

Chincoteague

National Wildlife Refuge Hunting Regulations 2025–2026



Welcome

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1943 as an inviolate sanctuary for migratory birds. The 14,670-acre refuge vision is – “Chincoteague & Wallops Island National Wildlife Refuges encompass extraordinary and ever-changing lands at the edge of the sea, a place where unique habitats and wildlife flourish. In partnership with others, the refuges are a vital part of a larger system of protected lands and waters on the Delmarva Peninsula, critical to migratory birds. People from around the world can visit the refuges to learn, recreate, refresh themselves, be inspired by wildlife and wild lands, and renew their connection with nature”.

Safety

Areas of the refuge may be closed for management purposes, or other hazardous conditions that pose a threat to human health and safety. Such closures to the Northern Hunt and Archery Only Zones will be posted at the self-check station.

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.).

Firearms and or/muzzleloaders are prohibited in the Archery Only Zone. In addition, we limit hunting weapons for all species in the Northern Hunt Zone to the weapons allowed for the State deer season in effect.

Boats

A boat is required to access the Migratory Game Bird Only Zones. The use of a boat to access the Northern Hunt Zone and Archery Only Zone is prohibited.

Dogs

We allow the use of dogs for migratory game bird hunting. Dogs are prohibited on the Assateague Island portion of the refuge.

Accessibility Information

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>.

For additional information please contact 757-336-6122 ext. 2.

Hunting Regulations

Hunting regulations are designed to provide safe recreational opportunities through wise use of renewable wildlife resources. Hunting is 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.

Hunting will be in accordance with applicable State of Virginia regulations subject to the conditions stated herein. Brochures may be obtained by mail, at the refuge headquarters, or from the refuge website.

Hunters are required to pay the refuge entrance fee for upland/big game hunting. Federal Duck Stamps are accepted.

All members of a hunt party must possess a refuge hunt permit and be actively engaged in hunting. We allow an exception for those persons aiding a disabled person who possesses a valid State-issued Commonwealth of Virginia Disabled Resident Lifetime License or Commonwealth of Virginia Resident Disabled Veteran's Lifetime License.

For Tom's Cove Hook Only-

Four-wheel drive vehicles are required.

No OSV permit required but vehicles must remain east of the black and white posts while traveling and parking.

Hunters should use caution on Tom's Cove Hook as beach is often inaccessible during high tides. All over sand vehicles must carry a shove, jack, tow rope or chain or similar support for the jack, and a low-pressure tire gauge.

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge 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 March 14, 2026

Signature (permits are not transferable)

Access

Hunters may access the refuge two hours before sunrise until two hours after sunset.

Hunters on Assateague Island: Refuge main gate opens at 5:00 AM. Hunters must sign-in at the self-check station prior to entering your hunt zone and sign-out no later than 2 hours after the end of legal shooting hours.

Parking is allowed only along principle roads as designated on the attached map or established parking lots. Park off the roadway; do not block roads or trails. Do not operate vehicles past posted closures.

Tree Stands, Blinds & Decoys

We allow the use of portable tree stands, portable blinds and decoys, but you must remove them at the end of each day's hunt.

Harvest Reporting

All harvested or wounded/not recovered animals must be reported daily at the self-check station. Follow the posted self-check procedures. Virginia Deer Population Reduction Program (DPOP) instructions are provided at the self-check station and DPOP IS ONLY FOR SIKA taken on the refuge.

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge
8231 Beach Road
Chincoteague, VA 23336

Phone - 757-336-6122 ext. 2
Email - fw5rw_cnwr@fws.gov
Website - <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/chincoteague>

Federal Relay Service for the deaf and hard-of-hearing
1 800/877 8339 TDD/ 1 800/828 1140 voice

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

July 2025



Activity	Season Dates	Hunt Areas	Method of Take	Other Regulations
White-tailed Deer & Sika	Hunting is allowed <u>during the State deer season</u> starting with the first Saturday in October No hunting during the four day period of Thanksgiving Day through following Sunday	Northern Hunt Zone, Archery Only Zone	Firearms and/or muzzleloaders are prohibited in the Archery Only Zone We limit hunting weapons for all species in the Northern Hunt Zone to the weapons allowed for the State deer season in effect	Refuge-issued permit is required in addition to proper State permit No hunting on Sundays The refuge prohibits organized deer drives The refuge encourages all hunters to use non-toxic ammunition for all game species*
Turkey	Closed season			
Fox, Raccoon, Opossum & Coyote	Hunting is allowed <u>during the applicable State furbearer season</u> between the first Saturday in October and December 31 No hunting during the four day period of Thanksgiving Day through following Sunday	Northern Hunt Zone, Archery Only Zone	Firearms and/or muzzleloaders are prohibited in the Archery Only Zone We limit hunting weapons for all species in the Northern Hunt Zone to the weapons allowed for the State deer season in effect	Refuge-issued permit is required in addition to proper State permit No hunting on Sundays The refuge encourages all hunters to use non-toxic ammunition for all game species*
Waterfowl (ducks, geese, brant, swan, mergansers), Rail, Snipe, Gallinule/ Moorhen, Coot, Dove, Woodcock, Crow	Hunting is allowed <u>during the State season dates</u> that fall between September 16 - March 14	Migratory Game Bird Only Zone: Wildcat Marsh, Morris Island, Assawoman and Metompkin Island	State Regulations apply	Refuge-issued permit is required in addition to proper State permit In addition to the federal non-toxic ammunition law requirements, the refuge encourages all hunters to use non-toxic ammunition for all game species*

Harvest:

State regulations apply for bag limits

Sika: hunters may take up to five sika daily, two of which may be antlered

***Nontoxic ammunition will be required to hunt all species on the refuge starting September 2026.**

Prohibited Activities

- By law, recreational activities on national wildlife refuges are prohibited unless expressly permitted
- Possession of alcoholic beverages
- Camping and fires
- Searching for or removal of any natural items such as antlers, skulls, plants, historic, and archaeological features
- Use of electronic or photographic trail monitoring devices
- Marking or flagging any tree or other refuge feature with reflectors, paint, or other substance
- Permanent tree stands, nails, screw-in steps, or other items that penetrate the outer bark of a tree
- Night hunting
- Hunting within 100 feet (30.5 meters) of any building, road, or trail, whether improved or unimproved
- 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
- Turkey hunting
- ATVs/UTVs and saddled animals
- Riding bicycles, including e-bikes, on roads and trails not designated for bike riding. See Trails Brochure.
- Access to hunt the Northern Hunt and Archery Only Zones by watercraft
- Hunting from permanent blind or pit blind



