

Public Squirrel Hunting Open Through Sept. 15 On Participating Private Lands

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SPRINGFIELD – Public squirrel hunting opportunities are available Aug. 1 through Sept. 15 at more than 30 private land hunting sites enrolled in the Illinois Department of Natural Resources’ popular Illinois Recreational Access Program, commonly known as IRAP.

IDNR has leased more than 4,400 acres of private land for 2023 squirrel hunting through IRAP, creating more than 30 public access squirrel sites in 18 counties. Sites are available at no cost to participants. Hunters simply must register, sign a liability

waiver, and reserve a site through IRAP's online registration system at <https://dnr.illinois.gov/conservation/irap/irapregistration.html>.

All registered participants have the option of adding up to three additional registered hunters to their reservation for a group hunt. All hunters will receive a valid site permit that must be carried on their person and a windshield card that must be placed in their vehicle after reserving their site.

Youth hunters 17 and younger must be accompanied by an adult supervisor (a parent or a designee of their parent who is at least 21 years of age). Both youth and their supervisors must register and reserve a site online. All hunters must have completed a department-approved hunter education course if they were born in 1980 or later, and they must have all appropriate permits as outlined in the most current version of the Illinois Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations.

Once hunters successfully reserve their site, they can download a site-specific permit to print and take with them on their hunt, along with directions and a map with coordinates. More information about IRAP's squirrel hunting sites can be found online at <https://dnr.illinois.gov/conservation/irap/small-game-hunting.html>.

Small game hunting is a great way to introduce young and first-time hunters to the activity because it teaches basic principles needed for other hunting activities. Reconnecting families to the outdoors and providing opportunities for youth and first-time hunters to carry on hunting traditions are just a few of IRAP's many goals.

Since its inception in 2011, IRAP has leased more than 27,000 acres of private land in 52 Illinois counties for a variety of semi-controlled hunting and fishing activities. IRAP is funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service known as the Voluntary Public Access Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP). Because of IRAP, more than 17,000 acres of habitat improvements have been implemented on private land, and thousands of outdoor recreationalists have had the chance to enjoy the outdoors.

For more information visit <https://dnr.illinois.gov/conservation/irap.html> or contact DNR.IRAP@illinois.gov.