



2023

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HUNTING

**A supplement to
TIMES JOURNAL
Cobleskill, NY**

Deer season looking good

With deer hunting seasons that span four months, vastly different habitat types, and nearly 4 million acres of public land to be explored, New York State offers unique opportunities for hunters

to pursue white-tailed deer.

DEC biologists predict that the 2023-2024 hunting season will be another productive season for New York's deer hunters.

Winter-related stress

and mortality were minimal for deer during the winter of 2022-2023, which was the eighth mild winter in a row across the state.

Although natural vegetation and crops got off

to a slow start due to unusually dry conditions during the months of May and June, above average levels of precipitation and temperatures throughout the month of July have improved deer forage quality across most of the state.

However, some areas of western New York and Long Island are still experiencing moderate drought conditions and a late frost in May along with localized outbreaks of spongy moth may affect the production of certain crops (ex. apples) and hard mast (ex. acorns) in some areas this fall.

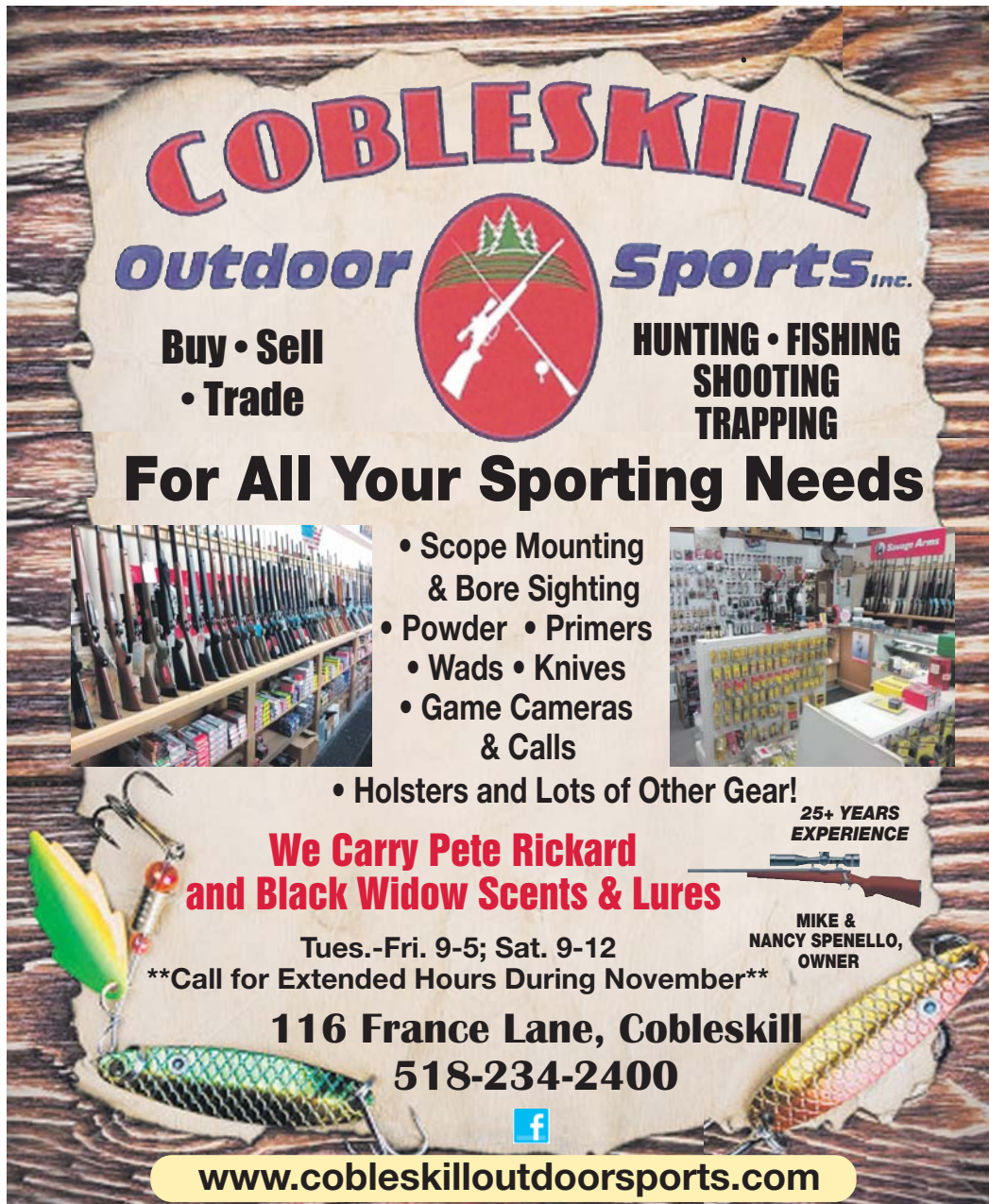
In response to growing deer populations in many areas of the state, DEC has increased the availability of deer management permits (DMPs) (i.e., antlerless deer tags) or maintained them at similar levels to last year for the

2023-2024 hunting season.

DMPs are the primary tool used by DEC to manage deer populations and are available to hunters through an instant lottery process beginning August 1 and ending October 1.

Hunters should consult DEC's table of DMP targets and chances of selection before purchasing their license. Use of DMPs by hunters helps ensure that deer populations do not exceed habitat carrying capacity or levels of social acceptability (ex. farmers experiencing crop damage), and limits the need for DEC to use other methods to reduce deer

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on next page.



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Deer season. . .

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impacts.

DMPs also provide additional opportunities for hunters to extend their time afield and fill their freezers with venison.

Statewide, DEC anticipates the total antlered buck harvest this fall will be similar to last year. However, the age distribution of bucks available to hunters continues to improve.

Although a mandatory antler point restriction continues in a few WMUs, in the rest of the state where hunters can choose the buck they want to harvest, most are continuing to choose to harvest older bucks.

Based on DEC's deer population monitoring, the buck harvest has shifted from more than 70 percent yearlings a couple decades ago to greater than 60 percent 2.5-year-old or older bucks in recent years.

If you are interested in seeing more larger, older-aged bucks and experiencing greater buck activity during the breeding season, DEC recommends practicing and encouraging other hunters to Let Young Bucks Go and Watch Them Grow.

Harvesting antlerless deer instead of young bucks contributes more to deer management and can increase hunter satisfaction through increased

viewing of and opportunities to harvest older-aged bucks.

Expanded Hunting Opportunities

Deer harvest data and feedback from hunters has continued to demonstrate the benefits of expanded hunting opportunities established in 2021, and deer hunters will continue to enjoy these opportunities during the 2023-24 seasons as well as new opportunities to use rifles to hunt big game in Onondaga County.

1. Onondaga was added to the list of counties where rifles can be used to take big game during the regular season in 2023.

2. 12- and 13-year old hunters may hunt deer with a firearm or crossbow in counties that passed a local law to participate in the opportunity. See Junior Big Game Hunting for a map of participating counties.

3. Antlerless-only deer season in mid-September (9/9 - 9/17/2023) using firearms, crossbows, and vertical bows in WMUs 3M, 3R, 8A, 8F, 8G,

Continued
on next page.

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8J, 8N, 9A, and 9F, and using only vertical bows in WMUs 1C, 3S, 4J, and 8C. Only DMPs and DMAP tags may be used.

4. Daily hunting hours for deer and bear extended to 30 minutes before sunrise until 30 minutes after sunset.

5. Holiday Deer Hunt remains an extension of the late bow and muzzleloader season from December 26 - January 1 in the Southern Zone. Hunters and other recreationists are encouraged to Share the Snow.



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Hunter safety remains essential all season

While statistics show hunting in New York is safer than ever, mistakes are made every year. DEC believes every hunting-related shooting incident is preventable, and Commissioner Basil Seggos encourages hunters to use common sense this season and to remember what they learned in their DEC Hunter Education Course.

Firearms safety:

- Point your gun in a safe direction.

- Treat every gun as if it were loaded.
- Be sure of your target and beyond.
- Keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.

In addition to blaze orange or pink being required for hunting big game with firearms, DEC encourages small game hunters to wear blaze orange or blaze pink.

Wearing orange or pink prevents other hunters

from mistaking a person likely to be shot. For more information and other important safety tips, visit DEC's website and watch videos about

hunter safety. For more information about getting outdoors safely and responsibly, visit DEC's website.

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Times Journal

A roundup of deer details from DEC

The two most important things you can do as a hunter to ensure effective management of New York's deer herd are to harvest at least one antlerless deer per year and to report all the deer you harvest.

DEC relies on hunters to help keep deer populations and wildlife habitat healthy.

Hunter reports of harvested deer are also the only source of two critical pieces of information that guide DEC's management - when and where deer are taken.

These data are used to estimate the number of

deer harvested in each WMU throughout the State which guides future management actions.

In 2022, only 46% of successful deer hunters reported their harvest even though it is critical to DEC's deer management and is required by law.

Help steward New York's deer herd by following through on your responsibility to tag your deer and report your harvests this hunting season - Take It · Tag It · Report It.

Chronic Wasting Disease

Chronic Wasting Dis-

ease (CWD) is spreading across the country and, if introduced to New York, could permanently impact our deer population and hunting tradition. CWD is always fatal to deer and is practically impossible to eliminate once estab-

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on next page.

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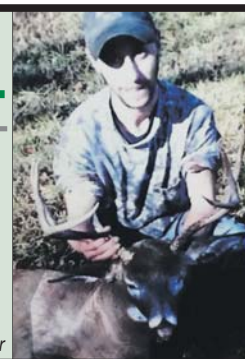
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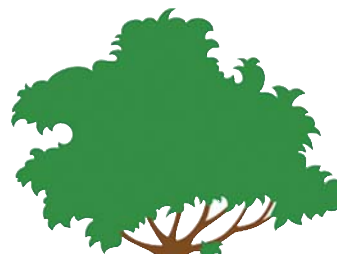
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Deer roundup. . .

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lished. The most effective strategy is to prevent CWD from entering New York in the first place. Hunters can help protect New York's deer herd from CWD by taking the following steps:

- If you hunt white-tailed deer, mule deer, elk, moose, caribou, or other deer species outside of New York, debone the venison and follow the legal requirements for other parts of the carcass before bringing them back

to New York. See CWD Regulations for Hunters. DEC will confiscate and destroy illegally imported carcasses and parts.

- Avoid natural deer urine scent lures and attractants. CWD can spread through the bodily fluids (saliva, feces, urine) of infected deer before they appear sick. CWD prions (abnormal proteins) bind to soil and plants where they can remain infectious for years. There is no way to ensure that natural deer urine products are free of prions. Use synthetic alternatives instead.

- Hunt only wild deer and support fair chase hunting principles. CWD is commonly spread through deer transported between high-fence facilities.

- Report any deer that appears sick or is acting abnormally to DEC.

Use Non-Lead Ammunition

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Deer harvest steady in 3-county area

Plentiful food supplies and a mild winter point to 2023 being a successful one for deer hunters.

Hunters in Schoharie, Delaware and Otsego counties took nearly 15,000 deer combined last year, and it's not a stretch to think they'll equal or top that number this season.

In Schoharie County, hunters in 2022 took 3,476 white tails last year, including 1,901 adult males, 147 male fawns, 1,286 does and 142 female fawns.

Those numbers are a tick up from 2021, when the total take was 3,150, with 1,974 adult bucks, 76 male fawns, 1,013 adult does and 87 female fawns.

Otsego County saw a sharp increase in the deer harvest last year. Hunters took 6,123 total deer in 2022, a number that includes 3,135 adult bucks,

295 male fawns, 2,430 adult does and 263 female fawns.

In 2021, Otsego's total take was 5,519, nearly 600 fewer than last year. The '21 figures show 3,178 adult bucks, 190 male fawns, 1,941 adult does and 210 female fawns.

Delaware County's year-to-year total take numbers are almost identical. Last year, hunters took a total of 5,347; in '21, the total was 5,330.

In 2022, Delaware hunters took 3,415 adult bucks, 186 male fawns, 1,579 adult does and 167 female fawns.

Those numbers in 2021 were 3,488 adult bucks, 131 male fawns, 1,578 adult does and 133 female fawns.

Statewide, the total take, male-female and fawns,

was 231,961, the highest since 2020's 253,990 but not near the record of 2002, 308,216.

By counties, the highest totals from 2022 were 13,587 in Steuben County and 10,515 in Chautauqua County.

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Duck season in Schoharie, Otsego and Delaware counties opens October 21.

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Many small game opportunities

State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Basil Seggos announced that most small game hunting seasons opened on Saturday, October 1, across New York.

"From waterfowl and upland gamebirds to squirrels, rabbits, and more, there are abundant opportunities for hunters across New York State," Commissioner Seggos said. "This year, hunters can enjoy even more waterfowl hunting, with an increase in mallard and Canada goose

bag limits and an extended season."

Season dates, bag limits and other hunting regulations for New York's small game species are available in the Hunting and Trapping Regulations Guide, which can be obtained from a license-issuing agent or on DEC's website at dec.ny.gov.

Ruffed Grouse

Ruffed grouse hunting season runs from October 1 through the last day of February in most parts of the state. In Northern New York, the season opened

on September 20, and runs through the last day of February.

Ruffed grouse hunters in the Northern Zone are reminded to positively iden-

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on next page.

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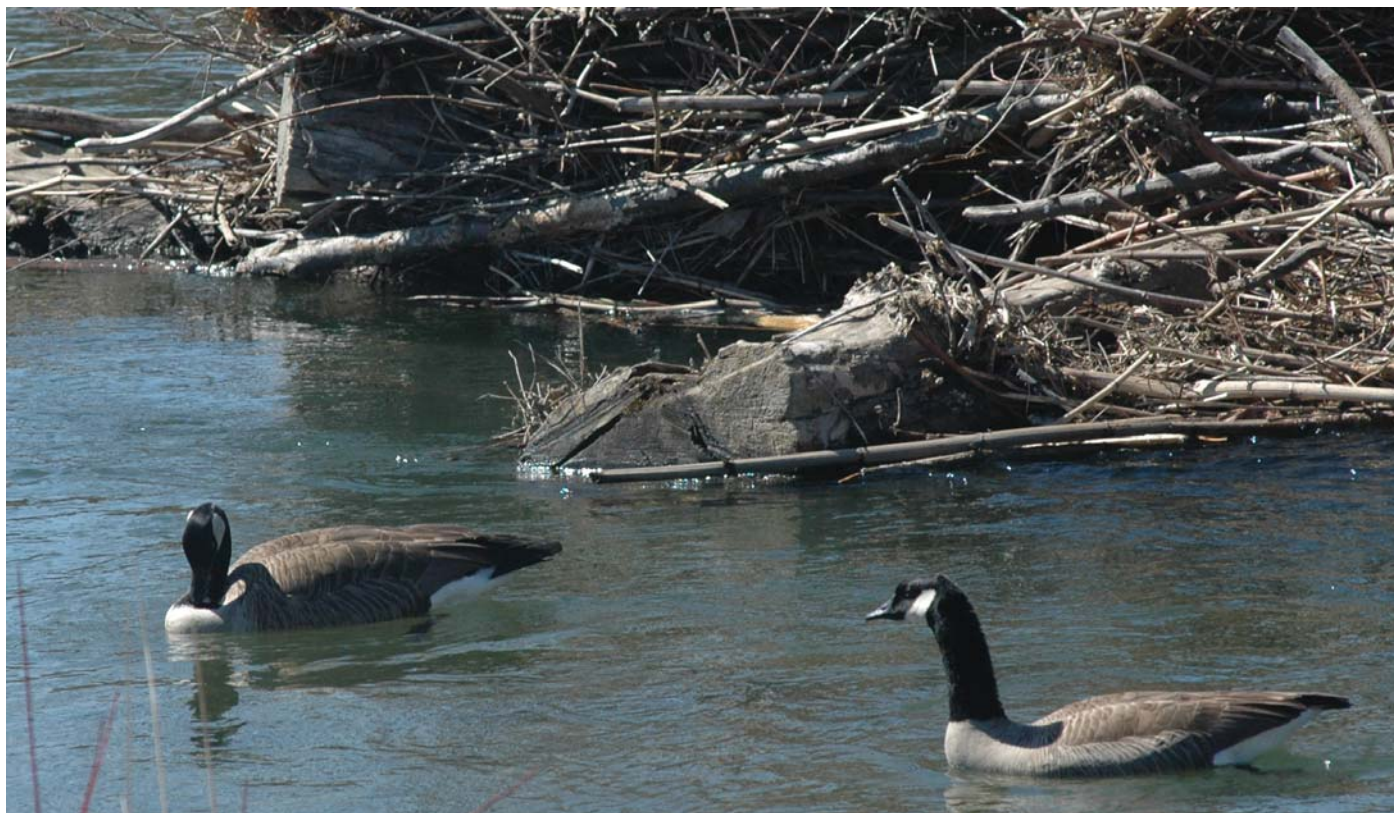
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Small game...

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from previous page.

-tify quarry before shooting. The Northern Zone, specifically Wildlife Management Units 5C, 5F, 6F and 6J, is also home to the spruce grouse, a State-endangered species that is illegal to hunt. Loss of a single spruce grouse, particularly a female, could be a significant setback for a small local population. For tips on how to discern the two species, view the Hunting and Trapping



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Regulations Guide or the ruffed grouse hunting information page on DEC's website.

DEC encourages ruffed grouse hunters to take part in the grouse hunting log program and submit

feathers from harvested birds to assess recruitment (number of young produced per adult female grouse) for different parts of the state. Interested hunters should visit the DEC website.

Pheasant Season

During the spring of 2023, the Reynold's Game Farm suffered a highly

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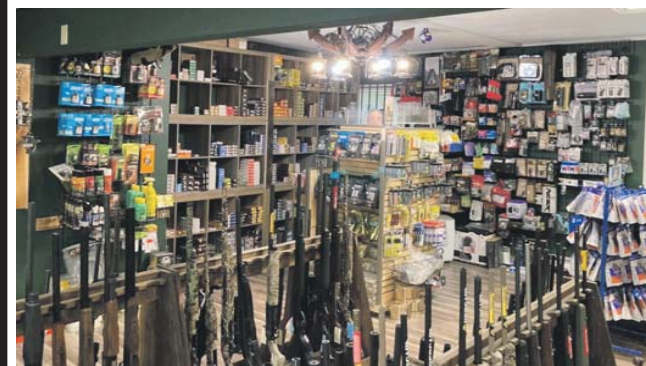
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Small game seasons...

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Farm suffered a highly pathogenic avian influenza outbreak in the breeder flock. After enacting precautionary measures to ensure the facility was properly decontaminated, DEC secured a contract to acquire 30,000 pheasants from a commercial hatchery to

supplement fall upland bird hunting opportunities around the state.

Prior to hunting seasons DEC will release adult pheasants on lands open to public hunting for the upcoming fall pheasant hunting season. The pheasant hunting season begins:

October 1, in northern and eastern portions of New York.

October 21, in central and western portions of the

state.

November 1, on Long Island.

An interactive map of statewide pheasant release sites, approximate timing of stocking, and number of birds stocked, can be found on DEC's website.

Squirrel and Rabbit

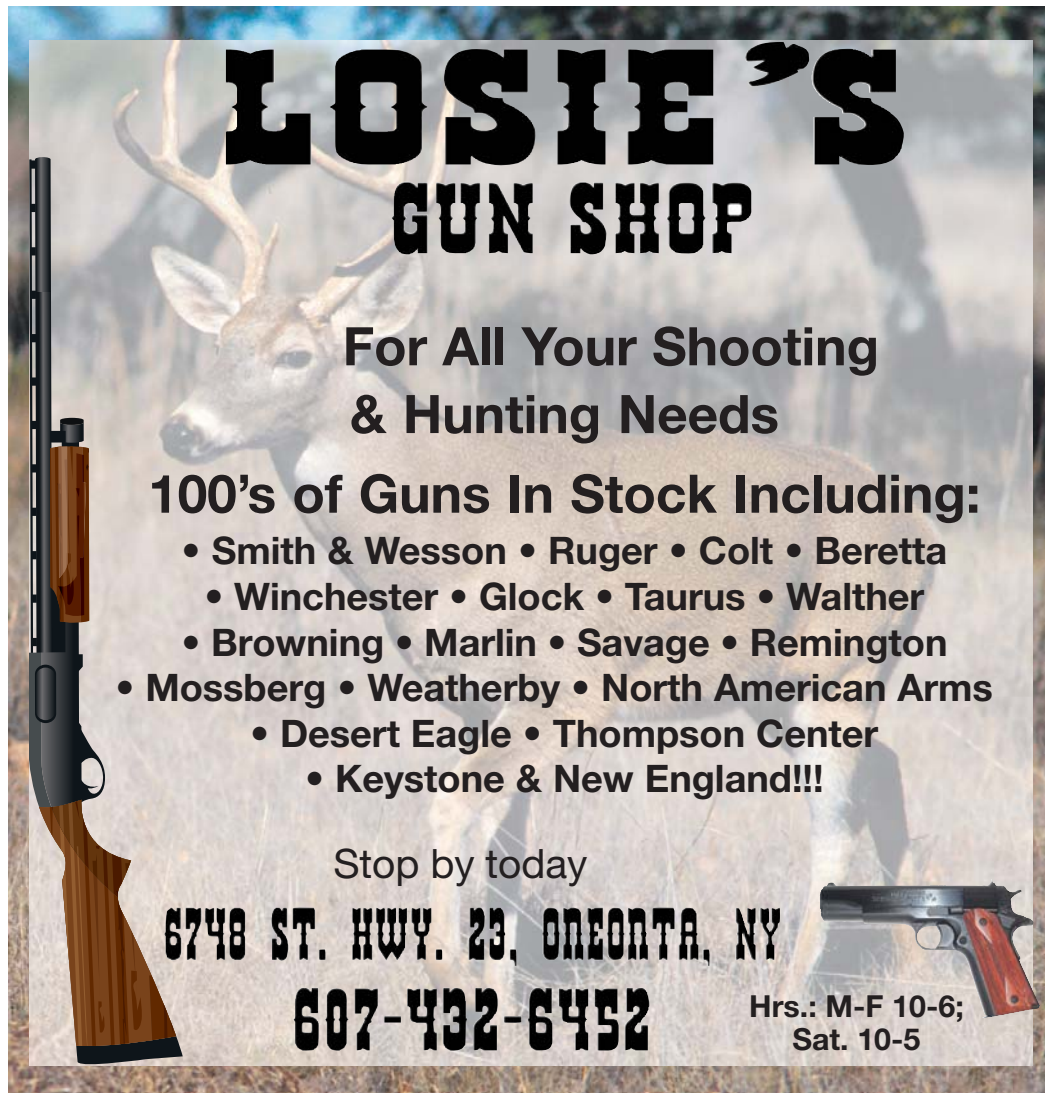
Opportunities to pursue squirrels and rabbits can be found throughout the state, including on many

public lands. Squirrel seasons started September 1 in Upstate New York and begin November 1 on Long Island. Rabbit hunting begins on October 1 in Upstate New York and on November 1 on Long Island. With ample opportunities and mild weather, squirrel and rabbit hunting are great ways to introduce novices to hunting.

Snowshoe hare (or varying hare) season starts October 1 in the Northern Zone. Hare hunters in the Southern Zone, where the season starts in late fall or early winter, are encouraged to report their observations to DEC through the DEC website.

Wild turkey

Wild turkeys can be found throughout the state but reach their highest densities in landscapes that have a mix of forests, old fields, and farmlands. Wild turkeys are less vulnerable to harvest in areas with abundant food (e.g., hard and soft mast), because they don't have to roam far and wide foraging, so scouting before the season is important. The statewide fall season bag limit is one bird of either sex. Hunting hours are sunrise to sunset.



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DEC offers advice for turkey hunters

New York has both spring and fall hunting seasons.

The most successful turkey hunters use a variety of calls (e.g., box calls, slate calls, mouth calls) to bring a bird within gun range, usually 30 yards or less.

Head-to-toe camouflage helps hunters to stay undetected prior to the shot. Movement must only occur when the bird is behind a tree or other obstacle.

Few hunting experiences can rival the excitement as a turkey approaches a hunter. Turkey hunters need to be extremely careful, however, before taking a shot.

The excitement of a turkey hunt should sharpen the hunter's awareness of key safety rules: Always identify the target before shooting, and be sure that no other person is in harm's way.

Some people are tempted to try to stalk a wild turkey. Forget it. First, it is extremely difficult to approach a turkey undetected. You will be much more successful calling the bird to you. Second, stalking turkeys puts both you and other hunters at risk. Let the bird do the walking.

Tips for a successful turkey hunting season

- Don't stalk. More than half of turkey hunting injuries happen when one hunter stalks another.

- Always assume any call or footsteps you hear are from another hunter. Don't shoot until you clearly see the whole turkey and know its sex.

- If you see another hunter, talk to him or her clearly, and don't move. Never wave or use a turkey call to alert another hunter.

- Turkeys are tough. You need to be close (30 yards or less is best). You need to get a clear head and neck shot. Do not try to shoot them in the body or when they are flying.

- Smaller shot, no. 4, 5, and 6, work better than larger shot, due to denser shot patterns.

- When calling, sit still with your back against a big tree, to hide you from turkeys and stalkers.

- Never wear turkey colors — red, white, or blue.

- Wear hunter orange when going in or out of the woods and when walking around.

- When sitting still waiting for a turkey, put hunter orange on a tree near you.

- If you take a turkey or carry a decoy, wrap it in hunter orange.

Rules you should know:

- You will need a hunting license and a turkey permit.

- You may hunt with a bow or crossbow, but you may not hunt turkey with a crossbow in the fall in the Northern Zone if you are using dogs. A crossbow may not be used in Westchester or Suffolk counties.

- You may hunt with a shotgun or handgun only when using shot no larger than #2 and no smaller than #9.

- You may not take a turkey with a rifle, or with a handgun firing a bullet.

- You must fill out the tag which comes with your permit and attach it to any turkey you shoot immediately.

Be sure to consult your hunting regulations guide for other rules.



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