

SEASONS

As a migratory bird, the mourning dove is regulated by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, as are snipe, ducks, geese, swans, and other migratory birds. Each year the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates the number of mourning doves in the U.S. and establishes dove hunting guidelines accordingly. States such as Ohio, then establish hunting seasons based on these federal guidelines which are established in August each year.

REGULATIONS

- Federal regulations for dove hunters prohibit shotguns that hold more than three shells, live decoys, or baiting.
- In addition, Ohio regulations prohibit shooting doves from wires, utility poles, or buildings.
- Refer to the federal regulations published annually by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the annual Ohio Hunting and Trapping Regulations (Publication 85) for more information.

BAITING

Federal regulations state that “No person shall take migratory game birds by the aid of baiting, or on or over any baited area.” Baiting is defined as “the placing, exposing, depositing, distributing, or scattering of shelled, shucked, or unshucked corn, wheat, or other grain, salt, or other feed so as to constitute for such birds a lure, attraction, or enticement to, on, or over any areas where hunters are attempting to take them....” Areas where these activities have occurred are considered baited and remain so for 10 days following the complete removal of the bait source.

Doves and other migratory game birds, except waterfowl, can be hunted on or over lands where grains, salt, or other feed have been distributed or scattered as the result of bona fide agriculture operations or procedures (these include more than just planting and harvesting). They also can be hunted on or over lands where a crop was grown and manipulated for wildlife management purposes. Crop manipulation, in this case, does not include distributing or scattering grain or feed after it has been removed from or stored on the field where grown. Manipulation for wildlife management purposes, such as hunting, includes tech-

niques like mowing, disking, burning, and dragging down standing crops. Natural vegetation can also be manipulated in this manner.

SAFETY

Dove hunters must be responsible and safe in the field.

- Obtain the landowner’s permission
- Properly identify your target
- Follow established regulations
- Make use of harvested birds

These are all ways that dove hunters can preserve their sport. All hunters should follow basic gun handling rules and obey simple safety guidelines:

- Don’t hunt too close to livestock or occupied buildings
- Don’t shoot across roads
- Don’t shoot at low-flying birds

Hunters — remember it is your responsibility to understand these regulations and know whether or not an area is baited.

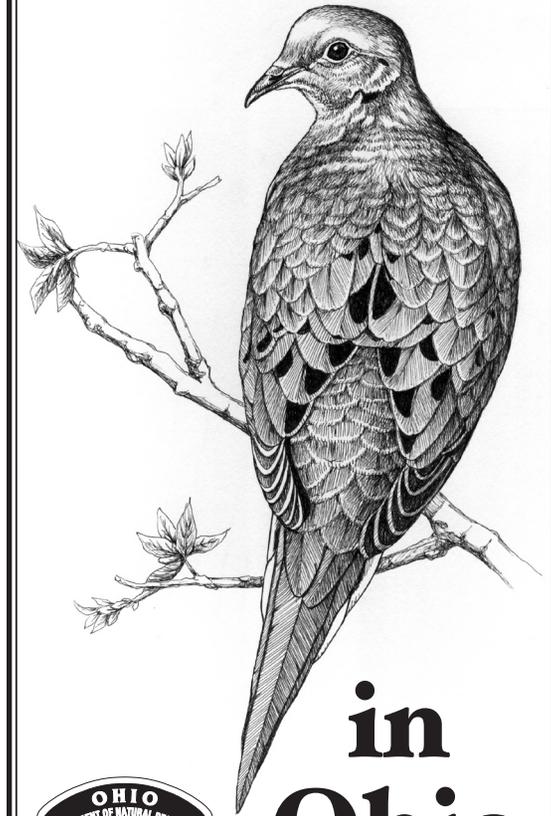
As with all forms of hunting, a safe, responsible, and enjoyable dove hunt is a successful hunt. Hunt fairly, honestly, and safely, and help preserve the future of dove hunting in Ohio.



**FOR INFORMATION ABOUT DOVE
HUNTING CLINICS OR HUNTER
EDUCATION COURSES,
PLEASE CONTACT:**

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Hunting Doves



in
Ohio



Ted Strickland, Governor • Sean D. Logan, Director
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Ranging from Mexico to Canada, and from coast to coast, the mourning dove is the most popular, abundant, and widespread game bird in North America. Its adaptable life-style and high reproductive rate have allowed its population to flourish in both agricultural and urban areas, making it one of the most common birds in Ohio. Biologists estimate that at least four million doves are found in Ohio each fall. Many of these doves are migrants from northern states and move through Ohio during the fall hunting season.

DOVE FACTS	
Ohio's Population	Four to five million average in fall
Life Expectancy	Average 1 to 1½ years
Mating	Monogamous
Peak Nesting Time	April through June
Incubation	14 days
Biotic Potential	Will nest several times per season averaging three to four broods per year
Adult Weight	Three to five ounces
Body Length	12 Inches
Wingspan	16 to 18 inches
Movement	Two-thirds of Ohio's doves migrate in September and October to Gulf Coast states.* One-third of the population is nonmigratory usually staying within a 20-mile radius of their nest.**
*All Gulf Coast states have dove hunting seasons.	
**Ohio's nonmigratory doves live mostly in urban and suburban areas.	

HUNTING TIPS

The mourning dove's fast flight, quick changes in direction, and alert nature make it one of the most challenging game birds to hunt.

- The most successful dove hunters begin their season by scouting possible hunting areas in late August or early September.
- Likely hot spots include recently harvested soybean, corn, hay, or wheat fields.
- A water source nearby will make the area more attractive to doves.
- Hunters should set up along a fencerow or other cover.
- Small blinds may be used to hunt the middle of a field; brush piles, small bushes, or even camouflage clothing may be equally effective.
- Dove hunters often hunt in teams, with individuals distributed around the edge of a field to keep the birds moving.
- While not necessary, the use of dove decoys and calls may improve hunting success late in the season when fewer doves are moving through the state or as doves become more wary.
- Since doves will usually remain in an area until they are frightened away, hunters should try to hunt an area only every other day or so.

EQUIPMENT

Twelve- or 20-gauge shotguns with improved cylinder or modified chokes and a couple of boxes of 7½, 8, or 9 shot shells are the most popular combinations. Smaller shotguns such as .410 and 28-gauge are also suitable, but beginning dove hunters may find these smaller gauges discouraging since they carry fewer shot for harvesting fast-moving doves.

Regardless of which gauge is chosen, hunters should always pattern their guns before the season begins and limit their shots to 40 yards or less. Remember that doves fly faster than most other game birds and even the most seasoned hunters may need to practice on clay targets in order to successfully harvest mourning doves.

IDENTIFICATION

In flight, mourning doves can be identified by their small heads, long pointed tails and wings, and steady wingbeats. Similar-sized birds such as American kestrels (sparrow hawks), killdeers, woodpeckers, and blue jays, have different color patterns than doves and glide for short distances during breaks in the wingbeats. These are all protected birds, and dove hunters must be able to distinguish mourning doves from these and other species before the season begins. Hunters who are in doubt of a shot should let the bird pass and wait for a clearly identifiable and legal target.

CARE AND COOKING OF DOVES

Once a dove is shot, the hunter should quickly recover the bird. The use of a retrieving dog is recommended, but hunters without dogs can effectively retrieve birds by hunting in open areas, limiting shots to one bird, and watching for exactly where the bird falls after the shot. Once retrieved, doves should be cooled as quickly as possible by placing them in the shade with their wings spread open, or in a cooler with ice. If possible, some feathers should be plucked and the entrails removed through a small slit near the underside of the tail. Once home, the birds can easily be plucked by dipping them in hot (not boiling) water with a drop of two of detergent added. Another option is to skin out the breast and discard the skin, feathers, head, and entrails.

Doves are excellent table fare and are most often grilled, broiled, or roasted, with each hunter having a favorite recipe. Plan to have two to four birds per person. Beginning dove hunters can ask veteran hunters or refer to any number of game cookbooks for proven dove recipes.

