



2025 WATERFOWL HUNTING NEWSLETTER

Waterfowl season is rapidly approaching and now is the time to prepare for opening day. Beginning September 1, 2025, 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.

IMPORTANT WATERFOWL HUNTING NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE ONLINE ONLY

As part of a broader effort to go paperless, CDFW will no longer print and mail waterfowl hunting newsletters to hunters. The cost to print and mail waterfowl hunting newsletters is significant, and money saved will be put toward fish and wildlife conservation. The Waterfowl Hunting Newsletter is available exclusively online at

<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Hunting/Waterfowl>.

CDFW MOBILE LICENSE APP

Display your sport fishing and hunting licenses, view your big game preference points and drawing applications/results, download and view CDFW published regulation booklets, and access CDFW websites to purchase licenses, submit harvest reports, and view fish stocking activities on your mobile device by downloading the CDFW License App today! For more information, including where to download the app, tutorial videos and Frequently Asked Questions, please visit

<https://wildlife.ca.gov/LicenseApp>.

IMPORTANT CHANGES FOR THE UPCOMING SEASON

During the spring of 2024, CDFW conducted a survey of waterfowl hunters on their experiences accessing Type A wildlife areas. The Survey is available at <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=233037&inline>. Results from the survey and a review of Title 14 regulations indicated that changes are needed to improve consistency and fairness for hunters. Some improvements that will be implemented in the upcoming season include the following:

- All check-stations will be using the electronic check-in system (WLAP)

- Hunting passes must be presented with **photo identification** at the time of entry
- Reservations will be accepted at check-stations in numerical order
- Party leaders must have a valid GO ID and hunting license to enter a party in the in-person vacancy draw (lottery)
- In-person vacancy draw results will be available online by logging in to www.ca.wildlifelicense.com/InternetSales, via the CDFW License App, and on a dedicated web page accessible with a QR code at the check-station
- Only one person is required to be present from each party to enter an in-person vacancy draw
- Hunters may only enter one in-person vacancy draw per hunt day

For more information regarding changes for the upcoming waterfowl season, please email LandsProgram@wildlife.ca.gov.

IMPORTANT FREE HUNTING DAYS

The California Free Hunting Days for the 2025-26 hunting season are Saturday, November 22, 2025, and Saturday, April 11, 2026. 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 1, 2025. For more information and requirements to participate in California's free hunting days, please visit <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Free-Hunting-Days>.

IMPORTANT WILDLIFE AREA AND REFUGE STATUS FOR THE UPCOMING SEASON

Grizzly Island Wildlife Area is expecting to have delayed flooding in several units due to the construction of a new water delivery system, which



aims to improve long-term water management and habitat resilience. The construction project will restrict water flow into Pond 11, which supports a number of popular hunting blinds. Additionally, units 23A, 23B, and 23C may also experience reduced or delayed flood. The limitations on water delivery to these areas could affect habitat conditions and hunting access during the early part of the season. Hunters are encouraged to stay informed and plan accordingly. For more information, please contact the Grizzly Island Wildlife Area at (707) 425-3828 or GrizzlyIsland@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sutter National Wildlife Refuge may have a delayed season opener due to delays in flooding from the ongoing construction of a new lift station. The new lift station is expected to be completed this year. For more information, please call the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex at (530) 934-2801.

IMPORTANT HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA

Cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 continue to circulate among wild birds in the United States, with detections typically increasing through fall migration. 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. Do not feed dogs raw meat or organs from harvested waterfowl. Falconers should avoid hunting waterfowl. 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.

DISABLED VETERAN HUNT AT COLUSA NWR

On Saturday, January 3, 2026, 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 <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/sacramento/sacramento-nwr-complex-hunting-junior-mobility-impaired-and-special-events>.

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 select CDFW license sales offices, license agents 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
- ❖ Photo Identification (not required for junior hunters*)
- ❖ 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 can also be obtained online by logging in to 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.wildlifelicense.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 by logging in to www.ca.wildlifelicense.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 online at www.ca.wildlifelicense.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.wildlifelicense.com/InternetSales, and proceed to the 2025 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 all 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=70431). The table includes the number of hunters allowed per reservation, reservation processing (i.e., check-in) and expiration times, and in-person vacancy draw (lottery) and first-come, first-served (i.e., refill) procedures. ***Please continue to check the table online throughout the season or contact the wildlife area or refuge for any changes to check-in times.***

WILDLIFE AREA 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. ***Application fees are non-refundable, including those submitted for 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.

Location	Hunt Dates	Details	How to Apply
Delevan NWR Special Junior Hunt	12/13/2025	All blinds are reserved for junior hunters. Hunters must have a valid junior hunting license to apply.	Use a postcard to apply directly to USFWS. For additional information visit https://www.fws.gov/refuge/sacramento/sacramento-nwr-



Location	Hunt Dates	Details	How to Apply
			complex-hunting-junior-mobility-impaired-and-special-events .
Sacramento NWR Special Junior Hunt	12/20/2025	All blinds are reserved for junior hunters. Hunters must have a valid junior hunting license to apply.	Use a postcard to apply directly to USFWS. For additional information visit https://www.fws.gov/refuge/sacramento/sacramento-nwr-complex-hunting-junior-mobility-impaired-and-special-events .

YOUTH WATERFOWL HUNTING DAYS (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.***

Location	Hunt Dates	Details	How to Apply
Northeastern Zone Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days	09/20/2025 09/21/2025	Open to waterfowl hunters 17 years of age or younger. Most public hunt areas (except Shasta Valley and Willow Creek) are open for youth hunters.	Contact the wildlife area or refuge you wish to hunt for details.
Colorado River Zone Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days	02/07/2026 02/08/2026	Open to waterfowl hunters 17 years of age or younger.	Contact the wildlife area or refuge you wish to hunt for details.
Balance of State, Southern San Joaquin Valley and Southern California zones Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days	02/07/2026 02/08/2026	Open to waterfowl hunters 17 years of age or younger. Most public hunt areas are open for youth.	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.***



Location	Hunt Dates	Details	How to Apply
Northeastern Zone	01/17/2026 01/18/2026	Most public hunt areas are open for Veteran and Active Military hunters. Goose hunting in this zone is not permitted during these days.	Please contact the wildlife area or refuge you wish to hunt for details.
Southern San Joaquin Valley, Southern California, and Balance of State zones	01/31/2026 02/01/2026	Most public hunt areas are open for Veteran and Active Military hunters.	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	Ray.Parker@wildlife.ca.gov
Butte Valley Wildlife Area	(530) 398-4627	Joshua.Eberly@wildlife.ca.gov
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	Lara.Sparks@wildlife.ca.gov
Mendota Wildlife Area	(559) 655-4645	Pritesh.Patel@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	Lara.Sparks@wildlife.ca.gov
San Jacinto Wildlife Area	(951) 928-0580	Carlos.Gutierrez@wildlife.ca.gov Shane.Reed@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	Michael.McVey@wildlife.ca.gov
Upper Butte Basin Wildlife Area (Little Dry Creek, Howard Slough, Llano Seco Units)	(530) 982-2169	UpperButteBasin.WLA@wildlife.ca.gov
Volta Wildlife Area	(209) 826-0463	Lara.Sparks@wildlife.ca.gov
Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area	(530) 757-2461	Garrett.Spaan@wildlife.ca.gov