



2023 WATERFOWL HUNTING NEWSLETTER

Waterfowl season is rapidly approaching and now is the time to prepare for opening day. Beginning September 1, 2023, hunters can purchase wildlife area hunting passes and submit reservation applications for State-operated wildlife areas. This newsletter contains important information for waterfowl hunters that will assist you in applying for reservations. Season summaries and complete regulations are available on the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) website at wildlife.ca.gov/Hunting/Waterfowl.

STAY CONNECTED TO CDFW

Providing CDFW with your email address and mobile phone number will enable CDFW to send you information you can use, such as license renewal and courtesy report card deadline reminders, and California fishing and hunting information. When purchasing a license from a license agent, or when you log in to www.ca.wildlifelicenses.com/InternetSales, update your communication preferences and provide your email address and mobile phone number.

NEW FREE HUNTING DAYS

Assembly Bill 804 (AB 804), signed into law in 2021, requires the CDFW to establish two free hunting days per year. The California Free Hunting Days for the 2023-24 hunting season are Saturday, November 25, 2023, and Saturday, April 13, 2024. To hunt on the free hunting days, participants must meet requirements established in FGC 3040, including the possession of a valid Free Hunt Days Registration. The Free Hunt Days Registration item will be available to claim beginning on October 11, 2023. For more information and requirements to participate in California's free hunting days, please visit <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Free-Hunting-Days>.

IMPORTANT WATER AVAILABILITY AND RESERVATION APPLICATIONS

Shasta Valley Wildlife Area will reopen to waterfowl hunting during the 2023-2024 waterfowl season. However, due to limited water availability, only dry field hunting opportunities can be provided. Pheasant hunting is permitted on Sundays during pheasant season. Reservations are required for Sunday pheasant hunts and for the opening weekend of waterfowl season. For more information, contact Steve Burton, Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisor), at (530) 340-0104.

CDFW will attempt to offer reservation applications only for areas that will be open for hunting.

However, last minute closures may occur due to uncertain water availability, and refunds cannot be issued for applications submitted to areas that are closed or if reservations are not available. As of the date of this newsletter, the status of water availability for most wildlife areas and refuges is not known. As information becomes available, updates about closures on wildlife areas and refuges will be posted on CDFW's web page at wildlife.ca.gov/Closures.

IMPORTANT WILDLIFE AREA AND REFUGE OPERATIONS RELATED TO COVID-19

CDFW plans to continue operating wildlife areas and refuges to provide recreational opportunities consistent with California Department of Public Health and county public health guidelines regarding COVID-19.

IMPORTANT HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA

Cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 have been detected in wild birds in the United States. Infection may cause mild to severe disease and mortality, which depends in part on the species of bird infected. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that the risk to general public health from HPAI is low, however some people may have job-related or recreational exposures that put them at higher risk of infection. Hunting dogs may also be at risk. Do not handle or consume sick game. Do not eat, drink, or smoke while handling game. Field dress and prepare game outdoors or in a well-ventilated area. Wear rubber or disposable gloves while handling and cleaning game. After handling game, wash hands with soap and water, and clean knives, equipment, and surfaces that came into contact with game. All game should be cooked to an internal temperature of 165°F before consuming. For more information, see USDA's guidance for hunters at



www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/fsc_hpai_hunters.pdf. Sightings of sick and dead wild birds may be reported to CDFW at the check station or through our online form at wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Laboratories/Wildlife-Health/Monitoring/Mortality-Report.

ONLINE-ONLY REGULATION BOOKLETS

Regulation booklets are available online-only and can be downloaded at wildlife.ca.gov/regulations.

VETERAN AND ACTIVE MILITARY HUNT DAYS

The Fish and Game Commission adopted regulations which allocate two days to veterans and active military personnel for waterfowl hunting in the Northeastern, Balance of State, Southern San Joaquin, and Southern California zones. Veterans (as defined in Section 101 of Title 38, United States Code) and members of the Armed Forces on active duty, including members of the National Guard and Reserves on active duty (other than training), may participate in this special hunt. Any person participating in this special hunt must possess and present upon demand verification of eligibility to participate. **Acceptable verification includes a Veteran's ID Card, Military ID Card for active duty, DD Form 214 (honorable discharge), or a State-issued driver's license or Identification Card with Veteran Designation.** Most wildlife areas are open for Veteran and Active Military hunters on these dates. **A wildlife area hunting pass is required to hunt on these dates.**

DISABLED VETERAN HUNT AT COLUSA NWR

On Saturday, January 6, 2024, all assigned ponds and blinds at Colusa NWR will be reserved for disabled veterans. Hunt details and application instructions are available on the Sacramento NWR Complex website at fws.gov/refuge/Sacramento/visit/hunting.html.

WATERFOWL RESERVATION DRAWING STATISTICS

Waterfowl reservation drawing statistics are available at wildlife.ca.gov/Licensing/Statistics/Waterfowl-Reservations.

IMPORTANT HUNTER CHECKLIST

Check stations do not sell any license items, permits, or passes. Hunters must purchase any

needed licenses, passes, and validations from a license agent or online.

Before going to a wildlife area to hunt waterfowl, verify that all members of your hunting party have these items:

- ❖ California Hunting License
- ❖ Prepaid Wildlife Area Hunting Pass (not required for junior hunters*)
 - Type A One-Day, Two-Day, or Season Pass for Type A Areas, or
 - Type A or B Season Pass for Northeastern Zone Type B Areas
- ❖ Harvest Information Program (HIP) Validation
- ❖ California Duck Validation (not required for junior hunters*)
- ❖ Federal Duck Stamp (required for all hunters 16 years of age or older)

*Note: A person hunting under the authority of a valid Junior Hunting License is known as a junior hunter.

Passes purchased online will be mailed to the customer. Allow 15 days for delivery of your pass. If you need a pass for use sooner than 15 days, please purchase a pass from a license agent.

RESERVATION DRAWING RESULTS

CDFW will mail reservation letters and send email notifications to hunters when they are drawn for a reservation. Results are also available online at www.ca.wildlifelicense.com/InternetSales.

WILDLIFE AREA HUNTING PASS REQUIREMENTS

On Type A and Type B wildlife areas, adult hunters must possess a valid wildlife area hunting pass. Any person hunting with a junior hunting license is exempt from wildlife area hunting pass requirements.

Type A Wildlife Areas

One of the following Type A Wildlife Area Season Pass or Day Pass is required:

- Type A One-Day Pass: valid for one day on a Type A Wildlife Area only.
- Type A Two-Day Pass: valid for two days or two people for one day on Type A Wildlife Areas only.



- Type A Season Pass: valid for the entire season on all Type A and B Wildlife Areas.

Type B Wildlife Areas

You must possess one of the season passes below. Type A One and Two-Day Passes are not accepted at Type B Wildlife Areas.

- Type A Season Pass: valid for the entire season on all Type A and B Wildlife Areas.
- Type B Season Pass: valid for the entire season on Type B Wildlife Areas only.

WATERFOWL RESERVATION DRAWING BASICS

CDFW's waterfowl reservation application system makes it easy for hunters to apply for reservations. Reservation drawing applications can be submitted anywhere California hunting licenses are sold and online at www.ca.wildlifelicenses.com/InternetSales.

You can submit more than one season-long reservation application or multiple-choice reservation application as long as you do not submit duplicate hunt choices.

- Reservations are issued by random drawings.
- Any person who possesses an annual hunting license may apply for reservations.
- Fee: \$1.34 per hunt choice.
- Deadline to apply is 17 days before each hunt date.
- Applications can be submitted electronically until 11:59 PM on the deadline date.
- Confirmation of application is immediate. Hunters receive a drawing receipt at the time of application.
- Duplicate hunt choices will be disqualified. One duplicate choice is disqualified, not both.
- View your pending applications and drawing results at www.ca.wildlifelicenses.com/InternetSales.
- Reservation letters are mailed to applicants who are drawn. Reservation letters can be reprinted at home via the link from your online drawing results.
- When hunters are drawn for a reservation, email notifications are sent providing a link to check your drawing results. To receive email notifications, your customer preferences must be set to receive license reminder emails.

SUBMIT APPLICATIONS ONLINE

Applying online is convenient. CDFW encourages hunters to submit their reservation applications at www.ca.wildlifelicenses.com/InternetSales.

Personally selecting and verifying your hunt choices online will allow you to confirm your applications are error-free.

HOW TO APPLY ONLINE

If your proof of hunter education has been stored to your customer record, you can purchase hunting items and apply for waterfowl reservation drawings online. Use your GO ID from your hunting license to retrieve your customer record at

www.ca.wildlifelicenses.com/InternetSales, and proceed to the 2023 Hunting tab. Select the multiple-choice reservation application, or the season-long reservation application, and make your hunt selections. After you have submitted payment and completed your transaction, you will be able to print a drawing receipt and review your hunt selections online.

HOW TO APPLY AT A LICENSE AGENT

Make a list of the areas and dates you wish to apply for. Take your list and hunting license with you to a license agent. The license agent will scan the barcode on your license to retrieve your customer record. Tell the clerk if you wish to submit a season-long reservation application or a multiple-choice reservation application. Give the clerk the list of hunts you wish to apply for or tell them your choices verbally. ***Be sure to verify that your drawing receipt shows the correct hunt choices before leaving.***

MILITARY ONLY RESERVATION APPLICATION

The military only reservation application may be used to apply for military only hunts reserved for veterans and active military personnel. Hunters participating in these hunts must possess and present upon demand verification of eligibility to participate in these hunts. Acceptable verification includes a Veteran's ID Card, Military ID Card for active duty, DD Form 214 (honorable discharge), or a State-issued driver's license or Identification Card with Veteran Designation. When using this option, the hunter or the license agent can select one or both hunting days for each participating area.



APPLYING FOR MOBILITY IMPAIRED ACCESSIBLE HUNTING SITES

When applying online for mobility impaired accessible hunting sites, be sure to select the application specifically for mobility impaired accessible hunting sites. The mobility impaired season-long reservation application, multiple-choice reservation application, and military only reservation application are located in the same location as the non-disabled versions.

If applying for mobility impaired accessible hunting sites at a license agent, inform the clerk that you wish to apply for mobility impaired accessible hunts. At the end of the transaction, look at your drawing receipt and verify that the clerk selected the correct mobility impaired accessible hunts.

RESERVATION INFORMATION TABLE

Waterfowl reservation information for Type A wildlife areas is available in the Waterfowl Reservation Information table

nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=70

[431](#)). The table includes the number of hunters allowed per reservation, reservation processing (i.e., check-in) and expiration times, and lottery and first-come, first-served (i.e., refill) procedures.

Please continue to check this table throughout the season or contact the wildlife area or refuge for any changes to check-in times.

FLOOD CLOSURE INFORMATION

It is common for waterfowl hunting areas to close periodically due to safety concerns caused by flooding.

Visit wildlife.ca.gov/Closures to see if any State-operated wildlife areas are closed. Reservations for State-operated wildlife areas that are closed due to flooding will not be accepted at other hunting areas. ***Refunds will not be issued for applications submitted to areas that are closed or if reservations are not available (Section 550.5(a)(1)(A), Title 14, of California Code of Regulations).***

JUNIOR WATERFOWL HUNTS (ADULT SUPERVISION REQUIRED)

To participate in any Junior Waterfowl Hunts, a hunter must possess a valid junior hunting license **and** must be accompanied by a non-hunting adult 18 years of age or older.

Hunt	Locations and Details	Hunt Dates	How to Apply
Delevan NWR Special Junior Hunt	On this day, all blinds at Delevan NWR are reserved for junior hunters. Hunters must have a valid junior hunting license to apply.	12/09/2023	Use a postcard to apply directly to the USFWS. For additional information visit www.fws.gov/story/sacramento-o-nwr-complex-hunting-junior-and-youth-hunts .
Sacramento NWR Special Junior Hunt	On this day, all blinds at Sacramento NWR are reserved for junior hunters. Hunters must have a valid junior hunting license to apply.	12/16/2023	Use a postcard to apply directly to the USFWS. For additional information visit www.fws.gov/story/sacramento-o-nwr-complex-hunting-junior-and-youth-hunts .

YOUTH WATERFOWL HUNTS (ADULT SUPERVISION REQUIRED)

To participate in any Youth Waterfowl Hunts, a youth must be accompanied by a non-hunting adult 18 years of age or older. Federal regulations require that hunters participating in any Youth Waterfowl Hunts



must be 17 years of age or younger. ***A wildlife area hunting pass is required for any youth hunter who is not hunting under the authority of a Junior Hunting License.***

Hunt	Locations and Details	Hunt Dates	How to Apply
Northeastern Zone Preseason Youth Waterfowl Hunt	On these dates, the Northeastern Zone is open to waterfowl hunters 17 years of age or younger. Federal refuges and State wildlife areas in the Northeastern Zone (except Shasta Valley and Willow Creek) are open for youth hunters.	09/23/2023 09/24/2023	Contact the wildlife area or refuge you wish to hunt for details.
Colorado River Zone Post Season Youth Waterfowl Hunt	On these dates, the Colorado River Zone is open to waterfowl hunters age 17 or under.	02/03/2024 02/04/2024	Contact the wildlife area or refuge you wish to hunt for details.
Post Season Youth Waterfowl Hunt	On these dates, the Southern San Joaquin Valley, Southern California, and Balance of the State zones are open to waterfowl hunters age 17 or under. Most wildlife areas are open for youth hunters on these dates.	02/03/2024 02/04/2024	Use a season-long reservation application or a multiple-choice reservation application to apply for these dates.

VETERANS AND ACTIVE MILITARY PERSONNEL HUNTS (VERIFICATION REQUIRED)

Veterans (as defined in Section 101 of Title 38, United States Code) and members of the Armed Forces on active duty, including members of the National Guard and Reserve on active duty (other than training), may participate. Any person participating in these hunts must possess and present upon demand verification of eligibility. Acceptable verification includes: a Veteran’s ID Card, Military ID Card for active duty, DD Form 214 (honorable discharge), or a State-issued driver’s license or Identification Card with Veteran Designation. ***A wildlife area hunting pass is required to hunt on these dates.***

Hunt	Locations and Details	Hunt Dates	How to Apply
Northeastern Zone	On these dates, most wildlife areas in the Northeastern Zone are open for Veteran and Active Military hunters. Goose hunting in this zone is not permitted during these days.	01/20/2024 01/21/2024	Please contact the wildlife area or refuge you wish to hunt for details.
Southern San Joaquin Valley, Southern California, and Balance of State zones	On these dates, most wildlife areas in the Southern San Joaquin Valley, Southern California, and Balance of State zones are open for Veteran and Active Military hunters. Goose hunting in the Balance of State Zone is not permitted during these days.	02/10/2024 02/11/2024	Use a military only reservation application to apply for these dates for areas where reservations will be drawn. Please contact the wildlife area or refuge you wish to hunt for additional hunt details.



CONTACT INFORMATION FOR STATE-OPERATED HUNTING AREAS

For information about hunter quotas, please contact the wildlife area or refuge you plan to hunt for more information.

Wildlife Area	Phone Number	Email Address
Ash Creek Wildlife Area	(530) 294-5824	
Butte Valley Wildlife Area	(530) 398-4627	
Colusa, Delevan, Sacramento, and Sutter National Wildlife Refuges	(530) 934-2801	sacramentovalleyrefuges@fws.gov
Gray Lodge Wildlife Area	(530) 846-7500	GLWLA@wildlife.ca.gov
Grizzly Island Wildlife Area	(707) 425-3828	GrizzlyIsland@wildlife.ca.gov
Honey Lake and Willow Creek Wildlife Areas	(530) 254-6644	HoneyLake@wildlife.ca.gov
Imperial Wildlife Area (Wister Unit)	(760) 359-0577	imperialwla@wildlife.ca.gov
Kern National Wildlife Refuge	(661) 725-2767	miguel_jimenez@fws.gov
Los Banos Wildlife Area	(209) 826-0463	Sean.Allen@wildlife.ca.gov
Mendota Wildlife Area	(559) 655-4645	Mendota@wildlife.ca.gov
Merced National Wildlife Refuge	(209) 826-3508	jack_sparks@fws.gov
North Grasslands Wildlife Area (Salt Slough, Gadwall, China Island Units)	(209) 827-6586	Sean.Allen@wildlife.ca.gov
San Jacinto Wildlife Area	(951) 928-0580	sanjacintowla@wildlife.ca.gov
San Luis National Wildlife Refuge (Kesterson, Blue Goose, Freitas, Bear Creek Units)	(209) 826-3508 USFWS	jack_sparks@fws.gov
Shasta Valley Wildlife Area	(530) 459-3926	
Upper Butte Basin Wildlife Area (Little Dry Creek, Howard Slough, Llano Seco Units)	(530) 982-2169	UpperButte@wildlife.ca.gov
Volta Wildlife Area	(209) 826-0463	Sean.Allen@wildlife.ca.gov
Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area	(530) 757-2461	