

Oklahoma Dove Hunting Guide



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Oklahoma is a prime destination for dove hunting enthusiasts, offering a variety of habitats and favorable conditions that attract these migratory birds each season. With its expansive fields, agricultural lands, and abundant natural resources, the state provides hunters with excellent opportunities to enjoy this popular outdoor activity. This guide will walk you through everything you need to know about dove hunting in Oklahoma, including the best locations, regulations, tips for success, and the essential gear you'll need to make your hunting experience enjoyable and productive.

Understanding Dove Species in Oklahoma

Before heading out into the field, it's important to familiarize yourself with the species of dove you are likely to encounter in Oklahoma. The most common types include:

- Mourning Dove: The most prevalent species, known for its soft cooing and slender body. Mourning doves are typically grayish-brown with a long tail and are found in open fields and near water sources.
- White-winged Dove: Slightly larger than the mourning dove, the white-winged dove has distinctive white wing edges and is often found in urban areas and near fruit-bearing trees.
- Eurasian Collared-Dove: This species is recognizable by its black "collar" on the back of its neck and is becoming increasingly common in Oklahoma.

Understanding these species will help you identify your target and ensure that you are hunting legally and ethically.

Dove Hunting Seasons and Regulations

Hunting seasons and regulations can vary from year to year, so it is vital to check the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) website for the most current information. Generally, the dove hunting season in Oklahoma is divided into three segments:

1. Early Season: Typically runs from mid-September to early October.
2. Regular Season: Usually starts in late October and goes through early November.
3. Late Season: Often extends from late December to early January.

Key Regulations to Remember:

- Licensing: All hunters must possess a valid Oklahoma hunting license and a migratory bird permit.
- Bag Limits: The daily bag limit is 15 doves, with a possession limit of 45.
- Hunting Hours: Shooting hours typically begin half an hour before sunrise and end half an hour after sunset.
- Prohibited Areas: Avoid hunting in restricted areas, such as state parks or private lands without permission.

Always consult the latest regulations to ensure compliance and promote sustainable hunting practices.

Choosing the Right Location

One of the keys to successful dove hunting is selecting the right location. In Oklahoma, several areas are known for their dove populations:

Public Hunting Areas

1. Oklahoma Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs): Many WMAs are open to dove hunting during the season. These areas are often managed specifically for wildlife and can provide excellent opportunities for hunters.
2. State Parks: Some Oklahoma state parks allow dove hunting; however, it's crucial to check specific regulations for each park.
3. Federal Refuges: Certain federal wildlife refuges may also have designated hunting zones.

Private Land

- Agricultural Fields: Doves are attracted to fields of sunflowers, milo, and corn, especially during harvest time. Seek permission from landowners to hunt in these productive areas.
- Water Sources: Doves need water and often frequent ponds or lakes. Setting up near these sources can yield great results.
- Natural Roosting Areas: Look for areas with trees or power lines where doves typically roost. These spots can provide excellent vantage points for hunting.

Essential Gear for Dove Hunting

Having the right gear is essential for a successful dove hunting trip. Here's a checklist of the equipment and supplies you should consider bringing:

Firearms and Ammunition

- Shotgun: A 12-gauge or 20-gauge shotgun is commonly used for dove hunting. Semi-automatic and pump-action shotguns are popular choices.
- Ammunition: Use shotshells with 7.5 to 9 shot sizes for optimal performance. Steel shot is required in some areas, so check local regulations.

Clothing and Accessories

- Camouflage Clothing: Wear lightweight, breathable, and camouflaged clothing to blend into the environment.
- Hat and Sunglasses: Protect yourself from the sun and improve visibility while hunting.
- Hearing Protection: Consider using earplugs or earmuffs to protect your hearing from gunfire.

Hunting Gear

- Field Bag: A sturdy bag to carry your gear, food, and drinks.
- Decoys: While not always necessary, decoys can attract doves and increase your chances of a successful hunt.
- Chair or Blanket: A comfortable place to sit while waiting for doves to arrive.

Tips for Successful Dove Hunting

To enhance your hunting experience, consider the following tips:

1. Scout Ahead: Spend time observing dove activity in your chosen area before the hunting season. Look for feeding patterns and roosting sites.
2. Be Patient: Doves can be unpredictable, so patience is key. Wait quietly and be ready to take your shot when the opportunity arises.
3. Practice Shooting: Before the season begins, practice your shooting skills at a local range. Focus on quick shots, as doves can be fast movers.
4. Hunt with a Buddy: Not only is hunting more enjoyable with friends, but having an extra set of eyes can help spot birds and improve safety.
5. Stay Hydrated and Energized: Bring plenty of water and snacks to keep your energy up during long hours in the field.

Post-Hunt Considerations

After your hunt, it's important to follow proper procedures:

- Field Dressing: Clean and prepare your doves as soon as possible to ensure freshness. Use a knife to carefully remove the feathers, entrails, and other inedible parts.
- Storage: Store harvested doves in a cooler with ice until you can process them further or transport them home.
- Cooking: Dove meat is tender and flavorful. Consider marinating and grilling them for a delicious meal.

Conclusion

Oklahoma offers a wealth of opportunities for dove hunting, from its diverse habitats to the thrill of the hunt. By understanding the species, regulations, and best practices, you can enhance your experience and enjoy a successful outing. Whether you are a novice or an experienced hunter, the excitement of pursuing doves in the Oklahoma landscape is an adventure worth taking. Gather your gear, respect the environment, and make memories that will last a lifetime in the beautiful outdoors of Oklahoma.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the best times of year for dove hunting in Oklahoma?

The best times for dove hunting in Oklahoma are typically during the early fall, specifically from late September to early October, coinciding with the migratory patterns of doves.

What licenses and permits do I need for dove hunting in Oklahoma?

In Oklahoma, hunters need a valid Oklahoma hunting license and a federal migratory bird hunting stamp. Additionally, a state migratory bird license is required to hunt doves.

What are some recommended locations for dove hunting in Oklahoma?

Popular locations for dove hunting in Oklahoma include the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's public hunting areas, private farms, and fields with sunflower or millet crops.

What types of equipment are essential for dove hunting?

Essential equipment for dove hunting includes a shotgun (typically 12 or 20 gauge), non-toxic shotgun shells, a hunting vest for carrying supplies, and appropriate camouflage clothing.

Are there any specific regulations for dove hunting in Oklahoma?

Yes, hunters must adhere to regulations such as daily bag limits, shooting hours, and designated hunting areas. It is important to consult the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation for the latest regulations.

What techniques can improve my success in dove hunting?

To improve your success in dove hunting, consider using decoys, setting up near feeding areas or water sources, and practicing your shooting skills beforehand to enhance accuracy.

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