



# Opinions of Youth Hunters and Mentors for the Timing of a Youth Firearms Deer Hunt in New York State



January 2012

## Survey Method:

- 2,500 resident, licensed youth hunters in New York (ages 12-15) were randomly selected from the DECALS database.
- A mail survey (Appendix 2) was distributed November 10, 2011 and responses were collected until December 30, 2011. We did not conduct a follow-up phone survey of non-respondents.

## Results:

- 852 total survey returns (34% response rate)
- 76 respondents did not provide usable data concerning preference of season timing (Question 4). They either left the questions blank or did not follow instructions for ranking the options (i.e., used the same rank for multiple options).

### *Season and Location of Typical Hunting Activity*

Season / Zone	Southern Zone				Northern Zone			
	Early Bow	Regular	Late Muzzleloader	Late Bow	Early Bow	Early Muzzleloader	Regular	Late Muzzleloader
% of Respondents*	48.4	73.8	38.6	21.6	18.5	18.2	41.3	14.1

\* Sum of percentages is greater than 100% because respondents could select all the seasons during which they typically hunt. More than twice as many respondents reported only hunting in the Southern Zone (54.0%) compared to only hunting in the Northern Zone (23.4.%). Only 22.7% of respondents indicated that they typically hunt in both the Northern and Southern Zones.

### *Likely Participation in a Youth Deer Season*

Expect to Participate?	<i>n</i>	%
Yes	769	90.5
No	17	2.0
Maybe	57	6.7
Don't Know	7	0.8
Total*	850	100

\* 2 respondents did not provide an answer to this question.

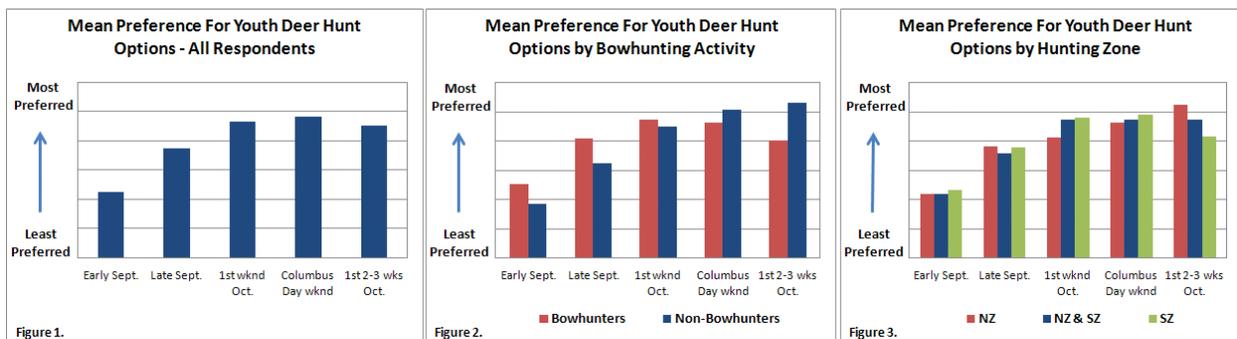
### Preference on Length of a Possible Youth Deer Hunt

Preferred Youth Season Length	n	%
1 weekend	208	24.9
2 weekends	303	36.2
Several weeks including several weekends	292	34.9
Neither	34	4.1
Total*	837	100

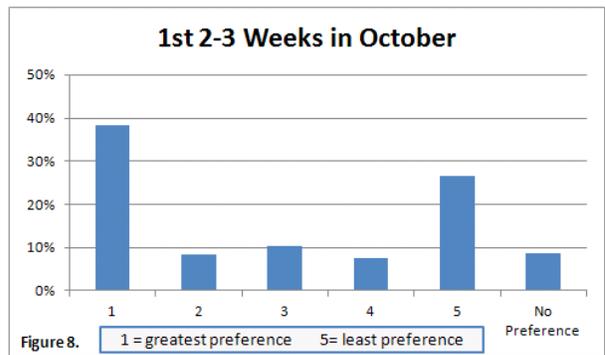
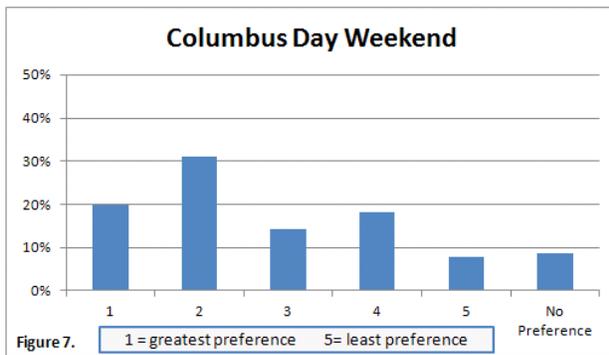
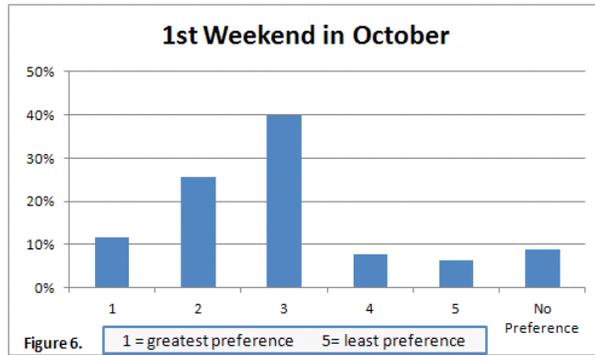
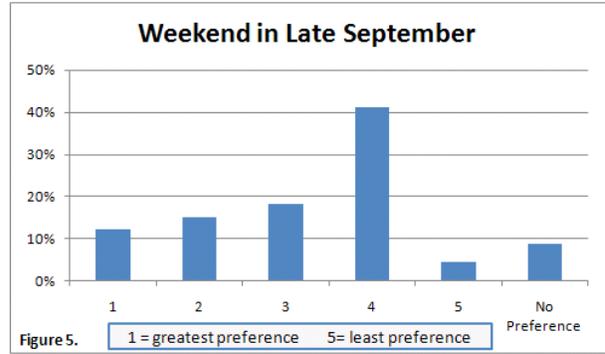
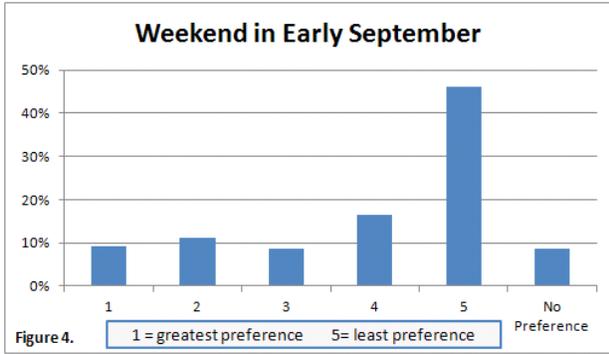
\* 15 respondents did not provide an answer to this question.

### Preference on Timing of a Possible Youth Deer Hunt

- 8.8% of respondents (68 of 776) indicated no preference for timing of a youth deer season, whereas 91.2% (708 of 776) had a preference. Responses from 76 respondents were unusable.
- Youth season options in early October were preferred over options in September for all hunters (Figures 1, 4-8) and for bowhunters (Figure 2).
- Columbus Day Weekend had the greatest overall preference for all hunters combined (Figure 1) with about twice as many respondents indicating high preference (ranks 1 and 2) as indicating low preference (ranks 4 and 5; Figure 7).
- Non-bowhunters preferred to hold a youth hunt during the 1<sup>st</sup> 2-3 weeks of October, while bowhunters preferred just the 1<sup>st</sup> Weekend in October (Figure 2).
- Respondents who typically hunt exclusively in the Northern Zone (NZ) preferred a youth hunt during the 1<sup>st</sup> 2-3 weeks of October, while respondents who typically hunt only in the Southern Zone (SZ) preferred a youth hunt over Columbus Day weekend (Figure 3). Respondents who hunt in both zones preferred October options over September but were equivocal about the 1<sup>st</sup> weekend in October, Columbus Day weekend, and the 1<sup>st</sup> 2-3 weeks of October.
- The 1<sup>st</sup> 2-3 weeks of October was selected as the most preferred option by the greatest proportion of respondents, but it was also ranked least preferred by a substantial portion of respondents (Figure 8).



**Figures 1-3.** Mean preference of youth hunters and mentors for the possible timing of a youth firearms deer hunt in New York. Tabular data are provided in Appendix 1.



**Figures 4-8.** Distribution of preference for several possible options for a youth firearms deer season in New York. Youth hunters and their mentors were asked to rank options from 1-5 (1 = most preferred and 5 = least preferred) using each rank only once.

**Appendix 1.** Mean preference ranks for the possible timing of a youth firearms deer hunt in New York with responses segregated among bowhunters and non-bowhunters, zone of hunting activity, and all hunters combined. Youth hunters and their mentors were asked to rank options from 1-5 (1 = most preferred and 5 = least preferred) using each rank only once. Mean values closest to 1 indicate greatest preference.

	<i>n</i>	Early September	Late September	1 <sup>st</sup> Weekend in October	Columbus Day Weekend	1 <sup>st</sup> 2-3 Weeks of October
<b>Bowhunters</b>	428	3.74	2.96	2.64	2.68	2.99
<b>Non-Bowhunters</b>	280	4.06	3.38	2.75	2.46	2.35
<b>Northern Zone Only</b>	162	3.91	3.10	2.93	2.69	2.38
<b>Northern Zone &amp; Southern Zone</b>	152	3.89	3.20	2.63	2.63	2.64
<b>Southern Zone Only</b>	394	3.84	3.10	2.6	2.54	2.92
<b>All Hunters</b>	708*	3.87	3.12	2.68	2.59	2.73

\* Of 852 survey returns, 76 respondents did not provide usable information regarding preference of season timing and 68 respondents indicated that they had no preference for when the youth season occurs.

**NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION**  
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Joe Martens  
Commissioner

November 8, 2011

Dear Parent or Guardian of a Junior Hunter,

Congratulations to your son, daughter, or dependent on their successful completion of the New York State Hunter Education class! We hope your junior hunter is excited about the many hunting opportunities that lie ahead.

We at DEC are doing all we can to encourage a new generation of New Yorkers to reap the many benefits hunting provides – enjoyment of the outdoors, putting wholesome food on the table, learning about wildlife, and helping to manage populations of deer and other species.

One way to encourage young people to try deer hunting is to have a special time when only junior hunters (under 16 years of age) are allowed to take a deer with a firearm. By doing that, the licensed adult hunter who must supervise a junior hunter can focus on teaching the young person the skills that will make them a safe and responsible hunter.

**We would like to learn from you** what type of special deer hunting opportunity **the junior hunter(s)** in your household or family would be most likely to take advantage of and enjoy.

We have several different ideas that we would like you to consider, outlined in the questionnaire on the back side of this letter. Please discuss this letter, and the questionnaire, with the junior hunter in your household and his or her hunting mentor. Please ask them to consider the different options listed, answer the questions as best they can, and return the completed questionnaire to us by December 1, 2011 using the enclosed pre-paid envelope.

The input we receive will help us select the best opportunity for junior hunters to experience deer hunting. We plan to implement one of these options in time for the fall 2012 hunting season.

If you have any questions, please send us an e-mail at [fwwildl@gw.dec.state.ny.us](mailto:fwwildl@gw.dec.state.ny.us) and type “Youth Deer Hunt” in the subject line. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gordon Batcheller".

Gordon Batcheller  
Chief, Bureau of Wildlife



New York State Department of Environmental Conservation  
Junior Hunter Questionnaire



Please take a few minutes to fill out this questionnaire and return it to DEC in the pre-paid envelope by **December 1**.

**For the following questions, we ask that the parent, guardian, or mentor respond after discussing the options with the junior hunter.**

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated!

Please PRINT within the box in blue or black ink

Correct    Incorrect



4

4

**1. Mentors, during which seasons do you typically hunt for deer?** (check all that apply)

Northern Zone:  Bowhunting     Early Muzzleloading     Regular     Late Muzzleloader

Southern Zone:  Early Bowhunting     Regular     Late Muzzleloader     Late Bowhunting

**2. Would you, and the junior hunter(s) with whom you hunt, participate in a special youth deer season if one was available?** (check one)

Yes     No     Maybe     Don't Know

**3. Would you, and the junior hunter(s) with whom you hunt, prefer to have a special youth deer season that covers one of the following?** (check one)

1 Weekend     2 Weekends     Several weeks including several weekends     Neither

**4. DEC favors a simple approach for a youth hunt that can be applied consistently across the Northern and Southern Zones, prior to other firearms seasons for deer.**

Youth hunters would be authorized to take one deer, of either sex, with a firearm during the youth deer season.

**Given these guidelines, several possible options for a special youth deer season are provided in the table below. Please review the table to identify when you and the junior hunter(s) with whom you hunt might best be able to participate.**

If you have a preference, please rank the 5 options **in order of your preference** (1=most preferred, 5=least preferred). If you have no preference check "No Preference" and do not rank the options.

Rank 1=most preferred to 5=least preferred (Use each # only once)	Option	Number of Days	Same days as Youth Hunts for Small Game	Overlap with Bowhunting Season	Need license & tags from prior year*
<input type="text"/>	Full weekend in early September	2	No	No	Yes
<input type="text"/>	Full weekend in late September	2	Some	No	Yes
<input type="text"/>	1st full weekend in October	2	No	Yes	No
<input type="text"/>	Columbus Day Weekend	3	Some	Yes	No
<input type="text"/>	First 2-3 weeks of October	14-20 days including 2 full weekends	No	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>No preference</b>					

Sample

2
1
3
5
4

\* Hunting licenses are valid until September 30 each year. A youth hunt in September would require a license and unfilled tags from the prior year. A new license would then be needed to hunt when the new license year begins October 1.