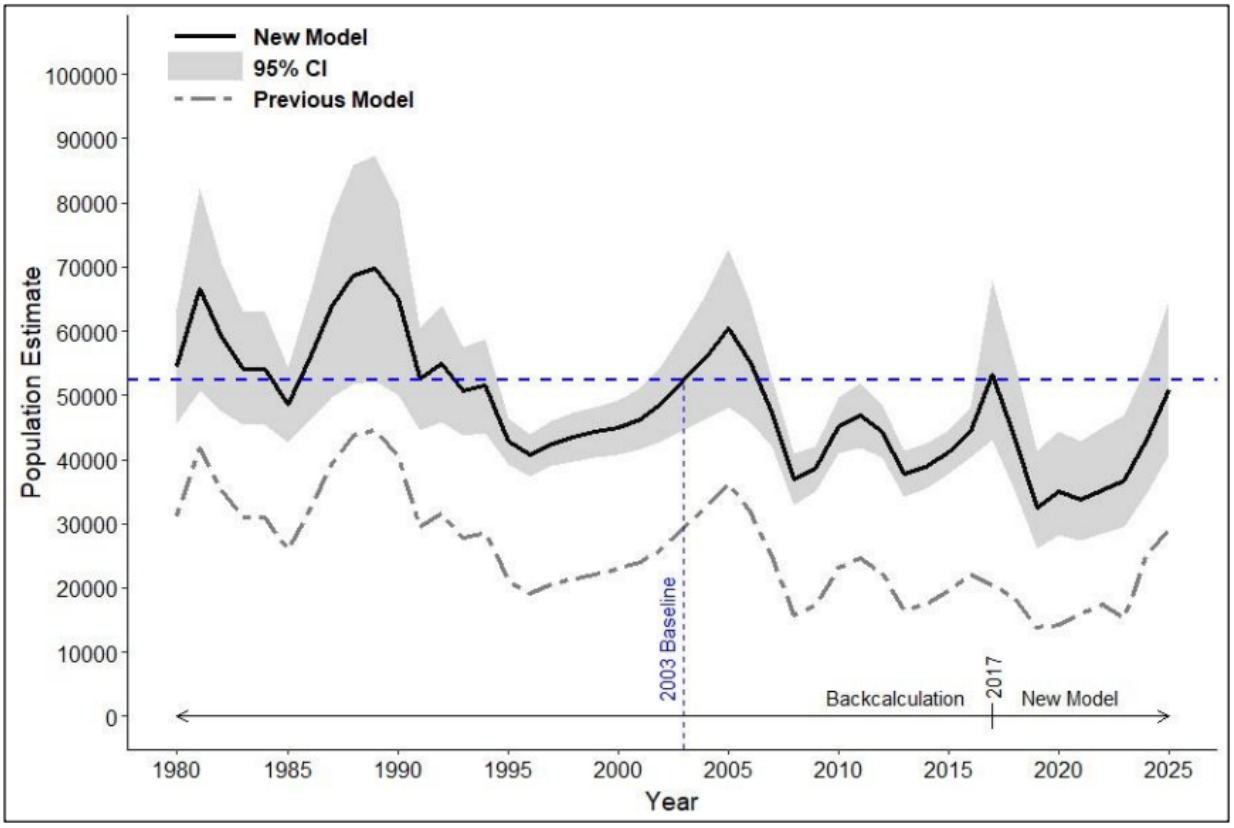

Figure 2. Oregon statewide sage-grouse population estimates, 1980–2025. The solid black line represents the abundance estimates from the new N-mixture model, and the dashed gray line represents the population estimates from ODFW's previous model. The population goal is set at the 2003 level, representing the baseline for Oregon's statewide sage-grouse population size.

Sage-grouse Controlled Hunt Results— A total of 695 permits were authorized for the 2025 season. The Lookout Mountain, Sumpter, South Wagontire, and Juniper Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) remained closed due to concerning population declines. Some of these declines followed large-scale range fires, while others are long-term declines related to changing land use and habitat quality. No permits were offered in the Silvies WMU in 2025 due to concerns from a wildfire in 2024 that burned over the largest lek. Additionally, permits were decreased on the Owyhee WMU due to long-term population concerns related to poor habitat conditions. Permits were increased slightly on the Malheur River, Trout Creek Mountains, Whitehorse, Steens, North Wagontire, and Warner hunt units from the previous year.

Of the 695 permits authorized for the 10 hunt units, 458 hunters participated in the season. Hunters harvested an estimated 419 sage-grouse, averaging 0.92 birds/hunter (Table 2). Hunter-returned wings (n = 261) were examined at the annual sage-grouse wing bee to estimate age

ratios, sex ratios, proportion of successful hens and timing of hatch. In 2025, wings showed 0.95 juveniles/hen in the harvest, below Oregon's long-term average of 1.47 juveniles/hen. Additionally, the proportion of juveniles in the harvested sample was 38.7% and below the long-term average of 47%. Production was highest in the Steens unit at 1.40 chicks/hen, followed by the Trout Creeks and Warner units. Production was lowest in the Beulah WMU and Malheur River units.

Table 2. 2025 sage-grouse hunting effort and harvest by wildlife management unit.

Hunt	Tags Authorized	Tags Drawn	Tags Issued	Did Hunt	Hunter Days	Birds Harvested	Birds/ Hunter	% Response
J51 Sumpter	0							
J64 Lookout Mtn	0							
J65 Beulah	125	125	96	79	29	48	0.61	71%
J66 Malheur Rvr	110	110	77	68	157	44	0.65	79%
J67 Owyhee	45	45	33	31	82	14	0.43	73%
J68A Trout Crk Mtns	45	45	28	30	36	48	1.58	80%
J68B E. Whitehorse	110	110	86	68	229	114	1.67	67%
J69 Steens Mtn	60	60	34	32	78	42	1.33	67%
J70 Beatys Butte	90	90	64	59	109	44	0.76	70%
J71 Juniper	0							
J72 Silvies	0							
J73A N. Wagontire	30	30	25	20	60	11	0.57	70%
J73B S. Wagontire	0							
J74 Warner	80	80	80	70	140	56	0.81	76%
Totals	695	695	508	458	917	419	0.92	73%

Wild Turkey

Turkey population trends are primarily monitored through the mandatory harvest reporting system. The main hunting season is focused on male, or "tom" turkeys and takes place during the spring. Fall seasons are designed to alleviate damage and includes the harvest of hen turkeys. The beardless turkey permit was introduced in 2023-24 to a pilot area in the vicinity of Grant County and expanded to the Willamette Valley in 2024-25, and the Rogue and Umpqua valleys in 2025-26. Designed to address conflict and manage populations, the permit allows for the harvest of 3 hens or beardless turkeys for the price of one turkey tag but is limited to private lands.

Spring Turkey – Tags issued for general spring turkey were up 4.5 percent from the previous year. Since 2022, SportsPac holders are allowed to select either a spring or fall turkey tag, resulting in a decrease in spring tag holders. The number of hunters in 2025 who pursued spring turkeys decreased 4.5 percent from the previous year. These hunters harvested 26 percent more birds than 2024, however an error in the mandatory reporting system impacted harvest data and likely inflated this estimate. The youth spring turkey hunt continues to be very popular and well received. Youth accounted for about 14 percent of total spring harvest of turkeys.

Fall Turkey –Because the fall turkey season ends on January 31st, mandatory reporting data is not available until after the late season reporting deadline of April 15th. Staff will analyze the data for the 2025-26 fall turkey season once it becomes available.

Beardless Turkey Permit - After the third year of the Beardless Turkey Permit Season, staff report that landowners and hunters like the product and are adopting its use. A total of 981 permits were sold for the 2025-26 season, up from 450 the previous year. This is likely due to increased awareness of the product and the expansion of the hunt boundaries to private lands in the Umpqua and Rogue valleys. Thirty-seven landowners in the John Day valley relied on the Hunt By Reservation System and ODFW staff to organize hunters on their property, while others operated independently. The mild winter resulted in fewer wild turkeys migrating down to the valley bottom, so reduced harvest is expected for 2025-26 in the John Day Valley. Final numbers from mandatory reporting will be available in mid-April. Staff also report that the presence of hunters, whether successful or not, did have a desirable hazing effect on the turkey flocks on the most heavily hunted properties.

Table 3. Wild turkey mandatory harvest reporting results for 2025-26 spring and fall seasons.

HUNT	Tags Authorized	Tags Issued	Hunters	Hunter Days	Birds Harvested	Birds/ Hunter	% Response
Spring Turkey	Unlimited	36,698	13,706	54,670	7,514	0.55	66%
Spring Youth Turkey	Unlimited	5,132	1,905	6,428	1,032	0.54	
Fall Turkey	Unlimited	14,790	*Data not yet available*				
Beardless Turkey Permit	Unlimited	1,038					
TOTALS		57,658	15,611	61,098	8,546	0.55	66%

2026-27 Upland Game Bird Season Proposals

For most upland game birds, all aspects of the seasons (e.g., season dates, daily bag limits, possession limits) are covered by the 2025-30 Upland Game Bird Hunting Season Framework and presented in Table 4. However, for some species like sage-grouse, there is a controlled hunt where the permit numbers are determined annually based on fall population projections. Hunting seasons can be adjusted prior to the next framework if appropriately justified, such as a major habitat disturbance or increasing nuisance and damage, in the case of wild turkeys.

Table 4. The 2026-27 season proposals for forest grouse, partridge, pheasant, quail, and general turkey.

UPLAND GAME BIRDS	OPEN AREA	OPEN SEASON	Daily Bag limit
"Blue" and Ruffed Grouse	Statewide	Sept. 1 – Jan. 31	3 each species
Chukar and Hungarian (Gray) Partridge	Statewide	Oct. 10 – Jan. 31	8 (except Lower Klamath Hills = 2)
Rooster Pheasant	Statewide	Oct. 10 – Dec. 31	2
California Quail	Western Oregon	Sept. 1 – Jan. 31	10 in aggregate
	Eastern Oregon	Oct. 10 – Jan. 31	10 in aggregate
Mountain Quail	Western Oregon	Sept. 1 – Jan. 31	10 in aggregate
	Eastern Oregon	Oct. 10 – Jan. 31	2 in aggregate
Spring Turkey	Statewide	Apr. 15 – May 31	1 (season limit 3)
Youth Spring Turkey	Statewide	Apr. 10 – Apr. 11	
Fall Turkey – Western Oregon	WMUs 14-30	Sept. 1 – Jan. 31	2 (season limit 2 Fall Turkey tags)
Fall Turkey – Eastern Oregon[1,2]	WMUs 36, 37[3], 38, 40, 43-44, 45 (N of Wheeler Co line), 48 (N of Grant Co line), 49, 51-64, 65[4], 66-67, 69, 71-72.	Oct. 10 – Jan. 31	1 (season limit 1)
	WMUs 37[5],45 (S of Wheeler Co line), 46, 47, 48 (S of Grant Co line), 50, and 65[6]	Sept. 1 – Jan. 31	
Fall Turkey – Beardless Turkey Permit	Western Oregon: Private lands[2] excluding private industrial forestland[7] within the boundaries of Marion, Polk, Yamhill, Benton, Linn, and eastern Lane[8] cos (WMUs 14-21), and within WMUs 23, 28, 29 (S of Josephine and Jackson co line), and 30.	Oct. 1 – Feb 28	3 turkeys including all hens and turkeys without a visible beard (season limit 3 permits)
	Eastern Oregon: Private lands[2] within WMUs 37[5],45 (S of Wheeler Co line), 46, 47, 48 (S of Grant Co line), 50, and 65[6]		

[1] From Dec. 1 – Jan 31, 2025 hunting is allowed only on private lands by permission.
[2] Private lands are any lands not owned or controlled by any state, county, or federal agency.
[3] That part of WMU 37 west of FS Rd 12 and S of the northern Ochoco NF boundary
[4] That part of WMU 65 that falls E of the western Malheur NF boundary.
[5] That part of WMU 37 east of FS road 12 and N of the Ochoco NF boundary.
[6] That part of WMU 65 that falls W of the western Malheur NF boundary.
[7] Private industrial forestland is land owned by a company or corporation that owns 5,000 or more acres of land used for growing and harvesting forest tree species in Oregon. A map of private industrial and non-industrial forestland can be found at: odfw.com/maps/odf
[8] That part of WMUs 18 and 20 within the Lane Co boundary E of the Range 7/8 W boundary extending from the N to the S border of the Co.

2026 Controlled Sage-grouse Hunt

The season framework for sage-grouse establishes a controlled hunt with a 9-day season between September 1-20. The 2026 proposed season dates are September 12-20 with a two bird daily and season bag limit. The department's policy is for sage-grouse harvest not to exceed 5 percent of the fall population and in practice, actual harvest is estimated at 3-4 percent or less of the fall population in the hunted areas. Sage-grouse are not hunted range-wide in Oregon; a limited number of sage-grouse permits are considered in 10 of the 21 WMUs where sage-grouse occur.

Volunteers and state and federal personnel are currently conducting the 2026 lek surveys. Over the next months, lek data will be entered and analyzed. Permit numbers are determined annually based on a mathematical formula combining spring lek count information, production, hunter participation rates, and results from the analysis of wings taken during the previous hunting season. Permit numbers for 2026 (Table 5) made permanent through these proposed rules may be changed by temporary rule if finalized sage-grouse population estimates by WMU vary notably from expectations after sage-grouse population and production surveys are completed in mid-July. Staff expects to maintain a very conservative permit allocation with existing closures maintained in the Silvies, Juniper, South Wagontire, Lookout Mountain, and Sumpter WMUs.

This will be the first hunting season to incorporate the updated sage-grouse population model, adopted as part of the 2025 Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon. The model incorporates detection variability and considers undiscovered leks, indicating that sage-grouse were undercounted with the previous methodology. Staff are not proposing to increase sage-grouse controlled hunt permits accordingly. This conservative approach considers non-uniform hunter distribution, and that WMUs do not truly represent population units (PACs). The number of permits offered by WMU during the past two years is shown in Table 5.

An important benefit of hunting sage-grouse is the collection of essential biological information that would otherwise be very difficult to obtain. Each hunter is provided with wing envelopes and asked to send in one wing from each bird harvested. Analysis of these wings provides an estimate of overall production, hatching chronology, and pre-winter sex and age composition of the population. The sex and age composition allows the prediction of breeding population trends for the following year. Age-at-harvest models are also being refined that allow for population reconstruction based simply on age at harvest data and known hunting effort. Without this wing analysis data, it would be very difficult to determine how sage-grouse populations are performing through time. It is particularly critical to have this information as land managers implement habitat improvements designed to benefit sage-grouse.

Of the western states where sage-grouse are hunted, Oregon sage-grouse hunting regulations are among the most conservative. The controlled hunt process allows the department to closely manage harvest and hunters and collect important information. Collecting this information by other means would be difficult and costly. The department will continue to evaluate the limited harvest of sage-grouse in the state on an annual basis; making any necessary adjustments and/or closures as warranted.

Table 5. Oregon sage-grouse hunting permit numbers in 2024, 2025, and recommendations for 2026.

Sage-grouse Permit Recommendations			
MANAGEMENT UNIT	**2024 PERMITS**	**2025 PERMITS**	**2026 RECOMMENDATIONS[1]**
Beulah	125	125	125
Malheur River	100	110	110
Owyhee	50	45	45
Trout Creek Mountains[2]	40	45	45
E. Whitehorse[3]	100	110	110
Steens Mountain	50	45	45
Beatys Butte	90	90	90
Juniper	0	0	0
Silvies	20	0	0
North Wagontire	25	30	30
South Wagontire	0	0	0
Warner	70	80	80
TOTAL	670	695	695

[1] Permit numbers may change by temporary rule if finalized sage-grouse population estimates by management unit vary notably from expectations after sage-grouse population and production surveys are completed in mid-July.

[2] The part of unit 68 south of Whitehorse Ranch Rd; west of Hwy 95; and east of Fields-Denio Rd.

[3] Unit 68 excluding that area described for Trout Creek Mountains hunt.

2026-27 Fall Wild Turkey and Beardless Wild Turkey Permit Seasons

Fall wild turkey seasons are designed to address nuisance and damage situations by allowing the harvest of any turkey, including hens. Eastern Oregon fall seasons were historically conservative as turkey populations gained a foothold, beginning as controlled hunts, then shifting to a general season as populations increased. Numerous adjustments to the fall wild turkey season have been incorporated, including opening up additional units, extending the season dates, increasing the daily bag limit (Western OR), and removing the limit on total tags available.

In 2023-24, the department piloted the special Beardless Turkey Permit concept in 4 WMUs associated with Grant County. In 2024, the Commission approved the expansion of the Beardless Turkey Permit zone to the Willamette Valley and extended the season through the end of February.

In 2025-26, the eastern Oregon Beardless Turkey Permit Hunt boundaries were expanded to include the Fossil WMU south of the Wheeler County boundary, and the Heppner WMU south of the Grant County boundary. Additionally, new beardless turkey permit hunts were established in southwest Oregon to include the Melrose, Applegate, Evans Creek south of the Josephine and Jackson County boundaries, and Rogue WMUs. These districts have a long history of chronic wild turkey nuisance and damage issues. The hunts were also on private land, and similar to other western Oregon beardless permit hunts, excluding private industrial forestland. The hunt was also adjusted to begin October 1, instead of November 1.

The Beardless Turkey Permit is intended to empower landowners to use hunters to address chronic winter turkey damage complaints at a reduced cost to the hunter. The John Day District

previously removed an average of 600 wild turkeys every winter from private land to address landowner damage complaints with no realized improvement in the situation. The cost of a turkey tag ($26.50 with a bag limit of 1) is viewed as a barrier in situations where hunters could increase turkey harvest. The Beardless Turkey Permit costs $26.50 and allows for the harvest of three "hen wild turkeys and/or wild turkeys without a visible beard" for each permit. Hunters can possess up to 3 permits with a three-bird daily bag limit. Successful hunters record harvest information on the permit (electronically or on paper) but are not required to physically tag each bird. The beardless turkey requirement increases the likelihood of removing reproductive females from the population while protecting toms for the popular spring sport hunt.

With many recent adjustments to fall turkey hunting and the Beardless Turkey Permit hunt, staff are proposing no change to these turkey seasons in 2026-27. This will allow more time to assess the efficacy of recent changes and for hunters to become familiar with these opportunities.

2026 Western Oregon Fee Pheasant Hunts

The department has offered special western Oregon fee pheasant hunts on specific public hunting areas for over 25 years. Since the hunts occur entirely or partially outside of the general statewide pheasant season, a special season must be adopted for these site-specific hunts.

These hunts, which are very popular with a segment of hunters living in western Oregon, are currently offered on the following four wildlife areas in western Oregon: E. E. Wilson, Sauvie Island, Fern Ridge, and Denman. In these hunts, rooster pheasants are released (typically daily) on hunt areas throughout the season. Each participant in the hunt must possess a Western Oregon Fee Pheasant Permit, good for two birds, in addition to a hunting license and upland game bird validation. These roosters are purchased from private breeders using funds from the sale of pheasant permits. The program typically purchases 3,800 pheasants for four western Oregon wildlife areas. In 2023, the department raised the administrative fee for a Western Oregon Fee Pheasant permit from $17 to $25 to account for the rising cost of pheasants and concurrently created a Youth Western Oregon Fee Pheasant permit for $10.

Table 6. Proposed locations and dates for the 2026 western Oregon fee pheasant hunts.

2026 Proposed Western Oregon Fee Pheasant Hunts	
HUNT AREA	**DATES**
Fern Ridge Wildlife Area	September 14 – October 11
Sauvie Island Wildlife Area	September 21 – October 4
Denman Wildlife Area	September 21 – October 9
E. E. Wilson Wildlife Area	September 28 – October 31

2026 Youth Upland Game Bird Hunts

Special youth hunts for pheasants began at E.E. Wilson Wildlife Area in the early 1950s and are currently held at numerous other areas throughout the state (Table 7). These youth hunts provide an opportunity for young hunters to experience bird hunting without competition from adult hunters. Youths aged 17 and younger are eligible to participate. The program has been popular

and well received but has been experiencing a long-term declining trend in participation for most locations. In 2025, 605 youth hunter-visits were recorded for the program, down from 634 visits in 2024. One less youth hunt is proposed in 2026 (Central Oregon) than the previous year.

All participants, including adults, are required to wear a blaze orange hat and vest, in addition to safety glasses. Instructors provide youth shotgun skill clinics in association with youth hunts at many locations. Sporting clay trailers provide a convenient method for participants to learn how to hit flying targets and use a shotgun more safely and effectively. Youth hunts draw considerable community interest and generally good publicity from the news media. Volunteers from sportsmen's clubs, the Hunter Education Program, and interested individuals assist with the hunts; some providing and handling dogs for the participants.

Table 7. Proposed 2026 youth upland hunt dates, locations, and maximum number of hunters allowed on area at any one time (hunter limitation).

2026 Proposed Youth Upland Game Bird Hunts		
HUNT AREA	**DATES**	**HUNTER LIMITATION**
Coquille Valley Wildlife Area	September 26 & 27	40
Denman Wildlife Area	September 19 & 20	85
E. E. Wilson Wildlife Area	September 26 & 27	70
Fern Ridge Wildlife Area	September 12 & 13	75
Irrigon Wildlife Area	September 26	15
John Day (private land)	September 19 & 20	30
Klamath Wildlife Area	September 19 & 20	80
Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area	September 19 & 20	35
Sauvie Island Wildlife Area	September 19 & 20	50
White River Wildlife Area (Mid-Columbia)	September 19 & 20	20

2026 Lower Klamath Hills Youth Chukar Hunt

The Klamath Chapter of the Oregon Hunters Association, in cooperation with the department, will again offer a youth hunting opportunity for chukar in the Lower Klamath Hills regulated hunt area. The hunt is planned for October 24 and 25. The primary intent of this hunt is to provide youth 17 years of age and younger an upland hunting opportunity immediately following the release of chukar into the hunt area. Each youth shall be accompanied by one adult chaperone. The adult chaperone will be asked to refrain from hunting. Mentored Youth Hunter Program rules will apply to this hunt since it is within the general season dates for chukar. Youth hunters will be required to wear hunter orange and safety glasses. Adult chaperones will be required to wear hunter orange. Hunting is available by reservation. Daily bag limit is two chukar.

2026 Pheasant Hunting Workshops

The department’s Hunter Education Program proposes to offer one pheasant hunting workshop at E.E. Wilson Wildlife Area. These workshops involve a hunt that takes place prior to the regular season and requires special approval from the Commission.

Table 8. Proposed Oregon outdoor skills education program pheasant hunting workshops.

2026 Proposed Pheasant Hunting Workshops		
HUNT AREA	**DATE**	**EVENT**
E. E. Wilson Wildlife Area	September 13	Pheasant Workshop

2026-27 Upland Game Bird Falconry Seasons

A small group of hunters in Oregon use raptors to take upland game birds. All falconers are licensed, and staff coordinates with the USFWS on the monitoring of falconry activities in the state.

Open Season: September 1 – March 31, 2027
Daily Bag Limit: One pheasant (either sex), two California quail, two Hungarian (Gray) partridge, two chukar partridge, two ruffed grouse, and two blue grouse. **Possession Limit:** Three times the daily bag limit.
Open Areas: Statewide

Sage-grouse Season[1]: September 1 – January 31, 2027
Daily Bag Limit: One sage-grouse
Season Limit: Two sage-grouse
Open Areas: Those areas with permits allocated for controlled sage-grouse hunting in 2026.

[1]Although the seasons are long; falconry harvest of sage grouse is low. In a 2021 harvest survey with 69 of the 148 licensed Oregon falconers responding, a total of two sage grouse were reported as harvested during the previous hunting season. A conservative sage-grouse season and bag limit is proposed. The falconry season for sage-grouse closes at the end of January, prior to the time birds begin gathering on leks where they are more vulnerable.

See Attachment 6

Population Status

Because of the federal rulemaking schedule, migratory game bird population status information used to inform hunting season proposals is collected during the calendar year prior to, or earlier, than the proposed seasons. For example, the proposals identified in this document for 2026-27 seasons are based in part on population status information collected in 2025 or earlier.

Mourning doves

The USFWS uses an integrated population model (IPM) to estimate annual abundance for previous years and predict the abundance (2025) of mourning doves in Western Management Unit, which includes Oregon, California, Washington, Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, and Utah. The IPM makes use of banding data, harvest survey data, and annual abundance indices from Breeding Bird Survey (BBS). Department staff have been banding mourning doves to generate information for the IPM since 2008. Last summer staff banded 800 doves across the state, up 26 percent from the previous year.

The USFWS predicted 53,180,215 mourning doves resided in the Western Management Unit, during August 2025. This prediction is the 3-year average of estimates from 2022-2024, (51.2 million, 53.9 million, and 53.9 million, respectively) and is up 8% from the long-term average (LTA) (2007-2024).

Band-tailed pigeons

Band-tailed pigeon population status is assessed by a model calculating the trend in pigeons counted at approximately 50 mineral sites in California, Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia in mid-July (Mineral Site Survey (MSS)). In Oregon, department staff have been conducting these surveys at 20 to 22 mineral sites since 2004. Unlike mourning doves, methods to assess total abundance of pigeons have not been developed.

For 2024, the USFWS reported the MSS indicated an increase in abundance for the Pacific Coast population during the period of survey (2004–2025: 1.3% per year, 95% credible interval = 0.1 to 2.5). There was some evidence for an increase in abundance over the most recent 10-year period based on the MSS, but no trend was evident during the recent 5- year period. BBS data can also be used to assess population trends for pigeons, and it indicates some evidence for a decline in the median annual count of Pacific Coast band-tailed pigeons seen and heard per route since 1968, but not during the recent 10- and 5-year periods.

Ducks

The department's breeding waterfowl survey produces estimates for the major breeding waterfowl areas of the state, but its coverage does not extend to the entire state and therefore the survey only provides an index to the statewide breeding population (Figure 3). Oregon's 2025 index for breeding ducks was 276,222, down 12 percent from 2024 but up 2 percent from the LTA. The index for breeding mallards, the most abundant breeding species, was 79,525, up 12

percent from 2024 but down 10 percent from the LTA (Table 9).

The overall duck season framework in the Pacific Flyway is based on the status of "western" mallards, which are those mallards breeding in Alaska, British Columbia, and the lower-48 states within the Pacific Flyway. The status of western mallards is based off breeding waterfowl surveys conducted in Alaska (part of the USFWS's Waterfowl Breeding Population and Habitat Survey (WBPHS)) and state/provincial surveys in British Columbia, California, Oregon, and Washington. The 2025 index of western mallards was 892,913 which is down 5 percent from 2024 and five percent from the LTA.

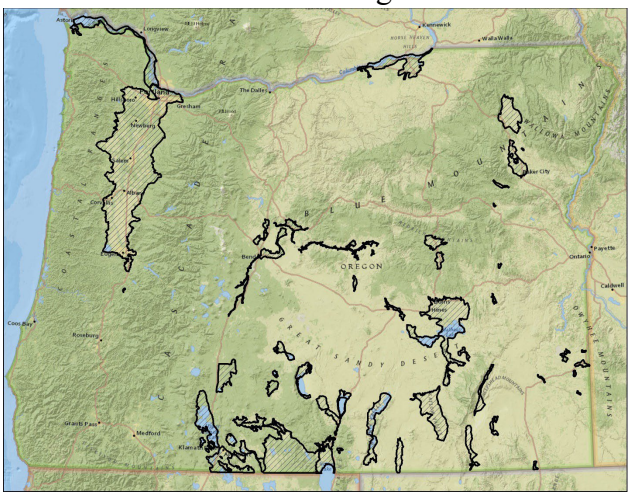

Figure 3. Major waterfowl breeding habitats in Oregon to which the department's spring breeding waterfowl population estimate applies.

The WBPHS includes much of Alaska, central and northwest Canada, and the U.S. prairie region. In 2025, the estimate for total ducks in this area was 33,980,000, unchanged from 2024 but down four percent from the LTA. Estimates for species breeding in the survey area that an important component of Oregon's migrant and wintering flock can be found in Table 9.

Table 9. Population estimates of select species and populations of ducks important to Oregon from the USFWS Breeding Waterfowl Population and Habitat Survey and state and provincial surveys in British Columbia, California, Oregon and Washington.

Species	2025	2024	Change from 2024	Change from LTA	Survey Years
Duck Estimates from the USFWS Waterfowl Breeding Population and Habitat Survey					
Mallard	6,463,861	6,609,303	-1%	-17%	1955-2025, except 2020 & 2021
Scaup	3,667,154	4,069,075	-10%	-25%	" "
Green-winged Teal	2,546,250	3,005,466	-15%	16%	" "
Wigeon	3,189,464	2,922,015	9%	22%	" "
Shoveler	2,758,185	2,645,811	4%	4%	" "
Gadwall	2,412,884	2,284,432	6%	17%	" "
Pintail	2,237,899	1,974,976	13%	-41%	" "
Ring-necked Duck	1,517,376	1,423,556	7%	71%	" "
Redhead	918,168	782,015	17%	25%	" "
Canvasback	686,805	566,319	22%	17%	" "
Combined state/provincial breeding population estimates of "western mallards" and Oregon specific indices					
Western Mallards	892,913	938,540	-5%	-10%	2010-2025, except 2020 & 2021
Oregon Mallards	79,525	71,047	12%	-10%	1994-2025, except 2001 & 2020
Oregon Total Ducks	276,222	302,089	-12%	2%	1994-2025, except 2001 & 2020

Geese

There are six species of geese which regularly occur in Oregon, several of which are divided into multiple populations for management purposes. Various types of surveys are used to monitor the populations, including winter population estimates, breeding population estimates, and breeding population indices (Table 10).

The Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta in western Alaska is the breeding grounds for minima cackling geese, Pacific white-fronted geese, and a portion of the brant wintering in Oregon. Surveys in spring 2025 indicated breeding populations on the delta for minima cackling and Pacific white-fronted geese were unchanged and up 13 percent, respectively, from 2024. Surveys for dusky Canada geese on the Copper River Delta were up 45 percent from 2024. Due to the ongoing Russia/Ukraine war, there was no information forthcoming about the status of the breeding population of Wrangell Island snow geese in 2025.

Pacific western Canada geese are the only goose population that breed in Oregon. The 2025 spring breeding index for these geese in Oregon was 35,922, up eight percent from 2024 but down 20 percent from the LTA.

Table 10. Recent population indices and status relative to objective of Pacific Flyway goose populations.

Pacific Flyway Population	Most recent population indices	Recent three-year avg. management index	Population objective	Status of management index relative to objective
Aleutian Cackling Goose	204,576	183,957	60,000	207%
Minima Cackling Goose	124,369	134,113	250,000	-46%
Taverner's Cackling Goose	33,616	33686	-	-
Lesser Canada Goose	10,925	6,204	-	-
Dusky Canada Goose	11,797	9,855	20,000	-51%
Western Canada Geese	425,350	377,551	200,000	89%
Greater White-fronted Geese	468,864	436,671	300,000	46%
Tule Greater White-fronted Goose	6,721	9,802	10,000	-2%
Western Arctic Snow Geese	1,006,561	1,039,112	300,000	246%
Wrangel Island Snow Geese (portion wintering NW Wash.)	87,394	93,999	70,000	34%
Ross's Goose	3,409,133	2,242,631	150,000	1,395%
Brant	196,159	209,944	322,000	-35%

Coots

The 2025 breeding population estimate for American coots from the WBPHS was 1,124,421, down 10 percent from 2024 and 41 percent from the long-term (1955–2024) average.

Wilson’s snipe

The North American Breeding Bird Survey indicated the 2024 Wilson’s snipe abundance index was up two percent from 2023 and down nine percent from the LTA.

2024-25 Hunter and Harvest Estimates

Hunter effort and harvest information for migratory game birds is collected through the Harvest Information Program (HIP), a cooperative survey effort between the USFWS and states. The USFWS is responsible for producing estimates of hunter effort and harvest by sampling potential migratory game bird hunters from records provided by the states. 2024-23 Oregon HIP hunter and harvest estimates can be found in Table 11. Harvest estimates from the 2025-26 seasons will not be available until summer 2026.

Because some species of waterfowl are hunted by a very small number of hunters, HIP estimates can vary widely and are relatively imprecise. For example, sea ducks (white-winged scoter, black scoter, surf scoter, long-tailed duck, and harlequin duck) are hunted by a very small subset of waterfowl hunters and HIP survey coverage in Oregon is not intense enough to sample these hunters at a rate that produces reliable estimates for each species. Therefore, beginning in 2022, the department implemented a sea duck harvest survey of all hunters who purchased a sea duck permit. This permit is required of all hunters who hunt sea ducks and allowed the department to specifically target those hunters for a special sea duck survey. Preliminary estimates for the 2025-26 season indicate that of the 782 hunters who purchased a sea duck permit, 186 hunted sea ducks and they harvested 595 scoters, nine long-tailed ducks, and three harlequin ducks. During the previous season (2024-25), 808 hunters purchased a sea duck permit and 214 hunted sea ducks, harvesting 875 scoters, 21 long-tailed ducks, and 13 harlequin ducks.

2024-25 Waterfowl Validation Sales

Oregon waterfowl validation (stamp) sales to resident hunters for the 2025-26 season totaled 67,191, a slight decrease (<0.5 percent) the previous season. However, 70 percent of adults and youths who purchased a Sports Pac (Sports Pacs accounted for 81 percent of validation sales) did not redeem their Sports Pac waterfowl validation voucher for the actual waterfowl validation after July 1, leaving the total number of resident waterfowl validations held by hunters during the 2025-26 season at 28,669, nearly unchanged from 2024-25. Total 2025-26 nonresident game bird validation (valid for both waterfowl and upland game bird hunting) sales were 5,015, up two percent from the previous year.

Table 11. Harvest Information Program estimates of Oregon migratory game bird hunters and harvest during the 2024-25 season, compared to the previous five-season average.

	Harvest			Hunters		
	2024-25 estimate	Previous 5-season average	Percent change from previous 5-season average	2024-25 estimate	Previous 5-season average	Percent change from previous 5-season average
Mallard	83,951	105,643	-15%			
Gadwall	9,506	8,272	15%			
American wigeon	48,730	60,164	-19%			
Eurasian wigeon	100	266	-56%			
Green-winged teal	55,334	49,394	12%			
Cinnamon & blue-wing teal	400	323	24%			
Northern shoveler	12,708	16,394	-22%			
Northern pintail	21,413	24,975	-14%			
Wood duck	2,401	5,400	-56%			
Redhead	400	356	12%			
Canvasback	1,401	2,250	-38%			
Greater scaup	1,701	3,242	-48%			
Lesser scaup	2,702	3,271	-17%			
Ring-necked duck	7,004	8,034	-13%			
Barrows goldeneye	100	216	-54%			
Common goldeneye	901	1,291	-30%			
Bufflehead	2,101	5,686	-63%			
Ruddy duck	300	238	26%			
Black scoter	0	0	No Change			
White-winged scoter	0	6	-100%			
Surf scoter	620	251	147%			
Harlequin duck	0	0	No Change			
Long-tailed duck	0	8	-100%			
Hooded merganser	700	1,145	-39%			
Red-breasted merganser	0	63	-100			
Common merganser	300	485	-38%			
Subtotal ducks	**251,153**	**295,382**	**-15**	**17,289**	**17972**	**-4%**
Canada geese	9,036	15,664	-42%			
Cackling geese	11,105	16,209	-31%			
White-fronted geese	4,790	3,691	30%			
Snow geese	653	4,994	-87%			
Ross' geese	109	1,490	-93%			
Brant	4	24	-84%			
Subtotal geese	**25,697**	**45,533**	**-44%**	**7,069**	**9,032**	**-22%**
Total waterfowl	**276,850**	**340,915**	**-19%**	**17,500**	**19,160**	**-9%**
Mourning doves	**14,421**	**16,230**	**-11%**	**1,706**	**2,971**	**-43%**
Band-tailed pigeons	**1,022**	**1,170**	**-13%**	**480**	**443**	**8%**
American coots	**1,598**	**4,645**	**-66%**	**128**	**791**	**-84%**
Wilson's snipe	**780**	**1,132**	**-31%**	**195**	**454**	**-57%**

Please note: All seasons for migratory game birds are established under USFWS frameworks. The department works through the Pacific Flyway Council (PFC) and the USFWS regulatory process to make recommendations on these federal frameworks. Additionally, all recommendations must fall within established frameworks (can be more conservative but not more liberal) and all season selections by the Fish and Wildlife Commission are subject to approval by the USFWS.

Mourning dove

Framework: Under the national harvest strategy, when mourning dove abundance dictates a standard mourning dove season, Oregon is allowed a 60-day season between September 1 and January 15, with daily bag and possession limits of 15 and 45, respectively. Seasons may be selected in two zones and the seasons may be spilt into two segments. Shooting hours are one-half hour before sunrise to sunset.

Recommendation: Adoption of a 60-day season and bag and possession limits of 15 and 45, respectively. This is the standard regulatory alternative as prescribed by the National Mourning Dove Harvest Strategy. Adopt different seasons within two geographic zones (Figure 5). In Zone 1 adopt a split season with half of the days utilized starting September 1 and the remainder utilized beginning on November 15. In Zone 2 adopt a 60-consecutive day season beginning on September 1. This recommendation represents no change from last season.

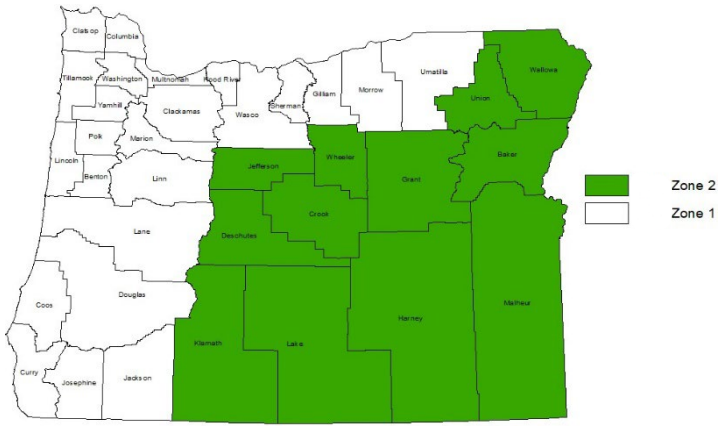

Figure 4. Mourning dove, duck, and Wilson's snipe hunting zones.

Proposed Season:

Zone 1:	Sept. 1 – Sept. 30 Nov. 15 – Dec. 14
Zone 2:	Sept. 1 – Oct. 30
Daily bag limit:	15 mourning doves
Possession limit:	45 mourning doves
Shooting hours:	One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Discussion: Based on the harvest strategy, current data, and an assessment by the USFWS, the prescribed regulatory alternative for the Western Management Unit is the standard regulatory alternative. The objectives of the harvest strategy are to conserve the mourning dove population and to minimize annual regulatory change.

In most years, especially in eastern Oregon, the effective length the mourning dove season is governed by the first cool temperatures or early storms that initiate southern migration, which usually occurs in early September. However, concentrations of wintering mourning doves can be found in some areas of western Oregon, which accounts for the split season in Zone 1.

Public Comment: None as of March 13.

Band-tailed pigeon

Framework: Under the Flyway adopted harvest strategy, when band-tailed pigeon abundance dictates a restrictive season, Oregon is allowed a 9-consecutive day season between September 15 and January 1, with daily bag and possession limits of 2 and 6, respectively. Shooting hours are one-half hour before sunrise to sunset.

Recommendation: Adoption of a 9-consecutive day season statewide, beginning as early as allowed under federal frameworks with a bag and possession limits of 2 and 6, respectively. This is the restrictive regulatory alternative as prescribed by the Flyway's Pacific Coast Band-tailed Pigeon Harvest Strategy. This recommendation represents no change from last season.

Proposed Season:

Statewide:	Sept. 15 – Sept. 23
Daily bag limit:	2 band-tailed pigeons
Possession limit:	6 band-tailed pigeons
Shooting hours:	One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Discussion: In July of 2010 the PFC adopted an updated management plan for Pacific Coast band-tailed pigeons with a harvest strategy based on the population status derived from the coordinated July mineral site survey. Although there has been concern over the status of the pigeon population in past years, hunting restrictions have reduced hunter numbers and harvest to minimal levels, which are believed to have no significant impact on the population.

Public Comment: None as of March 13.

Special youth waterfowl hunting days

Framework: States may select two days per duck-hunting zone, designated as ''Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days,'' in addition to their regular duck seasons but as a component of the total framework allocation. The days may be held concurrently. The days must be held outside any regular duck season on weekends, holidays, or other non-school days when youth hunters would have the maximum opportunity to participate. The days may be held up to 14 days before or after any regular duck season frameworks or within any split of a regular duck season, or

within any other open season on migratory birds. The daily bag limit may include ducks, geese (including brant), mergansers, and coots and would be the same as those allowed in the regular season. Flyway species restrictions would remain in effect. Shooting hours are one-half hour before sunrise to sunset.

States may use their established definition of age for youth hunters. However, youth hunters must be under the age of 18. In addition, an adult at least 18 years of age must accompany the youth hunter into the field. This adult may not duck hunt but may participate in other seasons that are open on the special youth day. Youth hunters 16 years of age and older must possess a Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (also known as Federal Duck Stamp).

Recommendation: Adoption of a two-day youth waterfowl weekend in September. This recommendation represents no change from last season.

Proposed Season:

Statewide:	Sept. 26 & 27
Daily bag limit:	Same as during regular season by zone
Shooting hours:	One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Discussion: This hunt allows youth hunters, with adult supervision, to have a chance to hunt waterfowl at a time when waterfowl are generally abundant, the weather in pleasant, and without the pressure to keep up with more experienced adult hunters or other distractions. Selection of this hunt does require that the general duck and goose seasons be reduced by two days in length. This is due to the limitation within the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) which restricts the hunting of any species of migratory bird to not more than 107 days. Since states in the Pacific Flyway are afforded a 107-day regular duck and goose seasons, selection of special hunt days necessitates a reduction in the length of the regular seasons, so the total number of days open for hunting does not exceed the MBTA limit of 107 days.

Public Comment: None as of March 13.

Special veterans and active military personnel waterfowl hunting days

Framework: States may select two days per duck-hunting zone, designated as ''Veterans and Active Military Personnel Waterfowl Hunting Days,'' in addition to their regular duck seasons but as a component of the total framework allocation. The days may be held concurrently. The days may be held up to 14 days before or after any regular duck season framework or within any split of a regular duck season, or within any other open season on migratory birds. The daily bag limit may include ducks, geese (including brant), mergansers, and coots and would be the same as those allowed in the regular season. Flyway species restrictions would remain in effect. Shooting hours are one-half hour before sunrise to sunset.

Veterans (as defined in section 101 of title 38, United States Code) and members of the Armed Forces on active duty, including members of the National Guard and Reserves on active duty (other than for training), may participate. All hunters must possess a Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (also known as Federal Duck Stamp).

Recommendation: Adoption of a one-day, Veterans and Active Military Personnel Waterfowl Hunting Day the Saturday following the close of the regular duck season. Persons participating in this hunt would be required to carry valid proof of veterans or active-duty status. This recommendation represents no change from last season.

Proposed Season:

Statewide:	Feb. 6, 2027
Daily bag limit:	Same as during regular season by zone
Shooting hours:	One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Discussion: This season was established by the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act in 2019 was first adopted by the Commission in 2021-22. Selection of this special season does require that the general duck season be reduced by one day (the youth waterfowl weekend also requires a reduction in the general duck season). This is due to the limitation within the MBTA which restricts the hunting of any species of migratory bird to not more than 107 days. Since states in the Pacific Flyway are afforded a 107-day general duck season, selection of special hunt days necessitates a reduction in the length of the general season, so the total number of days open for duck hunting does not exceed the MBTA limit of 107 days.

Public Comment: None as of March 13

Duck (including merganser)

Framework: A maximum season length of 107 days is allowed between the Saturday closest to September 24 and January 31; daily bag limit is seven birds to include no more than three pintail, two scaup, two hen mallards, two redheads, and two canvasbacks. The season for scaup may only be open for 86 days during the general duck season. For all species the possession limit is three-times the daily bag limit. Shooting hours are from one half hour before sunrise to sunset. Seasons may be selected in two zones and the seasons may be split into two segments.

Recommendation: Adoption of maximum days and bag limits as allowed by framework. Maintain traditional shooting hours. Adopt different seasons within two geographic zones (Figure 5). The adoption of a youth waterfowl weekend and a Veterans and Active Military Personnel Waterfowl Hunting Day requires a reduction in regular duck season by three days total, which accounts for the three-day split in each zone. This recommendation represents no change from last season.

Proposed Seasons:

Zone 1:	Oct. 17 – Nov. 1 & Nov. 5 – Jan. 31, 2027 *Scaup open from Nov. 7 – Jan. 31, 2027*
Zone 2:	Oct. 10 – Nov. 29 & Dec. 3 – Jan. 24, 2027 *Scaup open from Oct. 10 – Nov. 29 & Dec. 3 – Jan. 6, 2027*
Daily bag limit:	7 total; with no more than 3 northern pintails, 2 hen mallards, 2 redheads, 2 scaup, 2 canvasbacks and 1 harlequin duck. *Note: scaup may only be taken during the open season specific to them.*
Possession limit:	Three times the bag limit
Shooting hours:	One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Discussion: Allowed frameworks were developed cooperatively with the USFWS, states, and Flyway Councils under the concept of Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM). AHM is a process that increases objectivity and efficiency in the annual process of setting duck hunting regulations. AHM improves upon past approaches by using clearly defined harvest-management objectives, a limited set of regulatory options, and robust data assessment procedures. It is important to note the AHM process is dynamic and as new information is obtained, decision criteria are modified. For example, should habitat conditions deteriorate, due to climate change or other factors, to the point where they can no longer support populations robust enough to sustain the current level of harvest, the AHM process would identify the appropriate point at which to scale back hunter opportunity.

In the Pacific Flyway, overall duck season length and bag limits are determined via the Western Mallard Model under AHM. This model combines information about the mallard population size, population dynamics, and hunter harvest in Alaska, British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, and California to develop the appropriate season frameworks for the entire Pacific Flyway.

The proposed season framework is identical to last year and flyway biologists believe continued liberal harvest regulations for most species are justified based on decades of experience and analysis of long-term data sets including, population size, harvest, harvest rate, and recruitment information. For species with lower harvest potential than that which would be realized under the general duck season framework (i.e. northern pintail, canvasback, and scaup), species specific national harvest strategies or other decision tools are in place to guide harvest management. Sea duck harvest surveys conducted within Oregon indicate current levels of harvest are not a population concern for these species.

During the past three seasons, the department has offered duck seasons in two zones that had the same opening date (concurrent openers). This differed from the typical pattern that was in use from 2002 to 2022, where in most years the opening and closing date in Zone 2 was a week

earlier than in Zone 1 (split openers). Split openers were not possible during the 2023, 2024, and 2025 seasons due to department objectives of not overlapping duck season openers with the Any Legal Weapon buck deer opener and federal frameworks dictating the duck season close by Jan. 31. However, during 2026 and 2027 it is possible to hold split openers. We have anticipated this situation for several years, and beginning in 2022, began reaching out to hunters to gauge their preference for season timing. There was little consensus among commentors for various season opening options, so the department is proposing to return to the pattern of split openers.

Adoption of a 104-day regular duck season, with different season dates in two different zones, should provide ample opportunity to hunt at preferred times. Splitting the season with a three-weekday closure in each zone accounts for the days reserved for the special youth waterfowl hunting weekend and the Veterans and Active Military Personnel Waterfowl Hunting Day and maximizes the number of weekend hunt days allowed under the framework. Previous analysis has shown the vast majority of waterfowl hunter effort and harvest occurs on weekends, compared to weekdays.

Public Comment: Two members of the public requested the hunting season for harlequin ducks be closed.

Goose seasons

Please Note: There are four separate frameworks regarding goose seasons; special early Canada goose, general fall/winter, northwest permit goose, and brant season.

Special early Canada goose season

Framework: A Canada goose season of up to 15 days during September 1–20 may be selected. The daily bag limit may not exceed 5 Canada geese. Areas open to hunting of Canada geese in each State must be described, delineated, and designated as such in each State's hunting regulations. Shooting hours are one-half hour before sunrise to sunset.

Recommendation: Adoption of a September Canada goose season in all areas of the state except the South Coast Goose Zone, with a bag limit of 5 Canada geese in all open areas and possession limits triple the daily bag limit. Adoption of a season length of nine days in the Northwest Permit Zone and five days in all other open zones, with all areas opening on the traditional opener of the Saturday after the Labor Day weekend. This recommendation represents no change from last season, except six fewer days are proposed in the Northwest Permit Zone to keep the season within the allowed federal frameworks, but not open until the Saturday after Labor Day.

Proposed Seasons: (for zone descriptions see page 33)

Northwest permit zone:	Sept. 12 – 20
Southwest zone:	Sept. 12 – 16
South coast zone:	Closed
Mid-Columbia zone:	Sept. 12 – 16
High desert and Blue Mountains zone:	Sept. 12 – 16
Daily bag limit (all zones):	5 Canada/cackling geese

Possession limit: 15 Canada/cackling geese
Shooting hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Discussion: A September Canada goose season, designed to focus harvest on resident western Canada geese, was initiated in 1990 to alleviate agricultural crop depredation and provide a recreational opportunity on a growing resident goose population occurring in the lower Columbia River area. In later years, the September season was expanded statewide, however, this season has been closed in the South Coast Zone since 2006 due to a desire to hold late-winter Canada goose seasons in that Zone to address damage caused by Aleutian cackling geese.

Seasons are relatively short but cannot be longer because of the desire to hold long regular goose seasons, as well as avoid season overlap with the Labor Day holiday. Currently, frameworks for regular goose seasons are 107 days, the maximum under the MBTA, except in the Northwest Permit Zone. Season days used for September Canada goose seasons require a subsequent reduction in general Canada goose seasons. In 2017, staff considered a nine-day season in all areas of the state, however, hunter comments indicated a preference to maintain as many days as possible during the regular season.
Although the regular season frameworks in the Northwest Permit Zone would allow a slightly longer September Canada goose season in the Northwest Permit Zone than proposed here, the department believes maintaining the traditional opening date of the Saturday after Labor Day is important to help mitigate conflicts between goose hunters and other recreationalists, especially on rivers, over the Labor Day weekend.

Public Comment: None as of March 13.

General fall/winter goose seasons (excluding the Northwest Permit Zone)

Framework: Different frameworks exist for Canada/cackling, white-fronted, and white geese

- For Canada and cackling geese, a maximum season length of 107 days is allowed between the Saturday closest to September 24 and January 31, except that the season in the South Coast Zone may extend through March 10. The maximum daily bag limit is 4, except the maximum daily bag limit in the South Coast Zone is 6.
- For white-fronted geese a maximum season length of 107 days is allowed between the Saturday closest to September 24 and March 10. The maximum daily bag limit is 6, except the bag limit in Lake County is 1.
- For white geese a maximum season length of 107 days is allowed between the Saturday closest to September 24 and March 10. The maximum daily bag limit is 20.
- For all species the possession limit is three-times the daily bag limit and shooting hours are from one half hour before sunrise to sunset. Seasons may be set within five geographic zones and seasons may be split into two or three segments depending on species and zone.

Recommendation: Adoption of maximum days and bag limits as allowed by framework and select differential seasons in five different zones (Figure 5). Maintain traditional shooting hours. The adoption of a September Canada season, a youth waterfowl weekend, and a Veterans and Active Military Personnel Waterfowl Hunting Day requires reductions in regular goose seasons from three to twelve days in each goose zone. This recommendation represents no change from last season, except that the white-fronted goose bag limit is reduced from 10 per day to 6 per day.

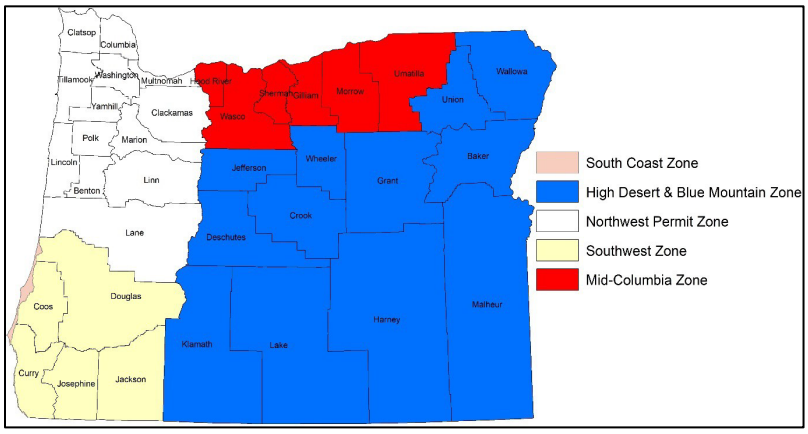

Figure 5. Goose hunting zones.

Proposed Seasons:

Southwest zone: (all of Douglas, Coos, and Curry counties east of Hwy 101, and Jackson and Josephine counties)	Oct. 17 – Nov. 1 & Nov. 10 – Jan. 31, 2027
South Coast zone: (all of Douglas, Coos, and Curry counties west of Hwy 101)	Oct. 3 – Dec. 6 & Dec. 19 – Jan. 7, 2027 & Feb. 20 – March 10, 2027
High Desert & Blue Mountains zone: (Canada and cackling goose seasons)	Oct. 10 – Nov. 29 & Dec. 15 – Jan. 31, 2027
High Desert & Blue Mountains zone: (White-front and white goose seasons)	Oct. 10 – Nov. 29 & Jan. 16 – March 10, 2027
Mid-Columbia zone: (Canada and cackling goose seasons)	Oct. 17 – Nov. 1 & Nov. 10 – Jan. 31, 2027
Mid-Columbia zone: (White-front and white goose seasons)	Oct. 17 – Nov. 1 & Nov. 10 – Jan. 14, 2027 & Feb. 6 – Feb. 28, 2027
Daily bag limit (all zones unless noted):	4 Canada/cackling geese 6 white-fronted geese 20 white geese

Possession limit:	Three times the daily bag limits
Shooting hours:	One-half hour before sunrise to sunset
Daily Bag Limit Exceptions	
South Coast zone:	6 Canada/cackling geese
Lake County:	1 white-fronted goose

Discussion: Most goose populations have remained robust in recent years, increasing recreational opportunity throughout the state. Snow, Ross's, Aleutian cackling, Pacific western Canada, and Pacific white-fronted goose populations in the flyway are at or significantly above management goals. The number of snow geese wintering in the state has greatly expanded in recent years, with significant wintering flocks now found around Sauvie Island and in the Columbia Basin. Liberal seasons provide substantial hunter opportunity, while helping to alleviate some agricultural damage to private lands caused by geese.

In 2025, the Pacific Flyway Council adopted a revised harvest strategy for the Pacific Population of white-fronted geese, which includes most of the white-fronted geese that occur in Oregon. Recognizing that the population has begun to decline from record highs of >700,000 but remains above the population objective, the Flyway believes that it is an appropriate time to reduce harvest from the very liberal bag limit of 10 per day, which has been in place since 2021.

Public Comment: None as of March 13.

Northwest permit zone goose

Framework: A maximum season length of 74 days is allowed between the Saturday closest to September 24 and February 15 for Canada and cackling geese and 107 days between the Saturday closest to September 24 and March 10 for white and white-fronted geese. Maximum daily bag limits are two Canada/cackling geese, 20 white geese and 10 white-fronted geese, except that the season for dusky Canada geese is closed. Possession limit is three-times the daily bag limit. Shooting hour frameworks are from sunrise to sunset. The season may be split into three segments.

Recommendation: Adoption of maximum days and bag limits as allowed by framework. Maintain restricted shooting hours of sunrise to sunset. This recommendation represents no change from last season, except to reduce the bag limit for white-fronted geese from 10 per day to 6 per day.

Proposed Seasons:

Northwest permit zone Canada & cackling goose season:	Oct. 24 – Nov. 1 & Nov. 21 – Jan. 8, 2027 & Jan. 30 – Feb. 14, 2027
Northwest permit zone white & white-fronted goose season:	Oct. 24 – Nov. 1 & Nov. 11 – Feb. 14, 2027
Daily bag limit:	2 Canada/cackling geese *(except dusky Canada geese are closed to harvest)* 6 white-fronted geese 20 white geese
Sauvie Island Wildlife Area: Eastside, Westside and Oak Island Only	Wildlife Area hunt days occurring from Oct. 24 – Nov. 1 & Nov. 11 – Jan. 31, 2027
Daily bag limit:	20 white geese
Possession limit (all areas):	Three times the daily bag limits
Shooting hours (all areas):	Sunrise to sunset

Additional Regulations:

- Maintain goose hunting during all days of the week. Hunting all days of the week allows hunters to hunt on their preferred days and provides landowners suffering depredation the opportunity to utilize hunting to address the damage whenever it occurs.

- Maintain the goose hunting closures on state wildlife areas (Sauvie Island, Fern Ridge, and E. E. Wilson) except maintain the white goose hunting opportunity at Sauvie Island Wildlife Area. Wildlife Area closures are meant to encourage Canada and cackling geese to forage on public lands in an effort to reduce agricultural damage to neighboring private lands.

- Maintain the requirement that all hunters must possess a valid Northwest Oregon Goose Permit while hunting.

- In addition to potentially receiving a citation, maintain the penalty that any hunter taking a dusky Canada goose have their Northwest Oregon Goose Permit invalidated for the remainder of the season and must retake the goose identification exam prior to hunting geese in the permit zone during subsequent seasons.

- Maintain the goose hunter education program for permit zone hunters. This will continue to improve knowledge of goose management issues and the role hunters play in this process.

Discussion: Goose hunting seasons in northwest Oregon have been heavily regulated since the 1950s to protect the dusky Canada goose which winters in this area. Dusky Canada geese have a small population size (range 7,000 – 18,000 over the last 40 years) and are more vulnerable to harvest than other geese. The Flyway's revised harvest strategy (2015) calls for a closed dusky Canada goose season in northwest Oregon and southwest Washington, the core wintering area for dusky Canada geese. This strategy applies to all northwest Oregon counties, not just that portion delineated as the Northwest Permit Zone prior to 2015.

Frameworks guided by this new strategy were first adopted by the USFWS for use during the 2015 season and remain in effect for the 2026-27 season. Additionally, the states of Washington and Oregon entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the USFWS in 2015 which outlines voluntarily actions the states will take to ensure hunters are equipped to identify the different types of geese in the hunt area and avoid taking dusky Canada geese.

The MOU requires the department to continue to conduct surveys for neck collared dusky Canada geese. The data is used to estimate annual adult survival rates, which are used as an index to determine if dusky Canada goose harvest has changed over past levels. Currently, there is no evidence that adult survival has changed since the check station program ended.

In addition to being the core wintering area for dusky Canada geese, the wintering goose flock in this region is also composed of minima cackling geese, Aleutian cackling geese, Taverner's cackling geese, lesser Canada geese, Vancouver Canada geese, western Canada geese, Pacific white-fronted geese, and Wrangel Island snow geese. The most abundant and heavily harvested wintering population are minima cackling geese. The Flyway's minima cackling goose management plan has an objective to maintain a population of 250,000. If the three-year average population index is greater than 10 percent above or 10 percent below the objective, the plan directs impacted states to implement regulatory actions to regain the objective.

In response to declining numbers of Taverner's and minima cackling geese, the federal frameworks for Canada and cackling goose seasons in this zone were greatly reduced and those restrictive frameworks remain in place for the 2026 season.

Public Comment: None as of March 13:

Brant

Framework: A maximum season length of 16 days is allowed between the Saturday closest to September 24 and December 15. Maximum daily bag limit is two brant and the possession limit six. Shooting hours are from one half hour before sunrise to sunset. Additionally, in the past the Commission has supported brant seasons in Oregon which purposefully overlap with seasons in California.

Recommendation: Adoption of 16-day season with a daily bag limit of two. This recommendation represents no change from last season.

Proposed Season:

Statewide:	Nov. 28 – Dec. 13
Daily bag limit:	2 brant
Possession limit:	6 brant
Shooting hours:	One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Discussion: Oregon coastal bays are a minor wintering site for brant in the Pacific Flyway, with only three bays (Tillamook, Netarts, and Yaquina) regularly hosting concentrations of wintering brant. Surveys conducted each January have detected an average of 87 brant among the three bays during the past four years. Due to the low numbers of wintering birds, relative to the overall Pacific Flyway population, the brant season in Oregon has been kept restrictive season framework.

Reasons for the low wintering numbers in Oregon are unknown, though human disturbance has been documented to have detrimental effects on brant in other areas of the flyway. Development and aquaculture (oyster plats) in estuaries, which can destroy eelgrass beds, and other non-hunting recreational activities in Oregon, are of concern. Brant hunter numbers in Oregon are low and minimal harvest occurs in Oregon. Even though frameworks have allowed more hunting opportunity for Oregon in some years, the department continues to support the conservative approach to brant hunting adopted by the Commission over two decades ago. Two objectives of the approach were to overlap Oregon and California seasons whenever possible and maintain harvest in Oregon at a low level.

Public Comment: None, as of March 13.

American coot

Framework: Concurrent with duck season with a daily bag limit of 25 and a possession limit of 75. Shooting hours are from one-half hour before sunrise to sunset.

Recommendation: Adoption of maximum days and bag limits as allowed by framework. This recommendation represents no change from last season.

Proposed Season:

Statewide:	Concurrent with duck season
Daily bag limit:	25 coots
Possession limit:	75 coots
Shooting hours:	One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Discussion: Coots are a lightly hunted game bird species, especially considering their visibility and relative abundance in wetland habitats throughout the state. Most coots are taken by hunters while hunting ducks.

Public Comment: None as of March 13.

Wilson's snipe

Framework: A maximum season length of 107 days between September 1 and February 28, with a daily bag limit of eight and a possession limit of 24. The season can be split into two periods. Hunting zones may be selected by established duck hunting zones.

Recommendation: Adoption of maximum days and bag limits as allowed by framework with the season in Zone 1 (Figure 4) beginning three weeks after the duck season begins and the season in Zone 2 running concurrent with duck season, except the snipe season would be open during the three-day split in the duck season. This season recommendation represents no change from last season.

Proposed Season:

Zone 1:	Nov. 7 – Feb. 21, 2027
Zone 2:	Oct. 10 – Jan. 24, 2027
Daily bag limit:	8 snipe
Possession limit:	24 snipe
Shooting hours:	One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Discussion: Snipe are a lightly hunted game bird species in Oregon. Federal surveys usually estimate fewer than 500 hunters pursue snipe in Oregon, and they usually harvest fewer than 500 snipe per season. Snipe season dates have varied over the years from a season concurrent with duck season to a season which opens later than duck season or has a split in December which allows some hunting into February, when duck season is closed. From 2005 – 2010 the season was concurrent with duck season, but after several public requests the department recommended a season in Zone 1 that opened later than duck season and closed in mid-February. Hunter effort and harvest estimates are difficult to generate accurately for lightly hunted species, so federal survey data cannot be used to gauge the impact of the season change. Some hunters do take advantage of the opportunity to hunt snipe during February.

Public Comment: None, as of March 13.

Crow

Framework: Liberal seasons are offered outside of months when nesting may occur. Per MBTA stipulations between the United States and Mexico, a 124-day season is allowed during a calendar year. Depredation and nuisance crows can still be taken outside of established hunting seasons under a federal depredation order; however, federal action since 2010 has made the take of depredation and nuisance birds more restrictive. Now crows taken under the depredation order must be taken with non-toxic ammunition and all take must be reported to the USFWS.

Recommendation: Adoption of maximum days allowed. This recommendation represents no change from last season.

Proposed Season:

Statewide:	Oct. 1 – Jan. 31, 2027
Daily bag limit:	No limit
Possession limit:	No limit

Public Comment: None, as of March 13.

Migratory game bird falconry seasons

Framework: Maximum season length of 107 days, including those days when the gun season is open. Falconry daily bag and possession limits for all permitted migratory game birds shall not exceed 3 and 6, respectively, singly or in the aggregate. During that time when the season for dove, pigeons, crow and/or snipe, overlaps that for waterfowl, the falconer's bag may contain no more than 3 of all the federally regulated species.

Recommendation: Adoption of maximum days and bag limits as allowed by framework. This recommendation represents no change from last season.

Proposed Seasons:

Duck (including merganser), Coot, Crow & Snipe:	Concurrent with gun seasons
Geese:	Concurrent with gun seasons except no hunting is allowed in the Northwest Permit Goose Zone or during any Special September Canada Goose Season
Mourning dove and band-tailed pigeon	Sept. 1 – Dec. 16
Daily bag limits:	3 in the aggregate, though not more than 1 band-tailed pigeon or goose
Possession limits:	Three times the daily bag limits

Discussion: There are approximately 150 licensed falconers in the state, not all of whom fly their raptors after game. Their collective harvest of birds is small. Most migratory game bird season proposals are concurrent with gun seasons since liberal 107-day general duck and goose seasons preclude opportunities for falconers to hunt outside of normal gun seasons.

Public Comment: None, as of March 13.

One member of the public requested the Eurasian collared-doves be removed from the list of unprotected wildlife and that a season and bag limit established for them.

Recommendation:
Modify language in OAR 635-008-0155 to allow game mammal hunting with firearms east of state highway 31 at Summer Lake Wildlife Area.

Discussion: Staff have noted that Division 008 rules for when you can hunt game mammals at Summer Lake Wildlife Area with a firearm have been inconsistent with the Big Game Hunting Regulations. This change brings the Division 008 rules in line with the Big Game Hunting Regulations.

Public Comment: None.