

Results of the 2021 Light Goose Conservation Order in Colorado

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The Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife established a conservation order for light geese in 1999. The conservation order area is the eastern plains of Colorado, east of Interstate 25. The conservation order period in 2021 was February 15–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 the Harvest Information Program (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 4,500 potential light goose hunters was drawn from among 2020-2021 HIP registrants. The sample was stratified into HIP registrants that responded they did not hunt light geese during the 2019-2020 seasons and conservation order, light goose hunters that did not bag any light geese during 2019-2020, light goose hunters that bagged 1-30 birds during 2019-2020, and light goose hunters that bagged >30 birds during 2019-2020. 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 1,538 (34% of the original sample) hunters responded to the survey. Estimates of hunter numbers and total hunter-days during the conservation order were higher in 2021 than in 2020, and higher than the 1999-2020 averages; however, light goose harvest was lower than in 2020 and the long-term average (Table 1). In 2021, the average light goose harvest per hunter was 5.4, slightly lower than the 1999-2020 average of 9.4. The average number of days hunted per hunter in 2020 was 5.0, near the 1999-2020 average of 5.1 days. In 2021, 74% of participants hunted north of Interstate 70 and harvested 68% of the total conservation order harvest, and 33% of participants hunted and harvested 32% of total geese south of I-70 in eastern Colorado.

Electronic calls were used by 28% of participants (784 ± 122) and 44% of harvest was obtained using electronic calls. Twenty-four percent of participants (675 ± 112) hunted after sunset and 13% of the total harvest was obtained through hunting after sunset. Unplugged shotguns were used by 24% of participants (689 ± 115) and 26% of total harvest was obtained using unplugged shotguns. Based on reported wounding loss by participants, we estimate that 954 ± 66 light geese were wounded but not retrieved during the 2021 conservation order (6% of reported retrieved harvest).

In 2021, 65% of respondents indicated they were very likely and 28% responded they were somewhat likely to participate in a light goose conservation order if it is offered in future years. Estimates of hunter numbers, hunter-days, and harvest have remained fairly stable throughout the 23-year history of the light goose conservation order in Colorado (Figs. 1-3).

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)
2014	3,555	(310)	25,311	(4,035)	34,216	(1,435)	14,774 (3,217)	3,878 (1,461)	7,956	(1,912)
2015	2,693	(298)	13,907	(1,996)	15,719	(732)	8,075 (2,525)	2,981 (1,148)	4,478	(2,171)
2016	2,933	(261)	16,903	(2,360)	23,499	(1,457)	10,613 (3,624)	1,750 (811)	7,415	(3,387)
2017	2,921	(275)	15,637	(2,356)	16,102	(611)	7,645 (2,132)	796 (489)	3,477	(1,211)
2018	2,821	(259)	18,076	(5,294)	56,647	(2,819)	18,021 (6,298)	1,396 (841)	28,542	(13,302)
2019	2,506	(223)	14,336	(2,128)	20,719	(893)	11,202 (3,434)	1,764 (1,057)	4,136	(2,293)
2020	2,075	(198)	11,154	(1,637)	16,813	(1,117)	3,564 (1,390)	550 (277)	3,974	(1,308)
1999-2020 average	2,306		11,659		21,709		11,740	2,433	6,474	
2021	2,833	(286)	14,220	(1,946)	15,164	(600)	6,617 (1,752)	1,980 (688)	3,929	(1,201)

Figure 1. Annual estimates of numbers of hunters participating in the light goose conservation order in Colorado, 1999-2021.

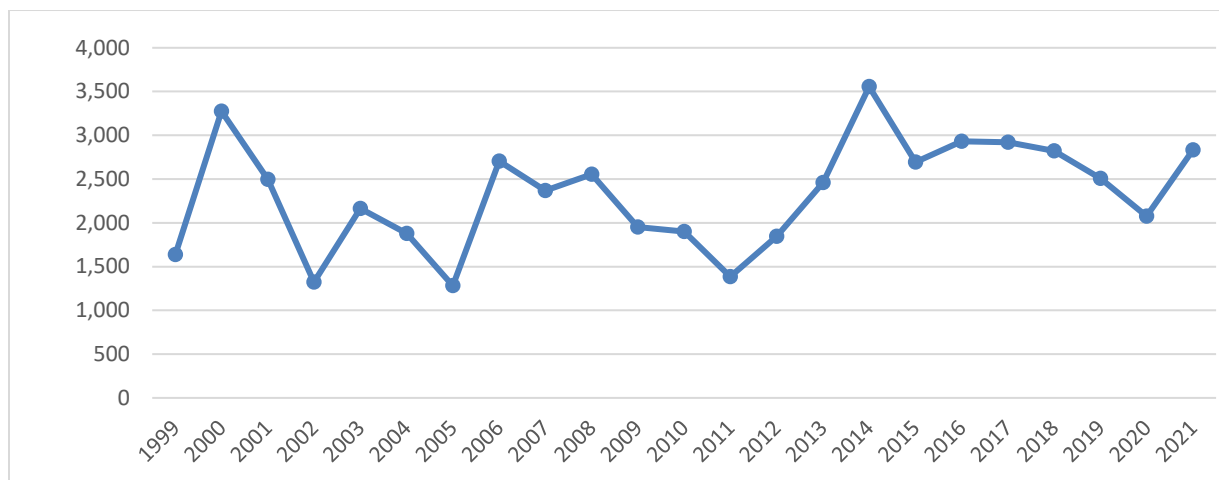


Figure 2. Annual estimates of numbers of the total number of hunter-days in the light goose conservation order in Colorado, 1999-2021.

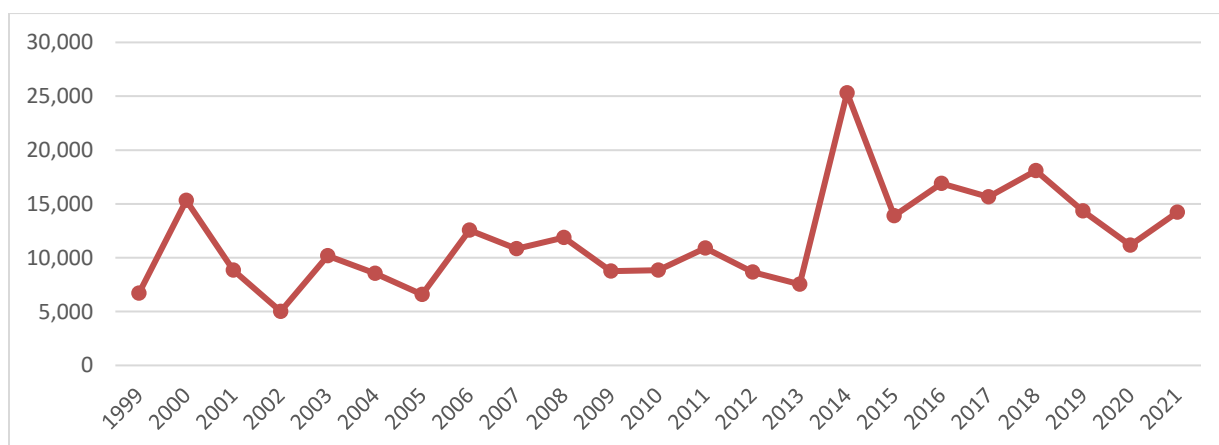


Figure 2. Annual estimates of total harvest in the light goose conservation order in Colorado, 1999-2021.

