



# MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

**Meeting Date:** April 19, 2022

**Agenda Item:** 2022–2023 Fall Migratory Bird Regulations

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 10 Minutes

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**Background:** Migratory bird hunting regulations pertain to cranes, snipe, doves, ducks, geese, swans, and coots, which are managed on a flyway basis. Two flyways occur within Montana, with roughly the eastern half of the state in the Central Flyway and the western half in the Pacific Flyway. Federal season and bag limit frameworks are established by the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service, but the Fish and Wildlife Commission retains the authority to establish seasons for migratory birds within those frameworks. Other than normal calendar rotation, all aspects of the previous season are recommended to remain in place, except the Pacific Flyway dark goose daily bag is proposed to increase from 4 to 5 and sandhill crane licenses in Carbon County are proposed to go from 20 to 30.

Proposed season dates for ducks, coots, geese, and swans for 2022-2023:

- Pacific Flyway (PF) - Ducks, coots, and geese: Oct. 1 – Jan. 13 (except scaup season closing Dec. 25); Swans: Oct. 8 - Dec. 1
- Central Flyway (CF) - Ducks and coots: Zone 1 – Oct. 1 – Jan. 5; Zone 2 – Oct. 1 – Oct. 9 and Oct. 22 -Jan. 17 (closed 12 days, Oct. 10-21). A bonus teal season Oct. 1 - Oct. 9 in the CF will allow hunters to take two additional blue-winged teal.
- CF - Geese - Zone 1 - Oct. 1 - Jan. 13; Zone 2 - Oct. 1- Oct. 9 and Oct. 22 - Jan.25 (closed 12 days, Oct. 10-21); CF swans: Oct. 1 - Jan.5 (both zones, no split season).
- Duck, coot, and goose daily and possession limits for both flyways are proposed to be the same as in 2021-2022, except that the PF daily dark goose bag increasing from 4 to 5. The special two-day Youth Waterfowl Season will be Sept. 24-25 in both flyway parts of the state (PF and CF).
- Spring Light Goose season – March 1 – May 15, no bag limit.

Proposed season dates for “webless” migratory birds:

- Mourning doves: Sept. 1 – Oct. 30. Common snipe: Sept. 1 – Dec. 16
- RMP sandhill cranes (all special drawing licenses): Sept. 1 – Oct. 30

Mid-continent sandhill cranes in CF (over the counter license): Oct. 1 – Nov. 27

**Public Involvement Process and Results:** Although not the focus of comment during the biennial season setting, migratory bird regulations were available for comment during that time period. No substantive comment was received regarding migratory birds during that effort. Public comment will be accepted at the April commission meeting.

**Agency Recommendation and Rationale:** The department recommends that the commission approve the department's recommendation. Prior survey and public comment show substantial support for limiting splits mid-season.

**Proposed Motion:** I move that the commission vote to adopt the 2022–2023 migratory game bird seasons as presented by the department with all other aspects regarding previous season adopted, except for those influenced by routine calendar rotations.