

Delaware turkey hunting season to open April 9

DNREC Division of Fish & Wildlife announces this year's check stations

DOVER – Delaware's spring turkey hunting season opens Saturday, April 9, and runs through Saturday, May 7, DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife announced today. Hunting hours are a half-hour before sunrise until 1 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Hunters are reminded that only bearded birds may be taken, and that all harvested birds must be checked at an authorized turkey check station by 2:30 p.m. on the day of the hunt. Bag limit is one bearded bird per turkey hunter per year.

Hunters must have successfully completed a mandatory turkey education class before they can legally hunt wild turkeys in Delaware. Turkey hunters also are required to carry their Hunter Education/Turkey Education card certifying successful completion of the mandatory turkey course.

Hunting on public lands, including state forest lands, is by preseason lottery permit only. Hunters must carry their public lands permit while hunting and may only hunt the designated area and season segment/dates specified in the permit.

DNREC Hunter Education Coordinator Mark Ostroski offered some tips for a safe and successful hunt. "A successful turkey hunt depends on many factors, including skill, careful preparation and attention to safety details," he said. "Hunters should be sure to pattern their gun, because knowing where and how your gun shoots can be the difference between failure and success at bagging that big gobbler."

Ostroski noted that hunters also should remember these important safety practices:

- Take time to identify your target and what lies beyond;
- It is illegal and unsafe to wear clothing that includes the colors red, blue, black or white while turkey hunting;
- Never stalk a wild turkey; and
- Do not imitate the male gobbling call while trying to attract another gobbler.

The wild turkey remains one of Delaware's top wildlife restoration successes after being on the verge of extinction by the early 20th century. In the early 1980s, the Division of Fish & Wildlife partnered with the Delaware chapters of the National Wild Turkey Federation and Delaware Wild Lands to reestablish a wild turkey population in the state. By 1991, the population had grown large enough to permit opening a wild turkey hunting season, and the big birds continue to thrive and multiply.

Last year, 633 birds were harvested, the second highest record to date and only 54 fewer turkeys than the previous seasons harvest of 687. "Over the past four seasons, hunters have harvested more than 600 turkeys each season, which can be attributed to the growing popularity of spring turkey hunting and a healthy turkey population," said Wildlife Biologist Joe Rogerson.

Authorized turkey check stations for 2016 will be available at the following locations:

New Castle County*

- Ommelanden Hunter Education and Training Center
1205 River Rd, New Castle, DE 19720
302-323-5333

***Note:** On page 31 of the of the 2015/16 Delaware Hunting and Trapping Guide, Master Baiters Bait and Tackle in New Castle, is listed as a 2016 Delaware Turkey Check Station, but they will not be participating this season.

Kent County

- McKay Wildlife and Hunter Education Field Office
6180 Hay Point Landing Road, Smyrna, DE 19977
(Intersection of Route 9/Shorts Landing Road)
302-735-3600
- Little Creek Wildlife Area Check Station
Route 9/Bayside Drive, Little Creek, DE 19961
(Just south of the Town of Little Creek)
302-739-4610
- Williamsville Store
3544 Williamsville Road, Houston, DE 19954
(Intersection of Deep Grass Lane and Williamsville Road)
302-424-2277
- First State Sporting Goods
825 Halltown Road, Marydel, DE 19964
302-343-9696
- Miller's Butcher Shop
577 Morgans Choice Road, Wyoming, DE 19934
302-697-8278
- LP Sports Center
1 East Street, Spartan Plaza, Harrington, DE 19952
302-398-6373
- Delmarva Speed & Sport
689 Warner Road, Milford, DE 19963
302-424-1179

Sussex County

- Wildlife Recreations
9641 Tharp Road, Seaford, DE 19973
302-629-4524
- Hook 'Em & Cook 'Em
3444 Coastal Highway, Unit 3, Bethany Beach, DE 19930
302-539-6243
- That Place
30618 Millsboro Highway, Millsboro, DE 19966
302-934-9260

- Bucks and Ducks Sports Center
14882 Hardscrabble Road, Seaford, DE 19973
302-875-5600
- Kelly's Outdoors
29920 John J. Williams Highway, Millsboro, DE 19966
302-934-7517

NOTE: The list of check stations is subject to change without notice. Visit [Hunting Information](#) after April 1 for any changes before the season begins. Check station hours may vary, so hunters are advised to call the station where they are likely to check a bird to confirm the hours of operation. Hunters who want to have their bird scored and entered into the National Wild Turkey Federation records are reminded to have their bird's live weight recorded on a certified scale. If the check station does not have a certified scale, hunters will be directed to another station to have the turkey re-weighed.

Most hunters are required to have a Delaware hunting license. Hunting licenses are sold online, at the licensing desk in DNREC's Richardson & Robbins Building, 89 Kings Highway, Dover, and by license agents statewide. To find a participating agent, or to purchase a license online, visit [Delaware Licenses](#). For additional information on Delaware hunting licenses, call 302-739-9918.

To hunt wild turkeys on public land in Delaware, hunters must enter a lottery from which public lands permits are drawn. Delaware's wild turkey season is broken down into four week-long segments, this year spanning April 9-May 7. Turkey hunters are drawn via the lottery system and issued a permit that enables them to hunt a designated public land area, such as the C&D Canal Conservation Area or Redden State Forest, for example, during a specified one-week segment.

For more information on hunting in Delaware, including the application for the public land permit lottery and information

about turkey season segments, click on [2015-2016 Delaware Hunting and Trapping Guide](#). The guide also is available in printed form at DNREC's Dover licensing desk, and from license agents throughout the state. For more information about public lands that allow turkey hunting, click [Wildlife Area Hunting Maps](#) or [State Forest Maps](#).

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