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Photo: K Blaise

Ontario's Proposal to Establish a Hunting Season for the Double-crested Cormorant (EBR Registry No. 013-4124)

**The Canadian Environmental Law Association's
Submission to Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry**

Submitted by:

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I. Introduction

Please accept this submission of the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA) in response to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry's (MNRF) consultation on Ontario's proposal to establish a hunting season for the double-crested cormorant ("cormorant").¹

The province alleges that due to "concerns expressed by some groups (commercial fishing industry, property owners) and individuals that cormorants have been detrimental to fish populations, island forest habitats, other species and aesthetics," a hunting season for cormorants beginning in 2019 should be created.² This "new population management tool" would include an open hunting season from March 15 – December 31 annually, an exemption allowing small game licences to be valid from June 16 – August 31, a bag limit of 50 cormorants per day with no possession limit and permit hunting from a stationary motorboat.

Not only is the proposal contrary to the conservation and sustainability purposes of the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act* ("FWCA"), it does not align with the principles of wildlife management which aim to reduce human-wildlife conflict. It also misrepresents cormorants as a threat to the Great Lakes and island ecosystems when instead, invasive species are the recognized primary threat. Due to the anticipated collateral damage to other bird species, the proposal also contravenes the *Migratory Bird Convention Act* ("MBCA"). For these reasons detailed below, CELA is opposed to the proposed hunt and urges the MNRF to discontinue any further action on this ill-conceived proposal.

II. Background - Canadian Environmental Law Association

The Canadian Environmental Law Association ("CELA") is a non-profit, public interest organization established in 1970 for the purpose of using and improving existing laws to protect public health and the environment. For nearly 50 years, CELA has used legal tools, undertaken ground-breaking research and conducted public interest advocacy to increase environmental protection and the safeguarding of communities. We work towards protecting human health and our environment by actively engaging in policy planning and seeking justice for those harmed by pollution or poor environmental decision-making.

CELA's legal counsel, Kerrie Blaise, authored this report. Ms. Blaise has a Master of Science from the University of Edinburgh and has undertaken research related to double-crested cormorants, as part of her Bachelors' thesis at York University. Ms. Blaise has also taught the law and jurisprudence relevant to Ontario's *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act* as a sessional instructor.

¹ Environmental Registry, "Policy Proposal Notice – Proposal to establish a hunting season for double-crested cormorants in Ontario," EBR Registry No. 013 – 4124, online: <https://www.ebr.gov.on.ca/ERS-WEB-External/displaynoticecontent.do?noticeId=MTM2NTE1&statusId=MjA4MDQ4&language=en> [Proposal Notice]

² *Ibid*

III. Response to the Proposal

Introductory Remarks

CELA is most concerned by the proposal's lack of scientific basis and the government's disregard for the principles of sustainability and conservation. Contrary to the proposal's assertion that cormorants have been "detrimental to fish populations," the MNRF has previously excused cormorants from negative effects felt by the sport fishing industry and instead, found that basin-wide changes are dominantly responsible for Great Lakes-wide fish composition changes.³ If the government now seeks to revise this comprehensive study or overturn its findings, CELA requests this be clearly stated in the proposal.

Furthermore, the proposal references "concerns expressed by some groups (commercial fishing industry, property owners)" that cormorants cause harm to "island habitats" and, their presence is detrimental to "aesthetics."⁴ By nature, cormorants nest in colonies, thousands of pairs strong, typically on islands and usually on big lakes. As a result of their localized concentrations, guano from nests can smother and kill the understory vegetation. Determining the ecological significance or value of a species based on their aesthetics is misguided. The death of trees in cormorant colonies is a natural process that occurs in all tree-nesting colonial waterbird habitats – it is part of their ecology – and as discussed in section 3 below, colonial waterbirds such as cormorants, are among the species which contribute to the biodiversity of the Great Lakes inshore region.⁵

Creating a hunt on the basis of perceived harm perpetuates a misinformed view of cormorants, removed from their ecological history and current prevalence. The perception of cormorant over-abundance largely results from the drastic fluctuations cormorant populations have undergone in the past century. Cormorants were nearly extinct in the 1970s, due to widespread culling which commenced in the 1950s and subsequent eggshell thinning, caused by persistent organic pollutants like DDT.⁶ The corresponding loss of large predatory fish in the Great Lakes and other inland lakes due to habitat degradation, overfishing, and pollution has increased the levels of smaller fish such as alewife, the cormorant's favoured food source. The population rebound of cormorants following the banning of DDT, also coincided with the creation of these favourable feeding grounds.⁷

For many Ontarians, these drastic fluctuations either occurred within living memory or prior to being born and thus, they grew up at a time when cormorants were nearly extinct. Therefore, to now observe cormorants in numbers often in the hundreds or thousands, is viewed as alarming or unnatural.

³ Stewart et al., "Review of the status and management of double-crested cormorants in Ontario" (2006) Ministry of Natural Resources: Wildlife Section Branch, p 27 [**Review of Cormorants**]

⁴ *Proposal Notice*, *supra* note 1

⁵ Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, "Cormorant advisory group meeting #1: meeting notes." Toronto, (24 Jan 2008)

⁶ J. Anthony Keith, "Management Policies for Cormorants in Canada" (1995) 18 *Colonial Waterbirds* 1 at 236 [**Colonial Waterbirds**]

⁷ *Review of Cormorants*, *supra* note 3, p 14

1. The proposal is contrary to the purposes of the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act*

First, the MNRF's proposal is contrary to the conservation and sustainability purposes of the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act* (FWCA).⁸ In 1997, when the FWCA was first introduced to the Ontario Legislative Assembly for debate, then Minister of Natural Resources John Snobelen stated the following about the Act's purposes:

The proposed *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act* will help ensure conservation and management of the province's abundant fish and wildlife resources. It will contribute to the sustainability of the environment, social and economic benefits associated with those resources, and it will give Ontario tougher fish and wildlife enforcement provisions.⁹

This statement by the Minister provides direct evidence of the legislative purpose of the FWCA.¹⁰ The current proposal, however, is void of any consideration demonstrating how sustainability and the conservation of wildlife resources were taken into account. Neither does the proposal reference any science-based justifications for its approach. Rather the proposal references "concerns expressed by ... commercial fishing industry, property owners."¹¹

Secondly, CELA submits that the proposal to allow cormorants to spoil is contrary to the objects of the FWCA. Section 36 of the FWCA, states that "a hunter or trapper who kills game wildlife other than a furbearing mammal shall not abandon it if its flesh may become unsuitable for human consumption."¹² The proposal notice - which states it will add provisions to the FWCA allowing cormorants to spoil and lawfully exempt hunters from possessing the carcass - does not align with the legislature's intended purpose of spoilage exemptions in s. 36 of the FWCA. As then Minister of Natural Resources, Minister Snobelen stated when the Act was being debated, there may be "situations where this [an exemption] is necessary to prevent or control the spread of disease."¹³ As further explained by Member of Provincial Parliament Chudleigh, any exemption to the spoilage prohibition would be reserved for instances in which it would "be necessary to kill fish and allow them to spoil in order to prevent or control the spread of disease."¹⁴ Unless the exemption now proposed by the government is for the purposes of controlling or preventing disease, the intention of the legislature should not be overridden absent public debate and scientific study.

⁸ *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997*, SO 1997, c 41 [FWCA]

⁹ Ontario, Legislative Assembly, *Office Report of Debates (Hansard)*, No L251a (26 Nov 1997) at 1520

¹⁰ Ruth Sullivan, *Sullivan on the Construction of Statutes* (Toronto: LexisNexis Canada, 2014) at 272

¹¹ *Proposal notice, supra* note 1

¹² FWCA, *supra* note 8, s 36(1): "A hunter or trapper who kills game wildlife other than a furbearing mammal shall not abandon it if its flesh may become unsuitable for human consumption."

¹³ Ontario, Legislative Assembly, *Office Report of Debates (Hansard)*, No L264 (18 Dec 1997) at 1001.

¹⁴ Ontario, Legislative Assembly, *Office Report of Debates (Hansard)*, (11 Dec 1997) at 1630.

Thirdly, due to the timing of the proposed hunt and allowable bag limit, the proposal also violates the objectives of the *FWCA* which include considerations of animal welfare, humane and ethical hunting practices. As Abella J.A. speaking for the Court of Appeal stated,

The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act received Royal Assent on December 18, 1997 and was proclaimed on January 1, 1999. It was enacted to provide a scheme of wildlife conservation and management including the establishment of ethical, humane and responsible hunting practices. The Act assigns to the government the responsibility for balancing the interests of people against the welfare of animals to determine what constitutes humane treatment or the unnecessary suffering of animals.

Concerns regarding animal welfare, including humane and ethical hunting practices, fall squarely with the policy and objectives of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act. [emphasis added]¹⁵

The daily bag limit of 50 cormorants per day is nearly ten times higher than the existing daily bag limits set for other game birds in the *FWCA* (see excerpt of open game seasons and accompanying bag limits in Appendix 1).¹⁶ Also, the proposed hunting season (spanning March 15 – December 31) is three times longer than other open seasons in the *FWCA*, which average three months.¹⁷

The timing of the open season is also particularly significant as it spans the nesting and chick rearing period for cormorants. Eggs are typically laid in late April, with hatching occurring a month later. It takes an additional 5-6 weeks for chicks to be able to fly and they are not fully independent until 10 weeks.¹⁸

Cormorants have altricial young, meaning they require care and feeding by both parents. The death of either parent would result in chicks starving to death. The hunt as proposed, is not a practice which is either humane nor ethical and thus contrary to objectives of the *FWCA*. The proposal fails to consider the impact of the hunt's timing and allowable bag limit on (1) nestlings exposed to the elements and deprived of food and (2) the pain and suffering of the birds, generally, caused by ruptured tissues from bullet wounds and potentially rendered flightless, and subject to death by drowning, starvation or exposure.

¹⁵ *Ontario Federation of Anglers & Hunters v. Ontario (Ministry of Natural Resources)*, 2000 CanLII 41606 (ON CA), [2002] OJ No 1445 (QL).

¹⁶ O Reg 670/98: Open Seasons – Wildlife [Appendix 1]

¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁸ US Fish and Wildlife Service, "Questions and Answers – Draft Environmental Impact Statement on Double-crested cormorant management," online: <https://www.fws.gov/pacific/news/2002/04/faq.htm>

2. The proposal exacerbates human-wildlife conflict contrary to the principles of wildlife management

The proposal will increase conflict between humans and wildlife, contrary to the principles of wildlife management. It is recognized that to contribute to the goals of conservation and sustainability - both purposes of the *FWCA* - conflicts between humans and wildlife should be minimized. This principle is recognized in *A Wildlife Policy of Canada*, which was developed as a result of a federal-provincial initiative with non-government organizations¹⁹ and informs the enforcement measures undertaken pursuant to the *Canada Wildlife Act* and the *Migratory Bird Convention Act, 1994*.²⁰ Accordingly, the Policy states:

(7.9) Wherever possible, human activities should be managed to avoid or minimize conflicts with wild animals. Ecological analysis should be undertaken to this end.

(7.10) Wild animals that cause unacceptable risk to people; damage to crops, aquaculture, or livestock; or pressure on habitats or other wildlife populations should be controlled only on the basis of long-term, scientifically sound, and economically justified programs. Such programs should be developed in close consultation with public and private interests; should employ only the most safe, efficient, economical, and humane methods; and should be subject to regulations. Lethal methods should be used minimally and only when preventative measures fail.

CELA submits proposals by the MNR should align with the principles of wildlife management, including the goal of minimizing human-wildlife conflict. As currently proposed, there is no ecological analysis or scientifically sound justification to act contrary to this principle.

Additionally, given the overlap of cormorants' habitat in areas which are popular cottage, camping and paddling destinations, the proposal introduces the potential for conflict between hunters and recreationalists where one currently does not exist. This is especially so in the summer months when many Ontarians, who are boating, swimming and paddling on one of Ontario's many waterbodies, may encounter hunters shooting cormorants from motorboats. The proposal does not demonstrate that government has thoroughly consulted with members of the public, residents, tourist operators and the recreationalists most affected by this proposal, nor demonstrated that non-lethal preventative measures have first been attempted.

¹⁹ *Colonial Waterbirds*, *supra* note 6

²⁰ Environment and Climate Change Canada, "Policy when Consideration Permitting or Authorizing Prohibited Activities in Protected Areas Designated Under the *Canada Wildlife Act* and *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994*" (December 2011), online: https://ec.gc.ca/nature/default.asp?lang=En&n=6D7D9454-1#_ftnref1

3. Invasive species, not cormorants, are the most significant threat to island ecosystems

Lake Huron boasts the longest freshwater coast in the world and the shoreline environments of the Great Lakes are critical for biodiversity.²¹ The archipelagos in Lake Huron, which include Georgian Bay, “support ecological communities that are found nowhere else in the world.”²² Colonial waterbirds, such as cormorants, are among the species which contribute to this region’s diversity.

A study which conducted a comprehensive biodiversity assessment of 23,000 islands in Lake Huron concluded “relative to the Lake Huron mainland shoreline, islands are disproportionately valuable as colonial nesting waterbird sites, [and] as sites that support Great Lakes endemic flora, fauna.”²³ The study also found that the primary threat to these island ecosystems was development and invasive species, not colonial waterbirds.

Based on CELA’s review of the proposal, there is no evidence that the MNRF has considered the ecological effects of removing cormorants from these island ecosystems. Furthermore, because the proposal allows hunting by motorboat, it will allow for easier access to formerly remote areas. The study of Lake Huron’s archipelagos found that it was expressly because of the islands’ isolation that they have been remarkably buffered from anthropogenic change, allowing them to support a rich and diverse range of species communities.²⁴ For these reasons, CELA does not support the proposals’ allowance of hunting by motorboat.

Furthermore, the proposal fails to consider the impact of the cormorants’ absence on aquatic ecosystems. A recent article in the journal *Nature* commented that nutrient-rich guano increases plant biomass, alters species composition of island plants and enhances the abundance of many types of biota.²⁵ The study also found that a reduction in seabird colonies on islands, caused by predation by introduced rats, reduced the productivity of the areas adjacent to the islands as a result of the loss in nutrient load attributable to guano.²⁶

At a time when the Great Lakes face unprecedented threats and ecological disturbance, as a result of human activity and climate change, CELA submits that the potential of cormorants to enhance productivity and key ecosystem functions should be studied prior to advocating for their removal.

²¹ Dan Kraus, Bonnie Henson and Dave Ewert, “Biodiversity and conservation of Lake Huron’s islands” (2009) 12 *Aquatic Ecosystem Health and Management* 1 at 90

²² *Ibid*

²³ *Ibid* at 99

²⁴ *Ibid*

²⁵ Nicholas AJ Graham et al, “Seabirds enhance coral reef productivity and functioning in the absence of invasive rates,” (2018) 559 *Nature*, p 250, online: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-018-0202-3>

²⁶ *Ibid*

4. Collateral damage to protected migratory birds contravenes the *Migratory Bird Convention Act*

Other commentators²⁷ have remarked that a considerable number of other bird species could be harmed or killed as a result of the proposed cormorant hunting season. Cormorants share nesting sites with other species in trees and on the ground. Great blue herons, black-crowned night-herons, great egrets and bitterns are among the species to share tree-nesting sites with cormorants.²⁸ Ground-nesting cormorant sites are also shared with caspian terns, loons, ring-billed and herring gulls.

All of these birds are protected under the *Migratory Bird Convention Act, 1994*.²⁹ Pursuant to the *Migratory Birds Regulations*, the hunting, disturbance, destruction of a nest, or possession of a migratory bird (either living, dead or in part), is prohibited under the act:³⁰

5 (1) No person shall hunt a migratory bird except under authority of a permit therefor.

6 Subject to subsection 5(9), no person shall

(a) disturb, destroy or take a nest, egg, nest shelter, eider duck shelter or duck box of a migratory bird, or

(b) have in his possession a live migratory bird, or a carcass, skin, nest or egg of a migratory bird

except under authority of a permit therefor.

Because cormorants nest in close proximity with bird species protected under the *MBCA*, it is very likely that they will experience collateral harm from the cormorant hunt. Unless the cormorant hunter has the requisite permits under the *MBCA* to hunt or harm a migratory bird, they will be in violation of the *MBCA*.

Even if those hunting cormorants were to obtain a permit to hunt migratory birds under the *MBCA*, the open season for migratory birds is a much shorter season and spans approximately September 1 – December 20 (see excerpt of *MBCA* open seasons in Appendix 2).³¹ Therefore, any death, harm or disturbance of a migratory bird outside of this period would be a direct violation of the *MBCA*. As the MNRF has proposed a hunting season spanning March 15 to Dec 31, hunters would be in violation of the *MBCA* for any harm or death caused to a migratory bird between the dates of March 15 and Sept 1.

²⁷ See Dr. Gail Fraser, “Comments submitted on proposed double-crested cormorant hunt in Ontario,” (4 Dec 2018) online: <https://gsfraser.blog.yorku.ca/research/conservation/proposed-cormorant-hunt-dec-2018/>

²⁸ Rush, S.A., C. Pekarik, D.V. Weseloh, F. Cuthbert, D. Moore and L. Wires “Changes in heron and egret populations on the Laurentian Great Lakes and connecting channels 1977-2009” (2015) 10 *Avian Conservation and Ecology* 1 at 7

²⁹ *Migratory Birds Convention Act*, SC 1994, c 22 [**MBCA**]; see also Environment and Climate Change Canada, “Birds protected in Canada,” online: <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/migratory-birds-legal-protection/list.html>

³⁰ *Migratory Birds Regulations*, CRC, c 1035

³¹ *Ibid*, Part VI, Table I Waterfowler Heritage Days and Open Seasons in Ontario [**Appendix 2**]

During this span of March 15 – Sept 1, cormorants would be predominantly based at their nesting sites, which they share with many other species of birds. Therefore, it would be practically impossible to hunt a cormorant without causing collateral harm to other bird species, thereby violating the *MBCA*.

Penalties for individuals who commit an indicatable offence under the *MBCA* can span \$15,000 - \$1,000,000 and/or could include a term of imprisonment for up to three years.³² Fines and imprisonment on subsequent offences span \$30,000 - \$2,000,000 and a term up to three years, respectively.³³

IV. Requested Action

CELA requests that the MNRF discontinue all action to advance the proposed hunting season for cormorants. Not only would the proposed legislative changes contravene the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act's* purposes of sustainability, conservation and ethical hunting practices, but due to the collateral damage to other waterbird species, the proposal violates Canada's principle migratory bird protection statute, the *Migratory Bird Convention Act*.

Any amendment to the *FWCA* or policy by the MNRF should be science-based and the ecological and sociological effects closely considered. The government has not justified why a lethal means of wildlife management is necessary, particularly when it poses a significant safety risk to residents and other recreational waterbody users. For these reason and those detailed herein, CELA is opposed to the proposed cormorant hunting season.

Yours truly,

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW ASSOCIATION



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³² *MBCA*, *supra* note 29, s 13(2)(a)(i)

³³ *Ibid*, *supra* note 29, s 13(2)(a)(ii)

Appendix 1

Excerpt - O Reg 670/98: Open Seasons - Wildlife

TABLE 7

GAME BIRDS OTHER THAN WILD TURKEY — OPEN SEASON

(HUNTING WITHOUT A FALCONRY BIRD OR A NON-INDIGENOUS FALCONRY BIRD)

| Item | Column 1 Species | Column 2 Area (Nos. refer to WMUs unless otherwise stated) | Column 3 Open Season — Residents and Non-Residents | Column 4 Daily Bag Limits | Column 5 Possession Limits |
|------|---------------------------------------|---|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. | Gray Partridge (Hungarian) | 36, 37, 42 to 50, 53 to 67, 69B | September 15 to December 31. | 5 | 15 |
| 2. | Gray Partridge (Hungarian) | 68, 69A, 70 to 95 | September 25 to December 31. | 5 | 15 |
| 3. | Ptarmigan | 1 to 4, 16 to 18, 24 to 27 | September 15 to March 31 in the year next following. | 5 | 15 |
| 4. | Ring-necked Pheasant | 1 to 4, 16 to 18, 24 to 27 | September 15 to March 31 in the year next following. | 10 | 10 |
| 5. | Ring-necked Pheasant | 5 to 15, 19 to 23, 28 to 50, 53 to 67, 69B | September 15 to December 31. | 10 | 10 |
| 6. | Ring-necked Pheasant | 68, 69A, 70 to 94 | September 25 to December 31. | 3 | 10 |
| 7. | Ring-necked Pheasant | 95 | September 25 to the last day of February in the year next following. | 10 | 10 |
| 8. | Ruffed Grouse and Spruce Grouse | 1 to 4, 16 to 18, 24 to 27 | September 15 to March 31 in the year next following. | Combined total of 5 | Combined total of 15 |
| 9. | Ruffed Grouse and Spruce Grouse | 5 to 15, 19 to 23, 28 to 50, 53 to 67, 69B | September 15 to December 31. | Combined total of 5 | Combined total of 15 |

| | | | | | |
|-----|---------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|----|
| 10. | Ruffed Grouse | 68, 73 to 76, 82 to 84 | September 25 to December 31. | 5 | 15 |
| 11. | Ruffed Grouse | 69A, 70 to 72, 77 to 81, 85 to 95 | September 25 to December 31. | 2 | 6 |
| 12. | Sharp-tailed Grouse | 1 to 4, 16 to 18, 24 to 27 | September 15 to March 31 in the year next following. | 5 | 15 |
| 13. | Sharp-tailed Grouse | 5 to 15, 19 to 23, 28 to 35, 38 to 41 | September 15 to December 31. | 5 | 15 |
| 14. | Sharp-tailed Grouse | 36, 37, 42 to 50, 53 to 67, 69B | September 15 to December 31. | 2 | 6 |

O. Reg. 85/17, s. 5.

Appendix 2

Excerpt - Migratory Birds Regulations, CRC, c 1035

PART VI

TABLE I

Waterfowler Heritage Days and Open Seasons in Ontario

| Column 1 | Column 2 | Column 3 | Column 4 | Column 5 | Column 6 | |
|----------|---------------------------|---|---|---|--|---|
| Item | Area | Waterfowler Heritage Day | Open Season | Canada Geese and Cackling Geese | Woodcock | Mourning Doves |
| 1 | Hudson-James Bay District | First Saturday of September ^(a) | September 1 to December 16 | September 1 to December 16 | September 15 to December 16 | No open season |
| 2 | Northern District | First Saturday of September ^(a) | September 10 to December 24 | September 1 to December 16 | September 15 to December 16 | No open season |
| 3 | Central District | Second Saturday of September ^(b) | For a period of 106 days beginning on the third Saturday of September | September 1 to December 16 | September 15 to December 16 | September 1 to November 30 ^(b) |
| 4 | Southern District | Third Saturday of September ^(b) | For a period of 106 days beginning on the fourth Saturday of September ^(c) | For a period of 11 days beginning on the first Thursday after Labour Day ^(d) | September 15 to December 20 ^(e) | September 1 to November 30 ^(b) |

| Column 1 | Column 2 | Column 3 | Column 4 | Column 5 | Column 6 |
|-----------|--|---|---|--|----------------|
| | Waterfowler Heritage Day | Open Season | | | |
| | Ducks (Other than Harlequin Ducks), Rails (Other than Yellow Rails and King Rails), Gallinules, Coots, Snipe, Geese, Woodcock and Mourning Doves | Ducks (Other than Harlequin Ducks), Rails (Other than Yellow Rails and King Rails), Gallinules, Coots, Snipe and Geese (Other than Canada Geese and Cackling Geese) | Canada Geese and Cackling Geese | | Mourning Doves |
| Item Area | | | For a period of 11 days beginning on the first Thursday after Labour Day, except for any Sunday within this period ^(e) | September 25 to December 20 ^(h) | |
| | | | For a period of 96 days — 95 days if Labour Day falls on September 1 or 2 — beginning on the fourth Saturday of September ^(d) | | |
| | | | For a period of 106 days — 105 days if Labour Day falls on September 1 or 2 — beginning on the fourth Saturday of September except for any Sunday within this period ^(e) | | |

| Column 1 | Column 2 | Column 3 | Column 4 | Column 5 | Column 6 |
|-----------|--|---|---|----------|----------------|
| | Waterfowler Heritage Day | Open Season | | | |
| | Ducks (Other than Harlequin Ducks), Rails (Other than Yellow Rails and King Rails), Gallinules, Coots, Snipe, Geese, Woodcock and Mourning Doves | Ducks (Other than Harlequin Ducks), Rails (Other than Yellow Rails and King Rails), Gallinules, Coots, Snipe and Geese (Other than Canada Geese and Cackling Geese) | Canada Geese and Cackling Geese | | Mourning Doves |
| Item Area | | | For a period of 8 days beginning on the fourth Saturday of February, except for any Sunday within this period (e) , (f) | | |

[\(a\)](#) Except for the Mourning Dove.

[\(b\)](#) Non-toxic shot required.

[\(c\)](#) In Wildlife Management Unit 65, recorded Snow Goose and Ross's Goose calls may be used when hunting those geese; any species of migratory bird for which it is open season may be taken while hunting Snow Geese and Ross's Geese with those calls.

[\(d\)](#) In municipalities where Sunday gun hunting is permitted by provincial regulations.

[\(e\)](#) In municipalities where Sunday gun hunting is not permitted by provincial regulations.

[\(f\)](#) Except in Wildlife Management Unit 94.

[\(g\)](#) In Wildlife Management Units 60–67, 69B.

[\(h\)](#) In Wildlife Management Units 68, 69A, 70–95.