

*THE WILD LIFE
PROTECTION ACT (WLPA)*

Hunting Regulations

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Introduction

Hunting Regulations

The National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) is responsible for ensuring the conservation, protection and sustainable use of Jamaica's natural resources. This mandate is achieved partly through the enactment of various legislations, one of which is the Wild Life Protection Act.

Wild Life Protection Act (WLPA)

The Wild Life Protection Act was promulgated in 1945 and has undergone several amendments, the most recent in 2001. The Act provides legislative protection for a number of animals and birds. The Act also regulates the bird shooting.

In general, the Act speaks to:

- ❖ The types of animals or birds that may be hunted;

- ❖ The prohibition of hunting or the possession of protected animals and protected birds (unless a season is declared);
- ❖ The punishment of persons who cause or attempt to cause direct harm to protected animals or protected birds;
- ❖ The zoning of areas in which hunting and fishing activities are prohibited;
- ❖ The regulating of the hunting of game birds, when a season is declared.

WLPA Regulations for Bird Shooting Season

The regulations specify the conditions under which the shooting season shall be conducted and are as follows:

Hunter's Licence

All hunters must have a valid Hunter's Licence and must have it in their possession while undertaking bird shooting activities. The licence must be shown upon request by a Game Warden.

Game Birds

Game Birds listed under the WLPA include the Long-tailed Pea Dove, White-winged Dove, Bald-pate, Pea Dove, Blue-winged Teal and Green-winged Teal.

No shooting season has been declared for the Green-winged or Blue-winged Teals.

Shooting Days and Times

During the shooting season, usually mid August to September of each year, shooting sessions are on Saturday, sunrise to 9:00 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. to sunset and Sunday, sunrise to 9:00 a.m.

Bag Limits

The overall bag limit per shooting session is 20 with the exception of the Bald-pate.

Where the only game bird hunted is the Bald-pate, 30 may be shot, that is, 15 during the morning shoot and 15 in the afternoon shoot on Saturday and 15 on a Sunday.

Where the only game bird being hunted is the Long-tailed Pea Dove or Pea Dove or White-wing Dove, only 40 can be shot on a Saturday, that is 20 during the morning shoot and 20 in the afternoon shoot and 20 on Sunday.

Wing Evidence

A fully feathered wing is to remain on each bird shot for inspection by Game Wardens.

Game Wardens

Under Section 13 of the WLPA, provision is made for the appointment of Game Wardens. The powers of a Game Warden are as follows:

- ❖ Enter, remain upon and traverse any lands at any time if there is reason to suspect that an offence may have been committed against the Act (Section 15, Subsection 2, WLPA).
- ❖ Search any person who may have been suspected of having contravened any provision of the Act on Crown Lands, Game Sanctuary and Fish Sanctuary (Section 16, WLPA).

- ❖ Stop and search any vehicle or boat for any animal, fish, bird, bird's nest and/or eggs, as well as any weaponry used to trap or kill animals (Section 16, WLPA).

- ❖ Stop and detain any person violating the Act without a warrant. If such a person fails to give his name and address, a Game Warden has the power to apprehend and deliver such person into custody at the nearest police station to be dealt with according to the law (Section 17, WLPA).

- ❖ It is an offence to assault, obstruct, hinder, resist, aid, abet or incite any assault against a Game Warden (Section 19, WLPA).

Breaches of the WLPA with regards to Bird Shooting Season

Under the Act, there are four offenses in relation to the hunting of game birds:-

- ❖ The hunting of any game bird during the Close Season, where 'hunt' includes kill, capture or willfully molest by any method and any attempt to kill, capture or molest any animal or bird.
- ❖ The hunting of game birds, during the shooting season, on any day or time other than that declared by the Minister.
- ❖ Failure to leave a feathered wing on each bird shot
- ❖ The transfer or storage of any game bird for commercial purposes.

Penalties under the WLPA with regard to the Bird Shooting Season

A Resident Magistrate may award a maximum fine of \$100,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months for breaches of any of the aforementioned offences (Section 20). In addition, where a person is found with game birds in cold storage and there is evidence to support the suspicion that it is for commercial purposes, the game birds may be seized.

Game Reserves

Section 5 of the WLPA makes provisions for the declaration of Game Reserves. A Game Reserve is a parcel of land, body of water or area comprising both land and water. Within a reserve, the hunting of animals (including birds) removal of eggs or the nest of any bird and the use of any dog, gun, catapult or any other weapon, which could be used to hunt any animals or birds, is prohibited. Jamaica has seventeen areas declared as Game Reserves along with all Forest Reserves.

Any person found in a Game reserve in possession of any animal, bird, bird's eggs or nests, will be presumed to be in violation of the WLPA. This can attract a maximum fine of \$100,000, 12 months imprisonment or both if convicted by a resident Magistrate.

It is also important to note that for each Game Reserve, there is a 50 meter distance from the boundary. This is called a buffer zone. Hunters are required to recognize this zone and refrain from all shooting activities within such zones.

Entry points to all Game Reserves are furnished with signs, which clearly state that the area is a Game Reserve and no shooting or other form of hunting is allowed at the site.

THE END.
QUESTIONS/COMMENTS
THANK YOU