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IDNR free upland game hunting permit lottery and controlled pheasant hunting program application period now open

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) reminds upland game hunters that applications are now being accepted for the 2026 free upland game hunting permit lottery and the controlled pheasant hunting program. These programs provide opportunities to hunt at select state sites across Illinois this fall.

The free upland game hunting permit program offers lottery-assigned, no-cost hunting opportunities for wild upland game, including bobwhite quail, ring-necked pheasants and cottontail rabbits. The controlled pheasant hunting program is a fee-based program that offers opportunities to hunt pen-reared ring-necked pheasants released at participating state sites.

Applications for the free upland game hunting permit lottery will be accepted through Aug. 31. Hunters may select up to six hunt areas and four dates for each area using the [online application](#). Applicants may list the same hunt area multiple times to improve their chances of receiving preferred hunting dates.

Hunters can find participating sites, permit rules, application instructions and application status information on the [IDNR Upland Game Hunting](#) webpage.

The controlled pheasant hunting program includes three lottery drawings followed by a first-come, first-served permit period. Youth permits primarily will be available during the first-come, first-served period, and additional wingshooting clinics are being added to select youth pheasant hunts. A complete list of youth clinics will be announced at a later date.

The application periods for the program are:

- **First lottery:** For Illinois residents only. Applications accepted through 1 p.m. Monday, Aug. 10.
- **Second lottery:** For Illinois residents who did not apply or were unsuccessful in the first lottery, along with nonresidents. Applications accepted from 3 p.m. Monday, Aug. 10 through 1 p.m. Monday, Aug. 17.
- **Third lottery:** For residents and nonresidents seeking a second permit. Applications are accepted from 3 p.m. Monday, Aug. 17 through 1 p.m. Monday, Aug. 24.
- **First-come, first-served permits:** Available beginning at 8 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 29 until quotas are filled or until 9 a.m. the day before the scheduled hunt. Disabled hunter permits remain available until allocated permits are exhausted or until midnight two days before the applicable hunt date.

Resident permits cost \$35, and nonresident permits are \$40. Eleven Illinois state parks participate in the controlled pheasant hunting program. Applications, program information and participating site details are available on the [IDNR Controlled Pheasant Hunting webpage](#).

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About IDNR

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources was established in 1925 as the Illinois Department of Conservation, bringing under one umbrella oversight of fish and game, forestry, public works, and lakes. Today, IDNR's work encompasses management of about 400 sites across Illinois, including state parks and historic sites; wildlife, fisheries, forestry, and natural heritage; Lake Michigan water allocation and coastal management; conservation police; mines and minerals; oil and gas; issuance of licenses, permits, and numerous grants; the World Shooting and Recreational Complex in Sparta; and the Illinois State Museum. Visit <https://dnr.illinois.gov> and follow us on [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#) and [LinkedIn](#).