

By: Pierce, Eaton, Fillingane, Hamilton,  
Lott, Maples, Shows, Taylor

To: Game and Fish

HOUSE BILL NO. 797

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 49-7-31, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO  
2 EXTEND THE DEER HUNTING SEASON THROUGH JANUARY 31; AND FOR RELATED  
3 PURPOSES.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

5 SECTION 1. Section 49-7-31, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
6 amended as follows:

7 49-7-31. (1) The open season for game birds and game  
8 animals shall be as follows:

9 (a) On bobwhite quail: The season shall open on  
10 Thanksgiving day and run through the first Saturday in March next  
11 following.

12 (b) On pheasant: There shall be no open season on  
13 pheasant.

14 (c) On wild turkey: The commission shall fix the  
15 spring season between the Saturday nearest March 20 and May 1 in  
16 designated areas. In addition, the commission may fix special  
17 fall either-sex seasons.

18 (d) On squirrel:

19 (i) Zone 1: For areas north of Highway 82 plus  
20 those portions of Sunflower County and Washington County south of  
21 Highway 82 the season shall open on the Saturday nearest October 1

22 and run through February 28.

23 (ii) Zone 2: For areas between Highway 82 and  
24 Highway 84, plus such portions of the state south of Highway 84  
25 and west of Interstate 55, the season shall open on the Saturday  
26 nearest October 15 and run through February 28.

27 (iii) Zone 3: For areas south of Highway 84 and  
28 east of Interstate 55 the season shall open on the last Saturday  
29 in October and run through February 28.

30 (e) On deer:

31 (i) With bow and arrow: October 1 through the  
32 Friday prior to Thanksgiving.

33 (ii) With guns and with dog: From the Saturday  
34 prior to Thanksgiving through December 1.

35 (iii) With primitive weapons and without dogs:  
36 December 2 through December 15.

37 (iv) With guns and without dogs: December 16  
38 through December 23. However, the commission may allow hunting  
39 statewide or in specific areas with any legal weapon which it may  
40 designate without dogs after the end of the last season for  
41 hunting deer with guns and with dogs, but the season with legal  
42 designated weapons and without dogs shall not extend beyond  
43 January 31.

44 (v) With guns and with dogs: December 24 through  
45 January 31.

46 (vi) When hunting deer during any gun season on  
47 deer, a hunter must wear in full view five hundred (500) square  
48 inches of solid unbroken fluorescent orange.

49 (vii) In order to set and regulate the deer  
50 seasons, the commission may:

51 A. Set and regulate the deer seasons on  
52 wildlife management areas which it administers;

53                   B. Allow the harvesting of antlerless deer in  
54 the districts or zones upon the recommendation of the executive  
55 director based upon good and substantial quantitative data and  
56 research evaluations that demonstrate that the harvesting is  
57 necessary to properly manage the herd. The commission, only upon  
58 the recommendation of the executive director, may allow the  
59 harvesting of antlerless deer during the deer season with guns and  
60 with dogs by a majority vote of the commission. Nothing in this  
61 section prohibits the harvesting of either sex deer by landowners  
62 or leaseholders on private lands under a deer management program  
63 prescribed or approved by the executive director.

64                   C. Provide a special permit for the  
65 harvesting of deer when they are depredating and destroying crops.  
66 The department shall supervise the harvesting and provide for the  
67 salvaging of the meat of the animals. The commission may  
68 authorize the department to assist any farmer in this state, who  
69 sustains crop damage by wildlife, in eradication of the problem  
70 wildlife.

71                   (viii) The commission shall establish a special  
72 hunting season for youth under the age of sixteen (16) and for  
73 handicapped persons in the Natchez State Park. The commission  
74 shall also establish a primitive weapon season in the Natchez  
75 State Park. The selection of participants in the primitive weapon  
76 season shall be by public drawing from all qualified applications.  
77 The commission shall set the number of permits to be issued and  
78 the length of the special seasons. The commission may also  
79 establish a special hunting season for youth and handicapped  
80 persons or a primitive weapon season as provided in this

81 subparagraph in any other state park under the jurisdiction of the  
82 department but shall only do so upon the recommendation of the  
83 staff of the department as approved by the commission. The  
84 commission shall select participants and set the number of permits  
85 to be issued and the length of the special seasons in the manner  
86 provided in this subparagraph.

87 (ix) The commission may establish and regulate  
88 special youth hunts for all nonmigratory game birds and animals  
89 outside of the open season on wildlife management areas \* \* \* and  
90 on private lands.

91 (f) On fur-bearing animals: The commission may fix the  
92 open season on fur-bearing animals between November 1 and March 1  
93 next following and fix the open season for hunting opossums,  
94 raccoons and bobcats with dogs and guns by licensed hunters from  
95 October 1 to February 28 next following; but raccoons and bobcats  
96 may be run, hunted, chased or pursued throughout the year with  
97 dogs by licensed hunters. The commission may establish an  
98 additional open season on raccoon from July 1 through October 1,  
99 and the bag limit on raccoon during the additional open season  
100 shall be one (1) per party, per night.

101 (g) On rabbits: The season shall open on the Saturday  
102 nearest October 15 and run through February 28 next following, and  
103 when rabbits are depredating or destroying crops, the owner of the  
104 crops or his tenants may shoot the rabbits with guns.

105 (h) On predatory animals: The hunting of predatory  
106 animals shall be restricted to the open seasons for hunting any  
107 game animal or game bird, using only the firearms, ammunition,  
108 primitive weapons or archery equipment legal for use during that

109 open season. Landowners, agricultural leaseholders or their  
110 designated agents may take predatory animals year-round on lands  
111 owned or leased by them. The taking of any animal or animals  
112 other than beavers or coyote by the use of a trap or traps is  
113 unlawful except during the time the season is open for the taking  
114 of fur-bearing animals. Fox and coyote may be run, chased or  
115 pursued with dogs except as provided in Section 49-7-32 year-round  
116 by licensed hunters.

117           (i) On migratory birds: The open season for migratory  
118 birds shall be the season prescribed by the Federal Migratory Bird  
119 Treaty regulations.

120           (j) On nongame gross fish: The season for taking  
121 nongame gross fish by hand or with grappling tongs shall be from  
122 May 1 to July 15.

123           (k) It is unlawful to trap fox after the closed season  
124 for trapping of other fur-bearing animals, except on property  
125 owned or leased by the person trapping.

126           (2) It is the intent of the Legislature that the open season  
127 for game birds and game animals shall be stabilized unless some  
128 unforeseen calamity affecting the resource necessitates earlier  
129 change.

130           SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from  
131 and after July 1, 2000.