



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Media contact: dnr.pio@illinois.gov

IDNR announces state and federal sites to be open for 2026 youth waterfowl hunting seasons

SPRINGFIELD – Numerous Illinois state parks, state fish and wildlife areas, and other public lands will be open for the 2026 youth waterfowl hunting seasons.

Federal sites that fall under the Illinois Department of Natural Resources' waterfowl administrative rule will also be open for the youth hunts and are listed below. At most sites, regulations for the regular waterfowl hunting seasons apply during youth hunts. Hunters should check for site-specific regulations and procedures, as they may vary by location. Bag limits during youth hunts are the same as those for the regular seasons.

Under federal regulations, hunters age 17 and younger may hunt ducks, geese, coots and mergansers when accompanied by an adult. The accompanying adult may participate in the hunt if the season is open and allowed at the site.

Youth hunters must have a valid hunting license, youth hunting license or apprentice hunting license. Hunters with a regular hunting license may be supervised by an adult age 18 or older. Holders of youth hunting licenses and apprentice hunting licenses must be accompanied by an adult age 21 or older. Youth hunters 16 and older must have a federal duck stamp but are not required to have an Illinois duck stamp.

Additional information about hunting license requirements and regulations is available in the [2026-27 Illinois Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations](#).

Special youth hunts conducted through the Youth Waterfowl Hunting Permit program or other youth-only hunts at IDNR sites are open only to hunters ages 10-17. The 2026 special hunts include:

- Black Crown Marsh, Oct. 17-18
- Clinton Lake State Recreation Area, Salt Creek and Disabled units, Oct. 24
- Larry D. Closson State Habitat Area, Oct. 24
- Banner Marsh State Fish and Wildlife Area, Oct. 24-25
- Marshall State Fish and Wildlife Area, Duck Ranch Unit, Oct. 24-25
- Horseshoe Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area, Jan. 30, 2027
- Union County State Fish and Wildlife Area, Jan. 30, 2027

All other youth hunts are open to hunters age 17 and younger.

All waterfowl hunters, including those participating in youth hunts, must register with the Harvest Information Program (HIP). Hunters can register when purchasing a hunting license from a license vendor or online through IDNR's [ExploreMoreIL](#) website.

State and federal sites to be open during the youth waterfowl hunts in the North, Central, South Central, and South zones include the following locations:

North Zone youth waterfowl hunt, Oct. 17-18

Chain O' Lakes State Park
Des Plaines State Fish and Wildlife Area
Heidecke Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area
Lake DePue State Fish and Wildlife Area
Sinnissippi Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area
Mississippi River pools located in the North Zone
William W. Powers State Recreation Area

Central Zone youth waterfowl hunt, Oct. 24-25

Anderson Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area
Banner Marsh State Fish and Wildlife Area
Braidwood Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area
Clinton Lake State Recreation Area
Coffeen Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area
Freeman Mine
Henderson Creek State Fish and Wildlife Area
Horseshoe Lake State Park (Madison County)
Horseshoe Lake State Park, Gabaret, Mosenthein and Chouteau Island units (Madison County)
Kankakee River State Park
Marshall State Fish and Wildlife Area
Marshall State Fish and Wildlife Area, Sparland Unit
Mazonia State Fish and Wildlife Area
Meredosia Lake
Mississippi River State Fish and Wildlife Area, all managed sites
Mississippi River pools located in the Central Zone
Momence Wetlands State Natural Area
Pekin Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area
Quincy Bay
Ray Norbut State Fish and Wildlife Area
Rice Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area
Sanganois State Fish and Wildlife Area
Sangchris Lake State Park
Shelbyville State Fish and Wildlife Area
Spring Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area
Starved Rock State Park
Weinberg-King State Park, Spunky Bottoms Unit
Woodford State Fish and Wildlife Area

South Zone youth waterfowl hunts, Nov. 7 and Jan. 30, 2027

Bluff Lakes
Cache River State Natural Area
Campbell Pond
Cape Bend State Fish and Wildlife Area
Carlyle Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area
Chauncey Marsh State Natural Area

Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge
Cypress Pond State Natural Area
Deer Pond State Natural Area
Devil's Island
Dog Island Wildlife Management Area
Dug Hill State Fish and Wildlife Area
Fort Massac State Park, Kerr Farm Unit
Horseshoe Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area (Alexander County)
Kaskaskia State Fish and Wildlife Area
Kinkaid Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area
LaRue Swamp
Mermet Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area – open until Jan. 30, 2027
Mississippi River
Newton Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area
Oakwood Bottoms
Pyramid State Recreation Area, Captain, Denmark, Galum and East Conant units
Rend Lake Project land and waters
Saline County State Fish and Wildlife Area
Sielbeck Forest State Natural Area
Shawnee National Forest
Ten Mile Creek State Fish and Wildlife Area
Union County State Fish and Wildlife Area

Information about IDNR's Youth Waterfowl Hunting Permit special hunts is available on the [Youth Waterfowl Hunting Permit](#) website. For site-specific hunting information, visit huntillinois.org.

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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](#).