

Southeast Zone Season Summary



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

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The updated 60-day duck season format for the Southeast Zone (SEZ) will be used for three years spanning the 2024-25 to 2026-27 seasons. This season structure maximizes weekend opportunities and includes the majority of the holiday days that occur in the fall and early winter, both of which are important for recruitment of youth hunters. It also captures the period of peak abundance for all ducks in the months of November and December and the majority of the migratory movement from October through December, ensuring that new ducks are continually coming into the zone throughout the season. Running the season into late December further provides duck hunters in the Southeast Zone with some opportunity to hunt ducks when icing conditions concentrate them in larger waterbodies like the Hudson River.

With this new season structure, the first split will start on the second Saturday in October and run for 9 days. After a 19-day break, the second split will run from the second Saturday in November (first Saturday in 2026) until the last Sunday in December, providing important opportunities during the holiday periods for duck hunters, especially youths, to get out in the field.

First Split Open	First Split Close	Second Split Open	Second Split Close
10/12/2024	10/20/2024	11/09/2024	12/29/2024
10/11/2025	10/19/2025	11/08/2025	12/28/2025
10/10/2026	10/18/2026	11/07/2026	12/27/2026

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

- Nine days in October (two full weekends plus Columbus Day)
- 22-24 days in November (approximately 4 weekends and includes Veterans Day and Thanksgiving)
- 27-29 days in December (4 weekends and includes Christmas and the weekend following Christmas)

Key Points:

- The three most important species in the SEZ continue to be mallard, wood duck, and black duck. The selected dates capture the migration and peak abundance of these species.
- The earlier opening day captures a better part of the wood duck migration and peak abundance levels that may have been missed with a later October opener.
- Weekends and holiday periods were included to provide increased opportunity, especially for youth hunters.
- A trade-off is that the season excludes the very peak migration days for mallards and black ducks that occurs during the last week of October and first week of November.

Southeast Zone Duck Abundance, Migration, Icing, and Season Selection

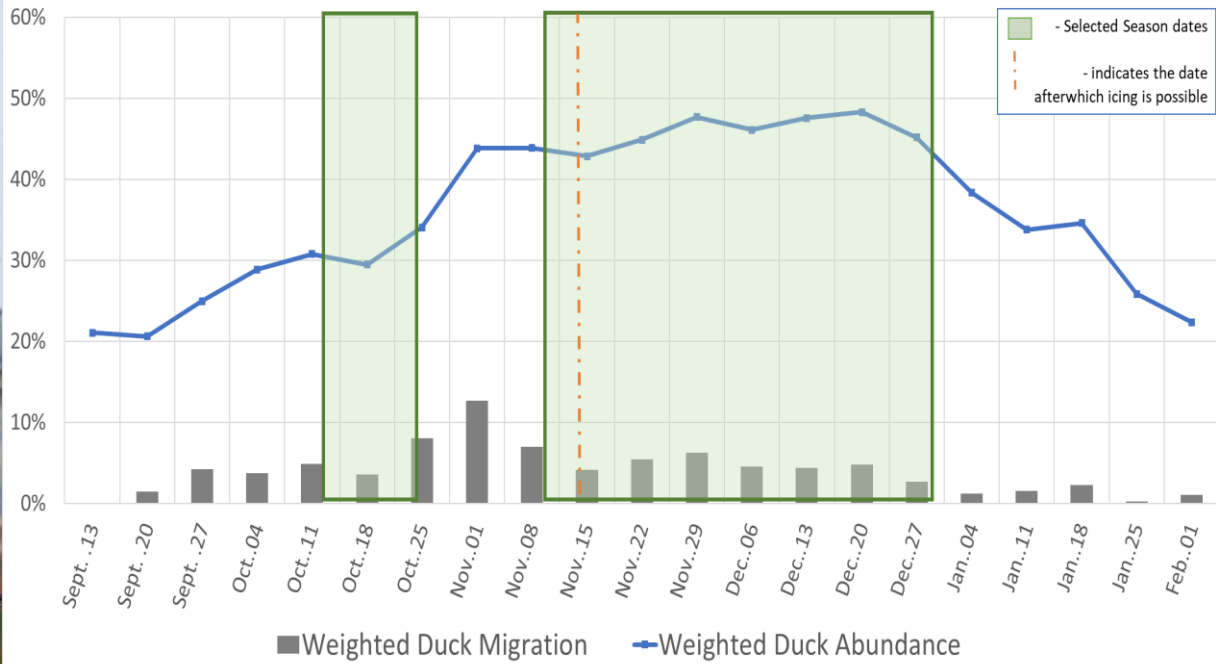


Figure 1 – This graph shows the abundance (blue line) and migration (gray bars) of all ducks in the Southeast Zone. Each species is weighted based on its importance to Southeast Zone hunters (i.e., a mallard is nearly 4 times as important as a scoter). The orange dashed line represents the date after 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.

Southeast Zone Hunter Objective Weights

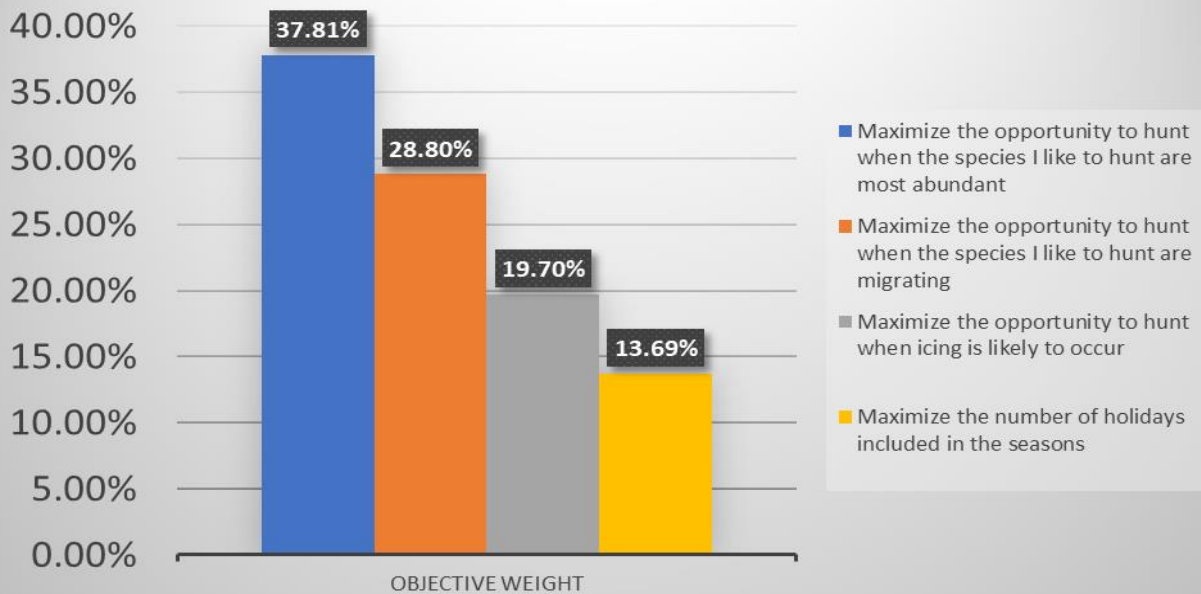


Figure 2 - This graph represents the importance of the 4 survey objectives to Southeast Zone duck hunters (i.e., 65% of what duck hunters value is based on maximizing abundance and migration of desired species)