

Prime Hook

National Wildlife Refuge Upland Game and Webless Migratory Bird Hunting Regulations 2026-2027



Welcome

Established in 1963, Prime Hook is an important stopover site for migratory birds as they travel the Atlantic Flyway and provides protected breeding habitat for federally and State-listed threatened and endangered species, as well as many neo-tropical migrating bird species. Prime Hook's habitat features include salt marsh, freshwater marsh, ponds, wooded swamps, upland grasslands and forest.

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/eo/public-civil-rights>.

Hunters with a disability must obtain a certification card from Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC). For information on obtaining this card, call the DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife at 302-739-9912.

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.) We prohibit the use of rimfire or centerfire rifles and all handguns including muzzleloading pistols.

Vehicles

Licensed motor vehicles are permitted only on public use roads and trails as shown on the map. ATVs and UTVs are prohibited. Hunters must park in designated parking areas, as identified on the map, to access the refuge for hunting. All State regulations and laws are applicable.

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.

Hunting will be in accordance with applicable State of Delaware regulations subject to the conditions stated below.

Permits

Hunters are required to possess a valid Delaware hunting license and all required stamps, valid government-issued photo identification, and a valid hunting permit issued by the refuge on their person at all times during refuge hunt and scout days.

Read and sign this brochure, it serves as your permit. Keep this permit on you while you are in the hunt area.

Open to Hunting

Hunting of rabbit, pheasant, mourning dove, snipe, and woodcock is permitted on designated areas of the refuge within federal and state guidelines subject to the following conditions:

Mourning dove, snipe, and woodcock hunting is prohibited in the upland game area north of Prime Hook Road and in the upland game area between Slaughter Beach Road and Fowler Beach Road (see map).

The use of dogs is permitted to locate, point and retrieve while hunting upland game and webless migratory birds.

Fox hunting is only allowed while concurrently hunting deer in areas and seasons open to deer hunting. Hunting fox by chase is prohibited.

Closed to Hunting

All other species of wildlife not listed above are protected. Hunting of squirrel is prohibited.

The State of Delaware has closed all hunting of wild quail. Quail hunting is not permitted on the refuge at this time.

Prime Hook NWR

Hunting Permit 2026—2027

When signed and carried, this serves as your permit for all refuge upland game and webless migratory bird hunts and acknowledges your understanding of the regulations contained herein. Expires August 31, 2027

Signature (permits are not transferable)

Method of take

Shotguns shooting non-toxic/non-lead shot is the only legal method of take for upland game and webless migratory birds on Prime Hook.

Exception: Fox may be taken incidentally while deer hunting with the weapon and ammunition being used to hunt deer.

Access

Areas

Fowler North, Prime Hook North, and Prime Hook South units are the only areas open to upland game. Webless migratory bird hunting is limited to the Prime Hook South unit.

Days

Monday - Saturday. **There is no Sunday hunting.**

Hours

The refuge is open for hunting access from 2 hours before legal hunting time to 1 hour after legal hunting time.

Hunters are prohibited from being on the refuge (including parking lots) between 9:00 pm & 4:00 am.

Seasonal Closures

Upland game and webless migratory bird hunts are closed during the firearms deer hunts occurring: October 9-17, November 13-21, December 12 & 19, January 16- 31.

Gates opened to enter the hunting area from designated access points must be closed immediately after passing through.

Guided Hunts

Hunt permit holders may not engage in guiding, outfitting, or advertising for commercial purposes.

Activity	Season Dates November	Harvest	Hunt Areas
Rabbit hunting	November 23 - February 27	State limits apply	Prime Hook South Prime Hook North Fowler North
Quail	Closed	Closed	Closed
Ring-necked Pheasant	November 23 - February 27	State limits apply	Prime Hook South Prime Hook North Fowler North
Mourning Dove	September 1 - 26 November 23 - 28 December 7 - January 30	State limits apply	Prime Hook South/Walk-In area
Snipe	September 29 - December 5 December 25 - January 30	State limits apply	Prime Hook South/Walk-In area
Woodcock	November 23 - December 5 December 25 - January 30	State limits apply	Prime Hook South/Walk-In area
State hunting regulations and licensing requirements apply to all hunting on the refuge. Shooting hours and methods of take may differ from the state. Signed refuge hunt brochure must be in possession of hunter. Upon request, hunters and their assistants must display for inspection all licenses, permits, game, equipment, weapons, and ammunition, to Federal and State law enforcement officers.			

Potential Disturbance

Due to an ongoing research project biologists may be present in the Prime Hook North unit. Work will be confined to the marsh areas in the Eastern part of the unit. Researchers will be wearing orange vests and will wait until after 9am to enter the area on hunt days to minimize disturbance.

Prime Hook
National Wildlife Refuge
12322 Turtle Pond Road,
Milton, DE 19968
302-684-8419

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1-800-344-WILD
July 2026



Prohibited Activities

By law, recreational activities on national wildlife refuges are prohibited unless expressly permitted. Please check with the office if you have questions.

- Entering hunt areas without possessing authorized hunt permits.
- Hunting and scouting outside designated days.
- The use of rimfire or centerfire rifles and all handguns including muzzleloading pistols.
- The use or possession of buckshot while hunting.
- Use and/or possession of alcoholic beverages or other intoxicating substances while hunting.
- Permanent tree stands, nails, screw-in steps, or other items that penetrate the outer bark of a tree.
- Building or maintaining any structure on the refuge.
- Leaving any property unattended.
- Cutting and damaging vegetation/trees or the use of cut vegetation/trees or organic material as camouflage for any purpose.
- Access to the refuge from private or state property.
- Distribution of bait or hunting with the aid of bait, including any grain, salt, minerals and other substances that are consumed.
- Hunting within 150 yards of any public use facility or hunting in designated safety zones as shown on hunting maps.
- Littering.
- Leaving feathers, carcasses, or other waste within 50 feet of any trail, road, or refuge structure.
- Shooting from, across or down any designated refuge road.
- Target shooting or shooting for any purpose other than legal in season hunting.
- Parking in front of or blocking gates.
- 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/game monitoring devices.
- Use of drones.



