

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

An Act To Strengthen Maine's Wildlife Laws

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 12 MRSA §10001, sub-§39, as enacted by PL 2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 and affected by c. 614, §9, is amended to read:

39. Migratory game bird. "Migratory game bird" means any of the following birds:

- A. Anatidae, or waterfowl, including brant, wild ducks, geese and swans;
- B. Columbidae, or pigeons, including doves and wild pigeons, but not including rock doves;
- C. Gruidae, or cranes, including little brown, and sandhill ~~and whooping~~ cranes;
- D. Limicolae, or shorebirds, including ~~avocets, curlews, dowitchers, godwits, knots, oyster catchers, phalaropes, plovers, sandpipers, Wilson's snipe, stilts, surf birds, turnstones, willet, and American woodcock and yellowlegs~~; and
- E. Rallidae, or rails, including coots, gallinules and sora or other rails.

Sec. 2. 12 MRSA §10105, sub-§14, as enacted by PL 2011, c. 668, §1, is amended to read:

14. Regulating the feeding of deer, bear, moose and wild turkey. The commissioner may by rule:

- A. Prohibit the feeding of deer, bear, moose and wild turkey at any location if there is documented evidence of chronic wasting disease, as defined in Title 7, section 1821, subsection 1, in the State; ~~and~~
- B. Prohibit or otherwise limit the feeding of deer, bear, moose and wild turkey if the department has reason to believe that the type or location of feed is creating a public safety hazard or having a detrimental effect on the deer, bear, moose and wild turkey; ~~and~~
- C. Prohibit or otherwise limit the placement of garbage or other known attractants for deer, bear, moose and wild turkey if the department has reason to believe the placement creates a public safety hazard.

Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

Sec. 3. 12 MRSA §11851, as affected by PL 2003, c. 614, §9 and amended by c. 655, Pt. B, §184 and affected by §422, is further amended to read:

§ 11851. Hunting wild birds

1. Unlawfully hunting wild birds. A person may not hunt a wild bird, other than the English or European house sparrow, the rock dove and the European starling, except as provided in this Part.

2. Unlawful possession of wild birds. A person may not possess, alive or dead, a wild bird, other than the English or European house sparrow, the rock dove and the European starling, except as provided in this Part.

3. Penalty. A person who violates this section commits a Class E crime.

Sec. 4. 12 MRSA §11852, as enacted by PL 2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 and affected by c. 614, §9, is amended to read:

§ 11852.Reopening season

Whenever a section of the State is closed to hunting by proclamation of the Governor during the open season on birds, the commissioner, after the proclamation has been annulled, with the consent of the Governor, may extend the open season for bird hunting in that section of the State for a period not to exceed the number of days lost as permitted by regulations of the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, 16 United States Code, Sections 703 to 712.

Sec. 5. 12 MRSA §11854, as enacted by PL 2003, c. 414, Pt. A, §2 and affected by c. 614, §9, is amended to read:

§ 11854.Nest or eggs of wild birds

A person may not take, possess or needlessly destroy the nest or eggs of a wild bird, except the English or European house sparrow, the rock dove and the European starling. A person who violates this section commits a Class E crime.

Sec. 6. 12 MRSA §11857 is enacted to read:

§ 11857. Unlawful possession of ruffed grouse

1. Daily bag limit. A person may not take more than the daily bag limit of ruffed grouse during any open season on ruffed grouse as established by the commissioner.

2. Possession limit. A person may not possess more than the possession limit of ruffed grouse taken during any open season on ruffed grouse as established by the commissioner.

3. Duty to label ruffed grouse. A person shall label any ruffed grouse that the person has taken, before the next calendar day begins, with the name of the person who harvested the ruffed grouse and the date it was taken if that person is within or travelling through the unorganized territory.

4. Penalty. A person who violates this section commits a Class E crime for which a fine of not less than \$100 plus \$25 for each ruffed grouse taken in violation may be adjudged.

Sec. 7. Wildlife Importation and Possession Task Force established. The Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife shall establish a task force to consider the effect of the importation and possession of wildlife and the issues of possession and exhibition of wildlife in the State. The task force must include a representative of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, a representative of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Bureau of Warden Service and 3 members of the public invited by the commissioner. The duties of the task force include developing recommendations for a list of restricted, unrestricted and banned species; amendments to current permit structures and fees; and the establishment of appropriate penalties for noncompliance with requirements. The commissioner shall submit a report by January 14, 2014 that includes the findings and recommendations of the task force, including suggested legislation, for presentation to the Second Regular Session of the 126th Legislature. The Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife is authorized to introduce a bill related to the subject matter of the report to the Second Regular Session of the 126th Legislature upon receipt of the report.

SUMMARY

This bill makes changes to Maine's wildlife laws for the purpose of strengthening wildlife populations. It adds rock doves to the list of wild birds that may be hunted, and it adds bear, moose and wild turkey to the list of wild animals a person is prohibited to feed. The bill adds language to clarify that the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife's extension of the open season for bird hunting in certain sections of the State that had been closed by proclamation must conform to federal guidelines for migratory game bird species. It adds a provision regarding unlawful possession of ruffed grouse. The bill also directs the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to establish a task force to consider the effect of the importation and possession of wildlife and the issues of possession and exhibition of wildlife in the State.