

# Summary of National Hunting Regulations: United Kingdom



Updated in October 2016

## HUNTING AND TRAPPING LEGISLATION/ RESOURCES

**Name of main legislation:** In the UK hunting law is a national issue, therefore several hunting laws exist: Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for England, Scotland and Wales; Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985

**Year of publication:** see above

**Supporting legislation:**

**Legislation updates:** In England and Wales the law has been amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and in Scotland by the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004.

**Hunting legislation (web link):** <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/browse>

**Authority in charge of controlling hunting (web link):** Home Office (Police) UK National Wildlife Crime Unit <http://www.nwcu.police.uk/>

**Major inconsistencies or loopholes detected (if yes please describe):**

The UK lacks a system of licensing for hunting, with no statutory limits applied to hunting bags, or statutory requirement to submit returns. Questions have been raised about consequences for the UK's compliance with principles under Article 7 of the Birds Directive, including "wise use", "ecologically balanced control" and requirement not to "jeopardise conservation efforts" for huntable or non-huntable species. The lack of a licensing system also limits the capacity of authorities to apply restrictions on hunting in response to incidents of wildlife crime.

Note: the devolved Scottish Government have commissioned a review of game licensing systems in Europe, which is expected to report this year.

**Derogations (on EU Birds Directive and/or Bern Convention):** None

## HUNTING AND TRAPPING: METHODS AND RESTRICTIONS

	Legal methods/restrictions	Notes
<b>Hunting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Certain game bird species can be hunt during the open shooting season (see below)</li><li>- There is no requirement to hold a hunting licence.</li><li>- Certificate is needed to use shotgun, rifle or other firearm (no certificate needed to use air rifles and air pistols, although a licensing requirement is being introduced in Scotland)</li><li>- Certain locations can be forbidden (eg above the high water line for some waterfowl)</li><li>- Falconry licence needed to hunt birds with a falconry bird.</li></ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shooting at night is not permitted in some areas (all of Northern Ireland and via local restrictions in England, Wales and Scotland). Exceptions apply for pest control purposes.</li> <li>- It is illegal to use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Any springe (sprung noose or snare), trap, gin, snare, any electrical device for killing, stunning or frightening, or any poisonous, poisoned or stupefying substance (or hook and line or muscle-relaxing agent – Northern Ireland only) so placed as to be calculated to cause bodily injury to any wild bird</li> <li>o Any net, any baited board, bird-lime or substance of a like nature to bird-lime</li> <li>o Any bow or crossbow</li> <li>o Any missile which is not discharged from a firearm including any arrow or spear (Northern Ireland only),</li> <li>o Any metal bar, axe, hatchet, cudgel, club, hammer or similar instrument (Northern Ireland only)</li> <li>o Any explosive other than ammunition for a firearm.</li> <li>o Any automatic or semi-automatic weapon against any bird (except the Bird Pest Species listed on the general licences)</li> <li>o Any shotgun where the barrel has an internal diameter at the muzzle of more than 1¾ inches</li> <li>o Any device for illuminating a target or sighting device for night shooting or any form of artificial light or any mirror or other dazzling device (except feral pigeon <i>Columba livia</i> under general licence)</li> <li>o Any gas or smoke, any chemical wetting agent</li> <li>o Any sound recording</li> <li>o Any live animal or bird as a decoy which is tethered, secured by braces or other similar appliances, or which is blind, maimed or injured.</li> <li>o Any mechanically-propelled vehicle in immediate pursuit of birds for the purpose of killing or taking.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>Trapping</b>	An authorised person may legally use cage-traps or nets to take certain species as defined in the General Licences (see pest section)	

## HUNTING SEASONS AND SPECIES

Hunting seasons differ in the different nations. In the ‘Open Hunting Season’ column are given the maximum opening season for each huntable species and national differences are mentioned in the ‘Notes’ column.

Open Hunting Season	Legally huntable species	Notes
Oct 1 – Feb 1	Common Pheasant	Introduced species England and Wales: Oct 1 – Feb 1 Scotland: Oct 1 – Feb 1 Northern Ireland: Oct 1 – Jan 31
Sep 1 – Feb 1	Grey Partridge	England and Wales: Sep 1 – Feb 1 Scotland: Sep 1 – Feb 1 Northern Ireland: Sep 1- Jan 31
Sep 1 – Feb 1	Red-legged Partridge	England and Wales: Sep 1 – Feb 1 Scotland: Sep 1 – Feb 1 Northern Ireland: Sep 1 – Jan 31
Aug 12 – Dec 10	Red Grouse (subsp of Willow Grouse)	England and Wales: Aug 12 – Dec 10 Scotland: Aug 12 – Dec 10 Northern Ireland: Aug 12 – Nov 30
Aug 20 – Dec 10	Black Grouse	England and Wales: Aug 20 – Dec 10 (Somerset, Devon and New Forest: Sep 1 – Dec 10) Scotland: Aug 20 – Dec 10 Northern Ireland: —
Aug 12 – Dec 10	Ptarmigan	England and Wales: — Scotland: Aug 12 – Dec 10 Northern Ireland: —
Sep 1 – Feb 20	Duck & Goose  England, Wales & Scotland : Gadwall, Common Goldeneye, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Common Pochard, Northern Shoveler, Common Teal, Tufted duck, Eurasian Wigeon, Canada Goose, Greylag Goose, Pink-footed Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose (England and Wales only)  Northern Ireland: Gadwall, Common Goldeneye, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Common Pochard, Ruddy Duck (introduced species), Greater Scaup, Northern Shoveler, Common Teal, Tufted Duck, Eurasian Wigeon, Canada Goose, Greylag Goose, Pink-footed Goose	Inland England and Wales: Sep 1 – Jan 31 Scotland: Sep 1 – Jan 31 Northern Ireland: Sep 1 – Jan 31  Below high water line - England, Wales and Scotland: Any area below high-water mark of ordinary spring tides. - Northern Ireland: The limit of where the living seaweed is attached to the stones of the foreshore.  England and Wales: Sep 1 – Feb 20 Scotland: Sep 1 – Feb 20 Northern Ireland: Sep 1 – Jan 31  Canada Goose (introduced species): This species can be shot throughout the year in England, Wales and Scotland only under specific general licences.
Aug 12 – Jan 31	Common Snipe	England and Wales: Aug 12 – Jan 31

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		Scotland: Aug 12 – Jan 31 Northern Ireland: Sep 1 – Jan 31
Sep 1 – Jan 31	Jack Snipe	England and Wales: Protected Scotland: Protected Northern Ireland: Sep 1 – Jan 31
Sep 1 – Jan 31	Eurasian Woodcock	England and Wales: Oct 1 – Jan 31 Scotland: Sep 1 – Jan 31 Northern Ireland: Oct 1 – Jan 31
Sep 1 – Jan 31	Eurasian Golden Plover	England and Wales: Sep 1 – Jan 31 Scotland: Sep 1 – Jan 31 Northern Ireland: Sep 1 – Jan 31
Sep 1 – Jan 31	Common Coot, Common Moorhen	England and Wales: Sep 1 – Jan 31 Scotland: Sep 1 – Jan 31 Northern Ireland: Protected

## TRAPPING SEASONS AND SPECIES

Open Trapping Season	Legally trapped species	Notes
		The current licences should be consulted for the correct lists

## TRADE AND PEST SPECIES

Legal trade	Notes
<p>The sale of pheasant, partridge, red grouse and black grouse is permitted year-round provided the game was obtained legally during the season relevant to the species.</p> <p>The sale of the following dead birds is permitted from 1 September to 28 February in England, Wales and Scotland: Mallard, Northern Pintail, Common Pochard, Northern Shoveler, Common Teal, Tufted duck, Eurasian Wigeon, Common snipe, Eurasian Golden Plover, Eurasian Woodcock, Common Coot</p> <p>In Northern Ireland, only woodpigeon may be sold dead (at all times).</p>	
Legislation on “pest species”	Notes
Pest birds, such as woodpigeons and corvids, can be controlled all year round for defined purposes (such as protection of crops or wildlife) subject to the terms and	Hunting of several Annex II species (e.g. woodpigeon <i>Columba palumbus</i> ) is currently only via provisions

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<p>conditions of General Licences. No one has to apply for a general licence. The purposes, species of birds and terms and conditions may be different in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. General licences typically are renewed once a year and can change.</p> <p>For controlling pests, it is possible to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- trap or kill permitted animals</li><li>- use permitted methods to kill animals</li><li>- only use poison to kill the pests it's intended for</li><li>- only use traps that have been approved for this use</li></ul> <p>Control methods allowed under the General Licence may include shooting, the destruction of eggs and nests, and the use of Larsen traps and multi-catch traps, which includes the use of decoy birds within such traps.</p>	<p>transposing Article 9, with corresponding thresholds which apply.</p>
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**NGO:** Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

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