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, furbearers 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 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 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 spade-foot toad, eastern American toad, Fowler’s toad, northern cricket frog, northern gray treefrog, 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.

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.

Snapping turtles—A hunting license is required to take snapping turtles. The only legal implements for taking snapping turtles are 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 1-800-458-4158 or visit the website https://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/outdoors/fish_health_advisories/advice_on_eating_game.htm

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

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.
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 email speciallicenses@dec.ny.gov.

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:
• 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.

Waterfowl may be taken via falconry during the following seasons:
• Northeast, Southeast, & Western Waterfowl Zones: Oct. 1–Jan. 13
• Long Island Waterfowl Zone: Nov. 1–Feb. 13
• Lake Champlain Waterfowl Zone: Only during the regular hunting season for each species (see map on page 49).

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

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.

Gregory M.’s dog Reilly after a successful pheasant hunt in Allegany County in 2021.
**Small Game Hunting**

**Protect Rabbits & Hares from RHDV2**
Rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus 2 (RHDV2) is highly lethal to rabbits and hares. It is easily transmitted through direct contact between rabbits or contact with contaminated objects. RHDV2 is extremely hardy, remaining contagious on surfaces for 3 months. If it enters NY’s wild rabbit and hare populations, it will be impossible to control and could result in significant population declines. To protect these species:

- Avoid contact with domestic rabbits.
- Wear disposable gloves when handling rabbit and hare carcasses.
- Properly dispose of rabbit carcasses in trash that’s taken to a landfill or by burying deep enough to prevent scavenging.
- Disinfect all hunting gear after out-of-state travel with a 10% bleach solution (1-part household bleach, 9 parts water).
- Avoid travel to states that have confirmed RHDV2 outbreaks, and do not bring rabbit carcasses killed in other states to New York.
- Avoid transporting rabbits or hares to train hunting dogs.
- Although dogs cannot get sick from RHDV2, they can transmit the virus, so minimize contact between dogs and rabbit carcasses.
- Immediately report sick rabbits or unusual rabbit mortalities to DEC’s Wildlife Health Program (518-478-2210, wildlife@dec.ny.gov).

**Hunters: You Can Help Combat the Illegal Wildlife Trade**
One of the biggest threats to New York’s turtles is illegal collection. What to look for: people with bags poking around wetlands and streams; unmarked traps in wetlands (a trap set for legitimate purposes will be clearly labeled); sheets of metal/plywood laid out on the ground to attract reptiles; cars with collection equipment like nets, containers, pillowcases visible inside; unattended backpacks/bags left in the woods along a trail or road. If you see or hear about suspicious behavior that may be connected to poaching call DEC Law Enforcement - 1-844-DEC-ECOS. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also has an anonymous tip line - 1-844-FWS-TIPS. For more visit: https://www.fws.gov/story/how-report-wildlife-crime.

**Cottontail Rabbit Hunting**
*Hunting Hours: Sunrise to Sunset*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season Dates</th>
<th>Daily Bag Limits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 1–Mar. 19</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 1–Feb. 28</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 1–Feb. 28</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Varying Hare Hunting**
*Hunting Hours: Sunrise to Sunset*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 1–Mar. 19</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 1–Jan. 31</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 12–Feb. 28</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Get 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 email us at wildlife@dec.ny.gov! Thanks for your help!

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season Dates</th>
<th>Daily Bag Limits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 1–Feb. 28</td>
<td>6, total, regardless of species</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 1–Feb. 28</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Small Game Hunting**

### Pheasant Hunting

**Hunting Hours:** Sunrise to Sunset

- **Cocks only**
- **Cocks & hens**
- **Cocks only east of Shinnecock Canal & Inlet**

#### 2022/2023 Regular Season Dates

- Oct. 15–Dec. 31
- Oct. 15–Feb. 28
- Oct. 1–Feb. 28
- Nov. 1–Dec. 31

#### 2022 Youth Hunt Dates

- Oct. 8–Oct. 9
- Sept. 24–Sept. 25
- Oct. 29–Oct. 30

#### Bag Limits Daily Season

- Oct. 1–Dec. 31: 2
- Oct. 8–Oct. 9: 2
- Sept. 24–Sept. 25: 2
- Oct. 29–Oct. 30: 2

**Notes:**

1. Youth Hunt: 21⁄4
2. **Regular Season**
3. In WMU 2A no youth hunt; hunting is by falconry only

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### Bobwhite Quail Hunting

**Hunting Hours:** Sunrise to Sunset

#### Season Dates 2022/2023

- Oct. 1–Feb. 28: 4
- Nov. 1–Dec. 31: 6
- Closed

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### Where does DEC stock pheasants?

New for 2022, DEC is launching an interactive mapper that shows where pheasants are released throughout New York. Please note that many of these lands are privately owned and pheasant stocking is only permitted with the participation of landowners. Be sure to respect the land and any special rules that may be in place. To view the map, visit: [https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/9349.html](https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/9349.html)

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### Ruffed Grouse Hunting

**Hunting Hours:** Sunrise to Sunset

#### Season Dates 2022/2023

- Sept. 20–Feb. 28: 4
- Oct. 1–Feb. 28: 4
- Closed

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### Grouse Hunters Needed!

**Easy as 1–2–3!**

1. **Collect 1 central tail feather**
2. **Pluck 2-5 rump feathers**
3. **Collect outer 3 wing feathers**

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.