

What is a Migratory Game Bird?

Under state and federal laws and regulations, all of the following are considered migratory game birds in New York:

- All wild ducks, mergansers, geese, and brant (waterfowl)
- All coot, rails, and gallinules (moorhens)
- Woodcock and snipe

Crows are not considered migratory game birds under federal regulations, but most of New York's migratory game bird hunting regulations apply to crows. You should assume they are the same except where differences are noted.

Mourning doves are considered migratory game birds under federal regulations, but they are not defined as such under New York State law so no hunting season has been established for this species.

Migratory Game Bird Seasons and Bag Limits

Migratory game bird hunting regulations are set by the federal government in consultation with state agencies.

Consumption of Wild Waterfowl

The New York State Department of Health recommends that you remove the skin and fat of wild waterfowl before cooking, and eat no more than two meals containing waterfowl per month (with the exception of mergansers). Mergansers are fish-eating birds that tend to be the most heavily contaminated waterfowl and should not be eaten.

Recent data indicate that waterfowl residing in the Hudson River between Hudson Falls and Troy have higher PCB levels than waterfowl from other portions of the Hudson River and are likely to have higher PCB levels than waterfowl from other areas of the state. Because PCBs may have a greater effect on young children or an unborn child, it is particularly important for women under 50 and children under 15 to minimize their PCB exposure. For more information visit www.health.ny.gov/environmental/outdoors/fish/health_advisories/advice_on_eating_game.htm.

Waterfowl Hunting in Populated Areas

Some excellent waterfowl hunting opportunities occur in shoreline areas of New York that are becoming more populated and developed. Waterfowl hunters have special privileges in New York, but please consider the possible concerns that nearby homeowners may have about noise, safety, or invasion of privacy before you go afield. Avoiding such conflicts will help ensure that waterfowl hunting remains an accepted tradition in fast-developing shoreline areas. For more information, go to www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/94213.html.

DEC, in cooperation with the South Shore Waterfowlers Association (SSWA), has produced *A Pocket Reference for Police Officers and Waterfowl Hunters* that summarizes the state laws that pertain to waterfowl hunting in general and includes a code of ethics for waterfowl hunters to help ensure that waterfowl hunting remains a viable recreational opportunity in New York. For a copy, call 518-402-8883 or email wildlife@dec.ny.gov.

Snow Goose Conservation Order

Waterfowl hunters in New York will have a special opportunity to harvest snow geese in most areas of the state from January 16 through April 15, 2023. This additional opportunity is offered because of concerns about impacts that snow geese are having on natural ecosystems. For more information, go to www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/50514.html.

General Regulations

Following is a summary of state and federal rules that apply to the taking, possessing, shipping, transporting, and storing of all migratory game birds in New York. For more complete information, consult the specific federal (50 CFR Part 20) and state (6 NYCRR Part 2.30) regulations. You can find links to both of these at www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/28175.html.

Definitions

Migratory game birds are wild ducks, geese, brant, coot, rails, gallinules, woodcock, and snipe. Migratory waterfowl are wild ducks, geese, brant, and coot.

License requirements

All migratory game bird hunters must carry a valid New York State hunting license, except for persons not required to have a hunting license. All migratory game bird hunters must register annually with New York's Harvest Information Program (HIP) and carry proof of compliance whenever going afield. If you are 16 years or

older and you hunt waterfowl, then you also need a federal migratory game bird hunting stamp (duck stamp).

Harvest Information Program (HIP) Registration

All migratory game bird hunters must register annually for HIP through DECALS, DEC's licensing system. Information from this survey helps the USFWS and State wildlife agencies monitor the harvest of migratory game birds and is needed to establish hunting regulations. HIP registration is valid from August 1 – July 30 annually. There are two options for registering:

- **Option 1 – Online HIP Registration:**
 - » Go to the DEC Hunting License website: decals.licensing.east.kalkomey.com/
 - » Click on the header at the top of the main page that says "Report Game Harvest/ Register for HIP"
 - » A DECALS login is not required, but you will be prompted to provide your DEC ID and Date of Birth
 - » Click "Search"
 - » The system will then list all previous HIP registrations you have associated with your DEC ID, indicating whether they have been submitted or are still pending.
 - If no results return after pressing the "Search" button, it means you currently do not have a current/valid hunting license and are ineligible for HIP registration.
 - » Once you find the current HIP year registration survey, you will select the dropdown arrow on the right-hand side, and select "Register for HIP"
 - You will be prompted to answer a series of questions pertaining to your hunting activities last year.
 - » After answering all required questions, press "Submit." The system will then save your data and provide your HIP number. This number completes the registration process and proves your participation in HIP. You are required to carry this number with you in some form while migratory bird hunting.
- **Option 2 – HIP Registration via the automated phone system:**
 - » Call 1-866-933-2257
 - » Select the option for "HIP registration"
 - » Follow automated instructions.
 - » At the end of the call, you will be given your HIP registration number. Migratory game bird hunters are required to carry this number in some form while hunting.

Migratory bird hunting stamp

Each waterfowl hunter 16 years of age or older must carry on his/her person a valid Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (duck stamp) signed in ink across the face. Stamps do not have to be attached to your license. E-stamps, validated as defined in the Federal Permanent Electronic Duck Stamp Act of 2013, are also permitted. Duck stamps are not required to hunt coot, rails, gallinules, woodcock, or snipe. Duck stamps are not required of minors 12 to 15 years of age hunting migratory waterfowl in New York State.

Migratory Game Birds

Federal duck stamps are sold at most post offices and many sporting goods stores and cost \$25 each. They may also be ordered by calling 1-800-852-4897. There is a shipping and handling fee for phone or internet orders.

Hunting hours

Woodcock may be taken from sunrise to sunset. All other migratory game birds may be taken from one-half hour before sunrise until sunset in all hunting zones. Canada geese may be taken until one-half hour after sunset during the September seasons, when all other waterfowl hunting seasons are closed. Otherwise, shooting hours end at sunset. Snow geese may be taken until one-half hour after sunset during January 15–April 15 whenever all other waterfowl hunting seasons are closed.

Non-toxic shot requirement

Non-toxic shot is required for hunting any migratory game bird, except woodcock, everywhere in New York State. Possession or use of shells loaded with shot other than steel, bismuth-tin, iron-tungsten, iron-tungsten-nickel, tungsten-bronze, tungsten-iron-copper-nickel, tungsten-matrix, tungsten-polymer, tungsten-tin-iron, tungsten-tin-bismuth, tungsten-tin-iron-nickel, or other shot approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is strictly prohibited when hunting waterfowl, snipe, rails, or gallinules.

Duck hunting blinds

NYS Navigation Law Section 33-b requires that duck blinds placed in the waters of lakes within New York State be prominently marked with the owner's full name and address. All duck blinds placed in lakes must be removed no later than March 15 annually.

Prohibitions on methods of take

No person shall take migratory game birds:

- With a trap, snare, net, rifle, pistol, swivel gun, shotgun larger than 10-gauge, punt gun, battery gun, machine gun, fishhook, poison, drug, explosive, or stupefying substance.
- With a shotgun capable of holding more than three shells, unless it is plugged with a one-piece filler that is incapable of removal without disassembling the gun. This does not apply to the taking of snow geese in any area or zone, or taking of Canada geese during September, when all other waterfowl seasons are closed. However, semi-automatic shotguns may not exceed six shells in the magazine and chamber combined, at any time when waterfowl hunting.
- From a sink box (a low-floating device, having a depression affording the hunter a means of concealment beneath the surface of the water).
- From or with the aid or use of a car or other motor-driven land conveyance, or any aircraft, except that paraplegics and single or double amputees of the legs may, with a permit issued by the DEC, take from any stationary motor vehicle or stationary motor-driven land conveyance. "Paraplegic" means an individual afflicted with paralysis of the lower half of the

body with involvement of both legs, usually due to disease or injury to the spinal cord.

- From or by means of any motorboat or sailboat unless the motor has been completely shut off and/or sail furled, and its progress has ceased. Motorboats and sailboats under power may be used to retrieve dead or crippled birds; however, crippled birds may not be shot from such craft under power except in the Special Sea Duck Area described in the Hunting Seasons Table.
- By the use or aid of live decoys. All live, tame or captive ducks and geese shall be removed for a period of 10 consecutive days prior to hunting and confined within an enclosure which substantially reduces the audibility of their calls and totally conceals such tame birds from the sight of migratory waterfowl.
- Using recorded migratory bird calls or sounds or electrically amplified imitations of bird calls. This does not apply to the taking of snow geese in any area or zone, or taking of Canada geese in September, when all other waterfowl seasons are closed.
- By driving, rallying or chasing birds with any motorized conveyance or any sailboat to put them in the range of hunters.
- By the aid of baiting (placing feed such as corn, wheat, salt, or other feed to constitute a lure or enticement) or on or over any baited area. Hunters should be aware that a baited area is considered to be baited for 10 days after the removal of the bait, and it is not necessary for the hunter to know an area is baited to be in violation. Migratory game birds may be taken on or over standing crops, flooded harvested crop lands, or grain crops properly shocked on the field where grown or grains are found scattered solely as a result of the normal agricultural planting or harvesting.

Military and Veteran Hunting Days

Military veterans or active duty hunters possessing the necessary licenses, HIP registration, and duck stamp, may hunt migratory game birds during two (2) special days in each zone. The daily bag limit is the same as those allowed during the regular hunting season.

In addition to the previously mentioned license requirements for adults hunting migratory game birds, participants must carry one of the following forms of identification afield:

- Active military identification card
- Actively participating Guard or Reservist identification card
- Retired military identification card
- New York State drivers license with Veteran Status
- Form DD214, Certificate of Discharge
- Form DD215, Corrected Certificate of Discharge

Wanton waste and possession of live birds

No person shall kill or cripple any migratory game bird without making a reasonable effort to retrieve the bird and retain it in his/her actual custody. Wounded birds reduced to possession

shall be killed immediately and included in the daily bag limit.

Field possession limit

No more than one daily bag or aggregate daily bag limit of migratory game birds may be possessed or transported, tagged or untagged, at or between the place of taking and:

- His or her automobile or principal means of land transportation
- His or her personal abode or temporary place of lodging
- Migratory bird preservation facility
- Post office or common-carrier facility

No person shall completely field dress any migratory game bird and then transport the bird from the field. The head or one fully feathered wing must remain attached to all such birds while being transported.

Possession, tagging, shipment, and importation

The possession limit is the maximum number of migratory game birds that any person may possess in total in his/her automobile or principal means of land transportation, personal abode, or in his/her name at any migratory bird preservation facility, post office, or common-carrier facility. The possession limit is three times the daily bag limit for all waterfowl species except snow geese.

No person shall give, put, or leave any migratory game birds at any place (other than personal abode) or in the custody of another person for picking, cleaning, processing, shipping, transportation, storage (including temporary storage), or taxidermy services, unless the birds are tagged by the hunter with the following information:

- Hunter's name, address, and signature
- Total number of birds involved, by species
- Dates such birds were killed

For more information on regulations pertaining to possession, tagging, shipment, and importation of legally killed migratory game birds, consult the specific federal and state regulations cited above.

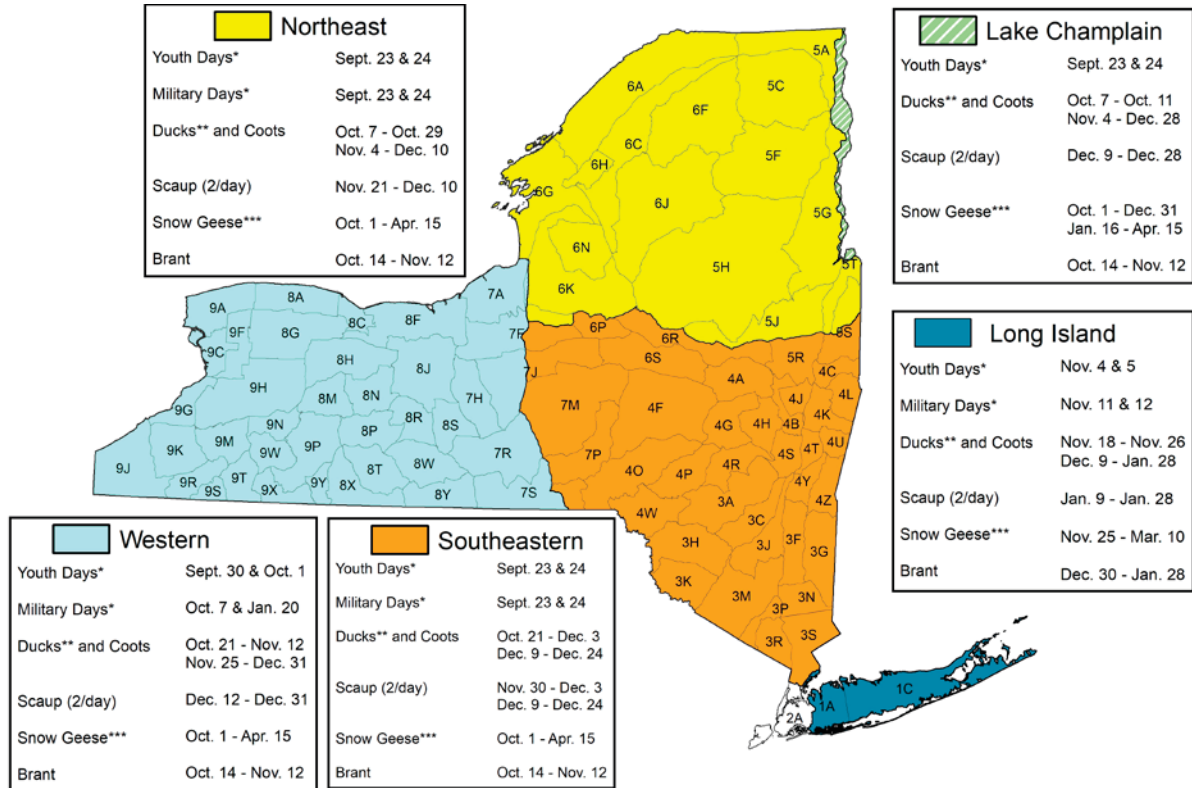
Caution/dual violation

More restrictive regulations may apply to national wildlife refuges and state WMAs open to public hunting. Violation of New York State migratory bird hunting regulations is also a violation of federal regulations.



Migratory Game Bird Hunting Seasons and Bag Limits

2023–2024 Waterfowl Seasons



Bag Limits

The daily bag limit is the maximum number of birds of each species that any person may take or possess in the field during any one day. The possession limit is three times the daily bag limit for all migratory game birds except snow geese.

Species	Daily Limit	Possession Limit
Ducks ^a	6	18
Coot	15	45
Canada Geese ^b	See map	Three times the daily limit — see map page 54
Snow Geese ^b	25	No limit
Brant	1	3

- a The daily limit of 6 ducks includes all mergansers and sea ducks (scoters, eiders, and long-tailed ducks) and may include no harlequin ducks and no more than 4 mallards (2 of which may be hens), 3 wood ducks, 2 black ducks, 1 pintail, 1 scaup (2 scaup are allowed during the 20 days specified above for each zone), 2 redheads, 2 canvasback, or 4 sea ducks (including no more than 3 scoters, 3 long-tailed ducks, or 3 eiders and no more than 1 female eider). For all other duck species found in New York, the daily limit is no more than 6.
- b Cackling geese and white-fronted geese may be taken as part of the Canada goose daily and possession limits. Snow geese and Ross' geese may be taken as part of the snow goose limits.

- * Youth hunters, 12 to 15 years of age, possessing a junior hunting license and HIP registration, may hunt ducks, mergansers, Canada geese, brant, gallinules, and coot on two (2) special days in each zone. Daily bag limits for all species are the same as those allowed during the regular hunting season for all species. Youth hunters must be supervised by a licensed (including current HIP registration and duck stamp) adult hunter, and the mentor may not carry a firearm. This prohibition does not apply to other hunters in the party that are not mentoring the youth.
- ** Crippled sea ducks may be taken under power in the Special Sea Duck area, only. The Special Sea Duck Area is defined as the coastal waters of New York State and all waters of streams and rivers seaward from the first upstream bridge.
- *** Snow goose seasons include both the regular hunting season and the Conservation Order that runs from January 16 – April 15 in all zones (except Long Island).

Attention Boaters!

Before you launch your boat or leave a site, you are required to clean all visible plant and animal material from your boat, trailer, and associated equipment. Drain your boat's bilge, livewell, baitwell, and other water-holding compartments. For more information on aquatic invasive species, visit: www.dec.ny.gov/animals/50121.html.

Brianna's Law – New Boating Safety Law!

If you were born on or after:	You will need a boating safety certificate when operating a motorized vessel in:
January 1, 1993	2020
January 1, 1988	2022
January 1, 1983	2023
January 1, 1978	2024

All operators of motorized vessels, regardless of age, will need a boating safety certificate by January 1, 2025. For more information and to find courses: parks.ny.gov/recreation/boating/.

Military and Veteran Waterfowl Hunting Days

Northeast Zone — September 23 and 24

Southeast Zone — September 23 and 24

Western Zone — October 7 and January 20

Long Island Zone — November 11 and 12

Daily bag limit is the same as the regular season. There are no military/veteran hunting days in the Lake Champlain Zone.

Migratory Game Bird Hunting Seasons and Bag Limits

Woodcock, Crow, Snipe, Rail, and Gallinule Hunting Season Dates, Bag Limits, and Regulations for 2023–2024

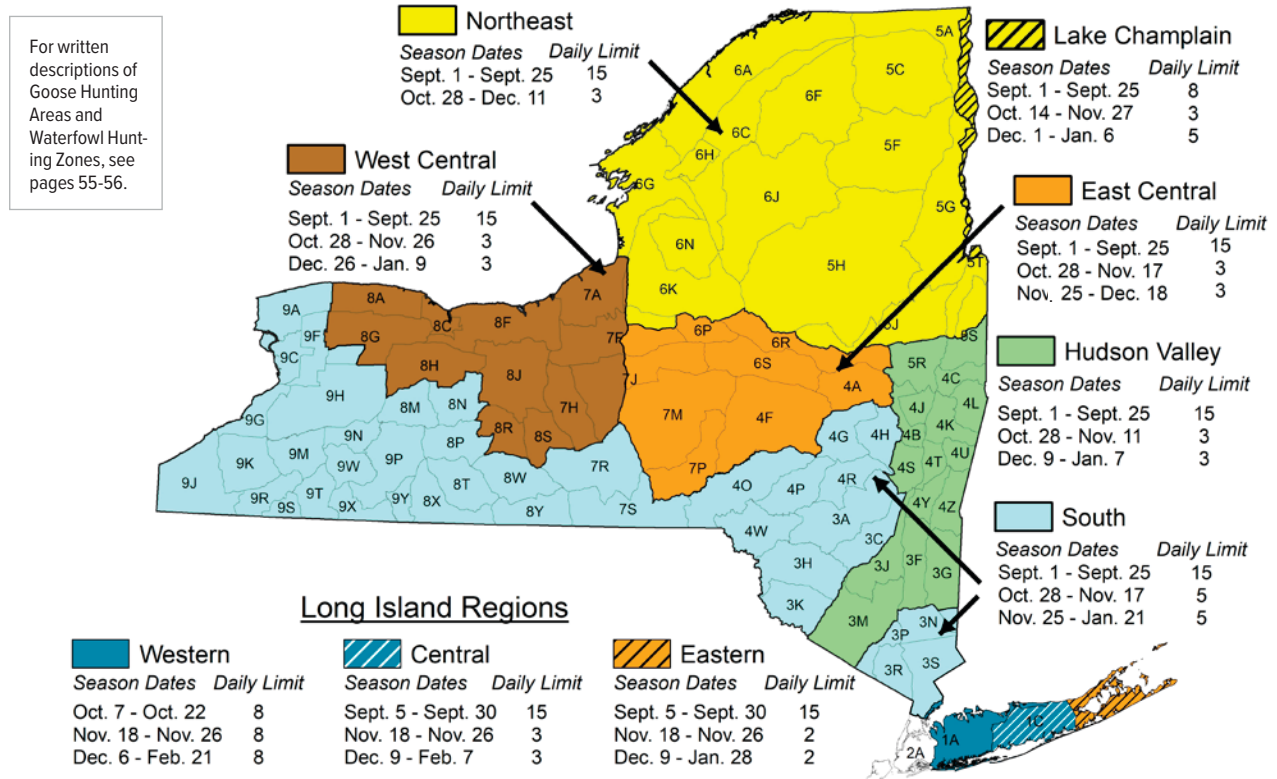
Regulations	Woodcock	Crow	Snipe	Virginia & Sora Rails	Gallinules	Clapper & King Rails
Upstate New York ^{1,3}	Oct. 1 – Nov. 14	Sept. 1 – Mar. 31	Sept. 1 – Nov. 9	Sept. 1 – Nov. 9	Sept. 1 – Nov. 9	Closed
Long Island ^{2,3}	Oct. 1 – Nov. 14	Sept. 1 – Mar. 31	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Bag Limit	3/day 9 in possession	None	8/day 24 in possession	8/day 24 in possession	8/day 24 in possession	n/a
Shooting Hours	Sunrise to Sunset	Sunrise to Sunset	1/2-Hr Before Sunrise to Sunset	1/2-Hr Before Sunrise to Sunset	1/2-Hr Before Sun- rise to Sunset	n/a
Non-Toxic Shot	NOT Required	NOT Required	Required	Required	Required	n/a
HIP Registration	Required	NOT Required	Required	Required	Required	n/a
Other	Fed Migratory Bird Stamp NOT Required	Hunting on Fri., Sat., Sun. & Mon. ONLY; Fed Migratory Bird Stamp NOT Required; Rifles and electronically amplified bird calls or sounds permitted	Fed Migratory Bird Stamp NOT Required	Fed Migratory Bird Stamp NOT Required	Fed Migratory Bird Stamp NOT Required	n/a

1 Upstate New York includes all of New York State north of the Bronx-Westchester County boundary

2 Long Island includes all of WMUs 1A and 1C (Nassau and Suffolk counties)

3 Hunting season closed in New York City for all species listed in table; New York City includes all of WMU 2A (Bronx, Kings, Queens, New York, and Richmond counties)

2023-2024 Canada Goose Seasons



New York State Goose Hunting Areas

See road boundaries at www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/28496.html

1. The Lake Champlain Goose Hunting Area is the same as the Lake Champlain Waterfowl Hunting Zone (see page 56).
2. The Northeast Goose Hunting Area is the same as the Northeastern Waterfowl Hunting Zone (see page 56).
3. The West Central Goose Hunting Area consists of the following WMUs: 7A, 7H, 8A, 8C, 8F, 8H, 8J, 8R, and 8S. The West Central Goose Hunting Area also includes: that part of WMU 6K lying west of a continuous line extending along the north shore of the Salmon River from US Route 11 to Interstate Route 81, then south along Route 81 to Route 49; those parts of WMUs 7F and 7J lying west of Route 81; and that part of WMU 8G lying north and east of a continuous line extending along the New York State Thruway from Crittenden-Murrays Corners Road (near the Erie-Genesee county line) to Exit 48 in Batavia, then south along Route 98 to Route 20.
4. The East Central Goose Hunting Area consists of the following WMUs: 4A, 4F, 6P, 6R, 6S, 7M, and 7P. The East Central Goose Hunting Area also includes those parts of WMUs 7F and 7J lying south of Route 31 and east of Route 81.
5. The Hudson Valley Goose Hunting Area consists of the following WMUs: 3F, 3J, 3M, 4B, 4C, 4J, 4K, 4L, 4S, 4T, 4U, 4Y, 4Z, 5R; that part of WMU 5S lying south of a continuous line extending east along Route 29 to Route 22, north along Route 22 to Washington County Route 153, then east along Route 153 to the New York–Vermont boundary; and that part of WMU 3G lying in Dutchess County.
6. The South Goose Hunting Area consists of the following WMUs: 3A, 3C, 3H, 3K, 3N, 3P, 3R, 4G, 4H, 4O, 4P, 4R, 4W, 7R, 7S, 8M, 8N, 8P, 8T, 8W, 8X, 8Y, 9A, 9C, 9F, 9G, 9H, 9J, 9K, 9M, 9N, 9P, 9R, 9S, 9T, 9W, 9X, and 9Y. The South Goose Hunting Area also includes: that part of WMU 8G lying south and west of a continuous line extending along the New York State Thruway from Crittenden-Murrays Corners Road (near the Erie-Genesee county line) to Exit 48 in Batavia, then south along State Route 98 to State Route 20; that part of WMU 3G lying in Putnam County; and that part of WMU 3S lying north of Route 1-95.
7. The Western Long Island Goose Hunting Area is that area of Westchester County and its tidal waters southeast of Interstate Route 95 and that area of Nassau and Suffolk counties lying west of a continuous line extending due south from the New York-Connecticut boundary to the northernmost end of Sound Road (just east of Wading River Marsh); then south on Sound Road to North Country Road; then west on North Country Road to Randall Road; then south on Randall Road to Route 25A, then west on Route 25A to Sunken Meadow Parkway; then south on Sunken Meadow Parkway to the Sagtikos State Parkway; then south on the Sagtikos Parkway to the Robert Moses State Parkway; then south on the Robert Moses Parkway to its southernmost end; then due south to international waters.
8. The Central Long Island Goose Hunting Area is that area of Suffolk County lying between the Western and Eastern Long Island Goose Hunting areas, as defined above and below.
9. The Eastern Long Island Goose Hunting Area is that area of Suffolk County lying east of a continuous line extending due south from the New York-Connecticut boundary to the northernmost end of Roanoke Avenue in the Town of Riverhead, south on Roanoke Avenue (which becomes County Route 73) to State Route 25, west on Route 25 to Peconic Avenue, south on Peconic Avenue to County Route (CR) 104 (Riverleigh Avenue), south on CR 104 to CR 31 (Old Riverhead Road), south on CR 31 to Oak Street, south on Oak Street to Potunk Lane, then west on Stevens Lane, then south on Jessup Avenue (in Westhampton Beach) to Dune Road (CR 89), then due south to international waters.

Waterfowl Hunting Zone Descriptions

Waterfowl Hunting Zones

Western Zone – That area west of a continuous line extending from Lake Ontario east along the north shore of the Salmon River to Interstate Route 81 and then south along Interstate Route 81 to the New York-Pennsylvania boundary.

Northeastern Zone – That area north of a continuous line extending from Lake Ontario east along the north shore of the Salmon River to Interstate Route 81, south along Interstate Route 81 to Route 31, east along Route 31 to Route 13, north along Route 13 to Route 49, east along Route 49 to Route 365, east along Route 365 to Route 28, east along Route 28 to Route 29, east along Route 29 to Route 22, north along Route 22 to Route 153, east along Route 153 to the New York-Vermont boundary, exclusive of the Lake Champlain Zone.

Lake Champlain Zone – That area east and north of a continuous line extending along Route 11 from the New York-Canada boundary south to Route 9B, south along Route 9B to Route 9, south along Route 9 to Route 22 south of Keeseville, south along Route 22 to the west shore of South Bay along and around the shoreline of South Bay to Route 22 on the east shore of South Bay, southeast along Route 22 to Route 4, northeast along Route 4 to the New York-Vermont boundary.



Jake, Bill S.'s hunting companion after a successful goose hunt

Southeastern Zone – That area east of Interstate Route 81 that is south of a continuous line extending from Interstate Route 81 east along Route 31 to Route 13, north along Route 13 to Route 49, east along Route 49 to Route 365, east along Route 365 to Route 28, east along Route 28 to Route 29, east along Route 29 to Route 22, north along Route 22 to Route 153, east along Route 153 to the New York-Vermont boundary, and northwest of Interstate Route 95 in Westchester County.

Long Island Zone – That area consisting of Nassau and Suffolk counties and their tidal waters, and that area of Westchester County and its tidal waters southeast of Interstate Route 95. (See map page 49).

Special Sea Duck Area – All coastal waters and all waters of rivers and streams in New York State seaward from the first upstream bridge.

Choosing Duck Season Dates

New York has five waterfowl zones, which allow DEC flexibility to select duck season dates that match hunter values and duck migration in each zone. In 2019, DEC implemented a new process for selecting duck seasons that pairs input from a large portion of New York duck hunters with data of duck movements and in-season patterns of duck abundance. Duck season frameworks are set on a 5-year cycle. The 2023–2024 duck season is the final year of the cycle.

During the winter of 2023, DEC surveyed all duck hunters that registered for HIP via an email survey to re-assess what factors are the most important to duck hunters in each zone. DEC added questions to understand the relative importance of icing (freezing of smaller ponds, lakes, and streams) in relation to hunter satisfaction with season dates. Icing concentrates duck activity on larger lakes and rivers with open water and may be viewed positively or negatively by hunters depending on the types of equipment (i.e. boat) duck hunters use or the habitats in which they typically pursue ducks. The survey also specifically asked duck hunters about which species are most important to them.

This spring, DEC met with the Waterfowl Hunter Task Force in each zone to develop a list of possible season date options that might meet the range of varying hunter objectives. These season options will be evaluated relative to data trends (abundance, migration timing, ice/temperature) and important hunter values identified in the survey to determine which season date option best aligns with what hunters value. The results of the process will be used to set the duck season dates for each zone from 2024–2029.

