

Illinois Snow Goose Hunter Survey

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Abstract

A self-administered mail survey of snow goose hunters in Illinois was initiated on June 10, 1999. A total of 1,000 hunters were randomly selected from our 1998-99 waterfowl survey, and each hunter received a 3-page questionnaire and cover letter followed 2 weeks later with a second mailing to non-respondents. A total of 705 (71%) hunters responded, and 47 (7% of respondents) indicated they participated in the special spring season. These hunters reported hunting a total of 176 days and harvesting 100 light geese. Our estimates provided a statewide participation of 1,227 hunters, 4,407 hunter days afield, and 2,504 light geese harvested.

Hunters who did not take part in the special hunt were asked for their reasons for not participating. Lack of time was the most frequent response (36%), whereas 34% of the respondents indicated lack of equipment and knowledge of snow goose habits was a deciding factor. Very few Illinois hunters hunted in other states during this special season; only 4 hunters in our sample hunted out of state (Arkansas 2, Nebraska 1, Missouri 1). The use of electronic calls appears to have been a contributing factor to hunter satisfaction, as was lack of bag limits. Hunting ½ hour after sunset did not appear to contribute greatly to hunter satisfaction. Decoying over land was the method used by most hunters (85%). A multi-state license appealed to many hunters; 42% indicated they would be very willing to hunt with such a license, however 71% favored no license at all. When asked if they would participate in such a hunt if offered next year, 59% of the respondents stated they would participate. Comments provided by participants suggested hunters perceived few snow goose flocks in the state at the time of the hunt, limited access to land for hunting, and lack of awareness concerning the season dates and regulations.

Appendix 1. Snow Goose Hunter Survey Results

1. Did you hunt snow geese during the special spring season (March 11-March 31)?

Yes	47 (7%)
No	658 (93%)

2. If you did not hunt snow geese, what were your reasons for not doing so? Please check all that apply.

Not enough time	256 (36%)
Did not have the proper equipment (decoys, calls, etc.)	242 (34%)
Did not know any other hunters who hunted snow geese	192 (27%)
Not enough knowledge of snow goose habits	185 (26%)
Not interested	105 (15%)
Other ¹	217 (34%)

¹ other reasons include “did not know of season”, “no place to hunt”, “no geese in our area”, “snow geese not good to eat”

3. If you answered “Yes” to question 1, please indicate the **number of days hunted**, **geese harvested** and **location hunted**:

State	Hunters	Reported Days	Reported Harvest
Illinois	47	176	100
Arkansas	2	5	45
Nebraska	1	1	0
Missouri	1	1	1

4. Please circle the number that indicates how each of the following contributed to your satisfaction with snow goose hunting.

	Very Much	Somewhat	None	Did Not Use
Electronic Calls	31%	2%	9%	58%
Hunting ½ hour after sunset	29%	22%	13%	36%
No bag limit	33%	15%	26%	26%

5. How often did you use the following techniques when hunting snow geese?

<u>Hunting Technique</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Never</u>
Sneaking/creeping	40%	19%	42%
Decoying over water	35%	12%	53%
Decoying over land	85%	7%	8%
Pass Shooting	51%	24%	24%

6. Which of the following did you purchase? Please check all that apply.

Illinois State Waterfowl Stamp	43 (100%)	
Federal Waterfowl Stamp	43 (100%)	
Stamp or permit from other state	Arkansas	17
	Missouri	9
	Iowa	9
	Wisconsin	7
	South Dakota	6
	North Dakota	4
	Michigan	3
	Nebraska	3
	Kentucky	2
	Louisiana	2
	Texas	2
	Florida	1
	Indiana	1
	Tennessee	1
	Arizona	1
	Canada	7

7. How willing would you be to hunt in other states under the following license requirements?

<u>License Requirement</u>	<u>Very Willing</u>	<u>Somewhat Willing</u>	<u>Not Willing</u>
Regular non-resident license	21%	36%	43%
Multi-state license	42%	39%	20%
No license required	71%	13%	16%

8. During which of the following seasons did you hunt snow geese? Please check all that apply.

1998-99	100%
1997-98	64%
1996-97	34%
Before 1996-97	23%

9. What year did you first begin hunting waterfowl (ducks or geese)?

Average = 1977 (22 years)

10. If offered next year, do you plan to hunt the spring snow goose season?

Yes	59%
No	41%

Summary of Comments

Fifty-five comments were received from the 655 hunters in our survey. Comments were directed at federal and state regulations, season dates and length, access, and information. Hunters who did not participate in the hunt were more likely to remark that the season was not widely publicized. Several hunters observed that hunting snow geese differs from Canada geese and therefore site regulations made for Canada geese (e.g. hunting from blinds only) should be altered for snow goose hunting conditions.

Hunters favored the new regulations allowing electronic calls and no bag limit. A few comments requested unplugged shotguns and multi-state licenses. Several comments were directed toward lack of access to lands where snow geese were observed. In general, hunters were supportive of the opportunity to participate in the spring hunt and would participate if offered next year.

1998-99 SNOW GOOSE SURVEY COMMENTS

Snow Goose Season

- *Too late/most of the snow geese had left IL by the time extended season arrived
- *Hunt dates need to be as broad as possible to ensure availability when flock goes through
- *Snows were all gone by March 10th/during March no snow geese in our area
- *Very few snows over Lake, McHenry, Kane, and Dupage counties
- *Early season I saw 1 flock then after 1st snow I saw around 2 or 3 hundred flying high heading south
- * changes in season dates for the central szone need to be strongly considered

Total=9

Duck and Canada Goose Season

- *would like split season.
- *lengthen, split or move to later time - Northern Quota Zone
- *extend resident Canada goose season
- *favor special hunt at State Parks or Preserve District
- *Southern & Rend Lake Quota Zones allowed above and beyond quota, while Northern Zone is closed.
- *Why let a few Chicago Suburbs shoot the entire Northern Zone geese quota

Total = 8

Regulations

- *electronic calls - in favor of = 5
- *unplugged guns - in favor of =2
- *multi-state license - in favor of = 2
- *favors no bag limit-2
- *support live decoys-1
- *support hunting over baited fields-1
- *Federal Duck Stamp - Should only have to purchase one, not one for each state=1

Total=14

Hunting Access

- *no access to snow geese in this area
- *need public hunting area in NE IL
- *open portion of reserve to hunting
- *need suitable hunting site reasonable distance from Vermilion county
- *farmers should put markers in private fields if you can hunt
- *open portions of the reserve to hunting/change sites everyday

Total=5

Wildlife Management

- *snow Goose population is mismanaged
- *major problem in Rend Lake area
- *population has increased-If we are going to take care of this problem there needs to be more time to kill the geese
- *too many new laws every year at Crab Orchard
- *shooting is limited from blinds only
- *to help control the snow goose population the eggs should be shaken and put back in the nest
- *keep up the good work/special season is good-first step in managing population
- *we have more of an open door to non-residents than they do us
- * multi state license - good idea

Total=11

Hunting Information

- *need to get information out to hunters - 2
- *publish rules when you set seasons
- *very little information was put out about dates, shooting hours, etc
- *need information on places to hunt, statistics, population, etc
- *would like to help harvest snow geese but don't know where to find them
- *need to know when the geese are in and where the best place is to hunt at
- *need to learn methods of calling & killing snow geese
- *advertise public areas which are hot spots for snow geese
- *not clear about regulations for snow geese hunting on Rend Lake

Total = 10