

2016 Spring Recap Upper Peninsula Region

[Graphic: Michigan Department of Natural Resources Logo.]

Wildlife Division of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Report All Poaching (RAP) Hotline: 800-292-7800

Find out more at: <http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/>

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Enhancement of State Forest Habitat

Each year about 10% of state forest land is evaluated for timber harvest and wildlife habitat improvement opportunities. The landscape is broken into compartments that average about three square miles in size. Currently, Wildlife and Forest Resource Division staff are inventorying these areas and incorporating wildlife values into management prescriptions. Prescriptions on state forest land may include timber harvests to promote early successional habitat, prescribed burns, maintenance of forest openings, planting food plots, planting mast producing trees and shrubs, and the retention of cover in deer wintering areas.

[Graphic: Group picture of partners who volunteered with DNR staff to plant oak saplings and seedlings on Drummond Island this spring.]

[Graphic: Female volunteer planting a sapling.]

Tree & Shrub Planting

In the Upper Peninsula Region, roughly 10,000 oak and crabapple trees were planted to increase food resources for wildlife. Oak trees are being planted in areas where diseased beech trees (Beech Bark Disease) have recently been harvested in order to provide alternative fall hard mast food sources. Apple and crabapple trees are being planted around select forest openings to provide a late summer soft-mast food source and redosier dog-wood shrubs were planted in areas to offer additional year-round browse for deer.

[Graphic: Volunteers planting seedlings and saplings.] On Drummond Island, the DNR partnered with The Drummond Island Sportsman's Club, Drummond Island Elementary School, the Ruffed Grouse Society, Michigan Sharp-tailed Grouse Association and the Chippewa/Luce/Mackinac Conservation Districts to plant oak seedlings and saplings to increase wildlife habitat (picture to the left).

Approximately 35 students were involved in the project and learned about how their efforts were helping to improve habitat on the island. The students were taught how to locate an ideal area to plant oak trees, and how to properly place them in the ground. Oak trees thrive where there are openings in the tree canopy. With the keen eyesight of the youngsters finding canopy openings and the vast amounts of energy, the class was able to plant about 30 saplings.

Maintaining Forest Openings

Forest openings serve many purposes, from sharp-tail grouse habitat to spring foraging areas for deer. Sometimes these openings are maintained as food plots such as in Delta County where the DNR has partnered with Wildlife Unlimited, Michigan United Conservation Clubs and U.P. Whitetails to maintain the Hendricks Habitat Improvement Area (lower left picture). In other cases, prescribed fire is used as a tool to maintain forest openings. Prescribed burns benefit plant and wildlife species within ecosystems by increasing the diversity of plant species which supports wildlife in the area. This spring, the High Rollaways/Sturgeon Hole deer wintering complex in Schoolcraft County experienced a 400 acre prescribed burn which created more ideal locations for sharp-tailed grouse and spring breakout habitat for deer (lower right picture). Other burns this spring include: Little West Road in Marquette County, Au

Train Wildlife Area in Alger County and the Munuscong Potholes in Chippewa County. Prescribed burns are possible with the collaboration of many DNR divisions.

[Graphic: Grass-covered forest opening.]

[Graphic: Prescribed burn in progress.]

Wildlife Disease Issues

White-Nose Syndrome in Bats

White-Nose Syndrome (WNS) in bats is caused by a fungus (*Pseudogymnoascus destructans*) that will grow sometimes on the muzzles of bats giving them the appearance of a white nose. Places where bats hibernate, such as caves or underground mines (known as 'hibernacula'), are ideal environments for this fungus, as it thrives in cold, damp conditions. WNS causes affected bats to prematurely and repeatedly awaken from hibernation, quickly depleting their fat reserves and losing body condition. Bats weakened by the loss of fat reserves are unable to replenish them due to lack of food (insects) in winter and die before spring. Bats with WNS often exhibit unusual behavior, such as flying during daylight hours or gathering outside of caves in cold weather.

[Graphic: A white nose syndrome infected little brown bat. Photo credit: Al Hicks, NYDEC.] WNS has now spread to 28 states and 5 Canadian provinces with the most recent confirmation announcement in April of Washington State. Michigan is in its 3rd year of WNS infection and overwintering bat populations continue to decline with mortality ranging between 40% to 70% at hibernacula sites. Baraga wildlife biologist John DePue is the Division lead and field coordinator of bat management and WNS response in Michigan.

Chronic Wasting Disease

Chronic Wasting disease, or CWD, is a central nervous system disease of cervids: deer, elk and moose that is transmitted through direct animal to animal contact or by contact with bodily fluids or carcass parts of an infected animal or soil. Although there are no known health risks to humans, CWD attacks the brain and is always fatal to the infected animal. Currently, CWD is in free-ranging cervids in 22 states and 2 provinces including Michigan's Lower Peninsula and neighboring state, Wisconsin.

In Michigan, a total of seven deer have been confirmed positive. Over 5,300 deer have been tested since May of 2015. This fall, increased monitoring efforts will take place on the western side of the U.P. in counties bordering Wisconsin. Heads from all deer harvested on Deer Damage Shooting Permits will be collected in Menominee, Dickinson, Iron and Gogebic counties for CWD testing.

CWD affected cervids exhibit changes in behavior and loss of body condition. These animals may stumble, have slight head tremors, stand with their heads and ears lowered and in terminal stages of the disease display excessive drooling, drinking and urination.

Visit mi.gov/cwd for more information.

Wildlife Population Surveys

Throughout the year, wildlife surveys are conducted to help estimate population trends, presence or absence and recruitment of species. This year, wildlife staff have conducted sharp-tailed grouse,

American woodcock, winter wolf track, Michigan breeding waterfowl and fawn recruitment surveys. Preliminary data from the fawn recruitment survey suggests a small increase in fawn percentages on the landscape when compared to 2015, and the winter wolf track survey estimated a minimum population of 618 animals Upper Peninsula wide.

[Graphic: Sault Saint Marie wildlife biologist David Jentoft and wildlife technician Tim Maples preparing to band geese.]

[Graphic: Young volunteers Nathan and Sara Scullon and Rory DePue look upon penned geese.]

A total of 423 Canada geese were captured and leg-banded at several locations by DNR staff and many volunteers. Reports of banded birds are used to calculate mortality rates, migratory timing and harvest information that is useful for planning future hunting seasons.

[Graphic: Baraga wildlife technician, Brad Johnson and the peregrine falcon banding crew on North Passage Island, Isle Royal National Park.] Peregrine falcon chicks were banded at different sites and outfitted with uniquely distinctive color-coded and numbered leg bands. The species is endangered in Michigan and by banding chicks it becomes easier to track movement and population growth of these birds of prey. Chicks are banded between 3-4 weeks old, handled carefully, and quickly returned to their nests after banding. Banding locations this year included: Sault Ste. Marie International Bridge. Portage Lake Lift Bridge and Passage Island within Isle Royale National Park. In many cases, MDOT and other volunteers or agencies will notify the DNR of active nest locations.

Did you know?

Soft mast is referencing the fruits and berries that are produced by trees and shrubs. While the term hard mast refers to acorns, hickory nuts, beechnuts etc.... Both hard and soft mast foods are important to the diets of wildlife in our area.

If you are interested in increasing wildlife abundance, consider planting some hard or soft mast-producing trees or shrubs.

Hard mast examples: oak, beech, beak hazel trees.

Soft mast examples: crabapple trees, blue berries, raspberries, cherry trees.

GEMS: Grouse Enhanced Management Sites

[Graphic: Grouse Enhanced Management Sign and kiosk.] Grouse Enhanced Management Sites (GEMS) are areas that are specifically managed for grouse hunting access but many other species such as woodcock, deer, bear, and hare use these areas for the food and cover offered as well. The GEMS are primarily composed of aspen stands that are on short rotational harvest schedules, which creates constant successional stages that benefit many types of species in the area and are used heavily by grouse.

Currently, many division staff are mowing and trimming trails within the GEMS in preparation for the coming hunting seasons; maintaining trails is essential for the ease of access and use for hunters. In some areas, the DNR is planting clover on some of the trails to provide additional food sources for the

wildlife located within the GEMS. Maps can be located at branch offices and online to help identify trails and forest stand types located within the GEMS.

[Graphic: Closed gate preventing access to a dirt road.] Ruffed grouse hunting season opens on September 15th and closes November 14th; it then continues December 1st through January 1st. Hunters targeting ruffed grouse should target young aspen stands.

Nuisance Bear Advice

Although most bear are shy by nature, they may become bold around humans if food sources are made available. Bear can be attracted to bird seed, garbage, barbeque grills, compost and animal food left outside. If you are experiencing nuisance bear problems in your area, here are some tips that may help you.

- Eliminate potential food sources for the bear by removing all attractants for at least two weeks. This includes picking up fallen birdseed from the ground and not putting feeders out during the day.
- Speak with and encourage your neighbors to remove all food sources as well, especially if the bear is visiting multiple homes within an area.
- Keep garbage and pet food in a secured area indoors and keep grilling and picnic areas clean.
- NEVER intentionally feed wild bear.
- Contact a local DNR office for more advice and tips for preventing bear problems or visit online at <http://www.mi.gov/bear>.