

# Crab Orchard

## National Wildlife Refuge Hunting Regulations 2025–2026



### Welcome

Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1947, with four broad management objectives: to provide wildlife conservation, agricultural development, recreational use, and industrial operations. The unity of these elements fashion the refuge as one of the most unique in the National Wildlife Refuge System. For managing the hunting program, the lands within the refuge have been divided into an Open Area and a Special Hunt Area. The Special Hunt Area contains 21,000 acres and is open to public hunting by special permit. The Open Area contains 23,000 acres and hunting is permitted in accordance with state hunting seasons.

### Safety

Special Hunt Area hunters must check in at the visitor center to obtain an Unexploded Ordnance Safety Fact Sheet prior to entering the hunting area.

### Firearms

Persons possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on National Wildlife Refuge System lands must comply with all provisions of State and local law. Persons may only use (discharge) firearms in accordance with refuge regulations (50 CFR 27.42 and specific refuge regulations in 50 CFR Part 32.)

### Ammunition

The possession of lead shot is prohibited refuge wide, except:

- During deer hunts, lead ammunition legal for taking deer may be used.
- Small game and furbearers may be hunted with .22 and .17 caliber rimfire lead ammunition during open season.

### Permits

The Refuge General Hunt Permit on the front of this brochure must be signed and in the hunter's possession while hunting on the refuge. Trapping on the refuge requires a Special Use Permit authorized by the Refuge Manager.

### Recreation Use Fees

Entrance and User Fees are required for all vehicles and vessels using the refuge. Passes are available on the refuge website. Passes must be affixed directly to the vessel or vehicle to be valid. A complete fee schedule can be obtained at [www.fws.gov/refuge/crab\\_orchard](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/crab_orchard).

### Access

All vehicles are restricted to roads or parking areas shown on map. Parking along roadway is permitted in accordance with State Regulations. Do not block gates or roads.

### Camping

Camping is permitted only in designated campgrounds.

### Motorized Vehicles and E-Bikes

Licensed motor vehicles are permitted only on public use roads as shown on the map. ATVs and UTVs are prohibited. E-Bikes are allowed on designated trails.

### Boats

The use of boats is authorized on the refuge. Boats used for hunting may not be left overnight on the refuge. Devils Kitchen and Little Grassy Lakes have a 10-hp motor limit.

### Hunting Regulations

Hunting regulations are designed to provide safe recreational opportunities through wise use of renewable wildlife resources. Hunting and fishing are permitted in accordance with Federal regulations governing public use on National Wildlife Refuges as set forth in Title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

### Accessibility

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs and activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is available to all individuals regardless of physical or mental ability. For more information please contact the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Equal Opportunity, <https://www.doi.gov/pmb/eeo/public-civil-rights>.

#### Crab Orchard Hunting Permit 2025—2026

When signed and carried, this serves as your permit for all refuge hunts and acknowledges your understanding of the regulations contained herein.

Expires August 31, 2026

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Signature (permits are not transferable)

## Refuge Specific Hunting Regulations

We only allow the use of archery equipment during shotgun deer seasons in the following areas.

1. On refuge lands west of Division Street and east of Bluegill Bay Marina Campground; and
  2. On all refuge land north of Illinois State Route 13; and
  3. In the area north and west of Crab Orchard Lake spillway.
- We allow the use of dogs when hunting, provided the dogs are under the immediate control of the hunter at all times.
  - Hunters must remove all boats, decoys, blinds, blind materials, stands, platforms, trail cameras and other personal equipment brought onto the refuge at the end of each day's hunt.
  - Deer hunters may place stands or blinds with owner identification attached in the hunting area 24 hours prior to their hunt. Stands left vacant for over 24 hours or stands without owner identification are subject to removal.

**Report Hunting Violations at – 1-844-FWS-TIPS**  
(1- 844-397-8477)

6987 Headquarters Rd  
Marion, IL 62959

Hearing impaired person may contact Crab Orchard  
through the Federal Relay Number at 1 800-877-8339.

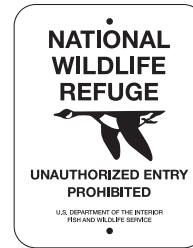
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
1-800-344-WILD

August 2025



## Signs and Boundaries

- Refuge Boundary Sign  
Unauthorized entry prohibited: These signs mark the boundary of the refuge. They DO NOT prohibit access, only unauthorized uses.
- Restricted Use Area Sign:  
These signs mark the boundary of the restricted area of the refuge. Areas behind this sign are only open to hunters with a Special Hunt Area permit.
- Area Closed Sign: These signs mark areas that are closed to hunters.

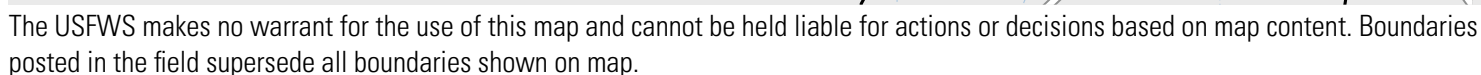


## Prohibited Activities

By law, recreational activities on national wildlife refuges are prohibited unless expressly permitted:

- We prohibit hunting within 50 yards (45 meters) of all designated public use facilities, including, but not limited to, parking areas, picnic areas, campgrounds, marinas, boat ramps, public roads, and established hiking trails listed in the refuge trails brochure.
- Possession and use of alcoholic beverages or controlled substances while hunting is prohibited.
- Searching for or removal of any natural items such as plants, historic, and archaeological features is prohibited.
- Marking or flagging any tree or other Refuge feature with reflectors, paint, or other substance are prohibited.
- Game Retrieval/ Transportation carts or any other mechanized device used for retrieving game or transportation, are prohibited in the Wilderness Area portion of the Refuge.
- Permanent tree stands, nails, screw-in steps, or other items that penetrate the outer bark of a tree are prohibited.
- Target practice or any non-hunting discharge of a Firearm is prohibited.
- We prohibit organized deer drives. We define a “deer drive” as an organized or planned effort to pursue, drive, chase, or otherwise frighten or cause deer to move in the direction of any person(s) who is part of the organized or planned hunt and known to be waiting for the deer.

Activity	Season	Hunting Area	Special Regulations
<b>Youth Firearm Deer, ADA accessible Firearm Deer</b>	Nov. 21-23, 2025	Special Hunt Area	Crab Orchard permits administered through IDNR. Hunters are required to check in at the Visitor Center prior to hunting.
<b>Firearm and Muzzleloader Deer</b>	Nov. 21-23, 2025 Dec. 4-6, 2025 *Dec. 12-14, 2025	Special Hunt Area	Crab Orchard permits administered through IDNR. Hunters are required to check in at the Visitor Center prior to hunting. *Williamson County Muzzleloader permits only.
<b>Youth Turkey Firearm and Spring Turkey Firearm</b>	**Illinois state spring season with state bag limits	Special Hunt Area	Permits administered through IDNR. Hunters are required to check in at the Visitor Center prior to hunting. Approved non-toxic shot required for turkey hunting. No fall season.
<b>Youth Waterfowl</b>	Dec. 20, 2025	#Hampton Unit Hunt	Controlled hunt only. Hunters are required to check in prior to hunting.
<b>Teal, Duck and Geese</b>	Dec. 24, 2025 - Jan. 31, 2026	#Hampton Unit Hunt	Hampton Unit will open to waterfowl hunting Wed. thru Sun. beginning December 24, 2025. Motorized boat prohibited.
<b>Archery Deer</b>	Oct. 1–Nov. 14, 2025, Dec. 9-Jan 18, 2026	Special Hunt Area	Hunters are required to check in at the self check stations prior to hunting within the Special Hunt Area. Scouting is Sept. 30.
<b>Archery Deer, Youth Deer Firearm, Muzzleloader Deer, Firearm Deer</b>	**Illinois state season with state bag limits	Open Hunt Area	Archery season closed during 1st and 2nd Firearm deer seasons.
<b>Spring/Fall Turkey Shotgun and Archery, Youth Turkey</b>	**Illinois state season with state bag limits	Open Area Hunt	Approved non-toxic shot required for shot shells
<b>Teal, Duck, Geese and Youth Waterfowl</b>	**Illinois state season with state bag limits	Open Area Hunt	Waterfowl hunting blinds must be a minimum of 200 yards (180 m) apart.
<b>Dove, Quail, Crow</b>	**Illinois state season with state bag limits	Open Area Hunt	Approved non-toxic shot required for shot shells.
<b>Rabbits, Squirrel, Bobcat, Coyote</b>	**Illinois state season with state bag limits	Open Area Hunt	Approved non-toxic shot required for shot shells. We prohibit the use of rifles or handguns with ammunition larger than .22 caliber rimfire, except the use of black powder firearms up to and including .40 caliber are allowed.
<b>* Williamson County Muzzleloader Permits only</b> <b>**See Illinois Digest of Hunting Regulations for specific dates at <a href="http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/hunting">www.dnr.illinois.gov/hunting</a></b> <b>#Hampton Unit is open to Special Hunt Area Deer and Turkey Hunts</b>			



The USFWS makes no warrant for the use of this map and cannot be held liable for actions or decisions based on map content. Boundaries posted in the field supersede all boundaries shown on map.