



# Summary of Migratory Birds Hunting Regulations

AUGUST 2023  
TO JULY 2024



**Notice:** Avian influenza virus (AIV) 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](http://www.canada.ca/Avian-flu) and the *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 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** means the counties of Antigonish, Pictou, Colchester, Cumberland, Hants, Kings, and Annapolis.

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

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 where you will be hunting. Municipalities may have additional restrictions on discharging firearms. Note that all required permits and licences must be in your possession while you are hunting.

## You can purchase your Migratory Game Bird Hunting Permit by visiting the Government of Canada website ([www.permis-permits.ec.gc.ca](http://www.permis-permits.ec.gc.ca))

**It is no longer required to sign the Migratory Game Bird Hunting Permit (both physical and electronic forms).** This allows you to carry your permit in a digital format, such as on a mobile device. If you choose to carry your permit on your mobile device, it must be in the PDF format provided by the e-permitting system (a photograph or screenshot of your permit is not valid). It is also your responsibility to be able to show the permit to a game officer immediately upon request.

Use of bait prior to and during the migratory bird hunting season is restricted; please consult the *Migratory Birds Regulations, 2022*, for restrictions regarding deposition of bait. Check your permit and provincial hunting regulations for additional restrictions, such as Sunday closures and minimum required distances from residences and businesses.

National Wildlife Areas located in Nova Scotia are administered under the *Canada Wildlife Act*. Refer to the schedule I.1 of the *Wildlife Area Regulations*, for area-specific rules.

## Consultation Process and Migratory Birds Regulatory Reports

A national consultation process has been developed to provide an opportunity for everyone to participate in developing the migratory birds hunting regulations. For more information, consult the *Migratory Birds Regulatory Report Series* web page on the Government of Canada website.

## Youth Migratory Game Bird Hunting (MGBH) Permit

Hunters who are minors (less than 18 years old) have the option to hunt with a Youth MGBH permit. The Youth MGBH permit, as well as the Canadian Wildlife Habitat Conservation stamp, can only be obtained through our online purchasing system, free of charge. The Youth MGBH permit is not available for purchase from independent vendors.

The Youth MGBH permit provides young hunters with the opportunity to practice their skills under the supervision of an adult mentor (in possession of a MGBH Permit) throughout the full open season and the special conservation season, and provides Youth MGBH Permit holders with their own daily bag and possession limits.

Mentors must possess their own MGBH permit, must have held such a permit in a previous year, and may accompany no more than two youth hunters. Mentors may carry a firearm, and may hunt. For more information on the new rules pertaining to hunting migratory game birds in the modernized *Migratory Birds Regulations, 2022*, please consult the Government of Canada *Migratory Game Bird Hunting* website.

## Enforcement

The *Environmental Violations Administrative Monetary Penalties Regulations* authorize game officers to use administrative monetary penalties (AMPs) to enforce the provisions of the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994* (MBCA) and its associated regulations.

The fine regime and penalty provisions in the MBCA and the *Designation of Regulatory Provisions for Purposes of Enforcement (Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994) Regulations* allow courts to impose penalties that reflect the seriousness of offences following a conviction pursuant to the MBCA or its associated regulations.

For more information on AMPs and the fine regime, consult the *About the Environmental Enforcement Act* web page on the Government of Canada website.



Game officers enforce the federal MBCA throughout Canada. This law regulates human activities such as hunting that could adversely affect long-term wildlife conservation. Individuals may be subject to a minimum penalty of \$5000 if they are found liable for committing an offence on summary conviction. For any questions, please contact Wildlife Enforcement by the telephone or email found with the regional office address at the end of this summary.

## 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 that allow hunting, the possession of lead shot is prohibited for all types of hunting, including the hunting of migratory birds and upland game birds.
- Hunters should consult provincial or territorial regulations for additional restrictions.

### 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**.

### 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 8. 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 9 to January 7	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)	
	Ducks (other than Harlequin Ducks, Common and Red-breasted Mergansers, Long-tailed Ducks, Eiders and Scoters), combined	October 1 to January 7	6 (not more than 1 may be Barrow's Goldeneye) from October 1 to November 30	18 (not more than 1 may be Barrow's Goldeneye)
			6 (not more than 1 may be Barrow's Goldeneye and not more than 4 may be American Black Ducks ) from December 1 to January 7	
	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	
Woodcock	October 1 to November 30	8	16	
Snipe	October 1 to November 30	10	20	
Zone No. 2	Common and Red-breasted Mergansers, Long-tailed Ducks, Eiders and Scoters, combined	October 8 to November 16. 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 17 to January 15	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)	
	Ducks (other than Harlequin Ducks, Common and Red-breasted Mergansers, Long-tailed Ducks, Eiders and Scoters), combined	October 8 to January 15	6 (not more than 1 may be Barrow's Goldeneye) from October 8 to December 7	18 (not more than 1 may be Barrow's Goldeneye)
			6 (not more than 1 may be Barrow's Goldeneye and not more than 4 may be American Black Ducks) from December 8 to January 15	
	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	
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 for hunters, and other information on the Government of Canada website ([www.canada.ca](http://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](mailto: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](http://www.reportband.gov)

**Canada**