



2026-27 Proposed Migratory Game Bird Seasons for Delaware and Proposed Future Change to September Teal Zone Boundary



The DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife is accepting public comments on proposed options for migratory game bird hunting seasons and bag limits for the 2026-27 hunting season, which opens on Sept. 1, 2026.

The proposed options for the next migratory game bird seasons are designed to work within the annual U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service migratory bird hunting regulations (known as Federal Frameworks). The federal regulations are based on current bird population levels and establish basic season parameters such as season lengths, total bag limits and date ranges within which seasons can be held.

Criteria for selecting seasons based on surveys of Delaware hunters and feedback received:

- Options must be within Established Federal Guidelines for splits and season dates
- Run season dates as late as possible
- Maximize Saturdays, Sundays, and Holidays
- Overlap duck and Canada goose seasons
- Have the migratory Canada goose season open during Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the end of the season
- Minimize conflicts with November General Firearm deer season and other firearms deer Seasons.

Please review the [Proposed Migratory Gamebird Season](#) options and [Proposed Future Change to the Boundaries of the September Teal Season](#). Share your thoughts by sending an email to DNREC_Hunter_Surveys@delaware.gov with the email subject titled, "Delaware Migratory Gamebird Season Feedback" or complete the comment submission form on de.gov/gamebirds. The comment period is open through midnight on March 29, 2026. If comments are not received by this date, in-person feedback can be presented at the meeting of the [Advisory Council on Wildlife and Freshwater Fish](#) on Thursday April 2, 2026 at 6:30 PM and NOT March 31, 2026, which was previously scheduled.

Your feedback and advice will be a great help.

Proposed 2026-27 Migratory Gamebird Seasons

Dove

Federal Framework: States may select a 90-day season between September 1 and January 31. States may split their seasons into three segments.

Option 1: Similar to 2025-26 season – offers Thanksgiving and late season opportunities

Sept. 1 – Sept. 27	(27 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
Nov. 23 – Nov. 29	(7 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
Dec. 7 – Jan. 31	(56 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset

Option 2: September season and offers opportunities earlier in the season

Sept. 1 – Sept. 27	(27 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
Oct. 17 – Oct. 25	(9 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
Dec. 9 – Jan. 31	(54 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset

Option 3: September season and maximizes late season opportunities

Sept. 1 – Sept. 27	(27 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
Nov. 30 – Jan. 31	(63 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset

Limit: 15; the possession limit is 3 times the daily bag limit.

September Teal

Federal framework: A 9-day season may be held between September 1 – 30.

Sept. 19 – Sept. 27	(9 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
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Teal season will be open all day in a limited geographic area. This area is the coastal area from south of the C&D Canal to north of Route 9 in Lewes, and east of Routes 13, 113/113A, and 1.

Limit: 6; the possession limit is 3 times the daily bag limit.

Resident Canada Goose

Federal framework: A 25-day special season may be held between September 1 – 25.

Liberal hunting methods (unplugged shotguns, electronic calls, and extended shooting hours) allowed when and where September Teal Season is NOT open

Sept. 1 – Sept. 18 Statewide	(18 days)	½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset, unplugged shotguns and electronic calls are both allowed
Sept. 19 – Sept. 25 Within the Special Teal Zone	(7 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset. No liberal hunting methods allowed.
Sept. 19 – Sept. 25 Outside of the Special Teal Zone	(7 days)	½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset, unplugged shotguns and electronic calls are both allowed

Limit: 15; the possession limit is 3 times the daily bag limit.

Ducks

Federal Framework: A 60-day season, with no more than 3 segments, may be held between the Saturday nearest September 24 through January 31.

Option 1: Similar to 2025-2026 season. Has more late season opportunities

Oct. 31 – Nov. 8	(9 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
Nov. 25 – Nov. 29	(5 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
Dec. 17 – Jan. 31	(46 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset

Option 2: Similar to 2025-2026 season with the later first season segment. However, it includes the entire week of Thanksgiving after the firearm deer season and the third segment opens on a Saturday

Oct. 31 – Nov. 8	(9 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
Nov. 23 – Nov. 29	(7 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
Dec. 19 – Jan. 31	(44 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset

Option 3: Similar to 2024-2025 and previous seasons with the earlier first season segment and it includes the entire week of Thanksgiving after the firearm deer season and the third split opens on a Saturday

Oct. 24 – Nov. 1	(9 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
Nov. 23 – Nov. 29	(7 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
Dec. 19 – Jan. 31	(44 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset

Option 4: Blend of the 2024-2025 and previous seasons and the 2025-2026 season with the earlier first season segment and shorter second segment during the week of Thanksgiving after the firearm deer season, and two days added to the third segment

Oct. 24 – Nov. 1	(9 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
Nov. 25 – Nov. 29	(5 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
Dec. 17 – Jan. 31	(46 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset

Limit: 6 (except coots & mergansers), which may include no more than 4 mallards (2 hens), 3 wood ducks, 2 black ducks, 3 pintail, 2 canvasbacks, 1 scaup during the first 40 days of the season, 2 scaup during the last 20 days of the season, 2 redheads, 4 total sea ducks (no more than 3 scoters, 3 eider (1 hen), 3 long-tailed ducks), 1 mottled duck, and 1 fulvous whistling duck. The season on harlequin ducks remains closed. The possession limit is 3 times the daily bag limit. and 1 fulvous whistling duck. The season on harlequin ducks remains closed. The possession limit is 3 times the daily bag limit.

Canada Goose (Migratory)

Federal Framework: AP Zone: A 45-day season may be held between November 15 and February 5. These seasons also include white-fronted geese. The season may be split into two segments.

Proposed season includes Thanksgiving, Christmas, and end of the season hunting opportunities

Nov. 25 – Nov. 29	(5 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
Dec. 23 – Jan. 31	(40 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset

Limit: 2; the possession limit is 3 times the daily bag limit.

Youth/Veteran's/Active-Duty Military Hunt

Federal Framework: States may select two days in addition to their regular duck seasons. The days must be held outside any regular duck season on a weekend, holiday or other non-school day 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 framework, within any split of a regular duck season or within any other open season on migratory birds. Allowable Framework: Two days that occur between Fourteen days prior to the Saturday nearest September 24 (Sept. 13, 2026) – fourteen days after January 31 (Feb. 14, 2027).

Sat. Oct. 17, Sun. Oct. 18, Sat. Oct. 24, or Sun. Oct. 25, 2026 AND Sat. Feb. 6 or Sun. Feb. 7, 2027 - ½ hour before sunrise to sunset. Selected dates should be dependent on duck season selection.

Bag may include ducks, mergansers, coots, moorhens, Canada geese, snow geese, brant, and tundra swan (February youth hunt day only). Standard limits, possessions, and special permit requirements apply.

Coots & Mergansers

Coots

Same season dates as ducks

Limit: 15; the possession limit is 3 times the daily bag limit.

Mergansers

Same season dates as ducks

Limit: 5; the possession limit is 3 times the daily bag limit.

Tundra Swan

By Special Permit Only – 272 permits available for the 2026-27 season. **Limit:** 1 per season

Federal Framework: States may select a 90-day season between September 1 and January 31.

Nov. 7 – Jan 31	(86 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
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Brant

Federal Framework: States may select a 30-day season between the Saturday nearest September 24 and January 31. States may split their seasons into two segments.

(Season dates include Christmas, New Years Day, and Ending with Ducks)

Dec. 19 – Jan. 2	(15 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
Jan. 17 – Jan. 31	(15 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset

Limit: 1; the possession limit is 3 times the daily bag limit.

Snow Goose

Greater Snow Goose Population Status: Population surveys conducted in 2025 on the breeding grounds in Canada estimated the greater snow goose population at 428,000 birds, which is below the population goal range of 500,000 – 750,000 birds and is 32% lower than the 2024 survey estimate of 628,000 birds

Federal Framework: States may select a 107-day season between October 1 and March 10. States may split their seasons into three segments. Hunters are authorized to use of e-calls and unplugged shotguns during the snow goose hunting season when all other waterfowl hunting seasons (excluding falconry) are closed. Expanded hours are not authorized except during the Conservation Order.

Option 1: A regular season that extends into March since we're proposing to not have the Conservation Order start on February 1.

Nov. 23 – Jan 31 (70 days)*	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
Feb. 1 - Feb 5 or 6; Feb 7 or 8 - March 10 (37 days)*	½ hour before sunrise to sunset

*Unplugged shotguns and e-calls could be allowed from Nov. 30 – Dec. 18 and Feb. 1 – March 10, excluding the special Youth/Veteran's/Active Duty Military Hunt Day in early February. These liberal methods are allowed because no other waterfowl seasons are open during these timeframes.

Option 2: Similar to 2025-2026 season

Oct. 17 – Jan 31 (107 days)**	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
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**Unplugged shotguns and e-calls could be allowed from Nov. 30 – Dec. 18. These liberal methods are allowed because no other waterfowl seasons are open during these timeframes.

Limit: 25; no possession limit.

Snow Goose Conservation Order

Federal Framework: The conservation order allows expanded methods of taking snow geese (light geese). It allows shooting hours to end one-half hour after sunset and imposes no daily bag limits. Control activities may be conducted only when all waterfowl seasons, excluding falconry, are closed.

Option 1: No Conservation Order

Option 2: Possible shortened Conservation Order, dependent on spring 2026 breeding ground survey. A decision to implement the Conservation Order would not occur until after the hunting guide has been printed and we would have to notify hunters of the change.

March 11 - April 9	½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset
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Limit: No bag limit

Rails, Gallinules, and Moorhens

King and Clapper Rails

Federal Framework: States may select a 70-day season between September 1 and the last Sunday in January. States may split their seasons into two segments.

Sept. 1 – Nov. 9	(70 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
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Limit: 10 singly or in aggregate; the possession limit is 3 times the daily bag limit.

Sora and Virginia Rails

Federal Framework: States may select a 70-day season between September 1 and the last Sunday in January. States may split their seasons into two segments.

Sept. 1 – Nov. 9	(70 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
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Limit: 25 singly or in aggregate; the possession limit is 3 times the daily bag limit.

Gallinules and Common Moorhens

Federal Framework: States may select a 70-day season between September 1 and January 31. States may split their seasons into two segments.

Sept. 1 – Nov. 9	(70 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
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Limit: 15; the possession limit is 3 times the daily bag limit.

American Woodcock

Federal Framework: States may select a 45-day season between October 1 and January 31. States may split their seasons into two segments.

Option 1: Most similar to 2025-26 Season

Nov. 25 – Nov. 29	(5 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
Dec. 23 – Jan. 31	(40 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset

Option 2: More opportunity earlier in the season

Nov. 25 – Dec. 6	(12 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
Dec. 25 – Jan. 24	(33 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset

Limit: 3; the possession limit is 3 times the daily bag limit.

Snipe

Federal Framework: States may select a 107-day season between September 1 and January 31 with an 8-bird daily bag limit. States may split their seasons into two segments.

Option 1: Similar to 2025-2026

Sept. 22 – Nov. 29	(69 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
Dec. 25 – Jan. 31	(38 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset

Option 2: Later start to coincide with the closure date for first segment of Option 2 for American woodcock.

Sept. 29 – Dec. 6	(69 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset
Dec. 25 – Jan. 31	(38 days)	½ hour before sunrise to sunset

Limit: 8; the possession limit is 3 times the daily bag limit.

Proposed Future Change to September Teal Zone Boundary and the Relationship to the Resident Canada Goose Season

Note: This change is not being considered for the 2026-27 hunting season. We are only soliciting feedback from hunters at this time for a possible change to occur no earlier than the 2027-28 season.

Currently, hunters can hunt teal in September within a designated zone on the eastern portion of the state south of the C&D Canal to north of Route 9 in Lewes, and east of Routes 13, 113/113A, and 1. **See next page for the map.** Additionally, hunters are allowed to hunt resident Canada geese using special hunting methods during the September Resident Canada Goose Season. These special hunting methods include extended shooting hours of ½ hour before sunrise through ½ hour after sunset, unplugged shotguns, and the use of electronic calls. However, by federal law, the special hunting methods may not be allowed when another waterfowl season is open.

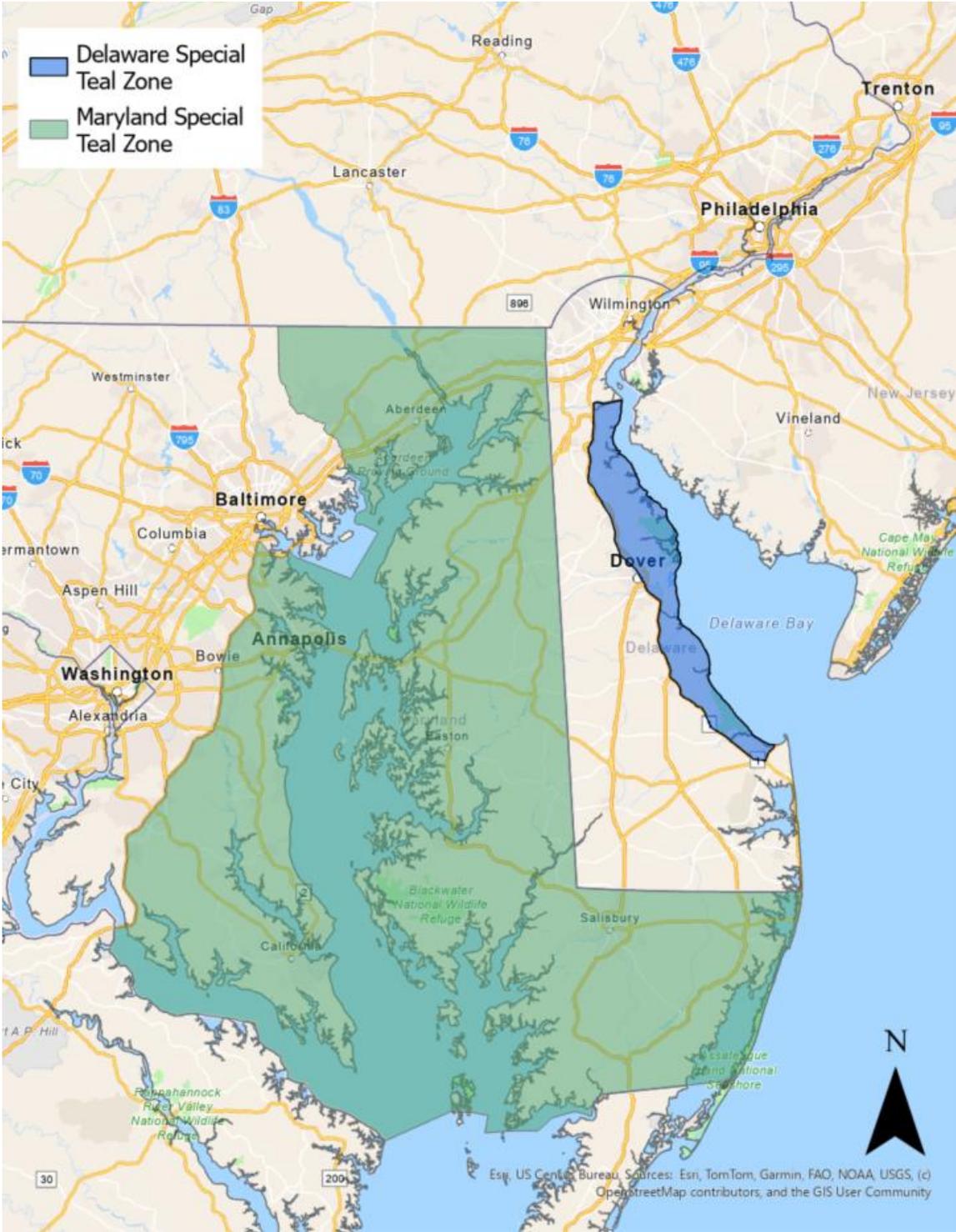
Due to the overlap of the later portion of the resident Canada goose season with the September Teal Season, the September Teal Zone will be open to resident Canada goose hunting and teal hunting at same time, but the special hunting methods (extended shooting hours, unplugged shotguns, and the use of electronic calls) will NOT be allowed during this time. Inside the September Teal Zone, these special hunting methods will be allowed for resident Canada geese before the September Teal Season opens. Outside of the September Teal Zone, these special hunting methods will be allowed during the entire September Resident Canada Goose season.

The season framework for Teal, based on their current population status, is within the moderate season package, which provides no more than 9 days of hunting opportunity. If teal populations increase, the season can extend up to 16 days, which would impact nearly 2/3 of the resident Canada goose season, which can be up to 25 days long. Hunters should keep this in mind when deciding which hunting opportunity is more important to them.

When the September Teal Season and the special zone were established, there were concerns about hunters harvesting wood ducks. Those concerns are still valid, but the Division could expand the teal zone, as we know and have heard from hunters, that teal can be found in areas outside of the current zone. For comparison, Maryland's zone encompassed 12 entire counties and portions of three others, whereas Delaware's zone includes a small portion of each of our counties.

We want to hear from our hunters, which do you prefer, expanding the teal hunting area in the state, or having a longer opportunity to hunt resident Canada geese using liberal methods (unplugged shotguns, electronic calls, and expanded hunting hours)?

Current Special September Teal Hunting Zones for Maryland and Delaware



September 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Labor Day					
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
						Deer - Youth and Non-ambulatory Adults
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
Deer - Youth and Non-ambulatory Adults						

October 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
					Deer - Antlerless Only	Deer - Antlerless Only
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Deer - Antlerless Only					Deer - Muzzleloader	Deer - Muzzleloader
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
	Columbus Day					
Deer - Muzzleloader	Deer - Muzzleloader	Deer - Muzzleloader	Deer - Muzzleloader	Deer - Muzzleloader	Deer - Muzzleloader	Deer - Muzzleloader
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Deer - Muzzleloader					Deer - Antlerless Only	Deer - Antlerless Only
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Deer - Antlerless Only					Deer - Antlerless Only	Deer - Antlerless Only

November 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
						Deer - Youth and Non-ambulatory Adults
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Deer - Youth and Non-ambulatory Adults		Election Day	Veterans Day		Deer - General Firearms	Deer - General Firearms
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Deer - General Firearms	Deer - General Firearms	Deer - General Firearms	Deer - General Firearms	Deer - General Firearms	Deer - General Firearms	Deer - General Firearms
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Deer - General Firearms				Thanksgiving		
29	30	1	2	3	4	5

December 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
29	30	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
						Deer - Antlerless Only
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Deer - Antlerless Only						
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Deer - Antlerless Only					Christmas	
27	28	29	30	31	1	2

January 2027

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
					New Years Day	Deer - Handgun and SWPCR
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Deer - Handgun and SWPCR	Deer - Handgun and SWPCR	Deer - Handgun and SWPCR	Deer - Handgun and SWPCR	Deer - Handgun and SWPCR	Deer - Handgun and SWPCR
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
						Deer - General Firearms
17	18 Martin Luther King Jr. Day	19	20	21	22	23
Deer - General Firearms	Deer - General Firearms	Deer - General Firearms	Deer - General Firearms	Deer - General Firearms	Deer - General Firearms	Deer - General Firearms
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Deer - General Firearms	Deer - Muzzleloader	Deer - Muzzleloader	Deer - Muzzleloader	Deer - Muzzleloader	Deer - Muzzleloader	Deer - Muzzleloader
31	1	Notes				
Deer - Muzzleloader						

February 2027

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
Deer - Muzzleloader						
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	1	2	3	4	5	6