Question of the Month: What do states in the Midwest charge for hunting and fishing licenses, and what kind of discounts do they offer?

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CSG Midwest looks at how much states charge for hunting and fishing licenses, as well as the discounts offered for different groups of people.

QUESTION: What do states in the Midwest charge for hunting and fishing licenses, and what kind of discounts do they offer?

Answer: Midwestern states vary a great deal regarding the types of hunting and fishing licenses they offer, as well as how much they charge for each permit.

Illinois charges residents the least in this region for annual hunting licenses ($12.50), while South Dakota charges the most ($31 for small game).

For fishing licenses, North Dakota charges the least for an annual resident pass ($10); Nebraska charges the most ($28.50).

Beyond basic annual passes for residents, states also offer various other types of passes. Most charge higher rates for non-residents. In Wisconsin, for example, a single annual fishing license is $20 for residents but $50 for non-residents. An annual deer-hunting license there costs more than six times as much for non-residents as for residents ($160 vs. $24).

Many states also offer combination hunting and fishing passes. South Dakota, for example, offers a combination license that permits a resident to fish and hunt small game for $51, a $7 discount over purchasing each license separately.

Other states offer discounts for specific groups of people. Minnesota, North Dakota and Wisconsin, for example, offer special combined fishing licenses for married couples ($25 per couple, compared with $17 apiece). Most states also offer discounts to senior citizens, youths and disabled veterans. In Wisconsin, members of the armed forces can obtain a fishing or small-game hunting license at no cost.
Five Midwestern states offer lifetime hunting and fishing permits that allow purchasers to renew licenses annually for free in exchange for an up-front fee.

At $52.50, Iowa’s lifetime fishing license is the least expensive in the region. Other states’ fees are significantly higher. In Illinois, a resident lifetime hunting license costs $360 and a fishing license $435. Kansas residents can purchase a lifetime hunting or fishing license for $442 apiece. In Minnesota, a lifetime fishing license for a resident aged 16 to 50 costs $383 and a lifetime deer-hunting license costs $573 for that age group. In Nebraska, a lifetime fishing license for a resident aged 16 to 45 costs $446, while a hunting license for that age group costs $300.

States in the Midwest also offer a number of different options for purchasing hunting and fishing licenses, such as in person or online.

Many states in the region have reciprocal agreements that allow people holding a license from one state to hunt or fish in areas that border another jurisdiction. For example, people who hold an Iowa fishing license can fish using a hook and line in lakes and rivers that border Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

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