

SEPTEMBER TEAL SEASON FACT SHEET - 2019

- Special teal seasons were initiated in late 1960's to provide harvest opportunities on blue-winged and green-winged teal. When the blue-winged teal breeding population (BPOP) is above 3.3 million, a 9-day season can be offered. If the BPOP exceeds 4.7 million, a 16-day season can be offered.
- Blue-winged teal are one of the earliest migrants. Many pass through Virginia from late August through October, prior to the opening of the late duck season.
- Green-winged teal are also early migrants and arrive in September and October. However, some Green-wings remain through the winter depending on weather conditions.
- Virginia has held a special September teal season since 1999 (see dates listed below). The season was initially held only in the area east of I-95 because there are greater numbers of teal and teal hunters in the coastal plain. Even in the coastal plain, teal are not widespread, and the harvest has been relatively small. The season was expanded in 2011 to provide some teal hunting opportunity in the area west of I-95.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates</u> <u>East of I-95</u>	<u>Season Dates</u> <u>West of I-95</u>
2018	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2017	Sept. 16 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2016	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2015	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2014	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 22 - 30
2013	Sept. 16 – 30	Sept. 23 - 30
2012	Sept. 17 – 29	Sept. 24 - 29
2011	Sept. 19 – 30	Sept. 26 - 30
2010	Sept. 20 – 30	na
2009	Sept. 21 – 30	na
2008	Sept. 20 – 30	na
2007	Sept. 17 – 26	na
2006	Sept. 15 – 25	na
2005	Sept. 16 – 24	na
2004	Sept. 16 – 25	na
2003	Sept. 13 – 23	na
2002	Sept. 14 – 24	na
2001	Sept. 15 – 25	na
2000	Sept. 14 – 23	na
1999	Sept. 16 – 25	na

Average Annual Harvest: 669 teal

FACT SHEET - Waterfowl Hunters and Harvests - 2019

- Liberal duck seasons (60 days, 6-bird bag limit) and resident goose seasons have resulted in high waterfowl harvests in Virginia during the past ten years. Harvest has averaged ~134,260 ducks and ~57,500 Canada geese from 2013-2017, compared to 114,770 ducks and 25,000 geese during the 1990's. The long season length and liberal bags offer greater opportunity and a greater cumulative harvest over the course of the season.
- Waterfowl hunter numbers in Virginia have been generally stable since the late 1990's. Since 1999, the Harvest Information Program (HIP) has been used to estimate hunter effort and harvest. The average number of duck and goose hunters over the past 3 years, as measured by HIP, was 15,700 and 13,666 respectively.
- Conditions during the 2017-2018 season were relatively favorable for waterfowl hunting although extreme cold temperatures during the beginning of January pushed many wintering waterfowl farther south. This resulted in a higher duck harvest than the previous year and above the 5-year average. Estimated Canada goose harvest on the other hand was lower than the previous year and but still slightly above the five year average.
- The total estimated duck harvest during the 2017-2018 season in Virginia (145,200) was 15% higher than the previous year (126,000) and 8% above the past 5-year average (134,260).
- During the 2017-2018 season mallards were the most commonly harvested duck in Virginia, followed by wood ducks, bufflehead, gadwall and black duck, which compromised the top 5 harvested species. The mallard harvest in Virginia in 2017-2018 (43,200) increased by 10% from 2016-2017, and was 11% higher than the past 5-year average (38,840).
- The Canada goose harvest in Virginia in 2017-2018 (60,000) was less than the previous season (84,400) and 4% higher than the past 5-year average (57,500).

FACT SHEET - The Status of Ducks - 2019

Mid-Continent Areas: Annual precipitation is the most important factor influencing the quantity and quality of nesting and brood rearing habitat for prairie-nesting birds. The number of ponds counted during the USFWS May breeding waterfowl survey is used as an index for assessing waterfowl nesting habitat. In 2018, the May pond count (5.2 million) was 14% below last year's count (6.1 million), but similar to the long-term average (5.2 million).

The total duck breeding population (BPOP) estimate for the mid-continent area was 41.2 million ducks in 2018, 14% below the 2017 estimate of 47.3 million, yet 17% higher than the long-term average (1955-2017). The Breeding population estimates (BPOP), along with the percent change from last year and the long-term average, are presented below for the 10 most common species.

Species	2018 BPOP	% Change from 2017	% Change from Long-Term Avg.
Mallard	9.3 million	-12%	+17%
Blue-winged Teal	6.5 million	-18%	+27%
Green-winged Teal	3.0 million	-16%	+42%
Gadwall	2.9 million	-31%	+43%
Northern Shoveler	4.2 million	-3%	+62%
Northern Pintail	2.4 million	-18%	-40%
American Widgeon	2.8 million	+2%	+8%
Redhead	1.0 million	-10%	+38%
Scaup	4.0 million	-9%	-20%
Canvasback	686,000	-6%	+16%
Total Ducks	41.2 million	-13%	+17%

Eastern Breeding Areas: Conditions in much of the eastern survey area declined or remained similar relative to 2017. The region experienced mainly average precipitation since September 2017 and variable fall and winter temperatures. The entire region had well-below-average temperatures in April 2018 that continued into May in more northerly areas. Spring phenology and ice-out were generally normal to much later than normal, the latter mainly in northern Quebec and Labrador. Conditions for waterfowl production generally declined to fair or good with northern areas affected by a late thaw and localized flooding farther south.

- Breeding population estimates for the 6 most common species surveyed were generally similar to or lower than last year except for Ring-necked ducks (2% above 2017). Mallards (1.1 million), Black ducks (712,000), Goldeneyes (486,000) and Green-winged teal (346,000) were slightly down from 2017 and their long term averages.

Virginia: Habitat conditions in Virginia during the spring of 2018 started poor with dry conditions, but significant precipitation later in the spring filled many wetlands and provided good nesting habitat. Local duck and goose production is expected to be slightly below average.

- The breeding pair estimate for Mallards (7,913) decreased significantly from the previous year's estimate (19,131). Wood duck breeding pair estimates (14,237) was similar to the 2017 estimate (15,167). Canada goose breeding pair estimates (53,447) were 32% higher than the previous year's estimate.

Changes in the Mallard Bag Limit in the Atlantic Flyway

The mallard has been one of the most abundant duck species in eastern North America. However, in the past 20 years, “eastern” mallards have been on the decline. Surveys conducted since 1988 throughout eastern Canada and the northeastern U.S. have provided reliable annual estimates of the breeding population size of eastern mallards. These surveys indicate that mallard numbers have decreased steadily in the northeastern U.S., declining by about 38% since 1998. Mallard numbers in Eastern Canada have been relatively stable, but overall, the breeding mallard population in eastern North America is declining (Figure 1). There has also been a significant decline in the mallard harvest in the Atlantic Flyway (around 40%, Figure 2), a direct result of this population decline. About 60% of the mallards harvested in Atlantic Flyway states are derived from the northeastern US.

Figure 1. Mallard breeding population in eastern North America

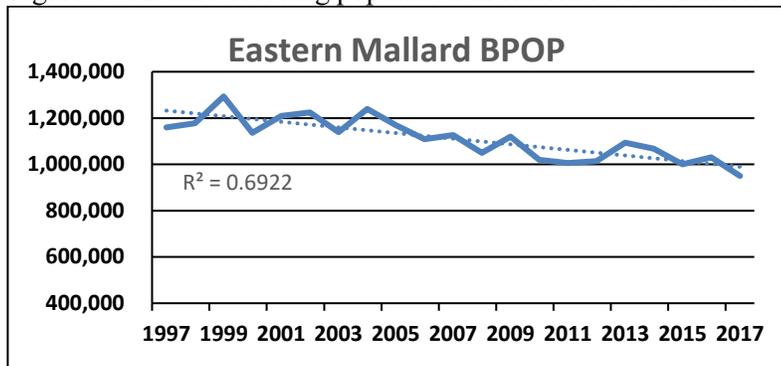
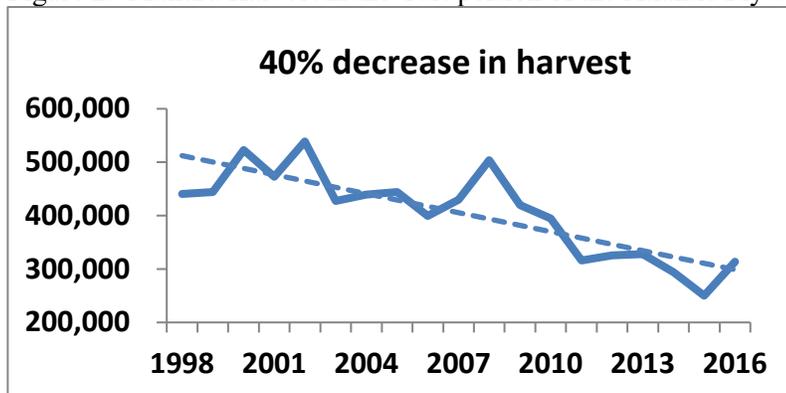


Figure 2. Mallard Harvest in the U.S. portion of the Atlantic Flyway



Given the current eastern mallard population size, the expected harvest from a 60-day season with a 4-mallard limit would result in harvest rates that exceed the ability of the current eastern mallard population to replace itself. Population models suggest that reducing the bag limit to 2 mallards will reduce the harvest by 25%, and should achieve a sustainable harvest level. Therefore, the Atlantic Flyway and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have agreed to reduce the bag limit from 4 to 2 mallards (only 1 hen) beginning with the 2019-20 hunting season in the Atlantic Flyway. In addition, a new harvest strategy is being developed that will help guide future hunting season regulations based on current mallard population dynamics.

YOUTH and VETERANS WATERFOWL DAYS

Guidelines for the Youth Days and the Veterans Days include:

1. States may select 2 days per duck-hunting zone, designated as "Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days," in addition to their regular duck seasons.
2. Youth Days must be held outside of any regular duck season on a weekend, holidays, or other non-school days when youth hunters would have the maximum opportunity to participate.
3. The days could be held up to 14 days before or after any regular duck season frameworks or within any split of a regular duck season.
4. The daily bag limit is the same as that allowed in the regular season and includes ducks, mergansers, coots, moorhens, gallinules, 1 Canada geese (except in Canada Goose Zones where the bag limit is higher), and 1 tundra swan (if the hunter possesses a tundra swan permit). Flyway species restrictions remain in effect.
5. Youth hunters must be 15 years of age or younger. Youth 12 years of age and older will need a valid Virginia state hunting license.
6. A licensed adult at least 18 years of age or older must accompany youth hunters into the field. This adult may not duck hunt, but may participate in other open seasons.
7. Recent federal legislation has provided the addition of 2 **Veterans Waterfowl Hunting Days** in addition to the 2 existing Youth Waterfowl hunting days. These days are similar to the Youth days, and guidelines for these days are the same as those listed in numbers 1, 3 and 4 above. The Veterans Days could be combined with the Youth Days or held separately.
8. Those allowed to participate in the special Veterans Days include 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).

FACT SHEET - The Status of Resident Canada Geese - 2019

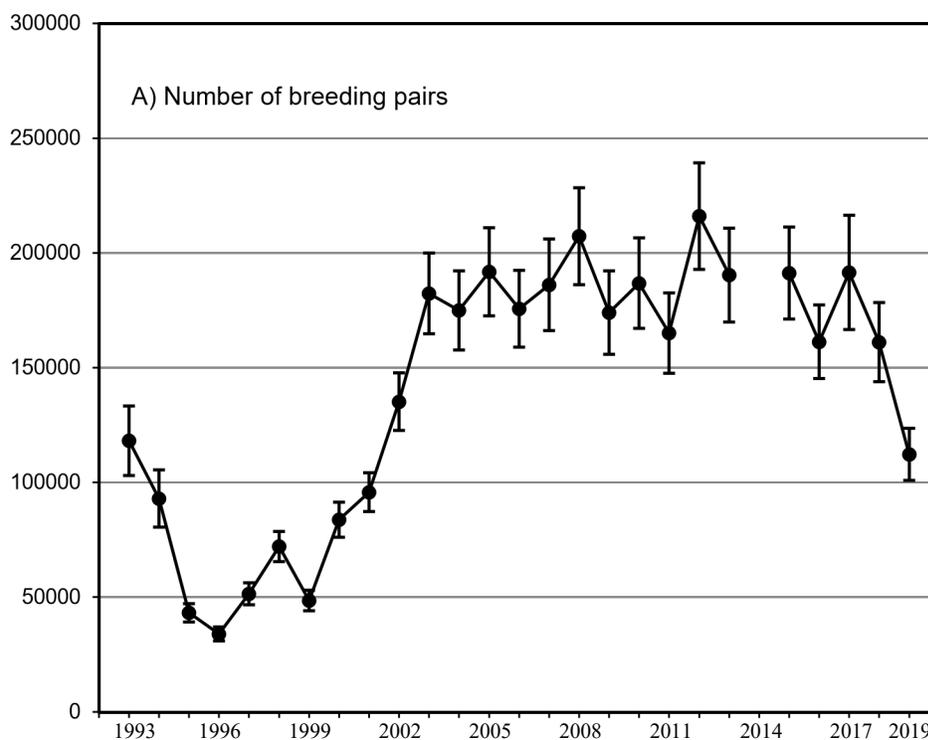
- The resident Canada goose population increased significantly in Virginia during the 1980's and 1990's, and peaked at 264,000 geese in the late 1990's. This population caused significant conflicts with human and wildlife populations, and management actions were taken to reduce their numbers. The current population estimate is 141,693 (+/- 30,000) in Virginia and near 1 million in the Atlantic Flyway.
- Special resident goose hunting seasons were initiated in 1993 to help manage this population and to provide recreational opportunities for hunters. These seasons occur prior to the arrival of most migrant geese (~Sept. 25 in Virginia), or in areas where there are fewer migrant geese. The Federal Framework allows Virginia to conduct a statewide September Resident Goose season from September 1-25.
- There are fewer migrant geese in the western portions of Virginia, and special "Goose Hunting Zones" have been established that allow seasons that are more liberal in areas with more resident Canada goose.
- Special resident goose hunting seasons have been very popular, and have increased hunter participation and resident goose harvests. These seasons have been very effective in managing resident goose populations and helping to meet statewide population objectives.
- In areas where hunting is not feasible, other options including Depredation Orders (Airport, Agricultural, and Nest and Egg Depredation Orders) have been implemented to help manage resident goose conflicts.

Year	Population Estimate *	September Harvest
2018	132,633 +/- 24%	Na
2017	142,167 +/- 21%	5,500
2016	158,200 +/- 19%	Na
2015	150,651 +/- 22%	6,100
2014	130,503 +/- 26%	7,500
2013	144,910 +/- 26%	10,700
2012	158,267 +/- 28%	9,700
2011	165,022 +/- 28%	14,700
2010	147,313 +/- 29%	15,600
2009	145,019 +/- 29%	16,800
2008	157,560 +/- 29%	17,500
2007	154,030 +/- 27%	13,600
2006	136,700 +/- 27%	11,100
2005	129,486 +/- 26%	10,100
2004	143,741 +/- 25%	17,000
2003	186,753 +/- 23%	14,800
2002	218,719 +/- 24%	14,300
2001	218,384 +/- 27%	11,800
2000	227,164 +/- 32%	10,800
1999	261,554 +/- 34%	11,400
1998	264,867 +/- 35%	12,200
1997	249,612 +/- 34%	10,500
1996	181,813 +/- 36%	10,000
1995	151,043 +/- 39%	5,500

*3-year running average

FACT SHEET- The Status of Migrant Canada Geese - 2019

- Migrant Canada geese from the Atlantic Population (AP) declined significantly from 1985-1995. The hunting season was closed in 1995 to allow the population to recover. Goose numbers rebounded quickly and a limited season (6 days with a 1-bird bag) was held in both 1999 and 2000.
- As the population increased, hunting regulations were liberalized. The season was extended to 30 days in 2001, then 45 days in 2002, and 50 days in 2012. The bag limit was increased to 2 per day in 2004 and has remain at 50 days with a 2 goose daily limit since then.
- However, annual productivity has been below average for 5 of the past 6 years, and adverse weather conditions on the nesting grounds in Canada resulted in very poor production in 2018. The breeding population has declined over the past several years (see graph below) and dropped again in 2018 to 112,000 breeding pairs.



- Due to the “bust” in production this year and the declining population trend, the Atlantic Flyway Council recommended reducing the hunting season on AP geese for the 2019-20 season. The season in our AP Goose Zone in Virginia will be restricted to 30 days with a 1-goose daily limit. Canada goose seasons in the other two goose zones in Virginia (Southern James Bay (SJB) and Resident Zones) will be unchanged from last year.

Canada Goose Populations and Hunt Zones

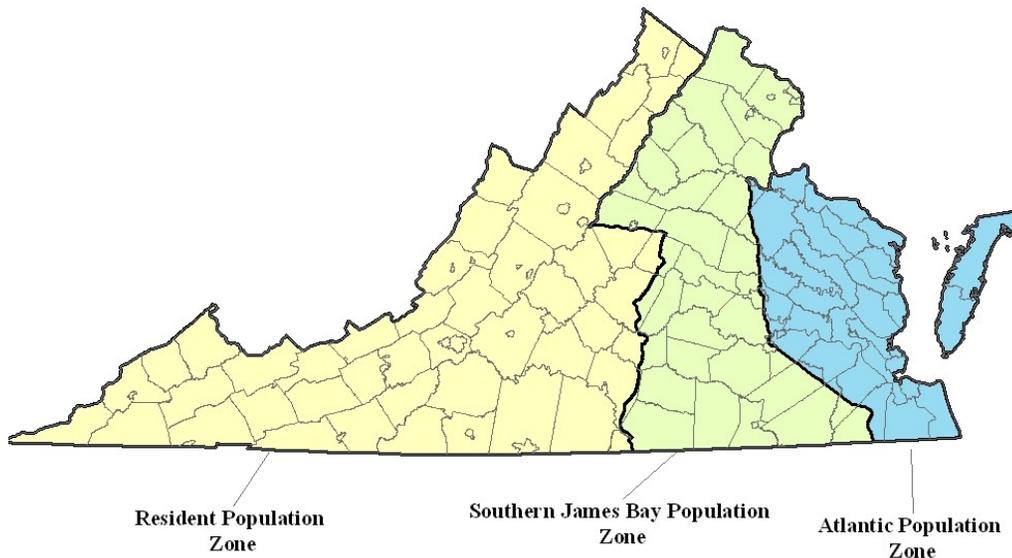
- There are 4 subpopulations of Canada geese in Virginia. These include the Atlantic Flyway Resident Population (RP) along with three migrant goose populations, the North Atlantic Population (NAP), the Southern James Bay Population (SJBP), and the Atlantic Population (AP). The majority of our migrant geese (~82%) are from the AP, about 18% are from the SJBP, and <1% are from the NAP.
- Recent research and banding analyses have enabled us to better delineate the distribution and migration corridors used by these different subpopulations, and to establish separate hunting zones based on the percentage of migrant geese in each zone. These zones include the:

Atlantic Population (AP) Hunt Zone – The area east of the Stafford/King George County line from the Potomac River south to the Rappahannock River, then west along the Stafford County line to Interstate 95, then south along I-95 to Route 460 in Petersburg, then southeast along Route 460 to Route 32 in the City of Suffolk, then south to the North Carolina border.

Southern James Bay Population (SJBP) Hunt Zone – The area to the west of the AP Hunt Zone boundary and east of the following line: the “Blue Ridge” (Loudoun County-Clarke County line) at the West Virginia-Virginia Border, south to Interstate 64 (the Blue Ridge line follows county borders along the western edge of Loudoun-Fauquier-Rappahannock-Madison-Greene-Albemarle and into Nelson Counties), then east along Interstate Rt. 64 to Route 15, then south along Rt. 15 to the North Carolina line.

Resident Population (RP) Hunt Zone – The portion of the state west of the SJBP Hunt Zone.

Virginia's Canada Goose Hunt Zones



FACT SHEET - Status of Light Geese (Greater and Lesser Snow Geese, and Ross's Geese) - 2019

- The majority of the “Light” geese found in the Atlantic Flyway are Greater Snow Geese, while less than 5% are Lesser Snow Geese, with even smaller numbers of Ross’s Geese.
- The Greater Snow Goose population is monitored on spring staging areas along the St. Lawrence Valley in Quebec. The 2018 population estimate was 877,000 geese (+/- 11%), which is 17% higher than last year but similar to the long-term average.
- The principal nesting areas for greater snow geese are on Bylot, Axel Heiberg, Ellesmere, and Baffin Islands, and on Greenland. They winter along the Atlantic Coast from New Jersey to North Carolina.
- Breeding conditions were below average on Bylot Island in 2018. Nesting phenology was delayed due to thick winter snow pack and cool weather in June, and predation levels were high during egg laying due to decreased lemming abundance. Nest initiation date (14 June) and first hatching date (11 July) were later than long-term averages (12 June and 9 July, respectively; 1998–2018).
- Over the last 30 years, snow goose populations have increased almost ten-fold. A shift from feeding almost exclusively in marshes to feeding more on agricultural grains has allowed them to expand their range and habitat use. This shift has also allowed them to return to their breeding habitats in better physical condition, which has led to increased productivity.
- This population boom has resulted in ecological degradation on their breeding, migration and wintering areas. It has also led to conflicts with agricultural interest. Snow geese can cause damage to these habitats by pulling up plant roots and denuding marshes of vegetation.
- Current hunting regulations for snow geese are as liberal as Federal Frameworks will allow and include a 107-day season that runs from October to January, and a bag limit that was increased from 15 to 25 in 2010. Liberal seasons have helped increase the harvest, however, the population is still quite large and concerns remain about detrimental impacts these birds are having on breeding and wintering habitats.
- A Conservation Order (CO) was established in 2009, and authorizes the use of alternative management strategies (unplugged shotguns, electronic calls, shooting to ½ hour after sunset, no daily bag limit) to further increase the harvest of snow geese in the Atlantic Flyway. The number of hunters participating in this season in Virginia has averaged 292 per year and the harvest has averaged 652 snow geese per year.

FACT SHEET - Status of Atlantic Brant and Tundra Swan - 2019

- **BRANT.** The main breeding areas for Atlantic Brant are in the Eastern Canadian Arctic on Baffin, Southampton, and Ellesmere Islands. Most brant winter along the Atlantic Coast from MA to NC.
- The 2019 Mid-Winter Survey count of brant in the Atlantic Flyway (120,109) was 30% lower than the 2018 estimate and was well below the past 5-year average (135,344). The low MWS count was coupled with very low productivity during the 2018 nesting season. Fall productivity surveys indicated only 1.5% young (n=30,500), which is 92% below the long-term average.
- As specified in the Brant Hunt Plan, the framework for the 2019-20 hunting season is based on the 2019 mid-winter count. The low count this year has resulted in a reduction in the brant hunting season framework, which will shorten the season to 30 days with a 2-bird/day limit (it was 60 days with a 2-bird/day limit in 2018-19).
- **TUNDRA SWANS.** The Eastern Population of tundra swans nest in arctic tundra areas from Alaska, east to Hudson Bay and Baffin Island. These birds winter in coastal areas from Maryland to North Carolina.
- There were 92,819 eastern population tundra swans counted on the 2019 Mid-Winter Survey, which was 17% lower than the 2018 count, and drops the 3-year running average to 107,907.
- Similar to other arctic nesting species (AP Canada Geese and Atlantic Brant), productivity for Tundra swans in 2018 was well below average in 2018.
- Prior to this year, eight states in the U.S. hunted tundra swans including Alaska, Utah, Montana and Nevada in the Pacific Flyway, North Dakota and South Dakota in the Central Flyway, and North Carolina and Virginia in the Atlantic Flyway. The number of hunting permits available is based on the status of the tundra swan population as specified in the Tundra Swan Harvest Strategy.
- In 2019-20, Delaware will initiate its first tundra swan-hunting season. Therefore, starting in 2019-20, the allocation of hunt permits in the Atlantic Flyway will be split between the 3 states that will have tundra swan hunting seasons (DE, VA, NC), in proportion to the number of swans in each state. For the 2019-20 season, North Carolina will be allocated 6,115 permits, Virginia will be allocated 801 permits, and Delaware will be allocated 84 permits.
- The tundra swan hunting season in Virginia is authorized and conducted as specified in the Atlantic Flyway Tundra Swan Management Plan and Hunt Plan, with limits and guidelines as specified under an MOU with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.