

BRANT HUNTING

Skagit County



Ryan Askren/USGS

- 2020 SEASON -



Washington Department of
FISH AND WILDLIFE

ATTENTION HUNTERS:

BRANT SEASON SETTING IN SKAGIT COUNTY HAS CHANGED

A **guaranteed** two day season will be held on January 11th & 12th in Skagit County. This season will occur regardless of aerial survey count results, though additional hunt dates may be added dependent on the outcome of the survey. Any season updates will be provided to hunters in a WDFW news release.

Why is the brant survey estimate necessary?

Two varieties of brant winter in Washington, black brant, and Western High Arctic brant (grey-bellies). The Western High Arctic brant is one of the smallest Arctic goose breeding populations in the world and winters only in a few areas, including Padilla and Samish Bays. This makes them susceptible to overharvest. Thus, harvest opportunity of brant in Skagit County is regulated through season length reductions or season closures to prevent over harvest.

How is the brant survey conducted?

Department staff fly over 300 miles of aerial transects within Padilla, Samish, and Fidalgo Bays - the primary wintering area of the Western High Arctic brant in Washington. Using high-resolution cameras that capture images of approximately 25% of the available habitat, biologists analyze the images to determine a count of the brant and the total area (square kilometers) imaged. From this, a density (number of brant per square km) is calculated and then multiplied across the total available habitat to estimate the population. This estimate is used to set the 2020 brant season in Skagit County.

What is the count estimate criteria for determining the Skagit County season?

Less than 3,000 brant = **ONLY the guaranteed hunt dates of Jan. 11 & 12**

3,000 – 6,000 brant = **Jan. 11, 12, 15 & 18 hunt dates**

More than 6,000 brant = **Jan. 11, 12, 15, 18, 19, 22, 25, and 26 hunt dates**

When was the brant survey conducted?

Due to weather, the black brant survey has not been flown yet. The photo survey requires minimal wind and fog conditions on the day of the survey. Whitecaps or rough water increase processing time and the chance of undercounting birds. If conditions do not improve enough to fly the photo survey, a direct visual count will be conducted by biologists.

When will hunters know the results of the survey?

A press release will be issued to the public as soon as possible after the photo survey analysis is complete, or the visual count is conducted, and numbers are tallied. This release will include the survey estimate number and the final season dates for the 2020 Skagit County season.

Will the survey estimate impact the brant season in Whatcom, Clallam, and Pacific Counties?

No. Regardless of the survey estimate, the 2020 season will occur in these counties on the dates listed in the Washington State Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Seasons pamphlet (page 18).