

Spring Light Goose Conservation Order

The population of mid-continent light geese (snow, blues, and Ross's geese) experienced an annual growth rate of 5% during the 1980's and 1990's. The primary reasons for this rapid growth are the plentiful supplies of food generated by modern agriculture coupled with the establishment of numerous refuges throughout their migration corridors. The burgeoning population is currently estimated at 15-25 million birds and has destroyed large expanses of Canadian arctic and subarctic coastal habitats, including areas along Hudson Bay, Southampton and Baffin Islands, and the Queen Maude Gulf. These areas are important to not only geese but also shorebirds and ducks. Excessive grubbing and grazing by light geese has resulted in many coastal areas being denuded of vegetative cover and food. The population growth rate needs to be curtailed and the light goose conservation order is an attempt to do just that.

The Arctic Tundra Habitat Emergency Conservation Act was passed by Congress and signed by the President in 1999. This Act put in place the provisions of the conservation order such as spring hunting, unplugged shotguns, hunting ½ hour after sunset and the use of electronic calls. The goal was to harvest enough adult light geese to reduce the population in half. Harvest did increase substantially, but after over 15 years there is still widespread damage in the arctic and light goose populations continue to grow. Light geese have proved extremely resourceful and have adapted to damaged breeding areas by moving inland from degraded coastal areas.

South Dakota, Nebraska, and Texas have led the Central Flyway in harvest during the conservation order. In the Mississippi Flyway the highest harvest occurs in Missouri, Louisiana, and Arkansas.

Comparison of the 2004 - 2014 Conservation Order light goose harvests

Year	<i>Resident Hunters</i>			<i>Nonresident Hunters</i>		
	<i>Number Hunters</i>	<i>Harvest</i>	<i>Total Days Hunted</i>	<i>Number Hunters</i>	<i>Harvest</i>	<i>Total Days Hunted</i>
2004	3,727	52,756	20,169	2,301	37,028	8,907
2005	4,136	71,545	26,427	2,617	44,852	11,161
2006	3,764	51,027	21,767	3,150	48,520	13,262
2007	2,480	39,343	13,323	2,808	57,212	9,970
2008	3,330	45,995	18,925	3,271	61,142	12,406
2009	2,895	38,184	15,173	3,621	78,765	15,063
2010	1,762	18,223	7,883	2,884	34,325	10,486
2011	2,503	33,569	15,600	3,617	77,786	26,766
2012	2,324	37,655	13,885	2,494	70,703	16,538
2013	3,166	53,571	15,502	4,142	114,926	15,856
2014	2,159	41,386	11,832	4,514	107,730	17,949