



by Dick Nelson

Lower and Upper Hudson Valley Hunters Have a Smorgasbord of Opportunities

If there is one thing that can be said about New York's hunting regulations, it is they are about as liberal as you can get. And, considering what you get for your money, the cost of a sporting license isn't bad either.

Of course you may get an argument or two from some people; but even out-of-state residents really don't have too much to complain about. With the exception of black bear, non-resident hunters have the same opportunities as resident hunters, including an even shot at receiving a Deer Management Permit (DMP), which are randomly selected by computer.

(A DMP allows a hunter to take a doe (female) deer in addition to a buck).

A complete list of resident license fees is available on the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) website at: www.dec.ny.gov/permits/6107.html. For non-residents it's: www.dec.ny.gov/permits/6397.html.

And while speaking of deer, you would think that with all the deer and bear running around on both sides of the Hudson River, big game hunters would be able to put a sizeable dent in the populations. And, considering hunters annually harvest about 23,500 deer and more than 300 bears between Westchester and Albany counties I guess you can say they do. But for every hunter that shoots a white-tailed deer, ten other deer give hunters the slip and that adds up to more venison on the hoof than in the freezer.

I mention this because depending on when you're reading this, the big game hunting season has either just begun, or is winding down.

Bowhunters have been at it since October 1, and for the most part have had an extremely good season. But



Look closely - How many deer here?



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the regular gunning season opened on November 17th, and you can bet your best shootin' iron that every deer throughout the Hudson Valley is aware of what all the men and women in those red and fluorescent orange hats and jackets are up to.

The regular season continues through December 9th.

Now that doesn't mean the deer and bear will be out of the woods when it closes. The bruins maybe, because most of them will have gone into hibernation. But Robin Hoods and muzzle-loader hunters get another crack at it from December 10-18, and Westchester County remains open to archers until December 31st.

How many deer will die of lead poisoning is hard to say, and in all probability the DEC won't have a handle on the total deer and bear harvest until sometime in late February or early March. But I will tell you this, because of the new three-point antler restriction (AR) the agency imposed in Wildlife Management Units (WMU) 3A, 4G, 4O, 4P, 4R, 4S and 4W you can bet the buck kill will be down; and if the DEC comes up with something to the contrary, I for one will hold their feet to the fire.

But deer and bear aren't the only animals trying to hold onto their skins; everything from rabbits, grouse, pheasants, ducks and geese are still fair game - ducks through December 30, the other through February 28th. And, depending on where you concentrate your efforts and how much time you spend in pursuit, will dictate whether you'll be dining on something you killed yourself, or on something that has been butchered, wrapped and sticker priced by someone else.

The first half of the Hudson Valley Zone Canada goose hunting season ends on November 16th, but for die-hard honker hunters the season reopens on December 8, continuing through January 5th. Just remember the daily bag limit is only three times around.

You can stretch that bag limit to five, by hunting the South Zone which also includes WMU's 3N, 3P, 3R, and 3S. Season dates are also longer. The first portion closes on December 11, reopening from December 29 - January 15 and again from February 23 - March 10.

Snow geese can be taken in either zone through April 15th. The daily bag limit is 25.

And here's a couple of more regulations duck and goose hunters are either

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unaware of or often overlook. According to the 2012-2013 Migratory Game Bird regulations guide, "No person shall completely field dress any migratory game bird and then transport the bird from the field. The head or one fully feathered wing must remain attached to all such birds while being transported." It also states that no person shall give, put or leave any migratory game birds at any place (other than personal abode) or in the custody of another person for picking, cleaning, processing, shipping, transportation, storage (including temporary storage) or taxidermy services, unless the birds are tagged with the hunter's name, address and signature, total number of birds involved, by species and dates such birds were killed.

In addition, anyone who hunts from a boat of less than 21 feet in length (including row boats, canoes and kayaks) must wear a securely fastened personal flotation device when the boat is underway. Any outboard that has its propeller in the water is considered underway.

If you don't have a copy of the guide, those and other regulations can be found on line at: www.dec.ny.gov/docs/wildlife_pdf/wfregsguide12.pdf.

Dropping anchor 'til next time.