

Game Commission proposes season changes

HARRISBURG — A closed season on bobwhite quail, new turkey management units and increased allocations of antlerless deer licenses highlight the Game Commission's proposals for 1981-82 hunting and trapping seasons and bag limits.

A previously-advanced proposal which would have required drawings to be held for all antlerless deer licenses has been eliminated.

Under season proposals, the archery deer season would begin on October 3 and end on October 30. The early small game season would open on October 17, and the regular small game season would start on October 31. The fall small game seasons would end on November 28.

A one-day bear season has been proposed for November 23. The regular two-week antlered deer season would open November 30 and end on December 12, while a two-day antlerless deer season has been proposed for December 14 and 15.

The late archery and flintlock deer season is proposed to open December 26 and close on January 2, while the winter small game season would open December 26 and close on January 9.

Proposed trapping seasons and bag limits are pretty much in line with those of recent years.

The closing of the quail season, if adopted, would be the first since 1953. Southern Pennsylvania is the northern fringe of the quail's natural range, and recent hard winters and farming practices have reduced the bobwhite population in the Keystone State to a level that a hunting harvest is not warranted this year.

Closure of the quail season may allow the bird to increase in numbers where habitat is adequate. This could allow the launching of a trap and transfer program to establish additional populations.

In addition, closure of the quail hunting season would provide additional protection for recently stocked Hungarian partridges.

Formation of three new turkey management units will provide the Game Commission with an opportunity to better control harvests of the state's largest game bird.

Included in the primary turkey management unit will be most of northcentral Pennsylvania where turkey hunters have traditionally enjoyed longer seasons.

The second turkey unit will be roughly Y-shaped, including southcentral Pennsylvania, the northeastern part of the state and a fair-sized section of west-central Pennsylvania. The final turkey area will consist of two parts: the southeastern and western parts of the state.

In the northcentral area, the proposed fall turkey season would open on October 31 and close on November 21. In the other two turkey management areas, the proposed season would open on October 31 and close on November 14.

The Game Commission plans to reserve the right to extend the turkey season in any section or sections if summer brood counts indicate sufficient numbers of birds to permit longer seasons.

To protect wild turkey populations which have been trapped and transferred recently, and to study the effects of hunting pressures, the Game Commission is proposing that most of Erie County and that part of Mercer County west of Interstate Route 79 be closed to fall turkey hunting, while all of Crawford County will be open to turkey hunters this fall.

The Game Commission this year is proposing that the bear hunting season be restricted to 32 counties. Unless a bear hunting license is created by legislation prior to June 1, the number of persons hunting bears in Pennsylvania in 1981 will

be unrestricted.

Increased productivity and survival, particularly in central and southeastern Pennsylvania, have led to the proposed allocation of 451,250 antlerless deer licenses for 1981. In 1980, the Game Commission authorized the allocation of 410,600 antlerless licenses.

Several changes are being proposed in deer seasons in southeastern and southwest Pennsylvania.

In the Special Regulations Area in the southeast, and in Allegheny County in the southwest, an antlerless deer season (for those who hold antlerless deer licenses) is being proposed from November 30 through December 15.

For those who do not have antlerless deer licenses, only antlered deer could be taken in the two special regulations areas in the southeast and the southwest. An antlerless deer license is valid only in the county in which it is issued.

The six-day antlerless deer area in southeastern Pennsylvania will be eliminated this year.

The proposal previously put forth by the Game Commission that would have required drawings to be held to select recipients of antlerless deer licenses was set aside after it was determined for proposal could have seriously jeopardized the state's deer management program.

It is the feeling now that it would be in the best interest of the deer resource to continue to permit county treasurers to either hold drawings or to issue the licenses on a first-come-first-served basis. Field officers will be directed to closely monitor antlerless license distribution in each county so the process is in accordance with Game Commission rules and regulations.

An attempt will also be made to develop a system whereby certain landowners who keep their lands open to antlerless deer hunting will

be assured of receiving antlerless deer licenses, hopefully by 1982.

The Game Commission this year is also proposing that a November

4 - January 21 hunting season be established on most furbearers to provide better management of these important wildlife resources.

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