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Reminder for Fisher Trapping Season
In 2016, following completion of the New York State Fisher Management Plan, regulations were adopted to: (1) reduce the fisher (and marten) trapping season from 46 days to 30 days in select Adirondack Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) in the Northern Zone; (2) establish a 6-day fisher trapping season in select WMUs in Central/Western New York; and (3) require a free special permit for all fisher trapping. For more information on how to obtain a free, special permit for fisher trapping, see page 54.

Pending Regulations
At the time the guide went to press, regulations were pending related to deer feeding. Please check DEC’s website for the latest regulation changes before heading afield this fall. Go to http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/28182.html.

Hunting & Trapping Essay Contest
We asked New York’s hunters and trappers to share stories about their first memorable experience afield or an experience during which they introduced a new person to hunting or trapping. Based on age categories, we selected three essays to appear in this year’s Hunting and Trapping Regulations Guide. Be sure to check them out (pages 21, 46 and 52)!
Message from the Governor

Hunting and Trapping in New York –
A cherished legacy of outdoor adventure continues

Among the many opportunities to enjoy New York’s great outdoors, hunting season remains one of the most cherished times of the year for many residents and visiting non-residents alike. With millions of acres of publicly owned state land and abundant wildlife resources, the possibilities for enjoyable days afield are endless. Every fall some 500,000 hunters and trappers take to the fields and forests of New York to enjoy our great outdoors. Whether motivated to spend time afield with family and friends, the excitement of seeing wildlife in its element, or simply reconnect with nature, it is a special time of year. For many, it is a time to carry on deeply rooted tradition, and for others it is time to begin a special bond with nature aided by a seasoned mentor. A successful outing is not always measured by game in the bag, but by the experience and memories that will last a lifetime. Introducing a new hunter to all that New York has to offer, or reenergizing a friend who no longer gets out as much, is a great way to carry on tradition or begin a new one. New York has endless opportunities with millions of acres of publicly owned state land and abundant wildlife resources.

I’ve made it a priority of my administration to continue to invest in new lands to conserve wildlife and to improve access for outdoor recreation. The new Doodletown Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Columbia County is one example of new lands to be enjoyed by wildlife enthusiasts. In the Adirondacks, the recent classification of the Boreas Pond tract strikes a balance between preserving a pristine landscape and ensuring that people of all abilities can enjoy this stunning landscape for generations to come.

The Young Forest Initiative administered by DEC’s Division of Fish and Wildlife is improving thousands of acres of habitat on WMAs, benefitting many popular game animals as well as other less-common species in need of conservation. The strong commitment of our dedicated network of volunteer hunter education instructors continues to produce safe and ethical practices by our hunters. The 2017 hunting seasons were again among the safest on record for hunting accidents. Still, even one incident is too many. It is every hunter’s responsibility to obey the law and make safe decisions. I urge hunters to always keep safety foremost on your mind as you enjoy time afield. And remember, use of blaze orange or blaze pink will help make you visible to other hunters.

The 2018-19 Hunting and Trapping Guide is an important reference for information about seasons, regulations, and wildlife management initiatives in New York. Within these pages, you will find additional information to stay informed on important issues such as Chronic Wasting Disease, use of non-toxic ammunition, and tree stand and gun safety. DEC staff puts this together each year to ensure that you can be informed, safe, and legal.

I wish you all a safe, successful, and truly rewarding season as you go out to enjoy this great fall tradition or begin a brand new one. Enjoy the magnificent fields, woods, and waters of the great state of New York.

Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor, New York State
Message from the Commissioner

Dedicated, professional staff at DEC are committed to providing sustainable hunting and trapping opportunities for the state’s treasured game species so that they may be enjoyed by all New Yorkers now and in the future. You can play your part by being sure to follow hunting laws and regulations, engaging in ethical hunting and trapping practices, and by capping off a successful hunt by reporting your deer, bear, or turkey, and having your otter, fisher, marten, and bobcat pelt-sealed.

New York has some of the best deer hunting in the country and it is important that hunters do everything they can to protect this important resource. Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a serious threat to our deer, and it is knocking on our door. Hunters can take an active role in preventing the introduction of this always-fatal disease to the deer herd:

- Dispose of carcasses in a landfill to prevent environmental contamination.
- If you use a urine-based lure, use a synthetic.
- Don’t feed wild deer.
- Report sick deer or deer behaving abnormally.
- If you hunt outside of New York, know the rules when importing hunted deer, elk or moose, and don’t ship or import a whole carcass or an intact trophy head.
- Encourage other hunters to follow these guidelines. Contact DEC if you observe a violation.

DEC also reminds hunters that ticks are active whenever temperatures are above freezing. Deer ticks can transmit Lyme and several other diseases. It is best to use an insect repellent and do a full body check at the end of the day. More information on deer ticks and Lyme disease can be obtained from the NYS Department of Health.

Hunting in New York is a safe activity, and it is getting safer year after year thanks to the efforts of over 2,500 volunteer hunter education instructors. The best advocates for hunting are hunters themselves, so be sure to use safe and ethical hunting practices while afield to ensure that the tradition of hunting continues to be a vibrant part of New York’s culture.

Whether watching a pointing dog work its way through a tangled covert in search of grouse or watching a doe and fawn slip past your tree stand as the sun rises, the hunting season is about creating and sharing memories you will have for a lifetime. I am proud of the work we do at DEC to preserve the state’s natural heritage so hunters and others can enjoy these benefits for generations to come.

Good luck this fall and be safe.

Basil Seggos
Commissioner
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Dear Hunter, Trapper and Conservationist

It is a great time to hunt or trap in New York State! New Yorkers enjoy seasons for the suite of game species that run from September through March. There are hundreds of thousands of acres of public land open to hunting and trapping across the state, including more than 80 Wildlife Management Areas where habitat and access improvement projects are planned or underway. Purchase of a voluntary Habitat and Access Stamp is a great way to contribute directly to access and habitat improvements.

Game Harvest Reporting

Hunters are required to report the harvest of deer, bear and turkey within 7 days of take. You may report your harvest using one of these methods:

- Online: www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/8316.html
- Game Harvest Mobile App (see below for details).

DID YOU KNOW? You may be fined up to $250 for failing to report your deer, bear or turkey take.

Take it • Tag it • Report it
Harvest reporting is the LAW and necessary for wildlife management!

Report Your Game Harvest via Mobile App!

DEC’s mobile app, NY Fishing, Hunting & Wildlife by Pocket Ranger, has added a new e-license and game harvest reporting tool. Hunters now have a quick, user-friendly way to:

- gain instant, mobile access to an electronic version of sporting licenses and privileges;
- report the harvest of deer, bear and turkey on a smartphone immediately while afield, even when out of cellular range;
- view current and past harvest reports.

The NY Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife App can be downloaded from the Apple App store or Google Play store. To access the game harvest reporting feature, simply click on the e-License/Report Harvest icon within the app.

NOTE: You will need a DEC Automated Licensing System (DECALS) user name and password in order to access your license documents through the app. If you have not yet created an online user name and password, visit the DECALS website today. Questions? – Call our sporting license hotline at 866-472-4332.

Report Your Game Harvest

DEC now offers three ways to report:

- Online through the DEC website http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/8316.html
- By phone 866-426-3778
- Immediately while afield using our NEW mobile app (see info at left).

It’s not just the law, it’s good wildlife management!

Remember to Report Your Harvest!

1-866-426-3778
www.dec.ny.gov
Tree Stand Falls are Becoming a Major Cause of Hunting Injuries

These hunting-related injuries and fatalities are easily preventable

Each year many hunters are seriously injured falling from tree stands. This has become a major source of hunting-related injuries and fatalities in New York. DEC began investigating tree stand incidents in 2017. Of the 12 investigated, 50% were fatal. All 12 incidents involved a hunter who was not wearing a harness or the harness was not attached to the stand, or the tree at the time of their fall. The proper use of tree stands and full-body harnesses will help to prevent these injuries and fatalities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL INCIDENTS</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fatal – no full-body harness</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatal – with unattached harness</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatal – with attached harness</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-fatal – no full body harness</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-fatal – with unattached harness</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-fatal – with attached harness</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF STAND INVOLVED (fatal)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Climbing tree stand *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hang-on tree stand **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladder stand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tower/tri-pod stand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homemade tree stand ***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hunters need to become more vigilant in their use of tree stands and not take a “this won’t happen to me” approach to their safety. Every one of the 12 incidents in 2017 could have been prevented if hunters simply practiced the following:

- Read the manufacturer’s instructions and warnings before you use your tree stand and check your stands (including straps and chains) every season. Replace any worn or missing parts.
- Use a full-body harness with a lifeline and stay connected from the time you leave the ground to the time you get back down.
- Use a “lifeline” or safety rope that is secured at the base of the tree or stand and to the tree just above your head when sitting in the stand. Attach the tether from your full-body harness to the lifeline using a carabiner and prusik knot, which easily slides up and down the lifeline, keeping you connected at all times.
- Be aware of suspension trauma. Be sure the harness has a foot strap to relieve harness leg pressure.
- Once you are safely in your stand and your tether is attached to the tree, raise your equipment into your stand. Always use a haul line, such as a strong rope, to raise and lower your unloaded gun or cocked crossbow or bow with quiver up the stand. Do not tie the haul line around the trigger or trigger guard on a firearm. Raise a firearm with the muzzle pointing down.
- Let a reliable person know where you will be hunting and when you will return. A map showing your stand location makes it easier for others to find you if you do not return on time.
- Carry emergency equipment, such as a knife, cell phone, flashlight and whistle in your pockets at all times (not in your pack hanging in the tree).

For more information, including the 2017 Hunting Safety Statistics and the 2017 Tree Stand Safety Statistics, visit the DEC Hunter Education Program page www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7860.html
Crossbow Use

Crossbow opportunities include portions of bow seasons in addition to muzzleloader and regular seasons:

- Crossbows may be used to take deer or bear during muzzleloader seasons and a portion of the early bow seasons (see maps on pages 24 and 39) by hunters with a valid hunting or junior hunting (ages 14-15 only) license and a current muzzleloader privilege.
- Crossbows may be used to take deer during the regular season and bear during early bear and regular seasons by hunters with a valid hunting or junior hunting (ages 14-15 only) license.
- See page 23 for the required Crossbow Certificate of Qualification.

Barbed Broadheads

Barbed broadheads are illegal for hunting big game. A barbed broadhead is one in which the angle formed between the trailing or rear edge of any blade and the shaft is less than 90 degrees. A notch at the base of the blade extending no more than two millimeters from the shaft shall not be considered a barb. Broadheads with mechanical blades are legal if the blades DO NOT form a barb or hook when the arrow is pulled from the flesh of a deer or bear. (See graphic on page 20.)

Junior Youth Hunter Essay Winner

Youth Essay Winner

By Kayla Atherton, Grade 8

“You got it. I believe in you and your shot.”

With a sharp intake of breath, I steadied the rifle in my hand, and pinpointed the deer right behind its shoulder…wait, wait, wait. Hold-up a minute. Let’s back-up to about 4 hours earlier when I was just about to head out with my grandfather to our hunting blind for my first youth deer hunt experience.

It was beautiful outside for an autumn day, not too chilly, but just right for an October deer hunt. As I admired my surroundings, my grandpa handed me a bag filled with snacks of his choice, which included apples, peanut butter M&Ms, and a solid pound of Kit-Kats and Hershey bars. I felt like I hit the jackpot and it wasn’t even Halloween yet!

We slowly made our way through the dried golden rod to the hunting blind that was just above a small valley. We settled ourselves in for the late afternoon and my grandpa said, “We better break out the candy. It’s gonna be awhile.”

We waited patiently for the next 3 ½ hours with only a couple of does below us. Finally, a buck revealed himself from the trees! I couldn’t have been more excited in my life!

“Get ready now, Kayla,” my grandpa whispered, also quite excited. “Now aim slightly behind the shoulder,” he repeated.

“I don’t know if I can make that shot,” I replied, with a bit of worry in my voice.

“You got it. I believe in you and your shot,” my grandpa encouraged.

Before I knew it, I took a deep breath, aimed, and pulled the trigger - BANG! The gun shuddered in my hands. We scurried across the valley, not knowing if I made the shot, then I literally stumbled onto the deer. The shot was slightly high, but right behind the buck’s shoulder. I jumped for joy and hugged my grandpa. The six-point buck was my first. My grandpa’s eyes shone with pride. I know this hunt was one I would always remember thanks to my grandpa and his confidence in me.
Chronic Wasting Disease: What You Need To Know

CWD is a serious threat to New York’s wild deer and moose and captive deer, elk, and reindeer.

What is CWD?
A contagious, fatal disease of cervids (deer, elk, moose, and reindeer/caribou) that is caused by an abnormal protein called a prion. It causes holes to form in the brain. Animals become diseased from direct contact with live infected animals, animal parts, or contaminated soil and plants. Animals shed prions in urine, feces, and saliva before they die. An infected deer can look healthy for months to years before dying.

Where is CWD?
The disease has been found in 25 states and three Canadian provinces. New York discovered CWD in Oneida County in 2005 in captive and wild deer, but no new cases have been found in the state since then despite intensive surveillance.

Why is CWD a Problem?
There is no cure, vaccine, or genetic resistance to CWD. Prions can last in the environment for decades. Once CWD is established in an area, eliminating the disease is virtually impossible. Although there are no known human cases, the Centers for Disease Control recommends no one consume a CWD-positive animal.

How Can I Help?
Don’t let CWD into the state again! Know your regulations http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/8325.html.

Here Are Some Things You Can Do:

Debone your harvest if you hunt outside of New York
Meat, hide and cape, antlers, cleaned skull cap with antlers attached, finished taxidermy mounts, tanned hides, and cleaned upper canine teeth are permitted. Improperly imported whole carcasses will be ticketed and the entire animal will be confiscated and destroyed. If you have a CWD-positive harvest from another state, please contact your DEC Regional Wildlife Office. DEC can assist with safe disposal of the animal and recommend disinfection methods.

Take precautions when handling deer
Wear rubber or latex gloves when field dressing or processing. Remove internal organs with knives or utensils dedicated for hunting. If you use lead ammunition, bury or landfill the organs to ensure scavengers, like bald eagles, do not accidentally ingest lead fragments. Trim generously around the wound channel and bag remaining carcass waste for the landfill.

Do not feed wild deer
Feeding is illegal year-round. Concentrating deer around food sources can spread diseases like CWD.

Report sick and abnormal deer to DEC
DEC would like to examine any deer that are very thin, drooling, standing with legs splayed and head lowered, listless, circling, or are easily approached. Contact the DEC Regional Wildlife Office near you (see page 6) or visit http://www.dec.ny.gov/about/558.html.

Avoid natural deer urine products
Commercially produced urine products are not tested for prions. Choose synthetic alternatives. You don’t want to contaminate your favorite hunting spot!

DEC is proposing to prohibit importation of whole cervid carcasses from all areas outside of NY. Before the 2018 big game hunting season, check DEC regulations online (www.dec.ny.gov) for an up-to-date listing of new CWD rules.
Crossbow Hunting Qualifications and Safety Information

Crossbows may be used by any person age 14 or older to hunt deer, bear, unprotected wildlife and most small game species except waterfowl and other migratory game birds. Crossbows may not be used to take carp or any other fish.

Hunters who plan to hunt with a crossbow must have in their possession while afield either their completed Hunter Education Certificate of Qualification card dated on or after April 1, 2014 OR the completed Crossbow Certificate of Qualification located below.

Crossbow safety information

• Before shooting your crossbow, read and thoroughly understand your crossbow owner’s manual.
• Make sure your fingers are well AWAY (below rail) from the path of the bow string and cables.
• Never dry-fire a crossbow (cock and fire without an arrow placed on the rail).
• Make sure the crossbow limbs are free of obstructions before shooting.
• Never carry a cocked crossbow with an arrow in it while walking.
• If hunting from a tree stand, always cock (but do not load) the crossbow on the ground before climbing into the stand.
• Once seated and secured in the tree stand, pull up your unloaded crossbow with a haul line.
• Do not place an arrow on the crossbow until you are safely secured in your stand.
• Never use a cocking device to uncock a crossbow.
• To uncock a crossbow, shoot an arrow tipped with a field point into the soft ground or a target.
• Always identify your target and the area beyond it before shooting.
• To prevent wounding game, practice often and do not take shots at game that are beyond your effective range, generally less than 30–40 yards, similar to a modern compound bow.
• To better understand how an arrow functions and the skill required for hunting with an arrow, DEC recommends all crossbow hunters take a bowhunter education course.

Practice safely, practice often, and learn the capabilities and limitations of the crossbow and the arrow it shoots.

Suggested references to review
NYSDEC Crossbow Hunting Qualifications:
www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/98061.html

Print Name

Signature

DEC ID# (this is your back-tag number) Date

Fill in, cut out, and carry afield with your hunting license while hunting with a crossbow.
Throughout New York, hunters are banding together to create deer management cooperatives, or co-ops. A co-op is a group of hunters who work together to accomplish goals over a collective acreage of land.

Reducing harvest of yearling (1.5-year-old) bucks is often a goal for co-ops. Bucks that are 2.5-years-old or older provide substantially more meat and larger antlers, and tend to create more rubs, scrapes, and vocalizations during the rut than their yearling counterparts. When groups of hunters choose not to harvest yearling bucks, they can substantially reduce the amount of effort needed to observe and take older bucks.

For a co-op in Yates County, NY, hunters agreed to try to harvest only bucks that have an outside spread of 14 inches or greater, which excluded the great majority of yearling bucks while leaving available the great majority of older bucks. As a result of their self-imposed restriction, the rate at which the hunters saw older bucks nearly doubled within five years, and the hunting effort needed to see an older buck has declined substantially, even more so in 2017 (Figure 1). With such positive results, co-op organizer John Hammer said, “Our co-op continues to grow each year as non-member property owners join after seeing more and larger bucks on their properties as the result of their neighbors letting young bucks go.”

It is not necessary to prohibit harvest of all yearling bucks to achieve similar results. In fact, about 19% of the adult bucks harvested by the Yates County Co-op members were yearlings (Figure 2). Many co-ops allow youth, first-time, and senior hunters to harvest any buck they choose. Co-ops also have the flexibility to change buck harvest criteria based on member input. “Some members have pushed to raise our minimum width requirement over the years, possibly to 16”, while other members have resisted,” John said. “So we haven’t changed it. Instead, we’ve given our members the freedom to adopt additional harvest standards.
The 10 Commandments of Firearm Safety

1. Watch that muzzle! Keep it pointed in a safe direction at all times.

2. Treat every firearm with the respect due a loaded gun. It might be loaded, even if you think it isn’t.

3. Be sure of your target and what is in front of it and beyond it. Know the identifying features of the game you hunt. Make sure you have an adequate backstop—don’t shoot at a flat, hard surface or water.

4. Keep your finger outside the trigger guard until ready to shoot. This is the best way to prevent an accidental discharge.

5. Check your barrel and ammunition. Make sure the barrel and action are clear of obstructions, and carry only the proper ammunition for your firearm.

6. Unload firearms when not in use. Leave actions open, and carry firearms in cases and unloaded to and from the shooting area.

7. Point a firearm only at something you intend to shoot. Avoid all horseplay with a gun.

8. Don’t run, jump, or climb with a loaded firearm. Unload a firearm before you climb a fence or tree, or jump a ditch. Pull a firearm toward you by the butt, not the muzzle.

9. Store firearms and ammunition separately and safely. Store each in a secured location beyond the reach of children and careless adults.

10. Do not consume alcoholic beverages before or during shooting. Also avoid mind- or behavior-altering medicines or drugs.

above the co-op minimum for their individual properties, and this has left everyone satisfied.”

Many co-ops also seek to improve habitat conditions for deer and other wildlife. Co-ops can enhance natural forage and cover for deer by creating young forest, fostering open areas with native forbs and shrubs, and pruning or planting native fruit and nut trees. Too, many co-ops participate in DEC’s Deer Management Assistance Program to meet their antlerless harvest goals, bringing the co-op’s deer population into better balance with the habitat.

This upcoming season, consider knocking on some doors or making a few phone calls to hunters on neighboring properties. You may just find out that they are seeking the same opportunity to let young bucks go and watch them grow!

Note: DEC thanks the Yates County Deer Management Cooperative for sharing data and their experience working together to manage white-tailed deer.

Figure 2. Percentage of adult buck harvest by age class for a Yates County Deer Management Cooperative and surrounding Wildlife Management Units (8N, 8R) from 2015 to 2017.

Photos courtesy Charles Alsheimer
Is It Time to Try a Better Bullet?

The damaging effects of lead exposure to humans and wildlife are well known. Lead fragments left behind when you harvest your trophy game animal can remain in the meat and within a gut pile exposing you and scavenging wildlife to lead consumption. While there have been no reports directly linking consumption of wild game taken in New York to sickness in humans, health officials advise there is no safe dose, particularly in young children. Many wildlife species are especially sensitive to lead poisoning, becoming debilitated even with small doses.

Today’s alternative monolithic bullets, typically made of copper, perform exceptionally well at taking game, and as availability increases, can be had at a cost similar to premium ammunition. Now is a good time to ensure your wild game meat is of the highest quality, and what is left behind doesn’t continue to kill long after the shot is over. It’s a good time to try a better bullet.

**Non-Lead Ammunition for...**
- Good Hunting
- Improved Conservation
- High-Quality Meat
- Safer Consumption

**Fragmentation vs. Mushrooming**

Comparison of two .270-caliber bullets shot into a modified rain barrel for collection to simulate performance on game. The copper jacket lead-core bullet (left) is heavily fragmented compared to the solid copper bullet (right) that retained its original shape upon impact.

**Shotgun slugs made of copper fold into “petals,” expanding the slug’s surface area better than slugs made of lead.**

**CT-scan showing lead fragments (appearing white) in 20 one-pound packages of ground venison.**

**Radiograph of a deer’s chest illustrating fragmentation of a lead ballistic tip rifle bullet.**

**What’s lurking in your firewood?**

*Firewood Warning*

Your firewood may be hiding invasive pests that are killing our trees and forever changing the forests we love. Protect our trees. Buy Local, Burn Local.

- It is illegal to bring untreated firewood into New York State.
- It is illegal to transport untreated firewood more than 50 miles from its source or origin.
- When transporting firewood, you must carry proof of source (receipt from a vendor), origin (self-issued certificate from DEC website), or treatment (label showing treatment method).

Failure to follow these regulations may result in a ticket. For questions or to report any invasives you find, call toll-free 1-866-640-0652

State and federal quarantine exist that further restrict the movement of firewood. For more information please visit www.dec.ny.gov and search for “invasive insects.”

*Treated firewood has been heated to 160°F for 75 minutes to eliminate pests living inside the wood. Treated firewood can be moved without restriction.*
Small game includes upland and migratory game birds, small game mammals, certain fur-bearers, and reptiles and amphibians.

Please read general hunting regulations first. See page 14.

**General Regulations**

- You may not use a rifle or handgun to hunt pheasant or migratory game birds. See page 44 for more information on turkeys.
- See pages 47–50 for additional information on migratory game birds.
- Air guns (see page 14) may be used to hunt squirrels, rabbits, hares, ruffed grouse, and fur-bearers that may be hunted (e.g., raccoons and coyotes) and unprotected species (see page 15). Air guns may not be used to hunt waterfowl, pheasant, wild turkey, or big game.
- Crossbows may not be used to take waterfowl or other migratory game birds. Crossbows may not be possessed afield in the Northern Zone when hunting small game (except coyotes) with the aid of a dog or when accompanied by a dog. Crossbows may be used to take any other small game or upland game birds during their respective open seasons except in Westchester and Suffolk counties.
- In Wildlife Management Unit 2A, hunting is permitted by falconry only.

**Reptiles and Amphibians**

**Frogs**—“Frogs” are defined as eastern spade-foot toad, eastern American toad, Fowler’s toad, northern cricket frog, northern gray treefrog, northern spring peeper, western chorus frog, bullfrog, green frog, mink frog, wood frog, northern leopard frog, southern leopard frog, and pickerel frog.

A fishing or hunting license is required to take frogs with a spear, club, hook, or by hand. A hunting license is required to take frogs with a gun, bow or crossbow.

**Snakes, Lizards, and Salamanders**—You may not harvest, take, or possess any native snakes, lizards, or salamanders at any time.

**Turtles**—The only turtle species for which there is an open hunting season is the snapping turtle. You may not harvest, take, or possess any other turtle species at any time.

The final diamondback terrapin season was April 1, 2017 through April 30, 2018, with licenses expiring June 4, 2018. You may no longer take or possess diamondback terrapins.

**Snapping turtles**—A hunting license is required to take snapping turtles. The only legal implementation for taking snapping turtles is a gun, bow or crossbow.

**Falconry Seasons**

To hunt small game species with trained raptors, you must possess a Falconry License and a hunting license. Licensed falconers may take small game from October 1 through March 31 in any area of the state open to hunting these species EXCEPT:

- Waterfowl may be taken only during the regular firearm hunting season or during a specific period outside of the firearms seasons as specified by DEC.
- Common crow may only be taken during the open firearms season.
- A licensed falconer may take both male and female pheasants anywhere in the state when hunting under a Falconry License.

For more information on falconry, contact the DEC Special Licenses Unit, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4752 or call 518-402-8985.

If you choose to eat snapping turtles, you should carefully trim all fat and discard fat, liver and eggs prior to cooking to reduce exposure to contaminants. For information on these health advisories, call 1-800-458-1158 or visit the website http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/outdoors/fish/health_advisories/.

**Spruce Grouse vs. Ruffed Grouse**

Male spruce grouse are very distinctive (mostly black with white markings and a red comb over each eye), but female spruce grouse are similar in color to ruffed grouse. By knowing the differences, hunters can avoid accidentally shooting spruce grouse. Loss of a female spruce grouse could be a significant setback for a small local population.

In New York State, the spruce grouse is an endangered species and not legal to hunt. Spruce grouse exist in lowland conifer forests in the Adirondacks. Although ruffed grouse occur in upland hardwoods statewide, during the fall and winter ruffed grouse may be found in spruce grouse habitat. Small game hunters in the Adirondack region must learn to distinguish between these species so that spruce grouse are not shot by mistake.
My Turkey Hunting Mentor
By Cody Blatner, Grade 9

I was fifteen years old and had hunted several youth spring turkey hunts without success. However, I learned a lot with my dad as my mentor. I learned when to call and when to be silent and have patience. I also learned how to sit still even as mosquitoes tried desperately to eat through my head net and gloves.

My dad and I were able to roost several gobblers the night before on some nearby state land. The next morning, we arrived back on the state land at around 3:45 a.m. It was cold and crisp with just enough moonlight to navigate.

I gave a few owl hoots and a turkey immediately gobbled straight ahead on a distant ridge. After several minutes, I gave several more hoots and another turkey gobbled to my left on another smaller ridge. I wanted to continue to call but worried about attracting predators, other hunters, or hens.

I set up my hen decoy and selected a large tree for us to rest against. As I waited for it to get light, I listened to the woods come alive around me. I could smell damp earth and wild leeks. A pileated woodpecker pounded on a nearby tree, and as I heard the caw of a distant crow, I knew it was finally time to call.

My dad gave a series of soft tree yelps and the turkey triple gobbled. I heard the wing beats and breaking branches as the turkey pitched down toward my location. I raised my gun into position while my dad gave a few soft clucks on his favorite mouth call. The turkey gobbled again and the ground seemed to shake. I heard the leaves crunching as the toms suddenly approached in full strut. The sun was shining on its tail feathers and its head was fire engine red and blue.

As the turkey faced me with its head tightly tucked in, my heart was pounding. My dad gave a series of yelps and the turkey broke strut with its head extended like a periscope. My red dot was on the base of his head and I fired. The turkey folded backwards from a load of copper-plated shot from my twenty gauge. After tagging my prize, I was finally able to wrap my hands around the legs of my first spring gobbler. I did a partial mount with my dad’s help and my mom prepared a great turkey dinner! I will always have memories of that special day.
Waterfowl Hunting Zone Descriptions

Western Zone – That area west of a continuous line extending from Lake Ontario east along the north shore of the Salmon River to Interstate Route 81 and then south along Interstate Route 81 to the New York-Pennsylvania boundary.

Northeastern Zone – That area north of a continuous line extending from Lake Ontario east along the north shore of the Salmon River to Interstate Route 81, south along Interstate Route 81 to Route 31, east along Route 31 to Route 13, north along Route 13 to Route 49, east along Route 49 to Route 365, east along Route 365 to Route 31 to Route 13, north along Route 13 to Route 49, east along Route 49 to Route 365, east along Route 365 to Route 28, east along Route 28 to Route 29, north along Route 29 to Route 9B, south along Route 9B to Route 9, south along Route 9 to Route 22 south of Keesville, south along Route 22 to the west shore of South Bay along and around the shoreline of South Bay to Route 22 on the east shore of South Bay, southeast along Route 22 to Route 4, northeast along Route 4 to the New York-Vermont boundary.

Southeastern Zone – That area east of Interstate Route 81 that is south of a continuous line extending from Interstate Route 81 east along Route 31 to Route 13, north along Route 13 to Route 49, east along Route 49 to Route 365, east along Route 365 to Route 28, east along Route 28 to Route 29, east along Route 29 to Route 9B, south along Route 9B to Route 9, south along Route 9 to Route 22 south of Keesville, south along Route 22 to the west shore of South Bay along and around the shoreline of South Bay to Route 22 on the east shore of South Bay, southeast along Route 22 to Route 4, northeast along Route 4 to the New York-Vermont boundary.

Lake Champlain Zone – That area east and north of a continuous line extending along Route 11 from the New York-Canada boundary south to Route 9B, south along Route 9B to Route 9, south along Route 9 to Route 22 south of Keesville, south along Route 22 to the west shore of South Bay along and around the shoreline of South Bay to Route 22 on the east shore of South Bay, southeast along Route 22 to Route 4, northeast along Route 4 to the New York-Vermont boundary.

But through the arc of the fall she kept the muzzle pointed up and away in a safe direction. She came up a little dump in the backside and a bit discombobulated, but smiling from ear to ear, and with the safety back on. Once righted, she placed her bottom squarely on the bucket with eyes glued to the water as our friend’s lab, Bayley, retrieved the bird.

I don’t know if I was prouder of Madelyn’s shot, or her keeping her wits about her and controlling her firearm during her fall. It was a perfect morning of good laughs about the bucket tumble.

When we got home, she cleaned the bird, saved some feathers for posterity, and then helped make one of our favorite recipes for dinner, Duck Delights. These pastries of shredded duck with onion, garlic, and cream cheese melt in your mouth.

Our morning was one of the most fulfilling days I’ve ever had afield, or as a parent. I’ve not asked, but I’m hoping Madelyn is looking forward to someday being a mother – and taking a daughter or son into the wild outdoors. And just maybe, an aged grandfather will be lucky enough to tag along.

Duck Delights Recipe

**Ingredients:**
- 2 boneless, skinless duck breasts (roughly 12 oz., can use leg meat, or substitute w/goose breast)
- 1/2 teaspoon of dried thyme
- 1/4 teaspoon of dried rosemary
- 1 tablespoon of olive oil
- “Sprinkling” of onion and garlic powder

**Directions:**

Cut fowl into bite-size pieces, combine with the above ingredients, and sauté over medium/low heat. Do not overcook. When cool, shred meat with a fork or your fingers.

In a large mixing bowl combine: 8 oz. of softened cream cheese, 1 can cream of mushroom soup (10 oz.), 1/4 cup finely chopped carrots, 2 tablespoons of half-half, 2 minced garlic cloves, 1 small onion finely chopped, salt and pepper to taste. Add meat and mix well, so that all ingredients are evenly distributed.

Use 2 tubes of refrigerated crescent rolls (8 oz. each). Separate crescent rolls and lay flat. Place a dollop (about an ice cream scoop) onto roll. Fold over and pinch rolls together making a “pocket/hand pie” and seal. Place rolls on a baking sheet.

Brush rolls with melted butter and cover with bread crumbs or crushed crackers to taste. Pre-heat oven and bake at 350 degrees until golden brown, about 20-25 minutes.
Tracking River Otters

River otters have historically been found throughout New York. In the early 1900s, populations began to decline due to unregulated harvest, habitat destruction, and water pollution. In 1936, otters became legally protected and the trapping season was closed. Conservation Department (DEC’s predecessor) staff assessed the abundance and distribution of otters, and after almost a decade, a stricter trapping season was reopened. While otter populations stabilized in the eastern half of New York, western regions appeared devoid of substantial otter populations.

During the late 1990s, in an attempt to restore historical populations, 279 otters were captured in the Catskill, Adirondack, and Hudson Valley areas and released at 16 sites across central and western New York. Observations from DEC staff, hunters, trappers, and other outdoor enthusiasts indicate that restoration attempts were successful.

To verify these observations, DEC partnered with SUNY ESF to assess the current status of otters and to develop a harvest-independent technique to monitor changes in otter populations. During the 2017 and 2018 winter field seasons staff searched for otter sign (tracks, scat, etc.) along designated transects at bridge crossings. In the 2017 season alone, staff surveyed 962 sites and about 239 miles of shoreline across the state!

This survey, along with data provided by trappers and wildlife watchers, will inform the development of a management plan for otters in New York. Highly valued by trappers as a furbearing species and a favorite amongst wildlife watchers, otters must be carefully managed to ensure sustainable populations for future generations. If you see an otter, we want to hear about it! Please report your sighting on DEC’s Furbearer Sighting Survey page at http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/30770.html.

Report Your Furbearer Sightings!

DEC wants to learn more about the occurrence of various furbearers throughout New York such as bobcat, otter, fisher, and weasel. Your observations help biologists understand the distribution and abundance of these elusive or inconspicuous mammals.

You can report your observations online, and can even include photos!

Go to www.dec.ny.gov/animals/30770.html or e-mail us at wildlife@dec.ny.gov

Thanks for your help!
Q: I’m using an “app” that shows land owned by NY State – can I hunt on that land?
A: State lands are owned by DOT, SUNY, DEC, NY Parks, and others. It is your responsibility to check the rules for each property, as even some DEC lands are off limits to hunting.

Q: What documentation must I carry when hunting?
A: You must carry your hunting license, plus deer/bear/turkey carcass tags and/or a “duck” stamp with HIP, plus a back tag (where required). “Hunting license” means the printed license listing privileges or a lifetime license card or NY driver license “Adventure” hunting icon. Special hunts or hunt areas may require additional paperwork.

Q: Why can NY stores sell deer food and salt blocks when it is illegal to use them for hunting?
A: The law does not prohibit sale, it prohibits the use of deer food and salt blocks as bait to aid in hunting certain species. If the material is placed where the animal may ingest it, it is likely to be considered baiting. Ask your local ECO (page 64 & 65).

Q: Are deer urine scents legal in NY?
A: As of April 2018, yes. DEC recommends against urine use due to CWD concerns. As they are not meant to be ingested, these scents are not considered bait.

Q: What about food plots, aren’t they baiting?
A: The law exempts food plots as “areas established by standard agricultural production practices”, and would be considered lawful.

Q: Can I use a carcass tag from a friend or family member on a deer, bear or turkey that I shot?
A: No - it is unlawful to possess or use tags of another, except properly consigned deer management permits (DMPs or landowner DMAs). DMP instructions can be found in this guide.

Q: Can I hunt small game with a rifle in counties where deer hunting with a rifle is prohibited?
A: Yes, but if any deer season is open, you cannot use a center fire rifle of .22 caliber or larger. You may not possess rifles afield on Long Island or Westchester Co.

Q: If the trapping season is open, does that mean I can hunt for that species?
A: It depends on the season and species. Some fur-bearing can only be trapped, while some can also be hunted, and some both, but with different seasons.

Q: I found a live wild animal in a trap, what can I do?
A: Unless you own the trap, have permission (and are licensed to trap), it is illegal to release, dispatch or steal a trapped furbearer or tamper with legally set traps.

Q: After reporting my deer, transporting and cutting it up, what do I do with the carcass tag?
A: The tag stays with the carcass and is not needed after the deer is prepared for consumption. Your actions reflect on all sportsmen, so properly dispose of the entrails, carcass and hide.

Q: How can I transport a crossbow in a vehicle?
A: A crossbow must be decocked to be legally possessed in or on a motor vehicle. Simply removing the bolt does not meet the requirement. When using artificial lights on lands inhabited by deer, a crossbow must be taken down, securely fastened in a case or locked in the trunk.

Q: Who is required to wear “Hunter Orange” while hunting?
A: Junior hunters and their mentors are required to wear at least 250 inches of solid/patterned fluorescent orange/pink while hunting deer or bear. There are no requirements for other hunting activities. Orange/pink makes it easier for others to see you in thick brush or at longer ranges.

Q: I wounded a deer and heard there are trained dogs that can help me find it. How do I contact a handler?
A: DEC-licensed leashed tracking dog handlers may help you find the deer. They are volunteers and do not charge for their service. Visit www.deersearch.org for more information or call the ECO Dispatch Center.

Q: How do I report poaching or other suspected violations of fish & wildlife laws?
A: Call the “Report Poachers and Polluters” Hotline as soon as possible at 1-844-DEC-ECOS (1-844-332-3267). You may file a complaint anonymously or keep your name confidential.

Q: What basic steps should I follow when an ECO approaches me while I am afield hunting?
A: Most importantly, keep firearms pointed in a safe direction with the safety “ON”. Do not try to unload them, which can lead to accidents.

Q: Without permission, how far must I be from a house to discharge an implement?
A: You must be a minimum of 150 feet to discharge a bow, 250 feet for crossbow and 500 feet for firearms including muzzleloaders. Local laws or ordinances on firearm discharges may also apply.

Q: May I hunt small game with an air gun?
A: You may use an air gun to hunt any species that may legally be taken with a .22 caliber rim fire rifle, provided the air gun is no smaller than 17 caliber with a muzzle velocity of at least 600 f.p.s.

Q: May I take a child younger than 12 with me while hunting? What about a spouse?
A: Yes, a person of any age may accompany a hunter afield to observe as long as they do not assist in the taking of wildlife, such as calling animals or actively participating in a deer drive. If unsure, consult an ECO.

Q: I own a camp and property in New York, can I purchase a resident hunting license?
A: Residency is a fixed, permanent and principal home to which a person always intends to return. Simply owning land or paying taxes does not make one eligible for resident license fees. More information on residency is found in the front of this guide.

Q: Can our hunting party “share” Deer Management Permits (DMPs) on a deer drive?
A: Only the person possessing a properly consigned DMP tag may take an antlerless deer, regardless of how many have the tag consigned to them. See the DMP consignment rules for more info.

Q: Can I target shoot on DEC lands?
A: Many DEC state lands, including State Forests and Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) have specific rules — call ahead. You may not damage live trees and must remove all litter.

Q: Can a felon hunt with a muzzleloader or crossbow?
A: There are a few exceptions that may permit this. Contact your local ECO, as it greatly depends on details specific to each individual.

Q: Can I carry a handgun while bowhunting deer/bear during the special bowhunting seasons?
A: No, you may not possess a firearm of any type while bowhunting during those seasons. Possession of a handgun in NY requires a NY Pistol Permit. NY does not recognize any permits from other states.

Q: Can I shoot a deer at first light on opening day of deer season?
A: No. For deer and bear hunting, legal shooting is between the minute of local sunrise to the minute of local sunset, NOT just when it’s light enough. Sunrise/set charts are available in this guide.

Q: May I transport an entire deer carcass into NY from another state?
A: Chronic Wasting Disease regulations ban importation of whole carcasses and certain parts, depending on the originating state. See the CWD pages of this guidebook.
ECO Mark Klein investigated a suspect whose hunting privileges are revoked in 47 states as part of the International Wildlife Violator Compact. Convicted of shooting these bucks illegally, the man faces additional fines and revocations.

ECO George Wilbur responded to a call about an injured American kestrel fledgling that had fallen from its nesting place. He captured and transported it to a DEC-licensed rehabilitator and later released the bird during an educational event.

ECO Kevin Holzle was on patrol opening day of Southern Zone regular season when he encountered this hunter with a buck of a lifetime. Knowing your local ECO and reporting violations is one way you can help bucks grow to this size.

ECOs George Wilber and Nate Doig after a busy opening day gun season. These deer were seized for violations ranging from shooting 30 minutes early, shooting from a road, hunting with aid of bait, and failure to meet antler restrictions.

Lt. Ric Warner assisted DEC Wildlife staff performing bear den surveys. The sow (mother) was tranquilized, blood samples and other biological testing performed, tags or tattoos applied and the family was tucked back in their den.

Lt. Ric Warner with one of two alligators captured by DEC on the Tioghnioga River. Releasing non-native species to the wild threatens native species and pose threats to the public. The “gators” now reside at a licensed educational facility.