



The Wildlife (NI) Order 1985, as amended – Wildlife and Game Protection

All persons issued with a firearms certificate should read this leaflet carefully. It sets out the position regarding the shooting of wild birds, animals and game.

Birds

With certain exceptions all wild birds, their eggs and active nests are protected at all times.

The Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) issues annual '[General Licences](#)'. These permit authorised persons to take named species, for specified reasons. They cover certain types of activity relating to birds, such as preserving public health or air safety, and preventing the spread of disease. You can read and download the licences from the DAERA website www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/wildlife-licensing or obtain a hard copy from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) wildlife team Tel: 028 90569557. Species lists are subject to annual review, so you should familiarise yourself with those in current use.

The following birds may be shot by authorised persons during the open season 1 September to 31 January inclusive.

Tufted duck	Ruddy duck	Gadwall
Mallard	Pintail	Pochard
Shoveler	Teal	Wigeon
Golden plover	Goldeneye	Scaup
Canada goose	Grey-lag goose	Pink-footed goose

It is an offence to kill any wild bird or game on Sundays or during the period commencing one hour after sunset on any day and ending one hour before sunrise on the next day. Sunset and sunrise times are published by HM Nautical Almanac Office (HMNAO) http://astro.ukho.gov.uk/nao/miscellanea/UK_SRSS/.

Under the Wildlife Order an “**authorised person**” means:-

- a) The owner or occupier, or any person authorised by the owner or occupier, of the land on which the action authorised is taken;
- b) Any person authorised by the Department.

It is an offence to sell, or to have in your possession for sale any wild bird (including wildfowl), except wood pigeon.

Under the terms of the Wildlife Order certain methods of killing wild birds are prohibited. If any person uses for the purpose of killing any wild bird with a firearm:-

- a) Any automatic ♦ or semi-automatic weapon ♦; or
 - b) Any shotgun of which the barrel has an internal diameter at the muzzle of more than 4.45cms (1.75 inches),
- he shall be guilty of an offence and be liable to a special penalty (ie, a fine not exceeding Level 5 on the standard scale, at time of writing £5000 and or a custodial prison sentence of up to 6 months).

♦“Automatic weapon” and “semi-automatic weapon” do not include any weapon the magazine of which is incapable of holding more than two rounds.

Wild Animals

If any person intentionally or recklessly kills, injures or takes any wild animal included in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife (NI) Order 1985, as amended he shall be guilty of an offence. Those convicted shall be liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, or to both:-

Schedule 5 species, protected at all times.

Badger	Pine marten	Common / Harbour seal
Grey seal	Red squirrel	Brimstone butterfly
Large heath butterfly	Holly blue butterfly	Dingy skipper butterfly
Marsh fritillary butterfly	Purple hairstreak butterfly	Real’s wood white butterfly
White-clawed crayfish	Irish damselfly	Common lizard
Spiny lobster	Freshwater pearl mussel	Fan mussel
Common newt	Short-snouted seahorse	Spiny seahorse
Basking shark		

The following animals are also protected at all times under the terms of the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations (NI) 1995 (aka Habitat Regs) as amended. A person guilty of an offence under these regulations shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale:-

Habitat Regs Schedule 2 Protected Animals

Otter	All species of Dolphin	All marine turtles
All species of bat	All species of Whale	All species of Porpoises

Additionally the animals listed below are protected from being killed by certain methods under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife Order, including Semi-automatic and Automatic weapons.

WO Schedule 6 /Habitat Regs species, protected from being killed by certain methods.

Fallow deer,	Pine marten
Red deer	Common seal
Sika deer	Grey seal
Pygmy shrew	
Irish / Mountain	

hare	
Hedgehog	
Brown hare	

Foxes, rabbits, rats, mink and grey squirrels may be shot by authorised persons at all times. Muntjac or Chinese Water deer may be shot by authorised persons during the period commencing one hour before sunrise ending one hour after sunset on any day. Sunset and sunrise times are published by HM Nautical Almanac Office (HMNAO) http://astro.ukho.gov.uk/nao/miscellanea/UK_SRSS/.

Game - the normal open seasons are:-

Birds	Open season
Grouse	12 August to 30 November
Pheasant	01 October to 31 January
Woodcock	01 October to 31 January
Snipe	01 September to 31 January
Jack snipe	01 September to 31 January
Grey partridge	01 September to 31 January
Red partridge	01 September to 31 January
Chukar partridge	01 September to 31 January
Hares	
Hares (both Irish and Brown)	12 August to 31 January
Deer	
Red stags	01 August to 30 April
Red hinds	01 November to 31 March
Sika stags	01 August to 30 April
Sika hinds	01 November to 31 March
Fallow bucks	01 August to 30 April
Fallow does	01 November to 31 March
Muntjac	No closed season
Chinese water deer	No closed season

Any reference to a species of deer or hare includes a hybrid of that species.

It is illegal to use the following firearms and ammunition to kill deer:-

Firearms

- 1) Any smooth bore gun.
- 2) Any rifle having a calibre of less than 6mm (0.236 inches).
- 3) Any pistol, revolver or other type of handgun other than a slaughtering instrument (within the meaning of Article 2(2) of the Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 2004 as amended).
- 4) Any air gun, air rifle or air pistol.
- 5) Any weapon which discharges a missile by means of a gas propellant.
- 6) The control Muntjac deer or Chinese water deer - a rifle having a calibre of not less than .220 inches and a muzzle energy of not less than 1,000 foot pounds

(1,356 joules); and a soft-nosed or hollow-nosed bullet weighing not less than 50 grains (3.24 grammes).

Ammunition

- 7) Any cartridge for use in a smooth bore gun.
- 8) Any cartridge or load for use in a rifle other than a cartridge or load so designed that, when fired in a rifle, the bullet discharged has a muzzle energy of not less than 2.305 Joules (1,700).
- 9) Any bullet for use in a rifle other than:-
 - a) a bullet weighing not less than 6.48 grams (100 grains);
 - b) an expanding bullet designed to deform in a predictable manner and thereby increase its effective diameter upon entering tissue.

Use of lead shot on or near water bodies and wetlands

It is an offence to discharge any lead based shot on or over wetlands or areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres.

Under the terms of the Environmental Protection (Restriction on Use of Lead Shot) Regulations (NI) 2009 any person who contravenes regulation 4, or causes or permits another person to contravene that regulation, shall be guilty of an offence, and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale.

All queries in relation to the information contained in this leaflet should be made to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) NED Wildlife Team. Tel. 028 905 69557 or email elmswildlife@daera-ni.gov.uk . NIEA Wildlife Team, DAERA, 2nd Flr Clare House 303 Airport Road West, Belfast BT3 9ED.