

Summary of Migratory Birds Hunting Regulations

August 2025
to July 2026



Notice: Avian influenza virus (bird flu) is a contagious viral infection that can affect domestic and wild birds throughout the world. Guidelines have been developed to prevent or mitigate the spread of this virus, and for precautionary measures to take when handling wild game. For more information, please refer to www.canada.ca/Avian-flu and the [Wildlife and Avian Influenza – Handling Guidelines to Protect Your Health](http://www.canada.ca/Wildlife-and-Avian-Influenza---Handling-Guidelines-to-Protect-Your-Health) web page on the Government of Canada website.

To hunt migratory game birds in Canada, you must possess:

- a valid Migratory Game Bird Hunting (MGBH) Permit;
- a Canadian Wildlife Habitat Conservation Stamp on the permit.

These two documents are issued by the federal government and are valid in all provinces and territories.

Hunting Districts

Zone No. 1: the counties of Antigonish, Pictou, Colchester, Cumberland, Hants, Kings, and Annapolis.

Zone No. 2: the counties of Digby, Yarmouth, Shelburne, Queens, Lunenburg, Halifax, Guysborough, Cape Breton, Victoria, Inverness, and Richmond.

For more information on restrictions and requirements for hunting migratory game birds, please refer to the [Migratory Birds Regulations, 2022](http://www.canada.ca/Migratory-Birds-Regulations-2022) (MBR), and/or consult the Government of Canada [Migratory Game Bird Hunting](http://www.canada.ca/Migratory-Game-Bird-Hunting) website, which includes a [frequently asked questions](#) page.

The Canadian [Firearms Act](http://www.canada.ca/Firearms-Act) outlines the requirements for the storage, transportation and possession of firearms, as well as details requirements for licensing and registration of certain firearms. Most provinces and territories have additional licence requirements for hunting migratory birds and/or to carry firearms. To know what you require, and if there are further restrictions for hunting migratory birds, please verify the applicable regulations for the province/territory and municipality where you will be hunting. Restrictions such as Sunday hunting closures and minimum required distances from residences and businesses for the discharge of firearms may be applicable.

You can purchase an electronic MGBH Permit by visiting the Government of Canada website (www.permis-permits.ec.gc.ca).

Hunters may carry their MGBH Permit either in physical (paper) or electronic formats (such as on a mobile device). Electronic MGBH Permits must be in the PDF format provided by the e-permitting system (a photograph or screenshot of your permit is not valid). It is the hunter's responsibility to be able to show all required permits to a game officer immediately upon request.

Consultation Process and Migratory Birds Regulatory Reports

A national consultation process has been developed which includes a report on the population status of migratory game birds and a consultation document that provides an opportunity to participate in developing the hunting regulations. For more information, consult the [Migratory Birds Regulatory Report Series](http://www.canada.ca/Migratory-Birds-Regulatory-Report-Series) web page on the Government of Canada website.

Youth Migratory Game Bird Hunting Permit

The Youth MGBH Permit is an option available to hunters who are minors (under the age of 18 years old on the day the permit is issued). The Youth MGBH Permit, as well as the Canadian Wildlife Habitat Conservation Stamp, are free of charge and **can only be obtained through the e-permitting system (www.permis-permits.ec.gc.ca)**.

The Youth MGBH Permit provides young hunters with the opportunity to practice their skills under the supervision of an adult hunter (known as a mentor) and allows them to have their own daily bag and possession limits.

Mentors must possess their own MGBH Permit, must have held a MGBH Permit in a previous year, and may accompany no more than two Youth MGBH Permit holders at a time. Mentors may carry a firearm and may hunt.

Many provinces and territories have additional licence requirements and restrictions for hunters who are minors and/or for mentors. Please consult the applicable provincial/territorial regulations.

Enforcement



Federal game officers enforce the [Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994](http://www.canada.ca/Migratory-Birds-Convention-Act-1994) (MBCA) and its associated regulations throughout Canada. This law regulates human activities, such as hunting, that could adversely affect wildlife conservation. Game officers may use warnings, administrative monetary penalties, tickets or prosecutions to enforce the provisions of the MBCA and its regulations. The fines and penalties that may be imposed reflect the seriousness of the offence(s). Individuals may be subject to a fine range for a first offence associated to sections of the MBR designated for the purposes of paragraph 13(1)(c) of the MBCA on summary conviction of not less than \$5,000 and not more than \$300,000, or imprisonment for a term of not more than six months, or both.

Shot

- Lead shot is toxic to wildlife and the environment.
- In Nova Scotia, the use and possession of shot other than non-toxic shot is prohibited while hunting migratory game birds other than woodcock.
- Within National Wildlife Areas (NWA) that allow hunting, the possession of lead shot is prohibited for all hunting, including the hunting of migratory birds and upland game birds. Refer to the [Wildlife Area Regulations](#) to know which NWAs allow hunting and for the restrictions or requirements when conducting this activity.

To reduce your exposure to contaminants in meat, make sure, before cooking it, to:

- remove the shot from birds hunted with lead shot;
- remove the skin and fat from fish-eating birds.

Species at Risk*

- **Barrow's Goldeneye** is listed in the [Species at Risk Act](#) as a species of special concern, and the **daily bag and possession limit is 1 bird**.
- **Harlequin Duck** is listed in the [Species at Risk Act](#) as a species of special concern. There is **no open season for this species**.

Crime Stoppers

Anyone wishing to report illegal hunting activities, illegal selling of birds or other offences related to migratory birds is asked to call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477). Your call is anonymous, and you may be eligible for a cash reward.

Open Season and Daily Bag and Possession Limits for Migratory Game Birds in Nova Scotia

Area	Species	Open Season	Daily Bag Limit	Possession Limit
Zone No. 1	Common and Red-breasted Mergansers, Long-tailed Ducks, Eiders, and Scoters, combined	October 1 to November 1 This is not an open season for Eiders.	5 (not more than 4 may be Scoters)	10 (not more than 4 may be Eiders and not more than 8 may be Scoters)
	November 2 to December 31 This is the only season for Eiders.	5 (not more than 2 may be Eiders, of which not more than 1 may be female, and not more than 4 may be Scoters)		
	January 1 to January 15 This is not an open season for Eiders.	5 (not more than 4 may be Scoters)		
	Ducks (other than Harlequin Ducks*, Common and Red-breasted Mergansers, Long-tailed Ducks, Eiders and Scoters), combined	October 1 to January 15	6 (not more than 1 may be Barrow's Goldeneye*)	18 (not more than 1 may be Barrow's Goldeneye*)
	All Geese, combined	September 1 to September 15	5 (plus an additional 5 Canada Geese or Cackling Geese in any combination)	
		October 1 to December 31	5	
	Woodcock	October 1 to November 30	8	16
	Snipe	October 1 to November 30	10	20

Area	Species	Open Season	Daily Bag Limit	Possession Limit
Zone No. 2	Common and Red-breasted Mergansers, Long-tailed Ducks, Eiders and Scoters, combined	October 8 to November 1 This is not an open season for Eiders.	5 (not more than 4 may be Scoters)	10 (not more than 4 may be Eiders and not more than 8 may be Scoters)
		November 2 to December 31 This is the only season for Eiders.	5 (not more than 2 may be Eiders, of which not more than 1 may be female, and not more than 4 may be Scoters)	
		January 1 to January 22 This is not an open season for Eiders.	5 (not more than 4 may be Scoters)	
	Ducks (other than Harlequin Ducks*, Common and Red-breasted Mergansers, Long-tailed Ducks, Eiders and Scoters), combined	October 8 to January 22	6 (not more than 1 may be Barrow's Goldeneye*)	18 (not more than 1 may be Barrow's Goldeneye*)
	All Geese, combined	September 1 to September 15	5 (plus an additional 5 Canada Geese or Cackling Geese in any combination)	20
		October 16 to January 15	5	
	Woodcock	October 1 to November 30	8	16
	Snipe	October 1 to November 30	10	20

The information presented here is a summary of the law. If there is a discrepancy between the law and this summary, the law prevails.

For more information, consult the [Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994](#), the [Migratory Birds Regulations, 2022](#), the [frequently asked questions on migratory game bird hunting](#), and other information on the Government of Canada website (www.canada.ca).

You may also direct your questions to:

**Environment and Climate Change Canada
Canadian Wildlife Service**

Regional Office

17 Waterfowl Lane

P.O. Box 6227

Sackville, New Brunswick E4L 1G6

Tel.: 1-800-668-6767

enviroinfo@ec.gc.ca

Report your Migratory Bird Bands:

Call 1-800-327-BAND (2263) to leave a message or go to:

www.reportband.gov