

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

Take Advantage of Special Early Goose and Teal Seasons



By Ben Davis, Wildlife Biologist, Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries

“Good weather for ducks” is a phrase typically associated with weather that’s less than desirable for most individuals.

An exception to this rule is the waterfowler, who seeks wind, rain, snow and ice. The environmental conditions that keep many people home sitting by the fire are what stir serious waterfowl hunters to their blinds watching the skies for circling birds. That does not mean, however, that all good waterfowl hunting is limited to those extreme weather conditions. Many states, including Alabama, are offering sportsmen the opportunity to participate in special early goose and teal seasons. Generally, these seasons occur when weather patterns are considerably milder, well in advance of the fall waterfowl season.



Canada Goose

The special early goose season is a good tool to manage excess populations of resident Canada geese. Geese can routinely be seen feeding at city parks and golf courses in Alabama. Abundant food is available in these areas, and they are relatively secure. Many times these geese become so comfortable in an area that they become permanent inhabitants, choosing not to participate in annual migrations. This can be troublesome to landowners in some of the areas that geese choose to inhabit.

Hunters often use the early goose season as an opportunity to go afield in preparation for fall waterfowl season or to try out new equipment purchased during the off season. Sportsmen can gain some field experience for the retriever that will accompany them during the upcoming duck season. Hunters can also discover unwanted surprises such as tangled decoy lines and leaky waders before they are standing waist deep in icy water.


Blue-winged Teal

Another waterfowl species that lends itself to an earlier harvest is the blue-winged teal. Blue-winged teal are one of the earliest of the annual migrating waterfowl

species. They will typically winter further south than their green-winged cousins, traveling to the extreme southern edges of the United States, as well as Central and South America to winter. Because of their early migration pattern, blue-winged teal are rarely seen in abundance during the fall waterfowl season. This early opportunity to harvest teal in September may be many hunters’ best chance to harvest these beautiful ducks.

Take Advantage of Early Seasons

Sportsmen who want to take advantage of every opportunity to experience the outdoors should try hunting Canada geese and blue-winged teal. The special early goose and teal seasons offer added opportunities to get out and experience nature at a time of year when the weather is pleasant and hunting pressure is light.

As with any other waterfowl hunting season, proper licensing and stamps are required. Be aware of season dates and times, as well as any special regulations that may apply. Also recognize that possession and bag limits during these early seasons may be different than those during the fall season. 



2005 Early Waterfowl Seasons and Bag Limits

- ▶ **Canada Goose**
September 1-15, 2005
Limit: 5 a day, 10 in possession
- ▶ **Blue-winged Teal**
September 10-25
Limit: 4 a day, 8 in Possession

Each waterfowl hunter 16 years of age and over must carry the necessary state hunting license and signed state and federal duck stamps. A Harvest Information Program (HIP) permit is also required.

For more details visit
www.outdooralabama.com.