

1999-2000 Waterfowl Hunter Survey

Summary

The Wildlife Division conducted a waterfowl hunter survey following the 1999-2000 hunting season to better understand waterfowl hunter's opinions and attitudes on waterfowl hunting seasons, bag limits and other related waterfowl hunting issues. From the 12,800 hunters that registered in 1999 through Virginia's Harvest Information Program (HIP) and indicated they had hunted ducks, geese, brant or swan in Virginia, 3000 (23%) were mailed questionnaires. Questionnaires returned totaled 1261 (42% response). Not every question was answered by each respondent. A complete report of the survey results will be available in the near future. Below are a few results that are pertinent to setting seasons and bag limits.

Duck Seasons

October Segment

- Timing of October Segment - 50% favored putting October segment in 2nd week of October versus 31% in support of putting it as early in the month as possible. Total elimination of the October season was opposed to strongly opposed by 55%.
- Number of Days - Surprisingly the most preferred options was for 5 days in October (48% support). The second most preferred was the 4-day option (33% support).

Bag Limits

- Respondents favored 5-duck bag (55%), over 4-duck bag (51%), and 6-duck bag (45%).

Black Duck Closure

- Respondents favored December closing (42%) slightly over Nov-Dec closing (39%), and opposed late (Jan 3-20) closure the most (41%).

Hunting Opportunity

- Respondents favored more days versus a higher bag limits when faced with more or less duck hunting opportunity (65% favored a 70 day season 5 ducks in the bag over 60 days and 6 ducks (18%); 67% favored 60 days and 4 ducks over 50 days and 5 ducks (19%)).
- Respondents favored having seasons extend as late into the framework as possible.
- In general, 65% of respondents indicated they were satisfied with duck hunting season frameworks as they currently exist and only 20% indicated they were dissatisfied.

Youth Hunting

- Only 9% of respondents took a youth hunting on youth waterfowl day.
- When asked how often they had taken a youth waterfowl hunting during the 1999-2000 season, 75% of the respondents answering the question reported that they never did, 15% indicated they took a youth hunting 2-5 days, 8% indicated 1 day and 5% reported more than 5 days.

Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

1999-2000 Waterfowl Survey

Please answer each of the following questions completely. All responses to questions will be kept in strictest confidence. Results from this study will be reported only in an aggregate total, never attributed to any individual.

1. Did you hunt ducks in Virginia during the 1999-2000 season (September 99 - January 2000)?

937 Yes (75%) (If yes, utilize the map below to indicate the regions hunted and number of ducks killed in each region.)

314 No (25%)

N=1256

5 did not answer

Region Hunted	Ducks Killed	
1	9349	68%
2	1108	8%
3	696	5%
4	353	3%
5	2257	16%
Total	13,763	100%

2. Indicate the number of days you hunted and the number of ducks you harvested during each of the segments of the 1999-2000 season? Enter a 0 (zero) if you did not hunt during a period.

<u>Segment</u>	<u># Hunters</u>	<u># Days</u>	<u># Ducks Harvested</u>
Sept Teal Season (Sept. 16-25)	<u>123</u>	<u>269</u>	<u>374</u>
Oct. Segment (Oct. 6-9)	<u>466</u>	<u>1001</u>	<u>1903</u>
Late Segment (Nov. 17-Jan 20)	<u>857</u>	<u>6892</u>	<u>11289</u>

3. Did you hunt Canada geese in Virginia during the 1999-2000 season (Sept.99 – Feb. 2000)?

50% Yes (If yes, utilize the map below to indicate the regions hunted and the number of geese Killed in each region.)

50% No

N=1001

4 did not answer

Region Hunted	Geese Killed
1-236	927 (3.9 per hunter)
2- 81	413 (5.1 per hunter)
3- 40	159 (4.0 per hunter)
4- 50	416 (8.3 per hunter)
5-266	2962 (11.1 per hunter)

4. Indicate the number of days you hunted and the number of Canada geese you harvested during each of the segments of the 1999-2000 season? Enter a 0 (zero) if you did not hunt during a period.

N=1256	<u>Segment</u>	<u># Hunters</u>	<u># Days</u>	<u># Geese Harvested</u>
	Sept. 1-25	349	1111	1632
	Dec. 26-31 (east of I-95)	188	481	392
	Dec. 1-Feb. 15 (west of I-95)	349	2047	2657

5. Indicate the number of days you hunted and your harvest during the 1999-2000 season for each species listed below. Enter a 0 (zero) if you did not hunt during a period.

	<u># Hunters</u>	<u># Days</u>	<u># Harvested</u>
Sea ducks	51	195	377
Brant	46	157	161
Snow Geese	88	346	499

6. Approximately how many days did you hunt on the following types of land during the 1999-2000 waterfowl season?

8019	Private land	831 did	66% of respondents hunted private land
2401	Public land	318 did	25%
384	State Wildlife Management area	97 did	8%
120	Federal National Wildlife Refuge	25 did	2%
129	Other (please specify) _____	19 did	1.5% _____

7. Did you take a youth hunting on youth waterfowl hunting day, (October 18, 1999)?

119 Yes
1009 No (38 did not answer)

1128

8. How often did you take a youth (15 or younger) waterfowl hunting during the 1999-2000 season?

72% Never
8% 1 day
15% 2-5 days
5% More than 5 days (57 did not answer)

We would like to have your opinion on future duck regulations in Virginia. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service provides the basic frameworks within which states must select waterfowl season dates and bag limits. The state can be more restrictive than the Federal Frameworks, but we must stay within these federal guidelines. The answers to the following questions will help us better meet the preferences of our duck hunters.

9. This coming season (2000-2001), we may be able to split the state into two or three separate zones for waterfowl hunting, i.e. mountain, piedmont, coastal. In addition, we may be able to have two or three season segments (for example: October, Thanksgiving, Late) within each zone. Zone and segment options can only be changed at 5-year intervals, so the option we select will remain in effect for the next 5 years. To what extent would you favor or oppose each option?

	Strongly Favor		Not Sure Does Not Matter				Strongly Oppose	
a. No zones, 3 season segments (what we have now).....	.36	.12	.08	.28	.05	.04	.07	4.4
b. 2 zones, 2 segments within each zone.....	.09	.07	.10	.36	.08	.09	.21	4.4
c. 3 zones, 3 season segments within each zone.....	.27	.09	.06	.29	.06	.06	.15	3.6

10. What is your opinion of the potential duck hunting zones listed below?

	Strongly Favor		Does Not Matter				Strongly Oppose	
If two zones, draw the line at Route 29.....	.06	.05	.09	.50	.08	.07	.16	4.3
If two zones, draw the line at Interstate 95.....	.17	.13	.11	.40	.04	.05	.11	3.6
If three zones, draw the lines at Blue Ridge and I-95.....	.17	.09	.10	.41	.05	.06	.12	3.7
If three zones, draw the lines at Route 29 and I-95.....	.14	.07	.10	.43	.06	.06	.13	3.9
Add other suggestions you may have _____								

11. In relation to the October segment of the duck season, indicate your preference of the following:

	Strongly Favor		Does Not Matter				Strongly Oppose	
Eliminate Oct. segment.....	.14	.03	.02	.24	.02	.10	.45	5.1
Oct. segment with 2 days.....	.06	.03	.04	.39	.08	.13	.28	4.9
Oct. segment with 3 days.....	.08	.06	.08	.37	.09	.10	.23	4.5
Oct. segment with 4 days.....	.16	.11	.06	.37	.06	.07	.17	3.9
Oct. segment with 5 days.....	.36	.07	.05	.31	.04	.06	.13	3.3
Oct. segment as early in month as possible.....	.18	.07	.06	.41	.06	.06	.17	4.0
Oct. segment during 2 nd wk. Of Oct.....	.32	.12	.06	.35	.03	.04	.08	3.1

12. If duck season 2000-2001 were 45 days, what would be your preference for the middle (Thanksgiving) and final segments, assuming an October segment of 4 days in each case.

<u>November</u>	<u>Final Split</u>	Strongly Favor		Does Not Matter				Strongly Oppose	
3 days (Nov. 23-25)	Dec. 8-Jan. 20.....	.24	.10	.11	.34	.08	.05	.08	3.4
4 days (Nov. 22-25)	Dec. 9-Jan. 20.....	.21	.17	.10	.32	.06	.05	.10	3.4
6 days (Nov. 20-25)	Dec. 12-Jan. 20.....	.37	.09	.06	.25	.04	.07	.11	3.2
0 days	Dec. 5-Jan. 20.....	.17	.05	.03	.27	.05	.08	.35	4.6

13. In relation to season dates, the closing date established by the USFWS for duck seasons in nearly all states in the country is January 20. Three states in the Mississippi Flyway have been allowed to extend their

duck seasons through January 31. However, as a penalty, these states have been required to shorten their seasons by nine days (from 60 to 51 days) during liberal regulation years, and by 7 days (from 45 to 38 days) during moderate regulation years. If other states are given the option to extend their seasons, which of the following would you support for Virginia?

	Strongly Favor			Does Not Matter			Strongly Oppose	
Liberal								
60 day season to end Jan. 20.....	.38	.10	.08	.27	.04	.06	.07	2.9
51 day season t end Jan. 31.....	.49	.10	.04	.19	.03	.06	.09	2.7
Moderate								
45 day season to end Jan. 20.....	.32	.10	.08	.27	.04	.08	.11	3.3
38 day season to end Jan. 31.....	.37	.09	.05	.21	.04	.09	.16	3.4

14. To what extent would you favor or oppose the following daily limits for ducks?

	Strongly Favor			Does Not Matter			Strongly Oppose	
a. 4 duck bag limit.....	.29	.12	.10	.23	.06	.07	.13	3.4
b. 5 duck bag limit.....	.33	.14	.08	.26	.04	.04	.10	3.1
c. 6 duck bag limit.....	.34	.06	.05	.21	.06	.09	.20	3.7

15. To what extent would you favor or oppose the following dates for September Teal hunting in 2000?

	Strongly Favor			Does Not Matter			Strongly Oppose	
September 9 – 19.....	.09	.04	.04	.66	.05	.04	.08	4.0
September 15-25.....	.27	.08	.04	.53	.01	.02	.04	3.2

16. To what extent would you favor the following options for Black Duck hunting, assuming duck season dates of 4 days in early October and November 17 – January 20?

	Strongly Favor			Does Not Matter			Strongly Oppose	
Close Black ducks in Oct. and Dec. 1-19.....	.29	.08	.05	.41	.04	.03	.09	3.3
Close Black ducks in Oct. and Jan. 3-20.....	.11	.03	.04	.41	.04	.09	.28	4.6
Close black ducks in Oct. and Nov. 17-Dec. 5.....	.26	.08	.05	.39	.03	.06	.14	3.6

17. Indicate your level of satisfaction with the duck hunting season framework (season dates and bag limits) that currently exists in Virginia.

	Very Satisfied			Does Not Matter			Very Dissatisfied	
	.15	.32	.18	.15	.09	.08	.03	3.1

18. If more duck hunting opportunity were offered, which season framework would you prefer? Currently the framework is 60 days and 5 ducks per day. (check one)

- .65 70 days of hunting and 5 ducks per day bag limit
- .18 60 days of hunting and 6 ducks per day bag limit
- .17 Does not matter

If less duck hunting opportunity was offered, which season framework would you prefer? Currently the framework is 60 days and 5 ducks per day. (check one)

- .19 50 days of hunting and 5 ducks per day bag limit
- .67 60 days of hunting and 4 ducks per day bag limit
- .14 Does not matter

19. To what extent do the following sources of information about duck abundance most affect your decision to hunt ducks?

Duck populations reported by state and federal wildlife agencies

No Influence			Some Influence			Strongly Influences	
.34	.06	.06	.26	.09	.08	.10	3.3

Duck populations reported by Ducks Unlimited and other sporting groups

No Influence			Some Influence			Strongly Influences	
.29	.07	.06	.25	.09	.11	.13	3.6

The number of ducks my friends and I see before and during the season

No Influence			Some Influence			Strongly Influences	
.16	.03	.04	.19	.10	.16	.32	4.8

Reports of duck abundance generally don't affect my decision to hunt

Strongly Agree			Neutral			Strongly Disagree	
.27	.11	.08	.29	.09	.07	.09	3.4

20. Indicate your level of agreement or disagreement for the following statements.

	Strongly Agree			Does Not Matter			Strongly Disagree	
Electronic calls should be legal for snow goose hunting.....	.36	.06	.04	.25	.03	.10	.16	3.5
Electronic calls reduce the fair chase aspects of hunting.....	.29	.12	.07	.24	.04	.11	.12	3.4
Unplugged shotguns should be legal for snow.....	.34	.07	.04	.20	.03	.13	.21	3.7
goose hunting.								
Unplugged shotguns reduce the fair chase aspects.....	.26	.10	.06	.22	.05	.13	.18	3.8
of hunting								
Electronic calls should be legal only as temporary.....	.37	.15	.06	.17	.02	.09	.14	3.2
measures to reduce populations to manageable levels								
Unplugged shotguns should be legal only as temporary.....	.35	.13	.06	.15	.03	.11	.17	3.4
measures to reduce populations to manageable levels								
Motorized decoys should be legal for hunting.....	.30	.11	.09	.23	.02	.08	.17	3.5
Motorized decoys reduce the fair chase aspect.....	.19	.08	.07	.29	.07	.11	.19	4.1
of hunting								
Other gadgets reduce the fair chase aspects of hunting.....	.14	.07	.10	.34	.07	.09	.18	4.2

Snow geese should have an unlimited bag limit.....	.26	.09	.08	.24	.07	.10	.16	3.7
Resident Canada geese should have an unlimited..... bag limit	.22	.13	.08	.14	.09	.13	.21	4.0
Regulatory agencies should only regulate bag limits..... and season lengths and should not get involved in equipment and technological issues	.19	.08	.07	.21	.07	.16	.23	4.3

21. To what extent would you favor or oppose the following 6-day season options for Canada goose hunting east of I-95?

	Strongly Favor		Does Not Matter		Strongly Oppose			
Nov. 20 – 25.....	.21	.07	.06	.43	.05	.06	.11	3.7
Dec 25 – 30.....	.21	.10	.07	.46	.04	.05	.07	3.4
Dec 28 – Jan 0319	.10	.11	.47	.04	.04	.05	3.4
Jan 1 – 6.....	.18	.15	.08	.45	.05	.04	.06	3.4
Jan. 14 – 20.....	.36	.09	.05	.39	.04	.03	.04	2.9

22. To what extent would you favor or oppose the following season options for resident Canada goose season?

	Strongly Favor		Does Not Matter		Strongly Oppose			
Sept. 1-2/Sept. 5-25 (closed for Labor Day weekend).....	.18	.09	.06	.39	.06	.07	.16	3.9
Sept. 1-25.....	.53	.11	.04	.25	.02	.02	.04	2.4

23. To what extent would you favor or oppose the following closing date for late Canada goose season west of I-95?

	Strongly Favor		Does Not Matter		Strongly Oppose		
February 15.....	.12	.09	.06	.55	.06	.12	3.7
February 28.....	.16	.09	.10	.51	.04	.10	3.5
March 10.....	.12	.13	.06	.52	.05	.12	3.6
March 24.....	.25	.05	.04	.48	.06	.12	3.4

24. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Agree		Does Not Matter		Strongly Disagree			
Resident geese provide aesthetic benefits to me.....	.20	.18	.15	.26	.06	.07	.09	3.4
Resident geese provide recreational hunting benefits to me.....	.49	.21	.10	.15	.02	.02	.02	2.2
Resident geese are a nuisance where I live.....	.24	.15	.10	.22	.06	.11	.12	3.5
Resident geese are doing significant damage to..... agricultural crops where I live	.22	.14	.13	.24	.06	.11	.10	3.5
Resident goose populations are too high where I live.....	.27	.17	.10	.18	.06	.11	.10	3.3
I support the removal and destruction of Canada..... geese in urban areas	.18	.11	.09	.19	.06	.14	.23	4.2

25. What do you feel are attributes that make for an enjoyable hunting experience/season?

	Strongly Agree		Does Not Matter		Strongly Disagree			
Seeing waterfowl.....	.83	.13	.01	.02	.00	.00	.00	1.2
Being able to shoot at waterfowl.....	.54	.23	.12	.10	.01	.01	.00	1.8

Being able to bag some waterfowl.....	.53	.21	.14	.10	.01	.01	.00	1.9
Killing a limit.....	.19	.06	.13	.39	.06	.08	.09	3.7
Being able to prepare and eat wild waterfowl.....	.47	.24	.15	.11	.02	.01	.01	2.0
Being in the field and enjoying the outdoors.....	.87	.09	.02	.02	.00	.00	.00	1.2
Seeing the dog work.....	.68	.12	.06	.13	.00	.01	.00	1.7
Calling ducks/geese.....	.63	.19	.09	.08	.01	.00	.00	1.6
Decoying ducks/geese.....	.65	.19	.07	.08	.01	.00	.00	1.6
Using my waterfowling equipment.....	.42	.23	.14	.17	.02	.01	.01	2.2
Being able to hunt with friends/family.....	.80	.14	.03	.03	.00	.00	.00	1.3
Sharing stories of duck hunting experiences.....	.66	.17	.08	.08	.01	.01	.00	1.6

26. In the section below, please indicate what you feel are constraints to waterfowl hunting in Virginia

	Strongly Agree		Does Not Matter			Strongly Disagree		
Limited places to hunt.....	.48	.23	.08	.12	.03	.04	.03	2.2
Limited time to hunt.....	.40	.22	.12	.15	.03	.04	.03	2.5
Equipment needs too great/or expensive.....	.09	.10	.15	.37	.07	.12	.10	4.0
Waterfowl regulations are too complicated.....	.25	.18	.15	.19	.06	.09	.08	3.2
Concerned about violating laws.....	.29	.19	.10	.16	.05	.09	.11	3.2
Not enough waterfowl to make it worthwhile.....	.10	.12	.15	.22	.09	.17	.15	4.2
Conflicts with other recreational users (boaters, fishermen)	.09	.11	.13	.28	.08	.16	.15	4.2
I do not perceive any constraints to my waterfowl hunting	.12	.11	.10	.23	.11	.16	.16	4.2

27. The following statements relate to your perception of how waterfowl regulations are established. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following:

	Strongly Agree		Does Not Matter			Strongly Disagree		
The state sets hunting regulations without any input from... the public	.14	.15	.12	.13	.14	.22	.11	4.1
Public input provided has a great influence on the final..... regulatory decisions	.10	.14	.20	.19	.14	.15	.07	3.9
There should be more public input into setting regulations..	.30	.28	.17	.14	.05	.04	.02	2.5
I would like to provide more input into setting regulations..	.31	.24	.17	.20	.04	.03	.01	2.5
Seasons and bag limits should be based on hunter demands	.07	.05	.08	.12	.11	.26	.30	5.1
Seasons and bag limits should be based on the biology..... of the species	.53	.27	.09	.07	.02	.01	.01	1.8
I understand how waterfowl regulations are set.....	.16	.26	.18	.14	.08	.12	.07	3.3

28. Please indicate your support of the following statements in regard to a mandatory state duck stamp.

	Strongly Support		Does Not Matter			Strongly Oppose		
I would support a mandatory state duck stamp.....	.27	.11	.09	.12	.05	.13	.24	3.9
I would support a mandatory state duck stamp only..... if proceeds went specifically to a waterfowl/ wetlands program	.60	.14	.05	.07	.01	.05	.08	2.2

What price would you be willing to pay for a State waterfowl stamp?

- \$5 \$7.50 \$10
45% 14% 41%

29. How did you learn about the HIP (Harvest Information Program) requirements?

(Check all that apply)

- magazine article .15
 Television .03
 Radio .02
 sport show .04
 VDGIF literature or personnel .43
 Friend .25
 other _____ .08

30. How did you register for HIP in 1999?

- phone 92%
 internet 8%
 license agent
 other

31. How difficult was the HIP registration for you?

- | Very
Difficult | Moderately
Difficult | Not Difficult
At All |
|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| .02 | .01 .10 .04 | .08 .38 .37 |

These last questions will help us understand some basic information about duck hunters in Virginia. Please answer each question.

32. What is your age? 44.4

33. Approximately how many years have you been hunting waterfowl? 22.0

34. At what age did you start hunting waterfowl? 21.6

35. Do you usually hunt ducks with a dog?

49% Yes 51% No

36. What do you estimate your total cost for duck hunting during the 1999-2000 season (including license, gas, meals, lease fees, shells, new gun, etc.)?

- .48 under \$500
.26 \$500-\$1000
.09 \$1000-\$1500
.05 \$1,500-\$2,000
.04 \$2,000-\$2,500
.07 over \$2,500

Gender: **99% Male** **1% Female**

37. What county (or city) do you live in? _____

38. What is your zip code? _____

39. Remarks (please use this space to make any additional comments concerning Virginia duck hunting season and the HIP process that were not addressed by this survey). _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your answers are very important to the successful management of wildlife in Virginia. If you have any questions regarding the study or this questionnaire, please contact:

Gary Costanzo, Waterfowl Research Biologist
Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
5806 Mooretown Road
Williamsburg, VA 23188
(757) 253-7072

PLEASE RETURN THE QUESTIONNAIRE IN THE ENCLOSED POSTAGE PAID ENVELOPE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THANKS AGAIN!

Waterfowl Hunter Survey

(Some selected results that could apply to current seasons)

Zones (Q#9)

- The current zoning option (no zones, 3 season segments) was the most popular and was favored by 56% of the respondents.
- The 2 zones, 2 segments within each zone was supported by 26% and opposed by 38% of respondents.

Duck Seasons

October Segment (Q#11)

- Timing of October Segment - 50% favored putting October segment in 2nd week of October versus 31% in support of putting it as early in the month as possible.
- Number of Days - Surprisingly the most preferred options was for 5 days in October (48% support). The second most preferred was the 4-day option (33% support).

Note: Despite the survey result, we have dealt with this issue before. The Eastern Hunters want 4 or less days in October, and based on past discussions I would recommend leaving this segment at 4 days.

Framework Extensions (Q#13)

- Respondents supported framework extensions (despite penalty days that were included in the question). 63% Supported going to January 31 even though the season would be cut to 51 days. 56% supported the 60-day season with an ending framework of January 20.

(Note: Mute point for this year as this option is not available)

Bag Limits (Q#14)

- Respondents favored 5-duck bag (55%), over 4-duck bag (51%), and 6-duck bag (45%).

September Teal (Q#15)

- Respondents favored Sept 15-25 dates (39%) over earlier dates Sept 9-19 (17%).

Black Duck Closure (Q#16)

- Respondents favored December closing (42%) slightly over Nov-Dec closing (39%), and opposed late (Jan 3-20) closure the most (41%).

Opportunity (Q#18)

- Respondents favored more days versus a higher bag limit when asked 2 different ways.

Canada Geese (note: limited application to current framework)

Season Timing (Q#21)

- Respondents favored a later season when only 6 days were available: Jan 14-20 was most supported (50%) versus 40% or 41% for earlier options (Jan 1-6, Dec 28-Jan 3).

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