Small Game Hunting

Small game includes upland and migratory game birds, small game mammals, certain furbearers, and reptiles and amphibians.

Please read the general hunting regulations first on page 16.

General Regulations

- You may not use a rifle or handgun to hunt pheasant or migratory game birds. See page 50 for more information on turkeys.
- See pages 53–55 for additional information on migratory game birds.
- Air guns (see page 16) 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 17). 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.
- In WMU 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 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. 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.

You may not take or possess diamondback terrapins at any time.

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 contami nants. For information on these health advisories, call 1 800 458 1158 or visit *health.ny.gov/environmental/outdoors/fish/health_advisories/.*

Reptile and Amphibian Hunting Seasons

Frogs	
Open Season	Jun. 15–Sept. 30
Open Area	All WMUs except that (1) leopard frogs shall not be taken in WMUs 1A, 1C, or 2A; and (2) northern cricket frogs and eastern spadefoot toads shall not be taken in any area of the state.
Size Limit	None
Daily Bag	None
Season Bag	None
Hunting Hours	Any time of the day or night, except that no person shall use a gun to take frogs when hunting at night (sunset to sunrise).
Snapping Turtles	
Open Season	Jul. 15–Sept. 30
Open Area	Statewide
Size Limit	The upper shell (carapace) must be 12 inches or longer, measured in a straight line.
Daily Bag	5
Season Bag	30
Hunting Hours	Any time of the day or night

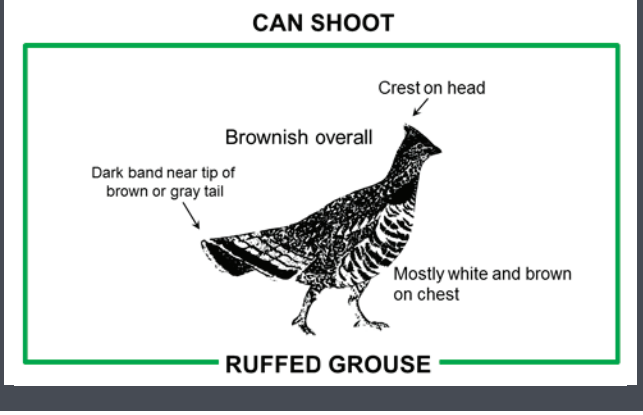
Possession and Release of Game Birds

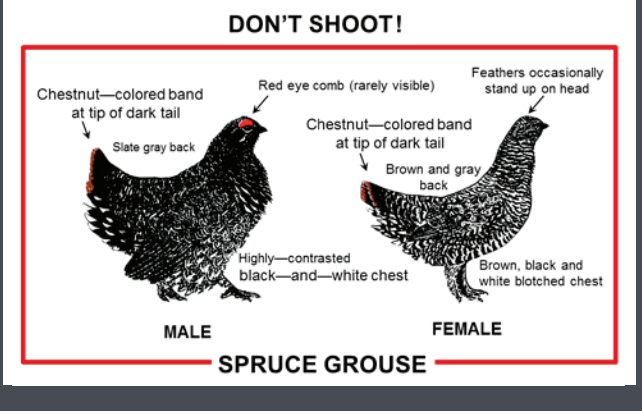
It is illegal to possess or release migratory game birds and upland game birds without the proper license(s) from DEC. Before you take possession of any captive-reared or wild

Ruffed Grouse vs. Spruce Grouse

In New York State, the spruce grouse is endangered and is not legal to hunt. Spruce grouse occur in evergreen forests in the Adirondacks in WMUs 5C, 5F, 6F, and 6J. During the fall, spruce grouse frequently make their way to roads to eat gravel and often travel into upland hardwood forests where ruffed grouse occur. Small game hunters in the Adirondack region must be able to distinguish between these species so that spruce grouse are not shot by mistake.

Spruce grouse are similar in size and color to ruffed grouse, mak ing distinguishing between them difficult. One notable difference is that spruce grouse have an orangish brown band at the tip of their tails, which contrasts with ruffed grouses black tail band. By noting the differences in the images here, small game hunters can avoid accidentally shooting a spruce grouse. The loss of a single female spruce grouse could be a significant setback for a small local population.





game birds, contact the DEC Special Licenses Unit, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4752; 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 Oct. 1 through Mar. 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, and 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 56).

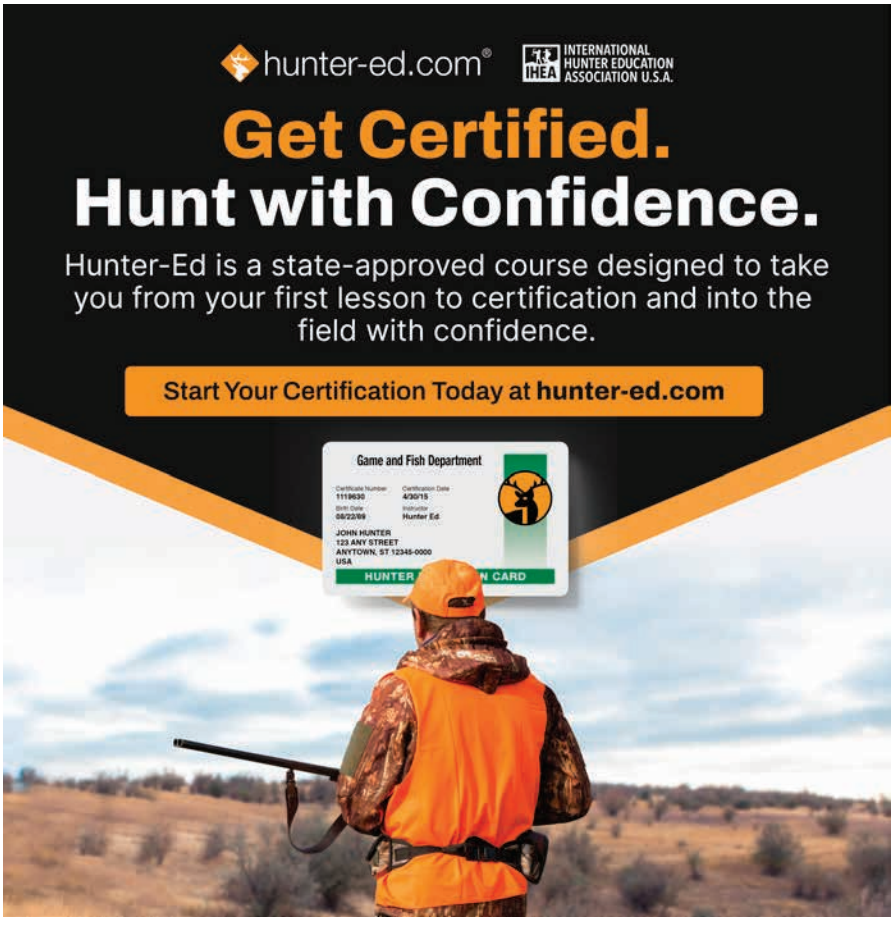
For more information on falconry, contact the DEC Special Licenses Unit, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4752, or call 518-402-8985.

Protect Rabbits and 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 NYS 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 rab bit 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 rab bits or unusual rabbit mor talities to DEC s Wildlife Health Program (518 478 2203; *wildlifehealth@dec.ny.gov*).**

Photo by John Mack



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 accompa nied 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 while hunting small game (except coy otes) with the aid of a dog or when accompanied by a dog.

Training

You may train dogs on raccoon, fox, coyote, and bobcat from Jul. 1 through Apr. 15. You may train dogs on other small game only from Aug. 15 through Apr. 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

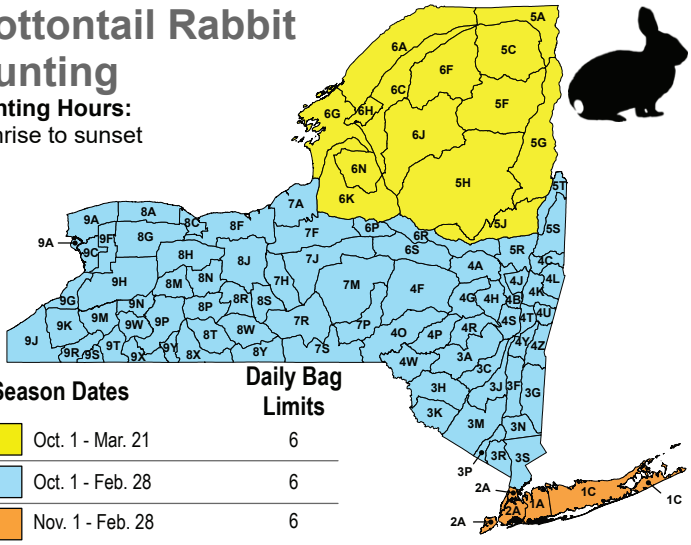
Hunting dogs should remain under control of the hunter or trainer, especially on lands inhabited by deer. Do not allow your dogs to pursue game on any posted land without the landowner s permission. You cannot legally harvest game that is pursued through private property that you do not have permission to be on, even if the animal returns to property where you do have permission. Do not shoot dogs; report stray dogs to a local Environmental Conservation Officer (ECO) or your local animal control officer.

Hunters: You Can Help Combat the Illegal Wildlife Trade

One of the biggest threats to New York State 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 at 1 844 DEC ECOS. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) also has an anonymous tip line - 1 844 FWS TIPS. For more visit: *https://www.fws.gov/wildlife crime tips*.

Cottontail Rabbit Hunting

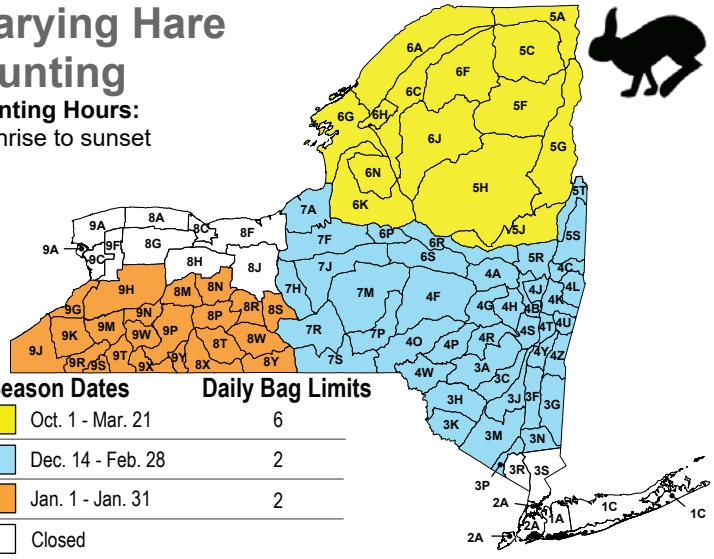
Hunting Hours:
Sunrise to sunset



Season Dates	Daily Bag Limits
Oct. 1 - Mar. 21	6
Oct. 1 - Feb. 28	6
Nov. 1 - Feb. 28	6

Varying Hare Hunting

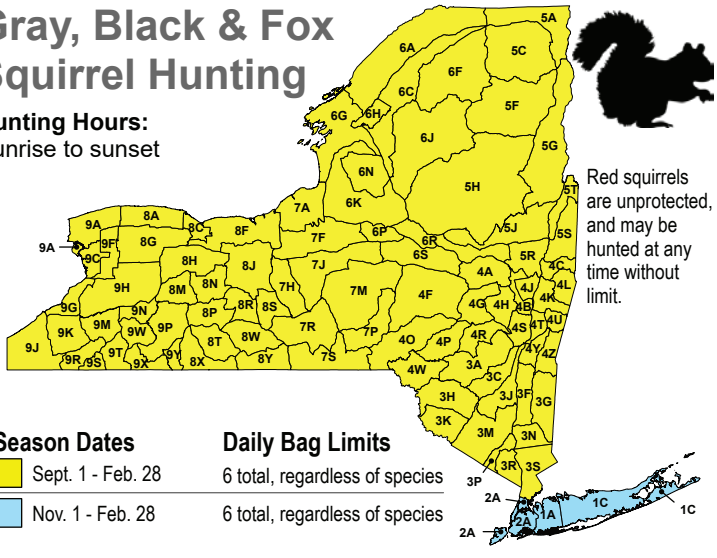
Hunting Hours:
Sunrise to sunset



Season Dates	Daily Bag Limits
Oct. 1 - Mar. 21	6
Dec. 14 - Feb. 28	2
Jan. 1 - Jan. 31	2
Closed	

Gray, Black & Fox Squirrel Hunting

Hunting Hours:
Sunrise to sunset

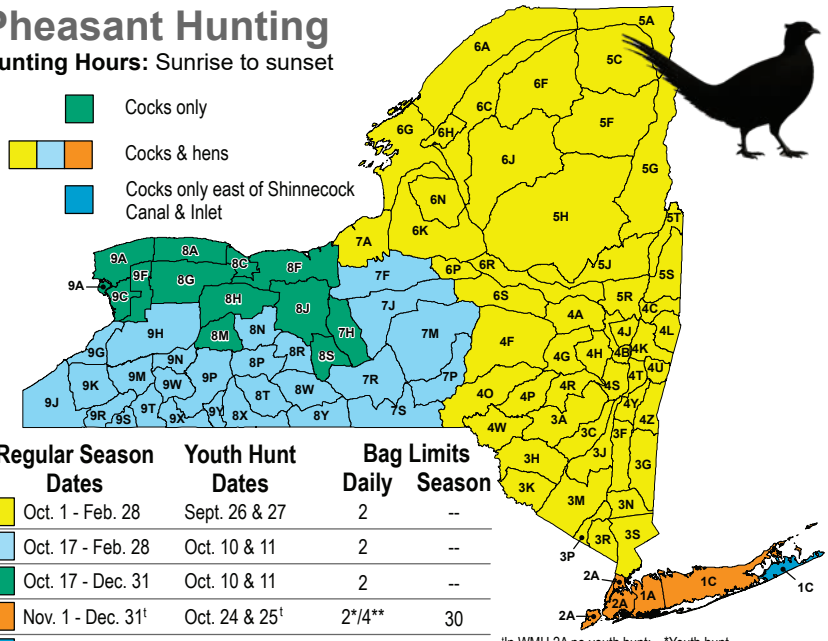


Red squirrels are unprotected, and may be hunted at any time without limit.

Season Dates	Daily Bag Limits
Sept. 1 - Feb. 28	6 total, regardless of species
Nov. 1 - Feb. 28	6 total, regardless of species

Pheasant Hunting

Hunting Hours: Sunrise to sunset



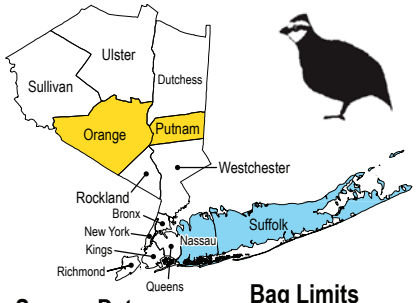
Regular Season Dates	Youth Hunt Dates	Bag Limits Daily	Bag Limits Season
Oct. 1 - Feb. 28	Sept. 26 & 27	2	--
Oct. 17 - Feb. 28	Oct. 10 & 11	2	--
Oct. 17 - Dec. 31	Oct. 10 & 11	2	--
Nov. 1 - Dec. 31[t]	Oct. 24 & 25[t]	2*/4**	30
Nov. 1 - Dec. 31	Oct. 24 & 25	2*/4**	30

[t]In WMU 2A no youth hunt; hunting is by falconry only

*Youth hunt
**Regular season

Bobwhite Quail Hunting

Hunting Hours: Sunrise to sunset



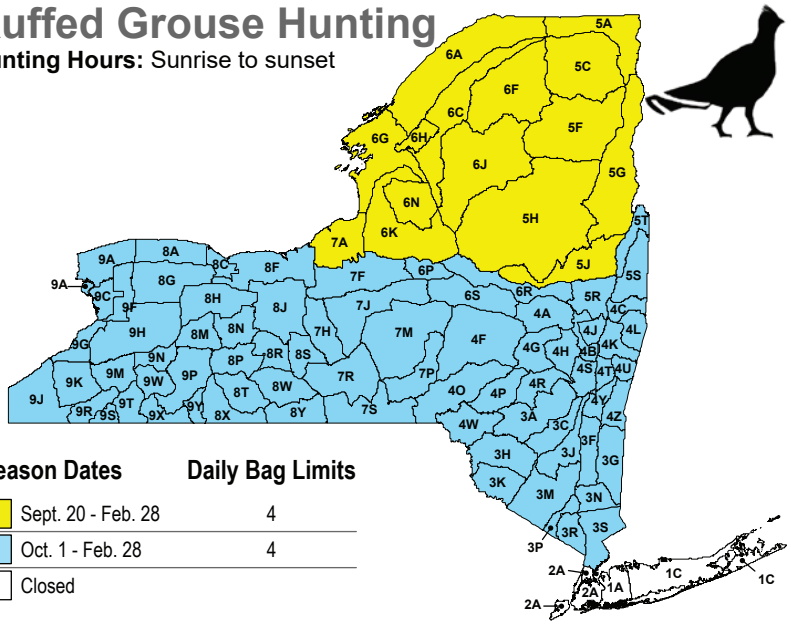
Season Dates	Bag Limits Daily	Bag Limits Season
Oct. 1 - Feb. 28	4	10
Nov. 1 - Dec. 31	6	40
Closed		

Where does DEC stock pheasants?

DEC introduced an interactive mapping tool to display the locations where pheasants are released throughout the state. Approximately 50,000 pheasants are released annually, thanks to the cooperation and interest of private and public landowners. Whether on public or private property, it s essential to adhere to any special rules and respect the land. Scan the QR code to find locations using the inter active mapping tool:

Ruffed Grouse Hunting

Hunting Hours: Sunrise to sunset



Season Dates	Daily Bag Limits
Sept. 20 - Feb. 28	4
Oct. 1 - Feb. 28	4
Closed	

Calling All Grouse Hunters!

Submit a Grouse and Woodcock Hunt ing Log and Ruffed Grouse Parts to be entered in a raffle to win a YETI® cooler or a subscription to the *Conservationist*.

These data help DEC monitor the ruffed grouse population across New York State.

For more information on how to participate, visit the webpage below, email *wildlife@dec.ny.gov*, or call 518 402 8883.

on.ny.gov/3HX9ueE