

2021

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OUTDOOR RECREATION *Guide*



 PENNYSAVER


Heavy Hitters

By Eric Davis
Outdoor Chenango
Columnist

I would probably say that more than 90-percent of bowhunters today solely focus on arrow speed when choosing their bow, arrows, or both. The “need for speed” was sought to avoid deer ducking the string and it still is a common reason given when discussing equipment among archers. When a

of hair and thick hide to help them survive the harsh winters of New York. This becomes a heavy obstacle for a broadhead to get through before hitting the vitals of the deer. Speed alone might not be enough to ensure the broadhead gets through if the arrow is too light. This is where a heavier arrow or head can make a big difference. The reason you may want to go heavier for

The general recommendation for archers is to shoot an arrow that is 6 to 8 grains per pound of draw weight to achieve optimal momentum.

deer hears a startling noise and wants to flee, they drop to “load up” before springing up to get out in a hurry. So, it is not necessarily that the deer know it is a bow, they just react to hearing a loud noise. So, one way to gain extra arrow speed is to go with a lighter arrow. Deer have a dense coat

longer than a lighter arrow does after hitting the hair and hide of the deer. The general recommendation for archers is to shoot an arrow that is 6 to 8 grains per pound of draw weight to achieve optimal momentum. This would mean a total arrow weight, which includes the tip, fletchings, and nock, of 360 to 480 grains for a 60-pound draw weight bow. Some people want to push momentum to the maximum and go with arrows that are over 10-grains-per-inch.

Some other ways to add weight to your arrow for added momentum include using larger fletchings, 4 fletchings, lighted nocks, or brass inserts instead of aluminum. The weight of the tip of the arrow can also be changed. The common weight is 100 grains but 125 and 150-grain options are available. Momentum is also an important factor when considering what broadhead you are going to use. Expandable broadheads fly more like field tips but they use energy to open when they impact the deer. So lighter draw

weights or arrows on the lighter end of the spectrum might not be suited to use expandable broadheads. Fixed blade broadheads can fly differently that field tips in bows that are not perfectly tuned but since they are “ready to go” upon impact with the deer they do not slow down the arrow as much as expandable broadheads. These are the go-to option for thick skinned game like elk or moose. An additional bonus to shooting a heavier arrow is that the sound of the bow is quieter when shot. The potential energy stored in the bow when it is at full draw is distributed

to the arrow and throughout the bow when it is shot. A lighter arrow absorbs less energy than a heavier leaving more energy to be dispersed to the bow, in the form of vibration or noise. So, while a light arrow might get to the deer quicker, a heavier arrow can keep the deer from hearing the bow and will provide more penetration thanks to its increased momentum. So when thinking about what arrow you want to use, make sure to think about what exactly you want to get out of the arrow and consider the best way to obtain those results.



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Trying to Give Back

By Eric Davis
Outdoor Chenango
Columnist

After becoming the chapter president of the local National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) chapter in 2015, I started to talk to my committee about doing an outreach event. The NWTf has three outreach programs: Women in the Outdoors, Wheelin' Sportsmen, and JAKES (Juniors Acquiring Knowledge, Ethics, and Sportsmanship). After discussing things and noting that our Hunting Heritage Banquet was scheduled on the Youth Hunt Weekend, we decided that a Wheelin' Sportsman hunt would be our choice. This program is designed for physically handicapped people to try to get them hunting. In the years prior, mentored hunts with injured veterans had become a popular Wheelin' Sportsman event. We were told about another non-profit organization called Operation Injured Soldier.

Their mission was to get injured veterans outdoors, either hunting or fishing. What was convenient was that you just told them how many hunters you could accommodate, the day(s) you wanted to hunt and the best hotel location. They would pay for the hotel rooms and any licenses the hunters needed. So, we decided that our committee would be the first year's mentors so that we did not bite off more than we could chew. As we divided the committee into pairs that would be each take one hunter, we decided to request three hunters. We requested funding from the NY chapter of NWTf to hold the hunt. The \$250 of funding came from the Super Fund, a special fund that

only gets money put into it from fundraising events within the state. We used the money to buy food and drinks for dinners on Friday and Saturday and lunch on Saturday and Sunday. We also bought each hunter a box call to take with them after the hunt. Friday night came and the hunters met us for a cookout and campfire so we could all get to know each other before hunting Saturday morning. Unfortunately, we only had one hunter show up, so we offered to take Operation Injured Soldier's New York program leader, a wounded veteran himself. Environmental Conservation Officer Brett Armstrong brought his K9 and did a demonstration for the hunters. We sat around and chatted for awhile before heading to bed to barely sleep before meeting back up in the morning.

I was part of the group that took the OIS leader out. He was a Marine who became a firefighter after leaving the Corps. Then after 9/11, he enlisted in the Army as a middle-aged man with a family. While training to go to the Middle East, he fell during training in the mountains and injured his back ending his

military career. He walked with two braces so we were limited on how far we could walk, and we had to hunt from a ground blind so the hunter could sit in a chair instead of on the ground. Luckily, another committee member had permission on a property where a tom had been strutting in a field next to a hedgerow where we could drive a truck out and set up a blind. We got in and setup early, the bird gobbled as it started to get light out. We called to him and got him to respond. After it was fly down time it became apparent that he was following hens in the opposite direction from where we were. However, two hens came in behind us and stayed next to our decoys for close to half an hour. After they finally walked off, the tom was long gone. We tried to get closer to where he was last heard but our limited mobility made it tricky. Not long after, we called it a morning and headed back to camp. After getting back, we got news that the other hunter was successful. It was his first turkey ever harvested. The hunter was from Texas and had served in Afghanistan. While there, he stepped



up organizations such as NWTf and OIS for those opportunities. In the meantime, make sure to thank all the veterans you know or see for their service to our country.

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The Brotherhood: Time to Make Some Changes

By Eric Davis
Outdoor Chenango
Columnist

Last year at the end of September, I saw a picture from a former coworker on social media with a doe he shot with his bow in the Northern Zone. When I clicked on it to write a

congratulatory comment, I read through what others had already said. While 8 out of the 9 comments were along the lines of “Atta boy,” the last one stood out to me. It said, “I’d say good job but why would you

shoot a doe in September?” Reading this made me a little hot under the collar. I cannot know for sure how well the commenter knows the successful hunter, but I know that the hunter has only been bowhunting for a few years. This deer might have been his first bow harvest ever. Yet here was someone so quick to put him down over it. What is more troubling is that this is not the first time I have seen or heard something like this said to successful hunters after harvesting game. Television hunting programs seem to show deer hunting as solely focused on inches of



antler that are on a buck as the measure of success. While it is shown that one of the stages of being a sportsman/sportswoman is the trophy stage, not everyone is in that stage at the same time. While shooting the biggest buck of your life might be your goal this fall, there are others who just want to put food on the table for themselves and their family. The main argument that goes with the notion of only shooting big bucks is that those hunting for meat should shoot does, not small bucks. However, in New York not everyone gets doe tags. Yet any hunter who buys a big game license gets a buck tag. If you really want to shoot bigger bucks, convince the state to give everybody a doe tag and have buck tags be on a draw system. When you see a picture posted on social media, the person posting it is doing so because they are proud of what they

have done. Most of them are looking for encouragement and support. These hunters may be in the Retention phase of hunting. This is when they are deciding, do I still want to do this, or do I want to give up? So, if you are angered by their post, be a grown-up and just scroll past it. I believe the saying is, “If you don’t have anything nice to say, then don’t.” With hunter numbers low, the last thing we can afford is to lose new, young hunters. When looking beyond just social media and thinking about in person interactions I have witnessed while working in sporting goods retail, there is another side to the “brotherhood” of hunting. Like in many families, being the toughest seems to be a competition. However, new hunters do not want to hear how hard your firearm kicks compared to what they are using, or how you dragged

your deer farther or in rougher terrain. They are looking to be included in the hunting community, not belittled for being new. I can’t count how many times I would be helping a female customer trying to find a firearm to use and male customers would chime in to say how much better whatever they had was compared to what the customer was looking at. A similar conversation would happen with young hunters looking for low recoil options. Many of those customers walked away with a look of defeat or shame because they were just told what they were looking at was not what “real” hunters use. So, when it comes to the notion of the “brotherhood” of the hunting community, it’s time to change things from the good old boys’ club to a welcoming community if we want our hunting tradition to continue.

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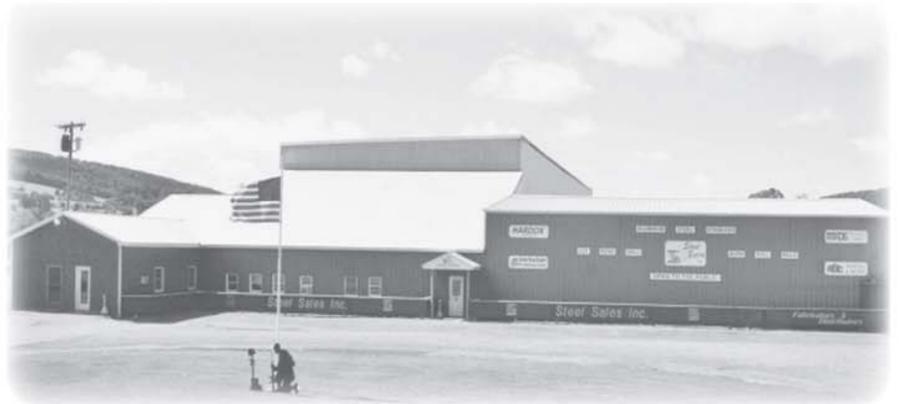
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Going Old School

By Eric Davis
Outdoor Chenango
Columnist

As the whitetail rut has tapers off towards the end of regular firearm season, deer hunting can become a drag as many deer movement during daylight seems to come to a screeching halt. The urge to find a hot doe that keeps bucks on their feet at all hours of the day has passed, so they may become nocturnal due to hunting pressure brought on by gun season. There are two things you can do to try to harvest a buck late in the season. The first thing is to take

some time off from hunting and let the area you hunt rest then hunt food sources. Studies have shown that it takes 3 days for the deer activity to return to normal after a stand is hunted. So, by letting your area rest for a week or more, the deer may start moving during daylight again. Then only hunt on major fronts moving in, particularly extreme cold fronts. Bucks burn through their fat reserves during the rut and need to replenish them before harsh winter weather hits. Feeding becomes priority number one to them. When heavy cold fronts approach, deer will feed ahead of the front and after it hits, sometimes even during the front hitting. Carbohydrates are easily converted to fat reserves, so food sources heavy in carbohydrates are the best bet. Leftovers from crop harvest are easy pickings if the snow hasn't covered them up. Corn fields that are harvested with a combine usually have a lot of food left in them compared to those cut for silage. In the big

woods, look for oak flats. Acorns that fell earlier in the fall will become more palatable after they sit and release some of their tannins. I've seen oak flats in the muzzleloader season that look like someone walked through with a rototiller due to how hard the deer were scraping up the ground to find acorns. Late season food plots such as turnip and radishes are designed to attract deer once the cold weather hits. The second method you can try is to make them move by doing deer drives. Deer drives are looked at negatively by some deer hunters but are a great way to punch a tag on limited time to hunt. A deer drive generally consists of two parts, sitters and drivers, and operate by having the sitters set in places where they can shoot safely as deer are getting away from the drivers. While the notion of the drive seems simple, there are some finer points that need to be addressed to increase their success rate. The greatest point for drive success is safety. Knowing where each



sitter is and roughly where each driver will walk let's everyone know safe shooting directions. The wind direction can play a big factor in a drive's success. Ideally, the sitters should be facing into the wind while the drivers walk with the wind at their back, blowing their scent towards the sitters. This allows deer to smell the drivers and try to get away downwind without smelling the sitters and avoiding them. Another factor is the speed of the drivers. In the words of a gentleman, I learned to hunt with, "I prefer my deer walking, not running." While the point is to get the deer up and moving, if the deer are at full speed, the sitters won't get good shot opportunities. When I am a driver, I like to take three to five steps and then stop for three seconds. If a sitter shoots, drivers should stop walking for at least 30 seconds that way the sitter can get a bearing on where a hit deer runs before any more deer come out in the drive. When performed safely and correctly, deer drives are great ways to fill tags.

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Wading through Waders

By Eric Davis
Outdoor Chenango
Columnist

If you are getting into fishing, waterfowl hunting, or trapping you will likely need to buy waders of some sort in the future. The difficult thing is knowing what you are looking at when facing the mountain of boxes full of waders in the store.

Waders come in two main varieties: hip waders and chest waders. Hip waders are essentially a pair of boots that extended up your legs to your thighs. There are two separate boots, one for each leg. Hip waders most commonly are made of rubber or PVC. Hip waders easier to put on and take off, cost less than chest waders, and are often all you need on small shallow streams.

Chest waders are like a combination of boots, pants and the bottom of a shirt all sewn together and waterproof. Chest waders are a one-piece unit, and are commonly made of neoprene, PVC, or nylon with a Gore-Tex membrane.

You can get chest waders that have insulation in the foot section for added warmth. There are even fleece line waders for fighting off the cold in the late waterfowl seasons. Chest waders can also come in stocking-foot styles where you put a wading shoe or boot over the sock or stocking type foot of the wader. Being able to change the wading shoe allows you to match the sole of the shoe to the bottom you are walking on.

Breathable waders have

become very popular among fly fishermen these waders allow perspiration and some heat to escape out of the waders without letting any water in. Breathable waders are also extremely lightweight making them easy to maneuver in. Chest waders are more expensive than hip waders but provide coverage in deeper water and added warmth by having your core inside of the waders instead of out in the elements. When it comes to waders, just like with regular shoes, the sole of the boot can vary wildly. Felt soles have long been the choice when fishing on slick bottoms. Lately, felt soles have become a target in the fight against aquatic invasive species (AIS) as the felt can trap micro-organisms that can be introduced into a different body of water. Rubber soles would be the common sole style

for boot-foot chest waders. Rubber soles are good for use in muddy or swampy bottoms but can have bad traction on slick flat rocks. Studded soles are just like studded snow tires, they have small metal studs protruding from them so they can grip on smooth surfaces better. There are studded rubber soles and studded felt soles available. Studded rubber soles could be used in place of traditional felt sole boots as they will provide grip on slick rocks and slimy bottoms but are tough to clean after going through muddy bottoms. Once you have your waders, there are a few other pieces of gear that can come in very handy. When using chest waders, if you go too deep and water comes over the top of the waders, they can fill quickly and pull you under water. A wading belt, which is cinched around your waist, limits the amount of water that can get into the waders. The socks you wear with



your waders can make a big difference. Do not use cotton socks as they will lose any insulation value if they become wet, and your feet will almost always get wet from sweat in waders. Socks with a high amount of wool will keep their insulation value even when they get wet. Whenever you are done with your waders, you should store them properly. The first step is to dry them out

completely on the inside. Use a boot dryer with added wader extensions to dry to boot part of the waders out. Then hang the waders so their outside will dry. Hang the waders by the boot, not by the top, to avoid stretching the material of the waders out by dangling the heavy boot section. You can buy a boot hanger for under ten bucks and it will make your waders last longer.

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So Many Options

By Eric Davis
Outdoor Chenango
Columnist

It is that magical time of year for outdoor recreationalists because there are so many different options of what to do. Archery

season began October 1, the salmon are running in the Salmon River, pheasant and duck seasons begin Saturday October 16. With so much to choose from, how can you decide what to do with your limited time

off? Use the weather to help you decide. If rain is in the forecast, consider skipping an archery hunt and hit the swamp for wood ducks. Rainy days are often called ducky days. The churning of the water from the rain mixes up invertebrates and plant seeds in the water and makes them easier for the ducks to feed on. Rain also hides camouflaged hunters better by limiting the ducks' visibility. A



spinning wing decoy will get incoming ducks to try landing with it so put this where you want to be shooting and leave a

they chase baitfish in shallow, topwater baits can lead to some spectacular action. If a cold front comes in, it may be best to sit

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little pocket around it. Early in the season, a decoy spread of a dozen or two is all you need.

If it is supposed to be warm and dry, an upland bird hunt can be a great way to enjoy an autumn day. The DEC stocks pheasants on some pieces of state land, so put on your blaze orange with either some buddies and/or your hunting dog. Work into the wind with your dog so they can get the scent of any birds. If hunting without a dog, walk in a line with the hunters spaced apart so birds can't run through between them. Just be mindful that archery season is open so make sure you are following proper safe handling of your firearms and are careful of your shooting directions. Warm days may also call for getting cooled down in a creek or river. You might catch the tail end of the salmon run up north or you might find brown trout getting ready to spawn in rivers locally. Fall bass fishing can be fun as they are feeding aggressively to get ready for winter. As

in a treestand or ground blind. Cold overnight temperatures can lead to deer feeding longer into the morning before heading to bedding areas. As they head to lay down, now the sun is up and you can get a shot. As the day length gets shorter, bucks will start to use scrapes and rubs to mark their territory as the rut approaches. Rattling can be a good technique as the bucks are establishing territories and the sound of fighting bucks can draw other bucks in to get in on the action. The first does will start to come into heat in late October and the bucks will start cruising trying to find the first receptive doe of the year. Halloween is a favorite day of many bowhunters to start all day sits. Do not be afraid to double-dip or mix-and-match your days. Duck hunt in the morning and then bow hunt in the afternoon, or bow hunt the morning and then hit the pheasant field after lunch. With so many options available, there's no excuse to stay at home!

Gearing Up For Fall Fun

By Bob McNitt

(Previously published in *The Evening Sun*)

Enjoying the outdoors today, regardless of the weather and activity, has never been better. Tremendous advances in technology and manufacturing translate to gear that wasn't dreamt of just a few decades ago. From clothing to equipment to electronics, there are products that will enhance your time spent outdoors.

Footwear

The selection of footwear for various needs today is mind boggling. From ultra lightweight jogging/hiking shoes to reinforced heavyweight hunting boots, there's a shoe or boot that's designed especially for the purpose it's used. From tropical to arctic temperatures, desert or swamp, there's a model that will keep your feet comfortable, dry and in cold climates, warm. Just about all come in a variety of colors, styles and camouflage patterns. Hunters and hikers, in particular, need footwear that's comfortable, waterproof, and sturdy enough to stand up to rugged wear and terrain.

Clothing

I'm not sure where to even start on the huge array of today's outdoor clothing, the selection is just too massive and diversified. There's clothing that "breathes," clothing that whisks away perspiration to keep you warm in winter, and even waterproof clothing that does both. For hunters concerned about game catching their scent, there's even charcoal-lined clothing that keeps human scent to a minimum. From head to toe, take your pick. Getting a blister from ill-fitting socks is largely a thing of the past, what with the huge selection of special-use socks and stockings available. Pick a hat for your needs, from those that keep you cool and shaded to those that keep you warm and dry.

Camping

Not everyone wants or can afford a big RV, and with gas prices as high as they are, more campers are turning to something that's large and comfortable enough, yet light and maneuverable enough to spend as much time camping as possible without breaking the bank in the process. From tow-behind hardwalls to economical pop-ups, there's a camper to suit every need and budget. Thanks to modern materials, today's campers last far longer than earlier ones, and require minimal maintenance.

In a word, they're now an investment that when amortized over their many years of service aren't that costly. Of course, for the casual economy-minded camper, the array, sizes and styles of tents are more than adequate to fit just about any need.

Backpacking

Whether you plan on a short, one-day hike and need only minimal provisions, or am embarking on a multi-day trip that will cover many miles, you don't need to be turned into a pack mule totting an obsessively heavier than needed load. Although a fanny pack is often sufficient for one-day outings, a well-designed daypack allows you to carry quite a bit more and with a high degree of comfort. In addition to raingear, food and drink, there'll be room for such things as cameras, binoculars, flashlight, cell phone, firestarters (in case you need to start a reliably safe fire, personal first aid items, toiletry needs and a spare pair of dry socks. Today's daypacks are comfortable, spread the weight evenly and many have wide support belts that help keep the weight off your shoulders.

Electronics

It's only fitting that in this age of high-tech, where e-mail, Twitter, blogs and Facebook have become increasingly commonplace in our society, that it has also made its way into our outdoor activities. Although carrying and knowing how to use a reliable compass should never go out of favor, tracking and communication satellites now play a major role in our outdoor adventures. Trail cameras and laser rangefinders have become popular with hunters. Anglers use sonar to seek out fish-holding structure as well as the fish themselves.

Much of this starts with the Global Positional Systems (GPS) in our vehicles that tell us not only where we are but also how to successfully reach any pre-set locations and addresses we entered beforehand and without getting lost. Once on foot or in a watercraft on big waters GPS not only tracks our route, but also leads us to pre-set locations (called waypoints) we're seeking to find. It also accurately marks new locations we may find so we can easily return to them later.

The newest rage being used by many hunters are digital trail cams. These units are normally attached to trees at various locations where game is expected to frequent, and when an animal passes within range of the unit, its digital image is recorded, along with the date and time it passed by. The only fault with these motion-activated units is they must be set so any foliage that might be moved by wind doesn't activate the shutter. Many new users have been disappointed to discover the unit's images all consist of a leafy branch or high weed that moves with each gust of wind.

For those who seek to penetrate deep into big woods areas, where a cellphone may not work, there are various satellite units that, using GPS, emit a signal if the user has an emergency and needs help. These pinpoint the unit and user's exact location so help can readily reach them. Other units also provide updated weather and forecasts so the operator can take the necessary steps to "weather the storm."

While all these electronics are great and useful, they depend on batteries and may also malfunction. So the best, most reliable tools any avid outdoors person can have is still knowledge, a good compass, and a healthy dose of common sense.

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NYS SNOWMOBILING



<http://nysnowmobiler.com/>

The following are some basic questions and answers to frequently asked questions about snowmobiling in New York. If you need additional information please contact your local club or NYSSA directly, we will try to help. Every snowmobiler should take the time to look over the "Snow mobile Guide" published by the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

RIDING IN NY

Q. I am coming from out of state, does my sled need to be registered?

A. Unless you are riding on one of the days where NYS waives the

registration requirement for out of state snowmobiles, you must have a NY registration. If your sled is registered in your home state you can register your sled online at NY DMV.

If you are coming over from one of the Canadian Provinces you must visit a Motor Vehicle Office location. Waiver of the registration requirement does not relieve the operator of the requirement for liability insurance.

Q. What do I need to ride a snowmobile in NYS?

A. Every Snowmobile operated off the owners property must be registered in New York and have liability coverage on the sled.

Q. Must I join a snowmobile club?

A. No, but joining a club is highly recommended and will provide you with a discount on your registration. The discount applies to any

snowmobile that you own.

Q. How do I choose a club to join?

A. We recommend that you join the club(s) where you ride and / or live.

Q. How much insurance should I have on my sled?

A. NYS Law states the minimum insurance you must have. You must have liability insurance which provides coverage for any one person sustaining bodily injuries or death of at least \$10,000 and for two or more persons involved in an accident for at least \$20,000 and at least \$5,000 for damage to the property of another. Proof of insurance must be carried with you. (Parks and Rec Law 25.13)

Q. Where can I ride?

A. Snowmobiling is only permitted on those lands where permission has been given to ride. There are over 10,000 miles of designated and registration supported trails in NYS. Refer to

the map on our web site for information to how to access those trails.

FOR BEGINNERS

Q. What should I wear?

A. NYS Law requires you to wear a DOT approved snowmobile helmet that is properly fitted. A snowmobile suit or jacket and pants is recommended, along with warm boots and gloves.

Q. Can I rent a snowmobile in NY?

A. Yes you can. There are several businesses around the state that rent snowmobiles. If you are riding for the first time it is strongly recommended that you consider a snowmobile tour where someone familiar with the local trails will guide you. We do provide a list on this website (link) of businesses that provide sleds for rent and equipment.

Q. Do I need to take a safety course before I operate a snowmobile?

A. NYSSA strongly recommends that you

familiarize yourself with the sport before riding including completing safety training. Any person over eighteen may operate a snowmobile on lands where public snowmobiling is permitted without taking a snowmobile safety course. There are online courses available for adults.

RULES & SAFETY

Q. Can my child operate a snowmobile in NYS? A. A child between 10 and 14 may operate a snowmobile when they hold a snowmobile safety certificate and are accompanied by a person over eighteen years of age. A person over 14 and under 18 who holds a safety certificate may operate a snowmobile as an adult on any lands where snowmobiling is permitted.

Q. May I operate a snowmobile at night?

A. There is no state prohibition on operating at night but there are speed restrictions near a residences. You must exercise increased caution when

operating at night.

Q. What equipment must my snowmobile have?

A. State law requires specific equipment including a headlight (at all times), a tail and brake light, and a properly working muffler system.

ABOUT NYSSA

Q. Who is NYSSA and what do they do?

A. NYSSA is the New York State Snowmobile Association. The Association advocates for all snowmobilers and snowmobile clubs in New York.

Q. How can I help snowmobiling in NY?

A. Join a club and volunteer to help maintain the trails you ride.

GENERAL

Q. Where does my registration money go?

A. Most of your registration money goes to the State Trail Development and Maintenance Fund. Through the Office of Parks, that fund is used to support the 230 clubs in their trail maintenance activities such as grooming and building bridges.

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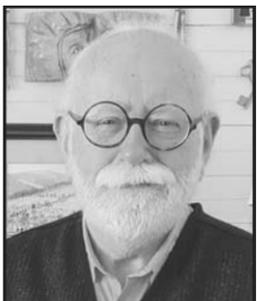


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Beginner's guide to kayaking

Kayaking is a water sport that can be beneficial to the mind and body. Just about anyone willing to spend a day on the water can benefit from learning about kayaking and how to get started with this rewarding activity. The history of kayaking is interesting. The word "kayak" means "hunter's boat," and the Inuit used to rely on these small vessels to catch food by sneaking up on their prey from the water's edge. Some people still hunt and fish from their kayaks, but many are happy to use them for sightseeing and exercising. "Paddlesports are

increasing in popularity among Americans who desire to connect with the outdoors," said Christine Fanning, executive director of The Outdoor Foundation. The Outdoor Foundation and The Coleman Company, Inc., found in a Special Report on Paddlesports that 21.7 million Americans enjoyed paddling on rivers, lakes, streams, and other waterways in 2014, the most recent year for which data is available. Paddlesports include canoeing, rafting, kayaking, and stand-up paddling. Learning how to kayak does not involve a

significant initial financial investment. The outdoor experts at REI say there's a good chance a novice kayaker will not go out and buy a boat immediately. It's important to first get a feel for the sport and then go from there. Although it's not absolutely necessary, it's recommended that novices take paddling lessons to hone their kayaking skills. Learning the proper technique can help people avoid strain on their neck and back and safeguard their arms from fatigue. Novices should practice on calm waters until their technique is honed.



Lakes are a great place to learn, as rivers and places with mild currents can overwhelm those new to the sport. One of the easiest ways to get introduced to kayaking is to go with an experienced paddler or tour company. Such companies charge a set price for an excursion that will provide transportation to the drop site as well as the equipment needed for the voyage. Tours may

include travel down several miles of a relatively calm waterway, allowing novice kayakers to get a feel for paddling and take in the scenery. Getting in and out of a kayak can be challenging for beginners. The resource Kayakpaddling.net offers helpful illustrations and animated tutorials about entering and exiting kayaks as well as

paddling techniques and safety. Kayakers should bring some essentials along. A dry pack can keep electronics, food and equipment dry. Remember to wear sunscreen and a hat to keep safe from the sun. A life vest also is essential. Exercise, fresh air and enjoying the open water are just some of the many draws of kayaking. TF186055

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Time to prepare for ice fishing season

By Eric Davis
Outdoor Chenango
Columnist

Now is the time to get ahead of the game and to start preparing your ice fishing equipment. All it takes is one or two harsh cold fronts to turn open water into solid black ice this time of year. Some years, there is fishable ice before New Year's Day.

If you are done deer hunting and need something to do that makes you think about the outdoors, grab your jigging rods and tipups to get them ready.

At the beginning of every ice fishing season, I like to put fresh line on all of my jigging rods. When I fished in a lot of bass tournaments in high school, I put fresh line on every week. I didn't want to have a fish break off because the line was old and weak. While every week is a tad extreme for the casual ice fisherman, once a year should be plenty.

Remember not to overfill the spool the reel. I stop at about 2/3 capacity of the spool. This helps control the line as it wants to

unravel off the spool. It has the memory from being stored on the larger spool that you buy it on at the store.

If you don't use spring bobbers on your jigging rods to watch for strikes, give bright colored lines a try. I like the Suffix line that comes in fluorescent orange. This makes it easier to watch the line for any movement as it contrasts with dark black ice and with white snow, once snow accumulates on the ice. Yellow line works well also.

For tipup maintenance, I



like to unspool 10 yards or so and inspect the tipup line and swivel for any noticeable damage. I will replace the leader material every year. For "small fish" tipups, I like to use 6 pound fluorocarbon and for the "big fish" tipups I go with either 10 or 12 pound fluorocarbon.

I typically will make the leader 6-8 feet long. If I plan on going after big toothy fish, such as northern pike, I will use steel leaders to avoid the fish cutting the line. Inspect the spool on the tiptop to make sure it is smoothly spinning.

You may need to put a small dab of grease on the shaft of the spool to get it operating smoothly. Set the tipup like you would while fishing and make sure that the flag is tripped when line is taken from the spool.

Once I have gone through the rods and tipups, I will

go through my tackle boxes to make sure everything is organized the way I like it. I use a small box for my jigs that has foam in it so you can stick the hook into the foam to hold the jig in place. I keep my vertical jigs on one side and my horizontal jigs on the other side. They are organized by size and color so I can quickly find a jig if I need to swap to what the fish are biting.

I have started experimenting with using plastic jig trailers as opposed to live bait, such as spikes or mousies, and have a small box where I keep the plastics. I don't catch as many fish but they tend to all be bigger fish when using the plastics.

I release 99% of the fish I catch usually with only a few outings a year devoted to helping someone else fill the freezer (I'm allergic to eating fish) so I don't mind catching fewer fish. All of the supplies I use for tipup fishing I keep in their own tackle box. I have the hooks organized by size, color, and whether they are single or treble hooks. The sinkers

and swivels are organized by size also.

If you use a fish finder or power auger, dig them out and give them a good once-over. Throw any batteries on the charger to get them ready. If you use a gas auger, give the motor some attention. If your hand auger seemed like it wasn't working as great last season, consider looking for replacement blades. You can even find places that will swap blades with you and they will sharpen your old blades then swap them with another fisherman who wants fresh blades. Get your shanty out and set it up. You can see if any rodents have chewed on the fabric or if the rope to pull it needs to be replaced before it breaks when your out on the middle of the lake.

As I have come to realize, it is often easier and less expensive to take a few minutes to inspect your gear and catch something that needs to be fixed instead of having to replace things after they break.



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Just listed. Stately and beautiful 5 BR; 3 1/2 bath in this 3900 sq. ft. home on 64 acres in Oxford, NY. The abundant living space of this home will surely become the gathering place for your family and friends. The property also has a two story, red-vinyl sided barn with five horse stalls as well as plenty of storage for your outside toys and an oversized 3-car, two story garage. The second floor of the garage is a massive open space which can readily be converted into an office, a studio or an apartment. The possibilities are endless with this property.....**\$439,900**

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