

NEW YORK STATE

CONSERVATIONIST

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OCTOBER 2019

Nature's colors AMAZE

Hurt in the Woods

a Hunter's Fall

Hooked on Salmon

Fall River Fishing

Out
in the
field

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IF YOU DO

**YOUR PART
FEWER WILDFIRES WILL
START**

75



CHEERS TO 75 YEARS



PREVENTING WILDFIRES

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2019—CELEBRATING 75 YEARS OF EDUCATING
THE PUBLIC ABOUT PREVENTING WILDFIRES (SEE PAGE 32)



NEW YORK STATE
CONSERVATIONIST

Volume 74, Number 2 | October 2019
Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of New York State

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**Department of
Environmental
Conservation**

Dear Reader,

Fall is synonymous with hunting, including the start of deer and bear seasons, dates that have been etched in the minds of many New Yorkers since the close of last year's seasons. In this issue, you'll find a "look back" story from 25 years ago detailing a unique challenge one deer hunter faced in pursuit of a buck, and stories on hunters' personal experiences in the field, including a first-hand account from an injured hunter as he waited for help to arrive. This issue also includes a summary of New York State Hunting/Trapping regulations that can be used as a reference guide before you head out in the field.

Best of luck to the more than half a million licensed hunters in the state. Be safe, and for those who bag a deer, check out a great venison recipe on page 8 that you may want to try.

The October issue also includes a photo essay highlighting the vibrant colors of autumn. Wherever you are in New York State, you are never far from vibrant fall foliage. Some of the pictures may inspire you to join friends or family to view nature's amazing beauty; you won't be disappointed. Also, check out the article on conservation easements, which explains how New York is working to protect vital lands and ensure they are open for public recreation.

And don't forget, there's still time for fishing. Read an angler's tale of fishing the Salmon River for the first time, illustrating the excitement, challenges, and occasional frustration of fishing, which nearly all anglers have experienced.

I'm also happy to preview some good news for anglers. Governor Andrew Cuomo recently announced a new initiative, "Revive Mother Nature," that will restock and restore aquatic habitats throughout the state. The new program, which will be formally introduced by the Governor in his 2020 State of the State Address in January, will protect and restore wetlands and waterways, provide significant investments in New York's fish hatcheries to bolster the state's populations of freshwater sportfish, such as walleye, trout, and salmon, and restore oysters in New York Harbor and double the current shellfish restoration initiative on Long Island. New York's waters are teeming with life, and this new initiative will provide even greater benefits.

With fall now upon us, I encourage you to get outside—there's no shortage of opportunities here in New York.

Best wishes,

Basil Seggos, Commissioner





HUNTERS: Want Older Bucks in New York? It's Your Choice

Many deer hunters dream of seeing and shooting a large buck. But there is great temptation for hunters to take the first buck they see, often a young buck, when the opportunity presents itself.

New York hunters can increase the likelihood they will harvest an older, larger buck simply by choosing to pass up shots at young, small-antlered bucks. Older bucks create more rubs and scrapes. They are more challenging to hunt, and yield more meat—all things that may enhance the deer hunting experience.

Many New York hunters are already voluntarily choosing to pass on young bucks. As a result, the availability and harvest of older, larger-antlered bucks is increasing.

To see and take more older bucks, DEC encourages hunters to work with neighbors and hunting partners to cooperatively reduce harvest of young bucks, improve habitat conditions, and ensure adequate harvest of antlerless deer.

For more information, see www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/27663.html



Venison Donation Coalition Help End Hunger

Hunters can donate venison to food pantries and soup kitchens throughout the state through the Venison Donation Coalition (VDC).

One deer makes 160 servings!

VDC is a nonprofit organization that coordinates the efforts of hunters, deer processors, food banks, individuals and organizations to provide high-protein, low-fat meat to the hungry. If hunters donated one of every 100 deer taken, the program could easily reach 100,000 pounds of venison to feed the hungry.

It's easy to participate: simply bring your legally tagged and properly field-dressed deer to a participating processor

(see www.venisondonation.org). There is **NO COST TO THE HUNTER!**

Hunters can also donate dollars to this program when they buy their license.

And you needn't be a hunter to contribute. Anyone can donate either online or by mailing a check to:

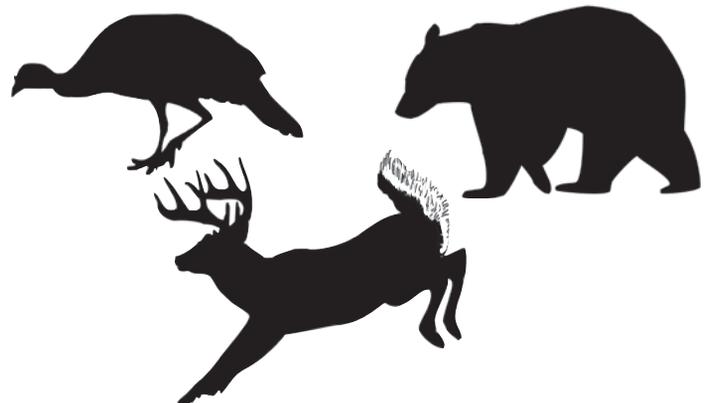
The Venison Donation Coalition, 3 Pulteney Square, Bath, NY 14810

For more information,
call **1-866-862-3337**

or visit the website at

www.venisondonation.org
Donate Dollars-Donate Venison

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- **Online:** www.dec.ny.gov
- **By phone:** 866-426-3778
- **Mobile App:** HuntFishNY App can be downloaded from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store



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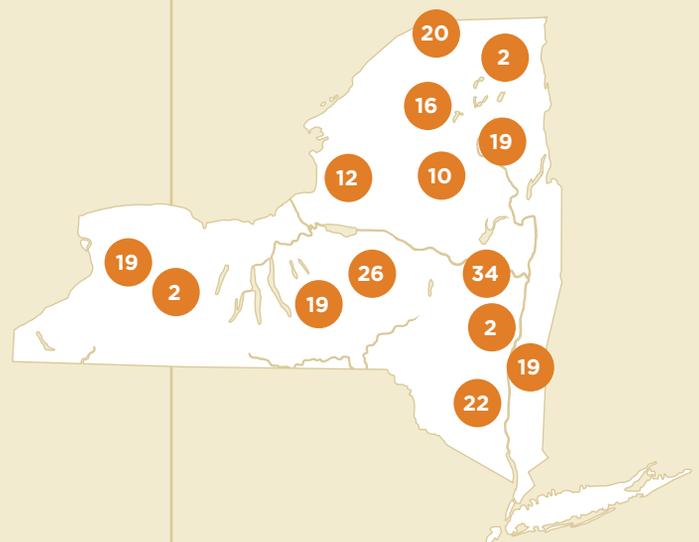
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SPECIAL INSERT

CONSERVATIONIST





Lake Champlain



New York

Alight

Amazing colors and beautiful scenery
announce autumn's arrival

Keuka Lake



Church Pond near Paul Smith's College, Franklin County



From summit of Wright Peak, Adirondacks



North South Lake Campground, Catskills



Mt. Van Hoevenberg Trail, Adirondacks



From Giant Mountain, Adirondacks

Autumn in New York reminds people just how beautiful nature can be. DEC encourages everyone to get outside and enjoy fall's stunning colors firsthand; you may just be inspired by the vibrant, changing hues reflected in the trees. Whether you are interested in a hike in the Adirondacks, Catskills, or a nearby forest, or if you prefer a family picnic or walk in a local nature preserve or park, you will find amazing colors all across the state. So be sure to make plans to enjoy nature during the fall season—and remember to bring a camera or cell phone to capture (and share) your experience.

To celebrate the season, we'd like to share a sampling of some beautiful autumn scenes taken by both amateur and professional photographers. If you have a photo you'd like to share, please send it to us at magazine@dec.ny.gov—we may use it on our Facebook page, or in a future issue of the *Conservationist*.



Bill Banaszewski

Honeoye Lake



Karen Williamson

Boreas Pond



Michael Pistono

Hawk's Nest outside of Port Jervis



Wendy Fuller

Letchworth State Park

Gerri Jones



Allegany State Park

Wendy Fuller



Letchworth State Park



Saranac Lake area, Adirondacks



Allegany Region

For ideas on places to visit during the fall season, check out these websites:

DEC

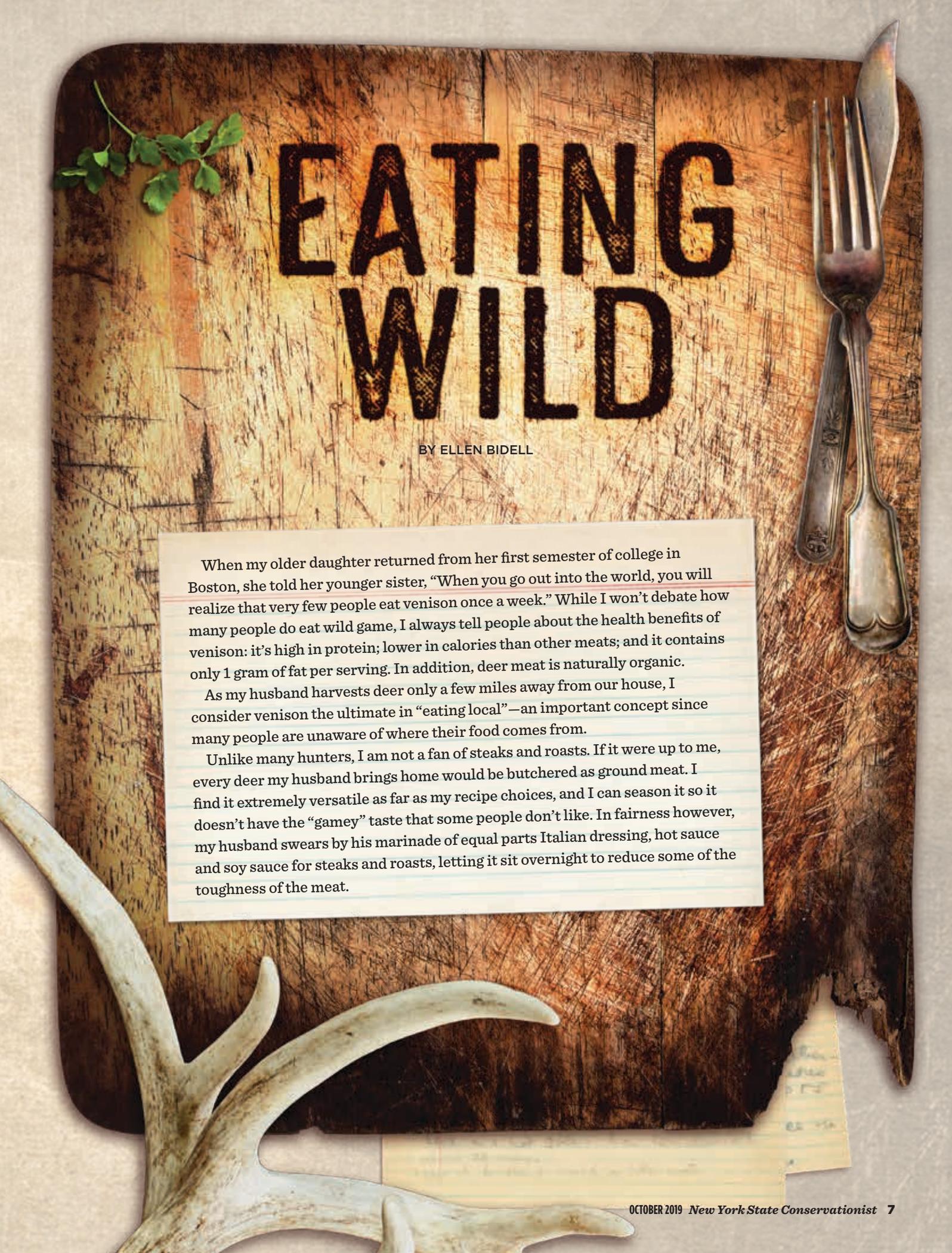
www.dec.ny.gov; search "Outdoor Activities"

STATE PARKS

<http://parks.ny.gov/>

I LOVE NY

<http://www.iloveny.com/seasons/fall/#.V7sPsUrD99M>



EATING WILD

BY ELLEN BIDELL

When my older daughter returned from her first semester of college in Boston, she told her younger sister, “When you go out into the world, you will realize that very few people eat venison once a week.” While I won’t debate how many people do eat wild game, I always tell people about the health benefits of venison: it’s high in protein; lower in calories than other meats; and it contains only 1 gram of fat per serving. In addition, deer meat is naturally organic.

As my husband harvests deer only a few miles away from our house, I consider venison the ultimate in “eating local”—an important concept since many people are unaware of where their food comes from.

Unlike many hunters, I am not a fan of steaks and roasts. If it were up to me, every deer my husband brings home would be butchered as ground meat. I find it extremely versatile as far as my recipe choices, and I can season it so it doesn’t have the “gamey” taste that some people don’t like. In fairness however, my husband swears by his marinade of equal parts Italian dressing, hot sauce and soy sauce for steaks and roasts, letting it sit overnight to reduce some of the toughness of the meat.

While I have several tried-and-true recipes for venison—lasagna, meatloaf, and chili—as my family tries to limit our intake of red meat, I have begun to look at all recipes in a new light. If a recipe calls for ground beef, I will substitute venison every time—meatballs, quesadillas, stroganoff, and burgers. However, because deer spend their lives browsing and running, the fat content of their meat is extremely low, so I mix in some ground pork, buffalo, or sausage (sparingly) to increase the fat content of the meat. Otherwise the ground venison can be dry.

Here are a few wild game recipes I've tried over the years.

HEARTY VENISON LASAGNA

Ingredients:

2 lbs. ground venison (I don't add other kinds of meat because this recipe doesn't need the extra moisture)
16 oz. shredded mozzarella cheese
16 oz. ricotta cheese
1 egg
2 cups cooked spinach or kale
2 tbsp. chopped garlic
½ chopped onion
1 chopped zucchini
16 oz. chopped mushrooms
1 jar pasta sauce
1 package lasagna noodles
Olive oil
salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cook the noodles according to the directions and set aside. Brown the venison (seasoned with salt/pepper), garlic, and onions in 2 tbsp. olive oil. Add the zucchini and mushrooms and cook an additional 8 minutes. Add the jar of sauce and heat through. Remove from heat and set aside. In a bowl, combine the ricotta cheese, egg, and salt/pepper. Add the chopped/cooked spinach and mix thoroughly. (I started this trick to get my daughter to eat spinach, along with the cheese.)

Layer lasagna noodles along the bottom of a 9" x 13" pan. Layer ¼ of the venison mixture, then ¼ of the ricotta mixture, then ¼ of the mozzarella. Repeat the layering, ¼ of ingredients at a time. Cover with aluminum foil and bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour, until bubbly. Remove the foil for the last 15 minutes of cooking.

CRANBERRY BARBEQUE SLOW COOKER VENISON MEATBALLS

Ingredients for the meatballs:

1 lb. ground venison
1 lb. ground pork or sausage
½ cup breadcrumbs
⅓ cup milk
¼ cup diced onion
½ tsp. chopped garlic
1 tsp. oregano
1 egg
¼ cup Parmesan or Romano
Salt and pepper to taste

Ingredients for the sauce:

14 oz. whole cranberry sauce
1½ cups spicy barbeque sauce
¾ cup light brown sugar
1 cup water

Sauté the onions, garlic, and oregano. Mix with all the ingredients for the meatballs and roll into the size you want. You can brown them on the stove first, but I always start them in the slow cooker when I am rushed for time.

Add the ingredients for the sauce and cook on low for 4-6 hours.



Every January, I join my husband on a rabbit hunt. I don't have a hunting license, so my job is to spot the rabbits, something I am apparently good at. He butchers the rabbit himself, so by the time I get it, it is ready to throw in the crockpot. I would prefer two rabbits for this recipe, but it works with one if you are only feeding a few people.

MOROCCAN RABBIT

Ingredients:

1 rabbit, quartered
1 onion, quartered
1 red pepper, chopped
1 cup dried apricots, cut in half
½ cup prunes, cut in half
½ cup almonds
3 cups chicken stock
3 tbsp. tomato paste
Olive oil

Ingredients for Moroccan Spice Rub:

2 tsp. ginger
½ tsp. black pepper
2 tsp. turmeric
½ tsp. garlic powder
1 tsp. cinnamon

Rub the rabbit with some of the spice mixture. Sauté onion and peppers in olive oil in a large Dutch oven. Add the remaining spices and cook for 1 min. Brown the rabbit on all sides and add the remaining ingredients. Bring to a boil, then simmer for around 1 hour.

Every other season or so, my husband shoots a wild turkey. A wild turkey is all dark meat, and you don't usually eat the legs because they are tough, although you can use them to make stock. (A male wild turkey weighs between 16 to 24 pounds.)

WILD TURKEY SALAD

Ingredients:

Wild turkey breast
1 carrot
½ cup chopped onion
1 cup chopped celery
1 tsp. chopped garlic
1 cup white wine
Salt and pepper to taste
2½ cups cooked wild rice
½ cup dried cranberries
½ cup cashews
⅔ cup Greek yogurt
2 tbsp. Lemon juice

Place the turkey breast and next six ingredients in a slow cooker and cook on low for 6 to 8 hours, or until turkey is tender. Let the turkey cool and chop it into bite size chunks. Mix thoroughly with the remaining ingredients.

Ellen Bidell is a Public Participation Specialist in DEC's Albany office. She and her family have been cooking and eating wild game for decades.



Author's husband and hunter education instructor.



A LOOK BACK

OCTOBER

1994

We regularly receive requests from our readers for copies of old issues or past articles. In going through our past issues, we are often struck by how little, or how much, things have changed. We thought our readers would enjoy reading some of these older articles, so from time to time we'll be providing "A Look Back" at magazine content and, when appropriate, include an updated perspective on the various topics.

(Note: This article originally appeared in the October 1994 issue of *Conservationist* magazine.)

The Owl and the Buck

BY PETER R. SCHOONMAKER

The warmth of the October sun was burning off the frost on a beautiful mid-morning in the Adirondacks. It was the last day of the muzzleloader season and a perfect day for birdhunting. Earlier in the week, I had been lucky enough to bag a fine six-point buck. To celebrate, my father and I were taking Katy, his English setter, out for a romp in woodcock and grouse cover.

The ground was still damp in the patch of alders and old apple trees that had been a productive spot for bird hunters for years. Katy soon let us know she had scented a grouse.

I moved ahead to cut off the bird's escape route, crossing a small creek and hopping over an overgrown stone wall to a pair of mature hemlocks shielding two time-worn apple trees. As I reached the end of the cover, I realized that Katy's bell had stopped, indicating she was on point. Suddenly, a grouse flew right at me, then made a sharp turn before I could try a going-away shot.

As I followed the bird's flight, my eyes stopped abruptly when I noticed marks on tree trunks made by a deer's antlers: a fresh buck rub. As a regular

hunter of this turf, I knew there hadn't been an active buck here in several years. Dad and I followed the buck's track to fresh patches of pawed ground made to establish territory and attract does—a fresh scrape line—sharing a charge of excitement at the sight. On the way home we planned our buckhunting strategy.

The following week, Dad doctored up the scrape line with buck lure to make our buck think a doe had been by. He could watch the scrapes from a concealed vantage point. Two days after he used the buck lure, he approached the scrape line and discovered that the buck had been back to paw the ground afresh and leave his scent. Confident the buck was in the area because the sign was fresh, my father concealed himself in a thick stand of red pine on a small rise nearby. It was an excellent choice for concealment—so excellent that the buck had chosen it, too. After about a half-hour, Dad heard something



to his right and behind him, just over the rise. He turned and saw the top portion of a deer who had just stood up out of its bed and was moving away. Dad had no chance to attempt a shot, but he did glimpse the antlers of a tight basket-racked buck.

My father told me about this experience and of another sighting of the buck as well. We decided to make another attempt. This time we'd try a little antler rattling. When the buck heard the sound of other bucks fighting in his territory, he'd come to investigate.

We settled into position by late afternoon, Dad up past the knoll on the buck's escape route and I near the alders above the buck's rub and scrape line, and tried the first sequence of antler rattling. After an hour, I heard the footfalls of a walking deer moving slowly and cautiously toward the rise where I hid. The buck took the left fork of the deer trail, easing along the flat below the knoll, concealed by the canopy of trees as he circled my position.

I was concentrating on the buck, rifle ready, when a small bird flew past my head, fluttered by me a second time, then disappeared. By the time I had regained my composure, the buck had walked completely around me. In the gathering dusk I saw a flick of the buck's tail as he disappeared from sight.

We tried hunting the whitetail in the morning, to no avail, and decided to make another attempt at dusk. My father positioned himself at the edge of a thicket, and I settled below him under a white pine tree whose low-hanging boughs extended out 12 to 16 feet. I concealed myself against the broad tree base in the comfort of the soft needles. I rattled antlers and used a grunt tube to simulate deer talk.

As dusk fell, I heard the buck's footfalls. He worked his way around my position to behind and just over the edge of the rise on which I sat. I could hear him, but search as I might, I couldn't see him. To add to my anxiety, the wind changed, and the buck was no longer approaching me from downwind. I tensed, listening, still hoping to catch him in my sights.

Suddenly, right in my face, a bird fluttered, startling me. It made another pass, and I realized it was the same bird that buzzed me the last time the buck came near. Again, the bird flew up towards my face and lit at eye level on a limb an arm's length away. It was a very small owl—the cutest predator I had ever seen. It was no more than eight inches tall, had large yellow eyes, and appeared exceedingly tame. We gazed at each other until the owl turned its head and looked to my right. Realizing what the distraction had cost me, I spun around just as the whitetail vanished, along with my hopes for bagging another buck. The little owl fluttered away.



When we got home, Dad and I got out Audubon's *Encyclopedia of North American Birds*. My bird turned out to be a saw-whet owl, the smallest owl in the eastern U.S., a nocturnal bird fond of dense coniferous woods and often found in low swamps.

Adirondack whitetail hunters know we only have a two in 10 chance of successfully bagging a deer, so that can't be the only reason we hunt them. We are there for the quality of the wilderness experience, the enlightening wildlife encounter. Ultimately, memories of the ones that got away will outnumber those of successful outings. I'll never forget my encounter with the owl and the buck, and will always wonder if they were in "ca-hoots."

In 1994, **Peter R. Schoonmaker** was a field editor with *Whitetails Unlimited* and a feature editor with *Krause Publications* and *Thicket Publications*. This article was adapted from his book, *Seasonal Drift-Adirondack Hunts and Wilderness Tales*, published by North Country Books.

FISHING

A FAMED RIVER

— A first-timer catches salmon
in the Salmon River



BY NORAH MACHIA | PHOTOS BY ANTHONY MACHIA

On any given day during the annual fall salmon runs, a myriad of enthusiastic anglers sporting waders and signature hats can be seen making their way to the riverbanks of the Salmon River, carrying an assortment of fishing gear, folding chairs, and plastic coolers.

Often, they are in search of Chinook salmon, also known as “king salmon,” and are hoping to end the day with bragging rights for landing a big fish. In many cases, they will not be disappointed. Chinook salmon weigh between 15 and 30 pounds, with an average catch in these parts of 18 pounds. In fact, the largest Chinook salmon ever caught in New York State and the Great Lakes was taken from this very river in 1991, weighing in at 47 pounds 13 ounces.

Although natural reproduction of salmon takes place in the river, many of these fish are making the fall run back to their birthplace—DEC’s Salmon River Fish Hatchery in Altmar. Opened in 1980, the fish hatchery produces Chinook and coho salmon, and steelhead and brown trout to stock in more than 100 public waters across an 11-county region.

Approximately 1.75 million Chinooks are stocked in and along Lake Ontario each year, with 300,000 of those going into the Salmon River, along with 80,000 coho salmon. These fish grow to an impressive size in the lake, and when it’s time to spawn, they head home via the Salmon River. The fish start their journey back to the hatchery in large numbers as early as Labor Day in some years, with peak salmon runs occurring in late September and early October.



Above: All ready to head out!
Below: The author gets a few pointers on salmon fishing.

The large crowds of anglers who come to the Salmon River—estimated to be 150,000 to 200,000 annual visitors—are a testament to the fantastic fishing available here. While I had researched and written about the tremendous growth of this fishing industry, I had never actually cast a line in the water. But last fall, I decided it was time to move from observing and writing to actually experiencing it.

I decided to give fly fishing a try, with some help from my brother-in-law, Chris. Chris is an experienced fisherman from New Hampshire who has joined the ranks of the many out-of-state residents drawn to the Salmon River. A high school teacher by day, he spends most of the rest of his time fishing. He learned from his mother, Priscilla, who introduced him to fly fishing at a young age. In fact, their family has traveled as far as New Zealand for the ultimate fishing expedition.



The author and her fishing partner, Chris, landed a large Chinook salmon.

But his most recent focus has been the Salmon River.

My fishing lesson took place on a crisp fall weekend in October. We met up at a spot along the river in Altmar, designated as a “catch-and-release only” area. Although it was still early in the morning by my standards, the riverbanks were already lined with large crowds of anglers standing nearly shoulder-to-shoulder in some spots. At that point, late arrivals would probably have a challenging time finding any open spaces along the riverbank.

The first things Chris taught me were that you have to put in the time, and you need patience—lots of it. Don’t get me wrong, the salmon were plentiful, and anglers were catching them left and right. But at the same time, many fish were getting away.

Salmon are stubborn and put up a good fight, which is exactly what makes fishing for them such a challenge. It’s extremely rewarding when you finally catch a big one.

There was a lot of activity on the river that day. The salmon were moving upstream with periodic bursts of energy and jumping out of the water. Sometimes, they were jumping because they were fighting after being hooked. Other times, they seemed to be taunting us, moving in close proximity and then jumping up and back down in the water, showing off with huge splashes.

That day, we were standing among a mix of anglers, from beginners to those with years of experience fishing the waters here. The men and women cast their lines with intense focus and determination. The atmosphere was a mix of competition and cooperation. Those who found a good spot, well, they pretty much stayed there.

Although the anglers often stood close to each other, either on land or in the water, when the words “fish on!” were yelled, the scene played out like a well-rehearsed Broadway play. The other anglers moved swiftly, retreating onto the riverbanks to allow the person with a hooked fish the freedom to move along in an attempt to slow the fish down. Mutual respect was everywhere—nobody wanted to have their line tangle with that of the person who had a potential catch and shoulder the burden of responsibility for the fish that got away.

On these riverbanks, strangers became fast friends. If a lone fisherman needed a hand, another angler was there in what seemed like seconds, grabbing a net and wading in the water to help bring in the catch. They also took turns with cell phones, taking photos for each other to document their prize catches.

There is a real art to fly fishing for salmon, and it starts with the proper casting technique of throwing the line gracefully over the water (this went smoother once we moved away from a cluster of nearby trees). Eventually, I



learned how to flick the rod from behind and actually have the end of my line land in the right spot (it definitely took some practice).

It’s not that I have a flair for the dramatic, but when I felt that first real tug on the end of the line, my hands clenched tightly to the rod, and I dug my feet into the ground. I was prepared—and determined—to bring that fish to shore.

Chris stayed calm, directing me to give the fish some slack, then reel it back in a little, then give it slack again. My initial instinct was to reel the salmon in right away, but when the tip of my brother-in-law’s new fishing pole started to bend at a rather alarming rate, I figured it would be a good idea to follow his advice, and first work on tiring out the fish.

This went on for several minutes, and I felt myself gradually being pulled farther into the water. This fish had a lot of stamina, but at that point, my pride was at stake. The salmon, however, ended up outsmarting me. It appeared to have stopped fighting, but just as Chris approached it with a net, the tension on my line suddenly disappeared. The fish had broken away, joining its comrades back in the river.

There was nothing more to say.

It was time for round two. I was not leaving the Salmon River without having at least caught one fish—either with the pole or as an assist with the net. So Chris and I switched roles. He had the pole, I had the net.



Although the author didn't reel in the fish, she felt that just by netting it she had helped catch the large Chinook.



Norah Machia spent 20 years as a reporter for the *Watertown Daily Times* before joining the Northern New York Magazines as a regular contributor. She just completed her first book, *Tug Hill - Shaping the Future of the Region*.

A short time later, there was a tug at the line. "I got this," I yelled, grabbing the net and rushing into the water, the adrenaline rushing and my heart pumping. Chris yelled out directions: "Make sure you get the fish going head first into the net. Get the fish to swim into it and lift it out of the water quickly. Hold on tight to the handle, or you will lose the fish. It's going to be heavy!"

My eyes widened as I focused on my fish target...I went from feeling anxious to exhilarated as I witnessed that large salmon swim into the net. I quickly scooped it out of the water. It was indeed heavy.

I walked carefully to the shore, hoping I would not trip and lose "my" big catch in front of the other anglers. Perhaps nobody was paying attention, but it seemed like in this world of fish combat, all eyes were on the one doing battle.

We had caught a Chinook salmon. Chris estimated it to be about 20 pounds (I'm sure the first one I lost was even bigger). We had some photos taken, and then my brother-in-law gently put the fish back in the water.

I turned and thanked him for this great adventure, then started walking back to the wooded path that led to the parking lot.

"Leaving already?" Chris asked.

"Mission accomplished," I replied. To me, it didn't matter if my role had been reeling in the fish or scooping it out with the net. It had been caught, period. What a relief—I had gotten the fish photo!

Chris, however, stayed on the riverbank that day for many more hours. It was his second day of a planned three-day weekend fishing trip. He caught several other large Chinooks that weekend, despite not having me by his side to help (go figure).

I had observed that many anglers spent the entire day in the same spot, if the fishing was good. Some started out just before dawn to secure the perfect location. Others didn't even break for lunch. I left a small bag of food and a water bottle for Chris, but wondered if he would even remember they were there.

Salmon fishing can be addictive. I had a great time that day and am planning to go back again this year, as is Chris. He has also scheduled a winter trip for steelhead. Maybe I'll ride along...but only if the boat is heated.

My advice: you don't need to be an expert to fish for salmon on the Salmon River. But I highly recommend you have someone with you the first time who knows what he or she is doing. I'm sure you will enjoy the challenge immensely, and, like me, you may just find yourself wanting to return to the river. After all, thousands of others keep coming back.

FUN FOR ALL SEASONS

—New York’s conservation easement lands offer year-round recreation opportunities

BY JANE RAFFALDI | PHOTOS BY AUTHOR, UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

On an unseasonably warm morning last October, I found myself surrounded by brilliant fall foliage on a quiet river near the village of Speculator, Hamilton County. While the cars likely lined Route 73 to the north on this prime leaf-peeping day, my coworkers and I felt we had the water all to ourselves. Though we were only about a mile away from the nearest road, we had quickly achieved the feeling of remoteness so often sought by those escaping to the outdoors on this lesser-known type of land—the conservation easement.

As a frequent visitor within the Blue Line, I had passed through Speculator many times, but I had never heard of Elm Lake or any of the other attractions on the Speculator Tree Farm Conservation Easement. My state land destinations were usually scribbled down from Google searches, social media, or word of mouth. Each year, millions of visitors explore DEC Forest Preserve and State Forest lands, but few people know about the opportunities awaiting them on more than 900,000 acres of DEC conservation easement lands, most of it located in the North Country.

What is a Conservation Easement?

A conservation easement is a voluntary, legal agreement that protects the natural resources of a parcel of land by restricting future land use and/or development on the property “in perpetuity” (permanently). This agreement is held between a landowner and a government agency or land trust, with the landowner maintaining ownership. The conservation easement can either be sold or donated, resulting in a variety of tax benefits for the landowner. The easement is recorded with the property’s deed and transfers to all future landowners. DEC conservation easements always prioritize environmental protection, whether the main goal is to maintain water quality, manage the forest for wood products, provide public recreation opportunities, or protect wildlife habitat.

A scenic snowmobile ride on the Long Lake-Newcomb Connector Trail in the Adirondacks

Vivid colors while paddling on Elm Lake

Navigating the stream that October day as it meandered into a winding, narrow outlet, we passed several beaver lodges built onto the bank and had to carry our canoes over a dam or two. A perceptive eye in our group spotted a marsh wren nest woven into the reeds just a few feet from our paddles, and great blue herons occasionally passed silently overhead. The wildlife viewing opportunities were just a perk of our paddling visit, but the Speculator Tree Farm and most other easements allow a dozen other recreation opportunities throughout all seasons.

From birders to boaters to mountain bikers and more, these properties offer activities for any outdoors-lover. Whether it be reflection or adventure you're seeking, there are a variety of different landscapes protected by DEC through conservation easements. Paddlers may be drawn to the Speculator Tree Farm or Sucker Lake easements in Hamilton and St. Lawrence Counties respectively, while snowmobilers may enjoy the Big Tupper or Grass River easements in Franklin and St. Lawrence Counties, among others. Mountain bikers can explore the 65 miles of dirt roads on the Kushaqua Tract in Franklin County, and horseback riders would likely appreciate the access roads and trails of the Croghan Tract easement in Lewis County. Hikers (as well as those who prefer to mosey along) can find scenic trails on just about any easement that allows public access.

Though most conservation easements allow public recreation, access and permitted activities vary among sites. Some landowners have leases with hunting clubs or other private organizations, which may restrict public access in certain areas or during specific seasons. Many conservation easements are actively managed for timber and other forest products, and may have restricted access when these activities are taking place. If you plan to visit an easement, be sure to search for the easement name on DEC's website at www.dec.ny.gov, or contact the DEC Lands and Forests office nearest to the easement property.

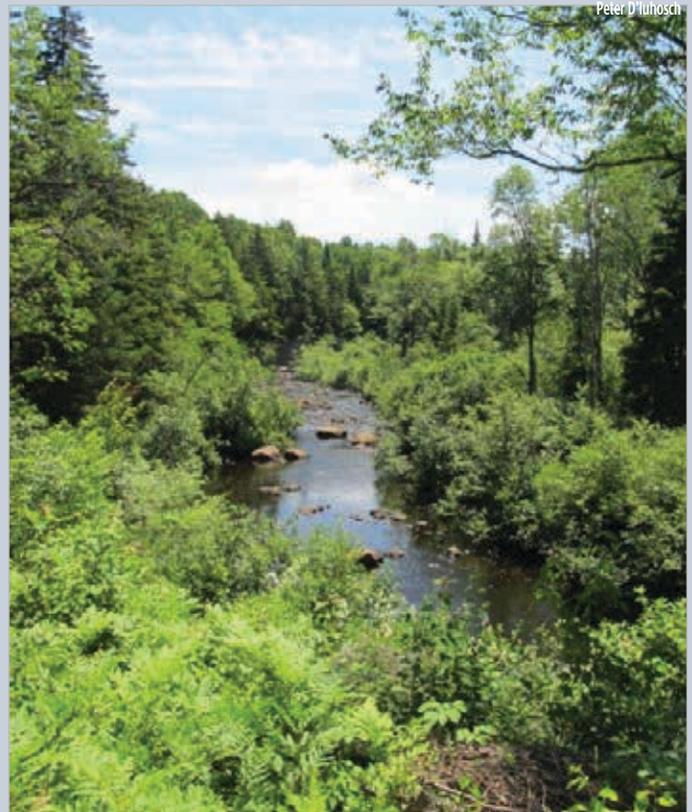
DEC conservation easements offer sights and solitude for those looking to escape the growing crowds at New York's better-known state lands. The expansive sizes and remote locations of these easements often allow visitors to feel as though they have discovered a hidden gem, as we did on our paddling visit to Elm Lake.

As we loaded our canoes into the truck that afternoon, I knew I had found a whole new collection of properties to explore no matter the season.

Jane Raffaldi is an Outreach Specialist in DEC's Division of Lands and Forests.



Autumn reflects the beauty of conservation easement lands.



Peter D'Alonzo

The South branch of the Grass River on the Long Pond Easement, St. Lawrence County.



Visitors can enjoy biking on certain conservation easement lands.

Recreation on Conservation Easements

DEC's Division of Lands and Forests manages more than 900,000 acres of land as conservation easements, including nearly 807,000 acres of working forests. The majority of easement lands are found in the Adirondacks and Tug Hill Plateau, but there is also an easement in New York City. Most easement parcels allow public recreation, such as hiking, fishing, paddling, and wildlife viewing, and, in some cases, camping, hunting, and trapping. To learn more about conservation easement lands, including what activities are permitted on individual easement properties, check out DEC's website at www.dec.ny.gov/lands/41156.html.

CONSERVATION EASEMENT LANDS OPEN FOR PUBLIC RECREATION:

- New York City
 - Pouch Camp Conservation Easement
- Eastern Adirondacks/Lake Champlain Region
 - Adirondack Mountain Reserve Conservation Easement Tract
 - Cedarlands Conservation Easement Tract
 - Kushaqua Conservation Easement Tract
 - Paul Smiths College Conservation Easement Tract
 - Perkins Clearing and Speculator Tree Farm Conservation Easement Tract
 - Sable Highlands Conservation Easement Lands
 - Santa Clara Tract Conservation Easement Lands
- Western Adirondacks/Upper Mohawk Valley/
Eastern Lake Ontario Region
 - Beers Lot Conservation Easement Tract
 - Big Tupper Conservation Easement Tract
 - Croghan Conservation Easement Tract
 - East Branch Fish Creek North Conservation Easement Tract
 - East Branch Fish Creek South Conservation Easement Tract
 - Five Mile Conservation Easement Tract
 - Grass River Conservation Easement Tract
 - Long Pond Conservation Easement Tract
 - Massawepie Conservation Easement Tract
 - Niagara Mohawk Conservation Easement Tracts
 - Oswegatchie Conservation Easement Tract
 - Preston Lot Conservation Easement Tract
 - Seveys Conservation Easement Tract
 - Sucker Lake Conservation Easement Tract
 - Tooley Pond Conservation Easement Tract



Matt Nowak

The Stillwater Fire Tower on Lyme Adirondack Timberlands easement, western Adirondacks.



Jeff Mapes

Paddlers enjoy solitude on the still waters of Elm Lake.

On Patrol

Real stories from Conservation Officers and Forest Rangers in the field

CONTRIBUTED BY ECO LT. LIZA BOBSEINE AND FOREST RANGER CAPT. SARAH B. GEESLER

Drones Lead the Way— Erie County

On July 28 at 8 a.m., State Police contacted Central Dispatch requesting Forest Ranger and ECO assistance to search the Tillman Road Wildlife Management Area for a man who had run from a welfare check the night before. Crews, K-9s, helicopters, and drones searched the trails and open areas of the thickly vegetated swamp. Working in tandem with State Police drone operators, Forest Ranger John Kennedy used his drone to walk a ground crew into the wilderness area to locate the man. The man was evaluated and taken to a local hospital by Twin City Ambulance for further evaluation.



Bobcat Rehab—Dutchess County

On the evening of Aug. 23, ECO Zachary Crain received a call regarding a good Samaritan removing an injured bobcat from a roadway in East Fishkill. The bobcat had been struck by a vehicle and the person had transported it to a nearby animal hospital, only to discover that the facility was closed. ECO Crain responded, took possession of the bobcat, and transported it to a licensed DEC wildlife rehabilitator. The rehabilitator reported that the female bobcat (estimated to be six months old) sustained a broken leg, which was surgically repaired. The young bobcat is expected to make a full recovery and will be released in a few weeks back to the area she was found.



Unusual and Unsafe ATV Transport—Cortland County

ECO Lt. Mark Colesante stopped a vehicle on Aug. 31 that he observed transporting an ATV in an unusual way on Rt. 41A in the town of Homer. The driver had decided to transport the ATV by strapping it to the roof of his four-door sedan, a unique but illegal method of transport. The operator was issued tickets for an unsecured load and driving an overloaded vehicle.

The Bachelor Meets Survivor—Essex County

In mid-July, Ray Brook Dispatch received a midnight call reporting a group of seven male hikers in their early thirties were overdue on Mount Colden. After finally getting in contact with the hikers, it was reported the group was a bachelor party of seven men from New Jersey, who decided, on a whim, to climb the Trap Dike on Mount Colden in the High Peaks Wilderness. On the descent toward Lake Arnold, their phones started to lose power because the group had to use the flashlight on their cell phones. The callers were placed in contact with Forest Ranger Lt. Kostoss, who determined the young men had no injuries and could spend the night in woods and hike out at first morning light. The next morning, the group was at the Marcy Dam Outpost and requested a ride out because they were tired, cold, wet, hungry, and dehydrated from their two-day ordeal. Ranger Giglinto responded with a UTV and scooped up three of the individuals; the remaining four hiked out to the Adirondack Lodge.

WILSON HILL WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

BY MICHAEL MORGAN

Wilson Hill Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is located on the shore of the St. Lawrence River in the far northern region of New York, with neighboring Ontario, Canada visible just over a mile away across the mighty river. The area is a magnet for large numbers of waterfowl.

Land for this WMA was first purchased in 1958 when the New York Power Authority (NYPA) was inundating thousands of acres of the river valley to create the St. Lawrence hydroelectric project. More than 1,500 acres of prior farmland, forest, and riparian areas were converted to large wetlands surrounding an area referred to as Wilson Hill.

This newly created habitat was designed to support duck breeding and provide hunting opportunities. More than 1,000 acres of uplands were also set aside as nesting habitat, and an additional 1,500 acres of wetlands and uplands were gradually added during the next 60 years. Wilson Hill became an island as the rising water gradually cut it off from the mainland, except for several earthen dikes and causeways that protect the Wilson Hill wetlands and provide access to the island.

In the early 1960s, dozens of Canada geese were brought to Wilson Hill to establish a large breeding population. This goose management effort led to the start of the Wilson Hill goose drive in 1965—now an annual summer event where biologists and dozens of volunteers round up and band hundreds of Canada geese. More than 32,000 geese have been captured and released during a period of 55 years, from 1965 to 2019! Thousands of sportsmen and

sportswomen, bird watchers, scout groups, and nature lovers of all types have enjoyed the opportunity to interact with Canada geese in this very unusual fashion.

The quality of the waterfowl habitat and the large numbers of ducks and geese at Wilson Hill WMA led to it becoming a popular destination for waterfowl hunters; it rapidly became so popular that hunting access was regulated through a hunter registration and permit system (see Notes in sidebar). DEC also stocks pheasants for upland hunters, and archery deer and other small game hunting are also popular.

In 2003, DEC, with support from NYPA, initiated a series of improvements—construction of four new dikes, six new water control structures, and a new large pump station—to improve the wetlands to benefit additional wildlife as well. These improvements allow for better control of water levels and have had a tremendous impact on the quality of the wetlands here. Conditions remain fantastic for ducks and geese, and the improved vegetation and habitat also support many different types of wildlife, such as shorebirds, least and American bitterns, grebes, coots, bald eagles (there are two nests at the WMA), nesting black terns (previously not nesting here), a pair of sandhill cranes, Virginia rails, and soras. Visitors can also see loons, frogs, grouse, otters, and turtles in this northern New York location.

Michael Morgan is a Wildlife Biologist in DEC's Watertown office.



Sandhill cranes



Male and female wood duck

**LOCATED IN THE TOWN OF LOUISVILLE
ON THE ST. LAWRENCE RIVER NEAR
MASSENA, ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY;
SIZE: APPROXIMATELY 4,000 ACRES**



Site Features



NOTES: Open year-round. Hunting, birdwatching, photography, cross-country skiing, and hiking are all popular activities. Hunter access to many areas at Wilson Hill WMA is controlled through a permit system (contact the Bureau of Wildlife offices in Potsdam (315) 265-3090 or Watertown (315) 785-2263 for more information), but the WMA also offers several observation platforms and viewing areas that are open to the general public.

There are several miles of trails, including the Nichols Trail, which features 1.5 miles (one-way) of accessible trail that roughly follows the southern shore of the Nichols Pool Habitat Improvement Project. It is constructed of compacted crushed stone dust, with nine boardwalk sections. There are three accessible spur trails off the main trail that lead to viewing locations along the shoreline, including an accessible observation blind that is also an accessible waterfowl hunting blind during duck hunting season. The trail can be used for hunting big game, small game, and waterfowl during the appropriate seasons.

A 1.9-mile cross-country ski trail runs along the northeastern boundary of the WMA on Wilson Hill Island and leads to a grass parking area near the WMA's maintenance facility and information kiosk. A viewing platform is available at a grassy parking area on Route 131.



DIRECTIONS: Located in the town of Louisville, approximately 6 miles west of the village of Massena, along state highway Routes 37 and 131. Four parking areas are open to the general public; others have restricted access and are only available to permitted hunters and trappers.



CONTACT: For more information visit www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/9324.html or call the Wilson Hill project manager at (315) 705-5539.



Jim Clayton

Canoeists help herd Canada geese in the annual Wilson Hill goose drive.



Jim Clayton

Staff round up Canada geese



Jim Clayton

Staff band the geese to track their movements.



Nesting black tern



THE STAND

Surviving a fall from a tree stand



The tree stand—site of the fall

BY ED RHINE

My wife waited anxiously for me to return. She saw that my bow and gear were gone and assumed I'd gone hunting, but it was after six o'clock and very dark. So, she began to call people: our daughter who lived nearby; our son almost 70 miles away; a longtime family friend and hunting companion; and some neighbors. The consensus was that if I had not returned by 7 p.m., then something was really wrong. A neighbor, who felt something serious had happened, decided to go find out what that was. He went into the woods and began calling for me.

"Damn! Now everyone will know where my stand is." These were the words I uttered as my rescuers prepared to carry me out of the woods.

It was November 17, 1997, the last day of bow season in New York, and a day I will never forget.

I began the season hunting out of my favorite stand, a permanent structure I had discovered abandoned and in disrepair 24 years before. Located about one-half mile from my home, the stand was more than 25' in the air and looked down into a swamp, a dense area that contained what appeared to be several deer trails. My oldest daughter, who was six at the time, helped me drag the extension ladder and building materials to the site to rebuild it. My thinking was that if some "old timer" had gone to the trouble to construct it here, it must be a good site.



The inhospitable landing spot

Our home was located on a dead-end dirt road on a 700-acre dairy farm at the base of the Shawangunk Mountains. The stand was 300 yards in the woods, off a lane that was the now abandoned extension of the road we lived on. With the mountains to the west and farmlands to the east, the stand was positioned to observe deer moving back and forth in the morning and evenings between their bedding areas on the side of the mountain and the valley where they fed.

My routine was to get to the stand about one hour before daylight, hunt until about 10 a.m., return home and work for a few hours, and be back in the stand about 2 p.m. As a teacher, I was only able to hunt on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, but living where I did enabled me to maximize my hunting time.

Over the years, I had rebuilt the stand a number of times, each time improving it both for comfort and for safety. I had learned that nailing the support members to the trees was not very safe—the trees moved in the wind causing the members to move, and the nails rusted, making the structure unsafe over time. I began using heavy spikes and rested the support members on them and wired them to the tree. This allowed for movement without weakening the structure. When branches I used while climbing died, I cut them off and replaced them with heavy spikes. The last spike I added was about 18' below the deck of the stand.

One perfect fall Sunday afternoon, I decided to go hunting. I quickly got into my camo, grabbed my pack and bow, and walked up the lane to the stand. I didn't tell anyone in the house I was going hunting or where I was going to go—an error I would regret.

I was in the stand by 2 p.m., and within an hour began to see deer. I wasn't able to get a shot, but knew tomorrow would be a great day. It was time to leave. I lowered my pack, then my bow, and stood looking down planning my decent. I checked my watch; it was 4:44.

Unfortunately, as I stepped back and down onto the first spike with my right foot, I instinctively reached up and grabbed a short, 10"-long branch for support—a branch I had cut off years earlier to provide a clear shooting lane for my bow. It broke off in my hand. My right foot was on the spike, my left foot was still on the stand, and my body was now headed out backwards toward the ground below, which contained numerous boulders and large, exposed tree roots. I clearly remember thinking this is how I was going to die.

As I fell, I turned and grabbed for a large branch, but I hit it with my chest and face. My next thought (or sensation) was that I was tumbling. I remember raising my arms to shield my face, and at almost that same moment, I hit the ground. I actually bounced back up and then hit the ground a second time. I could not believe I had just fallen about 25' and landed on the forest floor with rocks and boulders everywhere, yet I was still alive! I was in severe pain, however.

“Damn! Now everyone will know where my stand is. These were the words I uttered as my rescuers prepared to carry me out of the woods.”

I could see that my right hip was either broken or dislocated. My leg was lying kind of off to the side. My left shoulder was in similar shape. I could not move either limb. I had landed between a large

oblong rock and several other large rocks in a depression on the forest floor. You could say it was bad luck that I fell, but I was incredibly lucky to land where I did.

Almost immediately, I realized that I had to get up and out of the woods. It was now completely dark and getting colder, and I was only wearing lightweight cotton camouflage clothes. I pushed myself up with my right arm and got my left leg under me. But that was as far as I could get. My left arm and right leg were entirely useless. I could not get onto my feet. I had no choice but to lay there on the ground and hope that someone would find me. I had always believed that because of my physical and mental strength, I could overcome any adversity. I had never imagined this combination of injuries. Having both the right leg and left arm immobilized left me completely unable to get up or even to move.

I was able to turn myself onto my back, and made a pillow out of my face mask. I was as comfortable as I could make myself and began the wait to be rescued. After a while, I saw a light that appeared to be moving through the woods. I started to yell for help. The light continued to move; then I could no longer see it. After the fourth time, I realized I was seeing planes from a local airport. I decided I needed to save my voice so I would be heard if and when someone came looking for me.

The temperature continued to drop, and I began to shiver. I thought I could survive my injuries but wasn't sure I could survive the cold. At some point, my right hamstring spasmed. The pain was incredible! I spent much of the remaining time concentrating on keeping that muscle from going into another spasm.

“ I clearly remember thinking this is how I was going to die.”

All the while I was laying there, I could hear wild critters moving around me, and I pictured the deer laughing at me. At some point, I thought I heard someone yell something. I lay as quietly as possible and listened. I heard it again, and this time it was a little louder. Someone was in the woods! I yelled back as loudly as I could and heard a response. I could not make out what was said, but I didn't care—someone knew I was here. I yelled a second time and got another response. Then nothing; complete quiet. I hoped the person was going back to get help.

I lay and waited for the sounds of rescuers. I found out later that the person I had heard was my neighbor, who had decided to go up into the woods to see if he could find me. It wasn't too long before I heard people coming up the lane and calling for me. It was my younger daughter, who had a pretty good idea where the stand was, and my oldest daughter's husband. When they got closer, I yelled for her to go home and call the rescue squad. My son-in-law got to me and I told him I was freezing. He covered me with his coat; it was one of the best gifts I had ever received. A short time later, my son came running through the woods. My wife had called him to say I hadn't come home, and he jumped into his jeep and drove the 70 miles. I explained what had happened, and while we were talking, we heard more people coming through the woods.

The rescue squad
had arrived.

I asked my son to take my pack and bow to the house, and the squad began to get me ready to be transported out of the woods and to the hospital. The squad leader was a neighbor, and a couple of members of the squad had been students of mine. They had a hard time stabilizing my head and every time they moved my arm, it was extremely painful. I was still freezing and just wanted to get out of the woods.

My lifelong friend, Jim Riley, and his brother, Howard, also arrived; it seemed my wife had called everyone I knew. Jim and I had been hunting together since we were 14 years old. He got the job of cradling my dislocated arm as the squad carried me out of the woods. It was now almost midnight.

I never appreciated being warm as much as I did in the back of the ambulance on my way to the hospital. At the hospital, the doctor discovered my right knee had been punctured and the kneecap shattered by something (possibly one of the spikes or a branch). The wound contained debris (leaves and twigs) from the forest floor, which created a very serious possibility of infection. I was immediately prepped for surgery.

My shoulder joint and right hip were put back in place and immobilized. My right knee, which I did not even know had been injured, was operated on and repaired. I spent three weeks in the hospital and was released on Christmas Day. I lamented the fact I had missed the entire hunting season.

I had a long road to recovery as a result of my fall. I experienced blood clots, endured gall stones, and underwent months of physical therapy. Several months after the fall, my right hip was replaced—the trauma had caused the hip joint to die. A couple of years later, I had to have my left hip replaced—apparently it was damaged as well and took longer to succumb to the trauma.

I continue to hunt from trees, but will not leave the ground without first attaching a safety vest. I never again used a home-built stand where I could not use a safety vest. My friend, Jim Riley, was a hunter safety instructor in Virginia, and he used my story to illustrate that it does not matter how smart you are or how long you've been hunting, accidents can still happen.

Jim and I are in our late 70s. We still hunt together (usually from trees) and intend to do so as long as we possibly can. But an important lesson I learned from my experience is that you must always let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return, and *always* use safety gear.

Good hunting may be the goal, but more importantly, make safe hunting part of your hunting routine.

Ed Rhine is a retired superintendent of schools. He spent 70 years living in NY and now resides in NC.

Tree Stand Incidents and Safety

Tree stand incidents are becoming a major cause of hunting-related injuries and fatalities in New York. The proper use of tree stands and full-body harnesses will help prevent such accidents.

- **Check your stands** (including straps and chains) every season and before every use and replace any worn or missing pieces.
- **Use a full-body harness** with a lifeline and stay connected from the time you leave the ground until you get back down.
- **Never carry your gun, bow, crossbow, or gear** as you climb to your stand. Secure all your hunting equipment to a haul line (e.g., strong rope). Do not tie the haul line around the trigger or trigger guard on a firearm; raise a firearm with the muzzle pointing toward the ground. Once you are safely in your stand, and your tether is attached to the tree, raise your equipment to the stand. Use the same haul line to lower your equipment to the ground before climbing down.
- **Let a someone know** where you will be hunting and when you will return. A map showing your stand location will help others find you if you do not return on time.
- **Carry emergency equipment**, such as a knife, cell phone, flashlight, and whistle in your pockets (not in your pack) at all times.

For more information, check out "Hunting Safety Basics" on DEC's website www.dec.ny.gov.



SOUTH OTSELIC FISH CULTURE STATION

BY WILLIAM WOODWORTH AND MICHAEL SPEZIALE

The South Otselic Fish Culture Station (a.k.a., South Otselic Hatchery) is one of three cool-water fish hatcheries operated by DEC. The hatchery was first established in 1932 to produce black bass, but over the years many fish species have been raised at the facility. Today, the hatchery produces tiger muskellunge, walleye, and heritage brook trout, which are stocked into approximately 60 public lakes, rivers, and ponds around the state.

Each year, in early April, several staff from South Otselic head up to the Oneida Hatchery to participate in the annual walleye egg collection. While this is going on, staff at South Otselic prepare the hatchery's 10 earthen ponds to receive the 335,000 newly hatched Oneida walleye fry. Before the fry are stocked, the ponds are fertilized using alfalfa meal, brewer's yeast, and cow manure. This combination of organic fertilizers ignites a plankton bloom, which becomes the main forage (food) for the young walleye.

While the walleye fry are being raised in the ponds, staff monitor the ponds daily for oxygen, zooplankton, clarity, algae, and the presence of fish; additional fertilizer is added as needed. After 50 days, the water is drawn down and the walleye are harvested as 1.5- to 2-inch fingerlings. These fingerlings are then stocked into 12-20 public waters throughout the state.

Around mid-April to early May, fish culturists pick up tiger musky fry from Hackettstown Fish Hatchery in New Jersey, which has generously supplied New York with this premiere sportfish for more than a decade. A sterile hybrid cross of northern pike and muskellunge, the "tigers" are then raised indoors for 4 to 5 months. The fish grow at an astonishing rate and by September they have reached or exceeded their target size of 9 inches and are ready to be stocked. In some years, the hatchery has been able to stock 11-inch tigers.

Two sources provide the water used at South Otselic Hatchery: the Otselic River provides up to 1,500 gallons of water per minute (gpm); and a well produces 350 gpm of 49°F water. Tiger muskies and walleyes are primarily grown on river water, while brookies are raised entirely on the colder well water.

In early October, after all the hatchery fish have been stocked, the entire staff from South Otselic travel to Cayuga Lake to conduct the annual Finger Lakes lake trout egg collection. With the assistance of the Oneida and Bath hatcheries, fish culturists collect approximately 350,000 lake trout eggs and 50,000 splake (a hybrid cross of brook trout and lake trout) eggs. The spawning lake trout are captured using 300-foot-long gill nets set in front of Taughannock Falls State Park. The adult trout are brought



Walleye pond fingerlings



Staff harvest walleye pond fingerlings.



Stocking tiger muskies by boat

LOCATED IN THE HAMLET OF SOUTH OTSELIC IN CHENANGO COUNTY



If You Go

One of three cool-water fish hatcheries operated by DEC, the South Otselic Hatchery is open to the public year-round.



LOCATION: 1549 State Highway 26, South Otselic, NY 13155



VISITOR HOURS: Open 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, year-round



SPECIES RAISED: tiger muskellunge, walleye, and brook trout



PHONE: (315) 653-7727

on board a pontoon work boat, stripped of their eggs and milt, and then immediately released back into the lake. One morning during this week-long project is dedicated to making splake eggs. For this, adult male brook trout from the Randolph Hatchery in Cattaraugus County are crossed with wild Cayuga Lake female lake trout. All the resulting eggs of both species are shipped to the Bath Hatchery to be raised there.

The heritage brook trout rearing season for South Otselic Hatchery begins in early November. Hatchery staff work with DEC fisheries biologists and technicians to take eggs from wild Windfall and Little Tupper brook trout in the Adirondacks. The fertilized eggs are transported to the South Otselic Hatchery and are raised indoors until May. The resulting three-inch fingerlings are transferred to Rome Hatchery to be stocked into Adirondack lakes and ponds.

The diversity of fish produced each year at South Otselic provides sportsmen and sportswomen with exciting fishing opportunities. If you visit the hatchery, make sure to bring along a fishing pole, as the Otselic River has a great brown trout fishery.

William Woodworth is the Hatchery Manager at DEC's South Otselic Fish Culture Station, and **Michael Speziale** is the Assistant Hatchery Manager there.

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Tiger Muskellunge

- A hybrid cross between northern pike and muskellunge.
- While they occasionally occur naturally, most tiger muskellunge found in New York's waters have been stocked. They are sterile hybrids, so no successful spawning takes place.
- Has dark stripes running vertically down its sides.
- Tigers are extremely rapid growers, growing more quickly than either parent during the first two years of life. Adults can reach in excess of 4-feet long and 30 pounds.
- DEC has been raising and stocking tiger muskies since 1968; approximately 90,000-110,000, 9-10 inch-long tiger muskies are stocked in each year in late summer.
- An important game fish actively sought by many anglers.



Otisco Lake tiger musky

Remember to Report Your Game Harvest

HuntFishNY Mobile App * 1-866-426-3778 * www.dec.ny.gov

Most regulations are in effect September 1, 2019 through August 31, 2020

REGULAR & BOWHUNTING DEER SEASONS

Hunting Hours: Sunrise to Sunset

2019

Northern - Southern Zone Line

Youth Firearms Season
Season Dates: Oct. 12 - 14, 2019
Area Open: Northern and Southern Zone, except bowhunting only WMUs
Eligible Hunters: Youth 14-15 years of age
Bag Limit: One deer (antlered or antlerless)
Tags: Regular (either-sex), DMP and DMAP (antlerless-only), Bow/Muzz tags are not valid

Crossbows
May be used to hunt deer during the Northern and Southern Zone Regular Seasons
May not be used to hunt deer:
- during the Youth Firearms Season; or
- anytime in WMUs 1C (Suffolk County), 3S (Westchester County), 4J or 8C.

NORTHERN ZONE	Early Bowhunting--All WMUs	Sept. 27 - Oct. 25
	Crossbow	Oct. 16 - Oct. 25
	Regular	Oct. 26 - Dec. 8
	Late Bowhunting--Only WMUs 5A, 5G, 5J, 5A, 6C, 6D, and 6H	Dec. 9 - Dec. 15
SOUTHERN ZONE	Early Bowhunting	Oct. 1 - Nov. 15
	Crossbow--Not in WMUs 4J or 8C	Nov. 2 - Nov. 15
	Regular (opens Saturday)	Nov. 16 - Dec. 8
	Late Bowhunting	Dec. 9 - Dec. 17
WESTCHESTER COUNTY (3S)	Regular--Bowhunting Only	Oct. 1 - Dec. 31
SUFFOLK COUNTY (1C)	Regular--Bowhunting Only	Oct. 1, 2019 - Jan. 31, 2020
	Special Firearms (Permit Req.)	Jan. 5 - Jan. 31, 2020

Antler Point Restrictions
During all seasons, antlered bucks must have at least one antler with 3 or more points that are at least 1 inch long. Young hunters (ages 12-15) are exempt.

No Deer Hunting

MUZZLELOADING DEER SEASONS

Hunting Hours: Sunrise to Sunset

2019

Northern - Southern Zone Line

Northern Zone

Deer of Either Sex	Oct. 10 - Oct. 25
Deer of Either Sex	Dec. 9 - Dec. 15
Antlered Only	Oct. 19 - Oct. 25
Deer of Either Sex	Dec. 9 - Dec. 15
Deer of Either Sex	Oct. 19 - Oct. 25
Antlered Only	Oct. 19 - Oct. 25

Southern Zone

Deer of Either Sex	Dec. 9 - Dec. 17
--------------------	------------------

Crossbows
May be used to hunt deer during the Northern and Southern Zone Muzzleloader Seasons.
May not be used to hunt deer anytime in WMUs 1C (Suffolk County), 3S (Westchester County), 4J or 8C.

Antler Point Restrictions
During all seasons, antlered bucks must have at least one antler with 3 or more points that are at least 1 inch long. Young hunters (ages 12-15) are exempt.

No Muzzleloading Season

BLACK BEAR SEASONS

Hunting Hours: Sunrise to Sunset

2019

Northern - Southern Zone Line

Youth Firearms Season
Season Dates: Oct. 12 - 14, 2019
Area Open: Northern and Southern Zone, except bowhunting only WMUs
Eligible Hunters: Youth 14-15 years of age

Crossbows
May be used to hunt bear during the early bear seasons, muzzleloader seasons, and the regular firearms seasons.
May not be used to hunt bear anytime in WMUs 3S (Westchester County), 4J, or 8C.

Northern Zone

Early Bear	Sept. 14 - Oct. 18
Bowhunting	Sept. 14 - Oct. 25
Crossbow	Oct. 16 - Oct. 25
Muzzleloading	Oct. 19 - Oct. 25
Regular	Oct. 26 - Dec. 8

Southern Zone

Early Bear	Sept. 7 - Sept. 22
Early Bowhunting	Oct. 1 - Nov. 15
Crossbow--Not in 3S, 4J, or 8C	Nov. 2 - Nov. 15
Regular	Nov. 16 - Dec. 8
Late Bowhunting	Dec. 9 - Dec. 17
Late Muzzleloading	Dec. 9 - Dec. 17
Westchester County (3S)	Oct. 1 - Dec. 31
Regular--Bowhunting Only	

Bowhunting Only WMUs
 No Bear Hunting

Allegany State Park prohibits bear hunting

FALL TURKEY SEASONS

Hunting Hours: Sunrise to Sunset

Season Bag Limit: 1 bird of either sex

Fall 2019

Oct. 1 - Oct. 14
Oct. 19 - Nov. 1
Nov. 16 - Nov. 29

SPRING TURKEY SEASON (no map)

Hunting Hours: One half - hour before sunrise to noon

Area Open: All of upstate New York north of the Bronx-Westchester County boundary

Season Dates: May 1 - May 31

Season Bag Limits: Two bearded turkeys (one bird per day)

SPRING YOUTH HUNT

Season Dates: April 25 - 26, 2020

Area Open: Same as regular spring season Plus Suffolk County (WMU 1C)

Eligible hunters: Youth 12 - 15 years of age

How To Properly Fill Out Your Carcass Tag and Report Your Harvest

Carcass Tag

It's as Easy as 1 - 2 - 3!!

- Fill in the date, location, biological and season information on the front of your tag.
- Mark or cut out month and day of kill AND sign the back of your tag.
- Report your harvest! See details below.

Use pen or permanent marker.

Hole for attaching to your game

Report Your Game Harvest

- Deer, Bear and Turkey harvests must be reported within 7 days of take.
- You can report your harvest by phone, online or through our new mobile app
- Reporting online and through the new mobile app is simple, fast and convenient!

Take It * Tag It * Report It

1-866-426-3778 or the HuntFishNY Mobile App www.dec.ny.gov

RUFFED GROUSE HUNTING

Hunting Hours: Sunrise to Sunset



COTTONTAIL RABBIT HUNTING

Hunting Hours: Sunrise to Sunset



PHEASANT HUNTING

Hunting Hours: Sunrise to Sunset

- Cocks only
- Cocks & hens
- Cocks only east of Shinnecock Canal & Inlet

2019/20 Regular Season	2019 Youth Hunt	2019 Bag Limits Daily	2019 Bag Limits Season
Oct. 19 – Dec. 31	Oct. 12 & 13	2	-
Oct. 19 – Feb. 29	Oct. 12 & 13	2	-
Oct. 1 – Feb. 29	Sept. 28 & 29	2	-
Nov. 1 – Dec. 31	Oct. 26 & 27 †	2*/4**	30
Nov. 1 – Dec. 31	Oct. 26 & 27	2*/4**	30

†No Youth Hunt in WMU 2A / *Youth Hunt / **Regular Hunt

Junior hunters (ages 12-15) must be accompanied by a licensed adult hunter. Only the junior hunter may carry a firearm.

VARYING HARE HUNTING

Hunting Hours: Sunrise to Sunset



GRAY, BLACK & FOX SQUIRREL HUNTING

Daily bag limit of 6.

Hunting Hours: Sunrise to Sunset

Long Island: Nov. 1 – Feb. 29

All other areas of New York: Sept. 1 – Feb. 29.

Red squirrels are unprotected, and may be hunted at any time without limit.



BOBWHITE QUAIL HUNTING

Hunting Hours: Sunrise to Sunset



Counties
Orange
Putnam
Nassau
Suffolk

Season Dates 2019/20	Bag Limits Daily	Bag Limits Season
Oct. 1 – Feb. 29	4	10
Nov. 1 – Dec. 31	6	40
Closed		

RACCOON, FOX, SKUNK, OPOSSUM, & WEASEL HUNTING

Long Island: Nov. 1 – Feb. 25

All other areas of New York: Oct. 25 – Feb. 15.

There are no bag limits for these species. They may be hunted during the day or night, except weasel which may only be hunted from sunrise to sunset.

COYOTE HUNTING

Statewide except Long Island and New York City:
Oct. 1 – Mar. 29



There are no bag limits for coyotes. They may be hunted during the day or night.

BOBCAT HUNTING

There are no bag limits.

Hunting Hours:
After sunrise on opening day; and at any hour, day or night, for the rest of the open hunting season.

If you take a bobcat, you MUST:

- 1) Complete a Furbearer Possession Tag AND
- 2) Get the pelt or unskinned animal sealed.

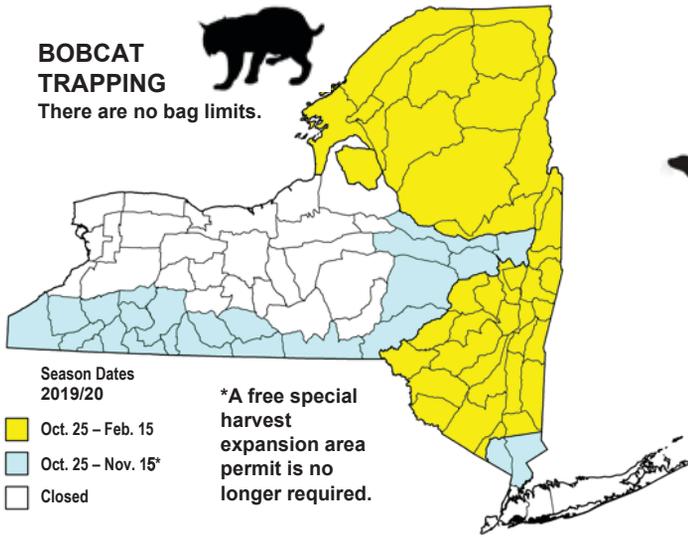


*A free special harvest expansion area permit is no longer required. You must still have a valid hunting license.

BOBCAT TRAPPING

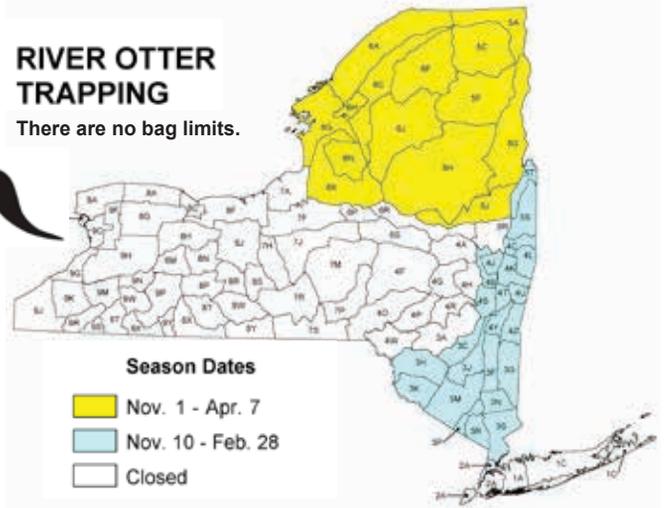


There are no bag limits.



RIVER OTTER TRAPPING

There are no bag limits.



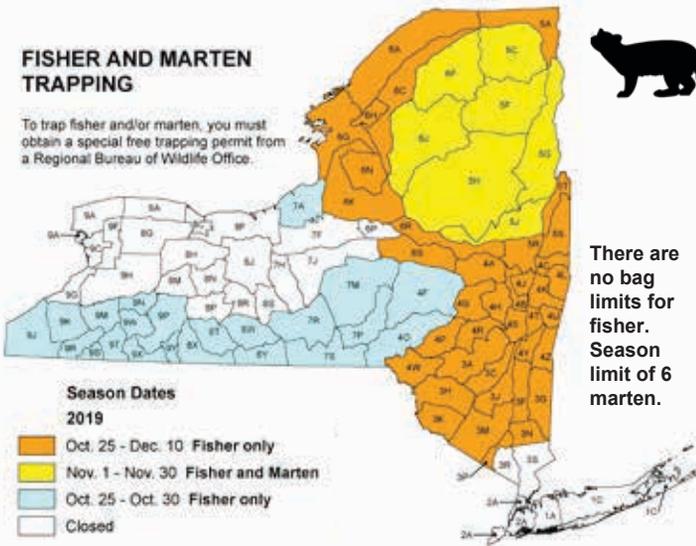
Reminder

If you take a fisher, marten, bobcat, or river otter, YOU MUST

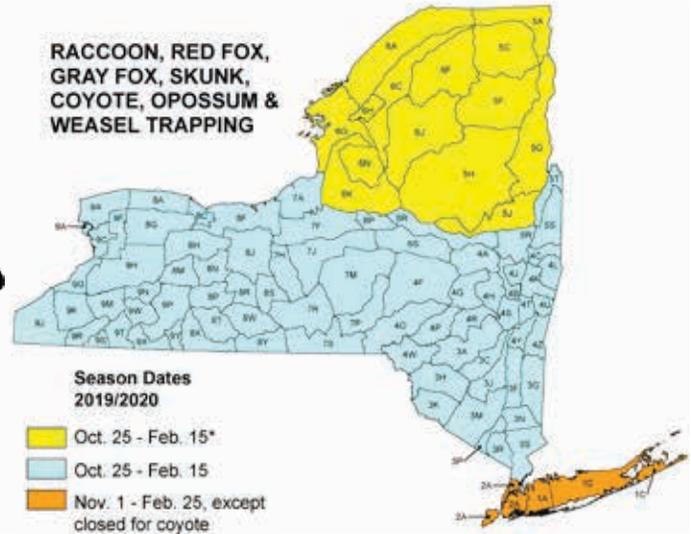
1. Complete a Furbearer Possession Tag AND
2. Get the pelt or unskinned animal sealed.

FISHER AND MARTEN TRAPPING

To trap fisher and/or marten, you must obtain a special free trapping permit from a Regional Bureau of Wildlife Office.



RACCOON, RED FOX, GRAY FOX, SKUNK, COYOTE, OPOSSUM & WEASEL TRAPPING

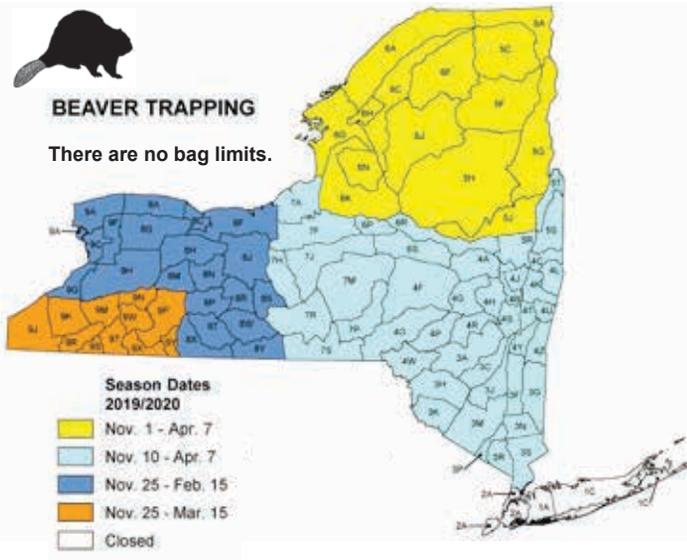


*In the Northern Zone body-gripping traps set on land may not be set with bait or lure if the fisher and marten season is closed.



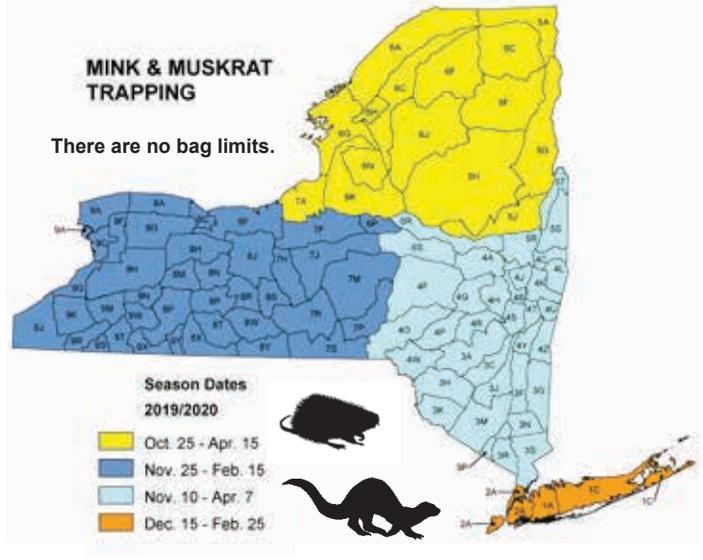
BEAVER TRAPPING

There are no bag limits.

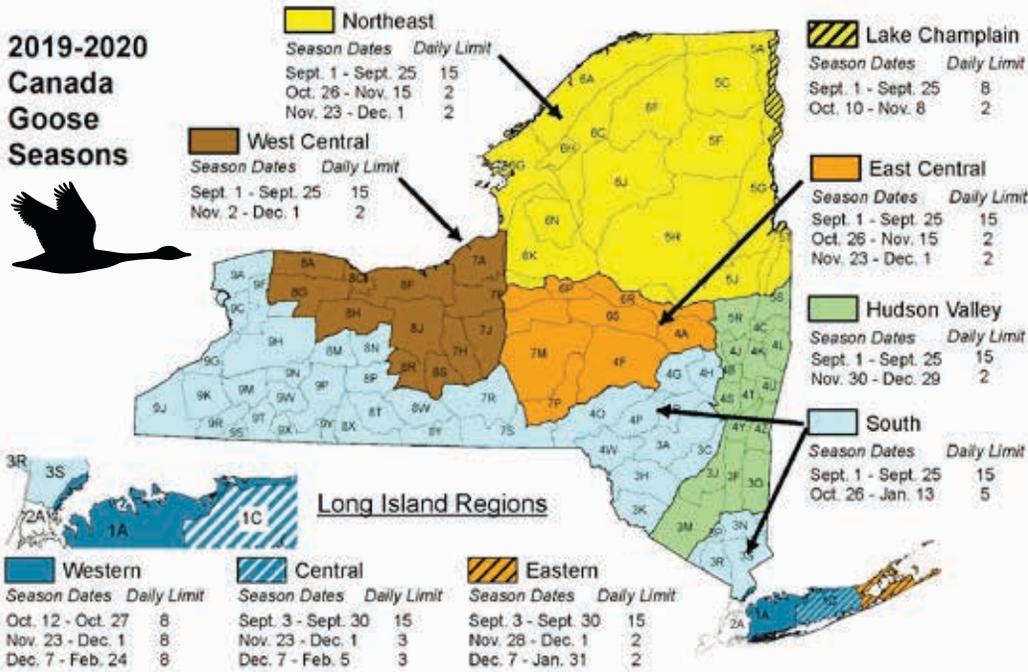


MINK & MUSKRAT TRAPPING

There are no bag limits.



2019-2020 Canada Goose Seasons



WOODCOCK

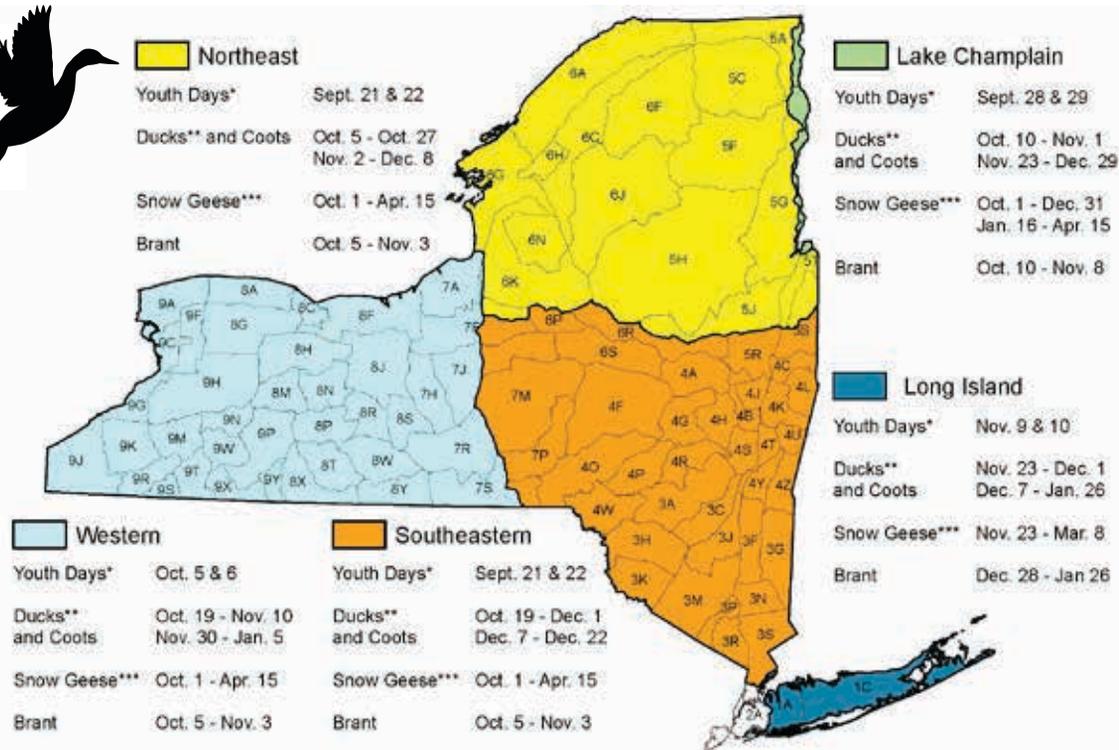
Oct. 1 - Nov. 14
Closed



CROW

Sept. 1 - Mar. 31
(Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays
and Mondays only)
Closed

2019-2020 Waterfowl Seasons



SNIPE, RAILS AND GALLINULES

Sept. 1 - Nov. 9
Closed

A migratory duck stamp is not required to hunt these three groups of birds.

HIP registration is required for each of these species except crow. To register: www.newyorkhip.org or 1-888-427-5447.

* Youth hunters, 12 to 15 years of age, possessing a junior hunting license and HIP registration, may hunt ducks, mergansers, Canada geese, brant, gallinules, and coot on two (2) special days in each zone. Daily bag limits for all species are the same as those allowed during the regular hunting season for all species. Youth hunters must be accompanied by a licensed (including current HIP registration and duck stamp) adult hunter, but the adult hunter may only shoot migratory game birds if the respective hunting season is open for hunters of all ages.

** Crippled sea ducks may be taken under power in the Special Sea Duck area, only. The Special Sea Duck Area is defined as the coastal waters of New York State lying in Long Island Sound, Block Island Sound, Great Peconic Bay and associated bays eastward from a line running between Miamogue Point in the Town of Riverhead to Red Cedar Point in the Town of Southampton, and any ocean waters of New York State lying south of Long Island.

*** Snow goose seasons include both the regular hunting season and the Conservation Order that runs from January 16 - April 15 in all zones (except Long Island).

Bag Limits

The daily bag limit is the maximum number of birds of each species that any person may take or possess in the field during any one day. The possession limit is three times the daily bag limit for all migratory game birds except snow geese.

Species	Daily Limit	Possession Limit
Ducks ^a	6	18
Coot	15	45
Canada Geese	See map	* Three times the daily limit
Snow Geese ^b	25	No limit
Brant	2	6

a The daily limit of 6 ducks includes all mergansers and sea ducks (scoters, eiders and long-tailed ducks) and may include no harlequin ducks and no more than 2 mallards (1 of which may be hens), 3 wood ducks, 2 black ducks, 1 pintail, 2 scaup, 2 redheads, 2 canvasbacks, 4 scoters, 4 eiders, 4 long-tailed ducks or 2 hooded mergansers. For all other duck species found in New York, the daily limit is no more than 6.

b Cackling geese and white-fronted geese may be taken as part of the Canada goose daily and possession limits. Snow geese and Ross' geese may be taken as part of the snow goose limits.



2018-19: Successful Season for Deer Hunters

When New York’s deer hunting season gets underway, hunters will look to build on last year’s success. During the 2018-19 season, hunters harvested an estimated 227,787 deer, nearly 12 percent more than the previous season. The total included 114,402 antlerless deer (a 20 percent increase) and 113,385 antlered bucks (a 5 percent increase). The take in the Northern Zone was 28,642 deer, while the Southern Zone take was 199,145. Older bucks—those at least 2.5 years of age—accounted for nearly 60 percent of the adult buck harvest, a record for both total number and percentage of older bucks in the overall harvest. View the full 2018 Deer Harvest Summary Report at www.dec.ny.gov/docs/wildlife_pdf/2018deerrpt.pdf.



NY Teen Artist Designs Junior Duck Stamp

Nicole Jeon, a 16-year-old from Scarsdale, took top honors at the National Junior Duck Stamp Art Contest, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife program that invites students to express their knowledge of North American waterfowl, wildlife conservation, and wetlands through a picture or drawing of a duck, goose, or swan. Nicole’s beautiful acrylic painting of a harlequin duck graces the 2019-20 Junior Duck Stamp, raising funds to support educational programs and activities that nurture our next generation of sportsmen, sportswomen, and conservationists.

Approximately 3,000 Junior Duck Stamps are sold annually for \$5 each; you can buy them online through the U.S. Postal Service and at some national wildlife refuges.



Happy Birthday Smokey

Smokey Bear has been an American icon since 1944, spreading the word about how people can help prevent wildfires. The longest-running public service advertising campaign in U.S. history, this message still resonates today.

Smokey was born on August 9, 1944, part of a joint campaign of the U.S. Forest Service and the Ad Council to use a fictional bear as a symbol to promote forest fire prevention. Over the past 75 years, Smokey has successfully educated generations of Americans with a simple message—“Only YOU can prevent wildfires.”

New York State has 18.6 million acres of public and private forest lands susceptible to seasonal wildfires, so prevention is paramount. In 2018, DEC Forest Rangers, who lead state wildfire control efforts, extinguished 105 wildfires that burned a total of 845 acres. DEC urges all New Yorkers to heed Smokey’s message and take the necessary steps to protect our forests, wildlife, and human life. Wildfires can spread quickly, so join Smokey to reduce the number of wildfires and always make safety your top priority.

Frank Beres

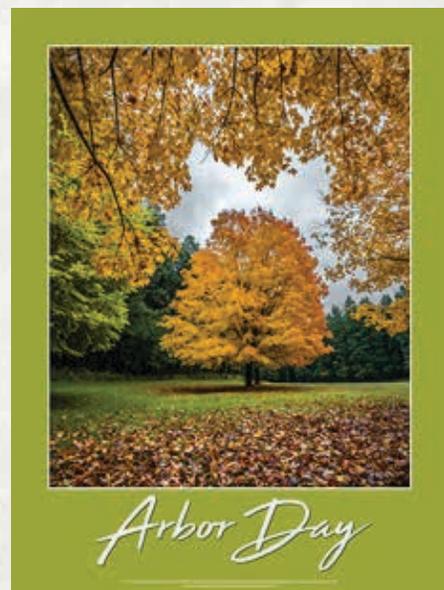


Frank Beres



Southern Pygmy Clubtail—A Rare Sight

A field biologist for the NYC Department of Environmental Protection discovered and photographed an extremely rare dragonfly species along a small tributary of Rondout Creek in the Catskills this summer. The population of the Southern pygmy clubtail (*Lanthus vernalis*), listed as “critically impaired” by the New York Natural Heritage Program since 2012, has been dwindling in New York and the Northeast for nearly two decades. The dragonfly, which only reaches about four centimeters in size and needs cold water to survive and thrive, was found by the scientist as he hiked to a water quality sampling site in the forest around Rondout Creek. It hopped onto the scientist’s finger, who was then able to take some photos before it flew off. Little is known about this insect’s life, habits, and population dynamics. A five-year survey failed to find the dragonfly at half the sites where it was known to historically exist.



Arbor Day Contests

Arbor Day is a time to celebrate trees—their beauty, importance in protecting natural resources and promoting outdoor discovery, and their role in helping mitigate climate change. DEC’s Urban and Community Forestry program is again sponsoring two annual State Arbor Day poster contests to raise awareness of trees. The Arbor Day Original Artwork Poster contest will be accepting photograph and artwork submissions through Dec. 31, 2019. Original entries must feature trees within New York State. Submissions should be sent to arborday@dec.ny.gov, along with the participant’s name, address, and where the photo was taken.

The 5th Grade Arbor Day Poster Contest, co-sponsored by DEC, the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, and the NYS Education Department, invites students to submit an original poster depicting this year’s contest theme: “Trees Feed New York.” Winners will be announced and honored in April at the annual State Arbor Day celebration in Albany. Winning artwork will be replicated on posters distributed to schools, libraries, government offices, nursery and landscaping businesses, and environmental organizations throughout the state. To learn more, visit DEC’s website at www.dec.ny.gov/lands/108006.html



Reflections

I love the NYS *Conservationist* Magazine and wanted to share this picture with you. It was taken on Upper Cascade Lake in Keene, NY

JANET BERNECKY

Great shot, Janet. Check out more fall foliage photos on page 2.



Dropping in for a Visit

This photo was taken at the lean-to above Buttermilk Falls near Long Lake. Can you identify it?

PETER LA DUC
NEW MILFORD, NJ

Thanks for this great pic of a female Araneus saevus (a species of orb weaver) descending on her dragline. This silk is not sticky, and most spiders trail it around wherever they go, occasionally tacking it down with another kind of silk, much like a rock climber setting a belay that minimizes the distance they can fall if they slip. She is holding the silk with the claws of her two hind legs for extra stability as she descends.

—COLE GILBERT, PROFESSOR OF ENTOMOLOGY, CORNELL UNIVERSITY



Ask the Biologist

Q: Can you tell me what is wrong with this crow?

—MELISSA ROWELL

A: This crow is likely suffering from avian pox, as suggested by the crusty scabs around its eyes. Highly contagious, the virus can be spread by mosquitos and direct contact with infected birds or contaminated surfaces such as bird feeders. It is a great reminder to clean out bird feeders and bird baths with a 10 percent bleach, 90 percent water solution before placing them outside for the winter.

—KEVIN HYNES, DEC WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST



A Covered Dish

Last winter, I spotted this Barred Owl suddenly swoop to the ground onto a snow pile and catch a mouse that must have been tunneling through the snow. I was so lucky to have been there, camera in hand, to capture it.

DEAN NEWTON
HASTINGS, OSWEGO COUNTY

Mice are a favorite meal of barred owls, whose diet also includes squirrels, chipmunks, rabbits, amphibians, reptiles, and other birds. They sit in their perch, using their sharp eyes and ears to scan for prey.



Two Large Bucks

I was lucky enough to get photos of two majestic whitetail bucks in Albany County.
DEAN BOUTON

Those are two nice-looking deer. Body and antler size of white-tailed bucks increases with age until they reach full maturity at age 5-7. As more hunters in New York chose to pass up shots at young bucks, we're seeing more middle-aged bucks, with larger bodies and bigger antlers in New York.

—JEREMY HURST, DEC WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST



Keeping an Eye Out

Aaron Winters sent us this shot of a male northern harrier in Geneseo NY. Formerly called a marsh hawk, the northern harrier may cover up to 100 miles per day in search of prey such as rodents and small birds. It is extremely agile and acrobatic, and requires vast expanses of relatively intact open habitat.



Curiouser and Curiouser

My wife Cindy and I went for a hike to the top of Dog Hill Mt. in the Catskills. We came across a couple of black bears eating acorns. They ran off, but one of the bear's curiosity got the best of it and decided to see what was going on. We will hold that memory forever!

FRED WEBER

What a great experience! Bears are remarkable animals, and it's great that you were able to observe one while you were hiking. In the late summer and fall, bears spend a great deal of time feeding in preparation for winter. Unfortunately, sometimes this brings them in close proximity to humans where they find unsecured garbage, bird seed, and pet food. Whether you live or recreate in the bear country, please remember to help protect the bears by not letting them access unnatural foods, and if you see a bear, keep your distance as you did here.

—JEREMY HURST, DEC WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

CONTACT US!

@ magazine@dec.ny.gov



Conservationist Letters
NYSDEC, 625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233-4502



facebook.com/NYSDECtheconservationist

Back Trails

Perspectives on People and Nature

Evolution of a Hunter

BY RAY ROCKWELL

A brace of mallard drakes that were recently dabbling in the slow-water section of a local creek showed up at the backdoor. They were in my father's hands; a hunter's hands. Their arrival awakened in me a hardwired urge to hunt; but I was too young and the opportunities too few.

Still, I'd beg to be taken hunting, beg for stories of adventures in the chase. Farming doesn't leave much time for a father's indulgence, but now and then in autumn we'd go for a walk in the woods. At intervals I was allowed to carry the old single-shot twelve, open and empty, and almost as long as I was tall. The handful of shells were secure in the parental pocket. I was one happy hunter; well, bearer anyway.

I eased into a BB-and-Me stage, practicing stalking techniques whenever I could. Yet, I was intrigued with stories about trapping muskrats in and around a stand of flooded timber always called "the drowned lands." Now there was something perhaps more age-appropriate for me than propellants and projectiles!

I was welcome to tag along and set out a few of the ancestral traps, but I had to go out early enough each morning to check the line before school. Should one or more sets have been successful overnight, I'd come home quickly and fetch my father to come and complete the capture. Everything else was my responsibility—fleshing and stretching the skins of rabbits,

skunks, and once an utterly unexpected opossum.

But my thoughts always returned to hunting. By now I was at an age when I could be trusted with the rimfire Remington, and after school on those so-short winter days, I followed tracks in the snow, armed and ready for whatever the wilderness sent my way—wolf or wolverine, moose or musk-ox. Fantasy and reality ultimately failed, however, when we moved to the suburbs.

As I entered high school, our new setting offered many pursuits besides hunting and trapping, and I pursued them. Years later, it was *me* caught in a trap—the tender trap of love, then marriage, carriage, mortgage, and time-consuming jobs.

After twenty years, I decided to buy my hunting license and I set out to explore the pheasant/rabbit fields of my younger years only to find they had become the back nine of a local golf course. Likewise, I discovered the hilltop squirrel woods were now posted, and the partridge place was a cluster of single-family houses.

I decided to expand my purview to include a new hunting target—white-tailed deer. My father had always avoided deer hunting, so deer were an unknown quantity to me. Fortunately,



I was helped by guides and mentors: one whose family homestead was on the edge of the Catskills; another who lived in the heart of the Adirondacks; and the third who frequented the eastern edge of the county, hunted on public land, and knew it intimately. All I know about the when-to, where-to, and how-to of deer, guns, and the right hunting gear, I learned from them.

While I've come back to hunting rabbits and grouse, and have added turkeys and coyotes, all of those must wait until big game season closes. With one exception—the May turkey season. Then is the occasion for awful sleep-deprivation...which, in turn, affects my hunt for trout, where I sometimes see a pair of puddle ducks, which is where it all began.

Ray Rockwell is a retired high school English teacher. He was an ADK leant-to adopter for 19 years, and enjoys hunting and fishing.

Hunting Q & A

Q: Can anyone hunt?

A: No. Hunters must be licensed. To qualify for licenses, all hunters must first pass a Hunter Education course that covers safety, wildlife conservation, responsible use of natural resources, outdoor skills, and hunting techniques. Other special courses are required for bowhunting and trapping. Junior Hunters (12- through 15-year-olds) can hunt only under supervision of a licensed parent or guardian, or adult hunter designated in writing by the parent or guardian. Also, 14- and 15-year-olds can now hunt deer and bear. (See rules in Hunting Regulations Guide www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/37136.html.)

Q: Is hunting dangerous?

A: The most dangerous part of a hunting trip is the drive to the hunting area. Safety courses and strict hunting laws have reduced potential dangers. Activities such as bicycling and swimming are many times more likely to result in injuries or death than hunting.

Q: Does hunting endanger wildlife?

A: No. Hunting is highly regulated. Limited seasons and bag limits ensure proper numbers of overwintering breeding stock. Too many animals in winter, when food is limited, can mean decreased survival for the whole population. Regulated hunting helps manage populations of some species to reduce crop and environmental damage, diseases, and road collisions.

Also, the dollars spent by hunters are responsible for the restoration of many species of wildlife (such as bald eagles and peregrine falcons) in New York and the Northeast. Those same dollars support the purchase and management of over 200,000 acres of Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) across the state. WMAs provide wildlife habitat for game and nongame wildlife, as well as recreational areas where all New Yorkers can participate in hunting, fishing, hiking, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing.

NYSDEC Hunter Education

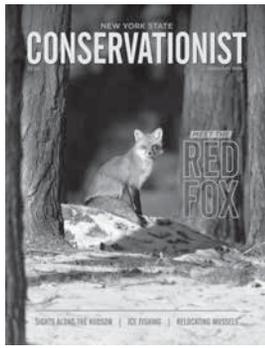
To find a course: Toll-free 1-888-HUNT-ED2
On the web: www.dec.ny.gov
(Search "Hunter Education Classes")

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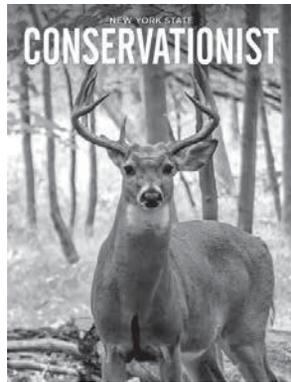
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March 1, 2020

BYO BAG

Did you know that New Yorkers use more than 23 billion plastic bags a year?

When improperly disposed of, plastic bags pose threats to fish and wildlife, clog machinery at recycling facilities, and litter the pristine outdoor places we love and enjoy spending time in with our friends and family.

Starting March 1, 2020, any retailers required to collect New York State sales tax will no longer be able to provide plastic carryout bags to their customers. But you don't need to wait for March 1st to take action! You can start bringing your reusable bags to the store ahead of the ban going into effect. Remembering your reusable bag means conserving natural resources, creating less litter, and keeping New York beautiful for future generations.

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/117781.html>



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Department of
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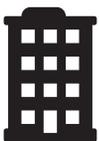
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Visit DEC's website

2018 BIG BUCK CLUB AWARDS

The New York State Big Buck Club, Inc. is a private organization that maintains records of large deer and bear taken in New York. Each year since 1972, the Big Buck Club has recognized the hunters who take the largest trophy bucks in the state. The winner for each category receives original art of his or her deer by artist Michael Barr of Corning.



Largest Gun Deer (Non-typical)

Taken in: Onondaga County

Score: Net 195-5/8

Gross 202-1/8

Points: 17

Taken by James Buff



Largest Gun Deer (Typical)

Taken in: Livingston County

Score: Net 172-0/8

Gross 180-1/8

Points: 11

Taken by Delaney Emerson

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

NYS BBC, Records Office, 147 Dog Tail Corners Rd., Wingdale, NY 12594

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Autumn colors on Long Island

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