



# MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

**Meeting Date:** April 18, 2023

**Agenda Item:** 2023–2024 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 and bag limits for migratory birds within those frameworks. Other than normal calendar rotation, all aspects of the previous season are recommended to remain in place.

**Public Involvement Process and Results:** Public comment will be solicited for a 4-week period starting February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Public comments will be posted online and provided to commissioners at least two weeks prior to the April commission meeting. Prior survey and public comment show substantial support for limiting splits mid-season.

**Analysis and Alternatives:**

Alternative A: The commission may approve the 2023–2024 migratory game bird seasons as presented.

Alternative B: The commission may amend the proposed 2023–2024 migratory game bird seasons.

**Agency Recommendation and Rationale:**

Proposed season dates for ducks, coots, geese, and swans for 2023–2024:

- Pacific Flyway (PF) - Ducks, coots, and geese: Sept. 30, 2023 – Jan. 12, 2024 (except scaup season closing Dec. 24); Swans: Oct. 7 – Dec. 1, 2023
- Central Flyway (CF) - Ducks and coots: Zone 1 – Sept. 30, 2023 – Jan. 4, 2024; Zone 2 – Sept. 30 – Oct. 8, 2023 and Oct. 21, 2023 – Jan. 16, 2024 (closed 12 days, Oct. 9–20). A bonus teal season Sept. 30 – Oct. 8, 2023, in the CF will allow hunters to take two additional blue-winged teal.
- CF - Geese: Zone 1 – Sept. 30, 2023 – Jan. 12, 2024; Zone 2 – Sept. 30 – Oct. 8, 2023, and Oct. 21, 2023 – Jan. 24, 2024 (closed 12 days, Oct. 9–20); CF swans: Sept. 30, 2023 – Jan. 4, 2024 (both zones, no split season).
- Duck, coot, and goose daily and possession limits for both flyways are proposed to be the same as in 2022–2023. The special two-day Youth Waterfowl Season will be Sept. 23–24, 2023 in both flyways (PF and CF).
- Spring light goose season: March 1 – May 15, 2024, no bag limit.

Proposed season dates for “webless” migratory birds for 2023–2024:

- Mourning doves: Sept. 1 – Oct. 30, 2023. Common snipe: Sept. 1 – Dec. 16, 2023
- Rocky Mountain Population sandhill cranes (all special drawing licenses): Sept. 1 – Oct. 30, 2023
- Mid-continent sandhill cranes in CF (over the counter license): Sept. 30 – Nov. 26, 2023

**Proposed Motion:** I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the 2023–2024 migratory game bird seasons as presented by the department with all other aspects regarding prior seasons adopted, except for those influenced by routine calendar rotations.