Small Game Hunting

Small game includes upland and migratory game birds, small game mammals, certain fur-bearers, and reptiles and amphibians.

Please read general hunting regulations first on page 14.

**General Regulations**

- You may not use a rifle or handgun to hunt pheasant or migratory game birds. See page 44 for more information on turkeys.
- See pages 47–52 for additional information on migratory game birds.
- Air guns (see page 14) may be used to hunt squirrels, rabbits, hares, ruffed grouse, and fur-bearers that may be hunted (e.g., raccoons and coyotes) and unprotected species (see page 15). Air guns may not be used to hunt waterfowl, pheasant, wild turkey, or big game.
- Crossbows may not be used to take waterfowl or other migratory game birds. Crossbows may not be possessed afield in the Northern Zone when hunting small game (except coyotes) with the aid of a dog or when accompanied by a dog. Crossbows may be used to take any other small game or upland game birds during their respective open seasons except in Westchester and Suffolk counties.
- In Wildlife Management Unit 2A, hunting is permitted by falconry only.

**Reptiles and Amphibians**

Frogs—“Frogs” are defined as eastern spadefoot toad, eastern American toad, Fowler’s toad, northern cricket frog, northern spring peeper, western chorus frog, bullfrog, green frog, mink frog, wood frog, northern leopard frog, southern leopard frog, and pickerel frog.

A fishing or hunting license is required to take frogs with a spear, club, hook, or by hand. A hunting license is required to take frogs with a gun, bow or crossbow.

**Snakes, Lizards, and Salamanders**—You may not harvest, take, or possess any native snakes, lizards, or salamanders at any time.

**Turtles**—The only turtle species for which there is an open hunting season is the snapping turtle. You may not harvest, take, or possess any other turtle species at any time.

The final diamondback terrapin season was April 1, 2017 through April 30, 2018, with licenses expiring June 4, 2018. You may no longer take or possess diamondback terrapins.

**Snapping turtles**—A hunting license is required to take snapping turtles. The only legal implement for taking snapping turtles is a gun, bow or crossbow.

If you choose to eat snapping turtles, you should carefully trim all fat and discard fat, liver and eggs prior to cooking to reduce exposure to contaminants. For information on these health advisories, call 1-800-458-1158 or visit the website [http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/outdoors/fish/health_advisories/](http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/outdoors/fish/health_advisories/)

**Falconry Seasons**

To hunt small game species with trained raptors, you must possess a Falconry License and a hunting license. Licensed falconers may take small game from October 1 through March 31 in any area of the state open to hunting these species EXCEPT:

- Waterfowl may be taken only during the regular firearm hunting season or during a specific period outside of the firearms seasons as specified by DEC.
- Common crow may only be taken during the open firearms season.
- A licensed falconer may take both male and female pheasants anywhere in the state when hunting under a Falconry License.

For more information on falconry, contact the DEC Special Licenses Unit, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4752 or call 518-402-8985.

**Possession and Release of Game Birds**

It is illegal to possess or release migratory game birds and upland game birds without the proper license(s) from DEC. Before you take possession of any captive-reared or wild game birds, contact the DEC Special Licenses Unit, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4752 or call 518-402-8985 or e-mail [speciallicenses@dec.ny.gov](mailto:speciallicenses@dec.ny.gov).

**Spruce Grouse vs. Ruffed Grouse**

Male spruce grouse are very distinctive (mostly black with white markings and a red comb over each eye), but female spruce grouse are similar in color to ruffed grouse. By knowing the differences, hunters can avoid accidentally shooting spruce grouse. Loss of a female spruce grouse could be a significant setback for a small local population.

In New York State, the spruce grouse is an endangered species and not legal to hunt. Spruce grouse exist in lowland conifer forests in the Adirondacks. Although ruffed grouse occur in upland hardwoods statewide, during the fall and winter ruffed grouse may be found in spruce grouse habitat. Small game hunters in the Adirondack region must learn to distinguish between these species so that spruce grouse are not shot by mistake.

![CAN SHOOT](image1.png)

**MALE**

- Chestnut-colored band at tip of dark tail
- Light gray back
- Brown and gray back

**FEMALE**

- Chestnut-colored band at tip of dark tail
- Red eye comb (rarely visible)
- Feathers occasionally stand up on head

**Spruce Grouse**

**Ruffed Grouse**

- Crest on head
- Brownish overall
- Mostly white and brown on chest
- Dark band near tip of brown or gray tail

**DON’T SHOOT!**

- Feathers occasionally stand up on head
- Brown, black and white bronzed chest
- Brown, black and white bronzed chest
- High contrasted black—and—for white chest
- Brown and gray back
- Slate gray back
- Chestnut-colored band at tip of dark tail
- Chestnut-colored band at tip of dark tail

If you choose to eat snapping turtles, you should carefully trim all fat and discard fat, liver and eggs prior to cooking to reduce exposure to contaminants. For information on these health advisories, call 1-800-458-1158 or visit the website [http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/outdoors/fish/health_advisories/](http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/outdoors/fish/health_advisories/)
Small Game Hunting

Keep Your Hunting Dog Safe

- Keep your dog visible and identifiable! Blaze orange isn’t just for you.
- Watch for hypothermia, especially if dogs are going to be in the water.
- If the weather is warm, watch your dog carefully for signs of heat exhaustion, including heavy panting, drooling, weakness and confusion.
- Provide only small meals or snacks prior to the hunt and throughout the day. Overfeeding can lead to bloat and gastric torsion.
- Make sure your dog has access to plenty of fresh water.
- Carry a dog first aid kit.


Cottontail Rabbit Hunting
Hunting Hours: Sunrise to Sunset

Varying Hare Rabbit Hunting
Hunting Hours: Sunrise to Sunset

Got Hare?
DEC wants to learn more about the distribution of hare. You can report your observations online at www.dec.ny.gov/animals/30770.html or e-mail us at wildlife@dec.ny.gov! Thanks for your help!

Gray, Black & Fox Squirrel Hunting
Hunting Hours: Sunrise to Sunset

Mandy Bailey
DEC Biologist and her dog, Boone

2019–2020 New York Hunting & Trapping Guide
Attention –
If you would like to raise and release pheasants to increase pheasant hunting opportunities, please e-mail us at wildlife@dec.ny.gov and type "pheasants" in the subject line or call (607) 273-2768. For a list of hunting areas where pheasants are released, contact a DEC Regional Wildlife Office (on page 6) or visit our website at www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/9349.html.

Grouse Hunters Needed!
DEC is embarking on a study of ruffed grouse age and sex composition. You can help by sending a sample of rump, wing, and tail feathers from all NY harvested ruffed grouse.
To request more information and supplies, please call 518-402-8929 or email wildlife@dec.ny.gov.
Use of Hunting Dogs

Dogs may be used to hunt small game, except:

- You may not use dogs to hunt wild turkey in the spring.
- In the Northern Zone, if you are hunting with a dog, or accompanied by a dog, you may not possess a rifle larger than .22-caliber rimfire or possess a shotgun loaded with slug, ball or buckshot unless you are coyote hunting with a dog. In the Northern Zone, crossbows may not be possessed afield when hunting small game (except coyotes) with the aid of a dog or when accompanied by a dog.

Training

You may train dogs on raccoon, fox, coyote, and bobcat from July 1 through April 15. You may train dogs on other small game only from August 15 through April 15. You may train dogs at any time on lands you own, lease, or have written permission to use, if you are not training on wild game. You may only use blank ammunition when training dogs, except during an open season.

Control

Hunting dogs should remain under control of the hunter or trainer, especially on lands inhabited by deer. Do not allow your dogs to pursue game on any posted land without the landowner’s permission. Do not shoot dogs; report stray dogs to a local Environmental Conservation Officer or your local animal control officer.
Patriot: Application for up to two antlerless deer tags issued through a random computer selection process. Tags are valid for hunting antlerless deer only (both antlers less than 3” long) in a specified Wildlife Management Unit. See DMP information on pages 28–29. Application deadline is October 1 annually.
Qualifications: Must hold a current year NYS hunting license to apply and pay a non-refundable $10 application fee. Fee is waived for hunters 12–15 years of age and holders of Lifetime (Sportsman) Licenses purchased prior to October 1, 2009.

Native American:

Turkey Permit (Ages 12+):

Privileges: Hunt turkey during fall and spring turkey seasons (see page 45). To hunt turkey, all hunters must possess a turkey permit. There are no exceptions.
Qualifications: Current year NYS hunting license. Turkey tags are included with a Lifetime License (formerly Lifetime Sportsman).

Military Disabled:

Privileges: Set traps for species during their appropriate seasons (see page 55 for detailed information).
Qualifications: Trapper Education Certificate or previous trapping license. See page 37 for additional information on the mentoring program for trappers under 12 years of age.

Trapping License $395
Fishing License (age 70 and older) $65
For a person age 0–4 $380
For a person age 5–11 $535
For a person age 12–69 $765
For a person age 70 or older $65

Lifetime License (Sportsman) (combined hunting and fishing licenses, includes turkey permits):

For a person age 0–4 $380
For a person age 5–11 $535
For a person age 12–69 $765
For a person age 70 or older $65

Women Hunt Fish NY – Photo Contest Winner

Before the Hunt

Photo Credit: Renata Canaday
Subject: Carey Killion & dog Sally
Location: Genesee County, NY
Home County: Erie County, NY

“Dog training for a NAVHDA Finger Lakes Chapter. Our Chapter does a lot to promote hunting and gun safety to our local youth hunters and we encourage and get good participation from a few young ladies! The Chapter is also looking to have Carey, the Chapter Secretary, (once she gets past surgery recovery) work on plans for a western New York hunting workshop geared specifically for women.”

Lifetime Licenses and Tags for Young Hunters

Young hunters who hold a lifetime hunting privilege and wish to receive their tags must first take the appropriate hunter safety training course and have it entered in their DECALS profile. To have the course added, please call the DEC call center at 1-866-933-2257 (M-F, 8:30-4:30). Young hunters should take the appropriate training course well in advance of the season to allow adequate time for their tags to be mailed. Tags cannot be obtained from a license-issuing agent.

When purchasing a lifetime license for a child, the purchaser must bring proof of the child’s age (e.g., birth certificate or passport) and a copy of the parent’s proof of residency.