U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Deer Hunting

Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge

General Information

Just 26 miles as the crow flies from New York City, Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge attracts an estimated 185,000 visitors a year to its 7,855 acres. The refuge hosts an archery and six-day firearms seasons each year, in accordance with New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife (NJDFW) and refuge-specific regulations. In addition to providing recreation, the hunts conserve habitat for species such as forest-nesting birds. All hunters must obtain a refuge hunting permit, in addition to a New Jersey state license, before scouting and hunting.

Hunting Regulations

The regulations below supplement the general regulations which govern hunting on National Wildlife Refuges as set forth in Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations.

The 2026 deer hunting dates are:
Fall Bow: September 12th – October 30th, 2026
Youth Archery Day: September 26th, 2026
Permit Bow: October 31st – December 24th and December 26th – December 31st, 2026
Youth Firearm Day: November 21st, 2026
Six Day Firearm: December 7th – 12th, 2026
Winter Bow: January 1st – February 20th, 2027

THE REFUGE IS NOT OPEN FOR SUNDAY HUNTING
BAITING IS PROHIBITED

Permits	While **hunting or scouting**, permittees **MUST** carry a valid New Jersey Hunting License, a **NJDFW Zone 13 permit** from the state, **and a valid Great Swamp NWR Combination Hunt Permit**. Permits are not transferable and are not valid until signed. ***Note:** Coyote/fox may be taken incidentally while deer hunting on the refuge.
Weaponry	Only muzzleloading rifles may be used to take deer in the Wilderness Area (see map). Shotguns or muzzleloaders may be used in other areas of the refuge.
Bag Limit	Bag limits are in accordance with those listed for Zone 13 in the New Jersey Hunting & Trapping Digest (2026 Issue)
Scouting	**Scouting is permitted two weeks prior to season opening.** Weapons are prohibited while scouting.
Hunter Orange	Hunters must wear in a conspicuous manner on **HEAD, CHEST, and BACK** a minimum of **200 square inches of SOLID FLOURESCENT ORANGE** clothing during deer firearms seasons.
Observer	All refuge permit holders will receive one Observer Permit to allow one non-hunting person to accompany the hunter. This is an opportunity for others to learn about hunting or to assist the hunter. The holder of this permit must be set up with the hunter at the same location, and is not allowed to possess or shoot a weapon.
Deer Drives	**All deer drives are prohibited.**
Trail markers	All marking tape, reflective pins, or other materials used to mark trails must be removed at the end of the hunt day. The use of paint is prohibited.

Tree stands	Only portable tree stands may be used. All stands, ladders, cameras, and blinds must have the hunter's RAID # displayed. All hunter property must be removed no later than March 13th, 2027. Anything left on Refuge Property after March 13th will be considered abandoned and is subject to disposal. No Exclusive Rights: Placing a stand does not give you exclusive rights to the surrounding land. Hunters may use only one stand or blind at a time on refuge property.
Hours	Hunters may enter the refuge two hours before shooting time and leave no later than two hours after shooting time. See the New Jersey Fish and Wildlife Digest for legal hunting hours.
Parking	**Hunters must park in designated refuge parking areas (see map) with the Refuge Parking Permit displayed on the vehicle's dash. Do not block gates, roads and buildings.**
No Hunting Zones	No Hunting Zones are located in various areas within the refuge. Hunting is prohibited in these areas. Refer to refuge hunt map for details.
Nature Trails	Hikers may be using the hiking trails during the hunting season. Use extreme caution. Refer to refuge hunt map for trail locations.
Report Your Harvest	Harvested game must be reported in accordance with state regulations. Please indicate you are hunting on **FEDERAL** land.
Law enforcement	Individuals utilizing the refuge are subject to inspections of permits, licenses, hunting equipment, bag limits, boats, vehicles, and their contents by refuge or state law enforcement officers.

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Refuge hunting areas may change each year. Hunters are required to read the hunt maps provided. Please respect adjacent landowners, **DO NOT TRESPASS!**

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Prohibited Activities

- Littering
- Use of a spotlight or other artificial light may not be used to locate wildlife.
- Baiting or hunting over bait, salt or any consumable attractant.
- Drives are prohibited.
- Drive or screw a nail, spike or other metal object into a tree or hunt from any tree in which such an object has been driven.
- Trimming or cutting vegetation.
- Use or possession of alcoholic beverages.
- Use of ATVs and/or dirt bikes.
- Target practice
- Camping and campfires
- Overnight parking
- Searching for or removing any object of antiquity including arrowheads, pottery or other artifacts.
- Blocking gates or roadways with vehicles.

An Important Message

Our wildlife is a valuable resource. Laws and regulations are intended to protect them, while allowing for some consumptive use. Hunters are encouraged to report any violations they may encounter to a State or Federal employee. The future of hunting on the refuge requires responsible hunter behavior and compliance with regulations.

Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge
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Basking Ridge, NJ 07920