

Dove Season Opening Sept. 1; Opportunities Available Throughout California

August 29, 2022



The first of two opening days of California's dove hunting season is quickly approaching. Dove hunters will be able to hunt for mourning dove, white-winged dove, spotted dove and ringed turtle dove beginning Thursday, September 1 through Thursday, September 15, followed by a second hunting season, Saturday, November 12 through Monday, December 26.

The Sept. 1 dove opener is one of the most anticipated dates on the hunting calendar and is considered by many as the traditional start to California's hunting seasons.

Mourning dove and white-winged dove have a daily bag limit of 15, up to 10 of which may be white-winged dove. The possession limit is triple the daily bag limit. There are no limits on spotted dove and ringed turtle dove. Hunting for Eurasian collared-dove is open year-round and there is no bag or possession limit. A dove identification guide (PDF) can be found on the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) website.

Hunters are reminded that nonlead ammunition is required for hunting doves and taking wildlife anywhere in California with a firearm.

Numerous dove hunting opportunities are available to the public for the first dove season at CDFW wildlife areas throughout the state. These areas include Upper Butte Basin, Gray Lodge, Yolo Bypass, North Grasslands, Los Banos and Imperial Valley wildlife areas, and Palo Verde Ecological Reserve. Many of these areas have been planted with food crops to attract and hold doves. Maps are available at some check station locations or online. Entry procedures vary from area to area and hunters are advised to call ahead in preparing for their hunt. Portions of Los Banos and North Grasslands wildlife areas are restricted to special permit holders until noon on September 1, after which they will open to public hunting for the remainder of the first season.

Additional public dove hunting opportunities are offered through CDFW's Upland Game Wild Bird Hunts and SHARE programs. Dove hunting is considered a great starting point for new hunters. It's often the first hunting season available to newly licensed hunters who completed their hunter education requirements in the off season. There is very little equipment needed, typically lots of fast wing-shooting action, camaraderie and plenty of public land hunting opportunities.

Doves are a favorite on the table and many dove hunters and their friends and families are already eagerly anticipating bacon-wrapped, jalapeño dove poppers on the grill among other favorite dove recipes.

Minimum hunting requirements are a valid hunting license and upland game bird validation (validation not required for Junior Hunting License holders), good footwear, a shotgun of almost any gauge, nonlead shotgun shells, a cooler with ice to store your birds and plenty of water for the typically hot weather. For more information and resources on dove hunting, CDFW's Advanced Hunter Education program has videos to help get you started and CDFW's R3 program has additional resources and videos available as well.

Mourning doves favor dry environments and can exploit many food types and sources. Most successful dove hunters will position themselves near paths to and from roost sites, water, food sources or gravel. Dove movement is most frequent in the early mornings and late evenings when they are flying from and to their roost sites, however late morning to early afternoon can still provide opportunities. Hunters should scout dove activity in the area a few times prior to hunting.

As a dove hunter, you may have a chance of encountering a banded dove. As of August 15, CDFW staff and volunteers have banded more than 1,100 doves throughout California. If you harvest a banded dove, please report the band to the U.S. Geological Survey (www.reportband.gov) to help further dove research.

CDFW's Wildlife Health Lab recently confirmed the presence of Highly Pathogenic Eurasian H5N1 Avian Influenza in three wild birds found in Colusa and Glenn counties. If you suspect a dove to be infected with avian influenza or *Trichomonas*, please contact CDFW's Wildlife Health Lab by email or phone (916) 358-2790.

Important laws and regulations to consider include the following:

Shoot time for doves is one half hour before sunrise to sunset.

All hunters — including junior hunting license holders — are required to carry their hunting license with them.

Hunters must have written permission from the landowner prior to hunting on private land.

Bag limits apply to each hunter and no one can take more than one legal limit.

It is illegal to shoot within 150 yards of an occupied dwelling.

It is illegal to shoot from or across a public roadway.

It is the responsibility of every hunter to know and follow all laws.

Safety is the most important part of any hunting adventure. Safety glasses are a simple way to protect the eyes and are available in many shades for hunting in all types of lighting situations. Ear protection is also strongly recommended.

The weather throughout the state on September 1 is expected to be hot and dry. CDFW urges hunters to drink plenty of fluids, wear sun protection and have a plan in case of an accident.