“We are looking forward to another great migratory bird hunting season in Wisconsin. Whether it’s ducks, geese, mourning doves or woodcock, there should be plenty of birds and plenty of opportunity for hunters this fall.”

TAYLOR FINGER, DNR MIGRATORY BIRD ECOLOGIST
SEASON: SEPT. 1 - NOV. 29

MOURING DOVE

POPULATION REMAINS STRONG FOR ONE OF AMERICA’S MOST COMMON BIRDS

Conservative estimates put the population of mourning doves leaving Wisconsin in the fall at between 4 and 5 million, though some doves remain in the state through the winter. Nationwide, recent estimates put the mourning dove population at about 300 million.

Hunters should expect to see similar numbers compared to recent years, especially in southern tiers of fields, where the birds are most common in sunflower, wheat or other grain fields.

All field locations can be found using FFLIGHT (The Fields & Forest Lands Interactive Gamebird Hunting Tool) or the DNR’s Hunt Wild app. The largest concentration of dove fields is in the southern tier of the state. This spring was unseasonably wet, which made dove field plantings difficult.

Field staff worked hard, resulting in 35 dove fields being planted on public lands for a total of 199 acres. A total of 33 dove fields (189 acres) are planted with sunflowers and two fields (10 acres) are planted with wheat.

“Mourning dove hunting is a relatively new opportunity for Wisconsin hunters and provides a great opportunity to get out and brush up on your wingshooting skills while going home with great table fare.”

— TAYLOR FINGER, DNR MIGRATORY BIRD ECOLOGIST

350M
One of America’s most populous birds, there are roughly 350 million mourning doves across the continent.

41M
Nationwide, about 41 million doves are harvested annually.

10,000
Around 10,000 Wisconsin hunters participate in dove hunting on a yearly basis.
Wisconsin’s Goose Population Continues to Grow

A long-term increase in Wisconsin’s Canada goose population continued in 2019, with the population estimate rising another 9%.

Field staff indicated that Canada goose nesting and brood production was excellent across the state and we expect numbers similar to recent years going into the fall hunting season.

“In 2019, we had excellent goose production and the expectation is that we will have solid numbers of geese throughout the state for both the early and regular Canada goose hunting seasons.”

— Taylor Finger, DNR Migratory Bird Ecologist

According to the United States Fish & Wildlife Service, there are about 6.5 million Canada geese across the world.

Wisconsin has an average of 47,000 active goose hunters.

Over the past 25 years, the population of resident Canada geese has increased considerably.

The 2019 Wisconsin breeding Canada goose population estimate of 171,407 is up 9% from 2018, when there were an estimated 157,950 geese in Wisconsin. The estimate is 71% above the long-term average, which suggests a continued gradual increase in their population.

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From 2009 to 2019, Wisconsin woodcock heard during the singing-ground survey is stable, which is consistent with the 50-year trend. Wisconsin saw an 11.76 percent increase in woodcock heard during the 2019 survey, according to the United States Fish & Wildlife Service. The 50-year trend shows a -0.26 percent population trend from 1968 to 2019.

In the upper range, woodcock population has increased 2.08 percent in the last 10 years and .02 percent in the last 50 years, remaining very consistent.

Wisconsin contributes over 750,000 woodcock annually to the flyway population. The annual fall flights through Wisconsin totals at least 1,500,000 birds.

“Brood rearing conditions this year were average to above average so we expect good numbers of woodcock this fall.”

— TAYLOR FINGER, DNR MIGRATORY BIRD ECOLOGIST

Wisconsin has about 11,000 square miles of woodcock habitat, with over 80 percent found in the northern third of the state. This area contains some of the most productive woodcock breeding habitat in the United States, with summer densities of up to 100 birds per square mile.

Suitable woodcock habitat can be viewed using FFLIGHT at https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/lands/FFLIGHT.html or the DNR’s Hunt Wild app.
The four most abundant ducks (mallards, wood ducks, blue-winged teal and green-winged teal) make up about 70% of Wisconsin’s fall hunting harvest. The 2019 Wisconsin breeding duck population estimate of 413,662 is consistent with the last ten years. Mallards represent the number one duck in the Wisconsin hunters’ bag and make up over 32% of the total duck harvest in Wisconsin. The Wisconsin breeding mallard population estimate of 204,296 is similar to previous years. The wood duck represents roughly 22% of the Wisconsin duck hunters’ bag. The Wisconsin breeding wood duck population estimate of 100,027 experienced no change from the previous year population estimate.

In 2018, the US Fish and Wildlife Service estimated the continental US duck population to be 41.2 million. There are roughly 60,000 duck hunters annually in Wisconsin. The four most abundant ducks (mallards, wood ducks, blue-winged teal and green-winged teal) make up about 70% of Wisconsin’s fall hunting harvest.
WISCONSIN WATERFOWL SURVEY RESULTS

SPRING WATERFOWL SURVEY POPULATION

MALLARDS 204,296
BLUE-WINGED TEAL 61,946
WOOD DUCKS 100,027
OTHER DUCKS 47,392

PERCENT CHANGE FROM 2018

MALLARDS -7%
BLUE-WINGED TEAL +37%
WOOD DUCKS 0%
OTHER DUCKS -39%

PERCENT CHANGE FROM LONG-TERM AVERAGE (1973-2018)

MALLARDS +12%
BLUE-WINGED TEAL -41%
WOOD DUCKS +24%
OTHER DUCKS -27%

Wisconsin spring waterfowl surveys have been conducted annually since 1973. On these surveys, DNR staff in the air and on the ground count all ducks, geese, swans and cranes seen, including mallards, Canada geese, blue-winged teal and wood ducks. This year’s numbers indicate stable wood-duck and mallard populations, with a significant teal increase, though teal remain below the long-term average.

The best approach when evaluating the blue-winged teal survey data is to look at long-term trends and continental context. Wisconsin blue-winged teal breeding numbers have remained low compared to historic levels while continental numbers have shown dramatic increases during the late 1990s and in the last 10 years, reaching record numbers in three of the last five surveys with estimates of 6 to 8 million breeding teal. Roughly two-thirds of the teal harvest during Wisconsin’s regular duck season is supported by teal that nest outside of Wisconsin.

“Wisconsin has 5 million acres of wetlands and 15,000 lakes, including the Mississippi River, Lake Superior and Lake Michigan. Wisconsin also has the largest freshwater cattail marsh in the country, Horicon Marsh. With so many areas that provide public hunting opportunity, there are endless opportunities for Wisconsin’s waterfowl hunters.”

— TAYLOR FINGER, DNR MIGRATORY BIRD ECOLOGIST
## 2019 National Duck Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>% Change from 2018</th>
<th>% Change from Long-Term Average</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mallard</td>
<td>9.432</td>
<td>9.255</td>
<td>+2%</td>
<td>+19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Green-Winged Teal</td>
<td>3.178</td>
<td>3.043</td>
<td>+4%</td>
<td>+47%</td>
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<td>Blue-Winged Teal</td>
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<td>6.450</td>
<td>-16%</td>
<td>+6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Shoveler</td>
<td>3.649</td>
<td>4.208</td>
<td>-13%</td>
<td>+39%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Pintail</td>
<td>2.268</td>
<td>2.365</td>
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<td>-42%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canvasback</td>
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<td>0.686</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scaup</td>
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<td>3.989</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Wigeon</td>
<td>2.832</td>
<td>2.820</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gadwall</td>
<td>3.258</td>
<td>2.886</td>
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<td>+61%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Ducks</td>
<td>38.899</td>
<td>41.193</td>
<td>-6%</td>
<td>+10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May Ponds (U.S./Canada)</td>
<td>4.990</td>
<td>5.227</td>
<td>-5%</td>
<td>-5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers in millions, all numbers via U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.