BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

AN EXTENDED GUIDE · NO. 1842

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Hunting and Fishing Apps: A Plain-English Guide to onX, HuntStand, Fishbrain, and Your Phone in the Field

onX, HuntStand, Fishbrain, and your phone — a plain-English guide for the field

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

Bill Davis — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · bill@billshometech.com · Atwater, Ohio

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THE 60-SECOND VERSION

1 The 60-Second Version

The whole idea, quickly.

A hunting or fishing app turns your phone into a smart GPS map for the outdoors. It shows exactly where you're standing on a detailed map — even with no cell signal, if you've downloaded the maps first — along with property boundaries and who owns the land around you, the spots you've marked (your stand, your truck, a good hole), and the path you've walked so you can find your way back.

The best-known is onX Hunt; onX Fish and Fishbrain serve anglers, and HuntStand is a solid free place to start. The two habits that matter most: download your maps before you leave home while you still have signal, and never rely on the phone alone.

- Your phone becomes a GPS map that works offline.
- It shows land ownership, your marks, and your path.
- onX Hunt for land; onX Fish or Fishbrain for water; HuntStand free to start.
- Download maps at home; carry a backup in the field.

> **TIP**
>
> Before your trip, while you're still on Wi-Fi or cell signal, download the offline maps for exactly where you're going. This is the one step people forget — and the map is useless deep in the woods if you didn't save it first.

WHAT THEY DO

2 What These Apps Actually Do

A GPS map built for the outdoors.

At heart, these are mapping apps that use your phone's built-in GPS — the same satellite positioning that powers driving directions, which works anywhere under open sky, cell signal or not. On top of a detailed outdoor map, they add the information a hunter or angler actually needs.

- Your exact location: a dot on a detailed topographic or satellite map, even far from any road.
- Land ownership: colored property boundaries and, often, the owner's name — public land, private land, and where the lines are.
- Waypoints: pins you drop to mark your stand, your truck, a trailhead, or a fishing spot.
- Your track: a recorded line of everywhere you've walked, so you can retrace it.
- Extras: wind, weather, sunrise and sunset, and sometimes catch or harvest logs.

The GPS part is the key to understanding why the phone works out there at all. GPS is separate from cell service — your phone can pinpoint your location by satellite with zero bars — but the map picture that location sits on does need to have been downloaded ahead of time. That's the whole trick these apps are built around.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Because they use real satellite GPS, these apps work in places with no phone signal at all — the back of a hunting property, the middle of a lake. The map just has to be saved to the phone first, which the offline-maps chapter covers.

THE APPS

3 The Main Apps, Compared

Which one for what.

A few apps dominate, each with its own strengths. Prices change, so treat these as of late 2026 and confirm in the app store, but the roles are stable.

App	Best for	Rough cost
onX Hunt	Hunting — land ownership, the gold standard	~$36/year Premium, ~$100/year Elite
onX Fish	Fishing — lake maps and depth	~$35/year
HuntStand	A free start for hunters	Free tier; paid Pro upgrade

Fishbrain	Fishing spots and a catch community	Free tier; paid Pro upgrade

onX Hunt is the best-known and most trusted for hunting, especially for its property-boundary data. onX Fish does the same job for water, with lake maps and depth contours. HuntStand is a strong free alternative that's a fine way to try the idea without paying, with a paid Pro tier if you want more. Fishbrain leans into the social side — logging catches and seeing where others are catching fish — with free and paid levels.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> You don't need all of them. A hunter is well served by one hunt app (onX Hunt or HuntStand); an angler by one fish app (onX Fish or Fishbrain). Start with one, learn it, and only add another if you find a real gap.

THE KILLER FEATURE

4 Property Boundaries

The reason these apps exist.

If there's one feature that makes these apps worth it, it's property boundaries. The app overlays the actual property lines onto the map and, for private parcels, often shows the landowner's name. In an instant you can see whether you're on public land, on the property you have permission for, or drifting onto a neighbor's.

- See public versus private land at a glance, in color.
- See exactly where a boundary line runs, out in the field with no fence in sight.
- See a private parcel's owner name, so you know whom to ask for permission.
- Avoid the serious trouble of accidentally hunting or trespassing where you shouldn't.

This matters enormously because land boundaries in the woods are usually invisible — no fence, no sign, just trees. Stepping onto the wrong property, even by accident, can mean a trespassing citation or worse, and losing a landowner's goodwill. Seeing the lines on your phone keeps you honest and safe, and makes it easy to find and

approach the right owner to ask permission.

WATCH OUT

The boundary data is very good but not perfect or legally official — surveys and records can lag reality. Use it as an excellent guide, but when a line is close or the stakes are high, err well to the safe side and, when in doubt, get explicit permission.

OFFLINE MAPS

5 Downloading Offline Maps

The step everything depends on.

This is the most important practical skill with any of these apps, and the one beginners most often skip. The map images need to be downloaded to your phone while you have internet, so they work later where you have none.

1. At home or anywhere with Wi-Fi or good signal, open the app and go to the area you'll be hunting or fishing.
2. Find the 'Download' or 'Offline Maps' option.
3. Select the region around your spot — a bit bigger than you think you'll need.
4. Let it finish downloading before you leave (it can be large; use Wi-Fi).
5. In the field, the map and your GPS location will work with no signal at all.

Think of it like packing a paper map before a trip — you wouldn't expect to buy one deep in the woods. Download a little wider than your planned area in case you wander, do it on Wi-Fi to save your data, and double-check it's finished before you lose signal on the drive out.

TIP

Make downloading the maps part of your pre-trip packing routine, the night before, right alongside charging your phone. The two together — full battery, maps saved — are what make the app reliable when you're actually out there.

Rather not do this yourself? I'll come to your home and set it up for you — a flat $99 first visit across Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities. Outside the area? I also help remotely by phone or screen-share. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042.

WAYPOINTS

6 Marking Spots and Tracking Your Path

Breadcrumbs for the field.

Two features turn the map from a picture into a personal tool: waypoints (pins you drop on important spots) and tracking (a recorded line of where you've walked). Together they mean you never lose your truck, your stand, or your way back out.

Waypoints

- Drop a pin on your parked truck or trailhead the moment you arrive.
- Mark your tree stand, blind, or a productive fishing hole so you can return to it exactly.
- Add notes to a pin — 'good morning spot,' 'deep hole' — and even a photo.
- The app can guide you back to any pin, showing distance and direction.

Tracking

Turn on tracking and the app quietly records a line of your whole route. If dusk falls or fog rolls in and nothing looks familiar, you simply follow your own recorded track back the way you came. It's the modern version of leaving breadcrumbs, and it's saved many a hunter a cold, confused night.

TIP

The very first pin to drop, every single trip, is your truck or the trailhead where you parked. It's the one spot you absolutely must find again, and marking it takes two seconds as you set out.

CONDITIONS

7 Weather, Wind, and Conditions

Planning the smart approach.

Beyond maps, these apps bundle in the weather and wind information that shapes a day outdoors — and for hunters, wind direction in particular can make or break an outing.

- Wind direction and speed, often shown right on the map, so you can approach a stand from downwind.
- The forecast — temperature, rain, pressure — for planning when to go.
- Sunrise, sunset, and legal shooting light times.
- Sometimes solunar or activity forecasts suggesting when game or fish may be most active.

For hunting, the wind tool is the standout: because game animals rely on smell, knowing the wind direction lets you plan your walk in and your stand so your scent blows away from where the animals are. For fishing, the weather and pressure trends help you pick the right day and time. It's the kind of planning that used to take several separate tools, now in one place.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Check the wind forecast the evening before and again in the field — it can shift. The best-laid stand plan assumes a wind direction, and a quick glance at the app as you arrive lets you adjust before you've spoiled your approach.

SAFETY

8 Using It Safely in the Field

A tool, not a lifeline.

These apps make the outdoors safer and more enjoyable, but a phone is a battery-powered electronic device in the cold and wet, so a little caution keeps it from becoming a false sense of security.

- Start fully charged and bring a power bank — cold weather drains batteries fast.
- Keep the phone warm (an inside pocket) to preserve battery in the cold.
- Carry a backup: a paper map and a compass, and know roughly how to use them.
- Use a location-share feature or simply tell someone where you're going and when you'll be back.
- Switch on battery-saver or airplane mode (GPS still works) to stretch the charge.

The golden rule is that the app is a wonderful aid but not your only lifeline. Phones die, break, and get dropped in creeks. Someone should always know your plan and your expected return time, and a simple paper map and compass in your pack cost nothing and never run out of battery.

WATCH OUT

Don't let the app lure you farther or deeper than you'd otherwise go on the assumption it'll always get you back. Plan as if the phone might fail — because occasionally it does — and the app becomes pure upside.

FREE VS PAID

9 Free Versus Paid — What's Worth It

Spending wisely.

Each app has a free tier or a free trial and a paid subscription, and it's worth knowing what your money buys before you commit.

- Free tiers (HuntStand, Fishbrain, trials of onX) are a genuine way to learn the apps and decide if you'll use one enough to pay.
- The paid features that matter most are the detailed property-boundary data and unlimited offline map downloads.
- onX Hunt's Premium covers one state; its Elite tier covers the whole country — worth it only if you hunt across state lines.
- Fishing apps' paid tiers add detailed lake maps, depth data, and ad-free use.

For most people, the honest answer is: start free to learn the app, and pay for the one feature you actually need — almost always the property boundaries (for hunters) or the detailed water maps (for anglers). Don't pay for the nationwide tier if you hunt

one state, and don't stack multiple paid apps when one covers your needs.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Many hunters find onX Hunt's single-state Premium is all they ever need, and anglers do fine with one fishing app's paid tier. Confirm the current prices in the app store, since they shift, and buy only the tier that matches how far afield you really roam.

GETTING STARTED

10 Getting Started

From download to the field.

Putting it all together, here's the simple path from a bare phone to a confident day outdoors with the app in your pocket.

1. Pick one app for your activity — onX Hunt or HuntStand for hunting, onX Fish or Fishbrain for fishing.
2. Install it from the official app store and make an account; start with the free trial or tier.
3. At home on Wi-Fi, go to where you'll be going and download the offline maps.
4. Learn to drop a waypoint and turn on tracking — practice in your own backyard.
5. In the field: mark your truck, check the wind, and let it quietly track your path.

Give yourself one relaxed practice session close to home before you rely on it — drop a pin, walk a bit with tracking on, and find your way back to the pin. Ten minutes in a familiar place builds the confidence to trust it where it counts.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> If you'd like a hand getting set up — installing the app, making sense of the subscription tiers, downloading offline maps for your spot, or practicing the waypoint and tracking features — that's exactly the patient, in-person help I'm glad to give. Bill's Home Tech, (330) 200-8042.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this page handy. It points you straight to what to do for each task.

I want to...	Do this...
Know what they do	Turn your phone into a GPS map showing location, land ownership, and your marks
Pick an app	onX Hunt for hunting land, onX Fish/Fishbrain for water, HuntStand as a free start
See property lines	The headline feature: who owns the land you're standing on, with owner names
Download offline maps	Save your area before you go so the map works with no cell signal
Mark your spots	Drop waypoints for your stand, truck, or a good fishing hole
Track where you've been	Record your path so you can retrace it back out in the dark
Check wind and weather	Use the built-in wind and forecast tools to plan your approach
Stay safe	Carry a backup, share your location, and don't rely only on the phone
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along



Illustration — a schematic. Set-up screens differ; each takes only a few minutes.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

Before You Go

Four steps at home

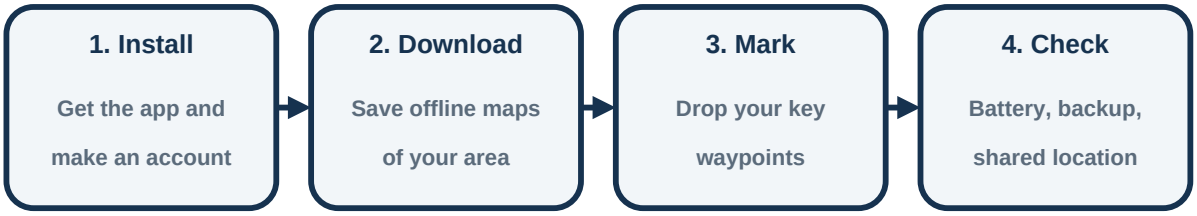


Illustration — a schematic. The order is a suggestion; do one box at a time.

A schematic of the plan — company steps vary; the order does not have to.

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.

HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

You don't have to remember all of it — just that a friendly, patient person is one call away, whenever you'd rather have a hand.

KEY SPECS

In your home — $99 flat for the first visit, no contracts and no surprises, with a 30-day come-back-free follow-up. In-home visits cover Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities.
Outside the area? Remotely — $49 for a screen-share session (free for Support Plan members, $39/mo), refundable if I can't fix it — and credited toward a visit if you'd rather have me in person. Book either at billshometech.com/book.

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full $99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Whenever you're ready, I'll come to your home anywhere in Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities, at your pace. Too far for a house call? I also help remotely. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042. — Bill

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