

Results of the 2015 WISCONSIN WATERFOWL HUNTER SURVEY

Participation in Waterfowl Hunting and Opinions of Hunting Regulations

Section 1: Your Waterfowl Hunting Experiences

This first section asks about your waterfowl hunting experiences in Wisconsin. Questions that refer to “waterfowl” mean geese and ducks, including coots and mergansers.

1. During which of the following years did you do any duck or Canada goose hunting in Wisconsin?

2015	61%
2014	58%
2013	56%
2012	53%
2011	51%
2010	49%
None of these years but hunted prior to 2010	11%
I am not a waterfowl hunter	17%

2. For how many years have you hunted waterfowl? I've hunted waterfowl for _____ year(s).

The average number of years the respondents have hunted waterfowl was 23.8 with a range of 1-75 years

3. During your most recent waterfowl hunting season(s) in Wisconsin what type of land or water did you hunt?

Private land owned by someone else	55%
State owned property	50%
Federal owned property	23%
Public waters not within state or federal property	23%
Private land I own	19%
County or municipal owned land	17%
Private land owned by a club	3%
I'm not sure	1%

4. How often do you use the following techniques to hunt waterfowl in Wisconsin?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Walk in water hunting (no boat)	15%	14%	27%	33%	11%
Open water (beyond emergent plants)	59%	19%	12%	7%	4%
Field hunting	18%	19%	29%	23%	11%
Layout boat	83%	9%	4%	3%	0%
Motorized boat	37%	13%	17%	22%	11%
Non-motorized boat	34%	16%	28%	19%	3%

5. During your most recent waterfowl hunting season(s) in Wisconsin, did you or a hunting partner do any scouting prior to your duck and/or goose hunts?

	Duck	Goose
Have not hunted	7%	14%
No	29%	37%
One Trip	23%	16%
Two Trips	13%	9%
Three or more trips	29%	25%

6. In a typical year about how many ducks and geese did you usually harvest? Just give us your best recollection.

The average number of ducks harvested in a typical year the respondents reported was 11.2 with a range of 0-100.

The average number of geese harvested in a typical year the respondents reported was 3.8 with a range of 0-102.

7. Below is a list of attributes that can have an influence on your waterfowl hunting experiences. Please tell us your level of satisfaction for each item.

	Very dissatisfied	dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very satisfied
When waterfowl are arriving in the area I hunt	7%	14%	41%	24%	14%
Length of time waterfowl are staying in the area I hunt	8%	20%	46%	19%	7%
Timing of waterfowl seasons	10%	14%	42%	27%	8%
Number of waterfowl produced in my hunting area	11%	22%	41%	20%	6%
Overall number of waterfowl where I hunt	13%	23%	34%	25%	6%

8. Which if any of the following resources have you ever used to obtain information about waterfowl hunting in Wisconsin?

DNR regulation booklet	60%
Hunting magazines	45%
DNR Website	38%
Newspaper articles	24%
None of the listed options	22%
DNR apps on mobile device (ex., Smart phone)	18%
Emails from DNR	5%
DNR Twitter	1%
DNR Facebook	0%

Section 2: Duck Hunting in Wisconsin

This section looks specifically at duck hunting in Wisconsin. Even if you have not hunted in 2015, please continue with the questions until you are directed to skip to the next section.

1. In a typical duck season, about how many days do you duck hunt? Please just provide your best estimate by writing a single number rather than a range of days.

The typical duck hunter hunts 10.2 days a year with the range of 0-65.

2. In which zone(s) did you hunt ducks?

North zone	43%
South zone	68%
Mississippi River zone	15%

3. Did you do any duck hunting in 2015, even just part of a day, in open water of Lake Michigan (defined as beyond 500 feet from shore, excluding the waters of Green Bay)?

Yes, I open water duck hunted on Lake Michigan	3%
No, I did not do any open water duck hunting on Lake Michigan	97%

4. How many days did you go duck hunting in Wisconsin in 2015? For each month, please write the number of days you hunted.

Average number of days hunted in September was 2.3
Average number of days hunted in October was 6.0
Average number of days hunted in November was 4
Average number of days hunted in December was 1.1

5. How many ducks did you harvest in Wisconsin during 2015? _____ ducks

The average number of ducks harvested in Wisconsin during 2015 was 8.3

6. Satisfaction with your 2015 duck hunting experiences can be influenced by many factors. Please tell us your level of disagreement or agreement with each of the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I felt crowded at my hunting area	26%	17%	22%	22%	14%
Other hunters interfered with my hunt	30%	15%	24%	21%	10%
Other hunters were sky-busting	28%	11%	18%	23%	20%
I had a conflict with another hunter	65%	9%	19%	4%	3%
I had difficulty obtaining access to hunting sites	48%	15%	25%	9%	3%
Early freeze-up was a problem	76%	8%	12%	3%	3%
Weather conditions interfered with my hunts	44%	16%	20%	11%	9%
Ducks arrived after the season closed	20%	11%	25%	23%	21%
I was satisfied with the number of ducks I saw during the season	28%	26%	22%	19%	4%
I was satisfied with the number of shooting chances I had when I hunted	24%	27%	23%	21%	5%
I was satisfied with the number of ducks I harvested	35%	21%	23%	16%	4%
The date for the duck season opening is properly timed	16%	12%	32%	28%	12%
I was able to go duck hunting as much as I wanted	20%	20%	22%	23%	16%
I was satisfied with the overall quality of my duck hunts	13%	24%	32%	23%	8%

7. Overall, how satisfied were you with your 2015 Wisconsin duck hunts?

Very dissatisfied	15%
Fairly dissatisfied	22%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	25%
Fairly satisfied	32%
Very satisfied	6%

In 2011, Wisconsin changed from a 2-zone duck hunting structure (North and South zones) to a 3-zone structure (North, South and the Mississippi River zones – **see map on back cover**). This change was done in-part based on input from hunters responding to surveys similar to this one. The past five hunting seasons (2011 through 2015) have been managed with this 3-zone structure. The next few questions address the change from a 2-zone structure to a 3-zone structure.

8. Which zone structure do you most prefer: the former 2-zone structure or the current 3-zone structure?

Definitely prefer 2-zone	6%
Probably prefer 2-zone	4%
Makes no difference to me	59%
Probably prefer 3-zone	15%
Definitely prefer 3-zone	9%
I didn't hunt under the 2-zone structure	7%

9a. Which do you believe provides more opportunities to hunt multiple opening days: the former 2-zone structure or the current 3-zone structure?

Definitely 2-zone	6%
Probably 2-zone	3%
No difference	59%
Probably 3-zone	24%
Definitely 3-zone	7%

9b. Which do you believe results in greater hunter crowding at duck hunting areas: the former 2-zone structure or the current 3-zone structure?

Definitely 2-zone	8%
Probably 2-zone	15%
No difference	66%
Probably 3-zone	8%
Definitely 3-zone	3%

The next few questions consider options for both zone and season changes. These options were developed by a committee of duck hunters like yourself and waterfowl managers. While many additional options were identified, not all of them are eligible for consideration because some zone and season structures are regulated by the federal government.

We need your input on three options. Depending on which option you choose additional options for season structures will be considered. For all options assume a federally approved 60-day duck season.

Option 1: No changes. The North, South and Mississippi River zone boundaries **remain unchanged**. The season would have opening dates similar to those of 2014 and 2015. **Options for closures (split seasons) and start dates would be considered annually.**

Option 2: Maintain three zones but change the North – South boundary. The **South zone is extended north from its current Hwy 10/41 zone line to Hwy 64 (see map on back cover)**. The season would have opening dates similar to those of 2014 and 2015. **Options for closures (split seasons) and start dates would be considered annually.**

Option 3: Create a Lake Michigan zone. Keep the current North, South and Mississippi River zones at their current locations and **create a fourth Lake Michigan open water zone**. Open water hunting is defined as water beyond 500 feet from shore (excluding the waters of Green Bay). **(See map on back cover.)** If this new zone was added, **federal regulations prevent the state from having split seasons in any zone**; starting dates would be considered annually. This new zone is being considered to provide additional late season hunting days in areas of later freeze-up.

10. Of the three zone options on the previous page, which option do you most prefer? **(check one)**

Option 1: No change to current zone structure	63%
Option 2: Extend the South zone further north to Hwy 64	18%
Option 3: Create a fourth zone of Lake Michigan open water (no split season in any zone)	19%

Wisconsin has the option of having a split in its duck season; that means a closure for a period of time during the season. For each of the three current zones:

First tell us if you would like to have a split season. If No, go to the next question

If you prefer a split season for the zone, first indicate your preference for the length of the closure and then indicate if the closure should occur during the first half (first 30 days) or second half (second 30 days) of the season.

11. Should the North zone have a split season?

Yes	28%
No	72%

11a. How many days should the closure be in the North zone?

More than 9 days	13%
9 days	11%
7 days	21%
5 days (Monday – Friday)	42%
Unsure	13%

11b. Should the closure occur during the first half (first 30 days) or second half (second 30 days) of the season?

First half	77%
Second half	23%

12. Should the South zone have a split season?

Yes	42%
No	58%

13a. How many days should the closure be in the South zone?

More than 9 days	17%
9 days	12%
7 days	22%
5 days (Monday – Friday)	38%
Unsure	11%

13b. Should the closure occur during the first half (first 30 days) or second half (second 30 days) of the season?

First half	74%
Second half	26%

14. Should the Mississippi River zone have a split season?

Yes	31%
No	69%

14a. How many days should the closure be in the Mississippi River zone?

More than 9 days	14%
9 days	11%
7 days	24%
5 days (Monday – Friday)	31%
Unsure	19%

14b. Should the closure occur during the first half (first 30 days) or second half (second 30 days) of the season?

First half	78%
Second half	22%

The next few questions consider various aspects of duck harvest management in Wisconsin. Even if you have little experience with duck hunting, please try to answer each question.

16. Which statement best describes how you feel about the **current total daily duck bag limit (6 ducks)** in Wisconsin? Would you say the total daily duck bag limit was...

Too low	5%
About right	82%
Too high	6%
No opinion	7%

17. Which statement best describes how you feel about the **duck season length (60 days)** in Wisconsin? Would you say the duck season length was...

Too short	36%
About right	56%
Too long	1%
No opinion	7%

18. Which statement best describes how you feel about the **opening day of the duck season** in each zone in Wisconsin? Would you say the duck season timing for the...

North zone opening was...

Too early	15%
About right	52%
Too late	6%
No opinion	27%

South zone opening was...

Too early	17%
About right	56%
Too late	7%
No opinion	20%

Miss. River zone opening was...

Too early	11%
About right	37%
Too late	4%
No opinion	49%

19. Since Wisconsin began its 60-day duck season in 1997, Wisconsin’s breeding mallard population has declined and adult hen mallard survival has decreased. A one hen mallard bag limit was instituted to help curtail the decline and to control mortality of hen mallards. Some Wisconsin duck hunters are now asking for the federal maximum of two in the daily bag limit on hen mallards. What do you think the **daily bag limit for hen mallards** should be in Wisconsin?

0 hen mallards	10%
1 hen mallards	60%
2 hen mallards	21%
No opinion	10%

20. The opening day of duck season varies from year to year based on federal rules and the calendar. Assuming a 60-day duck season, please tell us your preference for opening day of the duck season for each of the three zones.

	North zone	South zone	Mississippi River zone
Saturday nearest Sept 24 th (Sept 21 – Sept 27)	42%	11%	6%
Saturday nearest Oct 1 st (Sept 28 – Oct 4)	22%	37%	13%
Saturday nearest Oct 8 th (Oct 5 – Oct 11)	7%	22%	8%
Later than the Saturday nearest Oct 7 th	3%	9%	5%
Makes no difference to me / Unsure	25%	21%	32%

In 2014 a statewide early teal season was offered for the first year of a 3-year trial in Wisconsin. The season ran for seven days, during the first week of September, and provided additional hunting opportunities.

21. Have you participated in Wisconsin's early teal season?

	2014	2015
Yes	15%	14%
No	85%	86%

22. How likely are you to hunt the 2016 early teal season in Wisconsin?

Very likely	12%
Fairly likely	11%
Unsure	20%
Not too likely	27%
Not at all likely	30%

23. Do you favor or oppose continuing an early teal season beyond 2016 with the understanding that no days would be removed from the regular season?

Definitely favor	17%
Probably favor	18%
Unsure	26%
Probably oppose	13%
Definitely oppose	26%

24. What would be your preference for the timing of and the length of a September early teal season?

Timing

Keep current timing	70%
Start the 2 nd week of September	16%
Start the 3 rd week of September	14%

Length

Keep current 7-day length	57%
Fewer than 7 days	28%
More than 7 days	15%

Section 3: Canada Goose Hunting in Wisconsin

This section looks specifically at goose hunting in Wisconsin. Even if you did not hunt in 2015, please continue with the questions until you are directed to skip to the next section.

1. In a typical year, about how many days do you hunt geese in Wisconsin? Please provide your best estimate by writing a single number rather than a range of days.

The average number of days the respondents hunted geese was 6.9 with a range of 0-100 years

- 2 How many days have you gone goose hunting in Wisconsin in 2015? For each month, please write the number of days you hunted.

Average number of days hunted in September was 3.4

Average number of days hunted in October was 4.8

Average number of days hunted in November was 3.4

Average number of days hunted in December was 1.2

3. For Canada goose hunting, there are numerous zones, subzones and time periods from September through December. We'd like to know first, if you hunted the zone/time period and second, if you did, how many geese you harvested.

	No	Yes	Average number harvested
Early statewide season (Sept 1 – Sept 15)	51%	49%	1.8
Exterior north zone (Sept 16 – Dec 16)	57%	44%	1.5
Exterior south zone (Sept 16 – Oct 11 / Oct 17 – Dec 21)	35	65	1.7
Mississippi River subzone (Oct 3 – Oct 9 / Oct 17 – Jan 9)	88	12	.5
Horicon zone period 1 (Sept 16 – Nov 1)	91	9	1.3
Horicon zone period 2 (Nov 2 – Dec 16)	97	3	.3

4. Satisfaction with your 2015 goose hunting experiences can be influenced by many factors. Please tell us your level of disagreement or agreement with each of the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
I felt crowded at my hunting area	40%	15%	29%	10%	6%
Other hunters interfered with my hunt	42%	16%	27%	10%	5%
Other hunters were sky-busting	38%	9%	24%	15%	13%
I had a conflict with another hunter	59%	10%	24%	4%	2%
I had difficulty obtaining access to hunting sites	44%	13%	30%	9%	4%
Early freeze-up was a problem	72%	7%	19%	1%	2%
Weather conditions interfered with my hunts	50%	12%	24%	9%	6%
Geese arrived after the season closed	35%	13%	30%	12%	11%
I was satisfied with the number of geese I saw during the season	23%	17%	32%	19%	10%
I was satisfied with the number of shooting chances I had when I hunted	27%	23%	30%	15%	6%
I was satisfied with The number of geese I harvested	42%	17%	25%	10%	6%
The dates for the goose season openings are properly timed	8%	7%	39%	27%	19%
I was able to go goose hunting as much as I wanted	16%	17%	31%	20%	17%
I was satisfied with the overall quality of my goose hunts	18%	19%	35%	20%	9%

5. Overall, how satisfied were you with your 2015 Wisconsin goose hunts?

Very dissatisfied	14%
Fairly dissatisfied	18%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	38%
Fairly satisfied	24%
Very satisfied	5%

The next few questions consider various aspects of goose harvest management in Wisconsin. Even if you have little experience with goose hunting, please try to answer each question.

6. Which statement best describes how you feel about the **total daily goose bag limit** in the **early September season** and the **regular season**?

	Early September season	Regular season
Too low	14%	36%
About right	64%	49%
Too high	5%	1%
No opinion	17%	14%

7. Which statement best describes how you feel about the **goose season length** (number of days in the season)? Would you say the goose season length was...

Too short	19%
About right	65%
Too long	1%
No opinion	15%

8. **Recognizing the multiple zones and their opening dates**, which statement best describes your overall feeling about the **timing of the goose seasons**? In general, would you say the timing of the goose seasons was...

Too early	9%
About right	69%
Too late	2%
No opinion	19%

9. Wisconsin has the option to have one or two splits (season closures) in the Exterior zone for Canada goose hunting. Please tell us the kind of season you would most prefer in each of the following Exterior zones.

	North zone	South zone	Mississippi River zone
No split	67%	55%	57%
One split during duck split	17%	24%	22%
One split during gun deer season	13%	15%	14%
Prefer a split but at a different time	1%	2%	2%

If you have any questions, please contact **Jordan Petchenik at (608) 266-8523.**

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides equal opportunity in its employment programs, services and functions under an Affirmative Action Plan. If you have any questions, please write to: Equal Opportunity Office, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240



**Bureau of Science Services
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707-7921**



This study was funded in-part through Wildlife Restoration dollars.

PUB-SS-1151-2015