



## The Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban

P.O. Box 81183 • Lansing, MI 48908

(517) 321-DOVE phone • (517) 886-3683 fax

[www.StopShootingDoves.org](http://www.StopShootingDoves.org)

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### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Michigan Audubon Society: 517-886-9144

James Bull/Detroit Audubon: 313-928-2950

Songbird Protection Coalition: 517-321-4644

Michael Markarian/Fund for Animals: 301-523-3179

Rachel Query/The HSUS: 301-258-8255

## CONSERVATION AND HUMANE GROUPS LAUNCH SIGNATURE GATHERING CAMPAIGN TO LET MICHIGAN VOTERS DECIDE DOVE HUNT

LANSING, Mich. – With Michigan’s first dove hunt in decades set to begin as early as mid-September, the newly created Coalition to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban announced at a press conference here today that it intends to gather the 158,000 valid signatures required to put a dove hunt referendum on the 2006 ballot to reverse a law passed earlier this year and signed by Governor Jennifer Granholm in June.

The charter members of the coalition include the Michigan Audubon Society, Detroit Audubon Society, the Kalamazoo Humane Society, and the Michigan-based Songbird Protection Coalition. The national organizations represented in the coalition include Animal Protection Institute, American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Doris Day Animal League, The Fund for Animals, The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), and Society for Animal Protective Legislation. The coalition anticipates additional endorsements in the near future.

Several of the organizations were represented at the news conference held at the coalition’s campaign office in Lansing.

“This fall, for the first time in nearly a century in Michigan, hunters will take aim at this gentle songbird in a hunt that serves no wildlife management purpose,” said Sandy Rowland, director of The HSUS’ Great Lakes Regional Office.

“There has been a century-long Michigan tradition of protecting the gentle and inoffensive mourning dove from target shooting, and we want that tradition restored,” said Michael Markarian, president of The Fund for Animals. “Michigan voters will have the final say on whether the bird of peace should be blasted to pieces.”

Markarian pointed to the most recent public opinion poll, conducted by EPIC/MRA in February that found that only 30 percent of Michigan voters support dove hunting. The margin of error was plus or minus four percent.

The groups are organizing volunteers to collect the required number of valid signatures to place a referendum on the ballot in November 2006. Signature gathering efforts will begin immediately and must be completed by March 2005. The referendum will ask voters to reverse H.B. 5029, which declares the mourning dove a game bird and authorizes the Natural Resources Commission to establish an open hunting season in Michigan for the first time since 1905. The NRC is expected to do so on September 10 and the dove season could start as early as September 11.

### Charter Members

Animal Protection Institute

American Society for the Prevention  
of Cruelty to Animals

Detroit Audubon Society

Doris Day Animal League

The Fund for Animals

The Humane Society of the  
United States

Kalamazoo Humane Society

Society for Animal Protective  
Legislation

Songbird Protection Coalition

Michigan Audubon Society

Peggy Ridgway, president of the Michigan Audubon Society urges voters to support the referendum effort to protect Michigan's lands and water from dangerous amounts of lead that will enter the environment from dove hunting. "The use of toxic lead shot to hunt doves creates yet another negative invasion to our already burdened environment," she said. "We have gone to great lengths to remove this environmental toxin from our gasoline, paint, solder, and even shotguns when shooting near wetlands. Our stewardship of Michigan's land and water resources necessitates the elimination of further use of lead, and the continued effort to clean up what remains."

Mike Boyce of the Michigan Audubon Society's Environmental Action Committee, stated that "Dove hunting is notoriously inaccurate. The small, swift birds are difficult to shoot down with a single shot. As a result, hunters are responsible for discharging an enormous amount of lead shot that they are not obligated to retrieve." A study conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service found that hunters discharge between five and eight shots for every dove they shoot. "That lead shot will contaminate Michigan farm fields and poison doves and other wildlife," added Boyce.

Another concern for bird enthusiasts is the disruption of the ecosystem that will result from dove hunting and the likelihood that dependent young will die of starvation.

James Bull, Ph.D., Detroit Audubon Society president, noted that, "Mourning doves are a valuable food source for many other species, including eagles and raptors. Injured doves, full of lead shot, would be prime targets for predators and scavengers. The bioaccumulation of lead in those predators could have a major negative impact on those species, especially those that are already threatened or endangered."

Bull points out that American kestrels and Sharp-shinned hawks are at particular risk for misidentification by hunters. "In fact," he pointed out, "President George W. Bush, while dove hunting with an experienced guide, shot an American Kestrel and was fined for the error."

The Detroit Audubon Society was founded in 1939 and represents 6,000 members in southeast Michigan.

The Michigan Audubon Society is the state's oldest conservation organization. MAS was founded in 1904 and currently owns and maintains 19 sanctuaries in the upper and lower peninsulas.

The Humane Society of the United States is the nation's largest animal protection organization with over eight million members and constituents, including more than 265,000 in Michigan.

The Fund for Animals uses education, legislation, litigation and hands-on care to protect animals from cruelty.

The Songbird Protection Coalition was founded by a concerned Michigan citizen to facilitate the efforts of numerous Michigan citizens to protect Michigan's native songbirds.

The web address for the coalition is [www.stopshootingdoves.org](http://www.stopshootingdoves.org). Volunteers can register to join the campaign at this address, or call 517-321-DOVE.