

Chapter 3

WILDLIFE IDENTIFICATION



Objectives

- List five groups of wildlife.
- Learn identifying field marks of species in each group.



As a hunter, you should know the game animals and associated species in the area you hunt. Responsible hunters not only take time to learn field marks, but also to learn about the animal's sign, habits and environment. The best way to learn this is to spend time in the field year round with a good field guide and a pair of binoculars.

Wildlife is usually broken down into five groups:

1. Big game
2. Small game
3. Upland game
4. Migratory Waterfowl
5. Non-game including rare, threatened and endangered animals

Big Game

Black bear – *Ursus americanus*

- Largest game animal in New Jersey. Can grow to over 700 lbs.



- Confirmed reports from all 21 counties.
- Highest densities in northwest corner of the state.
- Hunting seasons conducted in 2003 and 2005.
- Can run 35 miles per hour and climb trees.
- Not a true hibernator.

White-tailed deer –

Odocoileus virginia

- Most popular big game species in North America.
- New Jersey has more opportunities to hunt than any other state nation.
- Annual harvest averages about 50,000.
- Antlered males must have at least one antler three inches long.
- Bucks harvested from Quality Deer Management zones, must have at least three points on one side. A point must be at least one inch long.



Small Game

Gray Squirrel –

Sciurus carolinensis

- Seasons open for bow, shotgun, and muzzleloader.
- No modern rifle season
- Must wear at least 200 square inches of blaze orange or a complete orange hat while firearm hunting.



Eastern Cottontail Rabbit -

Sylvilagus floridanus

- Can be hunted with shotgun or bow.
- Frequently hunted with hounds.
- Prefers early succession habitat.



Woodchuck -

Marmota monax

- Can be hunted with



bow, muzzleloader or shotgun bow.

- Modern rifle hunting only on private property.
- Orange is not required, but recommended to and from hunting location.

Raccoon – *Procyon lotor*

- Night time season allowed with hounds.
- Can use .22 shorts.
- Can be live trapped with trapping license, using snares or box traps.



Red Fox – *Vulpes vulpes*

- Has white tip on tail.
- Native to Europe.
- Is an edge species that thrives in New Jersey.



Gray Fox –

Urocyon cinereoargenteus

- Native to New Jersey
- Can climb trees.
- Prefers large tracks of unbroken woods.
- Cannot interbreed with red fox.



Coyote – *Canis latrans*

- Our eastern coyotes are much larger than western coyotes. Many coyotes in New Jersey are over 50 pounds.
- Coyotes can come in any color from blonde to black.
- Has a black spot, 1/3 of the way down, on top of tail.



Coyotes and Foxes have separate seasons during small game. You can also harvest them

during many of our deer seasons. A nighttime permit season is also gaining popularity. The nighttime season allows the use of electronic calls and external light sources. A new modern rifle season has been added to the winter season. Any coyote shot must be reported to the NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife within 24 hours. See the **Fish and Wildlife Digest** for the most current regulations, as they may change from year to year. Remember it is illegal and unethical to shoot any wild or stray dogs.

Upland Game

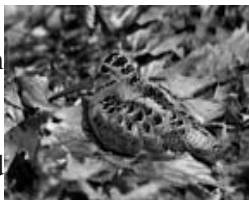
Ruffed Grouse

- Requires early succession habitat.
- Populations are down because most of their former habitat has matured and suitable habitat is fragmented.
- In spring, males can be heard drumming (beating their wings) to attract a mate.



Woodcock

- Uses long bill to probe in mud for worms.
- Relies on early successional habitat and wetlands.
- Need a HIP (Harvest Information Program) certification to hunt this migratory species.



Pheasant

- Not native to North America.
- Wild populations occur across the US.
- Most of New Jersey's wild populations are gone. The major cause of



this is thought to be a change in farming practices.

- A pheasant stamp is required to hunt on stocked Wildlife Management Areas.
- Can hunt Sundays on commercial and semi-wild preserves.

Bob-white Quail

- Wild populations found in the southern half of the state.
- Stocked on two WMA's and numerous semi-wild and commercial preserves.
- Often times flies low. Be sure the bird gets high enough off the ground to provide a safe shot.



Turkey

- Hunters brought this native bird back into New Jersey in 1977. The population is now over 20,000 birds.
- Turkeys can fly 55 miles per hour and roost in trees.
- It is illegal to stalk turkeys. You must be set up and calling.
- You should not wear a red, white or blue tee shirt underneath your camouflage because you can be mistaken for a male turkey's head.



Waterfowl

Migratory waterfowl season dates and bag limits are set according to federal guidelines. Waterfowl hunters are required to purchase federal and state waterfowl stamps. The moneys raised are used to protect wetlands and help manage waterfowl. Remember that while

hunting waterfowl, you must use non-toxic shot.

Not all species of ducks have open seasons or are huntable at the same time. It is crucial that you can identify ducks, not just in your hand, but at a distance using different field characteristics. Certain species have distinct flight patterns or calls. A complete list of waterfowl and their identifying characteristics can be found at Ducks Unlimited web site - www.ducks.org Practice year round to learn these field marks.

Ducks are broken into several groups.

Dabbling Ducks

- Also known as puddle ducks. Includes mallards, wood ducks, black ducks, widgeon, pintail, gadwall, shoveler, and teal.
- Prefers shallow water.
- It feeds only as deep as it can reach from the surface.
- High food quality.



Diving Ducks

- Also called pochards or bay ducks
- Diving ducks include ring-necked, scaup, canvasback, and redhead.
- Prefers deeper water.
- Dives completely underwater to feed.
- Have shorter bills, rounder heads, plumper



bodies, and simpler color patterns.

Sea Ducks

- Includes scoters, eiders, longtails bufflehead, goldeneye, and mergansers.
- Mostly associated with coastal waters.
- Excellent diving skills.
- Preference for animal foods.
- Food quality not as high as puddle ducks.



Geese

Snow Geese

- Breeds on the arctic tundra..
- Population at an all time high causing significant damage to the breeding grounds.
- Extremely liberal seasons are designed to help reduce populations.



Brant

- Our smallest goose in New Jersey.
- Winters in shallow saltwater bays and marshes.
- Breeds in the arctic tundra.



Canada Geese

- Largest goose in NJ.
- Non-migratory or resident populations are at high levels. Extremely liberal seasons and bag limits are designed to re-



duce populations.

- Migratory geese seasons are much more restrictive than the resident goose season.

Non-game

Endangered species are those whose prospects for survival in New Jersey are in immediate danger because of a loss or change in habitat, over-exploitation, predation, disease, competition, disturbance or contamination. Assistance is needed to prevent future extinction in New Jersey. Regulated sport hunting has never caused any animal to become endangered or extinct. Some species are on the state endangered species, meaning they are rare in New Jersey, while others are on the federal endangered species list. Federally endangered species are rare across the country. Both the bobcat and the timber rattler are state endangered species in New Jersey. They are rare because of their specific habitat requirements. Other states that have large quantities of their key habitats may have seasons on these species.



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Threatened species are those who may become endangered if conditions surrounding them begin or continue to deteriorate. The wood turtle and the red headed woodpeckers are both New Jersey state threatened species.

New Jersey is home to more than 500 species of vertebrates. Many of these species benefit from the work hunters do. Numerous woodland songbird populations suffer when deer populations grow too high. Only after the deer herd is reduced do these song bird populations come back. Several species of endangered and threatened salamanders use the same seasonal wetlands that woodcock hunters work to protect. Certain species of ground nesting birds are impacted when predator populations grow too high. Hunters and trappers are used to help keep these predator populations in check. All species, including the citizens of New Jersey, benefit from ethical hunting.

