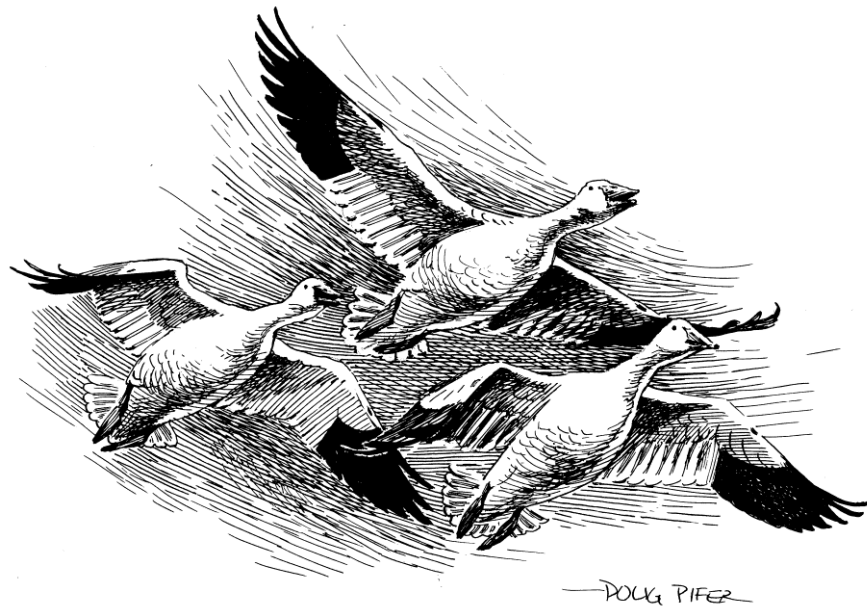


2009 Snow Goose Conservation Season in  
Pennsylvania  
Harvest Summary Report



July 15, 2009

## **Introduction**

Over the past 3 decades the Greater Snow goose population has increased dramatically to nearly 1 million birds. The AF Greater Snow Goose Management Plan (AFC 2009) calls for a population goal of 500,000 to 750,000 birds to bring the birds in balance with their natural habitats and associated biodiversity and reduce crop damage on wintering and staging areas.

Concern surrounding the overabundance of snow and Ross's goose populations and the problems associated with high populations of these birds prompted the U. S Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to develop a Light Goose Environmental Impact Statement (USFWS 2007) aimed at addressing the overabundance of light geese. The FEIS recommended federal regulations be modified to allow for additional hunting methods to increase harvest rates on greater snow geese and Ross' geese.

On November 5, 2008 the USFWS published a final rule (Federal Register 73:215) implementing a Conservation Order for light geese which included allowing the use of special hunting methods to increase the harvest of light geese across the country. Pennsylvania elected to participate in the 2009 Light Goose Conservation Season and state regulations were amended by the Board of Commissioners in January 2009 to allow the use of electronic calls and extended hunting hours (to ½ after sunset ).

## **Methods**

Season dates for the conservation season were March 11 - April 1, 2009 with daily bag limit of 15 geese and no possession limit. Additional hunting methods allowed included the use of electronic calls and expanded hunting hours (1/2 hour after sunset). Hunters were required to obtain a free Snow Goose Conservation Permit either online or by mail. Along with the permit, hunters were required to possess a general hunting license, migratory game bird license and a federal duck stamp (for those 16 or older). Mandatory reporting of harvest and hunter activity was required of all hunters even if they did not hunt and harvest reports were due within 30 days of the close of the snow goose conservation season.

On June 4, we sent a reminder mailing to those individuals that failed to send in their harvest reports. Because of the high response rate (88.5%) we did not conduct an additional survey of non-respondents to estimate their harvest.

## **Results and Discussion**

We issued 3,276 permits to hunters to participate in the 2009 Snow Goose Conservation Season. Ninety-six percent of the permits were issued to hunters using the online permit registration method. We received 1,397 reports (42.6% reporting rate) by May 30. After the

reminder letter was mailed out on June 4 we received an additional 1,503 reports increasing the total reports received to 2,900 and the reporting rate to 88.5%. Online reporting was very popular, with 90.8% of the reports received via this reporting method.

Of the 2,900 reports received 1,176, (40.5%) indicated they did not hunt at all during the conservation season. Of the 1,724 individuals that indicated they hunted during the conservation season their total retrieved harvest was 5,903 (Table 1). The additional hunting methods of extended hours and electronic calls resulted in a harvest of 736 and 1,522 geese, respectively. Total hunter days were 3,840 and the number of geese killed per hunter day was 1.5.

The harvest during the Conservation season was significant when compared to the 2008-09 regular snow goose season harvest in Pennsylvania of 10,000, as estimated by the USFWS (Raftovich 2009). The Atlantic Flyway states harvested 57,700 snow geese during the 2008-09 regular season, so Pennsylvania's total snow goose harvest (regular and conservation season combined) accounted for 27% of the total regular season flyway harvest. Harvest estimates from other Atlantic Flyway states participating in the snow goose conservation order are not yet available. Use of electronic calls accounted for 25.7% of the snow geese taken, while extended hunting hours had less effect, with only 12% of the total geese taken after sunset.

It appears the conservation season was successful in providing additional recreational opportunity on an overabundant species and achieving a significant level of harvest that will aid in reducing the greater snow goose population.

### **Literature Cited**

Atlantic Flyway Council. 2009. Management plan for Greater Snow Geese in the Atlantic Flyway. Snow Goose, Swan and Brant Committee of the Atlantic Flyway Game bird Technical Section.

Raftovich, R.V., K.A. Wilkins, K.D. Richkus, S.S. Williams, and H.L. Spriggs. 2009. Migratory bird hunting activity and harvest during the 2007 and 2008 hunting seasons. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Laurel, Maryland, USA.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2007. Final Environmental Impact Statement – Light Goose Management. Washington, D.C., USA.

Prepared by:  
John Dunn  
Game Bird Section

Table 1. Number of permits issued, reports received, hunter days and number of geese taken by hunting method during the 2009 Snow Goose Conservation Season in Pennsylvania.

Permits Issued	Reports received	Number of Hunters	Days Hunted	Geese Shot & Retrieved	Geese Shot & Lost	Geese Shot after sunset	Geese Shot with e'calls
3,276	2,900	1,724	3,840	5,903	317	736	1,522



**INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. Keep a daily record of your goose hunting during the snow goose conservation season on the field record form.
2. At the end of the season, report the results by completing either the online harvest report form at [www.pgc.state.pa.us](http://www.pgc.state.pa.us) or by mailing the completed harvest report card. (Attached)
3. Report even if you did not hunt during this season.
4. Failure to report by April 15, 2008 may result in loss of eligibility to participate for the 2009 snow goose conservation season.

TERRY L HECKROTE JR  
2001 ELMERTION AVE  
HARRISBURG PA 17110  
USA

2008 Resident Snow Goose Permit No.: 9999994  
Control Code: 98967A

Backtag No.: 99994X

Permit No.: 9999994  
Control Code: 98967A

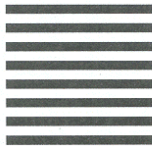


NO POSTAGE  
NECESSARY  
IF MAILED  
IN THE  
UNITED STATES

**BUSINESS REPLY MAIL**  
FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 8376 HARRISBURG PA

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

ATTN HARVEST REPORTS  
PA GAME COMMISSION  
2001 ELMERTON AVE  
HARRISBURG PA 17110-9851



2008 Resident Snow Goose Permit No.: 9999994  
Control Code: 98967A  
Backtag No.: 99994X

TERRY L HECKROTE JR  
2001 ELMERTION AVE  
HARRISBURG PA 17110  
USA

Phone: (717) 783-6625      Date of birth: 01/01/1967  
Gender: Male  
Date of issue: 10/03/2007      Time: 09:01.02



**THANK YOU!**  
Your participation helps to better manage Pennsylvania's waterfowl resources.

**MAIL THE ATTACHED REPORT CARD BY APRIL 15, 2008**



This document is hereby issued to the owner of the backtag number listed on the face of this card. While hunting the game specified on the front of this card, this card must be possessed by the hunter at all times. Retain this card for your records. This is your proof of having been issued this document.

(DOCUMENT IS NOT LEGAL UNTIL SIGNED HERE BY ISSUUEE)

Issued by: PENNSYLVANIA GAME COMMISSION  
BUREAU OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT (717) 787-5529

REPORT BY 4/15/2008		Check if you did not hunt during Snow Goose Conservation Season: <input type="checkbox"/>		Number of Geese*	
Day	Date	Check if the conditions below apply		½ hour prior to sunrise until sunset	Sunset until ½ hour after sunset
		Hunted	bagged but Nothing		
Tue	3/11	No			
Wed	3/12	Yes			
Thu	3/13				
Fri	3/14				
Sat	3/15				
Mon	3/17				
Tue	3/18				
Wed	3/19				
Thu	3/20				
Fri	3/21				
Sat	3/22				
Mon	3/24				
Tue	3/25				
Wed	3/26				
Thu	3/27				
Fri	3/28				
Sat	3/29				
Mon	3/31				
Tue	4/1				

**BEND ALONG PERFORATIONS BEFORE SEPARATING**

REPORT BY 4/15/2008		Check if you did not hunt during Snow Goose Conservation Season: <input type="checkbox"/>		Number of Geese*	
Day	Date	Check if the conditions below apply		½ hour prior to sunrise until sunset	Sunset until ½ hour after sunset
		Hunted	bagged but Nothing		
Tue	3/11	No			
Wed	3/12	Yes			
Thu	3/13				
Fri	3/14				
Sat	3/15				
Mon	3/17				
Tue	3/18				
Wed	3/19				
Thu	3/20				
Fri	3/21				
Sat	3/22				
Mon	3/24				
Tue	3/25				
Wed	3/26				
Thu	3/27				
Fri	3/28				
Sat	3/29				
Mon	3/31				
Tue	4/1				

**BEND ALONG PERFORATIONS - DETACH BEFORE MAILING**