

What's Happening with Muskrats?

By Andrew Burnett, Principal Biologist

Nothing gets a muskrat trapper more excited than rumors of \$10 pelts, especially if they haven't actively trapped in a few years. Typically when pelt prices are that high, trappers react with great expectations—taking equipment inventory, buying supplies, boiling traps—all the while thinking about how to spend that money from the 'rats they know are right where they used to trap them. All that work only to find precious little sign of the critters in pre-season scouting. So what happened?

The muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*) gets its name from the musky odor produced by glands along either side of the male's reproductive organ, which enlarge during the mating season. It is a large, brown aquatic rodent about the size of a football, not including its 9-inch tail which is vertically flattened from side to side compared with the broad flat tail of the larger American beaver. The muskrat is most abundant in marsh systems where shallow water supports a variety of cattails and other food plants. They are particularly abundant in the tidal marshes along the Delaware Bay.

In marshes and swamps, the muskrat builds a conical lodge from the dominant water plants of its habitat, preferably cattails and/or sedge grasses, on a thick bed of decayed vegetation that lies below water level. Lodges are then built up by the accumulation

of vegetation creating a dry sleeping chamber above the water level with one or more plunge holes leading to the water. Most lodges, which can harbor up to 10 individuals, are constructed in May or early June, and again in October. Muskrats may also construct several smaller feeding shelters known as "pushups" where food is brought and eaten in relative safety. Where conditions are unsatisfactory for building a lodge, muskrats may excavate a bank den having its entrance below water and an enlarged chamber well above the high-water level. Muskrats spend about half of their time within 50 feet of their lodge or den; the average home range is about 200 feet in diameter.

Muskrats are seldom seen far from water and may remain submerged for as long as 20 minutes. They use their broad, webbed hind feet and tail to propel

themselves through the water as fast as three miles per hour and can even swim backwards. They are mainly vegetarians, especially favoring the roots and stalks of cattails and other aquatic plants although they may foray out to fields to eat herbaceous plants or growing corn. Large freshwater clams, fish, and crustaceans form a minor share of their diet. Like beavers, muskrat can close their upper lips behind their incisors in order to cut materials underwater without drowning.

Muskrats are polygamous and quite prolific breeders. This is essential to compensate for their high annual death rate of up to 80 percent. The first litter is born in late April or early May after a month long gestation period. Young muskrats can swim at two weeks of age and are weaned when about a month old. Several litters averaging five to six kits are produced each season.

Carrying capacity of the land can be as high as 26 'rats per acre in the best habitats, but muskrats in poor-quality habitat tend to have fewer and smaller litters. Invasive plant species such as phragmites and purple loosestrife are indicative of poor quality muskrat habitat that displaces our native sedge grasses and cattails.

The muskrat is pursued by many predators, mink being the dominant one. Mink regularly enter lodges and bank dens to feed heavily on muskrats. Other animals that include muskrats in their diet are the northern harrier, larger owls, foxes and raccoons.



The muskrat is one of our most important native furbearers. According to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, 29.8 million muskrats were harvested nationally between 1993–2012, second only to raccoons at 33.2 million. Garden State muskrat trappers harvested an average of slightly more than 41,000 annually through the 2000's. Although New Jersey has more muskrat trappers today than in 1995, these trappers have experienced a downward trend in the muskrat harvest since then, as calculated by the catch-per-unit-effort approach.

Based on New Jersey Trapper Harvest Surveys, the catch-per-unit-effort has declined from 14.1 during 1995–04 to 6.5 during 2005–2014. Every experienced trapper knows that there are good harvest years and bad and that fur prices fluctuate based on fashion trends and on the weather half the world away. But the question remains, what happened to muskrat populations?

Muskrats can be tolerant of human disturbance and less than ideal water quality; muskrat predators, on the other hand, are more sensitive to these conditions. It's entirely plausible that muskrat populations of the 1970s were higher than might otherwise be expected due to pollution levels which repressed certain predator populations.

Subsequent environmental legislation such as the National Environmental Protection Act and the Clean Water Act has resulted in cleaner water for human and wildlife populations. In addition, there has been great success in recovering many avian predator populations from indiscriminate shooting and pesticide application since the late 1970's. Both of these factors may result in an increase in natural muskrat predators.

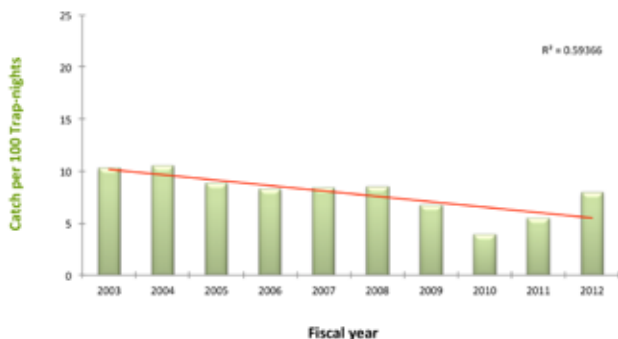
Less obvious factors, and perhaps less understood, might include disease and parasites. Muskrats are subject to a host of diseases, but only tularemia and hemorrhagic disease are currently considered major problems. However, an ongoing study by East Stroudsburg University has found babesiosis infection in 60 percent of muskrat carcasses examined. Muskrats are also host to dozens of parasitic worm species, in addition to ticks and mites.

The majority of the New Jersey muskrat harvest comes from tidal counties from Salem to Ocean. Severe weather events like Hurricane Sandy can have dramatic impacts on muskrats. Muskrat harvests, on the upswing in 2011–12, were cut in half the year following Sandy. Harvest estimates increased 25 percent the year after Sandy; hopefully that trend will continue.

Muskrats can be used as a monitor of environmental quality and ecosystem productivity. Inland freshwater systems dominated by invasive species such as purple loosestrife may look pretty, but these plants out-compete the native cattails on which muskrats thrive and degrade marshland habitat overall. Continued human development impacts the wetland environment and run-off from pesticides, fertilizer, silt and agricultural practices can alter the habitats that the muskrat calls home.

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife biologists will continue to monitor muskrat populations and assess the data to ensure the continued survival of the muskrat in the Garden State.

Muskrat Catch per Unit Effort in New Jersey, 2003-2012
Mean 324 Active Muskrat Trappers



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Regulations in red are new this year.

FOLLOWING COMMENCEMENT OF the black bear season, the Fish and Wildlife Director may announce closure of the season or **extension of the season** based upon data obtained and reviewed by Fish and Wildlife. A season closure, if announced, will become effective 24 hours from the daily legal closing time of the day on which the decision is made. **The dates of a bear season extension, if announced, will be Wednesday, December 16 through Saturday, December 19, 2015. Hunting regulations for the season extension will be the same as those during the regular season. Only those permit holders who did not harvest a bear during the regular season may hunt during the season extension. The bag limit is one bear per hunter for the entire bear season, including the extension.** The notification number for season closure or extension is the permit hotline number, (609) 292-9192. Season closure or extension notification will also be announced by news release, radio and Fish and Wildlife's website NJFishandWildlife.com.

Black Bear Hunting Season: Dec. 7–12, 2015

Hunting Hours: Legal hunting hours for black bear shall be ½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset.

Bag Limit: Only one bear of either sex and any age may be taken per properly licensed hunter or farmer hunter regardless of the number of black bear permits held. It is unlawful to take or attempt to take or continue to hunt for more than the number of black bear permitted.

Special permit requirement: All black bear hunters must have a current and valid firearm hunting license and a special Black Bear Hunting Permit issued by Fish and Wildlife. See *Black Bear Management Zone Descriptions*, page 59; see also *Black Bear Hunting Permits*, page 12. Hunters are limited to purchasing two black bear hunting permits, one each for two different zones. The bag limit remains at one black bear per hunter.

Youth Bear Hunters: Youth hunters with a valid hunting license must also possess a black bear hunting permit. Youth hunters aged 10 through 13 on or before Dec. 7, 2015 must be under the direct supervision of a properly licensed adult (21 years of age or older) while bear hunting. The adult must also

possess a black bear hunting permit. Direct supervision means the youth hunter and the supervising adult are together at the same location. The youth hunter may not hunt independently of the adult.

Firearms and Ammunition Legal For Bear Hunting

Shotgun: not smaller than 20 gauge nor larger than 10 gauge with rifled slugs. Lead, lead alloy or copper rifled slug or sabot slug. Buckshot is prohibited.

Muzzleloader Rifle: must be single-barrel, single shot rifles not less than .44 caliber. Flintlock, percussion and in-line ignitions are allowed. Double barrel muzzleloaders prohibited. Persons hunting with a muzzleloader rifle must also possess a current and valid rifle hunting permit.

Additional Black Bear Hunting Regulations

- ♦ Black bear hunters must wear a hat of solid fluorescent hunter orange or an outer garment containing at least 200 square inches of fluorescent orange material visible from all sides at all times while bear hunting **and also must follow the fluorescent orange requirements pertaining to hunting from a ground blind as specified under *Hunter Orange*, page 25.**
- ♦ It shall be illegal to use dogs to pursue or run black bear.
- ♦ No person shall attempt to take or kill a black bear or have in their possession or control any firearm, or other weapon of any kind, while elevated in a standing tree or in a structure of any kind within 300 feet of a baited area. On national wildlife refuges and at the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, the distribution of bait and/or hunting over bait is prohibited. Hunters should also check with the landowner or administrative agency before placing bait on any hunting area.

- ♦ Allowable hunting methods: stand hunting, still-hunting or drive hunting.
- ♦ Hunters using or possessing any shotgun slug in the field during the bear seasons must have a shotgun with adjustable open iron or peep sights or a scope affixed to the shotgun.
- ♦ Telescopic sights of any magnification (scope power) are permitted for bear hunting on all firearms, including muzzleloader rifles.
- ♦ Shotgun shells containing single spherical projectiles referred to as pumpkin balls are prohibited.
- ♦ While bear hunting with a shotgun, it is illegal to have in possession any ammunition not authorized for bear hunting.
- ♦ Only one muzzleloader rifle may be in possession while bear hunting.
- ♦ All firearms must be cased and unloaded while being transported in vehicles.
- ♦ It is illegal to take or attempt to take a black bear with a bow and arrow or with a crossbow.
- ♦ It is illegal to take or attempt to take a bear in a den structure.

Black Bear Hunting on State Lands

- ♦ Baiting is **prohibited** within 450 feet of campsites and picnic areas in all state parks and forests to coincide with the bear management policy for these areas. Learn these locations **BEFORE** you hunt.
- ♦ Hunting is prohibited in the Cedar Swamp Natural Area at High Point State Park due to sensitive wetland habitat that could be impacted by going off trail in this area.
- ♦ ATV use is prohibited in state parks, forests and wildlife management areas. However, hunters might be permitted to use ATVs to retrieve a bear but only with approval from, and on a pathway approved by, the park superintendent or designee (for state parks and forests) or from Fish and Wildlife's regional Law Enforcement office (for assistance on wildlife management areas).

After Harvesting a Bear—Mandatory Bear Check Requirement

Properly licensed hunters who harvest a black bear shall immediately complete and affix to the bear hide the "Black Bear Transportation Tag" from their Black Bear Hunting Permit. Information included on the black bear transportation tag shall include: the hunter's name, address, Conservation ID number; date and time of kill; nearest road, county and municipality of kill; and the sex of the black bear. When field dressing a black bear, leave the sex organs intact and attached to the body.

Hunting Tips

Scan this code for tips on hunting New Jersey's black bear or visit NJFishandWildlife.com/qr/bear tips.htm.



Proper Meat Handling

It is critical to remove the hide and cool the bear immediately after checking the bear. Cooling a bear with ice from inside the body cavity is inadequate to prevent the meat from spoiling. If the hide remains on overnight, the meat may be unsuitable for consumption.



Successful hunters must take the black bear to a designated check station by 7 p.m. on the day of the kill. Hunters shall surrender the black bear transportation tag and will be issued a legal possession seal.

Any legally killed black bear recovered too late to be brought to a designated black bear check station by 7 p.m. on the date of the kill must be re-reported immediately by telephone to the Northern Region Office of the Bureau of Law Enforcement (908) 735-8240. On the telephone message recording device, hunters must leave their name, address and a telephone number where they can be reached. The harvested black bear must be brought to a designated black bear check station on the next weekday to be registered and to receive a legal possession seal. After check stations have closed on Saturday during the regular season or Saturday during a season extension (if announced), hunters reporting a bear harvest via the Law Enforcement recorder will be contacted by a Fish and Wildlife biologist on Sunday to legally check the bear and to collect biological data.

Mandatory Black Bear Check Stations

In the event of a season extension, check station information will be announced via the permit hotline (609) 292-9192, news release, and on Fish and Wildlife's website NJFishandWildlife.com.

Hours: 12 noon to 7 p.m.

Warren County

- ♦ **Pequest Wildlife Management Area**
605 Pequest Road, Oxford

Morris County

- ♦ **Black River Wildlife Management Area***
275 North Road, Chester
- ♦ **Green Pond Golf Course**
765 Green Pond Rd, Rt. 513, Rockaway

Sussex County

- ♦ **Flatbrook Roy WMA**
Rt. 615 (Walpack Rd.), Sandyston
- ♦ **Whittingham WMA**
148 Fredon-Springdale Rd., Newton

* Operating Opening Day and Saturday only

Black Bear Game Care

As when cooking any raw meat, care must be taken to prevent exposure to disease when consuming wild game. Black bear are known to carry *Trichinella*, a parasite commonly associated with pork. States nationwide report incidents of bears infected with *Trichinella* and New Jersey is no different. A *Trichinella* infection (Trichinellosis) is a risk only if the meat is cooked improperly. To ensure bear meat is safe to eat, be sure it's cooked to an internal temperature of 170 degrees for at least 15 seconds.

Toxoplasmosis, most commonly associated with cats, is another parasitic disease that may be transmitted to humans if meat is not handled properly. To eliminate any health risks associated with Toxoplasmosis make sure no one who may be pregnant handle raw bear meat and always cook the meat thoroughly

as you would for *Trichinella*. If you follow these simple guidelines you can enjoy your bear meat without any concern for exposure to *Trichinella* or Toxoplasmosis.

Black Bear Management Zone Descriptions

Note: Black bear management zones are different than deer management zones. Choose carefully when purchasing a black bear permit. For the 2015 season, only zones 1–5 are open for hunting.

Bear Management Zone 1: That portion of Warren and Sussex counties lying within a continuous line beginning at the intersection of the Portland Bridge and the Delaware River at Columbia; then northward along the east bank of the Delaware River to the New York State Line; then east along the New York State Line to Rt. 519; then south along Rt. 519 to its intersection with Rt. 627; then south along Rt. 627 to its intersection with Rt. 626; then south along Rt. 626 to its intersection with Rt. 521; then southwest along Rt. 521 to its intersection with Rt. 94 in Blairstown; then southwest along Rt. 94 to the Portland Bridge, the point of beginning in Columbia. The islands of Labar, Tocks, Poxono, Depew, Namanock, Minisink and Mashapacong lying in the Delaware River are also included within this hunting area.

Bear Management Zone 2: That portion of Sussex, Warren and Morris counties lying within a continuous line beginning at Portland Bridge in Columbia; then northward along Rt. 94 to its intersection with Rt. 521 in Blairstown; then north along Rt. 521 to its intersection with Rt. 626; then north along Rt. 626 to its intersection with Rt. 627; then north along Rt. 627 to its intersection with Rt. 519 in Branchville; then north along Rt. 519 to the New York State Line; then southeast along the New York State line to Rt. 517; then south along Rt. 517 to its intersection with Rt. 94; then south on Rt. 94 to its intersection with Rt. 23 in Hamburg Borough; then south along Rt. 23 to its intersection with Rt. 517 in Franklin; then south along Rt. 517 to its intersection with Rt. 15 in Sparta; then south along Rt. 15 to its intersection with Interstate 80 in Dover; then west along interstate 80 to its intersection with Rt. 94; then south along Rt. 94 to the intersection with the Portland Bridge and the Delaware River located in Columbia, the point of beginning.

Bear Management Zone 3: That portion of Sussex, Passaic, Morris, and Bergen counties lying within a continuous line beginning at the intersection of Rt. 80 and Rt. 15 in Dover; then north along Rt. 15 to its intersection with Rt. 517 in Sparta; then north along Rt. 517 to its intersection with Rt. 23 in Franklin; then north along Rt. 23 to its intersection with Rt. 94 in Hamburg Borough; then north along Rt. 94 to its intersection with Rt. 517; then north along Rt. 517 to the New York State Line; then east along the New York State Line to its intersection with Rt. 287; then south along Rt. 287 to its intersection with Rt. 80; then west along Rt. 80 to its intersection with Rt. 15 the point of beginning in Dover.

Bear Management Zone 4: That portion of Sussex, Warren, Morris, Somerset and Hunterdon counties lying within a continuous line beginning at the intersection of Route 78 and the Delaware River; then north along the east bank of the Delaware River

to the Portland Bridge at Columbia; then northeast along Rt. 94 to its intersection with Rt. 80; then east along Rt. 80 to its intersection with Rt. 287; then southwest along Rt. 287 to its intersection with Rt. 78; then west along Rt. 78 to the Delaware River the point of beginning.

Bear Management Zone 5: That portion of Hunterdon, Mercer, Morris, Passaic, Somerset, and Warren counties lying within a continuous line beginning at the intersection of Rt. 78 and the Delaware River; then east along Rt. 78 to its intersection with Rt. 287; then northeast along Rt. 287 to its intersection with Rt. 202 in Oakland; then south along Rt. 202 to its intersection with Rt. 23; then south along Rt. 23 to its intersection with Rt. 80; then west along Rt. 80 to its intersection with the Passaic River; then west along the north bank of the Passaic River to its intersection with Rt. 80; the west on Rt. 80 to its intersection with Rt. 280; then south along Rt. 280 to its intersection with Rt. 632; then south along Rt. 632 to its intersection with Rt. 608; then south along Rt. 608 to its intersection with Rt. 124; then southeast along Rt. 124 to its intersection with Rt. 638; then south along Rt. 638 to its intersection with Rt. 531; then south along Rt. 531 to its intersection with Rt. 527; then south along Rt. 527 to its intersection with Rt. 533; then south along Rt. 533 to its intersection with Rt. 206; then south along Rt. 206 to its intersection with Rt. 518; then west along Rt. 518 to its intersection with Rt. 165; then west along Rt. 165 to its intersection with Rt. 179; then west along Rt. 179 to the Delaware River; then north along the east bank of the Delaware River to its intersection with Rt. 78, the point of beginning. ♪

2014 Black Bear Harvest by Zone and County

BMZ	2014 Harvest
1	80
2	88
3	78
4	27
Total	273

County	2014 Harvest
Sussex	150
Warren	60
Morris	28
Passaic	28
Hunterdon	5
Bergen	2
Total	273

No bears were harvested in the portion of Somerset county open to bear hunting in 2014.

Black Bear Management Zone Map

NOTE: Bear management zones are *different* than deer management zones.



Small Game Hunting

REGULATIONS

Regulations in red are new this year.

A CURRENT AND valid hunting license (Bow and Arrow, Firearm or All-Around Sportsman) is required to pursue any small game species. See page 24 for *General Hunting Regulations*. The use of dogs, unless specifically stated otherwise, is permitted to pursue any small game species, except wild turkey. Hunting for those species shown on page 63 is prohibited during the statewide Six-day Firearm (deer) Season and on the Wednesday of the Permit Shotgun (deer) Season that immediately follows the Six-day Firearm Season. For exceptions, see *Coyote and Fox* and *Semi-wild and Commercial Preserve Hunting* sections below. **Sunday hunting is prohibited**; see *Raccoon and Opossum*, page 62 plus *Semi-wild and Commercial Shooting Preserves* for exceptions.

Season Dates and Bag Limits: The *Small Game Hunting Seasons* table on page 63 lists dates, hunting hours and daily bag limits for all small game species open for hunting.

General Small Game Hunting Methods: Properly licensed hunters may hunt small game with shotguns or bow and arrow and limited hunting with small caliber rifles; see air gun and coyote/fox regulations. See also *General Hunting Regulations*, page 24.

Shotgun: Unless specifically stated otherwise, shotguns for small game hunting may be single or double barrel, rifled or smoothbore and not larger than 10-gauge or smaller than .410 caliber and capable of holding no more than three shells.

Shot: Unless specifically stated otherwise, shot size for small game hunting may be no larger than #4 fine shot.

Bow and Arrow: All bows must meet the requirements specified in *General Hunting Regulations*, page 24. **For taking game birds in flight, arrows equipped with an edged head are prohibited. Flu flu arrows are required for taking game birds in flight.**

Air gun: Air guns may be used for taking cottontail rabbit, hare and gray squirrel using ammunition not smaller than .177 caliber or larger than .22 caliber. Air gun BBs are not legal for hunting. See also *Air Guns* under *Firearms and Missiles*, page 28.

Muzzleloading Rifles: For limited small game rifle hunting, see below for *Coyote and Fox—Special Permit Season, Squirrel—Muzzleloading Rifle Season* and *Woodchuck* for restrictions.

Wildlife Damage: Property owners or their agents, and occupants of dwellings that are suffering damage from coyote, fox, opossum, raccoon, skunk, squirrel, weasel or woodchuck may control them by lawful means at any time subject to local ordinances.

Stealing Traps or Trapped Animals: It is illegal to take, carry away or unlawfully remove or steal a trap belonging to another person that is set along, by or in public or private property, ditch, stream, pond or water in this state and which has been set for the purpose of catching any of the furbearing animals species for which a legal season is established. It is also illegal to remove, alive or dead, any animal from the trap of another person.

harvested to a Fish and Wildlife Regional Law Enforcement Office within 24 hours. Callers must identify themselves by name, CID# and daytime phone number.

In addition to the general coyote and fox seasons described in the chart below, properly licensed turkey hunters may legally harvest coyotes if encountered incidental to legal turkey hunting. Turkey hunters shall not actively pursue coyotes or have coyote calls or decoys in possession. Also, properly licensed persons hunting deer during the Six-day Firearm, Permit Muzzleloader or Permit Shotgun deer seasons may kill coyote or fox if the coyote or fox is encountered before the hunter has taken the season bag limit of deer. However, after the hunter has taken a daily bag limit of deer, they must cease hunting immediately. Incidental hunting of coyote or fox while deer hunting may resume the following day (provided the season remains open and the season bag limit of deer has not been reached.) Only applicable projectiles approved for deer hunting may be used to take coyote and fox incidental to deer hunting during the deer seasons described above. See *Firearms, Bow and Ammunition* chart, page 31.

Baiting for coyote/fox is prohibited while hunting elevated in a standing tree or in a structure of any kind within 300 feet of a baited area.

Further, in addition to the general Coyote and Fox seasons plus the incidental harvest of coyote or fox while deer hunting, a Special Permit Coyote and Fox Season runs concurrent with the regular small game coyote and fox season. A Fish and Wildlife-issued permit is required to hunt coyote or fox under the provisions (see below) of the Special

Coyote and Fox, General and Special Permit Seasons

See chart below for both general and special permit season regulations for coyote and fox. NOTE: All successful coyote hunters must report any coyote

Coyote / Fox Season

Dates	Bow Only: Sept. 12–Nov. 6 in DMZs open for early fall bow deer hunting; otherwise Oct. 3–Nov. 6	Firearm or Bow: Nov. 7–March 15	Special Permit Season: Jan. 1 – March 15 (Permit required with shot larger than #4 fine thru #3 Buck sizes and/or nighttime hunting and/or using a muzzleloading rifle other than incidental to deer hunting and/or using a modern rifle)	
Hours	½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset	½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset, except 8 a.m. start on Nov. 7	½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset	½ hour after sunset to ½ hour before sunrise
Weapon Type and Projectiles Permitted	Bow: long, recurve, compound or crossbow See <i>General Small Game Hunting Methods</i> above.	Bow: long, recurve, compound or crossbow See <i>General Small Game Hunting Methods</i> , above. Shotgun and Shot Size: See <i>General Small Game Hunting Methods</i> , above.	Bow: long, recurve, compound or crossbow See <i>General Small Game Hunting Methods</i> , above. Shotgun: single or double barrel. Not smaller than 20 gauge or larger than 10 gauge, capable of holding no more than 3 shells. Shot: Not smaller than BB or larger than #3 Buck. Pellets must be lead or a tungsten-nickel-iron hybrid. Muzzleloading rifle: single-shot, single barrel no less than .44 caliber. Flintlock, percussion and in-line ignitions permitted, loaded only with a single projectile, either round ball or conical bullet. Electronic ignitions prohibited. A modern rifle magazine need not be pinned (plugged), but may be loaded with no more than three cartridges. Centerfire rifles: From .17 to maximum of .25 caliber with soft point or hollow point bullets and maximum of 80 grains. Rimfire rifles: From .17 to maximum of .22 caliber with soft point or hollow point bullets and maximum of 50 grains.	Shotgun: single or double barrel. Not smaller than 20 gauge or larger than 10 gauge, capable of holding no more than 3 shells. Shot: sizes not smaller than #4 fine shot or larger than T
Notes	Hunter orange not required. Use of dogs prohibited. Daily bag: unlimited coyote or fox	Hunter orange required when using firearm. Muzzleloading rifle may be used only incidental to deer hunting. Use of dogs permitted except not during Dec. 7–12 and Dec. 16. Daily bag: unlimited coyote or fox	While hunting under the provisions of the Special Permit: Hunter orange is not required (but is recommended while traveling to/from hunting areas.) Hunting methods are restricted to calling and stand hunting. A predator-calling device (manual or electronic) must be in possession. Use of dogs is prohibited. Use of bait is prohibited. Portable lights are allowed. Sunday hunting is not legal. Daily bag: unlimited coyote or fox	

Permit Coyote and Fox Season; as follows:

A permit to hunt coyote or fox is required 1.) to hunt at night and/or 2.) to use shot sizes larger than #4 fine and up to size #3 Buck, and/or 3.) to use a rifle for coyote or fox other than incidental to deer hunting. Sunday hunting is not legal.

Coyote/Fox permits: \$2, available at any license agent or via Fish and Wildlife's Internet license sales site (www.NJ.WildlifeLicense.com) beginning December 1. A 2016 hunting license must be purchased prior to or in conjunction with the purchase of a Special Season Coyote and Fox Permit.

Northern Bobwhite (Quail)

Northern bobwhite quail are native to the southern half of New Jersey. In recent years, quail populations have declined throughout their range including New Jersey.

Quail Season Closed

In an effort to reverse this decline in New Jersey, the statewide quail hunting season is closed except at Peaslee WMA and Greenwood Forest WMA where Fish and Wildlife will provide hunters and falcons the opportunity to hunt for quail.

See *Small Game Hunting Seasons* chart, page 63 for season dates and bag limits. Exception: This statewide closure does not apply to certain semi-wild and commercial shooting preserves that were permitted to stock quail during the 2009–10 season.

Pheasant

See *Small Game Hunting Seasons* chart, page 63 for season dates and bag limits. See exceptions below

for semi-wild and commercial preserve hunting.

Pheasant and Quail Stamp Areas: Anyone aged 16 and over (except 16 year olds whose Youth License remains valid until Dec. 31 in the year they reach 16 years of age) hunting or possessing pheasant or quail on the following designated wildlife management areas shall have in possession a current and valid Pheasant and Quail Stamp (Youth Hunting licenses include pheasant and quail stamp): Assunpink, Berkshire Valley, Millville (Bevan), Black River, Clinton, Colliers Mills, Dix, Flatbrook, Glassboro, Greenwood (including Howardsville), Heislerville, Tuckahoe (MacNamara), Mad Horse, Manahawkin, Manasquan River, Medford, Nantuxent, Peaslee, Pequest, Port Republic, Rockport, Stafford Forge, Walpack, Whittingham and Winslow. A current and valid Pheasant and Quail Stamp is also required at the Delaware River National Recreation Area.

Pheasant and Quail Stocking

Wearing a hunter orange hat is required for all fire-arm small game hunters on wildlife management areas stocked with pheasant or quail.

Fish and Wildlife anticipates pheasant and quail releases to be as follows:

- ♦ Assunpink, Berkshire Valley, Black River, Clinton, Colliers Mills, Dix, Flatbrook, Glassboro, Millville (Bevan), Nantuxent, Pequest, Port Republic, Tuckahoe (MacNamara), Walpack and Whittingham WMAs will be **stocked with pheasant** for the following dates:
 - » Nov. 7, 10, 12, 14, 17, 19, 21, 24, 26, 28
 - » Dec. 5, 19, 22, 29, 31
- ♦ Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and the Heislerville, Howardsville, Mad Horse, Manahawkin, Manasquan, Medford, Stafford Forge and Winslow WMAs will be **stocked with pheasant** for the following dates:
 - » Nov. 7, 14, 21, 26, 28
 - » Dec. 5, 19, 22, 29, 31

- ♦ Greenwood Forest and Peaslee WMAs will be **stocked with quail** for the following dates:
 - » Nov. 7, 10, 12, 14, 17, 19, 21, 24, 26, 28
 - » Dec. 5, 19, 22, 29, 31

New maps showing the specific field locations for every stocked wildlife management area are now available here: NJFishandWildlife.com/pheasmaps.htm.

Stocking Maps

Scan this QR code or follow the link for maps of the pheasant and quail stocked fields for each stocked WMA. Go to NJFishandWildlife.com/pheasmaps.htm.



Fish and Wildlife reminds sportsmen and sportswomen that the stocking schedule is tentative until approved by the Fish and Game Council in early October. The schedule is subject to pheasant production and may change due to emergency weather conditions. For changes to the stocking schedule due to inclement weather or other necessary adjustments, visit our website at NJFishandWildlife.com/smgame_info.htm.

Rabbit and Hare

The rabbit and hare hunting season will begin the last Saturday in September. The early opening date allows for hunting opportunity when rabbit populations are at their peak. Air guns may be used for taking cottontail rabbit and hare using ammunition not smaller than .177 caliber or larger than .22 caliber. See also *Air Guns* under *Firearms and Missiles*, page 28 and *General Small Game Hunting Methods*, page 60.

See *Small Game Hunting Seasons* chart, page 63 for season dates and bag limits.

Weights & Growth Rates of the Rockport Rockets

Do you know how much a pheasant chick weighs? No? You are not alone. Before our research, we didn't either.

Although a number of state wildlife agencies raise and stock ring-necked pheasants (*Phasianus colchicus*) for hunting, the weight of a pheasant chick from the day it was hatched until the day it was stocked remained unknown. To accumulate data on body weight and growth rate of juvenile pheasants, personnel from the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife embarked on a tight protocol of weighing pheasant chicks from one-day-old hatchlings through five-week-old brooder birds.

The researchers weighed more than 9,600 pheasant chicks in 2013 and 8,200 chicks in 2014. In general, cock and hen birds weighed about the same on the day of hatching, about 2/3 of an ounce. By the second week after hatching, though, cockbird chicks were significantly larger than hen chicks. Chicks grew at a considerable

rate after hatching, doubling their weight from day-olds to the first week. Again they doubled their weight from the first week to the second.

After the second week, the rate of growth slowed to about 1.5 times each week for the remainder of the five-week brooder period. Overall, chicks gained about 14 times their initial hatching weight over five weeks, from about 0.66 of an ounce to about 9.3 ounces.

At the end of the brooding period the pheasants were placed in the range pens to grow and become fully feathered for stocking. The birds released for stocking weighed approximately 2.5 pounds for hens and 3 pounds for cockbirds. This data collected throughout the brooding period is helpful information for the Rockport Game Farm



staff as they monitor the health and growth rate of our fast-flying Rockport Rocket pheasants to be stocked for the upcoming hunting season.

— Patrick C. Carr, Supervising Wildlife Biologist and Steve Wilson, Senior Wildlife Worker

50,000 Pheasants Stocked for Hunting on 26 WMAs Statewide!

View the 2015 Pheasant Stocking Schedule, available in mid-October, at NJFishandWildlife.com/pdf/2015/pheas-quail_sched15.pdf

Raccoon and Opossum

See *Small Game Hunting Seasons* chart, page 63 for season dates and bag limits.

Hours: Hunting may not begin until one hour after sunset on the opening day of the season. On all other days open during the season, the hours of hunting are one hour after sunset to one hour before sunrise. Sunday hunting is permitted **only for raccoon** between the hours of midnight (the beginning of Saturday) and one hour before sunrise (Sunday).

Hunting methods: Portable lights are permitted. Fluorescent orange is encouraged but not required on outer clothing while hunting raccoon and opossum. A current and valid rifle permit is required when possessing a .22 caliber rifle while hunting raccoon and opossum. Only .22 caliber shorts are permitted.

Dog Training: Dogs may be trained during the month of September and from March 2 to May 1, inclusive. The training hours are one hour after sunset to one hour before sunrise.

Ruffed Grouse

The state's two ruffed grouse hunting zones are delineated by Rt. 70. North of Rt. 70 the season will begin October 17. South of Rt. 70 the season will begin Nov. 7 to reduce harvest mortality of the remaining populations in the southern zone. The ruffed grouse zones are identical to those for woodcock and will provide for consistent regulations for these species that are often hunted simultaneously. See *Small Game Hunting Seasons* chart, page 63 for season dates and bag limits.

Semi-Wild and Commercial Preserve Hunting

Hunting for pheasant, quail and partridge is allowed from Nov. 7 to March 15 on semi-wild and from Sept. 1 through May 1 on commercial shooting preserves (which also allows mallards) that are properly licensed for the taking of such species. These game birds may be hunted on Sunday only on semi-wild or commercial shooting preserve lands.

Youth hunters (in possession of a valid Youth Hunting License and accompanied by a licensed, non-shooting adult) will be permitted to hunt pheasant, quail and partridge on licensed semi-wild preserves on Saturday, Nov. 1—the Youth Upland Bird Hunting Day.

All game taken on semi-wild or commercial preserves must be properly tagged before being transported off the licensed property.

A person may legally hunt on semi-wild or commercial preserves for game birds during deer seasons, but no shot larger than #4 fine may be used. There are no daily bag or seasonal limits for pheasant, quail, partridge or mallards taken on commercial preserves. There are no daily bag limits for pheasant, quail or partridge taken on semi-wild properties. Seasonal harvests on semi-wild properties may not exceed the number of birds to be stocked as indicated on the semi-wild permit application.

Woodchuck Season

Dates	Weapon Type Permitted	Gauge, Caliber or Weight	Projectile(s)
March 2 to Sept. 30, 2015	Center-fire rifle	.25 caliber or less	Hollow point, soft point or expanding lead core bullets of any weight.
		Larger than .25 caliber	Hollow point, soft point or expanding lead core bullets of any weight not exceeding 80 grains in weight.
	Rim-fire rifle	.25 caliber or less	Hollow point or soft point of any weight not exceeding 50 grains in weight.
	Muzzleloading rifle: single-shot, single barrel. Flintlock, percussion and in-line ignitions permitted.	No restriction	Must be loaded with a single projectile, either round ball or conical bullet.
March 1 to Sept. 28, 2016	Bow: long, recurve, compound or crossbow	35 pounds pull at archers draw length (long and recurve bows) or peak weight (compound bow); 75 pounds pull for crossbow	Arrows must be fitted with a well-sharpened metal broadhead with a minimum width of 3/4"
	Shotgun: single or double barrel, rifled bore or smoothbore	Not larger than 10 gauge, capable of holding no more than 3 shells	Shot – sizes not larger than #4 fine shot
	Bow: long, recurve, compound or crossbow	35 pounds pull at archers draw length (long and recurve bows) or peak weight (compound bow); 75 pounds pull for crossbow	Arrows must be fitted with a well-sharpened metal broadhead with a minimum width of 3/4"
Sept. 26–Dec. 5 and Dec. 14, 15, 17–31, 2015	Shotgun: single or double barrel, rifled bore or smoothbore	Not larger than 10 gauge, capable of holding no more than 3 shells	Shot – sizes not larger than #4 fine shot
Jan. 1–Feb. 15, 2016	Shotgun: single or double barrel, rifled bore or smoothbore	Not larger than 10 gauge, capable of holding no more than 3 shells	Shot – sizes not larger than #4 fine shot

Squirrel, Regular Season

Air guns may be used for taking squirrel using ammunition not smaller than .177 caliber or larger than .22 caliber. See also *Air Guns* under *Firearms and Missiles*, page 28 and *General Small Game Hunting Methods*, page 60. See *Small Game Hunting Seasons* chart, page 63.

Squirrel, Muzzleloading Rifle Season

Persons holding a current and valid firearm license and rifle permit may hunt for squirrels from sunrise to 1/2 hour after sunset with a muzzleloading rifle (.36 caliber or smaller loaded with a single projectile) during the periods Sept. 26–Nov. 6, 2015 and Jan. 2–Feb. 15, 2016.

Hunting for squirrel in the manner described above is restricted to the areas described below:

- Those portions of Passaic, Mercer, Hunterdon, Warren, Morris and Sussex counties lying within a continuous line beginning at the intersection of Rt. 513 and the New York State line; then south along Rt. 513 to its intersection with Rt. 511; then south along Rt. 511 to its intersection with Rt. 46; then west along Rt. 46 to its intersection with Rt. 80; then west along Rt. 80 to its intersection with Rt. 15; then north along Rt. 15 to its intersection with the Morris-Sussex County line; then south along the Morris-Sussex County line to the Warren County line; then southwest along the Morris-Warren County line to the Hunterdon County line; then southeast along the Morris-Hunterdon County line to the Somerset County line; then south along the Somerset-Hunterdon County line to its intersection with the Mercer County line; then west and south along the Hunterdon Mercer County line to its intersection with Rt. 31; then south along Rt. 31 to its intersection with Rt. 546; then west along Rt. 546 to the Delaware River; then

north along the east bank of the Delaware River to the New York State line; then east along the New York State line to the point of beginning at Lakeside. ♦ In that portion of Salem, Gloucester, Camden, Burlington, Mercer, Monmouth, Ocean, Atlantic, Cape May and Cumberland counties lying within a continuous line beginning at the intersection of Rt. 295 and the Delaware River; then east along Rt. 295 to its intersection with the New Jersey Turnpike; then east along the New Jersey Turnpike to its intersection with Rt. 40; then east along Rt. 40 to its intersection with Rt. 47; then north along Rt. 47 to its intersection with Rt. 536; then east along Rt. 536 to its intersection with Rt. 206; then north along Rt. 206 to its intersection with the New Jersey Turnpike; then northeast along the New Jersey Turnpike to its intersection with Rt. 571; then southeast along Rt. 571 to its intersection with the Garden State Parkway; then south along the Garden State Parkway to its intersection with Rt. 9 at Somers Point; then south along Rt. 9 to its intersection with Rt. 83; then west along Rt. 83 to its intersection with Rt. 47; then north along Rt. 47 to its intersection with Dennis Creek; then south along the west bank of Dennis Creek to its intersection with Delaware Bay; then northwest along the east shore of Delaware Bay and the Delaware River to the point of beginning.

Woodchuck

All persons in possession of a rifle (including a muzzleloading rifle) while hunting woodchuck must have a current and valid rifle permit in addition to the current hunting license. Rifle hunting (of any kind) for woodchuck is prohibited on state wildlife management areas, state parks, state forests or state recreation areas. Farmers and their agents may use shot not larger than #4 buckshot to control woodchuck causing damage. Hours of hunting are sunrise to 1/2 hour after sunset. See chart above for woodchuck hunting details. 🦫

2015–16 Small Game Hunting Seasons

Species (alphabetical)	Inclusive Dates	Hunting Hours	Daily Limits	Notes
Bobwhite (quail)	Closed statewide; except at Peaslee & Greenwood WMA (see Notes) At Peaslee & Greenwood WMAs ONLY: Nov. 7–Dec. 5; Dec. 14, 15, 17–31, 2015 and Jan. 1–30, 2016	Sunrise to ½ hour after sunset	4	8 a.m. start on Nov. 7 Quail may be hunted ONLY at Peaslee and Greenwood Forest WMAs. Pheasant and Quail Stamp required. Season closed in remainder of the state. (See exceptions under Northern Bobwhite, page 61.)
Coyote* and Fox, General All coyote must be reported within 24 hrs.	Bow and Arrow only: Sept. 12–Nov. 6 in DMZ Regulation Sets 4–8 Oct. 3–Nov. 6 in DMZ Regulation Sets 0–3 Firearm or Bow and Arrow: Nov. 7–Mar. 15	½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset	No limit	8 a.m. start on Nov. 7 Deer hunters may harvest coyote and fox during all open deer seasons with restrictions as specified under Small Game Hunting, <i>Coyote and Fox</i> , page 60. Rifle permit required in possession when hunting with rifle (allowed only incidental to deer hunting).
Coyote* and Fox, Special Permit Season All coyote must be reported within 24 hrs.	Firearm or Bow and Arrow: Jan. 1–Mar. 15 (permit required)	Permit holders may hunt day and night with certain restrictions; see Notes at right. Sunday hunting for coyote/fox is not legal. All such hunting must end at 11:59 p.m. Saturday night and may resume at 12:01 a.m. Monday morning.	No limit	For complete details, and for when a permit is required, see Small Game Hunting, <i>Coyote and Fox</i> , page 60. Calling and standing hunting only. Predator calling device must be in possession. See <i>Coyote/Fox Season</i> table, page 60, for firearm and ammo restrictions. Rifle permit required in possession when hunting with any legal rifle, allowed only during daytime hunting hours. During night hunting (½ hour after sunset to ½ hour before sunrise), only 10 or 12 gauge shotguns are permitted. See pellet restrictions in table on page 60. <i>Coyote/fox permit required.</i>
Crow** (Mon., Thurs., Fri., Sat.)	Aug. 10– Dec. 5** and Dec. 14–Mar. 19 (See Notes.)	Sunrise to ½ hour after sunset	No limit	8 a.m. start on Nov. 7 Maximum shot size is #4
Grouse, Ruffed**	North of Rt. 70: Oct. 17–Dec. 5; Dec. 14, 15, 17–31 South of Rt. 70: Nov. 7–Dec. 5; Dec. 14, 15, 17–31	Sunrise to ½ hour after sunset	2	8 a.m. start on Nov. 7
Opossum & Raccoon	Oct. 1 to Mar. 1	1 hour after sunset to 1 hour before sunrise	No limit	Rifle permit required when hunting with rifle. 7:41 p.m. start on Oct. 1. Closed Dec. 7–12 and Dec. 16.
Pheasant & Partridge	Nov. 7–Dec. 5; Dec. 14, 15, 17–31, 2015; Jan. 1–Feb. 15, 2016	Sunrise to ½ hour after sunset	Partridge — 7 Pheasant — 2	8 a.m. start on Nov. 7 Pheasant and Quail Stamp required on designated areas (see <i>Small Game Hunting</i> page 61).
Rabbit, Hare & Jackrabbit**	Sept. 26–Dec. 5; Dec. 14, 15, 17–31, 2015; Jan. 1–Feb. 20, 2016	Sunrise to ½ hour after sunset	Cottontail — 4 Hare — 1 Jackrabbit — 1	8 a.m. start on Nov. 7. Air guns are legal to harvest rabbits, hare and jackrabbit. See <i>General Small Game Hunting Methods</i> .
Squirrel, Gray**	Sept. 26–Dec. 5; Dec. 14, 15, 17–31, 2015; Jan. 1–Feb. 15, 2016	Sunrise to ½ hour after sunset	5	8 a.m. start on Nov. 7. Air guns are legal to harvest squirrel. See <i>General Small Game Hunting Methods</i> page 60.
Squirrel, Gray: Muzzleloading Rifle (.36 caliber or smaller)	Sept. 26–Nov. 6, 2015 and Jan. 2–Feb. 15, 2016	Sunrise to ½ hour after sunset	5	Rifle permit required. Designated areas only (see <i>Small Game Hunting</i> page 62).
Turkey (Fall, Either-Sex)	(Period N) Oct. 24–31, 2015	½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset.	1 Turkey (either sex) per permit	Permit required. All Turkey Hunting Areas statewide are now open to fall hunting.
Turkey (Spring Gobbler)	(Periods A to E) April 25–May 27, 2016	½ hour before sunrise to noon; starting May 16, hours are ½ hour before sunrise to sunset	1 Male Turkey per permit	Permit required. Refer to 2016 turkey permit supplement, available in late January.
Turkey (Spring Gobbler, Youth)	(Period Y) April 23–May 27, 2016	½ hour before sunrise to noon; starting May 16, hours are ½ hour before sunrise to sunset	1 Male Turkey per permit	Permit required. Refer to 2016 turkey permit supplement, available in late January.
Woodchuck:** Bow, Rifle or Shotgun	Mar. 2–Sept. 30, 2015 Mar. 1–Sept. 28, 2016	Sunrise to ½ hour after sunset	No limit	Rifle permit required when hunting with rifle. Rifle hunting prohibited on state property (see <i>General Hunting Regulations</i> , page 24 and <i>Small Game Regulations</i> page 60).
Woodchuck: Bow or Shotgun	Sept. 26–Dec. 5; Dec. 14, 15, 17–31, 2015; Jan. 1–Feb. 15, 2016	Sunrise to ½ hour after sunset	No limit	8 a.m. start on Nov. 7
Woodcock**	See <i>Migratory Bird Regulations**</i> on page 68	Sunrise to sunset	3 daily; 6 possession	HIP number required (see page 69). 8 a.m. start on Nov. 7
Youth Turkey Day	April 23, 2016	½ hour before sunrise to noon	1 Male Wild Turkey	Permit required. Refer to 2016 turkey permit supplement, available in late January.
Youth Upland Bird Day	Oct. 31, 2015	8 a.m. to sunset	Pheasant — 2 Quail — 4	Selected WMAs and licensed semi-wilds (see page 23).

* All harvested coyotes must be reported to a regional Division Law Enforcement Office within 24 hours. Callers must identify themselves by name, CID# and daytime phone number.

** The starting time to hunt migratory birds on Nov. 7 only on those WMAs designated as Pheasant and Quail Stamp Areas shall be 8 a.m. See list of areas, page 61.

Fall & Spring Wild Turkey Hunting

REGULATIONS

Fall 2015 Turkey Hunting Regulations

The 2015 fall turkey season will consist of one seven-day hunting segment, N, (excluding Sunday) from Saturday, Oct. 24 through Saturday, Oct. 31, 2015. Fall hunting hours are one-half hour before sunrise until one-half hour after sunset. **Fall turkey hunting is now open statewide in all Turkey Hunting Areas.**

• **Bag Limit:** One wild turkey of either sex per day during the fall season regardless of the number of permits the hunter holds.

Youth Turkey Hunt Day

April 23, 2016 (See page 23)

If no turkey is harvested on this youth hunt day, Period Y permits may be used by the youth hunter in the designated zone for the balance of the season until a bird is harvested (see page 23).

Non-hunting adults accompanying youth turkey hunters need only have in possession a valid hunting license. Turkey hunting is by permit only. Spring and fall turkey hunting is by permit only. See *Turkey Hunting Permits, General*, page 12. For farmers, see *Farmer Turkey Permits*, page 29.

- The fall lottery for turkey permits has been eliminated. A permit is still required (see page 12) and may be purchased at license agents or online at Fish and Wildlife's Internet license sales site www.NJ.WildlifeLicense.com.
- Dogs and artificial decoys may be used while turkey hunting in the fall season, except the use of electronically-operated decoys is prohibited. All hunters are required to possess a calling device while turkey hunting. The use of a hand-held decoy or a turkey tail-on-a-stick as camouflage to sneak up on a turkey is prohibited. Stalking a turkey is illegal.
- The maximum group size while turkey hunting is five hunters.
- Hunters may not attempt to chase or drive turkeys for the purpose of putting them in range of other hunters. However, hunters may flush a flock of turkeys to cause the flock to scatter.
- No shot larger than #4 fine shot or smaller than #7½ fine shot may be used for turkey hunting.
- Hunters may not use shotguns larger than 10-gauge or smaller than 20-gauge for turkey hunting.
- Fluorescent hunter orange is not required to hunt turkey.
- Properly licensed hunters may use archery tackle to hunt turkeys.
- While turkey hunting, a weapon may not be in possession within 300 feet of any baited area.

Immediately upon killing a turkey, hunters must complete the transportation tag on their fall hunting permit and affix it to the bird. The turkey must be taken to an official wild turkey check station by 7 p.m. on the day it is killed by the hunter who killed the bird.

Turkey Hunting Areas

Map for general reference only. For a complete description of the Turkey Hunting Areas, see the supplemental document *Wild Turkey Hunting Season Information*.



Spring Turkey Season Hours

Spring turkey hunters are reminded that legal hunting hours for the **last two weeks** of the spring turkey season (including all of period D and the **last Saturday** of period E) are changed to ½ hour before sunrise to sunset. For periods A, B, C and the first three Saturdays of period E, hunting hours will still end at noon. These hunting hours allow opportunities for working and youth hunters.

Coyotes may be harvested incidentally while turkey hunting. See page 60.

Spring 2016 Gobbler Hunting Regulations

Spring gobbler hunting regulations are published in the 2016 Wild Turkey Hunting Season permit supplement available in January. See *Turkey Hunting Permits, General*, page 12.

Turkey Hunting Seminars

The latest turkey hunting techniques are presented at several turkey hunting seminars sponsored by Fish and Wildlife or wildlife conservation organizations. These seminars focus on how to set up, calling techniques and key safety information for turkey hunters. New turkey hunters are especially encouraged to join us at a seminar. Check your newspaper and the January 2016 Wild Turkey Hunting Season permit supplement for the seminars scheduled during March or April. 🦃

2016 Spring Gobbler Hunting Season

Hunting Period	Dates
Youth Turkey Hunting Day (10–16 years of age)	Sat., April 23 If no turkey is harvested on this youth hunt day, Period Y permits may be used in the designated zone for balance of season until a bird is harvested
Hunting Period Y	
Hunting Period A	Mon., April 25–Fri., April 29
Hunting Period B	Mon., May 2–Fri., May 6
Hunting Period C	Mon., May 9–Fri., May 13
Hunting Period D	Mon., May 16–Fri., May 20; Mon., May 23–Fri., May 27
Hunting Period E	All Saturdays, April 30, May 7, May 14 and May 21

Stalking is Illegal

Use of a hand-held decoy or a turkey tail-on-a-stick as camouflage to sneak up on a turkey is prohibited. In New Jersey, stalking of wild turkeys is illegal, both for ethical reasons and for personal safety.

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DEER



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4-Day Guided Deer/Bear Combo
\$800/Person Spring Turkey Special
\$650/Person 3-Day Guided Hunt
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www.BigGameHuntingNY.com
P.O. Box 1526
Richfield Springs, NY

Fall 2015 Turkey Check Stations

ATLANTIC

Butterhof's Farm & Home Supply,
5715 White Horse Pike, Egg Harbor City (609) 965-1198
Ted's Taxidermy, 713 Rt. 40, Buena (856) 697-8585

BURLINGTON

Sportsman's Center, Rt. 130, Bordentown (609) 298-5300

CAMDEN

Banger's Sport Shop,
840 Piney Hollow Rd., Winslow (609) 561-1717

CAPE MAY

Belle Plain Supply,
346 Handisville Ave., Belle Plain (609) 861-2345
Fletcher's Corner,
212 South Rt. 47, Cape May C.H. (609) 465-4949

CUMBERLAND

Beaver Dam Boat Rentals,
514 Old Beaver Dam Rd, Newport (856) 447-3633
Blackwater Sports Center,
2228 Delsea Dr., Vineland (856) 691-1571

GLOUCESTER

Sportsman's Outpost,
Fries Mill Rd., Williamstown (856) 881-3244
The Bottle Barn,
65 West Broad St., Gibbstown (856) 423-3608

HUNTERDON

Sportsman's Rendezvous,
Rt. 31, Speedway Plaza, Flemington (908) 788-5828
Boan's Marine, 1296 Rt. 179, Lambertville (609) 397-3311
The Corner Store, Rt. 12 and Rt. 519, Baptistown (908) 996-7648
Carousel Deli And Bakery,
Rt. 179 and Wertsville Rd., Ringoes (908) 788-5180
Jugtown Mountain Campsites,
1074 Rt. 173 East, Asbury (908) 735-5995

MIDDLESEX

Sayreville Sportsmen,
52 Washington Ave., Sayreville (732) 238-2060

MORRIS

Mount Hope Deli,
662 Mount Hope Ave., Wharton (973) 328-7259

PASSAIC

Tackle and Field, 81 Ringwood Ave., Wanaque (973) 835-2966
Greenwood Lake Sports Center,
1745 Greenwood Lake Turnpike, Hewitt (973) 728-1000

SALEM

Salem Boat Exchange,
1163 South Broadway, Pennsville (856) 935-2515
Sam's Super Service, 290 Rt. 40, Elmer (856) 358-3488

SOMERSET

Gladpack Sunoco,
1 Pottersville Rd., Peapack-Gladstone (908) 234-1355
Puskas Dairy Farm,
170 South Middlebush Rd. Somerset (732) 690-0380

SUSSEX

Garden State Bow & Reel,
2760A Rt. 23N, Stockholm (973) 697-3727
Hainesville General Store,
283 Rt. 206 South Hainesville (973) 948-4280
Mountain Mike's Sport Shop,
7 Old Rudetown Rd., McAfee (973) 827-6527
Mountain View Country Store,
300 Rt. 519, Wantage (973) 875-6000
Simon-Peter Bait And Tackle,
Rt. 206 And Brighton Rd., Newton (973) 786-5313
Swartswood Deli,
911 Newton-Swartswood Rd., Stillwater (973) 579-3354

WARREN

Alpine Meats, Rt. 94 N., Blairstown (908) 362-8568
Hi-Way Sport Shop,
Box 253, Rt. 31 North, Washington (908) 689-6208
Smitty's Liquor & Deli, 89 Rt. 46, Delaware (908) 475-5933
The Owl's Nest, 97 Rt. 519, Warren Glen (908) 995-7903

Family Shares Two "First Turkey" Harvests

The 2014 turkey season will be one of my most memorable. My daughter Emily, 15 and son Mitchell, 11, each harvested their first turkey.

Emily got her turkey on April 23 in a quick morning hunt before school. My oldest son, Matthew, came with us to do the calling and called in a great tom which Emily shot at only 15 yards. She wanted to use her "pop's" old 16 gauge pump action shotgun. With one shot she knocked the strutting tom into the stream behind him. With shaking hands and a huge smile she looked at me and said, "That was awesome! I can't wait till deer season!" It was awesome indeed!

Ten days later, May 3rd, Mitchell got his opportunity. My buddy RJ set us up on some turkeys that he had roosted the night before. At the crack of daylight we heard turkeys gobbling—and there were a lot of them! After listening for what seemed like forever, I called with a couple of soft yelps. The birds responded immediately! Two jakes flew down first and came straight to our decoys. Mitchell took one shot with his old hand-me-down 20 gauge double-barreled shotgun to successfully harvest his first turkey.

Emily's tom weighed 20 pounds with a 10.5 inch beard. Mitchell's, while only 16 pounds, had a double beard, one measuring 5.5 inches the other 3 inches.

I encourage all sportsmen and sportswomen to take a kid hunting or fishing. Show them the outdoors and give them the opportunity to decide for themselves if they to want to hunt or fish. Hunt safe!

— Gary Hughes



Ron Hughes

Regulations in red are new this year.

- A trapping license is required and a Trapper Education course must be passed. See pages 1 and 8 for license information.
- All traps set or used must bear a legible tag of durable material with the name and address of the person setting, using and maintaining the traps. Trap tags with Fish and Wildlife-issued trap identification number or the trapper's Conservation Identification Number (CID#) may be used in lieu of name and address to mark each trap.
- No traps or trap stakes are to be set prior to times indicated in this section.
- All traps must be checked and tended at least once every 24 hours, preferably in the morning.
- No trap shall be permitted to remain set on any property at the close of the trapping season.
- No person shall steal or attempt to take traps of another, or remove a trapped animal without permission of the trap owner.
- **There is a mandatory reporting requirement for trappers who incidentally capture a bobcat to call (877) WARNDEP before releasing the bobcat. A Fish and Wildlife Trapper Response Team technician will go to the site for data collection and the safe release of the bobcat.**
- **Any person (including a farmer) who traps a coyote must report their harvest via the Automated Harvest Reporting System no later than 8 p.m. on the day of harvest.**
- Licensed trappers in possession of a valid rifle permit may carry a .22 caliber rifle and use only .22 caliber short rimfire cartridges to kill legally trapped animals other than muskrat. **Licensed trappers may carry an air gun and use ammunition no smaller than .177 caliber and no larger than .22 caliber to dispatch legally trapped animals other than muskrat.** Firearms may not be loaded with more than three rounds.

Beaver and River Otter

Beaver may be taken only by properly licensed trappers in possession of a special beaver trapping permit valid for an entire management zone, or a special site-specific beaver permit valid as designated on the permit. River otter may only be taken by properly licensed trappers in possession of a special river otter trapping permit valid for an entire management zone. Application can be made at license agents or via Fish and Wildlife's Internet license sales site www.NJ.WildlifeLicense.com. Applicants must have a current and valid trapping license to apply.

Zone maps, boundary descriptions and permit quotas are available on our website or call (609) 292-1473. Applicants must have a current and valid trapping license to apply. The application period is October 1–31. Applicants may apply for **only one beaver trapping permit and/or one otter trapping permit**. If the number of applications exceeds the permit quota, a random lottery drawing will be held to determine permit holders. Successful beaver permit applicants will be given first opportunity for otter permits in their respective zone.

The Director may issue Beaver Damage Control Permits to owners or lessees of any land to control

beaver damage. Damage Control Permits issued during the open beaver trapping season may be awarded to applicants that did not receive a zone wide permit during the open lottery and who reside near the damage site. All beaver harvested on Damage Control Permits issued during the open season must be registered at an official beaver/otter check station. Beaver taken on Damage Control Permits issued outside of the open beaver trapping season may not be possessed or sold by the damage permit holder.

Other beaver/otter rules and regulations:

- Holders of a river otter trapping permit may use a maximum of three traps daily.
- **Trappers may only possess one Special River Otter Trapping Permit per season.**
- All beaver and otter trap tags must be clearly visible above the water or ice.
- **Holders of both a Special Beaver Permit and a Beaver Damage Control Permit may use five additional traps daily on the property listed in the Damage Control Permit.**
- A Fish and Wildlife-issued Beaver Transportation Tag or Otter Transportation Tag must be affixed to the beaver or otter carcass **immediately upon taking possession of the animal.**
- All otters harvested incidentally by beaver trappers (i.e., trappers possessing a beaver permit but not an otter permit) must be fully surrendered to the Division of Fish and Wildlife. The entire carcass, including the pelt, must be surrendered.
- All successful trappers (or their agents) must present their beaver and/or otter pelts at a designated check station for examination where pelt tags will be affixed. **All otter carcasses must be surrendered when pelts are registered, as required by the Game Code. Failure to submit your carcass will result in the issuance of a citation by the Bureau of Law Enforcement.**
- Trappers are requested to properly flesh and stretch all pelts for examination. Additional information on check stations will be provided to all permit holders.
- Fish and Wildlife will staff check-in stations at the Assunpink, Clinton, Flatbrook, Tuckahoe and Winslow WMAs and the Newfoundland Fire Company on Saturday, Feb. 20, 2016 (9 a.m.–noon). Successful trappers who cannot attend the scheduled dates should contact either Joseph Garris at (908) 735-7040 or Andrew Burnett at (609) 748-2047 prior to Feb. 13 to make alternate arrangements.
- Permit holders will be notified via email, telephone or U.S. mail in the event the beaver and otter trapping season is extended for any reason, and notified of any change in the pelt registration date.

Bobcat and Fisher

Bobcats are classified as endangered in New Jersey; they are distributed widely across the northern part of the state. Fishers are returning, naturally and through reintroduction efforts in New York and Pennsylvania, to most of their historic range in the northeastern United States. Fishers have been documented in several northern and southern New Jersey counties.

There is no open trapping season for either bobcat or fisher. **It is now mandatory for trappers and farmers to report any incidental bobcat capture within 24 hours of discovery by calling 1-877-WarnDEP (1-877-927-6336).** Possession of New Jersey bobcats or fishers is prohibited but those legally harvested in other U.S. states or Canadian provinces may be possessed if properly documented. **Call the same number for a dead bobcat or fisher on your trapline; a Fish and Wildlife technician will arrange to pick up the animal. Biological samples will be taken from all bobcat and fisher carcasses. The data collected will be instrumental to understand the status of the species populations.**

Traps, Live-capture Foot Encapsulating

Enclosed or foot encapsulating (also known as enclosed foothold or dog-proof traps) traps are now legal for trapping. These traps have been specifically designed to capture species such as raccoon and opossum (which possess a degree of manual dexterity) while minimizing the capture of non-target animals especially domestic dogs and cats. Enclosed foothold traps are a live-restraint trap which do not result in the death of the captured animal or in the potential for significant injury.

These traps are subject to the following requirements:

- All triggering and restraining mechanisms shall be enclosed by a housing.
- The triggering and restraining mechanism is accessible only by a single opening when the trap is set.
- The access opening does not exceed 2 inches in diameter or when measured diagonally.
- The triggering mechanism can be activated only by a pulling force.
- The trap has a swivel-mounted anchoring system.

Traps, Live-capture Cable Restraints (Snare)

- No person shall set, use or maintain any type of snare unless they have first passed a Fish and Wildlife-approved trapper education course and carry on their person appropriate certification thereof.
- **All live capture cable restraints must include a relaxing-type lock, except when submerged underwater or when set for mink, muskrat, nutria or weasel.**
- All natural baits consisting of fish, bird or mammal carcasses or flesh used in trapping with live-capture cable restraints must be covered or concealed from view except when placed at least 30 feet from any trap set.

Live-capture cable restraints set for mink, muskrat, nutria and weasel are subject to the following requirements:

- All such traps must be constructed of aircraft cable or crucible wire measuring 1/32, 3/64 or 1/16 inches in diameter, equipped with a swivel;
- Mink, muskrat and nutria cable restraints must be set within 50 feet of the mean high water line.
- All such traps must be equipped with a stop to prevent the average loop diameter from exceeding 4 inches; and,

- All such traps must be set so that the distance between the ground/walking surface to the top of the loop does not exceed 7 inches.

Live-capture cable restraints set for coyote, fox, opossum, raccoon, skunk and weasel shall be subject to the following requirements:

- All such traps must be constructed of aircraft cable or crucible wire measuring 5/64 to 3/16 inches in diameter and be equipped with a swivel and a relaxing-type lock;
- All such traps must be equipped with a deer stop located no less than 6 inches from the beginning of the cable and a loop stop to prevent the average loop diameter from exceeding 12 inches; and,
- All such traps must be set so that the distance between the ground / walking surface to the top of the loop does not exceed 24 inches.

The above requirements for cable diameters, loop stops and loop sizes do not apply to body gripping restraining snares that are completely submerged underwater at all times (e.g., when set for beaver or river otter).

Traps, Body-gripping or Killer-type

No body-gripping or killer-type trap shall be used in non-tidal waters unless completely submerged underwater when the water is at the normal level. In tidal water, such traps must be completely covered at normal high tide.

It is illegal to use, set or maintain a body-gripping or killer-type trap having a jaw spread greater than

6 inches without a permit for beaver or river otter. A body-gripping or killer-type trap with a jaw spread of no more than 10 inches may be used for beaver or river otter. Jaw spread shall be measured between the inner edges of the jaws across the trigger of a set trap.

Beaver and otter trap tags must be placed above the water line and exposed to view.

Traps, Leg-hold

It is illegal to possess or use steel-jawed leghold traps anywhere in New Jersey.

Coyote, Red and Gray Fox, Raccoon, Skunk, Opossum and Weasel Trapping

- **Season Dates:** Nov. 15–Mar. 15 except Jan. 1–Mar. 15 for trapping coyote, red and gray fox, raccoon, skunk, opossum and weasel on these wildlife management areas: Assunpink, Berkshire Valley, Bevans (Millville), Black River, Clinton, Colliers Mills, Flatbrook-Roy, Glassboro, Greenwood (incl. Howardsville), Heislerville, MacNamara (Tuckahoe), Mad Horse, Manahawkin, Manasquan River, Medford, Nantuxent, Peaslee, Pequest, Port Republic, Stafford Forge, Walpack, Winslow and Whittingham. **Trapping is prohibited at all times on the Delaware Water Gap Nat'l Recreation Area.**

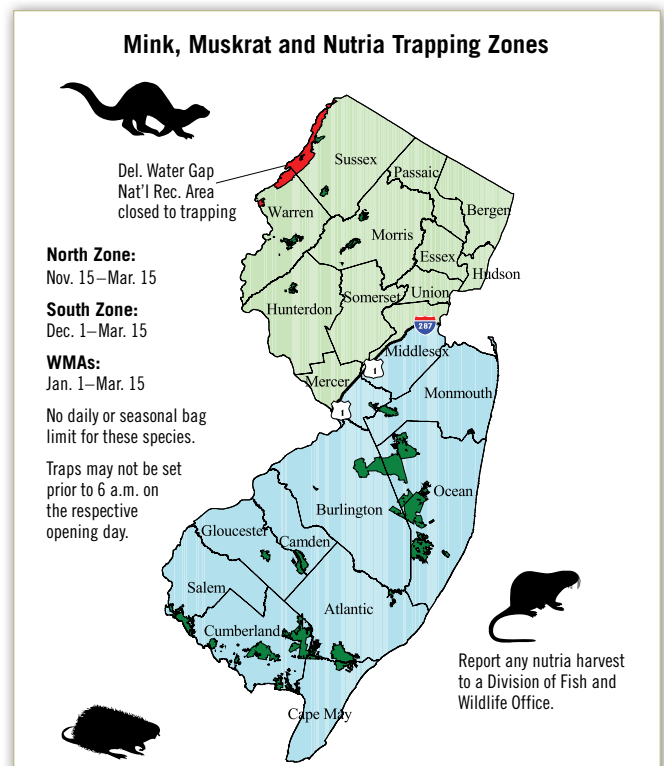
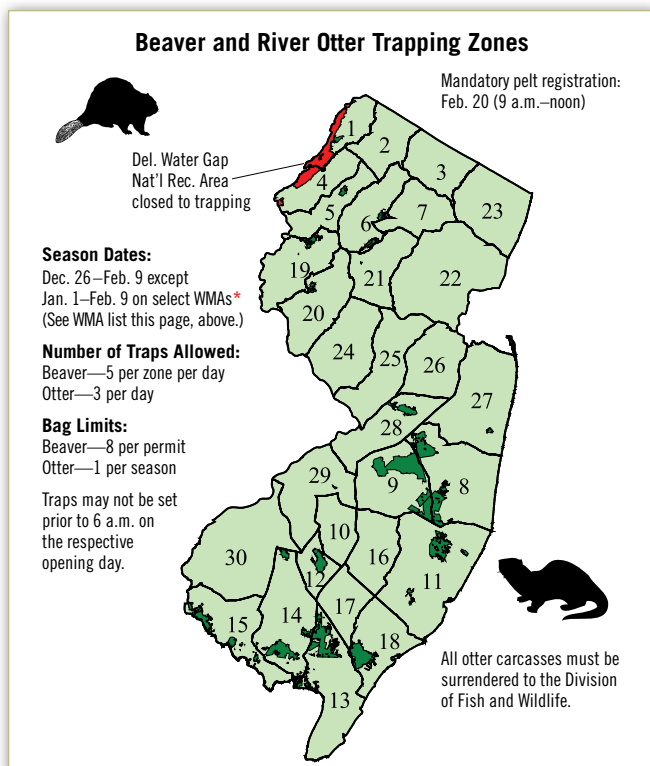
- **Bag Limits:** No daily bag limit for any of these species.
- No open fisher season. Call (877) 927-6337 to report any fisher capture.

- Traps may not be set prior to 6 a.m. on the respective opening day.
- Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area closed to trapping.

Mink, Muskrat and Nutria Trapping Zones

- **Bag Limits:** No daily bag limit for mink, muskrat or nutria.
- **North Zone Nov. 15–Mar. 15:** Those portions of Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Morris, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, Union and Warren counties lying north beginning at the intersection of US Rt. 1 and the Delaware River at Trenton; then north along Rt. 1 to its intersection with I-287; then south along I-287 to its intersection with Rt. 440; then east along Rt. 440 to the NJ-NY state line.
- **South Zone Dec. 1–Mar. 15:** Those portions of Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean and Salem counties lying south of the aforementioned line.

*The following wildlife management areas (WMAs) are closed to trapping until Jan. 1: Assunpink, Berkshire Valley, Bevans (Millville), Black River, Clinton, Colliers Mills, Flatbrook-Roy, Glassboro, Greenwood (incl. Howardsville), Heislerville, MacNamara (Tuckahoe), Mad Horse, Manahawkin, Manasquan River, Medford, Nantuxent, Peaslee, Pequest, Port Republic, Stafford Forge, Walpack, Winslow and Whittingham. **Trapping is prohibited at all times on the Delaware Water Gap Nat'l Recreation Area.**



THE COMPLETE MIGRATORY bird regulations will be published in the *New Jersey 2015–16 Migratory Bird Regulations* available in September at license agents, Fish and Wildlife offices and on the Fish and Wildlife website at NJFishandWildlife.com. Migratory bird season dates published in the Migratory Bird Regulations booklet supersede those printed in this *Digest* if there are discrepancies.

Migratory Bird Seasons

Season	Area	Dates	Daily Bag Limit
September Canada Goose*	Statewide	Sept. 1 – 30	15
Rail and moorhen	Statewide	Sept. 1 – Nov. 7	Sora & Virginia rail: 25 total or aggregate; moorhen and clapper rail: 10
Sea Duck	Special Sea Duck Area	Sept. 29 – Jan. 30	7, singly or in aggregate to include long-tailed ducks, eiders and scoters; except no more than 4 scoters
Snipe	Statewide	Sept. 18 – Jan. 2	8
Crow (Mon., Thurs., Fri., Sat.)	Statewide	Aug. 10 – Dec. 5** and Dec. 14 – Mar. 19	No limit
Woodcock	North Zone	Oct. 17 – Nov. 21	3
	South Zone	Nov. 7 – 28 and Dec. 19 – Jan. 1	
Mourning Dove, swans, harlequin duck, king rail	Statewide	Closed	No Season
Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days	North Zone	Oct. 3; Oct. 31	For all species, Youth Day limits are the same as for regular seasons
	South Zone	Oct. 10; Nov. 7	
	Coastal Zone	Nov. 7; Feb. 13	

* See special regulations only for September Canada goose hunting, on right.

** The starting time to hunt any migratory game bird, including waterfowl, on the opening day of the pheasant season (Nov. 7, 2015) shall be 8 a.m. on wildlife management areas stocked with pheasant and quail. See page 61 for stocked WMAs.

Attention Waterfowl Hunters

Special Regulations Permitted During September Canada Goose Season

Special regulations designed to help curb the growth of resident population Canada geese. These special regulations are optional.

1. Electronic calls are permitted.
2. Shotguns capable of holding no more than seven shells (including magazine and chamber) are permitted.
3. Hunting hours: ½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset.

Remember: these special regulations apply only to the September Canada goose season. Hunters who choose to use an unplugged gun during the September Canada goose season must remember to reinstall the magazine plug before pursuing other game species.

During all other waterfowl seasons, including duck, brant, regular and winter Canada goose, and snow goose, standard regulations apply. Standard regulations include: electronic calls prohibited, shotguns may not be capable of holding more than three shot shells and hunting hours end at sunset.

Hunters: Report Banded Birds

Hunters who recover banded migratory birds are asked to report the band number to the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bird Banding Laboratory (BBL), Washington, D.C. Banding data plays a critical role in migratory bird harvest management. There are three ways to report bands:

1. **Online:** reportband.gov
2. **Call Toll Free:** (800) 327-BAND
3. **Write:** to the address inscribed on the band.

Online reporting provides instant access to the original banding information including the species, sex, location, date and age of the bird at banding. Band reporters will be able to print a certificate of appreciation on their home computer which will include information about the bird which had been banded.

When contacting the BBL, be prepared to provide: band number, date the bird was recovered, exact location of the bird's recovery as well as nearest town, and method of recovery, e.g., shot or found dead. Hunters may keep the bands.

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What Do I Need To Hunt Migratory Birds In New Jersey?

Species Hunted	Hunting License	HIP Certification	NJ Stamp Certification	Federal Stamp
Crow	✓			
Woodcock, rail, moorhen, snipe	✓	✓		
Duck, brant, goose	✓	✓	✓	✓

Waterfowl Stamps: Both the New Jersey Waterfowl Stamp Certification and Federal Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp are required for waterfowl hunters 16 years and older and must be signed in ink. New Jersey Stamp Certifications (the state stamp itself no longer exists) are available from license agents and from the Licenses and Permits button on Fish and Wildlife's website. Federal stamps are available from some U.S. post offices and online at <http://www.fws.gov/duckstamps>.

Information For Migratory Bird Hunters

Important Reminder in Obtaining HIP Certification

Hunters, including youths, must purchase a Harvest Information Program (HIP) certification before hunting ducks, geese, brant, woodcock, rails, snipe, coot or moorhens (gallinules) in New Jersey and must always hunt with proof in possession in the license holder. HIP certifications are valid from Sept. 1 to April 15 each year.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will use this confidential information only to conduct migratory bird harvest surveys. Only a small, random group will be surveyed.

Hunters may purchase an HIP certification via three sales outlets:

- 1. License Agents**
HIP certification may be purchased at any license agent for a \$2 fee. Hunters will have their HIP certification printed on their license or as a separate document.
- 2. Internet Sales Site**
Hunters may purchase an HIP certification for a \$2 fee on Fish and Wildlife's Internet sales site (www.NJ.WildlifeLicense.com) then self-print the HIP certifications.
- 3. Telephone Sales Site**
Hunters may purchase their HIP certifications using Fish and Wildlife's telephone sales process (888) 277-2015. Hunters will receive a transaction number; record this number for immediate proof of completing an HIP certification. The actual HIP certification will be mailed to the hunter. Note: purchases made via telephone will incur an additional shipping and handling fee of \$5.13.

New Jersey Waterfowlers Clinic

Every year, experienced waterfowlers throughout New Jersey join together dedicating their time and energy to present the **New Jersey Waterfowlers Clinic**—an all day, free seminar covering “everything you ever wanted to know” about the traditions of waterfowl hunting in New Jersey. This year is no exception!

Thirty years ago, the clinic began as an opportunity to introduce young people to the world of waterfowl hunting. However, with the growing interest among men and women, as well as children, the event has been transformed into an opportunity for anyone 10 and up to spend a fun and interesting day learning about waterfowling!

Our full-day clinic covers waterfowling from A to Z, and includes bird identification, decoys, calling, guns and ammo, boats, safety, laws and ethics, do's and don'ts, clothing and camo, and even a demonstration by working retrievers! The value of the day is priceless. It's a unique chance to ask any question you've ever had about the sport—to be answered by the most experienced waterfowlers in New Jersey. Our instructors have a combined 300 years of experience!

- **Free breakfast and lunch to all attending!**
- **Date:** Sunday, Oct. 4, 2015
- **Location:** Tip Seaman Park, Tuckerton, NJ
- **Time:** 8 a.m.–3:30 p.m.

Please **register in advance** by calling Marty Kristiansen at (732) 977-5648 so we can plan accordingly.



We hope you'll join us this year and share our enthusiasm for all that is waterfowling!

Be a Conservation-Minded Trapper

For tips to avoid the accidental capture of bobcat or to prevent injury if one is trapped, scan the QR code, below.



Scan this code for Trapping Tips to Prevent the Accidental Capture of—and Injury to—Bobcat or visit NJFishandWildlife.com/qr/traptips.htm

If an accidental bobcat trapping occurs, it is **mandatory** that you call NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife's Trapper Response Team at **(877) WARN-DEP (877-927-6337)** so that we may obtain genetic samples.

Have You Seen This Cat?

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife needs your help by reporting bobcat sightings so we can better understand the size, distribution and genetic structure of our bobcat population.

Contact our agency if you have observed a bobcat:

- **Live and trail cam photos**—Complete a brief sighting report form: <http://www.nj.gov/dep/fgw/ensp/rprtform.htm>. Data from south Jersey is of particular interest.
- **Dead on the road**—call us at (908) 638-4127 to report the carcass location.



It is illegal to possess incidentally trapped or road-killed bobcat from New Jersey.