

Virginia Wildlife Laws and Regulations



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Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF)

- In Virginia, VDGIF enforces the laws, regulations, and guidelines governing wildlife
 - Wildlife is considered to be property of the Commonwealth of Virginia
- In general, permits are needed to take (meaning to harass, harm, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect), possess, and release wild animals, unless otherwise specifically allowed by law or regulation
 - Permits are also needed to destroy or disturb the nests, eggs, dens, or young of any wild animals, with the exception of nuisance species. It is also illegal to collect animal parts without a permit.

Types of Permits

- Rehabilitation: for the rehabilitation of sick, injured, orphaned, or displaced wildlife
- Exhibitor: for the exhibit of live animals for educational purposes
- Scientific Collections: for the collection, or capture and release, of non-listed (not threatened or endangered) wildlife for scientific or educational purposes
- Salvage: for the collection of animals found dead for scientific or educational purposes
- Threatened and endangered species: for any activities relating to federal- and/or state-threatened or endangered species

Exceptions to the Rule

- It is legal to collect up to 20 non-listed aquatic invertebrates and nongame fish of one species for “private use” (not for scientific or educational purposes, which require a permit).
- It is legal to collect up to 5 individuals of any non-listed reptile and amphibian species for private use, though the Wildlife Center strongly discourages this.
- As noted previously, those considered to be nuisance species are not protected by state law. In Virginia, there are 10 species defined as nuisance species...

Nuisance Species

- Birds:
 - Pigeon
 - English (house) sparrow
 - European starling
- Mammals:
 - House mouse
 - Norway rat
 - Nutria
 - Groundhog
 - Coyote
 - Black rat
 - Feral hog



Other classifications

The following animals are able to be “taken” (hunted or trapped) during the appropriate season and with a license:

Game animals: grouse, pheasant, bobwhite, quail, turkey, bear, bobcat, deer, fox, rabbit, raccoon, squirrel

Furbearing animals: beaver, bobcat, mink, muskrat, otter, opossum, weasel



Migratory game animals: doves, ducks, brant, geese, swan, coot, gallinules, sora and other rails, snipe, woodcock, crow



Federally Protected Species

- Additionally, a majority of bird species are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), enforced by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
 - Under the MBTA, no one make take, possess, import, export, transport, sell, purchase, or barter any migratory bird (or bird parts, nests, or eggs) without the appropriate permits
 - Birds that are not protected include European starlings, English sparrows, pigeons, mute swans and other non-native or domestic species
 - Permits are issued for rehabilitation, import/export, raptor propagation, falconry, scientific collections, taxidermy, waterfowl sale and disposal, and depredation permits
 - Eagles (Bald and Golden) are also covered under the MBTA, but have additional protection under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act

Wildlife Damages Regulations

- For those species that are not deemed “nuisance” animals, permits are generally required to “take” wildlife that are causing property damage. In addition to DGIF personnel, those that are authorized include:
 - Animal control officers
 - Commercial nuisance animal permittees
 - Licensed hunters/trappers
 - Landowners (under certain conditions)
- Live relocation is not allowed

Reporting Wildlife Crimes

- Anytime that a violation of state or federal wildlife law occurs, crimes should be reported as soon as possible to DGIF. Many times this may be reporting on an animal that has found to be shot or illegally trapped.
 - To report a wildlife violation, contact DGIF at 1-800-237-5712 or email WildCrime@dgif.virginia.gov
 - When reporting, try to have the following information available:
 - What happened
 - Who was involved (if known)
 - When (date and time)
 - Where (be as specific as possible)



Other Reporting

- Occasionally birds with bands are found dead in the wild or are found injured and are admitted to a vet or a rehabilitator's care

– To report, visit:

<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/homepage/call800.htm>

– To report a pigeon with a leg band, visit:

<http://www.pigeon.org/lostbirdinfo.htm>



Transporting wildlife

- As previously noted, permits are needed for the possession of wildlife. However, under the Virginia wildlife rehabilitation permit conditions, permitted rehabilitators or veterinarians may designate individuals to act under their permits as “transporters”. Transporters may retrieve or deliver wildlife to other permitted rehabilitators or approved release points when rehabilitation is complete.

Resources

- Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries Wildlife Information:
<http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/>
- Birds protected by the Migratory Birds Treaty Act:
<http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/RegulationsPolicies/mbta/mbtintro.html>
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Laws, Treaties, and Regulations:
<http://www.fws.gov/permits/ltr/ltr.shtml>