

Sept. 1 Dove Opener Signals Start of California's Hunting Seasons

September 1, 2023



It's a national holiday for some that doesn't show up on any calendar.

A day to rekindle friendships, of barbecues and extended family reunions. It's a day some Californians pick El Centro over El Capitan, when Blythe and Brawley best Beverly Hills, a day it's better to have hotel reservations closer to Calipatria than Carmel.

It's the single busiest day on the hunting calendar when more Californians are out hunting than any other. It's the Sept. 1 statewide dove season opener.

California's dove season arrives Friday and runs through Sept. 15, kicking off a long Labor Day holiday weekend and signaling the ceremonial start to California's fall hunting seasons (many archery deer seasons and some rifle seasons are already underway). It's the first of California's bird hunting seasons to open with grouse, quail, waterfowl, pheasant, wild turkey, among others quickly to follow as well as the second half of California's dove season, which reopens Nov. 11 and runs through Dec. 25.

The Sept. 1 dove opener typically offers the best hunting of the season and a chance for a quick limit of birds. It's often a social, festive affair, filled with camaraderie and punctuated in the evening by the sights, sounds and smells of dove tacos and bacon-wrapped jalapeno dove poppers emanating from so many grills. The fact doves are among many hunters' favorite wild game adds to the day's popularity.

The dove opener is often the first hunting opportunity for new hunters, both youth and adults, who have recently completed their hunter education requirements in preparation for fall hunting seasons. With its social nature, minimal walking and gear requirements compared to some other hunting pursuits, the dove opener remains an enjoyable outdoor event for many senior hunters, which is why so many California dove fields are richly woven with multiple generations of friends and family.

The dove opener provides a boost to California's rural economies, bringing urban and rural residents from diverse backgrounds to the agricultural communities within the Sacramento, San Joaquin and Imperial valleys where dove populations are most often concentrated.

Mourning doves and white-winged doves are the primary targets Sept. 1 though spotted doves and ringed turtle doves also become legal game. The invasive and ubiquitous Eurasian collared-dove is open year-round with no bag limits.

Just as the Sept. 1 dove opener draws more Californians afield than any other, it's also the busiest day of the year for wildlife officers with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), who will be out patrolling, observing and checking on dove hunters from Siskiyou to San Diego counties to ensure game laws are followed and enforced. Dove hunting regulations are available within [CDFW's 2023-2024 California Waterfowl, Upland Game, and Public Use of Department Lands Regulations](#) digital booklet.

CDFW offers numerous walk-in public dove hunting opportunities at its wildlife areas throughout the state, some of which have planted and prepared crop fields to provide a quality dove hunting experience for licensed hunters. Entry procedures can vary as do crop plantings from year to year and hunters are advised to call ahead in preparing for their hunt. To locate wildlife areas to hunt throughout the state, visit CDFW's [Places to Visit](#) webpage or [Public Lands Viewer](#).

For more information and resources on dove hunting, [CDFW's Advanced Hunter Education Program](#) and [R3 Program](#) have resources and videos available to accelerate the learning curve.

Additional information on dove hunting in California is available at [CDFW's Upland Game Bird Hunting webpage](#). Happy dove season, California.