

# Northeast Zone Season Summary



Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation

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The updated 60-day duck season format for the Northeast Zone (NEZ) will be used for three years spanning the 2024-25 to 2026-27 seasons. This season structure maximizes the two most important factors influencing waterfowl hunter satisfaction - peak migration and abundance of ducks within the zone during October and November. This season format also reflects the importance that hunters placed on having more opportunity later in the season when ice conditions on smaller water bodies force ducks to concentrate on larger lakes and rivers found in the zone (i.e., St. Lawrence River, Lake Ontario, etc.). Duck hunters want to see lots of ducks; they want to hunt during prime movement periods; and they value opportunity when ducks are concentrated because of local freeze-ups. The new season structure starts a week later than the 2023-24 season which still provides early season hunting and closes in late December.

The first split will start on the second Saturday in October and run a straight 51 days. The season will close at or near the end of November and then reopen for 9 days in mid-December and run through the Sunday before Christmas.

First Split Open	First Split Close	Second Split Open	Second Split Close
10/12/2024	12/1/2024	12/14/2024	12/22/2024
10/11/2025	11/30/2025	12/13/2025	12/21/2025
10/10/2026	11/29/2026	12/12/2026	12/20/2026

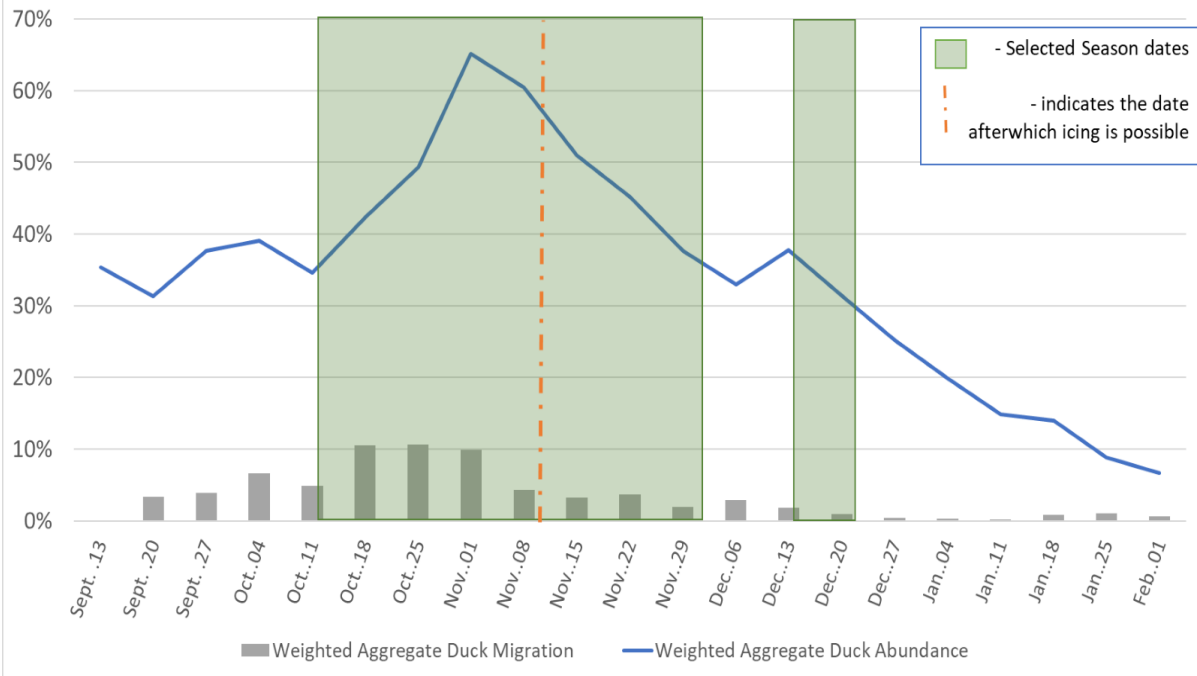
The numbers of days and weekends open to duck hunting per month will vary slightly depending on the calendar year.

- 20-22 days in October (3+ weekends including Columbus Day)
- 30 days in November (4+ weekends including Election Day, Veterans Day, and Thanksgiving)
- 9-10 days in December (2+ weekends)

### Key Points:

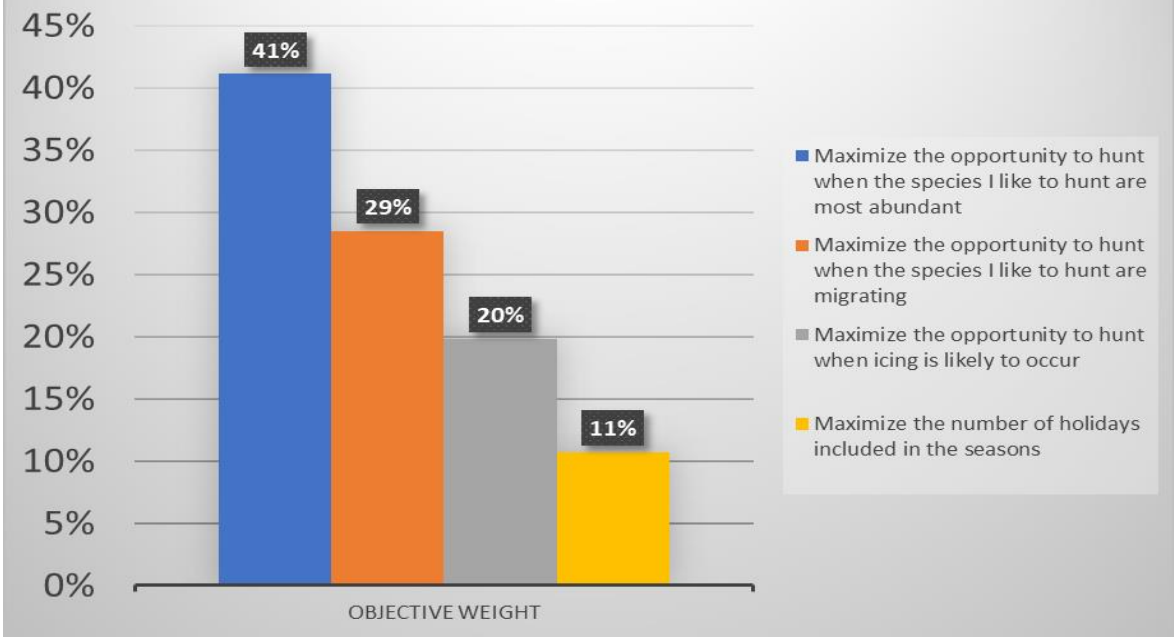
- The four most important ducks in the NEZ continue to be mallard, wood duck, black duck, and green-winged teal. The least important ducks were diving ducks and sea ducks.
- The later opening day captures the increase in immigration and abundance of the most desired puddle duck species like green-winged teal, mallard, pintail, and black duck as well as diving duck species like scaup and ringneck duck that are migrating through the zone in late October through November.
- The second split in December will close later in the month allowing hunters to pursue species like mallards, black ducks, and diving ducks on larger lakes and rivers that typically freeze last.
- To maintain an earlier opening day as in past seasons AND create later closing dates, a season format would require a longer closure during the fall that would significantly reduce access to the peak abundances for most species of waterfowl in the zone (Figure 1).

## Northeast Zone Duck Abundance, Migration, Icing, and Season Selection



**Figure 1** – This graph shows the abundance (blue line) and migration (gray bars) of all ducks in the Northeast Zone. Each species is weighted based on its importance to Northeast Zone hunters (i.e., a mallard is nearly 4 times as important as a scoter). The orange dashed line represents the date after which icing is likely to occur on smaller bodies of water in the zone. The green boxes are the selected duck season dates for the zone.

## Northeast Zone Hunter Objective Weights



**Figure 2** - This graph represents the importance of the 4 survey objectives to Northeast Zone Duck Hunters (i.e., 70% of what duck hunters value is based on maximizing abundance and migration of desired species).