

Summary of the Migratory Game Bird Hunting Regulations

August 2026
to July 2027



Notice: Avian influenza (bird flu) is a contagious virus that mainly affects domestic and wild birds. Follow safety guidelines to reduce the risk of spreading the virus and to protect your health when handling wild game. Learn more at ["Avian influenza in wild birds - Canada.ca"](https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/avian-influenza/wild-birds.html).

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

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

The MGBH Permit is valid anywhere in Canada where and when there is an open season to hunt migratory game birds.

Hunting Zones

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.

Hunting Restrictions and Requirements

For more information on restrictions and requirements to hunt migratory game birds, please refer to the *Migratory Birds Regulations, 2022* and/or consult ["Migratory game bird hunting - Canada.ca"](https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/avian-influenza/wild-birds.html), which includes a frequently asked questions page.

The Canadian *Firearms Act* outlines the requirements for the licensing, possession, storage and transportation of firearms. Learn more at rcmp.ca/en/firearms.

Most provinces and territories have additional requirements to hunt and/or carry firearms. Check the provincial/territorial and municipal regulations 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 apply.

You can purchase an electronic MGBH Permit through the Regulatory Services Platform (psr-rsp.az.ec.gc.ca).

Hunters must carry their MGBH Permit with them at all times when hunting or when in possession of unpreserved migratory game birds. Permits obtained online may be presented as an electronic PDF or as a printed copy. A provincial or territorial licence may also be required. It is the hunter's responsibility to be able to show all required permits to a game officer immediately upon request.

As of the 2027–2028 hunting season, Environment and Climate Change Canada will no longer print physical (paper) copies of the hunting regulation summaries. They will continue to be available online at ["Hunting regulations for migratory birds: provincial and territorial summaries - Canada.ca"](https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/avian-influenza/wild-birds.html).

The physical MGBH Permits may be phased out as early as the 2027–2028 hunting season. Hunters will be invited to obtain their MGBH Permit through the Regulatory Services Platform.

Youth Migratory Game Bird Hunting Permit

The Youth MGBH Permit is an option available to hunters who are minors (under 18 years old on the day the permit is issued). The Youth MGBH Permit and electronic CWHC Stamp are free of charge and **can only be obtained through the Regulatory Services Platform**.

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 requirements and restrictions for hunters who are minors and/or for their mentors.

Enforcement



Federal game officers enforce the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994* and its associated regulations. This law regulates human activities, such as hunting, that could adversely affect the conservation of migratory birds. Game officers may use warnings, administrative monetary penalties, tickets or prosecutions. Fines and penalties vary depending on the severity of the offence. Individuals found guilty of a summary conviction for a first offence are liable to a fine between \$5,000 and \$300,000, a maximum imprisonment term of six months, or both.

Crime Stoppers

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

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, except for woodcock.
- Within National Wildlife Areas (NWA) that allow hunting, the possession of lead shot is prohibited for all hunting, including the hunting of migratory and upland game birds. Refer to Schedule I.1 of 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. 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**.

Important Update to the Hunting Regulations for Nova Scotia

In Zone No. 2, the second open season for geese is now a week later, from October 23 to January 22. The length of the open season does not change.

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)
	Harlequin Ducks	No open season	N/A	N/A
	All geese, combined	September 1 to September 15	5 (plus an additional 5 Canada Geese or Cackling Geese in any combination)	20
		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)
	Harlequin Ducks	No open season	N/A	N/A
	All geese, combined	September 1 to September 15	5 (plus an additional 5 Canada Geese or Cackling Geese in any combination)	20
		October 23 to January 22	5	
	Woodcock	October 1 to November 30	8	16
	Snipe	October 1 to November 30	10	20

Hunting Hours: No person shall hunt earlier than half an hour before sunrise or later than half an hour after sunset.

Consultation Process and Migratory Birds Regulatory Reports

There is a national consultation process which includes a report on the population status of migratory game birds and a proposal report that provides an opportunity to participate in developing the hunting regulations. To learn more, visit "[Migratory birds regulatory report series - Canada.ca](#)".

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

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Canadian Wildlife Service

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Report your migratory bird bands:
 Call 1-800-327-BAND (2263)
 to leave a message or visit:
reportband.gov