



# MassWildlife Monthly February 2019

## News from the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife

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## MassWildlife seeks feedback on potential turkey hunting changes

At the request of the Fisheries and Wildlife Board and in response to a request submitted by the National Wild Turkey Federation, MassWildlife initiated a review of wild turkey

hunting regulations to evaluate potential changes that create new hunting opportunities and increase participation. Turkeys are abundant across the state and harvest numbers have been stable in recent years. All data indicate turkey populations will remain robust statewide with increased harvest limits and expanded seasons. MassWildlife staff suggested several preliminary proposals and is hosting two informational meetings in February to provide the public with an opportunity to give feedback. MassWildlife Turkey Biologist Dave Scarpitti will make a short presentation on the turkey hunting review and regulation proposals, followed by a Q&A session for the public to give feedback. The meeting dates are:

- **Thursday, February 7** at 6 p.m. at MassWildlife Field Headquarters (1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581).
- **Wednesday, February 13** at 6:30 p.m. at the Palmer Public Library (1455 N. Main Street, Palmer, MA 01069).

\*If bad weather requires rescheduling or cancellation, we will post a notification here.

Anyone unable to attend the informational meetings may comment on the changes outlined below by [clicking here](https://form.jotform.com/83535641044151) (<https://form.jotform.com/83535641044151>). Input can also be mailed by postal service to: Turkey Season Feedback, MassWildlife Field Headquarters, 1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581. Public feedback will be considered by MassWildlife staff and provided to the Fisheries and Wildlife Board. Please note that if changes are endorsed by the Board, a formal public hearing and public comment period will be scheduled and publicized.

## Preliminary Suggested Turkey Hunting Regulation Changes

**Increase the annual limit to three birds (2 bearded turkeys in the spring and 1 of either sex in the fall).** Currently, hunters may harvest either two bearded birds in the spring with no fall birds or one bearded bird in the spring and one bird of either sex in the fall, for an annual limit of two birds. At this time, 20% of successful spring turkey hunters harvest their season limit of two bearded birds and therefore cannot hunt turkeys during the fall season. The proposed change would allow all hunters to take two bearded birds in the spring and an additional turkey of either sex in the fall, increasing the annual bag limit to

three birds. Given the overall high population of turkeys, increasing the annual limit will not impact turkey abundance in the state.

**Increase the daily bag limit to two per day during the spring season.** Currently, turkey hunters may harvest one turkey per day during the spring season. Increasing the daily bag limit to two will allow hunters to take their spring season limit in a more efficient manner.

**Expand the fall season (ARCHERY ONLY) to coincide with the archery deer season.** Currently, the fall turkey hunting season begins the second to last Monday in October and ends the second Saturday thereafter, during which hunters may use a shotgun, muzzleloader, or archery equipment. This proposed change would allow turkey hunters to harvest turkeys with archery equipment during the entire duration of the archery deer season (6–8 weeks depending on zone). Turkey hunters would continue to be permitted to use shotgun, muzzleloader, or archery equipment during the traditional 2-week season from the second to last Monday in October through the second Saturday thereafter. In recent years, there has been an increase in fall turkey permits and the number of turkeys harvested with archery equipment; this change will increase opportunity for turkey bowhunters and those deer bowhunters who may have enhanced opportunity to take a turkey while deer hunting.

## Youth Day Turkey Hunt Hours and Permits

**Expand Youth Day turkey hunting hours to ½ hour before sunrise until 5 p.m.** The Youth Turkey Hunt Day occurs on only a single day the Saturday before the last Monday in April; approximately 250–285 young adults ages 12–17 participate each spring. This provides young hunters the opportunity to hunt on a special day before the start of the regular spring hunting season. Currently, hunting hours begin one half hour before sunrise and end at noon, providing a limited window of opportunity for young adult hunters. Due to the relatively low participation on Youth Day, expansion of the hunting hours will greatly increase the total time available for hunting and will not result in any impact on turkeys or other constituents.

**Allow Youth Turkey permits issued to youth aged 12–14 for use in the fall turkey hunting seasons.** At this time, youth 12–14 years old who successfully complete the mandatory

training program for the Youth Day are issued a free Youth Turkey Permit with two turkey tags and must always hunt with a licensed adult mentor hunter. These tags are currently only valid on the Youth Day and the remainder of the regular spring turkey hunting season. When hunting turkeys in the fall, these young hunters must currently use their accompanying mentor's turkey tags and license. Because young adults who complete the mandatory training workshop for the Youth Day demonstrate significant initiative to earn the Youth Turkey Permit and must always hunt with a mentor, it is unnecessary to restrict the use of their tags to the spring season only. This change will provide additional opportunity for young hunters with the Youth Turkey Permit to use their own tag during the fall season by providing them with 2 spring tags and 1 fall tag. (Note: Under current regulations, youth aged 15–17 are required to have their own hunting license and turkey permit, which allows them to hunt in the spring or fall seasons.)

## Hate pigeon poop? Save peregrine falcons.

You're driving home from work, crossing one of the many bridges in Massachusetts. Perhaps you're on the Tobin Bridge, driving north from Boston on Route 1. Or maybe you're crossing the Connecticut River between Chicopee and West Springfield on the MassPike. You're thinking about dinner as you wait in traffic when—*PLOP!*—something white and black falls onto your windshield.

Bird droppings are two parts combined together. The dark mass is the actual fecal portion (the poop). The white mess is uric acid—a bird's version of urine. This paste-like substance is so acidic and corrosive, that it can damage your car's paint job. And you guessed it, groups of birds all going to the bathroom in the same place can make man-made structures like bridges deteriorate faster.

Let's go back to you in the car. You lean forward to look up and see a pigeon flying away, lighter now that it left that mess on your windshield. You sigh. You may even curse. You try to remember where the nearest car wash is until you see a larger shape suddenly swoop in from higher above, catching the pigeon.

Pigeons are quick on changing directions while flying between buildings in the city, but peregrine falcons take their prey at high speeds, reaching over 240 miles per hour in a high-elevation dive. These fast-paced dives give peregrines an advantage over the quick-maneuvering pigeons. When peregrine falcons were reintroduced to Massachusetts in the 1980s, they took to nesting on bridges and building ledges over more traditional nesting areas on cliff faces. These new areas presented peregrines with the opportunity to prey upon species like blue jays, European starlings, and pigeons.

MassWildlife's [Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program](http://www.mass.gov/nhesp)—along with partners like MassDOT—is building, installing, and monitoring nest boxes for peregrine falcons throughout Massachusetts. These nest boxes provide shelter in otherwise precarious areas—places where our biologists are required to wear harnesses and use climbing ropes to access the nests. It just so happens that these areas are also where pigeons are prolific. Coincidence? We think not.

So, think of peregrine falcons when you're filing your state income taxes. Because of their disappearance from the state in the 1950s, these birds are currently listed as threatened under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act. This means that money you donate through Line 33A for Endangered Wildlife Conservation on your taxes goes to helping their numbers recover. Each nest box costs roughly \$200 in materials. Giving even a portion of this amount means more nest boxes for peregrines in the future and less pigeon poop eating away at your car paint and the bridges you drive on.

Money voluntarily contributed through Line 33A for Endangered Wildlife Conservation goes directly into a fund that can only be used for conservation work in Massachusetts. Funds donated through this income tax check-off line are used for conservation work with peregrine falcons and over 400 other rare species protected by the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act.

## Preliminary deer harvest report shows record year in 2018

The preliminary statewide deer harvest for 2018 is 14,513 – a new record high. The preliminary harvest figures by season are as follows:

- Youth Deer Hunt Day (Sept. 29): 138
- Paraplegic Deer Hunt (Nov. 1-3): 3
- Archery Season (Zones 1-9: Oct. 15-Nov. 24 and Zones 10-14: Oct 1-Nov. 24): 5,190
- Shotgun Season (Nov. 26-Dec. 8): 6,495
- Primitive Firearms Season (Dec. 10-Dec. 31): 2,687

Deer density and hunter effort tend to be the most important factors influencing harvest from year to year. However, there were two important changes for the 2018 season that may have led to the record harvest. The opening of over 7500 acres of Wachusett Reservoir Public Land and the two week extension to the archery season in Zones 10-14. The Zone 9 harvest increased from last year by about 300 deer, related to the newly opened Wachusett Reservoir Lands. Additionally, over 700 deer were taken during the two-week extension of the archery season in zones 10-14.

While total harvest by zone can be informative, it doesn't provide the complete picture. Thus, it is important to assess harvest data and monitor trends by Wildlife Management Zone ([WMZ map \(/files/2017-08/wmz-map.pdf\)](/files/2017-08/wmz-map.pdf)). Total harvest is influenced by deer density and the number of antlerless deer permits that MassWildlife allocates in each zone, as well as annual changes in hunter effort, harvest-rates, success-rates, weather, etc. The MassWildlife Deer Project Leader will spend the next few months thoroughly analyzing the deer harvest and biological data as well as assessing deer population trends in each zone. The results and recommendations for the 2019 season will take place at the annual deer management review presented at a Fisheries and Wildlife Board meeting in late spring. A complete harvest summary will be posted on the MassWildlife website shortly after the deer review, so please check back [here \(/service-details/deer-harvest-data\)](/service-details/deer-harvest-data) in early summer.

**[Click here to learn more about deer management in Massachusetts.](/service-details/deer-management)**

[\(/service-details/deer-management\)](/service-details/deer-management)

**2018 harvest by Wildlife Management Zone ([WMZ map \(/files/2017-08/wmz-map.pdf\)](/files/2017-08/wmz-map.pdf))**

<b>Zone</b>	<b>Adult Male</b>	<b>Button Buck</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
1	304	14	85	403
2	438	6	97	541
3	462	28	180	670
4N	456	16	154	626
4S	299	11	68	378
5	487	31	186	704
6	111	2	34	147
7	410	46	248	704
8	595	40	250	885
9	786	115	557	1,458
10	1,220	238	1,193	2,651
11	1,773	299	1,292	3,364
12	181	17	101	299

13	354	120	426	900
14	297	123	363	783
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>8,173</b>	<b>1,106</b>	<b>5,234</b>	<b>14,513</b>

## Additional Resources

[Deer harvest data](/service-details/deer-harvest-data) (/service-details/deer-harvest-data)

## Wildlife in winter

### Providing food for wildlife does more harm than good.

Each winter, MassWildlife receives inquiries from the public regarding whether or not to feed wildlife. While people have good intentions, supplemental feeding of wildlife typically does more harm than good. Most wildlife seasonally change their behavior to adapt to cold temperatures and scarce food supplies. Supplemental feeding can alter that behavior and have detrimental, and sometimes fatal, effects. Wildlife in Massachusetts have adapted over thousands of years to cope with harsh winter weather, including deep snow, cold temperatures, and high winds.

Supplemental feed sites congregate wildlife into unnaturally high densities, which can:

- Attract predators and increase risk of death by wild predators or domestic pets;
- Spread diseases among wildlife or cause other health issues (e.g. Rumen acidosis in deer, Aflatoxicosis in turkeys);
- Cause aggression and competition over food, wasting vital energy reserves and potentially leading to injury or death;
- Reduce fat reserves, as wild animals use energy traveling to and from the feeding site;

- Cause wildlife to cross roads more frequently, therefore increasing vehicle collisions;
- Negatively impact vegetation and habitat in areas where feeding congregates animals.

Providing wildlife with food at **any time of year** teaches them to rely on humans for food, which puts them at a disadvantage for survival and can lead to human/wildlife conflicts. Once habituated behavior is established, it can be very difficult or impossible to change.

## What can you do?

The best way to help wildlife make it through the winter is to step back and allow the animals' instincts to take over. To help wildlife near your home, focus on improving the wildlife habitat on or near your property, by including natural food and cover (e.g., some conifer cover and regenerating forest or brushy habitat). It is also important that wildlife populations are in balance with what the habitat can support.

## Bird feeding

MassWildlife biologists advise against feeding wildlife. While backyard bird feeding during winter months is generally acceptable, we recommend using native plants and water to attract birds to your yard. Fallen bird seed can unintentionally attract many types of wildlife, including bears, turkeys, small mammals like squirrels and mice, and predators like foxes, fishers, and coyotes that feed on small mammals. If you notice unwanted wildlife in your backyard, bring in your bird feeders immediately.

## Additional Resources

[Learn about Wildlife \(/learn-about-wildlife\)](#)

[Learn more about how deer survive the winter](#)

(<https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2018/01/03/Deer%20Winter%20Survival%20Article.pdf>)

## New look for MassFishHunt

If you're using a desktop computer to access MassFishHunt, you'll see a new homepage. The updated homepage includes a streamlined login process for returning and new

customers and expanded content to help you enjoy the outdoors in Massachusetts. A similar update for mobile users is coming soon.

MassFishHunt is the official licensing site of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. You can use the system to buy licenses, permits, and stamps for freshwater fishing, recreational saltwater fishing, hunting, and trapping. If you still need to purchase your 2019 license or permit, it's the perfect time—[go to MassFishHunt now](https://www.ma.wildlifelicenses.com/IS/InternetCustomerSearch) (<https://www.ma.wildlifelicenses.com/IS/InternetCustomerSearch>).

## Corrections to printed 2019 fishing and hunting Guide

NOTICE: There are some hunting season date errors in the printed 2019 Fishing and Hunting Guide involving the bear, snowshoe hare, and furbearer seasons.

Despite several reviews prior to publishing, there are several hunting season date errors in the printed version of the 2019 Guide to Freshwater Fishing, Hunting, and Trapping Laws involving the bear, snowshoe hare, and furbearer seasons. While all digital versions of the Guide have been corrected, hard copy versions distributed at state offices, retailers, and other license vendors contain hunting season date errors.

[Please click here to find a 1-page hunting season summary with corrected season dates.](/files/documents/2019/01/08/2019%20hunting%20season%20summary.pdf)

[\(/files/documents/2019/01/08/2019%20hunting%20season%20summary.pdf\)](/files/documents/2019/01/08/2019%20hunting%20season%20summary.pdf)

[Please click here to find the corrected full-length digital version of the Guide.](http://www.eregulations.com/massachusetts/huntingandfishing/)

[\(http://www.eregulations.com/massachusetts/huntingandfishing/\)](http://www.eregulations.com/massachusetts/huntingandfishing/)

We apologize for this error and inconvenience. If you have questions, please contact us at (508) 389-6300.

## Contact

**MassWildlife**

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8 a.m.- 4:30 p.m., M-F

## Online

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### websites

[MassWildlife Homepage](/orgs/division-of-fisheries-and-wildlife) (/orgs/division-of-fisheries-and-wildlife)

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