Introducing a new generation to the outdoors — Take a youth hunter afield this Fall

Once again, DEC is providing a special youth deer season over the three-day Columbus Day weekend. Junior hunters (ages 12–15) are eligible to take one antlered or one antlerless deer with a firearm and 14- and 15-year-old junior hunters may also take a bear with a firearm during this season. Rules of the Junior Hunter Mentoring Program (page 37) also apply.

DEC also offers special opportunities for junior hunters (ages 12–15) for waterfowl, wild turkey, and pheasants.

For all youth hunts, junior hunters must be accompanied by an adult hunter. Both the junior and adult hunters are required to have a hunting license for the youth deer season, a hunting license and a turkey permit for the turkey hunt, and a hunting license and current HIP registration for the waterfowl hunt. During the youth waterfowl hunt, the supervising adult must also have a federal duck stamp. During the youth pheasant, turkey, and big game hunts, adult hunters are not allowed to possess a firearm, crossbow, or bow, or to harvest an animal while accompanying a junior hunter. During the youth waterfowl hunt the adult hunter supervising the junior hunter may not carry a firearm, longbow, or crossbow afield, but the prohibition does not apply to other hunters in the party that are not mentoring the junior waterfowl hunter.

Crossbows may be used by 12- and 13-year-old hunters only to take deer. Hunters ages 14 and 15 may use a crossbow to take deer, bear, and other game for which crossbows may be used.

Note: Junior hunters (ages 12–15) must be accompanied by a licensed adult hunter whenever they are afield in pursuit of game, not just during designated special youth seasons.

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**Youth Wild Turkey Hunt**

Upstate NY (north of Bronx-Westchester Co. boundary and Suffolk County) | April 22–23, 2023

**Youth Firearms Deer and Bear Hunt**

Upstate NY (north of Bronx-Westchester Co. boundary; excluding bowhunting-only WMUs) | Columbus Day Weekend; October 8–10, 2022
Junior Hunter/Trapper Opportunities

Junior Big Game Hunting

NEW OPPORTUNITY: 12- and 13-year-olds can hunt deer with a gun or crossbow in counties that opt-in
A new law adopted in 2021 reduced the age for hunting deer with firearms and crossbows:
- Counties must pass a local law allowing the activity. See DEC website (www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/46245.html) for a list of counties that have opted-in.
- 12- and 13-year-olds can hunt deer with a rifle, shotgun, or muzzleloader during the youth deer hunt or regular season, and hunt deer with a muzzleloader during the early or late muzzleloading season.
- 12- and 13-year-olds can hunt deer with a crossbow during the crossbow portion of the early bow season, the regular season and late muzzleloading season.
- The new law does not authorize bear hunting.

12- and 13-year-old hunters must meet the same requirements as 14- and 15-year-old hunting deer with a firearm.

12- and 13-year-old junior bowhunters can hunt deer and bear with a bow if they meet the following requirements:
- Have completed a course in both Hunter Education and Bowhunting Education.
- Purchase a Junior Bowhunting License.
- Are accompanied by a parent, legal guardian, or a "youth mentor" who is 21 years or older and designated in writing by the junior hunter’s parent or legal guardian (use the form below).

- The accompanying adult needs to have at least 3 years of experience in hunting deer or bear by longbow AND have a license to hunt big game in the same seasons.
- The parent, guardian or youth mentor must maintain physical control over the minor at all times while hunting.

14- and 15-year-old junior hunting license holders can hunt deer and bear with a gun if they meet the following requirements:
- Have completed a course in Hunter Education.
- Purchase a Junior Hunting License.
- Be accompanied by a parent, legal guardian, or a "youth mentor" who is 21 years or older designated in writing (use the form below).
- The accompanying adult needs to have at least 3 years of hunting experience AND have a license to hunt big game in the same seasons.
- The parent, guardian or youth mentor must maintain physical control over the minor at all times while hunting.
- The Junior Hunter must stay on the ground and cannot use an elevated (tree) stand.
- Both junior hunter and accompanying adult must wear fluorescent orange or pink: a shirt or jacket with 250 sq inches of solid/patterned fluorescent orange or pink (the pattern must be no less than 50% fluorescent orange or pink) OR a hat with no less than 50% of the exterior consisting of solid fluorescent orange or pink AND visible from all directions.

14- and 15-year-old junior bowhunters and first-time 16- and 17-year-old big game hunters must:
- Be accompanied by a parent, legal guardian, or person 18 years or older designated in writing (use form below).
- The accompanying adult needs to have at least 1 year of hunting experience AND have a license to hunt big game in the same seasons.

Junior Trapping

Trappers under 12 years of age:
- May accompany and assist a licensed trapper in all aspects of trapping without possessing a trapping license themselves.
- The licensed trapper must have at least 3 years of trapping experience and may be a parent, legal guardian, or someone 18 years or older designated in writing (use the form below).

Junior Trappers 12 years or older:
- Must complete NY's Trapper Education Program whether they will be trapping alone or with an adult licensed trapper.

Share Your Hunting and Trapping Photos With Us!
Help us celebrate the successes of young and first-time hunters and trappers by submitting photographs to DEC's Hunting and Trapping Photo Gallery:
www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/54055.html

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Mentored Youth Hunter and Trapper Permission Form

Use this form to designate a licensed adult hunter or trapper to accompany young hunters or trappers.

I, ______________________________ am the parent/legal guardian
(Print name of parent or legal guardian above.)
(Please circle one.)
of ________________________________, and I hereby give permission for him or her
(Print name of young hunter/trapper above.)
to be accompanied by ______________________________ whom I acknowledge meets
(Print name of adult hunter/trapper above.)
the legal age, experience, and licensing requirements to function as a mentor during hunting and trapping seasons.

Signature: __________________________________________________________
(Parent or legal guardian sign above.)

Date ____________________ Telephone Number ____________________
(Print today's date above.) (Print phone number above.)

Attention Young Hunter or Trapper: carry this form with you while afield.