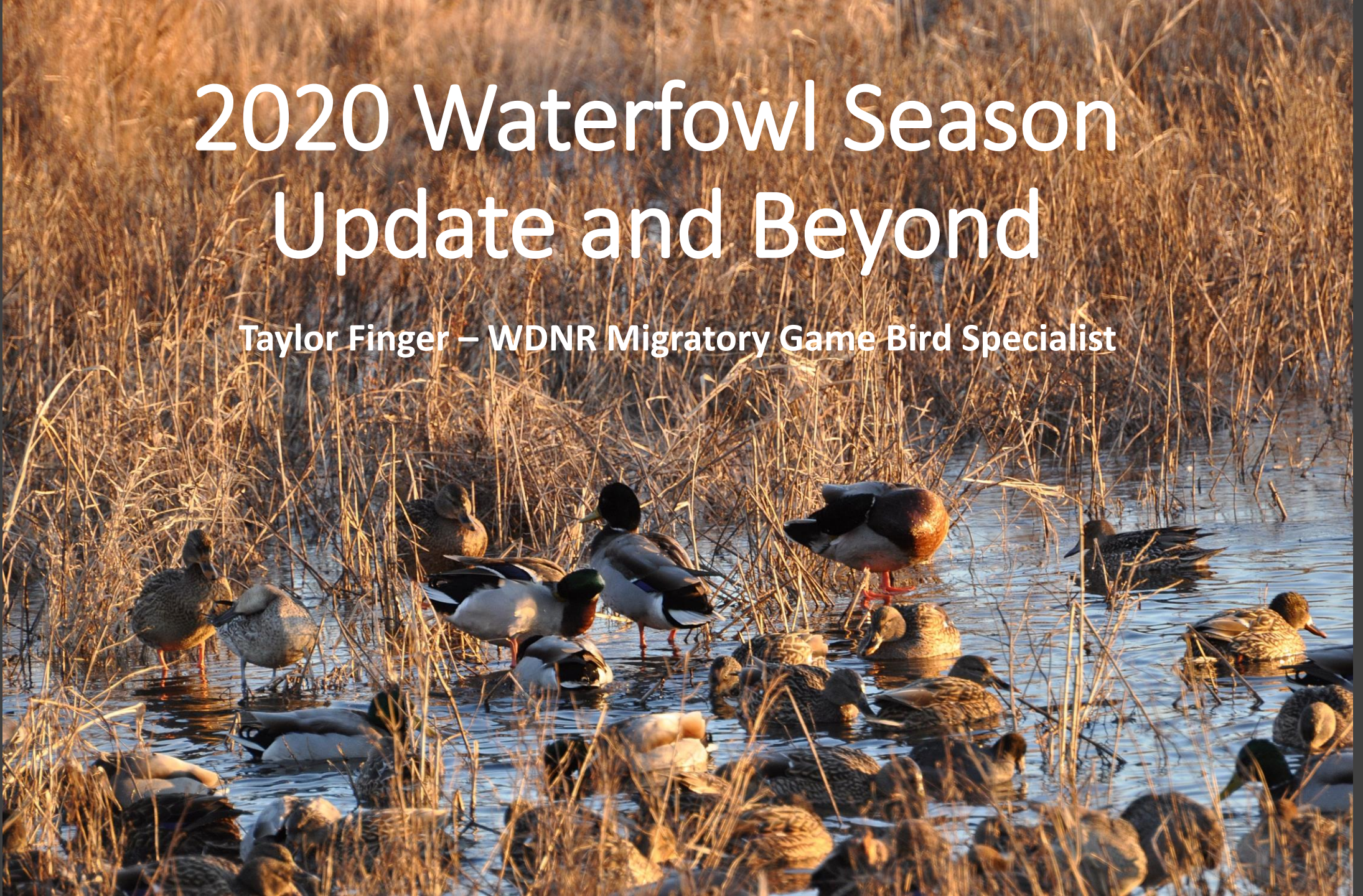


# 2020 Waterfowl Season Update and Beyond

Taylor Finger – WDNR Migratory Game Bird Specialist



# COVID Impacts on Waterfowl Data

- Due to travel and social distancing restrictions no state or continental breeding population data was collected
- Minimal surveys and banding conducted on Arctic and Subarctic Goose populations
- WI and MN did not band Canada Geese (IA, MI, IN, IL, KY, TN all did)
- WI has banded ~1,000 Wood ducks and 3,000 Mallards
- Limitations on ability to fly Mississippi River and Green Bay Surveys this fall due to COVID restrictions











# Flyway Meeting Updates

- Miss. Flyway meeting (via Zoom) was held Aug. 25<sup>th</sup> -27<sup>th</sup>
- Reminder of process
  - Flyway recommendations go to USFWS for review and final decision
- Take aways from meeting (recommendations – not USFWS approved)
  - 2021 Duck bag limits and seasons length mirror 2020
  - Update Canada goose management plan to liberalize regular season Canada Goose Bag limit to 5/day
  - Extension for states on the Zone and split decision until 2021
  - MN Early Teal Season
  - Very late approval for hunting seasons again in 2020

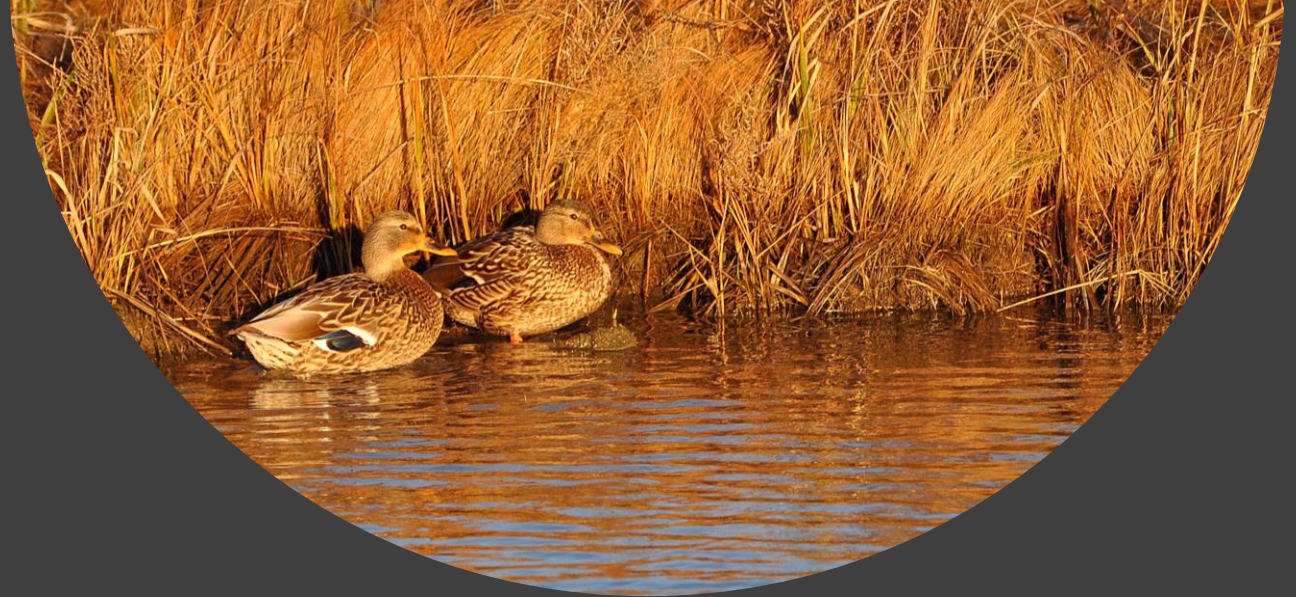
# 2020 Waterfowl Forecast

- Early Teal and Early Goose (Canada and Light Geese)
  - Canada geese – Excellent
  - Teal – Fair to average
  - Water Conditions – Variable
- Regular Duck and Goose
  - Canada geese – Average to above average
  - Ducks – Average to above average
  - Water Conditions – Average to above average



# 2020 Hunting Season Regulation Changes

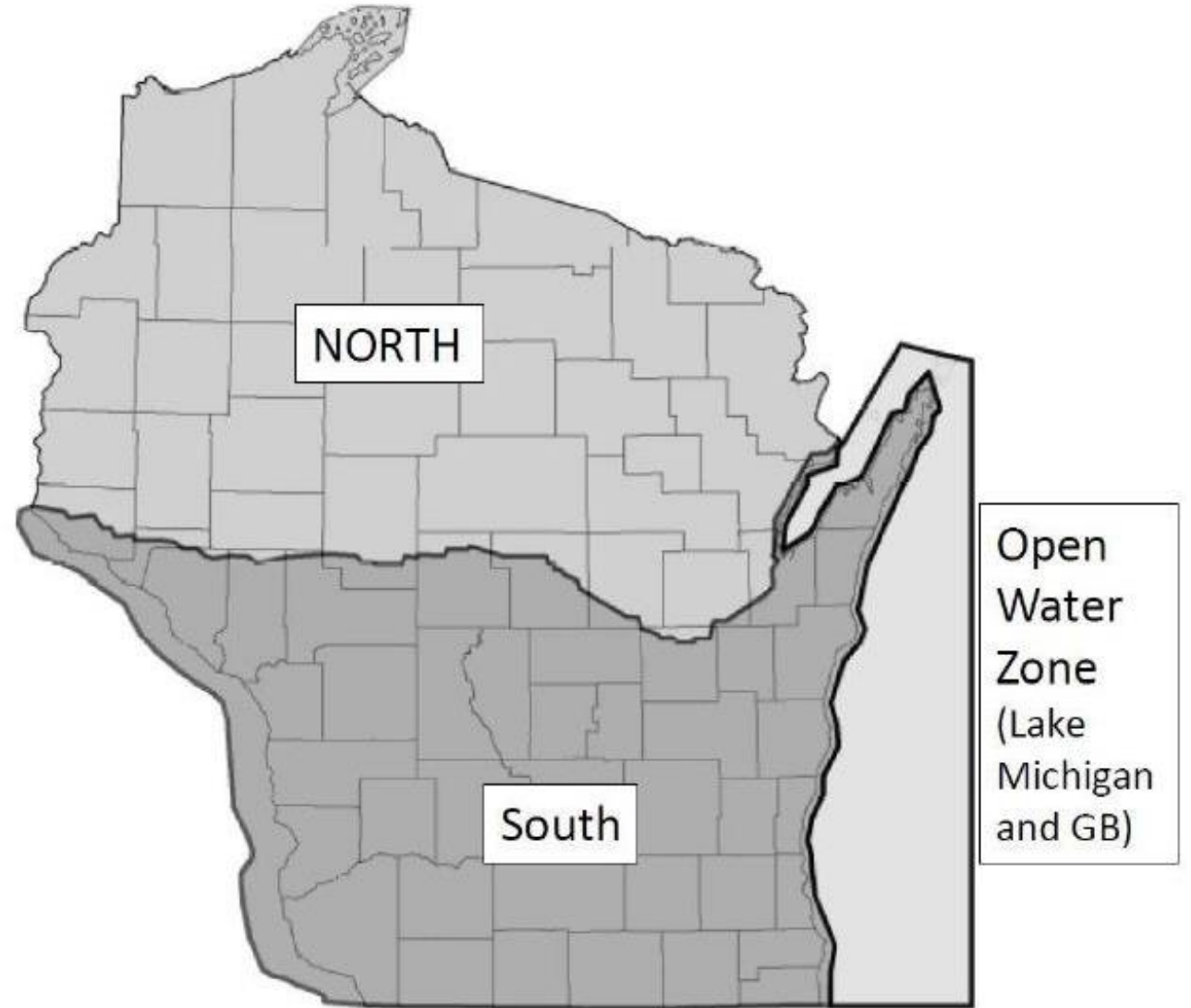
- Increase in Hen Mallard Bag limit to 2/day
  - Science and hunting public supported
- North Zone opens as early as possible (change from 2018 and 2019)
- South and Miss. River Zone open first week in October with same season structure
- Scaup bag limit changes
  - 1 scaup/day for first 15 days and 2 scaup/day for 45 days
- Changes to many waterfowl closed areas and refuges (later in presentation)





# 2021 Zone Configuration

- New Zone Configuration (2021 – 2025)
  - North, South and Lake Michigan Zone
  - Miss. River zone is combined with South Zone
  - Public and Hunting/Conservation Organization Support
  - Working with LE and legal on Lake Michigan Zone boundaries (islands, causeways, points, harbors, etc.)



# Closed Area and Refuges

- Review of Chapters NR 11 and NR 15
  - Closed Areas = 18 designations and Refuges = 13 designations
  - Hasn't been comprehensively reviewed in decades
  - Poor Maps
  - NR 11 and NR 15 do similar things but in separate sections of code
  - Review if property designations are still functioning for their intended purpose
- Goals of Revision
- Simplify regulations
  - Consolidate refuge/ closed area designations
- Remove unneeded property designations
- Provide consistency for area designations
- Make sure properties are working as actual refuges
- Update maps

# WILDLIFE REFUGE

**NO ENTRY  
APRIL 1 - AUG. 24**

**NR 11.08**

# Closed Area and Refuges (cont.)

- 2+ year process (feedback from public, land managers, WDNR leadership, politicians, etc.)
- Due to COVID – approval process was lengthy
- Finally approved in early August with implementation date on Sept. 1<sup>st</sup>
- Resulted in:
  - Increase protection on over 7,000 acres of state managed land deemed important for migratory stopover areas
  - Increased recreational opportunity (hunting, trapping, non-consumptive uses) on over 22,000 acres
  - All designations are simplified, attempted to make consistent and in one section of code
  - Property boundaries and refuge areas were digitally mapped so we have improved maps and will be incorporating to online mapping tools and apps.

# WILDLIFE REFUGE

**NO ENTRY SEPT. 1 -  
DEC. 31 EXCEPT FOR  
TRAPPING AND DEER  
HUNTING DURING GUN  
DEER AND MUZZLE-  
LOADER SEASONS**

NR 11.0

# Upcoming Topics

- Improving Spring Breeding Survey
- Improving Fall Surveys and Monitoring Efforts
- Review Open Water Rules and Opportunities
- Federally/Flyway – Review species specific harvest strategies
  - Scaup, Pintail, Canvasback
- Continue to improve public input process and adjust to any COVID related changes



# Waterfowl Management Plan

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- Approved late 2019
- Directs management efforts from 2020 – 2030
- Developing and implementation plan
  - Target efforts on:
    - Reviewing regulations
    - Improve public input and communication
    - Spring and Fall Surveys
    - Research



# Sandhill Crane Population and Management

- June NRB meeting discussing Sandhill Crane management in WI and their current population status
- Resulted in considerable discussion about future of Sandhill Crane Season in Wisconsin
- WDNR primary responsibility concerning cranes is to continue to monitor their population and provide education and information to the public
- It would require legislative action to establish the authority to implement a Sandhill Crane season (quota based hunt, permits, draw system)
  - If legislative action occurs and the WDNR is directed then work begins with the Miss. Flyway and USFWS to establish an experimental season with required monitoring

