

Results of the 2013 Light Goose Conservation Order in Colorado

Jim Gammonley
Colorado Parks and Wildlife
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The Colorado Division of Wildlife (now Colorado Parks and Wildlife) established a conservation order for light geese in 1999. The conservation order period was again held in 2013 during February 11 – April 30. Shooting hours were from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset. There was no bag or possession limit. Electronic calls and unplugged shotguns were allowed. Participants were required to be registered for HIP and to have a Colorado state duck stamp. All other federal and state regulations pertaining to the take of migratory birds were in effect during the conservation order.

A stratified random sample of 4,956 potential light goose hunters was drawn from among 2012-2013 HIP registrants. The sample was stratified into HIP registrants that responded they did not hunt light geese during the 2011-2012 seasons and conservation order, light goose hunters that did not bag any light geese during 2011-2012, light goose hunters that bagged 1-30 birds during 2011-2012, and light goose hunters that bagged >30 birds during 2011-2012. A post-season harvest survey was conducted by phone; individuals within the sample that provided email addresses when registering for HIP were sent email surveys as well.

A total of 1,030 (21% of the original sample) hunters responded to the survey. In 2013, 75% of participants hunted north of Interstate 70, and 37% hunted south of I-70 in eastern Colorado, continuing a recent trend of hunting activity shifting more to northeastern Colorado. Compared to 2012, the 2013 estimate of hunter numbers was 33% higher, the 2013 estimate of hunter-days was 13% lower, and the 2013 estimate of total harvest was 30% lower (Table 1). In 2013, the average harvest per hunter was 5.3 and the average number of days hunted per hunter was 3.1.

Electronic calls were used by 23% of participants (575 ± 108) and 67% of harvest was obtained using electronic calls. Twenty-seven percent of participants (670 ± 121) hunted after sunset and 15% of the total harvest was obtained through hunting after sunset. Unplugged shotguns were used by 22% of participants (547 ± 112) and 21% of total harvest was obtained using unplugged shotguns. Based on reported wounding loss by participants, we estimate that $1,720 \pm 92$ light geese were wounded but not retrieved during the 2013 conservation order (13% of reported retrieved harvest).

In 2013, 52% of respondents indicated they were satisfied with the conservation order, while 28% indicated they were dissatisfied; 75% indicated they were likely or very likely to participate in a light goose conservation order if it is offered in future years.

Table 1. Estimates (\pm SE) of participation and harvest during the light goose conservation action in Colorado.

Year	Hunters	Total-Hunter Days	Total Harvest	Harvest Using Electronic Calls	Harvest After Sunset	Harvest with unplugged shotguns
1999	1,638 (179)	6,709 (62)	13,417 (550)	Not permitted	Not permitted	Not permitted
2000	3,276 (511)	15,316 (3,178)	31,783 (7,877)	17,441 (5,607)	3,364 (1,417)	Not permitted
2001	2,495 (616)	8,836 (2,521)	22,457 (8,673)	16,671 (7,068)	2,060 (964)	Not permitted
2002	1,323 (351)	5,016 (1,502)	7,594 (1,923)	3,445 (1,011)	1,153 (505)	Not permitted
2003	2,162 (205)	10,193 (1,563)	27,395 (5,336)	19,828 (5,044)	3,658 (809)	Not permitted
2004	1,877 (184)	8,547 (911)	24,497 (3,286)	13,467 (2,457)	3,051 (652)	Not permitted
2005	1,281 (157)	6,593 (1,194)	16,135 (3,620)	12,417 (3,473)	1,886 (323)	Not permitted
2006	2,704 (511)	12,568 (3,406)	18,535 (751)	8,357 (466)	2,338 (170)	Not permitted
2007	2,367 (229)	10,847 (1,613)	23,375 (1,362)	16,041 (6,210)	3,509 (1,232)	Not permitted
2008	2,555 (250)	11,886 (1,595)	13,745 (1,268)	7,212 (896)	1,381 (233)	Not permitted
2009	1,951 (208)	8,744 (936)	23,072 (1,246)	15,190 (5,669)	6,485 (3,155)	Not permitted
2010	1,899 (200)	8,829 (1,343)	11,473 (861)	6,149 (1,260)	2,058 (468)	2,443 (639)
2011	1,385 (157)	10,905 (1,884)	28,193 (1,853)	14,438 (4,651)	3,066 (974)	3,246 (655)
2012	1,847 (203)	8,659 (1,215)	18,971 (1,316)	13,168 (2,921)	1,916 (337)	2,785 (580)
2013	2,461 (285)	7,533 (1,027)	13,246 (868)	8,821 (1,963)	2,049 (586)	2,766 (1,157)