



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Ten Thousand Islands

National Wildlife Refuge

Hunting and Fishing Regulations 2023-2024

Welcome

Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1996 to develop, advance, manage, conserve, and protect the refuge's estuarine ecosystem and its fish and wildlife resources. With a variety of coastal habitats, including freshwater and saltwater marsh systems and brackish ponds, these areas provide significant wintering habitat for migratory birds. Ducks and coots occur in these habitats in the fall and winter. Duck species occurring on the refuge include lesser scaup, mottled duck, ring-necked duck, hooded merganser and blue-winged teal.

**Ten Thousand Islands
National Wildlife Refuge**
12085 SR 29 South
Immokalee, FL 34142

Phone: 239/657 8001
Email: floridapanther@fws.gov

Office hours: Monday-Friday, 8 am-4 pm

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
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September 2023



This is a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System, a network of lands and waters managed for the benefit of wildlife and people.

Hunting on Ten Thousand Islands NWR

Only duck and coot hunting is permitted on approximately 4,000 acres of fresh and brackish water of the refuge's 35,000 acres. Please be aware that private property adjoins refuge lands. No other wildlife may be taken or hunted on the refuge.

Boat Access

Hunters are responsible for safe use along the US 41 roadway when launching any watercraft and are strongly urged to exercise caution. Hunters should only use launching sites for as long as needed to off-load watercraft then promptly remove their vehicles and trailers to another location so that other hunters will be able to use launch sites.

Hunt Regulations

Hunting regulations are designed to protect wildlife populations and the sportsman. All hunting will be in accordance with State and Federal regulations. If there are questions concerning State regulations, hunters should consult with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission or their officers. Hunters and fishermen, their vehicles, vessels and equipment are subject to inspection by Service Law Enforcement Officers.

Season: The open season for ducks and coots is concurrent with seasons established by the State of Florida. No other species other than ducks and coots may be taken.

Hunt Days: Hunting is allowed only on Wednesdays, Saturdays, Sundays, and Federal holidays within the state season from one half hour before sunrise until 12pm when all hunting will cease. During the September duck season, hunters may hunt all days in that season as designated by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. All hunting gear (decoys, guns, blinds) will need to be removed by 1:00 pm.

Youth Hunters: In accordance with State regulations, hunters under age 16 may hunt with an adult 21 years of age or older. The State of Florida designates two Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days. The first is on the Saturday before opening of statewide duck season. The other is on the second Saturday after statewide duck season closes. Please see Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission regulations.

Permits/Licenses: All hunters must possess a signed refuge hunting permit, attached to this leaflet. This permit is required to be carried at all times when hunting.

Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge Duck and Coot Hunt Permit 2023-2024

Name _____

Address _____

I have read and understand the refuge hunting regulations.

This permit must be completed, signed and in my possession during hunts.
Permits are not transferable.

Signature _____



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In addition, hunters will need to carry all required licenses (state hunt), stamps (federal & state waterfowl stamp), and permits (refuge, migratory bird hunt) when hunting. Refuge permits are non-transferrable.

Hunting Blinds: Hunters are encouraged to bring portable blinds made of man-made or native vegetation materials. All temporary blinds must be broken down at the end of each hunt day. Manufactured or man-made materials must be removed from the refuge. Cutting of mangroves or other federal and state protected plants is prohibited in accordance with state law. Construction of permanent blinds or pits is prohibited.

Personal Property: Decoys, guns, blinds, and boats used for hunting must be removed from the refuge by 1 pm daily.

Hunt Areas: Public hunting is permitted only in the area shown on the map on the reverse side of this brochure. Areas closed to hunting in proximity of the hunt area are established as buffer areas to respect adjoining landowners and other refuge users. Hunting and fishing will be in accordance with applicable State of Florida regulations subject to the conditions stated below. Brochures may be obtained by mail, at the refuge headquarters, or from the refuge website.

Access

Access to the Refuge from private property is prohibited. Hunters may only access the refuge using Trails 1,3, or 4 (see map). Park safely off the road on the shoulder of US 41. Provide space for other vehicles with trailers. Hunters may not use Marsh Trail or Marsh Trail Parking Lot to access the hunting area.

Entry into the refuge for hunting may not begin until 4 am for designated hunt days. Hunters are strongly encouraged to scout marsh and wetland hunt areas during daylight hours prior to the hunting season.

Hunting or Shooting: Jump shooting is not encouraged as the hunt area is limited and one could easily infringe upon another hunter's setup. Hunting or shooting in the US-41 roadway or across it is prohibited by state law.

Boats: Air thrust boats, hovercraft, personal watercraft, and off-road vehicles are prohibited at all times. Marsh water levels are generally shallow, less than 18 inches. As the season progresses, water levels will get extremely shallow and dry up entirely. Hunters may need to push boats for long distances along marked waterways and elsewhere. Motorized watercraft is limited to outboard motors or surface drive and long-tail mud motors with a maximum of 25 HP and short shaft motors with 5-10 HP will generally operate better. However, hunters should confine the use of motors to the marked trails, and use paddles, push poles or trolling motors as they cross over marsh grasses. Hunters may call the refuge office for the latest information on water levels.

Dogs: The use of dogs is encouraged to retrieve dead or wounded waterfowl. Dogs must remain under the control of their handlers at all times. A good dog will speedily retrieve your game and lessen disturbances to flying birds in the area.

Camping: Camping and overnight parking is prohibited.

Non-toxic Shot: Only steel shot or other approved non-toxic shot may be used. Use and possession of lead and any other toxic shot in any gauge is prohibited.

Hunting Guides: All guides are required to purchase a refuge Special Use Permit (SUP) and have it in their possession while in the field. Inquire at the Refuge Office for details.

Alcohol: The possession of alcoholic beverages while hunting is prohibited.

Guns: Ducks and coots may be taken with shotguns only. Possession of handguns and other long guns is prohibited unless specifically authorized under the provisions of subchapter C of 50 CFR 27.41.

Refuge Management Notes

The Refuge would like to host a postseason hunter meeting in February 2024. Upwards of 50% of the historical marshes that once occurred in the Ten Thousand Islands Region have been lost in the last 75 years (mainly due to mangrove forest expansion), and hunter numbers have significantly increased

since the Refuge was first established. We are interested in hearing about your personal hunting experiences on the Refuge, and what you think can be done to improve your safety and the quality of your hunting experience. If you are interested in attending the post-hunt meeting in February, or sharing your comments early, please email us at FloridaPanther@fws.gov. Meeting information will be shared on the Refuge website, Facebook and posted at the Marsh Trail.

Hunting Recommendations

Decoys and calls should be used to bring birds into ideal shooting range. When setting out decoys, place the outer decoy no more than 25-30 yards from the blind. This will help you judge when to shoot and result in fewer cripples and more birds in your bag.

Be a sportsman and respect the rights of other hunters afield. Before setting up, make sure you are not too close to others (allow a minimum of 150 yards between setups).

An important aspect of the hunter's experience is watching birds work over decoys. Sky busters flare ducks and make them wary of hunting areas. Letting the birds come in close and picking your shots will make for a more rewarding experience for all hunters.

Be sure of your shot. Many endangered and threatened wildlife species also use the refuge.

The area around Marsh Trail is closed to hunting to provide a quality experience for trail visitors during hunting season.

For further information or to provide comments, please contact:

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Immokalee, FL 34142
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floridapanther@fws.gov
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