

## Guide to Hunting Georgia's Public Land

**Step 1:** Pick up a copy of the current Guide to Georgia Hunting Seasons and Regulations (hereinafter "Guide") or view the guide at <https://www.eregulations.com/georgia/hunting/>.

**Step 2:** In the Guide, find the [General WMA Regulations](#) on page 40. Read this whole section 3 times.

**Step 3:** Choose an area you would like to hunt. There are several different types of public hunting land available including state-managed Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), Volunteer Public Access Areas (VPAs), National Forest (Federal), National Wildlife Refuges (Federal), State Parks (State), National Parks (Federal), and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE, Federal).

There is a [Public Hunting Opportunities locator map](#) in the Guide (page 44) to help you choose areas near you. Find the specific regulations for the area you wish to hunt. Specific regulations may differ from area to area based on management goals. [Volunteer Public Access areas](#) are listed on page 65 and [Federal areas](#) are listed on page 68.

All WMAs are partly or wholly managed by the Georgia DNR Wildlife Resources Division, but the ownership of the land can vary and includes state-owned land, private land leased by the state, and federal land. For example, Cedar Creek is a WMA, but the majority is owned by the Forest Service, so some Forest Service rules also apply such as no ATVs.

**Step 4:** Choose a species or group of species to hunt (deer, turkey, bear, small game, waterfowl, etc.) and choose a weapon type (archery, firearms, or primitive weapons). Under the WMA heading you will see the available dates for each species or group of species and weapon along with some additional and very important information. Most areas have far more restrictive dates than state seasons. Common terms are defined below:

- **Quota (Q)** – This means you must apply online by a certain deadline and be selected in order to attend the hunt. The number indicates the number of slots available. There are no "stand-by" programs for most hunts, the number of selected hunters is already adjusted for "no-shows."
- For all big game hunts and specified small game hunts sign in is required once per hunt period before hunting. You can sign in online or in person at the check station.
- **Bonus Deer (B)** – You must bring any deer you kill back to the check station to be weighed and measured by DNR personnel. **DO NOT** mark deer on your harvest record on bonus deer hunts or report the harvest to Game Check; you will be given bonus tags. Unless otherwise specified, there is a limit of 2 deer on bonus hunts; only one of them may be a buck if there are antler restrictions on the particular WMA. Deer from all other hunts must be reported to [Game Check](#) and marked on your harvest record.
- **Buck Only** – This means you can only shoot antlered bucks; button-heads will get you a ticket.
- **Buck Only/Either Sex Last Day** – This means you cannot kill an antlerless deer until the last day of the hunt. There may be several variations to this such as either sex last 2 days or last 3 days.
- **Quality Buck** – This means the area has antler restrictions, all antlered bucks must have at least 4 points on one side of the antlers OR a minimum of a 15 inch outside spread. Bucks are legal if they meet either option, they don't need to meet both. A good way to judge spread is if the greatest outer width of the beams is wider than the ear tips then the deer will have a spread greater than 15 inches.
- **Either Sex** – This means you can kill any type of deer for the duration of the hunt, but you are still subject to the bag limit.

**Step 5:** Read the special regulations. This section under each area heading will include site-specific rules that may not apply to other areas, such as antler restrictions on bucks.

**Step 6-** Purchase all required licenses. You will need a hunting license, Big Game license (if hunting Big Game), HIP permit (if hunting migratory birds), Federal and State Duck Stamp (if hunting Waterfowl), and any additional permits required for land outside of WMAs (some USACOE land requires a permit). A Sportsman's or Lifetime License will cover all these except for the federal duck stamp, other federal permits, and state park quota hunt fees. You can purchase a license by visiting [www.GoOutdoorsGeorgia.com](http://www.GoOutdoorsGeorgia.com), by calling 1-800-366-2661, or by visiting any license agent.

**Step 7:** Head to the check station and read all available signs. This is where you will find current information about any issues that have come up since the Guide was printed. You probably need to sign in anyway unless you are small game hunting.

**Step 8:** Public Land Etiquette. There are no designated spots on public land, with only a few exceptions (such as blind areas on some waterfowl hunts or the island deer hunts). Because everything is "first come, first served" you need to do plenty of scouting in advance of a hunt and pick out several good spots (5 or more preferable). This will save you a heap of heartache in the wee hours of the morning when there's a truck parked in your only spot. It should be widely known and accepted that if someone beats you to an area, you gracefully bow out and move on; that doesn't mean walk another 100 yards and start climbing a tree. If you can still see another hunter from the stand, you're probably too close.

Likewise, always expect the possibility that another hunter will walk in on you. In this case, politely flash your light or whistle if it's daylight and the other will likely move on. There will sometimes be the occasion that someone is not aware of these common courtesies or simply doesn't care; just remember that you have access to hunt over 1 million acres of prime land included with the purchase of your hunting license.

If it's daylight and someone walks past you don't get discouraged, tons of huge bucks have been killed because a late hunter arriving in the woods jumped the buck out of cover and he ran past the next guy that was already set up. A good rule of thumb for avoiding other hunters is to stay away from trucks. Unless it's a large parking area that is a single access point for hundreds of acres, you shouldn't park next to anyone else and risk disturbing them. Here are a few other little "Dos and Don'ts":

- **Don't** skybust. You will not kill a duck or dove from 100 yards away. Wait until you think you could hit it with a rock.
- **Do** sight in your rifle. Some days at a check station as high as 50% of deer are gut shot or shot multiple times. Taking aim at an animal is not the time to wonder if you are going to hit it.
- **Do** bring a deer cart. It will make your life much easier unless you're Paul Bunyan or a glutton for punishment. Hand trucks and dragging tarps make adequate substitutes for the budget conscious.
- **Do** bring a climbing stand (with harness). Mobility is key to being successful and your risk of having a stand stolen is higher if you leave it in the woods.
- **Don't** cordon off spots with signs and tons of flagging tape that you have no intention of picking up when you leave. This is litter and there are no designated spots. In fact, some hunters will target those spots thinking they are better and try to beat you there or deliberately walk in on you.

- **Don't** gut your deer and throw the guts or carcass on the roadside or campground. Gut it where it drops and drag any unusable parts into the woods 30 or 40 yards away from other hunters.
- **Don't** knowingly try to cut someone off to a bird when turkey hunting. There's nothing worse than working a bird and have someone run in and spook him. If you hear 5 owl tooters and crow cackles all honking at the same gobbler, it's best to move on to another spot.

**Step 9:** A few other little odds and ends.

- Dove dates are typically only listed for WMAs that have dove fields. You can still hunt doves on other WMAs when small game dates and state dove season coincide.
- For small game animals not specifically listed, they may be hunted when WMA small game dates for the area you are hunting and state season for that animal coincide, unless otherwise specified. This generally applies to rabbits, quail, squirrels, woodcock, snipe, grouse, waterfowl, foxes, bobcats, crows, alligators (quota only), marsh hens, and raccoons.
- You can only kill bears on WMAs that specifically list a season for them.
- Coyotes and feral hogs can be taken during any open season only with the legal weapons for that season, unless otherwise specified.
- Bicycles are great tools for accessing remote areas for turkey and small game seasons. You can ride them on gated roads. E-bikes under 750 watts may also be used unless the WMA is on National Forest. E-bikes are restricted to open roads (as in not gated) on National Forest land.
- You can't take ATVs off-road, so they don't do you much good even where they are allowed.

If you have general or specific WMA questions, feel free to reach out to your local Game Management Regional Office for more information.

Region	Address	Phone Number
Region 1	2650 Floyd Springs Road Armuchee, GA 30105	706-295-6041
Region 2	2150 Dawsonville Highway Gainesville, GA 30501	770-535-5700
Region 3	142 Bob Kirk Road NW Thomson, GA 30824	706-595-4222
Region 4	1773-A Bowens Mill Highway Fitzgerald, GA 31750	229-426-5267
Region 5	2024 Newton Road Albany, GA 31701	229-430-4254
Region 6	1 Conservation Way Brunswick, GA 31520	912-262-3173