

years. Call-Count Surveys conducted in Washington showed a significant increase during 1998–02 and a nonsignificant increase during 1975–02. According to Harvest Information Program (HIP) surveys, approximately 9,600 pigeons were taken during the 2002–03 season. The Interior band-tailed pigeon population is stable with no trend indicated by the BBS over the short-or long-term periods. An estimated 3,700 birds were taken in 2002–03.

Analyses of Mourning Dove Call-Count Survey data over the most recent 10 years indicated no trend in doves heard in any Management Unit. Between 1966 and 2003, all 3 Units exhibited significant declines. In contrast, for doves seen over the 10-year period, a significant increase was found in the Eastern Unit while no trends were found in the Central and Western Units. Over 38 years, no trend was found for doves seen in the Eastern and Central Units while a decline was indicated for the Western Unit. HIP surveys indicated that about 22,700,000 mourning doves were bagged nationwide during the 2002–03 season.

In Arizona, the white-winged dove population has shown a significant decline between 1962 and 2003. However, the number of whitewings has been fairly stable since the 1970s and, over the most recent 10 years, there is no significant trend indicated. The 2002 harvest estimate from the HIP survey was 102,700. In Texas, the range and density of white-winged doves continue to expand. In 2003, the whitewing population in Texas was estimated to be 2,525,000 birds, an increase of 8.4 percent from 2002. A more inclusive count in San Antonio documented more than 1.3 million birds. HIP surveys indicated a harvest of 943,000 whitewings during the 2002–03 season. The expansion of whitewings northward and eastward from Texas has led to reports of nesting in Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Missouri. They have been sighted in Colorado, Montana, Nebraska, Iowa, and Minnesota. Whitewings are believed to be expanding northward from Florida and have been seen in Georgia, the Carolinas, and Pennsylvania.

White-tipped doves are maintaining a relatively stable population in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. They are most abundant in cities and, for the most part, are not available to hunting. The 2003 survey averaged 0.95 birds per stop, a 2 percent decrease over the 2002 survey. During the special 4-day whitewing season, about 2,700 whitetips were bagged, according to State harvest-survey estimates.

Hunting Season Proposals From Indian Tribes and Organizations

For the 2003–04 hunting season, we received requests from 24 Tribes and Indian organizations. We actively solicit regulatory proposals from other tribal groups that are interested in working cooperatively for the benefit of waterfowl and other migratory game birds. We encourage Tribes to work with us to develop agreements for management of migratory bird resources on tribal lands. It should be noted that this proposed rule includes generalized regulations for both early- and late-season hunting. A final rule will be published in a mid-August 2003 **Federal Register** that will include tribal regulations for the early-hunting season.

The early season generally begins on September 1 each year and most commonly includes such species as American woodcock, sandhill cranes, mourning doves, and white-winged doves. A final rule will also be published in a September 2003 **Federal Register** that will include regulations for late-season hunting. The late season begins on or around September 24 and most commonly includes waterfowl species.

In this current rulemaking, because of the compressed timeframe for establishing regulations for Indian Tribes and because final frameworks dates and other specific information are not available, the regulations for many tribal hunting seasons are described in relation to the season dates, season length, and limits that will be permitted when final Federal frameworks are announced for early- and late-season regulations. For example, daily bag and possession limits for ducks on some areas are shown as “Same as permitted in Pacific Flyway States under final Federal frameworks,” and limits for geese will be shown as the same permitted by the State(s) in which the tribal hunting area is located.

The proposed frameworks for early-season regulations were published in the **Federal Register** on July 17, 2003 (68 FR 42546); early-season final frameworks will be published in mid-August. Proposed late-season frameworks for waterfowl and coots will be published in mid-August, and the final frameworks for the late seasons will be published in mid-September. We will notify affected Tribes of season dates, bag limits, etc., as soon as final frameworks are established. As previously discussed, no action is required by Tribes wishing to observe migratory bird hunting regulations established by the State(s) where they are located. The proposed regulations

for the 24 Tribes that have submitted proposals that meet the established criteria and an additional 4 Tribes from whom we expect to receive proposals are shown below.

(a) Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, Nett Lake, Minnesota (Tribal Members and Non-tribal Hunters)

The Bois Forte Band of Chippewa is located in northern Minnesota, as specified in **Federal Register** 66, No., 83. Bois Forte is a 103,000-acre land area, home to 800 Band members. The reservation includes Nett Lake, a 7,400-acre wild rice lake.

In their 2003–04 proposal, dated June 14, 2003, Bois Forte requested the authority to establish a waterfowl season on their reservation. The season would be the same as that established by the State of Minnesota, except that shooting hours on opening day would be one-half hour before sunrise to sunset. Harvest under their proposal would not alter possession limits or species allowances already in place in Minnesota. Bois Forte requests these hours on opening day and for every hunting day for the remainder of the State's official, established season.

Bag limits for non-tribal hunters will not be changed from current, State of Minnesota established levels. Bois Forte requires non-tribal persons hunting on Nett Lake on the first day of the season to complete a survey upon completion of the day's hunting requesting: (1) Name and contact information; (2) hunting permit number (State and tribal); (3) number of hours hunted; (4) location of hunting site; (5) tribal guide name; (6) number and species of waterfowl harvested in possession; and (7) number and species of waterfowl shot but not recovered. Bois Forte will collect the results and compare to previous seasons' data.

Harvest information from the 2002–03 migratory bird season included harvest of 1,000 ducks. Of these 1,000 taken, 700 were ring-neck ducks, 150 were blue/green-winged teal, and 150 were mallards. They had 216 hunters, similar to levels in the past.

The Band's Conservation Department regulates non-tribal harvest limits under the following regulations: (1) Non-tribal hunters must be accompanied at all times by a Band Member guide; (2) non-tribal hunters must have in their possession a valid small game hunting license, a Federal migratory waterfowl stamp, and a Minnesota State waterfowl stamp; (3) non-tribal hunters and Band Members must have only Service-approved non-toxic shot in possession at all times; (4) non-tribal hunters must conform to possession limits established