COLORADO DIVISION OF WILDLIFE 2008 Small Game Walk-In Atlas



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COLORADO DIVISION OF WILDLIFE • 6060 Broadway • Denver, CO 80216 • (303) 297-1192 • www.wildlife@state.co.us

2008 WALK-IN ACCESS PROGRAM

The Walk-In Access Program (WIA) is designed to help hunters find good places to hunt, while easing the difficulty and time consuming task of acquiring permission to private land. To maximize hunter opportunity and convenience, the Division annually reviews the program and considers what opportunities might be missing. With that goal in mind, the following changes influencing WIA have been adopted for 2008-09:

• Throughout the remainder of 2008 and early 2009, the Division will be transitioning to a new license year, meaning that licenses will no longer expire on December 31 annually. Instead, licenses will be valid from April 1 to March 31 of the following year, annually. Licenses included within this change include the small game license, fishing licenses, small game/ fishing combo, Habitat Stamps, and WIA Permits. This change allows the Division to synchronize the license year with peak license sale months, and offer our license buyers a license that is good for an entire season, without the worry of buying a new license on January 1 annually. To ease the transition period, The Division has adopted a regulation that makes all annual small game, fishing, small game/fishing combos, furbearer, Habitat Stamps, state migratory waterfowl stamps, and WIA Permits purchased in 2008 valid through March 31, 2009.

• To increase opportunity for hunters, the Division has adopted regulations that offer an extended WIA period on some properties through the end of March annually. This regulation will allow hunters to access some fields during the spring light goose Conservation Action. Access to these properties will begin on the opening day of pheasant season. Locations of these fields will be posted in an online version of the WIA atlas, or within the Late Cropland WIA Atlas, depending on their quantity and space limitations. Please see the Late Cropland WIA Brochure (available in late October) for details.

Look for these signs at WIA properties:

Walk-In Access Program Boundary signs come in two varieties. In the field you will see signs that have an access date





ing in 2008-09.

at the field corners, please do not hunt that field!

of September 1 through the end of February, and signs that have an

access date of "The opening day of pheasant season" through the end of February. Properties that are posted to open on the opening day of pheasant season cannot be accessed prior to November 8, 2008. Access to all properties ends on the last day of February, 2009. Two other signs are used on or near Walk-In Access Properties. Parking signs are used to designate where hunters should park at some Walk-In areas. A large majority of WIA properties do not have established parking areas, instead hunters should park along the road, taking care to stay out of the traveled portion of the road but also not park in tall weeds and grass where a fire hazard exists. Safety Zone signs are also common on or near WIA properties. These signs are used to deliniate safety zones around buildings, homesteads, livestock corrals or neighboring landowner's homes and properties. Please respect safety zone signs wherever you find them posted.

Rarely, it becomes necessary to remove a property from the Walk-In Access Program after this brochure is posted. When that happens, Walk-In Access boundary signs are removed and replaced with yellow Warning signs to notify hunters that the property is no longer available for Walk-In hunting. Do not hunt if fields are posted with vellow WARNING SIGNS! And remember, if you find a WIA property depicted in the brochure but boundary signs are not present

All fields enrolled in the program will be clearly marked at corners and along access points.

Every attempt has been made to ensure that this atlas is as accurate as possible, however, a few

errors may have gone undetected, or landowners may have withdrawn a field after the atlas was published. Do not hunt on fields depicted in the atlas unless you also see Walk-In Access signs

posted on the boundaries. Walk-In Atlases from previous years will not be accurate for hunt-

WALK-IN HUNTING AREA WALK-IN ACCESS PERMIT REQUIRED Walking Access Only Opening day of Pheasant Season - End of Feb. Permit does not allow Access for Big Game Hunting OLORAD Respect the Landowner, Respect the Land SAFETY ZONE





THIS PROPERTY IS NO LONGER **AVAILABLE FOR** WALK-IN ACCESS HUNTING.

Respect the Landowner, Respect the

Land



WALK-IN ACCESS REGULATIONS

In order to hunt small game, waterfowl or furbearers on the Walk-In Access Property, all hunters must first purchase, sign and have in their possession a small game license, a valid Walk-In Access Permit and comply with Habitat stamp regulations. In addition, hunters age 16 and older must possess state and federal migratory bird stamps prior to hunting waterfowl.

1. Public Access is permitted from 1 hour before sunrise to 1 hour after sunset. For waterfowl hunting, access is allowed from 2 hours before sunrise to 2 hours after sunset.

- 2. Statewide, take is restricted to small game, furbearers, and waterfowl. Hunters may not hunt or harvest Gambel's quail, Gunnison sage-grouse, or Greater sage-grouse from WIA properties.
- 3. Access is permitted:
 - a. September 1 through the end of February annually for lands enrolled and posted as Regular Season Walk-In Access properties;
 - b. From the opening day of pheasant season through the end of February annually for lands enrolled and posted as Late Season Cropland Walk-In Access properties.
- 4. Access shall be by foot only. Entry by horseback, motorized vehicle, or other means is prohibited.
- 5. Access is permitted for hunting only; all other activities are prohibited. Individuals may accompany hunters without obtaining or possessing a Walk-In Access permit provided they do not hunt.
- 6. Walk-In Access permits are not transferable to any other person, nor do they confer hunting privileges to any person other than the purchaser of the permit.

The Walk-In Access Program depends on private landowners that enroll property for Walk-In hunting and maintaining good relations with those landowners and their neighbors. There are some additional guidelines, that if followed, will improve the opportunities for all hunters and contribute to future WIA enrollments.

- Where designated parking areas are established, use them. Do not block gates or roads for the landowner or his agents that may need to work on the property. Do not park along highways.
- Do not park in tall grassy or weedy areas where your catalytic converter can cause a fire. Do not smoke or extinguish cigarettes in these areas either, and make sure to completely extinguish cigarettes if you do smoke.
- Don't litter or clean harvested birds on the WIA property or along roadsides. If someone else left a mess, please pick it up.
- Don't shoot near or towards houses, farm buildings, livestock or equipment.
- Don't hunt if cattle are in or adjacent to enrolled parcels
- Don't track down landowners who have enrolled land in WIA to get access to other fields.

COLORADO DIVISION OF WILDLIFE Department of Natural Resources 6060 Broadway, Denver 80216 (303) 297-1192 www.wildlife.state.co.us Created July 2008 Editor: Ed Gorman Maps designed and prepared by Dawn Brownne. Cover Photo: Ed Gorman Text: Ed Gorman

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Director, Colorado Division of Wildlife: Thomas E. Remington

Wildlife Commissioners (as of July 2008): Robert Bray, Chair; Brad Coors, Vice Chair; Tim Glenn, Secretary; Members; Dennis Buechler • Jeffrey Crawford • Dorothea Farris • Roy McAnally •Richard Ray • Robert Streeter Harris Sherman, ex-officio member; John Stulp, ex-officio member.

SMALL GAME HUNTING INFORMATION

SMALL GAME REGULATIONS

Some small game and waterfowl regulations are included within this atlas for your convenience. A more complete synopsis of small game and waterfowl regulations is contained within the 2008 Small Game and Waterfowl brochures, available at license agents, Division of Wildlife offices, or on-line at www.wildlife.state.co.us.

HUNTING HOURS

One half hour before sunrise to sunset, except furbearers, which can be hunted from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset. See sunrise/sunset chart below.

GUIDE TO LEGAL HUNTING HOURS

The table below is valid for Denver, CO through 2008. Subtract one minute from the opening and closing time for each 12 1/2 miles east of Denver. Add one minute to opening and closing time for each 12 1/2 miles west of Denver. The above changes are based on the assumption that each degree of longitude equals 50 miles and that a change of 1 degree of longitude equals 4 minutes change in sunrise and sunset times.

2008 Sunrise/Sunset Table							
	SEPT.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.	JAN.		
	Rise Set	Rise Set	Rise Set	Rise Set	Rise Set		
DAV	A.M. P.M		A.M. P.M.	A.M. P.M.	A.M. P.M.		
DAY	(DST)	(DST)	7.00 5.50	7.04 4.05	7.00 4.45		
1	6:27 7:31		7:28 5:58	7:01 4:35	7:20 4:45		
2 3	6:28 7:30		6:29 4:56	7:02 4:35	7:21 4:45		
<u>3</u> 4	6:29 7:28 6:30 7:27		6:30 4:55	7:03 4:35	7:21 4:46		
			6:31 4:54	7:04 4:34	7:21 4:47		
5 6	6:31 7:25 6:32 7:23		6:32 4:53 6:33 4:52	7:05 4:34 7:06 4:34	7:21 4:48		
7			6:35 4:52	7:06 4:34 7:07 4:34			
8			6:36 4:51	7:07 4:34	7:21 4:50 7:20 4:51		
9	6:34 7:20 6:34 7:18		6:37 4:49	7:08 4:34	7:20 4:51		
10	6:35 7:17		6:38 4:48	7:09 4:34	7:20 4:52		
10	6:35 7:17		6:39 4:48	7:10 4:34	7:20 4:53		
11	6:37 7:14		6:40 4:46	7:10 4:34	7:20 4:54		
12	6:38 7:12		6:40 4:46	7:12 4:35	7:19 4:56		
14	6:39 7:12		6:43 4:44	7:12 4:35	7:19 4:57		
14	6:40 7:09		6:43 4:44	7:12 4:35	7:19 4:57		
16	6:40 7:08		6:45 4:43	7:13 4:35	7:18 4:59		
17	6:42 7:05		6:46 4:42	7:14 4:36	7:18 5:00		
17	6:43 7:04		6:47 4:41	7:14 4:36	7:17 5:01		
10	6:44 7:02		6:48 4:41	7:16 4:37	7:17 5:02		
20	6:45 7:00		6:49 4:40	7:16 4:37	7:16 5:04		
21	6:46 6:59		6:50 4:39	7:17 4:37	7:16 5:05		
22	6:47 6:57		6:52 4:39	7:17 4:37	7:14 5:08		
23	6:48 6:55		6:53 4:38	7:18 4:38	7:14 5:08		
23	6:49 6:54		6:54 4:38	7:18 4:39	7:14 5:08		
25	6:49 6:52		6:55 4:37	7:19 4:40	7:13 5:09		
25	6:50 6:50		6:56 4:37	7:19 4:40	7:12 5:11		
20	6:51 6:49		6:57 4:36	7:19 4:40	7:12 5:12		
28	6:52 6:47		6:58 4:36	7:20 4:42	7:12 5:12		
20	6:53 6:46		6:59 4:36	7:20 4:42	7:10 5:14		
30	6:54 6:44		7:00 4:35	7:20 4:42	7:09 5:15		
31	0.04 0.44	7:27 5:59	7.00 4.35	7:20 4:43	7:09 5:15		
51		1.21 3.39		7.20 4.44	7.00 0.17		

2008 LICENSE COSTS

	Resident	Non Resident			
Small Game	\$21.00	\$56.00			
Small Game (one-day)	\$11.00	\$11.00			
Combo Small Game and Fishing	\$41.00				
Youth Small Game	\$ 1.00	\$ 1.00			
Walk-In Access Permit	\$20.00	\$20.00			
Youth Walk-In Access Permit	free	free			
Federal Duck Stamp	\$15.00	\$15.00			
Colorado Duck Stamp	\$ 5.00	\$ 5.00			
Habitat Stamp	\$ 5.00	\$ 5.00			
Annual Maximum of \$10; Life	etime \$200.00); Hunters 18 and			
under and over 65 do not need a Habitat Stamp					
License costs include a 25-cent search and rescue fee and a					
75-cent surcharge for the Wildlif	è Manageme	nt Education Fund.			

HARVEST INFORMATION PROGRAM

If you hunt small game, furbearers, or migratory birds in Colorado, including by falconry, you must sign up with HIP before your license is valid. Hunters must write their HIP number in the space provided on the license. Hunters will be asked basic questions about their hunting, including how many birds they harvested the previous season and what species they plan to hunt this year. Both the phone line and web site run 24 hours a day, every day, and the process takes about 5 minutes. To sign up for HIP, hunters need to call 1-866-265-6447 (1-866-COLOHIP) or go on line at www. colohip.com. For help getting your HIP number, call 1-800-368-4683, Monday through Saturday, 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. MST.

SMALL GAME HARVEST SURVEYS

The Division of Wildlife conducts several small game harvest surveys each year which are designed to estimate harvest, hunter numbers and recreation days. Harvest surveys are critical to monitor changing wildlife populations and are extremely valuable to hunters wanting to learn more about hunting small game in Colorado. Harvest survey reports are available on the Division's web site. Hunters are randomly selected to participate in specific small game surveys. All small game surveys are conducted by telephone, however, some also employ by e-mail. If contacted, your participation is not required in any way, but responding to the survey, even if you did not hunt or harvest those specific species is encouraged to help the Division better manage our small game resources.

WIA HUNTER NOTE

The late cropland WIA atlas will contain all properties open to WIA hunting. Look for it at your license agent or local CDOW office in late October.

2008 WALK-IN ATLAS

Some small game season dates are included within this atlas for your convenience, however, all season dates are not listed. A complete synopsis of hunting season dates can be found within the 2008 SMALL GAME and 2008 WATERFOWL Brochures. These brochures are available at license agents, Division of Wildlife Offices and on the internet at: www.wildlife.state.co.us

DOVES: MOURNING, WHITE-WINGED, & EURASIAN COLLARED*

Dates: Sept. 1 - Oct. 30
Areas: Statewide
Daily bag limit: Mourning and White-winged - 15 singly or in aggregate. Eurasian Collared - Unlimited (see Small Game Brochure for details).
Possession Limit: 30 for mourning and white-winged. Unlimited for Eurasian (see Small Game Brochure for details)
*See page 6 for more information

**DOVE BANDING: Mourning doves are being banded in Colorado and other states as part of a nation-wide program to monitor their status. Hunters should report banded mourning doves to the USGS Bird Banding Lab: www.reportband.gov or 1-800 327-BAND.

COTTONTAILS, SNOWSHOE HARE, WHITE-TAILED & BLACK-TAILED JACKRABBITS

Dates: Oct. 1 - end of February, 2009 **Areas:** Statewide **Daily bag limit:** 10 of each species **Possession limit:** 20 of each species

FOX & PINE SQUIRRELS:

Dates: Oct. 1 - end of February, 2009 **Areas:** Statewide **Daily bag limit:** 5 of each species **Possession limit:** 10 of each species

TEAL

Sept. 13 - 21 Areas: In Lake and Chaffee counties and east of I-25. Daily bag limit: 4 singly or in aggregate. Possession limit: 8 singly or in aggregate.

SANDHILL CRANE

Oct. 4 - Nov. 30 Areas: East of the Continental Divide except North Park (Jackson County) and San Luis Valley. Daily bag limit: 3 Possession limit: 6

CDOW OFFICES

Division of Wildlife Headquarters 6060 Broadway Denver, CO 80216 (303) 297-1192

Northeast Region Service Center 6060 Broadway Denver, CO 80216 (303) 291-7227

Northwest Region Service Center 711 Independent Ave. Grand Junction, CO 81505 (970) 255-6100

Southeast Region Service Center 4255 Sinton Road Colorado Springs, CO 80907 (719) 227-5200

Southwest Region Service Center 151 East 16th St. Durango, CO 81301 (970) 247-0855

Brush Service Center 122 East Edison, Box 128 Brush, 80723 (970) 842-6300

Fort Collins Service Center 317 W. Prospect Ave. Fort Collins, CO 80526 (970) 472-4300

Glenwood Springs Service Center 50633 Hwys. 6 and 24 Glenwood Springs, 81601 (970) 947-2920

Gunnison Service Center 300 W. New York Ave. Gunnison, 81230 (970) 641-7060 Hot Sulphur Springs Serv. Center 346 Grand County Road 362 Hot Sulphur Springs, 80451 (970) 725-6200

Lamar Service Center 2500 S. Main Lamar, 81052 (719) 336-6600

Meeker Service Center 73485 Hwy 64 Meeker, 81641 (970) 878-6090

Monte Vista Service Center 0722 S Road 1E Monte Vista, 81144 (719) 587-6900

Montrose Service Center 2300 S. Townsend Montrose, 81401 (970) 252-6000

Pueblo Service Center 600 Reservoir Road Pueblo, 81005 (719) 561-5300

Salida Service Center 7405 Hwy. 50 Salida, 81201 (719) 530-5520

Steamboat Springs Serv. Center 925 Weiss Drive Steamboat Springs, 80477 (970) 870-2197

For recordings on season dates and other information:

(303) 291-7529
(303) 291-7533
(303) 291-7546
(303) 291-7547
(303) 291-7548
(303) 291-7530
(303) 291-7528
(303) 291-1192

www.wildlife.state.co.us

SMALL GAME WALK-IN ATLAS

HUNTERS PLEASE NOTE:

Regulation prohibits the take of Gambel's quail and sagegrouse from all WIA properties.

Gambel's quail occur only in western Colorado, primarily in the Grand and Uncompaghre valleys, and may inhabit some WIA properties in this area. Gambel's quail have a distinctive plume feather on the head, males have a black face and copper feathers on top of the head, while females have mostly gray plumage with a tannish gray face and beige plumage underneath.



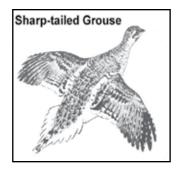
Photo courtesy Dan Williams, New Mexico Game and Fish Dept.

Sage-grouse also occur in western Colorado and may inhabit some properties. Sage-grouse are a large, grayish bird with a slow wing beat in flight. Sage-grouse have distinctly pointed tail feathers and black breast feathers, both of which are visible when flushed. Sagegrouse tend to be silent when flushed.



Plains sharp-tailed grouse are known to occur in Weld, western Logan and northern Morgan counties. Plains

sharp-tailed grouse are not a legal game bird in Colorado but have been tranplanted into some areas to re-establish populations. When hunting in these counties, please take special care to clearly identify the target before shooting. Sharp-tailed grouse are much lighter in color than cock pheasants and have a short, distinctly pointed tail, which shows white when in flight. Sharp-tailed grouse often emit



a low pitched series of clucks when flushed.

LANDOWNERS!

Interested in enrolling land in the Small Game Walk-In Access Program? The Colorado Division of Wildlife is interested in enrolling quality small game hunting lands. Eligible types of cover and areas of interest include:

Northeast Colorado - tall grass CRP, pivot corners, standing cover crop, tall crop stubble, abandoned farmsteads, tree rows and windbreaks, wooded creek bottoms, seasonal wetlands and goose hunting fields.

Southeast Colorado - tall grass CRP, pivot corners, standing cover crop, tall crop stubble, abandoned farmsteads, tree rows and windbreaks, wooded creek bottoms, seasonal wetlands, goose hunting fields, sand sage rangelands and cholla grasslands.

Northwest Colorado - waterfowl hunting fields including harvested corn stubble, alfalfa fields, and wheat, river bottom lands, and other small game habitat including lands for grouse hunting.

Southwest Colorado - waterfowl hunting fields including harvested corn stubble, alfalfa fields, and wheat, river bottom lands, and other small game.

To obtain more information, please contact your local CDOW office, or complete and return the following form.

Please contact me with more information on enrolling my land in the Small Game Walk-In Access Program.

Name:	
Address:	
City, State, Zip:	
Day Phone:	
Evening Phone:	
Property is located in	County
Type of Land:	
Send to:	
OD OT UT	

CDOW Attn: WIA 8118 CR 370 Sterling, CO 80751

REGIONAL PROFILES

Properties enrolled in NORTHWEST Colorado provide opportunity in Mesa and Garfield counties. Properties in these counties offer some small game hunting but were primarily enrolled for waterfowl hunting, with a focus on Canada geese that winter along the Colorado River and in the Grand Valley. A hunter can find both land and water (river) hunting opportunities on the enrolled properties. Fields have been enrolled to provide hunters with areas to set decoys for field hunting, while some stretches of river have been enrolled for the hunter that prefers a water spread. Waterfowl WIA properties in the NW are governed by Pacific Flyway seasons and bag and possession limits. Counties that offer WIA hunting in SOUTHWEST Colorado include Dolores and San Miguel. These properties offer dove hunting and other small game hunting such as cottontail rabbit. By regulation, Gambel's quail and sage-grouse cannot be hunted on WIA properties, although they may occur on or near enrolled properties.

Walk-In Access in NORTHEAST Colorado offers properties in Weld, Morgan, Logan, Washington, Yuma, Phillips and Sedgwick counties. In total, approximately 76,000 acres have been enrolled for Walk-In Access hunting. Much of the cover enrolled in the Northeast is primarily for pheasant, although some lands were enrolled for doves and other small game hunting opportunities are common. Waterfowl hunting opportunity on Walk-In Properties in the northeast is highly variable. Occasionally, late summer thunderstorms fill seasonal playas and lagoons within the area, creating some very good early season teal hunting that can extend through the early duck seasons until freeze up. Very few NE Region WIA properties provide opportunity to hunt geese.

Wide-ranging opportunity characterizes Walk-In Access in the SOUTHEAST Region, with properties in Pueblo, Las Animas, Crowley, Lincoln, Kit Carson, Cheyenne, Kiowa, Prowers, Baca, and Bent Counties. Approximately 91,000 acres are available for Walk-In hunting. Kit Carson County is very similar the NE Region in that most of the properties enrolled are for pheasant with opportunity for dove and other small game. Other counties in the SE offer hunters opportunity to hunt multiple species on enrolled properties, for instance, scaled quail and dove, or bobwhite quail and pheasant. Good potential also exists for waterfowl hunting in the SE, primarily pass shooting snow geese later in the season, but with some early season duck action over water, an opportunity that is dependent on late summer thunderstorms that fill seasonal playas. The SE region also offers some excellent opportunity to hunt close to the front range, with large properties near Colorado Springs and Pueblo.

CRP HAYING AND GRAZING:

With significant portions of the U.S. in severe drought condition, the United States Department of Agriculture has authorized landowners to hay and graze fields enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), which also make up a large percentage of land enrolled in the WIA program. It is very likely that you will see fields posted with WIA signs that have been or are currently being grazed or hayed. In accordance, WIA payment rates will be adjusted to compensate for grazing or haying operations that reduce hunting cover and wildlife habitat.

BEWARE OF HITCHHIKING SEEDS

Many 'noxious' weed species reproduce primarily by seed. These seeds are often transported by wind, rodents or animals, but they could be carried in the shoelaces and pant cuffs of humans. Please help control the spread by taking a few minutes as you leave a field to clean your shoelaces and pant cuffs of any seed. Don't forget to also give your fourlegged hunting companion a quick brush over to remove any hitchhiking seeds!

EURASIAN COLLARED DOVES

Eurasian collared doves are a relative newcomer to most hunters in Colorado. They are found sporadically across Colorado, and it is not uncommon to see them using the same habitats as mourning doves. Regulation allows the take of collared doves during the established dove season and the special late collared dove season (December 1 through the end of February).

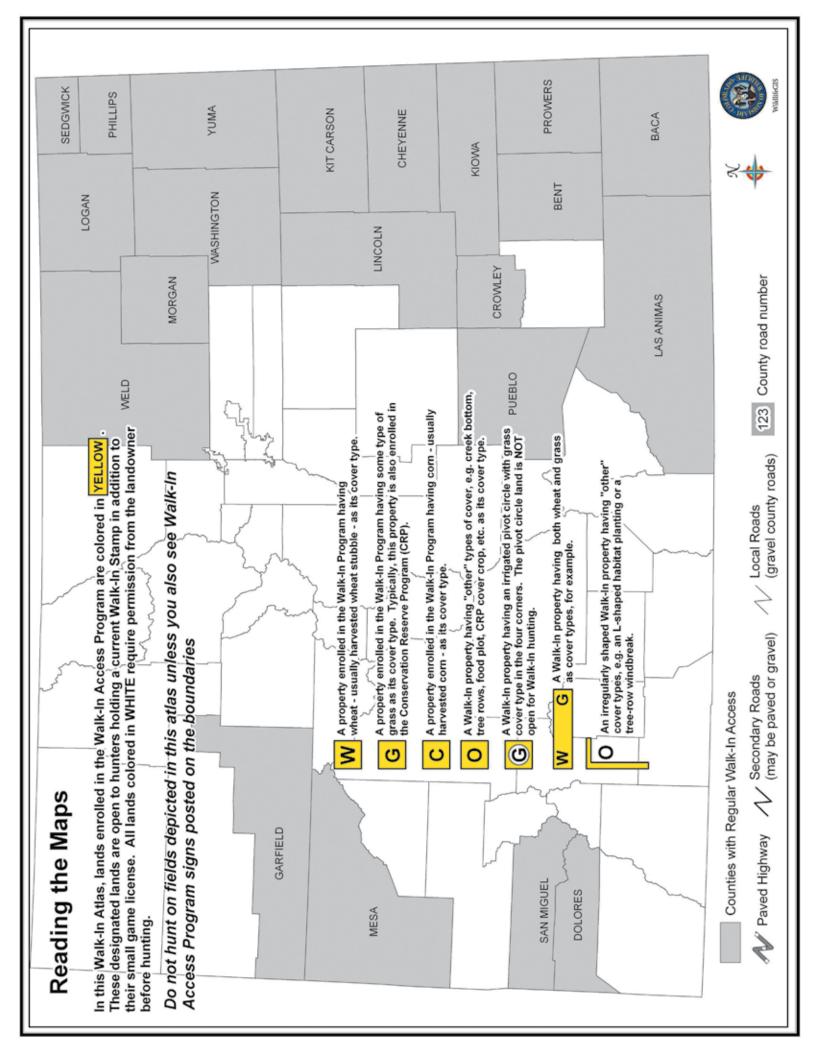


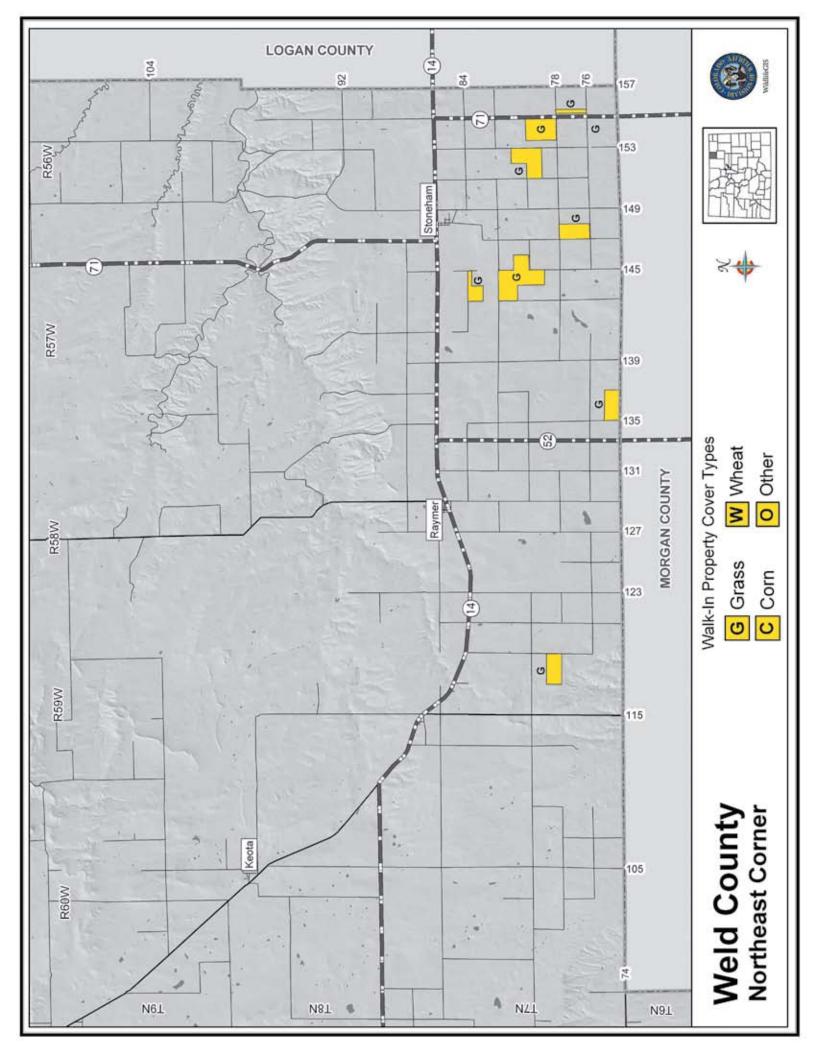
Eurasian collared dove

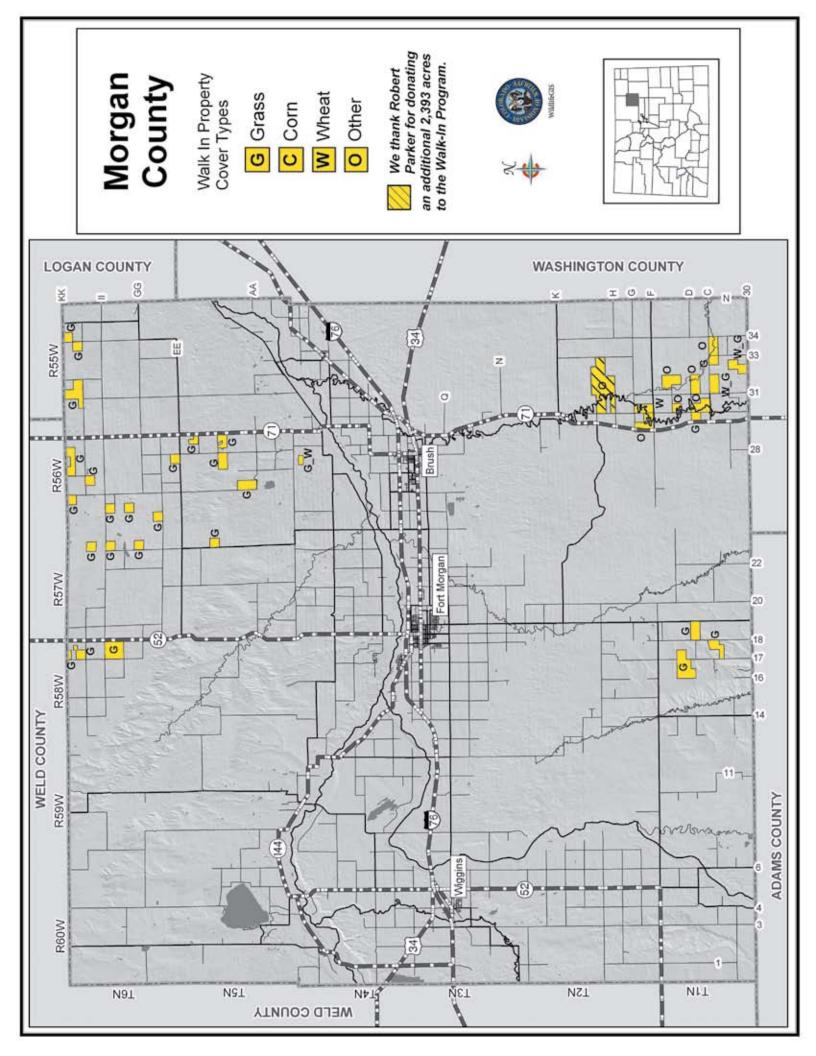


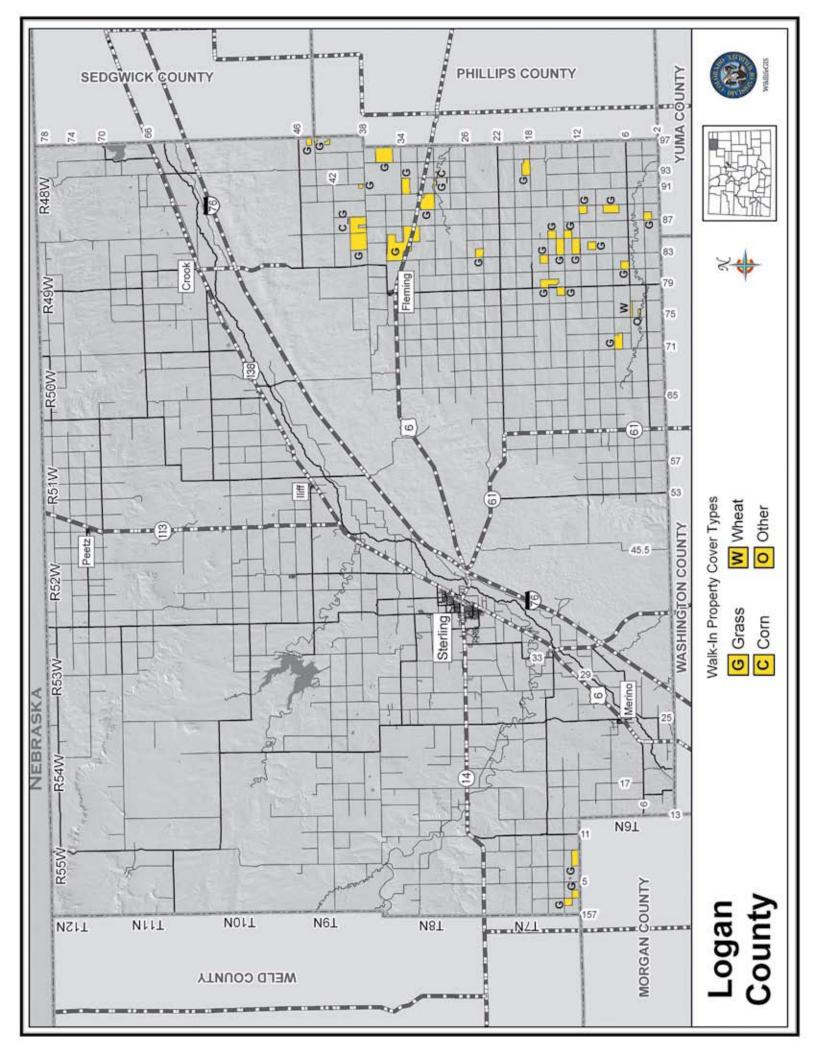
Mourning dove

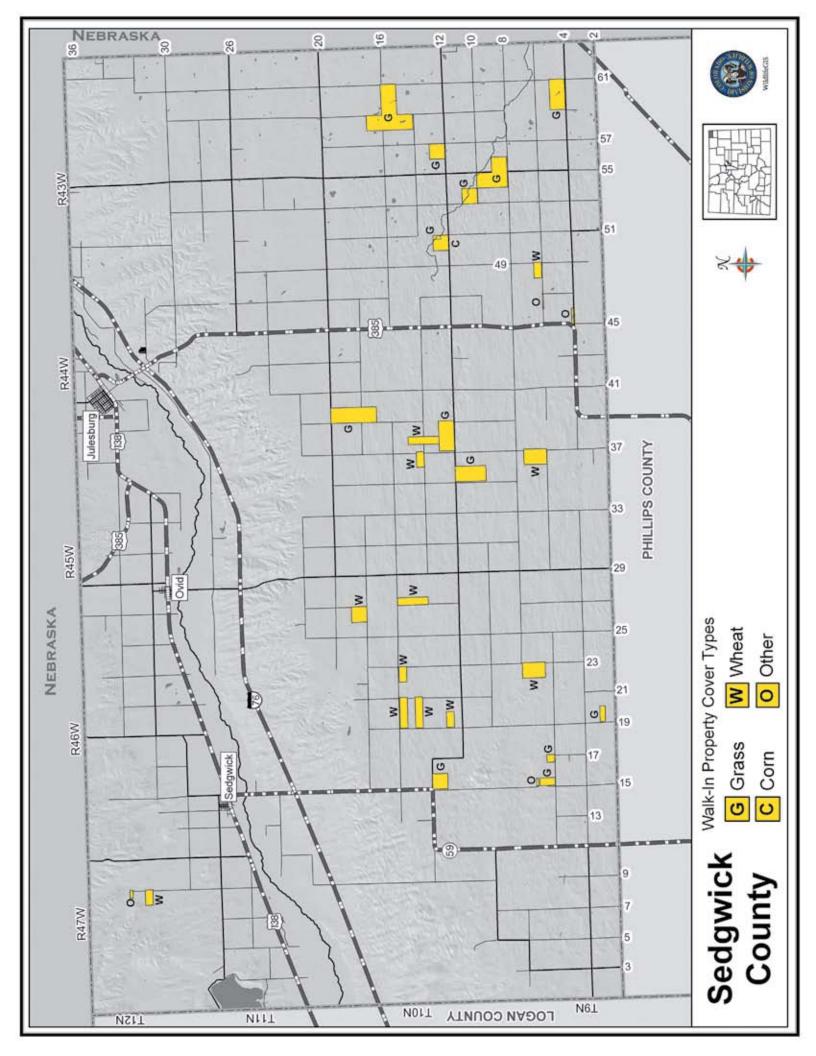
NOTE: While in the field or during transport, all dressed (not fully feathered) doves count against the daily bag and possession limit for **mourning and white-winged doves** during the Sept. 1-Oct. 30 dove season. During the special Eurasian collared-dove season, Dec. 1-end of February, all birds must be fully feathered while in the field or during transport.

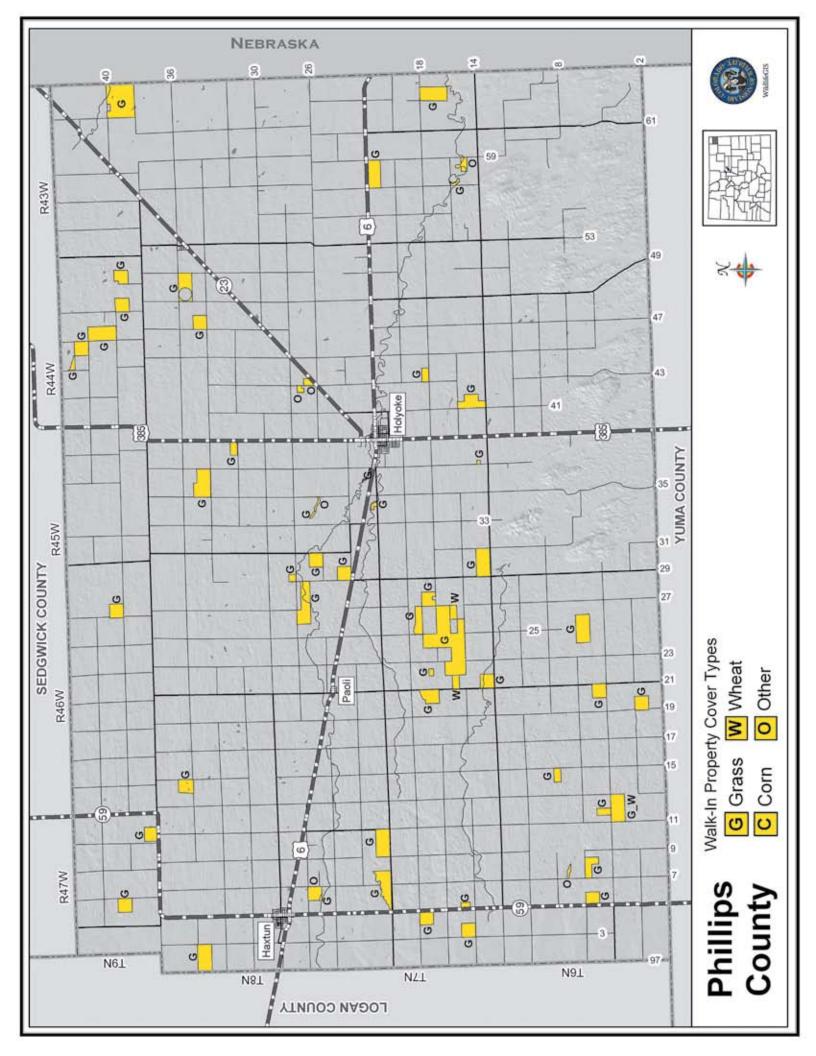


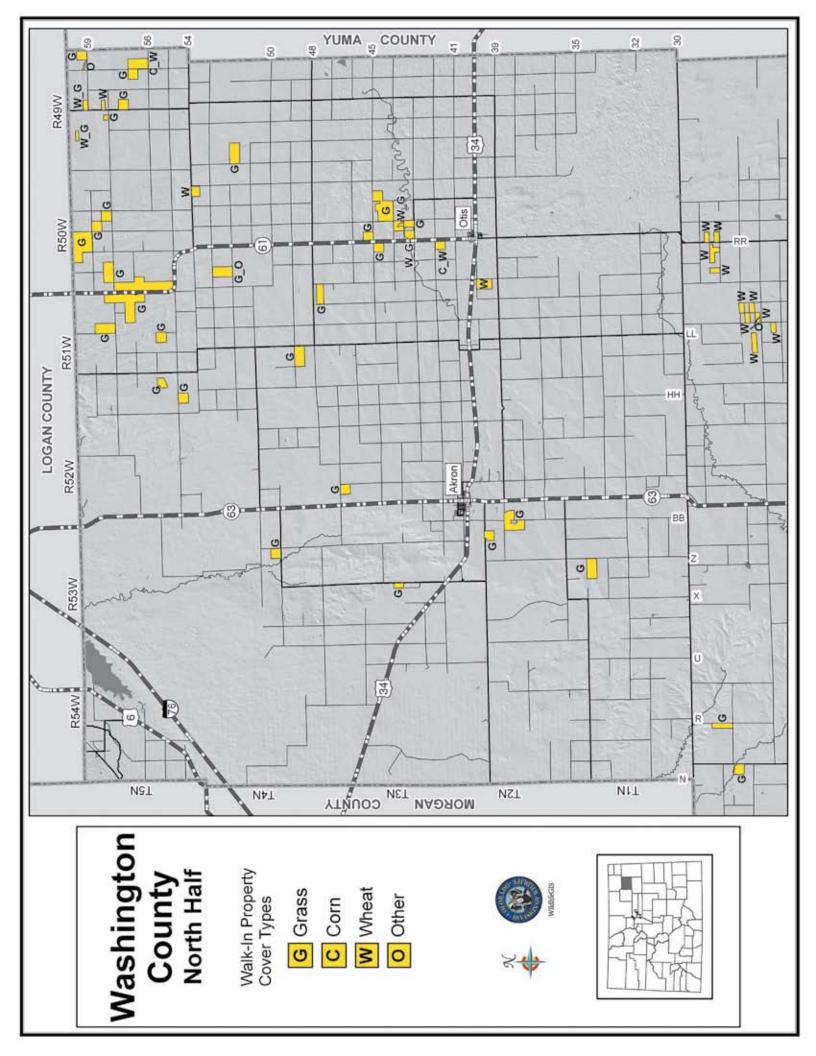


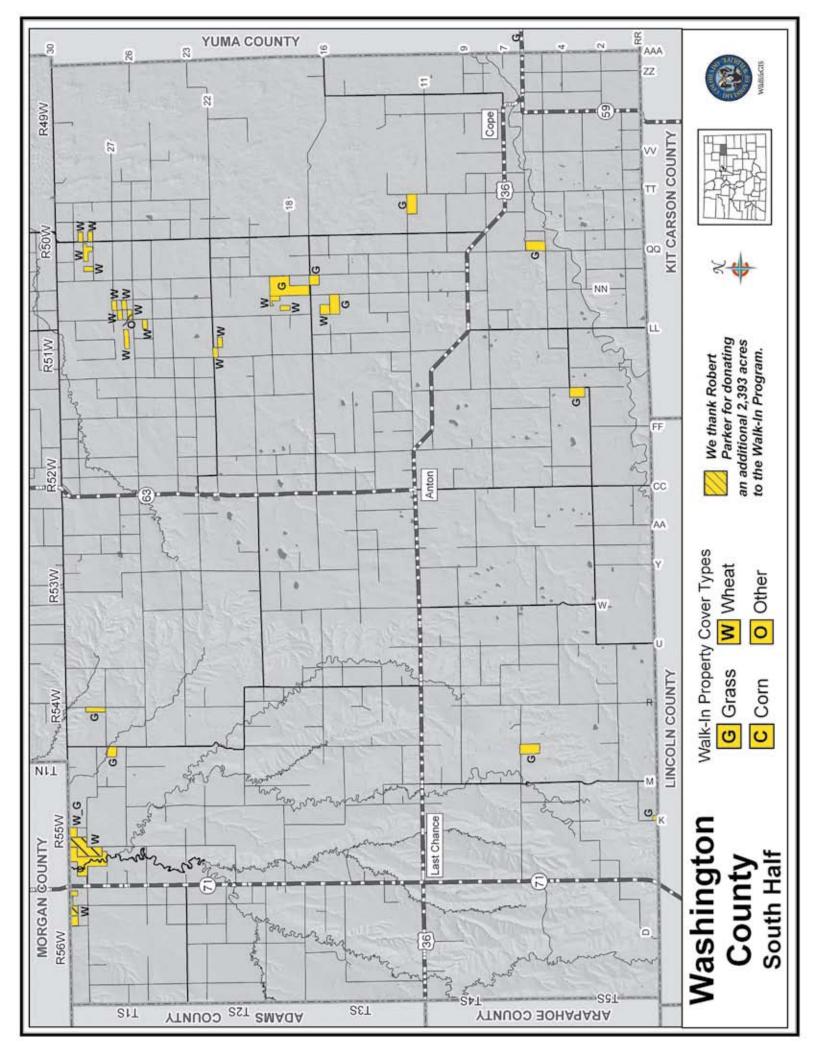


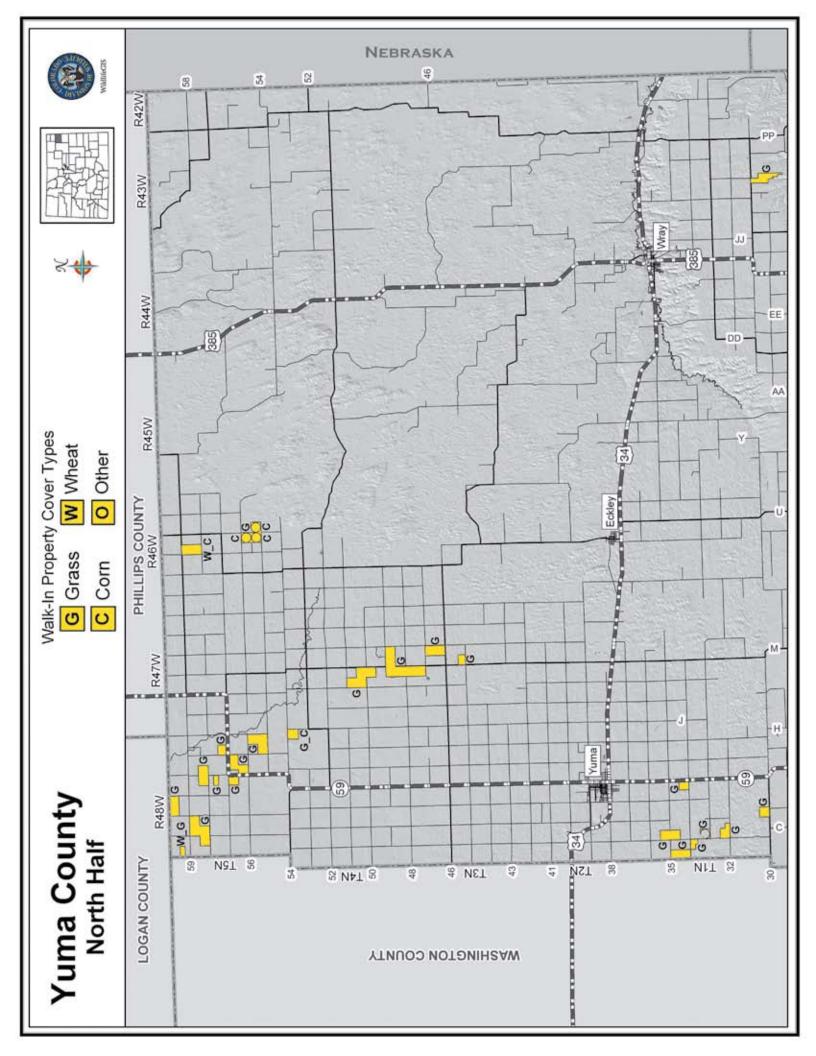


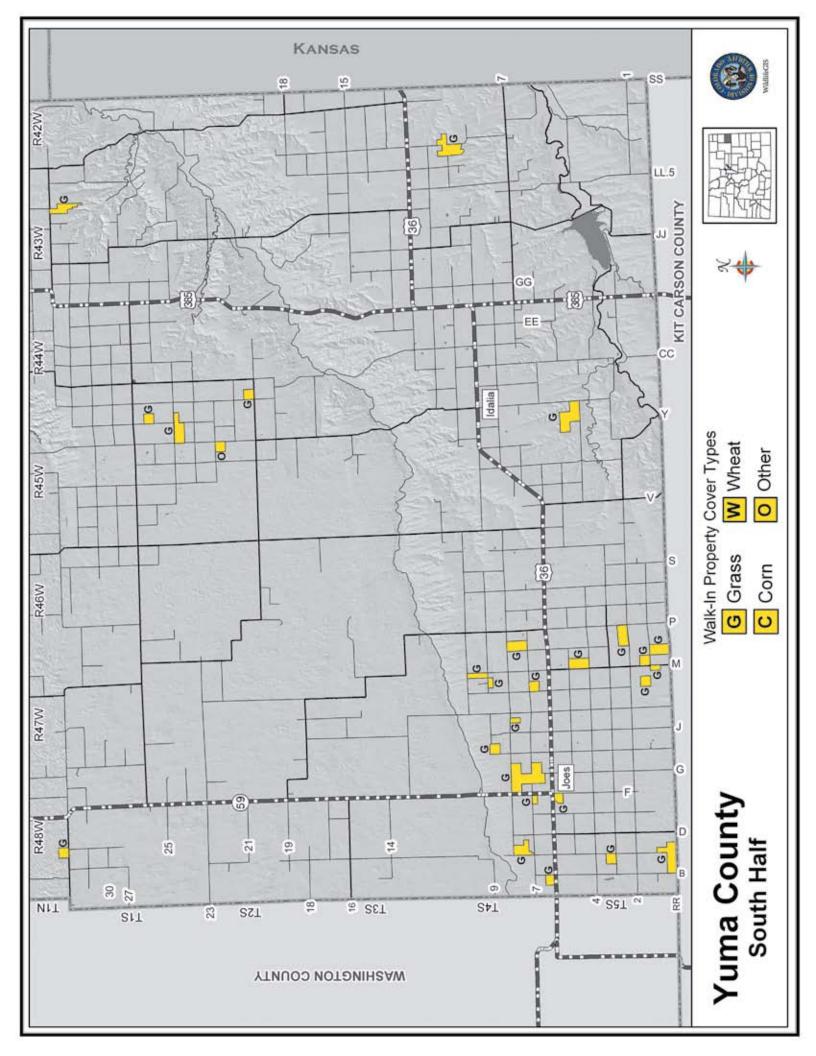


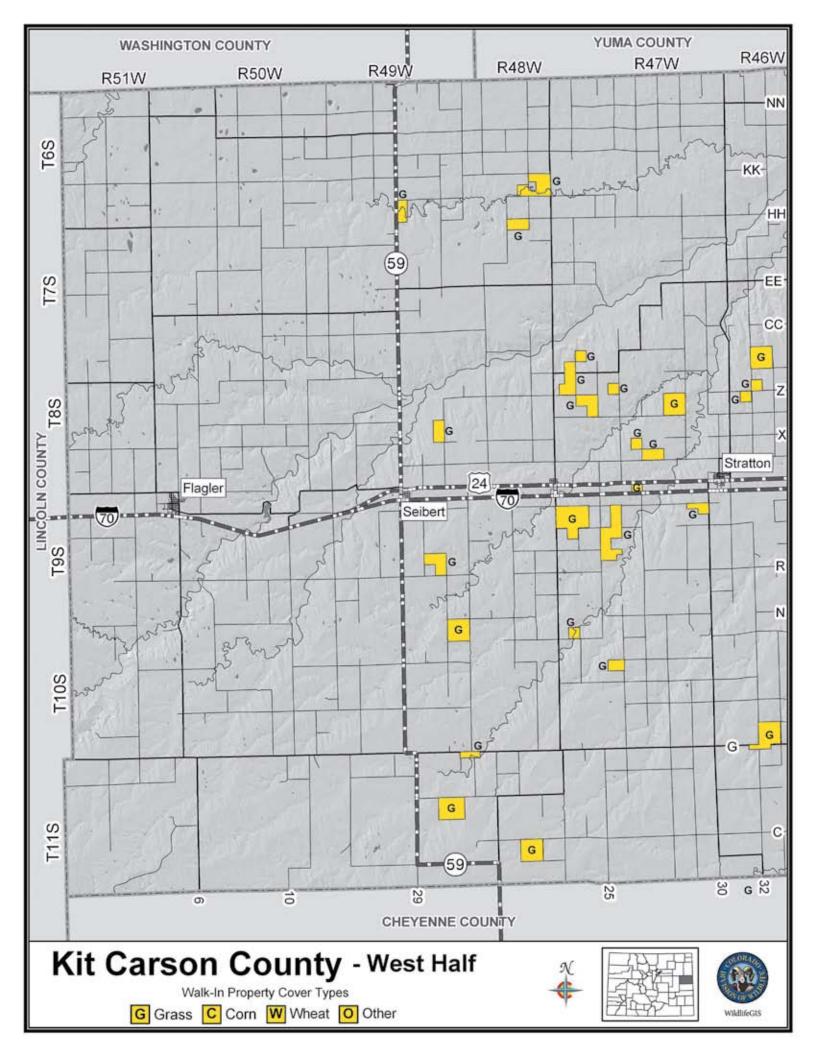


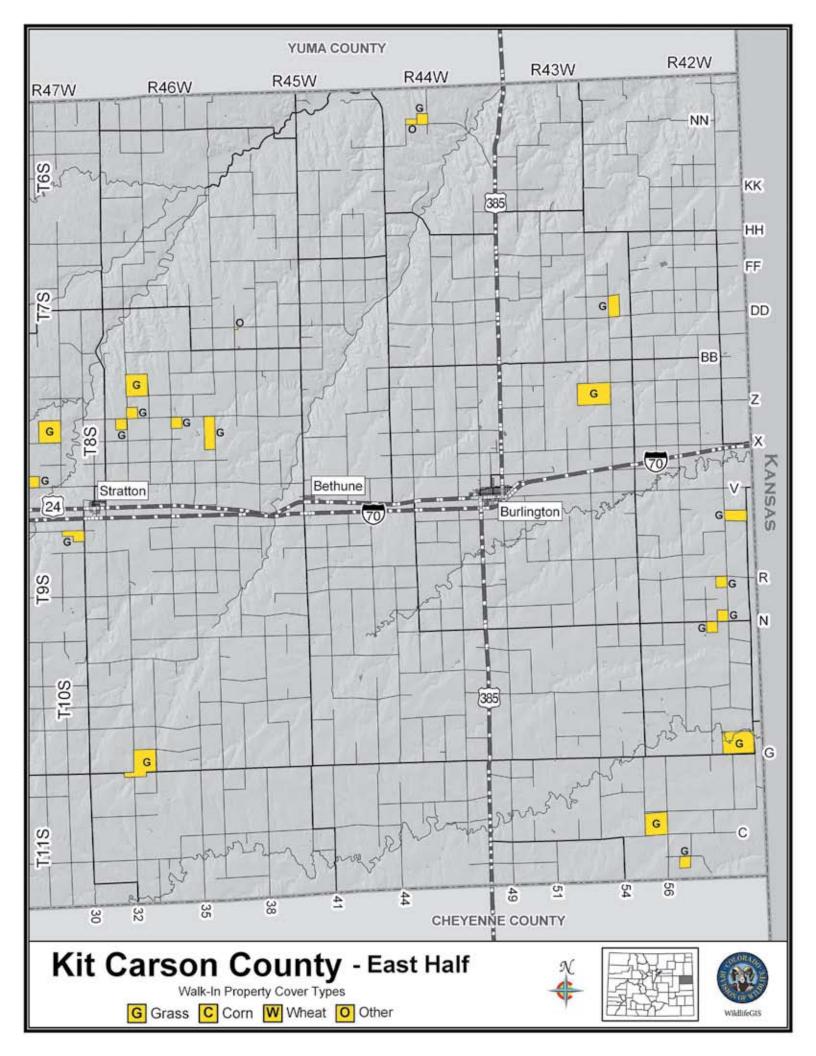


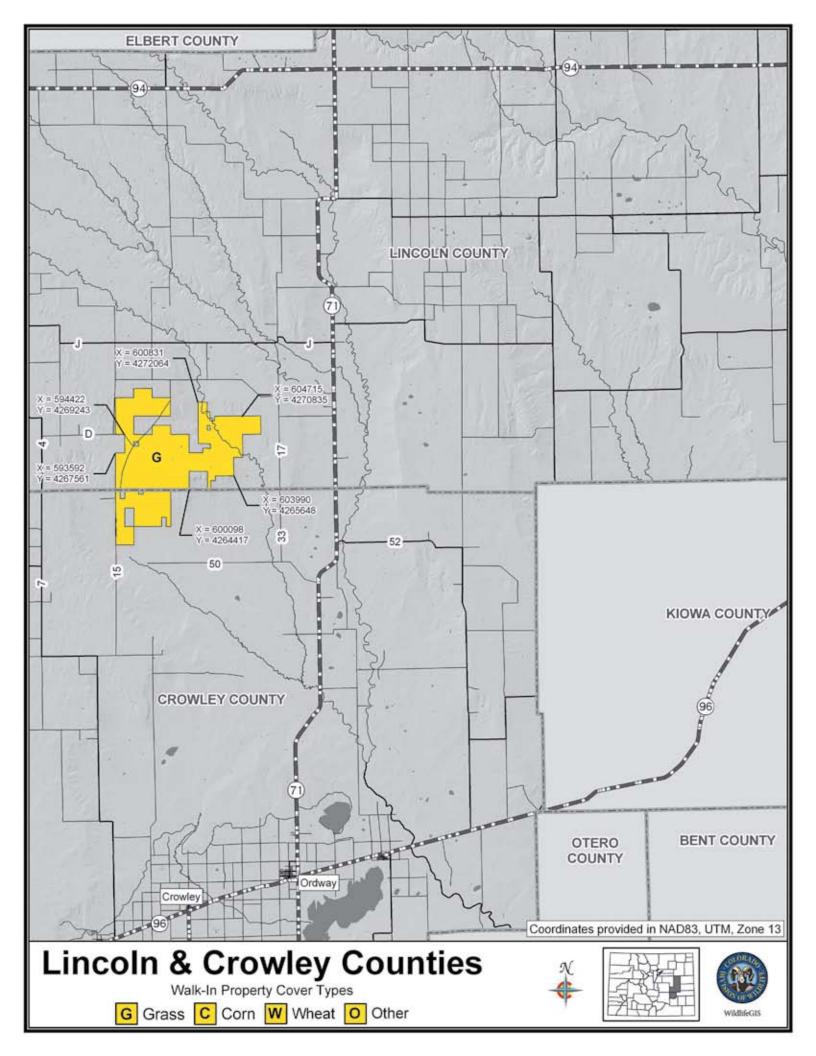


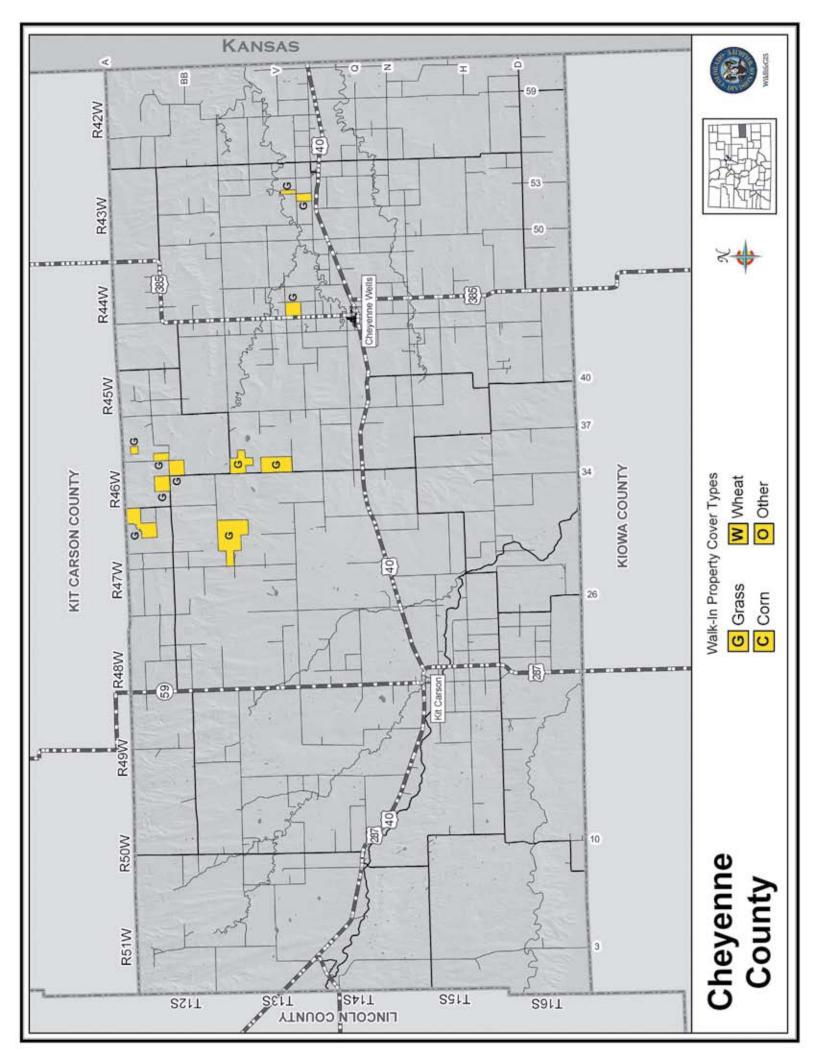


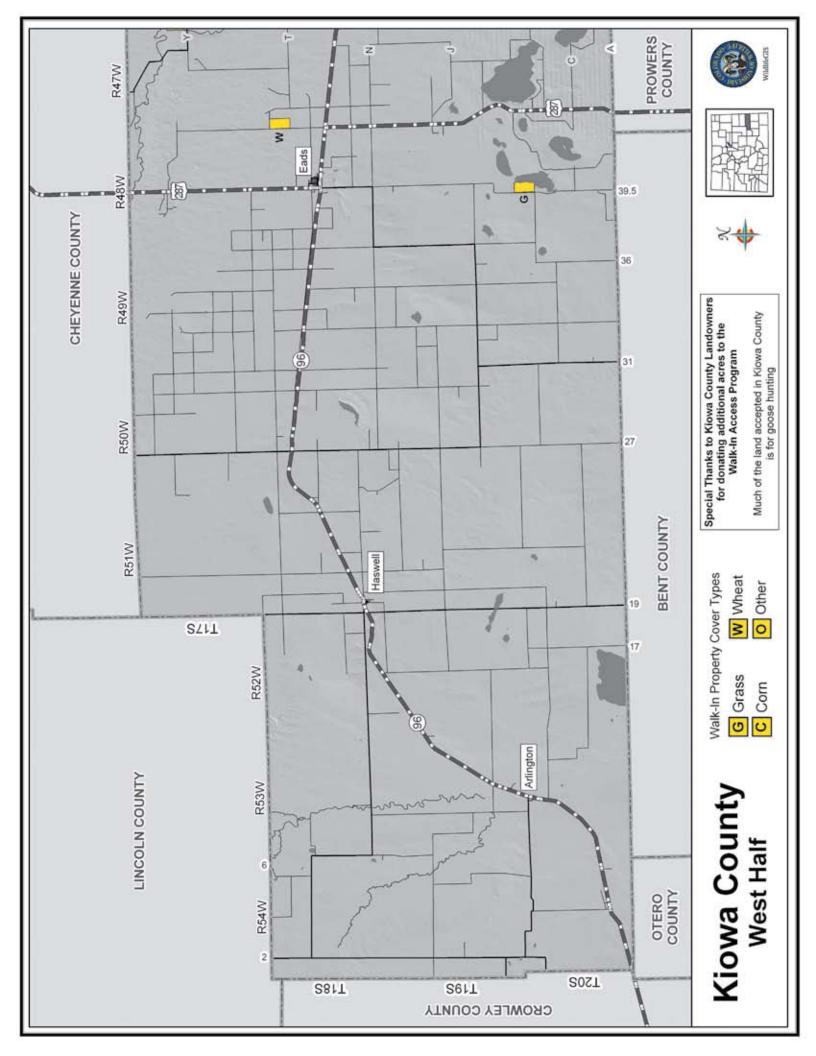


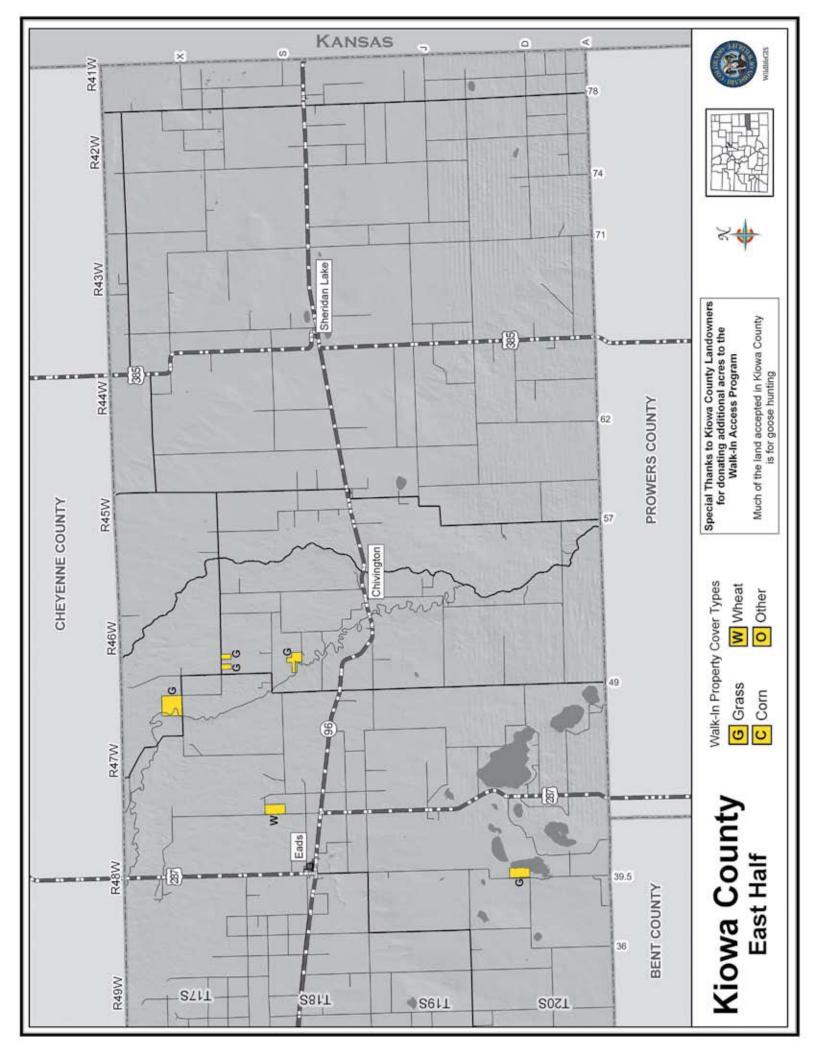


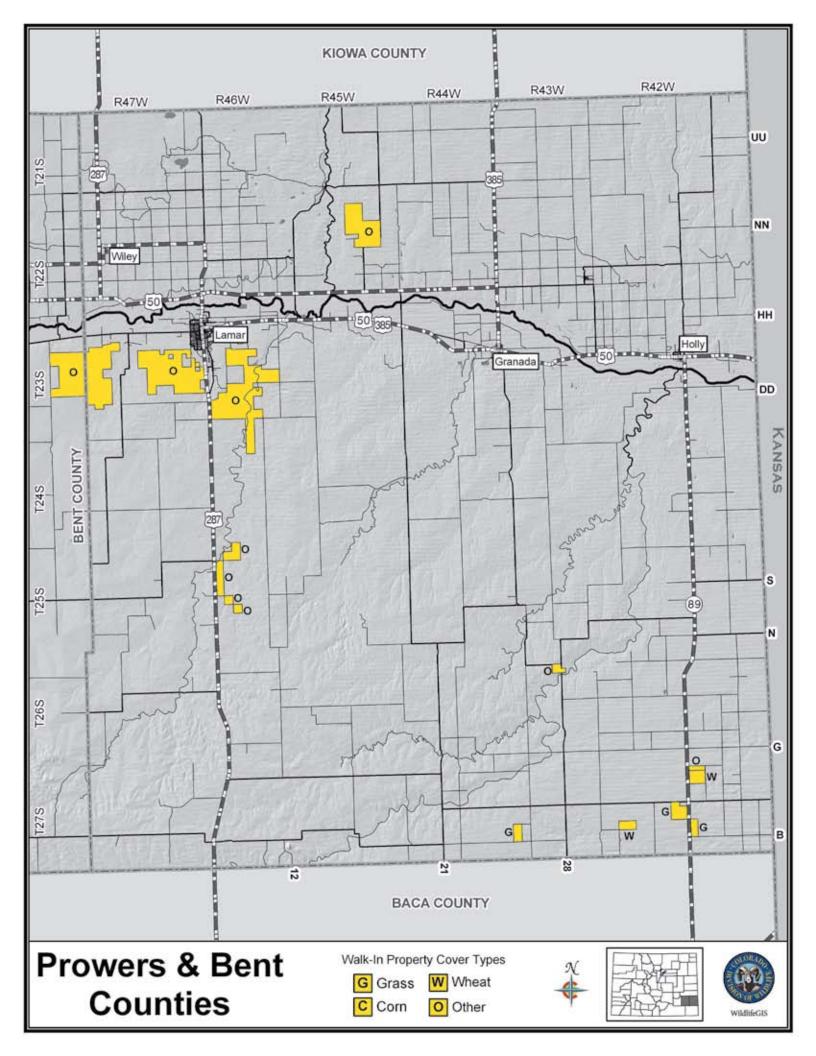


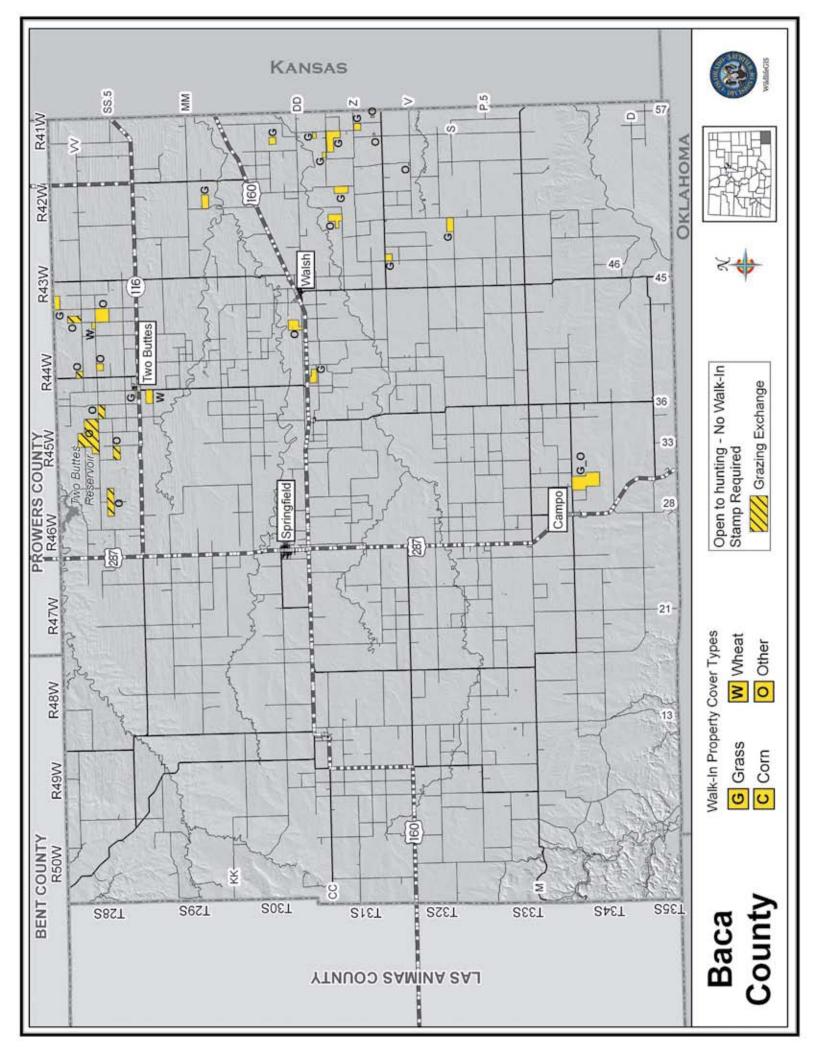


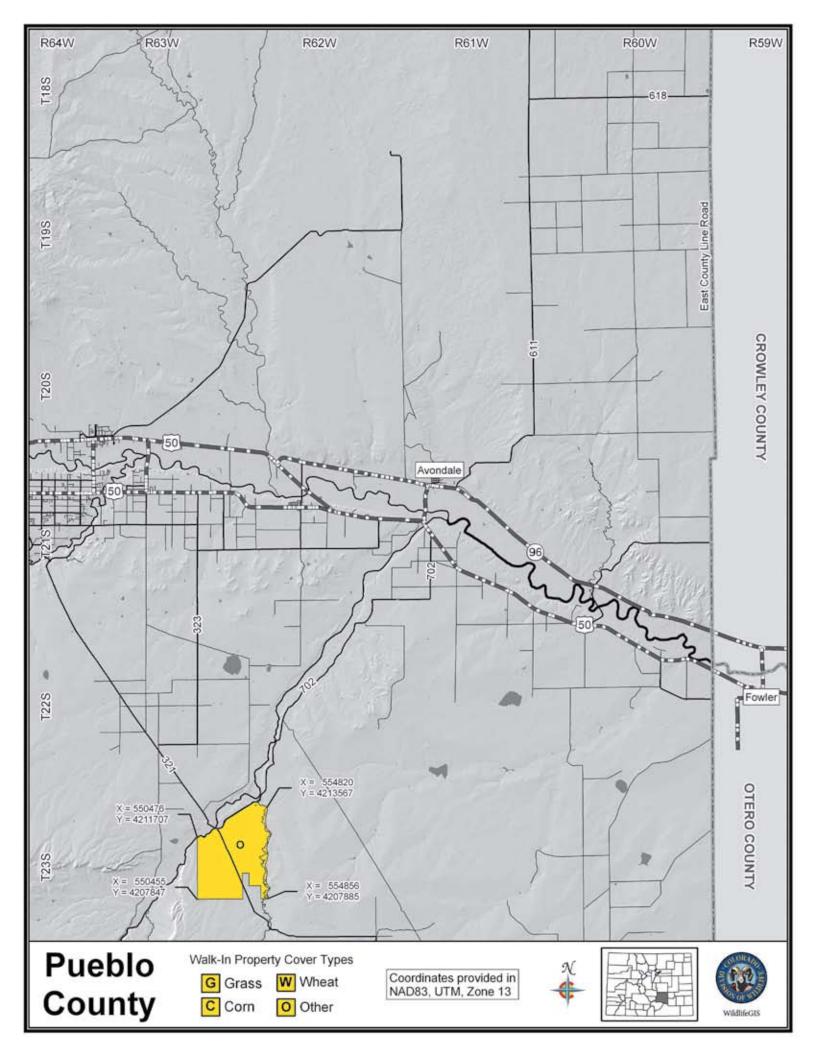


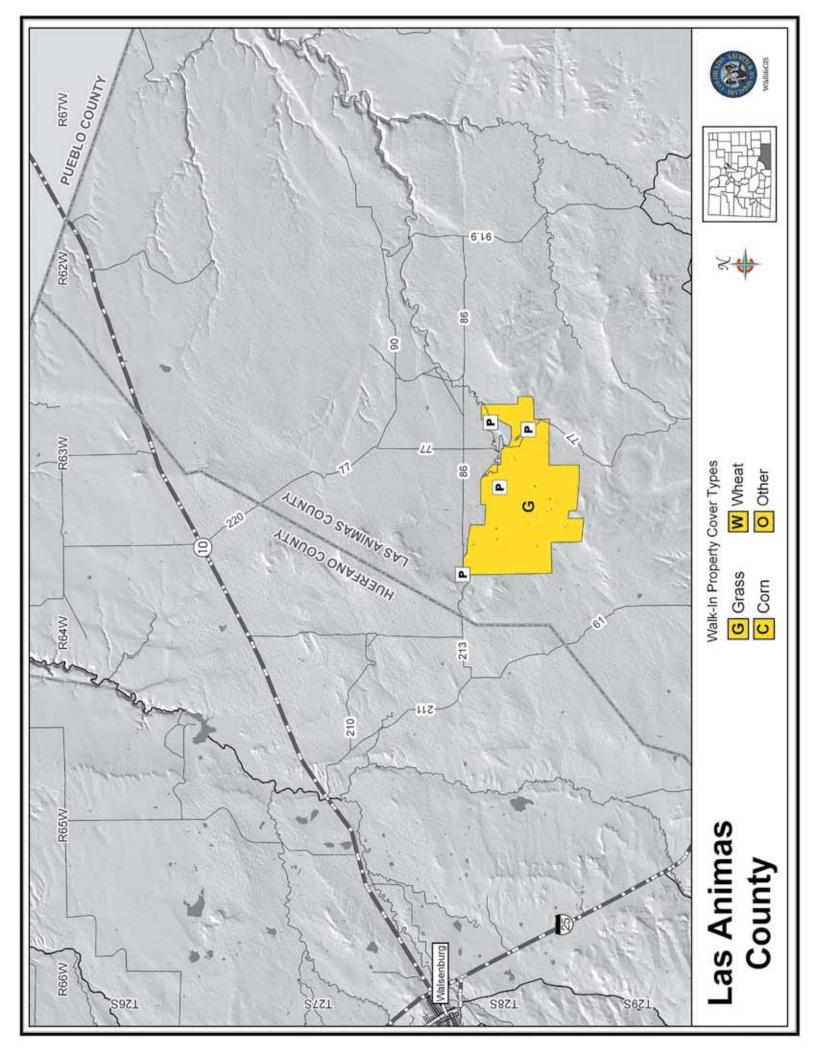


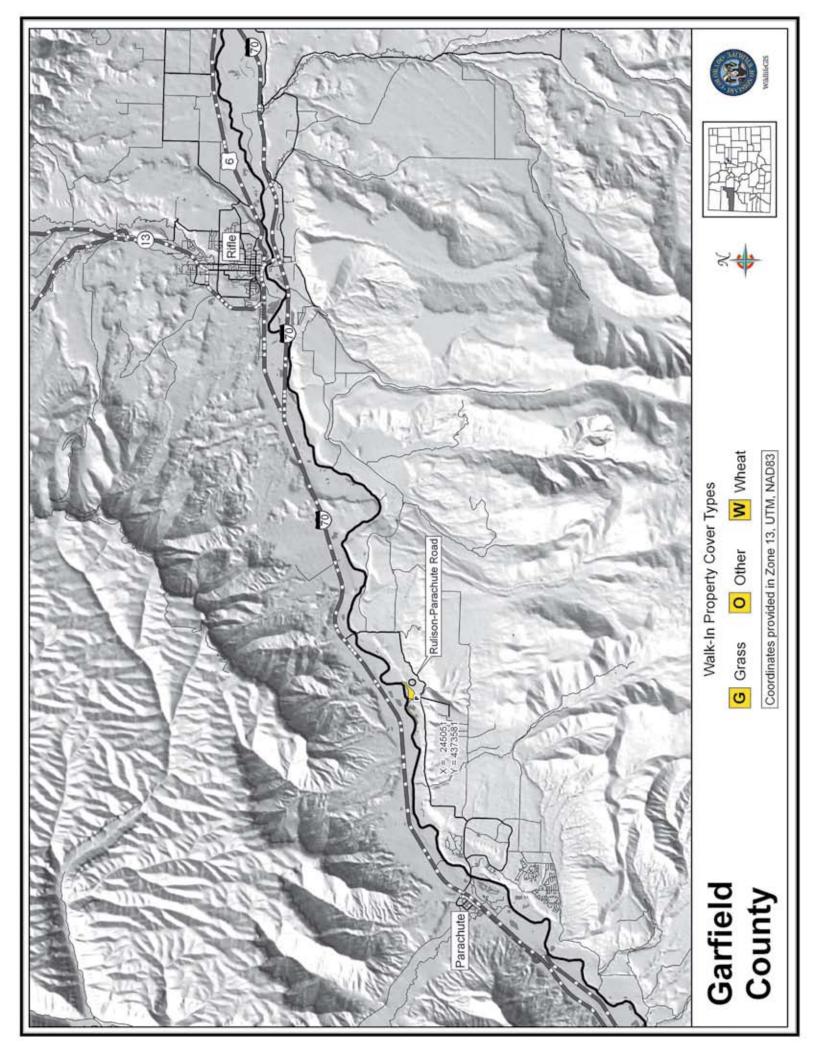


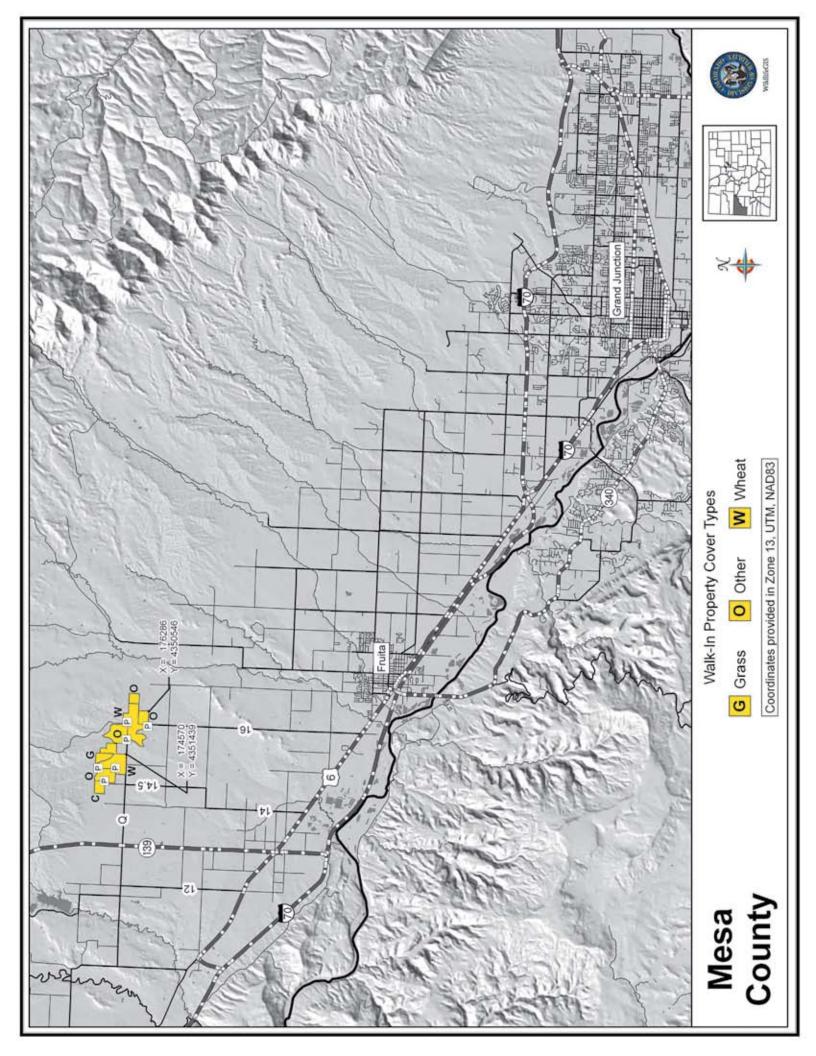


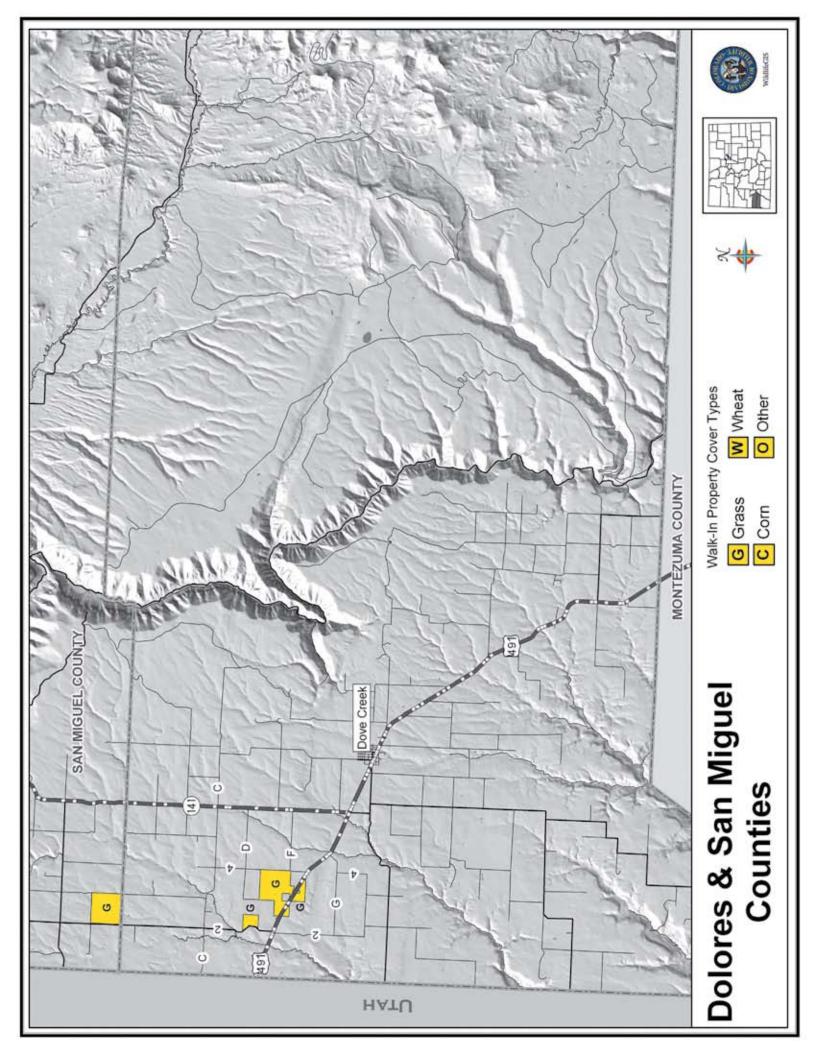












SMALL GAME WALK-IN ATLAS

Finding a Better Dove Hunt:

Mourning doves are the most widespread game bird in Colorado, occurring in all of Colorado's counties. Doves were harvested in 49 Colorado counties during the last harvest survey period. With such a wide distribution, the trick to successful dove hunting becomes finding concentrations of doves during the season. While some areas may consistently provide better dove hunting than others, county harvest numbers are influenced by hunter numbers as much as dove abundance, and hunters that are willing to seek out less popular areas might find excellent action and less hunting pressure.In most cases the best dove hunting occurs on both public and private land, and the Walk-In Access Program is a great opportunity for a hunter to get started.

So what makes a good dove hunting location? Well, there are some general things that hunters should pay attention to when looking for a place to hunt. For lone hunters or small parties, fifty doves in a specific area might be enough to enjoy a good hunt, but find a concentration of several hundred or a thousand doves, and a great hunt should ensue. Generally speaking, doves concentrate around three primary features, roosting areas, a convenient food source, and water sources. Find any of these alone and you should find some doves – finding two or three in combination can mean a large number of doves and the potential for some great action. Studying these three primary features and understanding how doves relate to them is helpful in paring down the list of potential dove spots.

Roosting Areas

Of the three, acceptable roosting areas are generally the easiest to find. Nearly any farmstead with a windbreak and a few dead snags can provide an acceptable dove roost. Seemingly, the species of tree isn't terribly important, as doves concentrate in any type that meets their needs, but cottonwood, elm, ash, locust and even Rocky Moun-

tain junipers are known to hold large numbers of doves, when they occur in the right place. For hunting purposes, look for sites that offer doves a variety of micro-habitats, including shade and wind protection. By far, the best roost sites for hunting are those that are close to water or food. Old corrals, gravelly areas, and dusting sites all add to the attractiveness of a roost sites. Isolated tree groves are equally valuable as hunting cover in farmland or in rangeland settings, and their value is inversely proportional to their occurrence on the land. Roost sites can be effectively hunted throughout the day, but the mid-morning period beginning around 10 a.m. can be excellent as doves come to the roost after the morning feeding period.



A cottonwood riparian dove roosting site in southeast Colorado.

Food Sources:

Dove foods can be categorized into two types; cultivated crops and natural food sources. In most years, cultivated crops provide a predictable food source for doves. Hunters often find good-sized concentrations of doves around wheat stubble, proso millet stubble, and domesticated sunflowers fields. In any of these fields, doves shy away from dense cover at ground level, so look for fields that have bare ground underneath the growing crop.

While doves do utilize agricultural food sources, over much of the range in Colorado, doves rely on natural food sources, including croton, bee plant, kochia, and pig-weed seeds. Each of these can support a good concentration of mourning doves when precipitation patterns and disturbance encourage their growth, but in many years, these pale in comparison to annual sunflowers. When conditions are right, and eastern Colorado range and croplands are covered with sunflowers, hunters can find amazing concentrations of local and migrating doves. Again, look for sunflower patches that have a thin under-story, with a good amount of bare ground. Also, pay attention to the maturity of the sunflowers. The best fields for dove hunting are those that have a good mixture of actively blooming sunflowers and already matured sunflower seeds that are falling to the ground and available to doves. In sunflower fields that are pulling in a good number of doves, hunters can pass shoot birds coming to and leaving the field or, a hunter can walk the field for opportunities at flushing doves, akin to hunting pheasants. Hunters are well advised to mark downed doves precisely when hunting weedy fields, and pick them up immediately instead of shooting at other doves. Doves blend in amazingly well and can be difficult to find if a hunter waits for even a few minutes before retrieving. Sunflower fields don't have to be large, even a small patch a few acres in size can pull in a surprising number of doves.



Fields of annual sunflowers are great concentration sites for doves.



This wheat field provides both foraging and loafing sites for doves.

Water:

A variety of water sources are used by doves. Similar to food sources, doves seem to prefer water sources that have little or no cover at water's edge or in the adjacent uplands. Good areas that should catch your eye include cattle watering tanks, stock ponds, gravel pits, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) guzzlers, flooded creek bottoms or small depressions that simply catch rainfall. Even a small puddle of water can pull in large numbers of doves, especially if the water is near a good food source or roosting site. While morning hunts can be productive at watering areas, often the best activity occurs afternoon and into the early evening. On days that are unseasonably hot, hunting can be consistent throughout the afternoon, but the last 45 minutes of legal shooting hours can be fantastic at a well-used water site. Many eastern Colorado water sources are short-lived at best, but once doves start using a watering source, a good number of birds will continue to use an ever-shrinking puddle as long as some water is present.



This windmill is a commonly used watering site in northeast Colorado *Photo by Mike Trujillo*

Hunting Concepts

Like pheasant or duck hunting, preparation plays an important role in a successful dove hunt. Experienced dove hunters consider dove hunting as serious as any other hunting opportunity, right down to the techniques of scouting and watching the weather forecast. Knowing how doves react to weather patterns and even individual weather events is an important concept to master, if the goal is a successful hunt. Here are some concepts that are well worth considering before a dove hunt.

1. Habitat Composition - A proven tactic used by dove hunters is to determine which primary habitat requirement is in the least supply in a given area, and focus hunting efforts on that habitat requirement. In any year or area, limiting factors change, but figuring out which requirement is most limited across the landscape is paramount to a good hunt. In an arid climate like eastern Colorado, water is not very prevalent in a normal year and often provides a good focal point for doves. Yet, if an area happens to be unusually wet resulting in a large number of seasonal lagoons or stock ponds, each individual water source is simply less attractive to doves because they can find water in multiple locations. The same concept holds true for foraging and roosting areas; and might only have one or two fields that doves use for feeding, or only a few good roost sites. Wise hunters focus on the habitat requirement that is most limited within their hunting area.

2. Weather Effects - As the previous paragraph describes, weather can play a huge role in dove hunting. Without a doubt, weather is the most significant factor that affects doves, including their distribution and how long they remain in a certain area. Most seasoned dove hunters are well aware of the impacts a late August cold front can have on dove numbers in the northern parts of Colorado. While an August cold front is rarely severe enough to send all the doves south prior to the season, even a mild front can hurry the migration. In southern Colorado, severe cold fronts are less common until October. More important than severe cold fronts, run of the mill weather events can significantly effect how doves use the landscape and in turn, affect what hunters find in the field. For instance, consider the impacts that a drought year can have on food availability and a hunter's choice of hunt location. Extremely dry seasons can reduce dove numbers in rangeland settings, because in these areas, doves are quite reliant on annual forb seeds for food, like annual sunflowers or buffalo burs, which need some precipitation to compete with rangeland grasses. When these foods aren't available, doves often move to an area

with more food, which often means an area dominated by cropland, primarily wheat and millet stubble. Even in the driest years, cultivated crops produce some food for doves, and harvesting operations leave a good amount of waste grain available. In addition, grain food sources are often supplemented by broadleaf forb seeds that grow in road ditches, fence rows, and abandoned farmsteads.

3. Season timing - September 1 is the earliest date in which the Migratory Bird Treaty Act allows migratory bird hunting, including doves. In turn, mourning doves begin migrating to southern wintering areas beginning in August, although this can be earlier or later depending on the year. In a normal year, good numbers of doves are found in northern Colorado when the season begins in September; however, migration has normally started by this time. In northeast Colorado, it is unusual to find large numbers of doves after the 3rd week of September, with noticeable differences in numbers between the first few days of September and the 15th, meaning that hunters in the northeast must hunt early to find lots of doves. By October 1, very few doves are left in northeast Colorado populations of doves are bolstered by migrating doves throughout the month of September. In many years, decent numbers of doves remain in southeast Colorado into October, providing hunters with a great opportunity to extend their season. Considering this, hunters interested in maximizing their dove hunting opportunity may choose to hunt early in the northeast, and then make a trip or two to southern parts of the state later in the season for a good chance at finding large numbers of birds.

Hunters - this space provided for notes taken while scouting

