

By: Representative Ishee

To: Wildlife, Fisheries and  
Parks

HOUSE BILL NO. 338

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 49-7-31, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO  
2 EXTEND SQUIRREL HUNTING SEASON IN ZONE THREE BY ONE MONTH; AND FOR  
3 RELATED 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 \* \* \* Saturday  
29 nearest October 1 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 dogs: 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 a date fixed by the commission that will provide a total of  
46 thirty-nine (39) days of hunting deer with guns and with dogs when  
47 added to the number of days provided for hunting deer with guns  
48 and with dogs in paragraph (e)(ii).

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

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

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

56 B. Allow the harvesting of antlerless deer in  
57 the districts or zones upon the recommendation of the executive  
58 director based upon good and substantial quantitative data and  
59 research evaluations that demonstrate that the harvesting is

60 necessary to properly manage the herd. The commission, only upon  
61 the recommendation of the executive director, may allow the  
62 harvesting of antlerless deer during the deer season with guns and  
63 with dogs by a majority vote of the commission. Nothing in this  
64 section prohibits the harvesting of either sex deer by landowners  
65 or leaseholders on private lands under a deer management program  
66 prescribed or approved by the executive director.

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

74 (viii) The commission shall establish a special  
75 hunting season for youth under the age of sixteen (16) and for  
76 handicapped persons in the Natchez State Park. The commission  
77 shall also establish a primitive weapon season in the Natchez  
78 State Park. The selection of participants in the primitive weapon  
79 season shall be by public drawing from all qualified applications.  
80 The commission shall set the number of permits to be issued and  
81 the length of the special seasons. The commission may also  
82 establish a special hunting season for youth and handicapped  
83 persons or a primitive weapon season as provided in this  
84 subparagraph in any other state park under the jurisdiction of the  
85 department but shall only do so upon the recommendation of the  
86 staff of the department as approved by the commission. The  
87 commission shall select participants and set the number of permits  
88 to be issued and the length of the special seasons in the manner  
89 provided in this subparagraph.

90 (ix) The commission may establish and regulate  
91 special youth hunts for all nonmigratory game birds and animals

92 outside of the open season on wildlife management areas and on  
93 private lands.

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

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

108 (h) On predatory animals: The hunting of predatory  
109 animals shall be restricted to the open seasons for hunting any  
110 game animal or game bird, using only the firearms, ammunition,  
111 primitive weapons or archery equipment legal for use during that  
112 open season. Landowners, agricultural leaseholders or their  
113 designated agents may take predatory animals year-round on lands  
114 owned or leased by them. The taking of any animal or animals  
115 other than beavers or coyote by the use of a trap or traps is  
116 unlawful except during the time the season is open for the taking  
117 of fur-bearing animals. Fox and coyote may be run, chased or  
118 pursued with dogs except as provided in Section 49-7-32 year-round  
119 by licensed hunters.

120 (i) On migratory birds: The open season for migratory  
121 birds shall be the season prescribed by the Federal Migratory Bird  
122 Treaty regulations.

123           (j) 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, 2004.