

# Special Seasons Designated for Young Hunters



**Madi L.** after a successful harvest in Livingston County



**John F. and Nicholas B.** with their successful harvest in Gilboa, NY

## 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/Indigenous Peoples' 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 45) 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.

Youth Hunts	
Youth Pheasant Hunt	
Northern and Eastern New York	Sept. 28–29, 2024
Western New York	Oct. 12–13, 2024
Long Island	Oct. 26–27, 2024
Youth Waterfowl Hunt	
Waterfowl Hunting Zone	Dates
Northeastern	Sept. 28–29, 2024
Southeastern	Sept. 28–29, 2024
Lake Champlain	Sept. 28–29, 2024
Western	Sept. 28–29, 2024
Long Island	Nov. 9–10, 2024
Youth Wild Turkey Hunt	
Upstate NY (north of Bronx-Westchester Co. boundary) and Suffolk County	Apr. 26–27, 2025
Youth Firearms Deer and Bear Hunt	
Upstate NY (north of Bronx-Westchester Co. boundary; excluding bowhunting-only WMUs)	Columbus/ Indigenous Peoples' Day Weekend; Oct. 12–14, 2024

Take them outside the classroom. Way outside.

**EXPLORE**  
BOWHUNTING

The NYSDEC has partnered with the Archery Trade Association to bring you a next step archery program with curriculum that includes over 20 introductory lessons to bowhunting for youth ages 11-17.

Contact the NY Explore Bowhunting coordinator for local instructor training opportunities.  
P: 518-402-8967 E: hunter@dec.ny.gov

## New York is on Target!

The National Archery in the Schools Program:

- Is an archery program for grades 4-12
- Is taught during school in the curriculum
- Includes instructor training
- Uses standardized equipment
- Has 40,000 students participate annually

**NASP**  
NATIONAL ARCHERY  
IN THE  
SCHOOLS PROGRAM

For more information, please contact NY NASP at 518-402-8855 or katelyn.ritzko@dec.ny.gov

## Junior Big Game Hunting

### 12- and 13-year-old can hunt deer with a gun or crossbow in counties that opt in

A 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 ([dec.ny.gov/things-to-do/hunting/deer-bear/junior-big-game](http://dec.ny.gov/things-to-do/hunting/deer-bear/junior-big-game)) 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-olds 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:

- They have completed a course in both Hunter Education and Bowhunter Education.
- They have purchased a Junior Bowhunting License.
- They 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:

- They have completed a course in Hunter Education.
- They have purchased a Junior Hunting License.
- They are 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 big game 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 NYS'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:  
[dec.ny.gov/things-to-do/hunting/hunting-trapping-photo-gallery](http://dec.ny.gov/things-to-do/hunting/hunting-trapping-photo-gallery)

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.*