



Ducks, Etc...

*Connecticut Waterfowl Association
Winter 2020 Newsletter*



President's Message

For this issue of Ducks Etc..., I chose to tell a short story about the rewards associated with Mentoring new waterfowl hunters. Here goes!

It was 2002, and I was taking my neighbor's 12-year old son, Drew Walter, for his first duck hunt on the early season Youth Day. So, this trip began with a 12-year old boy and a temperamental 20-year-old outboard. Turns out, neither performed very well.

About 100 yards from the boat launch the outboard sputtered and stopped. In the unlikely event that Drew did not know any curse words, he got to learn most of them when my attempts to revive the cantankerous engine failed! Ultimately, we were able to paddle to a suitable spot. Young Drew had many opportunities to harvest some green-winged teal, but none fell. Finally, what had to be a young-of-the year black duck, locked up on our spread and floated in. Three shots later it flew out unscathed!

We hunted together several times the next few years, but I just could not get this youngster to harvest a bird. But, on a breezy and snowy December Day in 2005, when Drew was fifteen, we broke the jinx. The hunting conditions were ideal and we had seen decent numbers of ducks while scouting the previous day. Yet, after a couple of hours of hunting, we had seen few birds. Then, we heard some mallard talk and a pair splashed down in the river about 100 yards from our decoys. They kept chattering and I responded with my mediocre calling. Suddenly, they picked up and made the flawed and fatal decision to join

our spread of imposters. We each fired once and both birds dropped. Drew was ecstatic! Success at last!



Success at last! Drew Walter in 2005 proudly showing off his first ducks!

Ironically, that Christmas we bought each other the same present, a copy of the fine DU book, "Misery Loves Company." The one I received was better, because Drew had inscribed a note on the inside cover that read as follows: "Mr. Chasko: Thanks so much for teaching me duck hunting and all the hard work that goes into it. Those first two ducks meant so much to me and I will never forget all the misery and hard work that we put into getting those mallards. Thanks for everything and I hope we have more luck in the future and maybe no more engine problems! – Drew."

Since then we have had more luck, less engine problems and Drew's shooting has greatly improved. We have enjoyed some fine hunts in Connecticut and as far away as Saskatchewan. The moral of this story is the importance of mentoring new waterfowlers. If you have no one to mentor, please consider becoming part of



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CWA's Waterfowl Hunter Mentor Program. If interested, you can find all the pertinent information on our Website, www.ctwaterfowlers.org.

Best to all,

**Greg Chasko
President, CWA**

Public Perception of Duck Hunters By Rich Chmiel

In Connecticut, much of the waterfowl hunting is done within the view of the public or, at least, in areas frequented by persons involved in non-hunting activities. Our activities as waterfowl hunters should be such that we present a favorable image. In early March of this year, I was maintaining wood duck nesting boxes for the DEEP. Most of these wetlands are on State properties, which are also used throughout the year by hikers, bird watchers, and others. Bearing in mind that I was in the marsh some sixty days after the north zone closed, I was appalled to find the trash left on the bank of an otherwise pristine State marsh.

The accompanying photographs show the remains of a duck blind/hunting site left behind. This was within clear view of a State Forest roadway.



When I collected the mess, it was found to consist of about 40 feet of burlap, several wooden poles, several metal poles, two plastic milk crates, 23 empty shotgun shells, 2 loaded shells, and other items of trash, including wire used to construct the blind.



Does this reflect favorably on our sport? I think not! When people complain about waterfowling



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(or other hunting activities) due to such circumstances, it reflects poorly on those of us who cherish the hunting tradition. Please, leave the woods and marshes in better shape than you found them!

Recent CWA Conservation News

During the past several months DEEP's Waterfowl and Wetland Programs have been actively pursuing a variety of projects. These range from constructing and monitoring wood duck boxes to banding ducks.

The Waterfowl Program staff recently completed monitoring all wood duck boxes across the state. In total, 412 boxes were checked. Preliminary results indicate that wood duck were the most prevalent species using the boxes, followed up by hooded merganser. Special thanks goes out to CWA member, Rich Chmiel for all his assistance checking wood duck boxes.



On March 14th, approximately 25 CWA members constructed 70 wood duck boxes, another 70 were built by DEEP staff. These boxes will be distributed across the state to improve local wood duck productivity.



Winter waterfowl banding concluded for this year with the capture of approximately 500 black ducks and mallards. CT's Waterfowl staff biologists were scheduled to assist with Canada goose banding in Prince Edward Island; unfortunately, due to COVID-19, all out of country travel was cancelled. Banding projects are important for waterfowl management because band recoveries provide data regarding harvest and migration routes. Remember to report all bands recovered from harvested ducks and geese.

When the weather turns warmer, the CWA donated DR mower, will be put back into service maintaining vegetation on impoundment dikes throughout CT. In 2019, approximately 20 dikes were mowed enhancing the DEEP's ability to maintain dikes' integrity and water levels for



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wetland plant management. The goal for 2020 is to maintain 40 impoundments and over the next five years complete the mowing on all functional impoundments across the state.

All Members Meeting

The CWA held its second Annual “All Members Meeting” at Cabela’s in East Hartford on Saturday, February 22, 2020. The meeting was well-attended with over 20 participants.

The meeting started with an informative presentation by Roger Wolfe, Leader of the DEEP Wildlife Division’s Wetland Habitat and Mosquito Management (WHAMM) Program. Roger’s presentation informed the group of the WHAMM Program’s many successful efforts to restore and enhance wetlands in Connecticut to benefit waterfowl and other wildlife.



Roger Wolfe, Leader of the DEEP Wildlife Division's Wetland Habitat and Mosquito Management Program talks about wetland restoration at the 2020 CWA All Members Meeting.

Following Roger’s excellent presentation, attendees were briefed on the CWA’s many activities during the past year. Then, input was

received on a variety of issues. Some of the suggestions that were agreed upon were:

- CWA would support the Connecticut Conservation Advisory Council’s proposal for a regulation change to eliminate the limit of six for waterfowl hunting parties.
- A new CWA patch would be made up
- The DEEP would be advised of the collapsed bridge at Babcock Pond WMA in Colchester and problems with accessing the handicapped blind at Sessions Woods WMA in Burlington. CWA stands ready to help remedy these problems.

All CWA members are invited to attend this meeting and we hope to see many of you there next year!

Shotgun Raffle



Browning Cynergy Field

Tickets \$20 - Only 200 Tickets
Winner chooses gauge (12 or 20) and barrel length (26” or 28”). Drawing September 13, 2020 at CWA’s Sporting Clay shoot at the Guilford Sportsmen's Association. Winner need not be present. Tickets:

<http://www.ctwaterfowlers.org/browning-raffle.html>

Gun provided by
Sportsmen’s Outpost, Wolcott, CT



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CWA Annual Sporting Clays Event



**September 13th
Guilford Sportsmen's Association
Hart Road, Guilford, CT
More details in the coming weeks.**

Proposed 2020-21 Waterfowl Hunting Regulations (following pages)

Comments on these proposed regulations will be accepted by the DEEP's Wildlife Division until April 15, 2020. Please express your opinions!

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Connecticut Department of

**ENERGY &
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION**

March 7, 2020

Hi CT migratory bird hunter,

Attached you will find the proposed 2020-21 hunting season frameworks for migratory game birds in CT. There are not many changes from last year, mallards and Atlantic Population Canada geese remain at very conservative seasons. The mallard bag limit in the Atlantic Flyway remains at 2. With this reduction is a reduction in the hen limit from 2 to 1. Mallard populations in the Eastern North America continue to decline and this reduction in bag limit has been looming for some time now. Until the Atlantic Flyway can develop a new mallard harvest strategy, we will continue to have a 2 bird mallard bag. We hope that we can develop a strategy to address mallard harvest management within the next 3 years.

The Atlantic brant count was a bit higher which will result in a 50 day season, rather than the 30 day season we just endured. This year the entire country is moving to a very restrictive scaup season. In the Atlantic Flyway this means a hybrid season, with 40 days with a 1 bird bag limit and 20 days with a 2 bird bag limit. The last time we had this type of season was in 2008.

As always, we will set seasons first from a biological standpoint, and then, if there are ways to change where hunting days are, we will make those changes. There are a number of things that can be changed from the proposed regulations you see here. If you have any comments on any of these, please email us with those. Every year we take the majority desire on regulatory issues that are purely social in nature.

- A. We continue to hear from hunters that they want goose hunting days to cover duck hunting days. I personally oppose this, as it takes away hunting opportunity, but fully understand the desire. With migrant goose seasons shorter than they have been, **is this still what people want?**
- B. Many duck hunters want more days later than earlier, and some, don't want an early season at all. The early season gives us opportunity at teal and wood ducks, opportunity that in most years, is gone later in the year. In the North Zone, we are proposing a 7 day early season. **Is this 7 days what we want, do we want more days early, or fewer?**
- C. We put the early season to start during the second week of October. We think that this timing reflects what most hunters want as well as the recent migration patterns of teal and wood ducks and some of the early big ducks coming from the north. **Is this what you want? Or do you want to go back to starting the early season the first week of October?**
- D. We are trying to have as many Saturday openers and closers. In some cases, it is just not possible to have every season open or close on a Saturday. **Is there still the desire to have as many openers and closers on a Saturday?**
- E. The Atlantic Population Canada goose season is once again a 30 day season. We have put all those days from Thanksgiving on, with a split in the middle. Putting the days later was in response to hunter input last year. **Is this still what AP goose hunters want? Or do we go back to having some days in October and the rest late?**
- F. We have set the woodcock/snipe seasons to trade a Monday hunt day for a season closing Saturday. We have also set the season to start the Wednesday after the pheasant and small game season starts. This is specifically to avoid pheasant hunters, at least on opening day, from disturbing woodcock hunting. **Does this work for woodcock hunters?**

We had to close a few more areas to waterfowl hunting this year. One of these was not in our control. Again, if we continue to push the envelope of where we choose to hunt, the Legislature, not DEEP, will dictate our hunting regulations. Please think before you hunt.

We continue to conduct habitat restoration projects across the state. Several inland impoundment projects were completed this past year, and big projects are slated for Barn Island and several other coastal sites this year. We also have plans for several new inland projects in 2020.

We continue to lose hunters. One pathway to hunting is mentoring. Most of us have taken a friend or family member hunting. Hopefully those we have taken continue to hunt. Currently, there is a waterfowl mentor program that over the past 5 years has resulted in an 80% recruitment rate of new waterfowl hunters. This program, run by CT Waterfowl Association and CT DEEP, uses mentors to take complete strangers out hunting. Our biggest problem with growing the program is a lack of mentors. There is no lack of people who want to try waterfowl hunting. We have taken adults, kids by themselves, and whole families hunting through this program. I challenged Ducks Unlimited and Delta Waterfowl at their annual dinners this year to step up and join us as a coalition to maintain and grow our tradition. Please consider being a mentor in this program.

1. A reminder that there has been a change in the way you are able to report bands. The 1-800 call center is closed down. This is a funding issue with the Federal Government. This is a big issue!! You will now only be able to report bands on the www.reportbands.gov website. They are developing an app for mobile devices. Please continue to report your bands and please don't buy bands on EBay!!! If the demand isn't there, the practice will hopefully cease, and hunters harvesting banded birds will report them correctly.
2. A new Federal law has provided 2 hunting days outside of the regular seasons for Veterans and active Military. We are still in the process of changing our CT regulations to define what constitutes a Veteran and active Military. Until we can do this, we won't be able to take these days.
3. Youth days are proposed to be October 3 and October 31.

We will be finalizing our season package by the end of the month. Please send any comments, on any of the items above, or anything else, by then. The pamphlet should be out by July. The new regulatory cycle now allows us to get the pamphlet printed and distributed well in advance of the coming season.

Please have a fun and safe hunting season.

Sincerely,



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Open Waterfowl Seasons and Bag Limits

(Changes from 2019 are highlighted in bold)

(All Dates Inclusive - Except Sundays)

NORTH ZONE: The portion of the state north of Interstate 95; **SOUTH ZONE:** The portion of the state south of Interstate 95.

SHOOTING HOURS: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset, **EXCEPT FOR THE SEPTEMBER GOOSE SEASON, WHEN SHOOTING HOURS END ½ HOUR PAST SUNSET.**

SPECIES	SEASON	NORTH ZONE	SOUTH ZONE	DAILY BAG LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMIT
DUCKS, MERGANSERS, COOTS	Early Late	Oct. 10 - Oct. 17 Nov. 7 - Jan. 7	Oct. 10 - Oct. 14 Nov. 17 - Jan. 20	DUCKS 6 ^{A,B} COOTS 15	18 ^{A,B} 45
SCAUP		Oct. 10 – Oct. 17 Nov. 7 – Dec. 17 Dec. 18 – Jan. 7	Oct. 10 – Oct. 14 Nov. 17 – Dec. 28 Dec. 29 – Jan. 20	1 1 2	3 3 6
SEA DUCKS (Scoter, Oldsquaw, Eider) ^C			Nov. 12 - Jan. 20	5 ^D	15 ^D
CANADA GEESE^E					
	September Early Season	Sept 1 - Sept 30	Sept 15 - Sept 30	15	45
REGULAR SEASONS	AP Unit ^F	Nov 26 – Dec 12 Dec 19 – Jan 5		2	6
	AFRP Unit ^G	Oct 10 – Oct 17 Nov 7 – Nov 30 Dec 19 – Feb 15	Oct 10 – Oct 17 Nov 7 – Nov 30 Dec 19 – Feb 15	5	15
	NAP H-Unit ^H	Oct 10 - Oct 17 Nov 7 - Jan 7	Oct 10 - Oct 17 Nov 7 - Jan 7	2	6
	Special Late Season		Jan. 15 - Feb. 15 ^I	5	15
SNOW GEESE (includes BLUE GEESE)		Oct. 1 – Jan. 14 Feb. 20 – Mar. 10	Oct. 1 – Dec. 2 Jan. 9 – Mar. 10	25	^J
BRANT		Nov. 11 - Jan. 7	Nov. 24 - Jan. 20	2	6

^A Includes all species of ducks, with the following restrictions: MALLARD: daily limit 2 and may include only 1 HEN. WOOD DUCK: daily limit 3. BLACK DUCK: daily limit 2. REDHEAD: daily limit 2. PINTAIL: daily limit 1. **SCAUP: See table.** CANVASBACK: daily limit 2. HOODED MERGANSER: daily limit 2. Possession limits are three times the daily bag limit. SEASON FOR HARLEQUIN DUCKS IS CLOSED.

^B MERGANSERS ARE INCLUDED IN THE TOTAL DUCK BAG OF 6.

^C In coastal waters and streams seaward of the first upstream bridge.

^D Daily bag limit for sea ducks may include no more than 4 SCOTERS, 4 OLD SQUAW, 4 EIDER, 12 in possession.

^E Daily bag limit includes white-fronted geese.

^F **AP Unit:** Litchfield County and that portion of Hartford County west of a line beginning at the MA border in Suffield and extending south along Route 159 to its intersection with I-91 in Hartford and then extending south along I-91 to its intersection with the Hartford/Middlesex County line (Wethersfield/Cromwell).

^G **AFRP Unit:** All the rest of the state not included in the AP or NAP descriptions.

^H **NAP H-Unit:** That part of the state east of line beginning at the MA border in Suffield and extending south along Route 159 to its intersection with I-91 in Hartford and then extending south along I-91 to State St in New Haven. South along State St to Route 34. West on Route 34 to Route 8, south along Route 8 to Route 110, south along Route 110 to Route 15, north along Route 15 to the Milford Parkway, south along the Milford Parkway to I-95, north along I-95 to the intersection with the east shore of the Quinnipiac

River, south to the mouth of the Quinnipiac River and then south along the eastern shore of New Haven Harbor to the Long Island Sound.

- I That portion of the South Zone east of the Quinnipiac River.
- J There is no possession limit for snow geese.

Woodcock Season

October 21, 2020 to November 14, 2020 and November 17, 2020 to December 12, 2020.

Daily bag limit 3

Possession limit 9

Rail and Snipe Season

September 1, 2020 to September 30, 2020 and October 15, 2020 to November 28, 2020

Sora and Virginia rails

Daily bag limit 25

Possession limit 75

Clapper and King rails

Daily bag limit 10, only 1 King Rail

Possession limit 30

Common snipe

October 21, 2020 to November 14, 2020 and November 17, 2020 to December 12, 2020.

Daily bag limit 8

Possession limit 24