



# MOURNING DOVES

BIRD ID

SEASON INFORMATION

HUNTING TIPS

Starting in 2011, Iowa will offer a hunting season for mourning doves. Dove hunting provides an opportunity for hunters of any age or experience level to participate. An enjoyable hunt only requires simple equipment and moderate physical activity.

Mourning doves are the most abundant game bird in the United States, and can be found in all 99 Iowa counties. Highest populations are in the Loess Hills and southern three tiers of counties.

## BIRD IDENTIFICATION

Light brownish-gray in color, mourning doves have small heads, elliptical wings, long-tapered tails and fly with steady wing beats. Doves have a lifespan of 12-18 months, preferring open farm, prairie and grass habitats.

Mourning doves are similar in size to blue jays, American kestrels and killdeers, which all have distinct color and flight patterns. Because dove hunting can take



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place in reduced light conditions, it's very important to identify each bird by silhouette and flight characteristics before firing. Eurasian collared-doves are very similar in appearance to mourning doves

but have a distinctive mark or "collar" on their neck, and are somewhat larger in size. Collared-doves can be legally taken during the dove season and count toward the bag limit.

## IOWA MOURNING DOVE SEASON INFORMATION

Dove hunting and HIP registration details will be in *Iowa Migratory Game Bird Hunting* regulations, online and from retailers in August.



Illinois DNR

SEASON DATES:	September 1 - November 29
SHOOTING HOURS:	One-half hour before sunrise to sunset
SHOT:	Lead shot maybe used, except in public wildlife areas designated as nontoxic shot only
BAG LIMITS:	Daily limit of 15, possession limit of 45
LOCATIONS:	Entire state is open to hunting
LICENSE AND FEES:	Small game license and habitat fee

### FEDERAL MIGRATORY GAME LAW REQUIREMENTS:

- Must register with the Harvest Information Program (HIP) prior to hunting
- Shotgun must be plugged to hold no more than three shells
- Hunters cannot use live birds as decoys
- No recorded or electronically amplified bird calls, imitations or sounds
- No hunting over baited areas

## HUNTING TIPS

### GUN CHOICE:

Any gauge or type of shotgun will work well for doves, but 20 and 12 gauges are most popular. Because shooting typically takes place on open fields at distances of 35 yards or less, an open- to moderate-choke will increase a shooter's chance of success. Skilled hunters setting up in pass-shooting situations may prefer tighter choke constrictions.

Because mourning doves fly quickly and erratically, knowing how your shotgun patterns, and practicing with clay targets prior to the season will improve your hunt. Shooter skill level is an important component to a successful hunt.

### AMMO CHOICE:

Lead shot may be used for mourning dove hunting in Iowa. Light hunting loads with 3/4, 7/8, 1, or 1-1/8 ounces of shot are adequate for dove hunting. Ammunition loaded with steel shot in size #6 or #7, or lead shot in #7½ or #8 are excellent choices. Due to growing concern about the impacts of lead in the environment, the DNR encourages the use of nontoxic shot. Nontoxic shot is required in designated public wildlife areas.

### WHEN TO HUNT:

Doves will migrate through an area based on weather conditions. Doves are more active in mornings and evenings — often the best time to hunt. Hunters can locate good areas to hunt by scouting and observing where doves are flying to food or water sources.



Missouri Department of Conservation

## WHERE TO HUNT DOVES IN IOWA:



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Mourning doves prefer feeding on open ground and eat a variety of seeds and grains. Look for doves:

- Near low-standing or harvested crops mixed with bare soil areas or along field edges.
- Near pastures, recently mown native grass areas or hayfields, sunflower fields and newly seeded CRP lands with areas of bare or open ground.
- Near watering holes with bare shorelines.

Many DNR wildlife management areas have established plantings that will attract doves, including sunflowers, corn, wheat, and weed patches along crop fields. Please visit the DNR's website: [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov) under "Hunting" for a listing of public wildlife areas with plantings for mourning doves.

Because doves have excellent eyesight, wear camouflage clothing and consider hunting from a blind or place of concealment. Do not disturb or scatter grain or seeds while trying to conceal yourself.

Remember, baiting doves is illegal, so spreading feed or broadcasting seeds outside of typical agricultural practices is not allowed.

## SAFETY AND ETIQUETTE:

- Be courteous and careful when hunting near other hunters, especially on public areas.
- Do not set up too close to other groups.
- While blaze orange is not required, wear an orange cap while walking to and from the field.
- Do not load firearms until at your hunting site.
- Always be aware of what is beyond a bird before you shoot.
- Clean birds in the field away from parking lots.
- Carry out any trash including empty shells.
- Always ask permission to hunt on private lands.

FOR MORE INFORMATION  
on where to hunt in your local area,  
contact your regional DNR wildlife biologist.