

# Get HIP!



Black Duck

The road to obtaining **CRUCIAL DATA** on **MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS** begins with a **FEW SIMPLE QUESTIONS** asked of hunters.

Written by

**JOE FULLER**

Photographed by

**E. EUGENE HESTER**

**T**his isn't a plea from your teenager to be a cool parent, but rather a reminder to get HIP in order to hunt migratory game birds. HIP certification is required to hunt all migratory game birds, including doves, rails, woodcock, ducks and geese. Although most hunters are aware of HIP, they may not understand why it's needed or some of the uses of the data generated from the program.

First, some background: HIP stands for Harvest Information Program. The cooperative program, administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and state agencies, began in 1999. It is the principal means used to generate estimates of migratory bird hunter activity and harvest. That information is critical to make sound, informed decisions regarding hunting season regulations and population management.

Fish and Wildlife and various state agencies have a long history of surveys to determine levels of hunting activity and harvest, and these surveys have proved useful especially for some species and for individual state purposes. In fact, Fish and Wildlife, through a survey of federal duck stamp buyers, was able to generate estimates of waterfowl hunting activity and harvest for nearly 40 years prior to HIP implementation. However, nationwide estimates of hunting activity for non-waterfowl species (doves, woodcock, rails, etc.) were for the most part completely lacking, and individual state surveys for these species could not simply be combined to provide reasonable results. The need for better information for these species, as well as a revamping of overall survey protocols, provided the impetus for the new survey program called HIP.

## HOW IT WORKS

Each year, states collect the names and addresses of all migratory game bird hunters and send this information to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Division of Migratory Bird Management's Harvest Surveys Section. Fish and Wildlife then selects a sample of these hunters to send more in-depth surveys. The responses to these follow-up surveys provide the information to estimate harvest and hunter activity on state and national levels.

States may use a variety of means to register hunters in the HIP program, including sign-up through the Internet, license agents and telephone or mail questionnaires. Currently the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission allows HIP registration directly through license agents and mails questionnaires to lifetime license holders.

If you plan to hunt migratory game birds during the upcoming year, please inform your license agent that you wish to be HIP certified. The license agent will then ask you a series of screening questions regarding your hunting experiences during the previous hunting season. You will be asked if you hunted ducks, doves, woodcock and other migratory game birds. Several additional questions will address in general terms how many birds you harvested for selected species.

One very common misconception regarding HIP is that the screening questions themselves are used to provide estimates of harvest. They are not. The purpose of the screening questions is to identify which species you are likely to hunt so that, if selected, you will be placed in an appropriate

**Waterfowl Hunting Record**

1. IF YOU DID NOT HUNT DUCKS, GEESE, OR BENT THIS SEASON, please check the box to the right and mail this form.

2. Please record your personal hunting activity for each day you hunted ducks, geese, or bent in the State specified in the attached letter. Record the number of birds you personally bagged. DO NOT include birds shot by other people. Please include ALL of your hunts for the birds listed. If you did not bag any birds during a hunt, record zero (0) for the birds you hunted that day.

3. IF YOU HUNTED DUCKS, GEESE, OR BENT BUT DO NOT HAVE DETAILED RECORDS, check the box to the right and go to question number 6 to record your Season Totals.

4. Please include additional comments on a SEPARATE SHEET of paper.

Please print all characters in BLACK ink using CAPITAL LETTERS ONLY as shown below:  
 ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ 0123456789

Date of Hunt: \_\_\_\_\_ State of Hunt: \_\_\_\_\_ No. Ducks: \_\_\_\_\_ No. Geese: \_\_\_\_\_ Bent: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Birds Killed and Retrieved: \_\_\_\_\_

**Dove and Band-Tailed Pigeon Hunting Record**

1. IF YOU DID NOT HUNT DOVES OR BAND-TAILED PIGEONS THIS SEASON, check the box to the right and mail this form.

2. Please record your personal hunting activity for each day you hunted doves or band-tailed pigeons in the State specified in the attached letter. Record the number of birds you personally bagged. DO NOT include birds shot by other people. Please include ALL of your hunts for the birds listed. If you did not bag any birds during a hunt, record zero (0) for the birds you hunted that day.

3. IF YOU HUNTED DOVES OR BAND-TAILED PIGEONS BUT DO NOT HAVE DETAILED RECORDS, check the box to the right and go to question number 6 to record your Season Totals.

4. Please include additional comments on a SEPARATE SHEET of paper.

Please print all characters in BLACK ink using CAPITAL LETTERS ONLY as shown below:  
 ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ 0123456789

Date of Hunt: \_\_\_\_\_ State of Hunt: \_\_\_\_\_ Mourning Doves: \_\_\_\_\_ White-Winged Doves: \_\_\_\_\_ Band-Tailed Pigeons: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Birds Killed and Retrieved: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Season Totals:

	Days Hunted	Birds Killed and Retrieved	Birds Downed but Lost
Mourning Doves			
White-Winged Doves			
Band-Tailed Pigeons			

Please call 1-800-327-BAND to report banded birds.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service selects some HIP-certified hunters each year to fill out more detailed questionnaires.

category for additional, in-depth surveys. For example, those people who identify themselves as dove hunters only may receive an additional survey regarding their dove hunting but are not likely to receive a survey for waterfowl or other species.

Additional harvest surveys are sent to hunters nationwide in order to provide state and national harvest estimates for ducks, geese, doves, woodcock, coots, snipe, rails and gallinule. This provides not only an estimate of actual harvest but also estimates of hunter numbers, total days afield and average seasonal take per hunter. For the program to achieve a representative sample of hunters, all hunters have a chance of being surveyed, regardless of what point during the year they become HIP certified or whether they harvested no, few or many birds the previous year.

Waterfowl hunters may question how harvest estimates are derived for individual species of ducks and geese. Fish and Wildlife's separate Parts Collection Survey provides this information. A number of waterfowl hunters supplied from HIP certification are selected each year and asked to submit wings from harvested ducks and wing tips and tail feathers from harvested geese. At the end of the hunting season, state and federal biologists examine each of the wings and tail feathers to determine species, age and sex of each harvested bird. This information, combined with the overall duck and goose harvest estimate, provides the species-specific harvest estimate. Although many waterfowl hunters know about this "wing survey," Fish and Wildlife also conducts several additional wing surveys for woodcock, rails and doves. Wing surveys for woodcock and doves are especially useful in determining annual recruitment or the number of new individuals entering the population.

Even with HIP certification and follow-up surveys, harvest and hunter-effort

AVERAGE NUMBER OF HARVEST SURVEYS RETURNED FROM HUNTERS ANNUALLY		
	North Carolina	Nationwide
ducks and geese	450	28,000
dove	500	20,000
woodcock	250	7,000
rail, snipe, gallinule, coot	130	10,000

2005 HARVEST ESTIMATES FOR N.C. AND THE U.S. OBTAINED THROUGH HIP HARVEST SURVEYS				
	North Carolina		Nationwide	
	harvest	hunters	harvest	hunters
ducks	271,700	24,800	12,510,800	988,400
canada geese	73,200	19,800	2,655,730	728,200
mourning dove	741,800	46,000	22,149,900	1,144,900
woodcock	1,800	1,800	297,200	118,050
rail	0*	0*	53,600	9,700
snipe	800	300	120,700	28,150

\*The harvest and active-hunter estimates for rails were 0. This is because no one who agreed to participate in the rail survey reported hunting rails or harvesting any for the 2005 season.

## COMMON QUESTIONS REGARDING HIP

### Isn't HIP required just for waterfowl hunting?

HIP certification is required for hunting all migratory game birds, including all waterfowl, doves, woodcock, rails, gallinules, coots and snipe.

### Do I have to get HIP certified in other states where I plan to hunt migratory game birds?

Yes, HIP certification is required for each state in which you hunt migratory game birds. If you're HIP certified in North Carolina but plan to hunt in Virginia, you must be HIP certified there also.

### How much does HIP certification cost?

In North Carolina, HIP certification is free of charge; however, other states may charge a small fee.

### Do I have to sign up for HIP when I purchase my license?

No, you can be HIP certified at any time, even if you have previously purchased your license.

### How are the screening questions I answered during HIP sign-up used to estimate the harvest of various species?

The screening questions you answered are not used to generate estimates of harvest. They are simply a means to identify you as a migratory game bird hunter and place you in a pool of hunters who may be selected at a later date for additional in-depth surveys.

### Do I have to participate in the additional hunter surveys or the various Parts Collection Surveys?

No, participation in these surveys is voluntary, but we urge you to take part.

### My license says that I am HIP certified, but I didn't get asked any of the questions. Am I really HIP certified, and can I be selected for additional harvest surveys?

If your license indicates HIP certification, then you are HIP certified according to our records. Occasionally, license agents (for various reasons) may choose not to ask you the questions. However, if at the time you are being HIP certified you are not asked the list of screening questions, we strongly encourage you to remind your license agent of this. Participation in the appropriate additional harvest surveys is contingent upon your proper responses to the screening questions.

## SIMPLIFIED EXAMPLE OF WATERFOWL HARVEST CALCULATION

**Step 1.** Responses to duck harvest survey combined with overall HIP registration indicate 25,000 duck hunters are active in North Carolina. (Note: Active duck hunters are those who reported hunting during the current year, regardless of whether they actually harvested any ducks.)

**Step 2.** Responses to duck harvest survey indicate that each hunter harvested an average of 10 ducks per year.

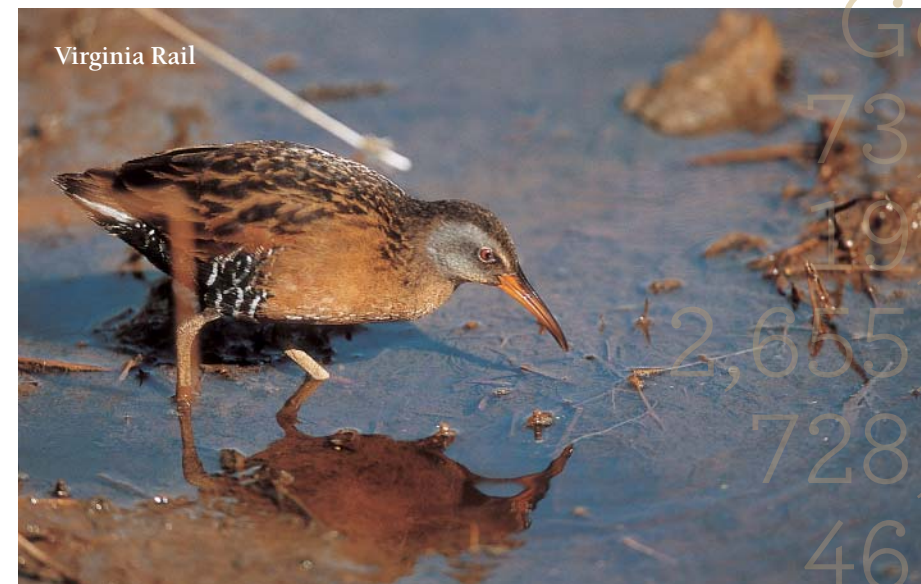
**Step 3.** Multiply 25,000 active duck hunters by an average of 10 ducks harvested per active hunter to get a result of 250,000 ducks harvested in North Carolina.

**Step 4.** Separate waterfowl Parts Collection Survey from North Carolina hunters indicates that 40 percent of returned duck wings come from wood ducks, 30 percent from mallards, 10 percent from lesser scaup, 10 percent from green-winged teal and 5 percent each from wigeon and gadwall.

**Step 5.** Multiply 250,000 by percentage from each species to obtain harvest estimate for each species.

- Wood duck: 250,000 X .40 = 100,000
- Mallard: 250,000 X .30 = 75,000
- Lesser scaup: 250,000 X .10 = 25,000
- Green-winged teal: 250,000 X .10 = 25,000
- Wigeon: 250,000 X .05 = 12,500
- Gadwall: 250,000 X .05 = 12,500

**Total: 250,000 duck harvest**



Virginia Rail

Joe Fuller is the migratory game bird coordinator for the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission.