

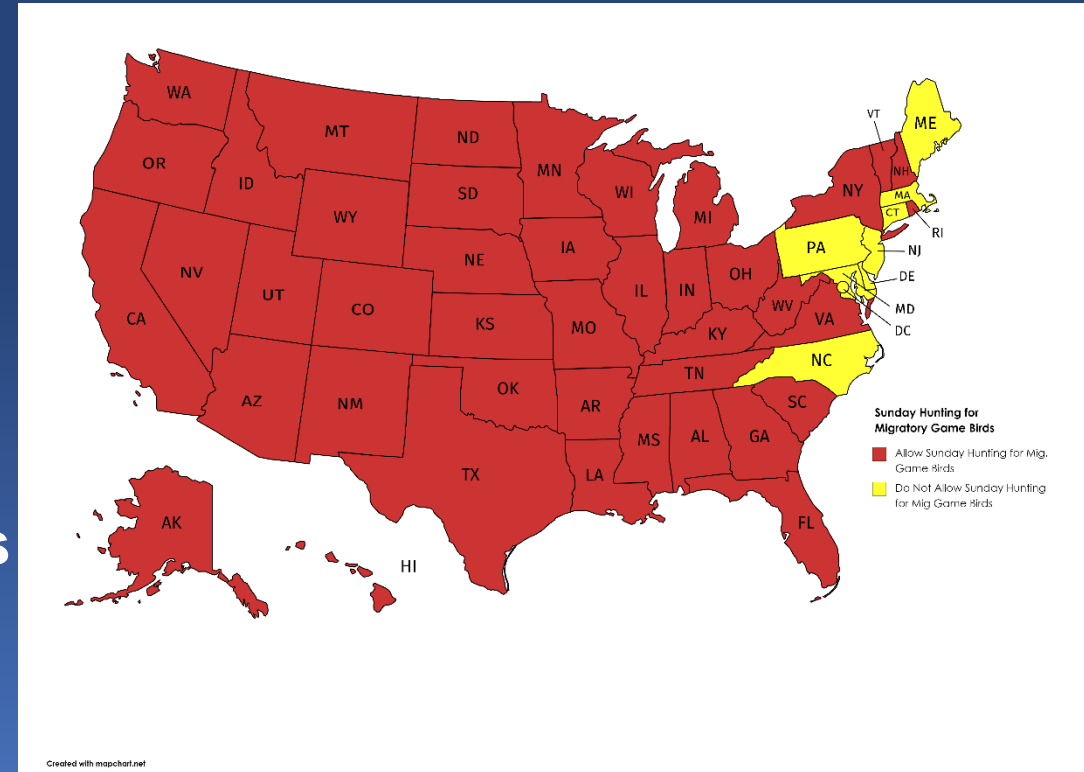
History of Sunday Hunting for Migratory Game Birds in Maryland

Presented by Bill Harvey and Josh Homyack



“Blue Laws” Generally Restricted Sunday Hunting

- Puritanical legislation enacted to encourage church service that, in some cases, dates to colonial times.
- In addition to hunting, “blue laws” often prohibited conducting business, tilling fields, consumption of alcoholic beverages, etc.
- Most blue laws have been repealed in modern times but a number of states have retained laws preventing Sunday hunting all or in part.
- Currently 42 states allow Sunday hunting for migratory game birds



Current Sunday Hunting Situation in the U. S.

- The number of states with laws prohibiting Sunday hunting continues to decrease. Most recently Virginia removed most prohibitions on Sunday Hunting for migratory game birds.
- However this number is constantly changing and includes, among other things, restrictions on certain species, geographic areas, weapon type and varies greatly by state.
- Currently only a few states prohibit all Sunday hunting with most having no restrictions and a few, like Maryland, have a mixture of restrictions.



Sunday Hunting in Maryland

- Regulated by law which means DNR does not have the authority to change without direction (legislation) from the General Assembly.
- In 2004 the Maryland General Assembly amended the NR 10-410 to allow some Sunday hunting for deer (2 days).
- Almost every year since 2004, county delegations have successfully introduced legislation amending NR 10-410 to expand Sunday hunting opportunities across the state.
- There is currently no Sunday hunting opportunity for migratory game birds in Maryland.
- “Why can’t I hunt waterfowl on Sundays?” is one of the most common “asks” from hunters in our annual public comment sessions.



USFWS Stance on Sunday Hunting for Migratory Game Birds

- The Federal Government (USFWS) has consistently regarded Sunday hunting as a state issue. They support Sunday hunting for the additional recreational opportunity it provides.
- USFWS granted compensatory days for waterfowl effective during the 1997-98 hunting season and for webless migratory game birds during the 2016-17 season.
- Prior to the 1997-98 hunting season there were no compensatory days for states that prohibited Sunday hunting. This meant Sundays imbedded in a season or season segment counted as a “hunting day” regardless of any state laws prohibiting Sunday hunting.
- Granting compensatory days allowed states to utilize the full measure of allowable hunting days as annually prescribed in the Federal Frameworks.

Implications for Maryland Hunting Seasons

- The USFWS has said that implementing Sunday hunting for migratory game birds cannot be done piecemeal without the revocation of compensatory days for all migratory game bird seasons.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What happens if MD allows one Sunday for a single migratory game bird species (ex. doves)? The USFWS will not allow states to implement Sunday hunting for some species (doves in this example) and retain compensatory days for the other species not being hunted on Sundays.
2. What if individual counties restrict Sunday for migratory birds? Those counties would lose Sundays as hunting days. Compensatory days will not be granted to geographic regions within states.
3. What if MD revokes Sunday hunting at some point in the future. The USFWS has said that if a state begins Sunday hunting for migratory game birds but some years down the road restricts migratory game bird hunting on Sunday, they will NOT grandfather compensatory days for that state.
4. Will Sunday hunting change the amount of hunting days we are allowed? Under either scenario, with, or without Sunday hunting, MD is granted the same amount of hunting days under the Federal Frameworks.
5. Will Sunday hunting change the number of days in each season segment? Every year, MD DNR hosts a public comment session to discuss the layout of migratory game bird seasons and that process will continue. Sunday hunting will effectively compress the seasons and may warrant moving days for some species to meet hunter preference for more days later in the season.