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OPEN SEASONS ON GAME BIRDS

by

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Our wild birds and mammals are the property of the people and they should be governed as carefully as an intelligent farmer takes care of the residents on his farm. However, in the earlier days when each state passed its own laws covering the shooting of waterfowl, the results showed that migratory ducks and geese were being destroyed. It was natural that the sportsmen in each state worked for their own interests, as they wanted to kill as many birds as possible before they flew on to the next state to be shot. For this reason, the states did not pass coordinated laws to conserve these migratory birds. The sportsmen were allowed to kill fifty or a hundred ducks a day, and they could shoot for several months, even up to the beginning of spring. The final and only chance of saving these migratory birds was the international treaty passed by the United States and Canada. So many of the ducks and geese lived far north in summer and migrated to the south in winter. It is fortunate for the people of this nation that the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior has regulated the laws to which all of the states have to conform. It also established many refuges that saved our waterfowl.

Formerly the canvasback was considered our de luxe table bird and many were shot along the Columbia River and in such places as Wapato Lake in Washington County. Years ago the canvasback, redhead, ruddyduck, buffle-head, and wood duck were so diminished in numbers that they were taken off the shooting lists. Because of careful protection, these birds have increased in numbers, and again they are on the game list. Six years ago the open season on ducks extended only for thirty days, from November 1 to November 30. In comparison to this, our open season on ducks this year is from October 15 to December 23.

In regard to upland birds, the Oregon State Game Commission has established regulations to the effect that the hunting of pheasants, California or valley quail, Hungarian partridge, sooty grouse, and ruffed grouse starts on October 16. The time for hunting varies in different counties according to the num-

bers of the birds. Get a copy of these game regulations from the Oregon State game Commission, 616 Oregon Building, Portland.

There has been an open season on doves this year from September 1 to September 15. Four years ago these birds were not permitted to be shot. The open season on band-tailed pigeons this year ranged from September 1 to September 30. The history of the passenger pigeon of the East and the band-tailed pigeon of the West should always be remembered by every sportsman. One of the most striking examples in game bird history was the countless millions of passenger pigeons that thronged in great areas of the middle West sixty or seventy years ago. Untold numbers were killed. In one region in Michigan in a year three million were trapped or shot for the market. No proper state or federal laws were passed to save this bird. It was completely exterminated. If a hunter had saved a skin or mounted specimen of this bird, he could sell it for \$500.

Fifty years ago the band-tailed pigeon was so abundant along the Pacific Coast that many people were trapping and shooting them daily. They were shipping a thousand or more at a time to the markets. As result they were rapidly diminishing in numbers and the states failed to properly protect them.

As a result of the international treaty, none of these birds were permitted to be killed for many years. It was only a few years ago when they had become fairly abundant that an open season of fifteen days was started, and the game limit in Oregon has been ten in any one day but not more than ten in possession at any one time.

Our present season on ducks, geese, brant, and coot has been longer than we have had for many years, as it ranges from October 15 to December 23. However, there is no open season on Ross goose, swan, Jack snipe, or Wilson snipe.

In regard to the bag limit for ducks, ten is the aggregate for all kinds in any one day, of which not more than three of any one, or more than three in the aggregate may be redheads or buffleheads; and of which not more than one may be a wood duck; and not more than twenty ducks in the ag-

gregate of all kinds in possession at any one time, of which not more than six of any one, or more than six in the aggregate may be redheads or buffleheads; and of which not more than one may be a wood duck. Bag limit for geese and brant two in the aggregate of all kinds in any one day and not more than four in the aggregate of all kinds in possession at any one time. The bag limit on the coot is much larger as twenty-five can be killed in any one day, and not more than twenty-five in possession at any one time.

The American coot is called mud hen and is one of the most common water birds in Oregon, and it is a resident from the Pacific to the Atlantic. Hunters in the East like to shoot this so-called water, marsh or meadow hen for food, but it has never been an attractive item in the game bag for sportsmen on the Pacific Coast. It likes to live in wildlife refuges and it has kept very abundant since it is not a favored part of our sportsmen's menu. They prefer mallards, pintails, and other ducks.

Along the Atlantic Coast, hunters apply the name of coot to some of the marine ducks which are the several species of scoters. These are hunted and killed as game birds, but as food they are not equal to the real coot or marsh hen. The scoters live on small mussels and shell fish. The flesh is coarser and more fishy in flavor than that of the coot.

Anyone can recognize the American coot with its slate-colored body and black head in contrast to the white bill. As a coot swims, his head moves backward and forward. When forced to fly, he patters along the surface quite a distance, splattering water with his feet and wings. In flight his feet stretch straight out behind looking as if he had rather a long tail. This appearance easily distinguishes him from any of the common ducks.

It shall be unlawful to have migratory game birds in possession more than forty-five days after the close of the season for such birds. It shall be unlawful to hunt or take migratory game birds except from one-half hour before sunrise to sunset during the open season therefor. Waterfowl are not permitted to be taken with or by aid of corn, wheat, oats, or other grain or products thereof or by any kind of feed by whomsoever or for whatsoever purpose placed

in any environment whatsoever. It shall be unlawful to use directly or indirectly live waterfowl decoys for the taking of waterfowl. It shall be unlawful for any person over the age of sixteen years to hunt for or take migratory waterfowl unless at such a time he is carrying on his person an unexpired federal migratory bird hunting stamp costing \$1.