

# Hunting Highlights

news for hunters

Arizona Game and Fish Department



## Endless possibilities

By Ron Day, law enforcement branch chief  
Arizona Game and Fish Department

Each year, time seems to stand still between deadline day and the day I finally find out what my fortunes were in the fall hunt drawing. Will it be my late white-tailed deer permit, or an archery bull hunt? An antelope hunt, or (heaven forbid!) my sheep tag? Those of us with this summertime disease suffer through the heat knowing that we have to endure these 110 degree days in order to find out for what we were drawn. Unfortunately, with permit numbers far below demand, many of us get that recorded message that starts, "You were not drawn for...". Luckily, I have heard this recording often enough to know that it is not the end of my fall hunting season. It only means I will be making different plans.

Many hunting opportunities are in no way, shape, or form associated with the fall drawing process. Two fall big-game hunts available to everyone are the archery deer hunt and the fall bear hunt. To participate in these hunts, simply purchase a hunting license and an over-the-counter non-permit hunt tag, and get into the field. The seasons associated with these hunts vary, and are found in the department's annual [fall hunt regulations](#). Both hunts offer an excellent opportunity to enjoy the outdoors and participate in a great hunt.

If you don't want to chase a big game animal this year, the small game and waterfowl possibilities are endless. Cottontail rabbits can be hunted year-round. Starting with the Sept. 1 dove opener and running through the end of quail season in mid-February, you are limited only by your desire to go hunting. When you list the number of different species of small game, you realize what a variety of opportunities exist. How about trying to spend a day this fall hunting each? Most of the seasons are structured to let you combine hunts. A Kaibab squirrel, blue grouse and chukar partridge trip is a great way to escape to the North Kaibab. Although this would be one of the tougher trips, you get the idea.

Do you duck hunt? If you do, enough said: you're already looking forward to the fall and have probably started dusting off and cleaning up your decoys. If you don't, it's probably because you haven't experienced one of those magic duck days.

Did I mention that I like to predator call? Words can't describe the look on a coyote's face when it is twenty yards from you and still coming strong. If you have not called one in yet and this is your first, don't bother to move. Just enjoy the moment. Your

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### In this issue:

1. [Draw follow-up: Endless possibilities](#)
2. [Hunting outlook](#)
3. [Dove hunting in Arizona](#)
4. [Junior hunters](#)
5. [Volunteer opportunities](#)

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### Game recipe: smoked dove paté

Debone 10 dove breasts  
Place in low heat smoker for one hour (one pan of apple wood chips).  
Cook in microwave until just done.  
Let cool.  
Combine dove meat with:  
1/4 onion  
1 clove garlic  
1/2 tsp. salt  
1 cap full Worcestershire sauce  
1 tsp. basil  
1 tsp. allspice  
Blend in food processor until consistency is smooth and add water slowly to assist.  
Cream cheese and a little mayonnaise can be used as a binding agent, replacing the water.

### Junior hunters

Do you have a photo and story you'd like to share about a youth hunt (your own, or that of your child or grandchild)? We'd like to share stories of our amazing junior hunters in each issue of Hunting Highlights. Send your picture and a story to the [Hunting Highlights editor](#).

### Ask a wildlife manager

Is there something you've always wanted to

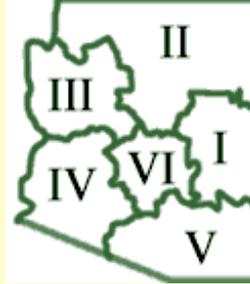
chances of actually bagging this coyote are just about nil. But you are hooked, and I guarantee there will be others.

Now that I've heard those dreaded words "You were not drawn for..." it's time to firm up my fall hunting plans. As I do, I will remember those two key words: "endless possibilities."

## Hunting outlook

By Brian Wakeling, big game program supervisor, and Mark Zornes, small game biologist, Arizona Game and Fish Department

Interested in hunting archery deer or dove this fall? Lucky enough to get drawn for pronghorn? Here is our regional forecast for these species.



### Archery Deer

Statewide, deer fawn recruitment increased for both white-tailed deer and mule deer this past year. What that means to hunters is that more yearling bucks (spikes and forkhorns) will be available this year than in the recent past. Do not expect droves of deer, but you should note a moderate improvement in numbers, and possibly in size.

Keep in mind that most early hunts have hot weather. Take lots of ice and be prepared to deal with meat and capes in warm weather. Remember that successful archery deer hunters, including Kaibab archery hunters, must contact the Arizona Game and Fish Department in person or by telephone at 866-903-3337 within 10 days of taking a deer.

#### Region I and II

Hunt at higher elevations. Water is not likely to be a problem this year, so water hole sitting may be less successful. Spot and stalk hunting may prove a good alternative approach. The Kaibab is always popular, but overcrowding complaints are common.

#### Region III

December archery deer hunts should be good spot and stalk hunting. If the summer monsoon produces average moisture, water sources may not be a strong attractant, making deer harder to find.

#### Region IV

Southwestern deserts can be difficult to hunt if the monsoon is average. Good quality bucks are taken annually in this area of relatively low deer density.

#### Region V

Compared with long term averages, rainfall was less plentiful in this region than in the other regions last winter and populations have responded less favorably. However, this is the main white-tailed deer region, so patient spot and stalk hunters can be successful.

#### Region VI

Hunt success has been high in Units 22 and 23 during the last two years. Last year's Willow Fire improved visibility and may prove helpful to white-tailed deer hunters. The Cave Creek Complex fire impacted a large area this summer, but few animals will abandon this area. Be aware that depending on when you go, parts of the area impacted by fire may be closed; it's a good idea to contact the [Tonto National Forest](#) ahead of time at 602-225-5200. If the monsoon is favorable, watch for fresh green patches, as they will attract deer.

### Pronghorn

Pronghorn surveys have been favorable in the northern regions, with better fawn recruitment when compared with recent years. Pronghorn hunting seasons usually

ask your local game warden but never got around to? All questions are fair game in this regular feature, from "where is the best place to go dove hunting around here?" to "what's the most interesting bust you've ever made?" If you've got a question for our wildlife managers, e-mail the [Hunting Highlights editor](#).

### Conservation spotlight

Are you excited about the mission and activities of your wildlife conservation organization? In the conservation spotlight, our readers will share your excitement. To get your group into the spotlight, e-mail the [Hunting Highlights editor](#).

### Been hunting?

Do you have a photo and story you'd like to share about your recent hunting trip? We'd like to share a "been hunting?" in each issue of Hunting Highlights. Send your picture and a brief story to the [Hunting Highlights editor](#).

### Dates to remember

Sept. 7: Sandhill Crane applications due  
Oct. 11: Spring draw applications due  
Mar. 25—26: Shooting Showcase

### Hot links

- [Hunter education classes](#)
- [Game and Fish names most revoked individual](#)
- [Arizona Outdoor Calendar](#)

have warm weather, so hunters should be prepared to care for meat and capes. Pronghorn lose fur easily, especially in warm weather, so packing your harvest out will require care.

Many pronghorn experts say that the pronghorn hunt occurs primarily before the season. Pre-season scouting can play an important role in locating and identifying the animal you plan to harvest. Hunts are often over in a very short time.

Regardless of which region your permit is in, pronghorn may not show much affinity to water sources if the monsoon produces average moisture. Hunt in areas with a diversity of broad-leaved herbaceous plants, as this is their primary food. Watch for green areas. Although Unit 21 recently suffered from the Cave Creek Complex fire, wildlife rarely abandon their areas entirely. They may respond well to green up and herbaceous improvements after the fire.

## **Dove**

Overall, dove hunters should be pleased with the 2005 early dove season. Nesting mourning and white-winged dove numbers appear to be up. Doves are likely to be more widespread than during the past few years, due to the abnormally wet winter and widespread natural food resources. For the best dove hunting, hunters should focus their efforts in the southern half of the state. Some opportunity for dove hunting will also occur in the northern half of Arizona, but won't be consistent due to weather conditions and timing of migration.

### **Region IV**

Dove hunting will be best in agricultural areas planted to small grains, like wheat or safflower. Abnormally wet conditions during the 2004-2005 winter caused some farmers to shift from wheat to less desirable cotton due to planting conditions. Increasing development in the Yuma Valley and Yuma Mesa is going to negatively impact a hunter's ability to find a place to hunt. Areas like Wellton and the Mohawk Valley will yield good hunting in 2005. Hunting should also be good this year around Salome and Aguila.

### **Region V**

Dove hunting should be good in traditional spots like Milligan Road near Picacho and around the Red Rock feedlots. More opportunity will exist to hunt desert birds this year. Dove numbers are up near Tucson, but hunters should be aware of limitations regarding developments, city limits, and private property.

### **Region VI**

Many areas in the east and north valleys are no longer accessible to dove hunting due to housing developments and annexation. The best opportunities exist in the agricultural areas near Stanfield, Maricopa and Casa Grande. The west valley near Buckeye down to Gila Bend and along the Gila River should also provide good opportunity. There are numerous feedlots in these areas, some of which permit dove hunting. Desert water holes will be good spots for late morning hunts. Hunters should check maps for such places that are located on state or other public lands.

Overall, development and annexation near urban centers is reducing dove hunting opportunities. Hunters should plan on pre-season scouting to locate dove flights and hunting access. Remember to get permission from landowners to hunt private lands. Spent shell casings are litter and should be picked up. Retrieving them shows respect for the land and landowner, and improves the image of hunters. Failure to do so has permanently closed gates to dove hunters in many locations. Keep in mind that hunters are not permitted to discharge a firearm within one quarter mile of a home or building without the owner's permission, and that shooting from or across roads is a violation of the law.

Good hunting!

## Dove hunting in Arizona

By Mike Rabe, migratory birds program supervisor, Arizona Game and Fish Department



Arizona is one of the best places to hunt doves anywhere. We have two seasons here: an early season from Sept. 1–15, and a later season in late fall and early winter that varies a little in the opening and closing dates. There are also two zones with slightly different regulations: a north zone and a south zone. This year the late season opens Nov. 18 and closes Jan. 1 in both

zones. In the early season, shooting is restricted to half an hour before sunrise to noon in the southern zone of the state. There is no half-day restriction in the north zone. Hunting takes place all day (half an hour before sunrise to sunset) in the late season statewide. Bag limits are 10 dove per day. Up to six of those can be white-winged doves. Complete information about Arizona's rules for dove hunting are found in the [2005-2006 dove and band-tailed pigeon regulations](#).

There are five species of doves in Arizona. Hunters have to be able to identify them all. The five species are mourning doves, white-winged doves, ground doves, Inca doves, and Eurasian collared doves. Turtle doves are also occasionally found in Arizona when they escape captivity. Mourning doves are by far the most common doves, dominating the skies in most areas. White-wings can be plentiful in the early season in desert regions.

All doves are classified as migratory birds. White-winged doves migrate into Arizona from Mexico in May and typically move south out of Arizona in early September, so white-wings are only available to the hunter for the early season hunt (Sept. 1–15). Many mourning doves also migrate through Arizona; some winter in Mexico and migrate through Arizona to breed in northern states. Some migrate from Mexico to breed in Arizona, and some live in Arizona year-round. White-wings are larger than mourning doves, with a distinct white wing-bar. Inca doves and ground doves are much smaller than either mourning or white-wings and are protected. In recent years, Arizonans have encountered increasing numbers of Eurasian collared doves. These exotics, introduced from Asia, are increasing in numbers. They are about the size of a white-winged dove, steely gray in color, with a black collar around the top of the neck. Currently, you can hunt Eurasian collared doves during the dove season with no bag limit.

Mourning doves are habitat generalists. They nest just about anywhere, including urban, agricultural, and desert areas. They migrate and breed as far north as central Canada. Mourning doves are rather lackadaisical about nest construction, usually making a loose nest of sticks where the female lays two eggs. Males and females share incubation duties. In Arizona, mourning doves may begin nesting as early as February and continue into September. Since it takes a little over a month to produce a pair of young doves (three to seven days for courtship and nest building, 15 days to incubate the eggs, and 10–15 days to brood the hatched young), a pair of doves can produce five broods in a good year (allowing for a little rest between broods).

White-winged doves are creatures of the southwest deserts. White-winged doves are not as prolific as mourning doves and not nearly as widespread. In a good year, they can pull off two broods of two doves each, but one brood of two is more common. Most white-winged doves migrate into Arizona to breed only. After breeding, they wing their way south, back to Mexico. A small number remain in Arizona all winter long in urban areas, visiting bird feeders and nesting in any tree that provides some cover from the sun. In the open desert, white-wings concentrate on the saguaro bloom and nest in mesquite or Palo Verde trees along washes.

I look forward to opening day of dove season the way some people look forward to meeting a friend they haven't seen for a year. My first hunting experience was a dove hunt with my father when I was 14. I killed several doves that day, but the doves I

killed (and ate that night) aren't what I remember most. What I remember best is my dad standing 30 yards away to my right as both of us waited by the canal bank near Maricopa and watched the doves come toward us in the dawn.

Dove hunting is the perfect first hunting experience for a youngster. A typical dove hunt involves finding a spot where doves are flying, standing in one place, and shooting as the doves pass by or overhead. This is perfect for a young hunter. They can concentrate on where the barrel of the gun is pointing, make sure the safety is on, and practice turning the safety off as they swing the gun with the target. Dove hunting is wingshooting in its purest form. Watch the dove, bring up the gun, click off the safety, shoot, and follow through.

The best way to have a successful dove hunt is to locate concentrations of doves before opening day. Doves follow a predictable routine. In the evening, they fly to roosts. Most roost in thickets of vegetation, either trees along washes or (in agricultural areas), windbreaks. At dawn, doves typically fly to food and water, in that order.

To breast a dove, pinch the skin on top of the breast and make a small cut or tear in the skin. Then peel the skin with the feathers away from the breast. Lift the breast away from the bird by putting your thumb underneath the breast bone. Cooking shears can make a nice neat job of this, although they are not really necessary. As with all game meat, the earlier you clean the bird, and the sooner you can get it cooled, the better it will taste. Experienced hunters bring a cooler with ice with them on the hunt to put cleaned birds in. Remember that regulations stipulate that you have to leave one fully feathered wing attached until you get the birds home.

### Junior hunters

September is the time for parents to prepare for the junior dove hunt at Robbins Butte Wildlife Area, just a few miles southwest of Buckeye on Highway 85. This "juniors only" hunt on Sept. 3—4 gives hunters up to age 17 a chance to pursue doves without adult competition. Hunters under 14 may hunt without a license when accompanied by a licensed adult. Each adult can bring up to two young hunters. Come early to select a hunting station for a fun-filled morning. Afterward, visit the check in tables and enjoy a free breakfast provided by the Chandler Rod and Gun Club. Oh, and don't forget to bring plenty of shells. This area can produce lots of chances to fill your bag.



### Volunteer opportunities for hunters



The Arizona Game and Fish Department's volunteer program provides many opportunities for volunteers to participate, firsthand, in managing Arizona's wildlife resources. Our goal is to provide you with a congenial and cooperative atmosphere where you can build relationships with staff and other volunteers, and gain knowledge about Arizona wildlife and wildlife management. We recognize your time is important and worthwhile, and will strive to provide a variety of rewarding and educational volunteer experiences.

We've listed some opportunities below that we think you might find interesting. For more opportunities or to submit information about a project that would benefit from

volunteers, check our [volunteer page](#) for more opportunities or e-mail our [volunteer coordinator](#).

### **Recent project: volunteers clear the way for antelope**

More than 40 volunteers recently got together to clear invasive piñon pine and juniper encroaching on antelope habitat in the Coconino National Forest near Kinnikinick Lake. It was not all work and no play for volunteers, who enjoyed a top sirloin dinner with all the trimmings after a day in the field. The June 25 event involved volunteers from the Arizona Antelope Foundation, Arizona Wildlife Federation, the Sierra Club, Grand Canyon Trust and Arizona ATV Riders.

### **Upcoming projects**

Aug. 20 and Sept. 24, 2005  
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

#### **Habitat restoration**

Take part in a [habitat restoration for antelope and grasslands birds](#). Contact [Rick Keller](#) at 928-214-1258.

Oct. 22, 2005  
8 a.m.

#### **Altar Valley Ranch Cleanup**

Help landowners overwhelmed by trash left by undocumented aliens. Drop off full trash bags at base camp and be treated to lunch, drinks and door prizes. For more information, e-mail [Gabriel Paz](#), call the Tucson Game and Fish office at 520-628-5376, or visit the Web site for [Arizona Hunters Who Care](#).

#### **Sport Fishing Education Program**

Volunteer to help promote fishing and fishing skills to people of all ages, especially beginning anglers. Nothing beats helping someone catch their first fish and seeing their smile. Please contact [Doug Thornburg](#), Aquatic Education Coordinator at 602-789-3240.

#### **Ben Avery Line Safety Officers**

Line Safety Officer volunteers help provide for the safe operation of the public shooting range at the Ben Avery Shooting Facility in north Phoenix, checking the safe condition of customer firearms, observing participants while they are shooting on the range, and maintaining safe operation of the shooting line. Training is provided at no cost. For more information, contact [Larry Collins](#) at 623-582-8313.