



**2020**

**Wildlife Division**

**Annual Report**

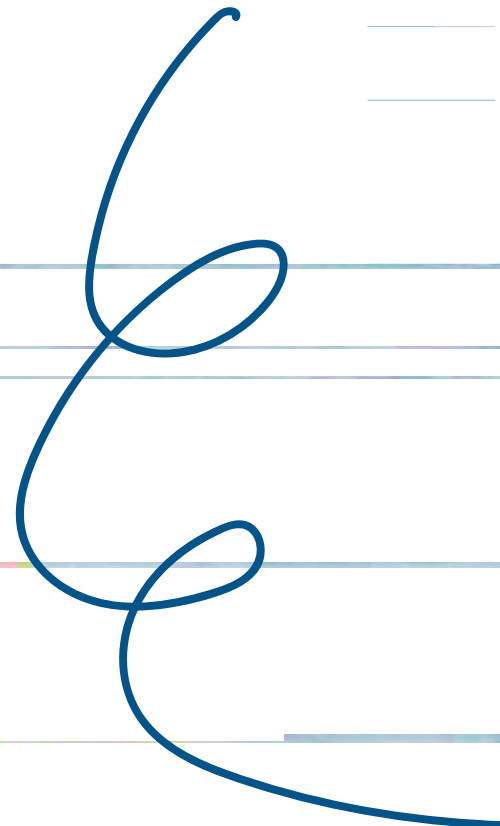


**Celebrating 100 years**

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# Letter from our Chiefs

Dan Kennedy

Dear Reader,

We are so grateful that you have chosen to read our 11th annual report. This report highlights work completed during fiscal year 2020, which spanned Oct 1, 2019 - Sept 30, 2020. DNR Wildlife Division staff are honored to be the public trust managers of one of Michigan's most vital natural resources - wildlife! This year, we faced unprecedented challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as did all of Michigan's citizens. We are exceedingly proud of the work we have accomplished this year considering these unusual circumstances, and we invite you to read our stories.

We begin this report with an overview of the adaptations our division had to make to acclimate to a new reality. From shifting our 160-member workforce to remote work, to continuing to safely provide wildlife-based recreation opportunities to the people of Michigan, to creating new regulations, policies and cutting edge research, all while working largely from home with children, pets, spouses and other family members as company.

Next, each region, section and unit of the division share their accomplishments from the year. You will find that even though we have had to balance quite a lot on our plates since March, we have completed some remarkable work. We conducted successful hunt drawings and lotteries on a new licensing system, created an extensive suite of deer regulations through an inter-divisional sprint team, modified safety procedures at our deer, furbearer, bear and waterfowl check stations to ensure the health and safety of staff and hunters and much, much more.

Here, at the end of my tenure as acting chief, I am delighted to welcome our new chief, Jared Duquette, who is a dedicated conservation professional. I know that Jared is the right leader to move the division into the future of wildlife conservation. Looking back on my time serving the division, I am more aware than ever that our staff put their heart and souls into the work they do and are some of the most talented and dedicated individuals I have ever had the pleasure to know.

As ever, we appreciate your support of Michigan's wildlife, and are honored to work with and for Michigan's citizens to help move wildlife conservation into a new era.

Sincerely,

Dan Kennedy  
Acting Wildlife Division Chief



# Introducing Our New Chief

Jared Duquette



Dear Wildlife Enthusiast,

I am delighted to return to Michigan to begin my tenure as the chief of the Wildlife Division. I grew up in St. Charles, Michigan, where I spent countless hours exploring and learning about nature, hunting and fishing in the Shiawassee Flats with friends. I earned my bachelor's degree in natural resources conservation from Central Michigan University.

Since graduating from CMU, I attained my master's and Ph.D. degrees and worked on research and applied conservation projects in several states across the U.S. and internationally. I have worked on a wide variety of species and topics, such as blackbirds, jaguars, and outdoor recreationalist behaviors. Some of these projects were in the upper and lower peninsulas of Michigan, including projects focused on preventing diseases in deer and elk. I look forward to bringing diverse knowledge and experience to the Michigan DNR.

In my most recent position with the Illinois DNR, I managed hunter recruitment, retention and reactivation activities and public outreach initiatives. I believe in the value of collaborative management, innovation, partnerships, and relationship-building. I am also dedicated to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the field of conservation. For now, I am working from home in Illinois, but am very much looking forward to making the transition back home to Michigan.

Michigan has been a leader in the conservation community, and it is with great respect for this legacy that I step into this new leadership role. I am eager to work with a cadre of dedicated staff, partners, and stakeholders to ensure that the future of wildlife and wildlife recreation in Michigan is available for generations to come.

I am looking forward to meeting many of you readers over the years to come and I wish you all well as we enter an uncertain 2021.

Be well,

Jared Duquette  
Chief of the Wildlife Division

# Special Report – COVID-19 and WLD work

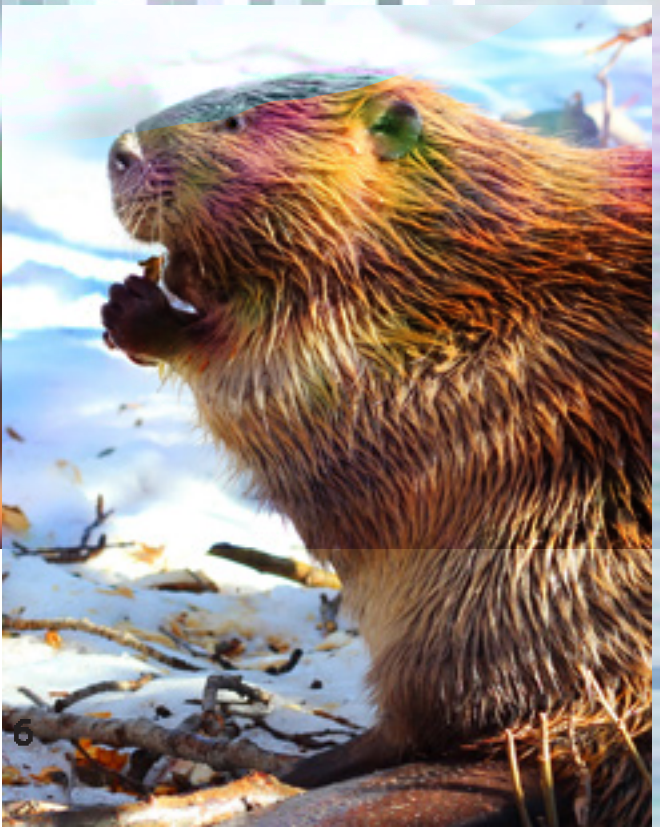
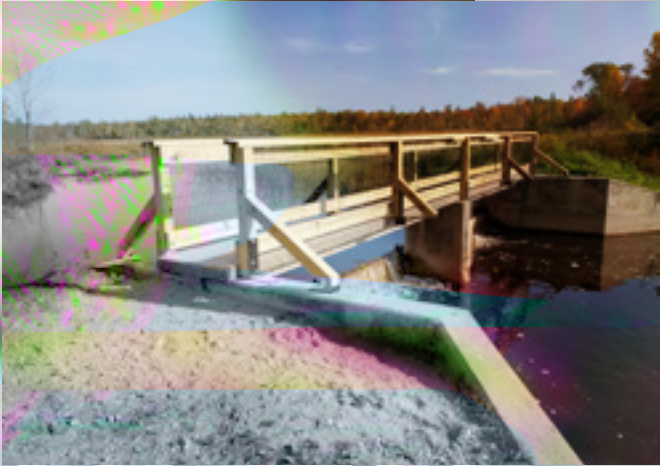
2020 was a year to remember. The COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted the world, also impacted the way we worked this year. In mid-March, a Stay Home, Stay Safe Executive Order sent our 160-member workforce home to become a telecommuting workforce. In short order, we had to sort out equipment, technology, and internet connectivity for working from home. We all learned to work in a whole new way. We still work from home.

Executive Directives gave us hiring freezes and strict spending restrictions, which made getting some of our work done a challenge. We were unable to hire seasonal staff, making the maintenance and enhancement of state lands more difficult. Additionally, we faced temporary layoffs meant to help balance state budgets. In incredible fashion, several partners stepped up to help us complete our work by contributing materials and pitching in to complete tasks.

We continued to work for our stakeholders, modifying deer check, bear and furbearer check and waterfowl check station procedures to keep our workers and customers safe. We communicated these changes and other important information to our stakeholders. We worked on regulation processes and planning projects. We continued to work for the people of Michigan and our incredible wildlife resource and it is our distinct honor to do so.



# Upper Peninsula Region



## Black Creek Flooding

The Black Creek Flooding is located east of the Manistique Lakes in Mackinac County. The flooding was created when a small dam was placed on a former railroad grade crossing Black Creek. It has become a popular location for waterfowl hunting, fishing, paddling, birdwatching, and other activities. Several upgrades were made to the flooding this year including adding gravel to improve the access road, replacing boards in the dam on the flooding and placing a locking system to prevent vandalism. Also, the old, damaged, metal railing on the walkway over the dam was replaced with a modern wooden railing. Partners in the DNR Forest Resources and Fisheries divisions helped with the road improvement and the work on the dam and walkway. Finally, staff planted wild rice across a small portion of the flooding to improve waterfowl habitat.

## Rainey Wildlife Area

The Rainey Wildlife Area, near Manistique, MI, offers outdoor recreationists the opportunity to view wildlife and wetland habitat. The area boasts a quarter-mile long hiking trail and viewing platform that overlooks Indian Lake and the Smith Creek slough. In 2020, staff installed a new kiosk roof and educational display, several new sections of boardwalk and additional hiking trail materials (with labor help from Schoolcraft County Corrections). Several repairs were made to the viewing platform to ensure safe use.

## Portage Marsh

Portage Marsh State Wildlife Management Area is a 600-acre coastal wetland complex in a long, narrow peninsula that juts out into Lake Michigan near downtown Escanaba. This year we upgraded the parking lot, boat ramp, and viewing platforms to provide access for a variety of wildlife recreation activities. In 2019, Wildlife staff partnered with Wildlife Unlimited of Delta County to fund interpretive signs for this site. The signs feature waterfowl identification tips and fun facts about dragonflies.

# Northern Lower Peninsula Region



## Hunting Elk Safely

Changes were made to the traditional elk hunting orientation and elk check stations to provide a safe working and learning environment for staff and hunters during the COVID-19 pandemic. The orientation was shifted from in-person to a virtual platform, allowing elk hunters to learn hunt information and protocols from a six-part video series and ask questions during a live virtual discussion. To prevent any gatherings at the elk check station, DNR staff took to the fields to inspect and register elk harvested during hunt periods one and two, while following all safety guidelines.

## Partnering with Processors

The NLR is piloting a program to reimburse processors that are willing to collect deer heads in counties with a bovine tuberculosis surveillance quota. The goals of the pilot are to explore whether this a more efficient and cost effective method of head collection than traditional check stations, to offer a (potentially) more convenient option to hunters wanting to submit heads, and to reduce COVID-19 exposure at check stations. The reimbursement rates are determined by the level of data collection completed by the processor. Local biologists partnered with MDARD to identify and contact processors and five processors decided to participate this year in Iosco, Otsego, and Cheboygan counties.

## Openings Work Continues

Using funds donated by the Wildlife Management Institute (WMI), field staff continued to enhance large openings and early successional forest habitat from Traverse City to Atlanta. Primarily intended to benefit American Woodcock, Golden-winged Warblers, and over 60 other species of concern across the 17-state Young Forest Project initiative, this work also maintained critical habitat for a breadth of wildlife including elk, wild turkey, and white-tailed deer. Our partnership with WMI provided us the avenue to accomplish our regional habitat priorities by creating openings for wildlife viewing, foraging, breeding, and nesting.

# Southeastern Lower Region

## Duck Banding in the Southeast Region

Though our staff have always been adaptable, in 2020 that flexibility really shined. Typically, staff have plenty of help with waterfowl banding with seasonal staff and volunteers. This year, we had to adapt to banding with fewer helpers. Still, staff were able to band 922 mallards, 326 wood ducks, 7 black ducks, 2 pintail and 1 wigeon for a total of 1,258 ducks banded. With help from the WLD duck banding team, a total of 2,304 ducks were banded in the region. We also banded 423 Canada geese.

## Partnerships Make Habitat Happen

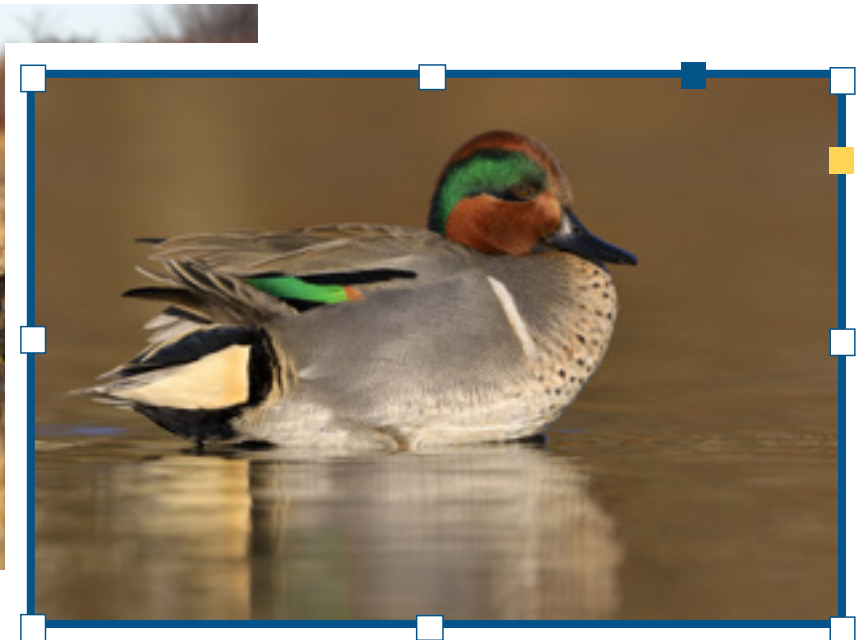
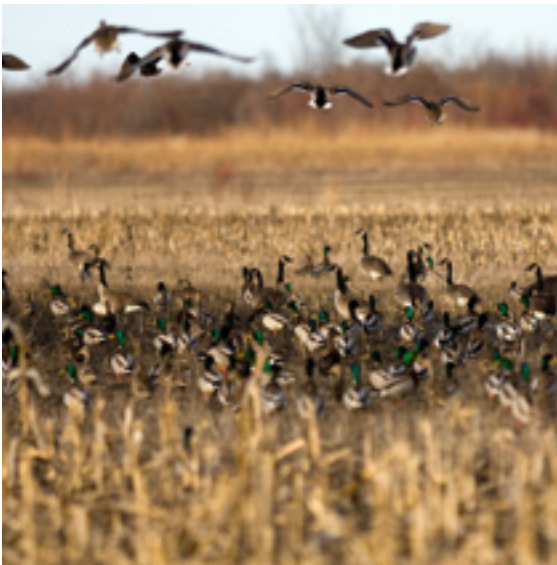
Partners help us provide outstanding wildlife habitat and hunting opportunities on our managed waterfowl hunting areas. This year, our partners helped us more than ever before to prepare for the waterfowl hunting season. Faced with a spending freeze, a hiring freeze and temporary staff layoffs, timely habitat management was not feasible for regional staff alone. It was only with the monetary and on-the-ground assistance provided by our partners that we were able to provide high quality hunting opportunities...together.

These organizations and others provided over \$100,000 for habitat work in the region:

St. Clair Flats Waterfowlers, Inc.  
Fish Point Wildlife Association  
Michigan Duck Hunters Association  
Pointe Mouillee Waterfowl Festival  
Gibraltar Duck Hunters Association  
Waterfowl USA Southwestern Lake Erie Chapter  
Harsens Island Waterfowl Hunters Association  
Shiawassee Flats Citizens and Hunters Association

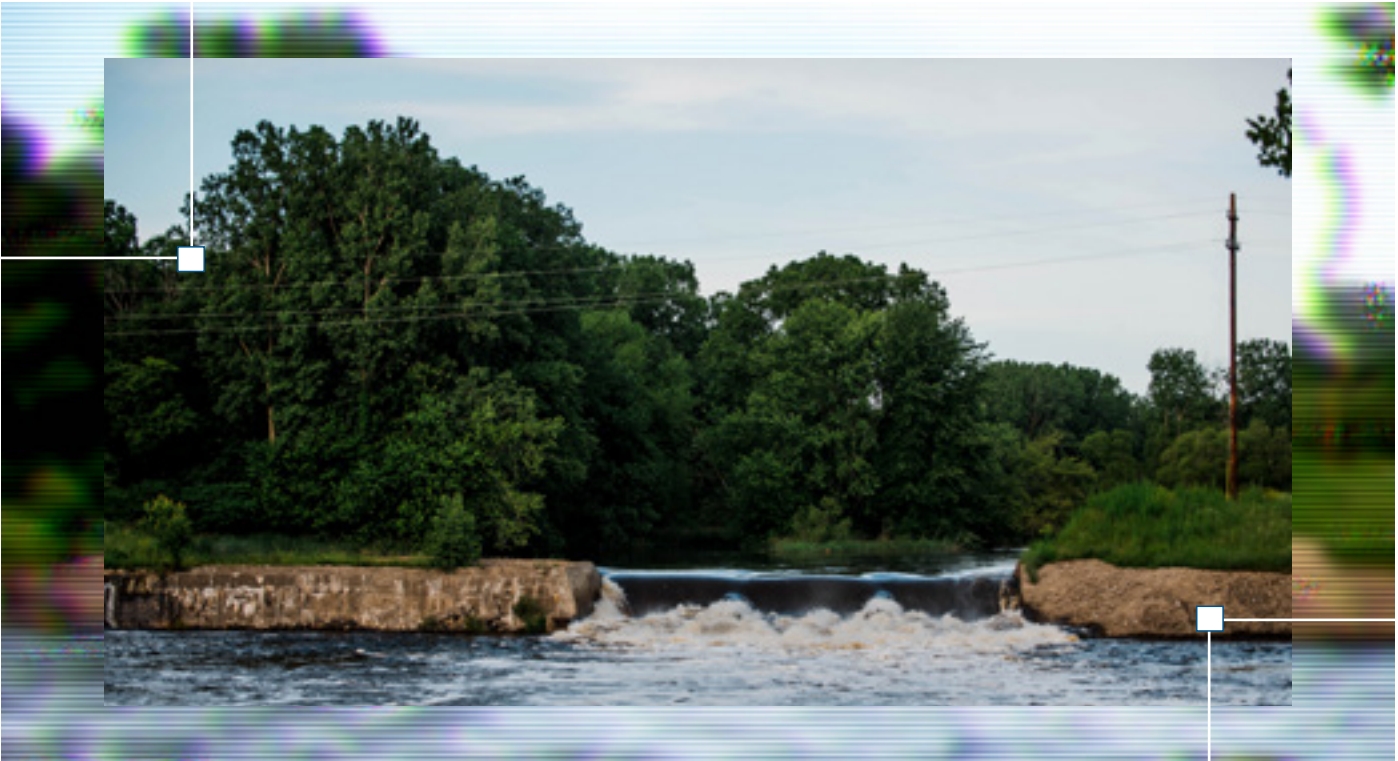
## Keeping People Safe and Serving our Customers

To keep everyone safe in the face of the pandemic, staff made big changes to our managed waterfowl area check station procedures this year. All check station activities were conducted in the open air, while wearing masks, to limit virus exposure while still providing quality service. Many of the areas switched from two hunt drawings each day to a single drawing. Several of the areas also reduced the number of hunting days each week. Other innovative changes included walk-up windows and drive-thrus to register for waterfowl drawings, drive-thru deer check, waterfowl drawing trailers in the parking lot, and drawings broadcast on FM radio.





# Southwestern Lower Region



## **Kalamazoo River to be Restored Through Trowbridge Dam Removal**

The Trowbridge Dam, located in the Allegan State Game Area, is part of a multi-phase dam removal and river remediation project within the Kalamazoo River watershed. Settled in the riverbanks and dam impoundments are polychlorinated biphenyl toxins from the disposal of industrial waste prior to the 1960s. During the latest project phase, state and federal agencies worked with the companies liable for the pollution to remove the contaminated sediments, allowing for the future removal of the Trowbridge Dam structure. The project, expected to be completed in 2023, will improve water quality, wildlife habitat and recreational opportunity along the Kalamazoo River.

## **Potterville State Game Area**

State game areas provide important recreation opportunities to hunters, wildlife watchers, hikers and others. We are delighted to announce a new game area in the region - the new 440-acre Potterville State Game Area. Located in Benton Township, Eaton County. The state game area bolsters habitat for pheasants, wild turkey, white-tailed deer, waterfowl and an array of non-game species. Three parking lots were installed for ease of access just in time for firearm deer season. A ceremony to celebrate the new state game area is tentatively scheduled for 2021.

## **Restoration at the Gourdneck State Game Area**

Restoration of an oak savanna ecosystem is underway at the Gourdneck State Game Area. Enjoyed by hunters and outdoor recreationists, the Gourdneck SGA provides a respite from its urban surroundings in Portage. The restoration efforts began with a 25-acre timber sale removing mature red pines, jack pines and aspen. Through a habitat grant implemented by the Kalamazoo Conservation District, invasive species are scheduled to be removed by crews from the City of Portage. Restoring these lands to their native ecosystems will promote a resiliency to climate change, habitat for wildlife, quality hunting conditions and excellent recreation opportunities.

# Biological and Social Sciences

## 2020 Research Projects

The Biological and Social Sciences Section develops and interprets the best available science for managing Michigan’s wildlife resources. Our researchers work with field staff and other resource professionals to incorporate research findings into management practices. To make the best use of scarce resources, research projects are often done in partnership with universities that are on the cutting edge of analytical and technological advances. To increase Division research capacity, we continued our participation with the Partnership for Ecosystem Research and Management (PERM) program and with the Quantitative Wildlife Center (QWC) at Michigan State University. In 2020, 20 research projects were conducted through university partnerships consisting of 1 project started, 14 ongoing projects started in previous years, and 5 projects that were completed in 2020.

## Research Projects Completed in 2020

Research Investigation	Partners	Period
What do nature-based recreation groups think about conservation?	MSU F&W, USFWS WSFR	2015-2020
How does forest structure at local and landscape scales affect woodcock population growth?	MSU F&W, MSU QWC, SCI MIC USFWS WSFR	2015-2020
How do we better develop and maintain partnerships to optimize our resources for achieving conservation goals?	MSU F&W, USFWS WSFR	2017-2020
Are there more effective and less expensive ways to conduct Michigan’s spring waterfowl surveys?	MSU F&W, SCI MIC, USFWS WSFR	2017-2020
Can we use existing featured species data to inform landscape-level management?	MSU F&W, USFWS WSFR	2017-2020

MSU QWC - Michigan State University’s Boone and Crockett Quantitative Wildlife Center  
 USFWS WSFR - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services’ Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program  
 MSU F&W - Michigan State University’s Department of Fisheries and Wildlife  
 SCI MIC - Safari Club International’s Michigan Involvement Committee

# Planning and Adaptation

## Doing our Part to Make Michigan Carbon-neutral

In 2019, Governor Whitmer directed state agencies to meet our state's portion of the Paris Agreement to reduce carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases by 26-28% below 2005 levels by 2025. About one-third of that goal can be met through conservation programs that pull carbon dioxide from the atmosphere into soil and vegetation. Our first concrete step was taken in late 2019 when our section led Michigan's delegation to an in-person meeting of three Great Lakes region member states of the U.S. Climate Alliance. The goal of the meeting was to coordinate and expand programs that states are developing to accelerate carbon sequestration, such as private lands forestry, wetland protection, and planting grasslands on marginal or erosion-prone agricultural lands. These programs will create wildlife habitat in Michigan while meeting climate goals at state and international scales.

## Working Together to Fight Invasive Species

The Invasive species program engaged with over 400 partner organizations through Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas (CISMAs). The work to build and maintain these partnerships is a collaborative effort across the Quality of Life departments (EGLE, MDARD, and DNR). This statewide network allows us to meet emerging invasive species challenges. In 2020, CISMA-led projects leveraged approximately \$2million in additional funds and other resources toward efforts that align with goals for wildlife. A few examples include control of Chinese yam bordering Crane Pond State Game Area, phragmites control on the Beaver Island archipelago, responses to watch-list species in the southeast region, and giant hogweed/wild parsnip management across the U.P. Other collaborative efforts included statewide partnerships on the Michigan Invasive Species Coalition (MISC) and the Midwest Invasive Plant Network (MIPN). The MISC enhances statewide coordination of invasive species management among large organizations and regional CISMA groups. This also included an annual conference which provided training and an opportunity to celebrate 10 years of the Coalition's contributions to invasive species management in Michigan. The MIPN completed a project on woody invasive plants of the Great Lakes Region that provides resources and other tools for managers.

## 25th Year of the Frog and Toad Survey

The Michigan Frog and Toad Survey turned 25 this year! The survey is a volunteer monitoring program, where people from across Michigan help us collect data to better understand frog and toad abundance, distribution, and long-term population trends. In this anniversary year, over 75 individuals or household teams visited 729 unique wetland locations three times over the spring and summer to listen for frog and toad calls.



# Policy and Regulations



## Retail Sales System Update

On February 18, 2020, the DNR launched a new system for selling hunting and fishing licenses, ORV and snowmobile permits, and hunting applications online and through 1,500 retail agents throughout Michigan. The system serves about 2 million customers a year, issuing nearly 4 million licenses and permits and processing roughly \$77 million in revenue. In 2020, our unit helped to successfully administer the fall turkey license drawing, bear license drawing, antlerless deer license drawing, managed waterfowl hunt drawings, elk license lottery, reserved deer hunt drawings and the Pure Michigan Hunt lottery through the new system.

## Privately-Owned Cervidae

Raising deer in captivity is jointly regulated by the DNR and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. There are over 300 licensed facilities totaling over 63,000 fenced acres in Michigan.

## Wildlife Permits

The division has nearly 40 different permit types and 25 of those permit types are processed or the data is managed in our unit - around 6,000 permits annually. Our unit is continuing to streamline the permitting processes and create database solutions that will make the process more efficient. Partnering with the Forestry Division's Resource Assessment Section, we were able to create an online permit process for commercial hunting guides, wild game meat processors, roadkill salvage permits, wildlife rehabilitation, scientific collectors, special dog training areas, and wildlife damage and nuisance control business permits. This new low-cost system has allowed us to communicate key information to permit holders and to grow our permittees. In 2019, we had nearly 200 commercial hunting guides and that number has grown to almost 400 permittees in 2020.

## Regulations and Legislation

The unit leads the process for updating the Wildlife Conservation Order and coordinated eight amendments in 2020 ranging from topics such as elk regulations to electronic trap monitors for wildlife damage and nuisance animal control businesses. The unit also provided departmental analysis for nine legislative bills.

# Public Lands Administration

## DNR Public Land Administration

In 2020, staff contributed to three DNR public land administration actions: the 2021 Public Land Strategy, the Project Boundary Review, and the State Land Review. The 2021 Public Land Strategy will guide DNR public land management for the next six years. The Project Boundary Review updated project area boundaries that serve as a guide for future public land ownership, and the State Land Review, examines parcels outside project boundaries to ensure the properties are still serving the DNR’s mission. This review will take several years to complete and public input will be sought. These three actions provide more focused public land administration, consolidate state ownership, and allow for more efficient land management.

## Wildlife Division Land Acquisitions

In FY 2020, the division was successful in acquiring approximately 600 acres of land for wildlife and wildlife-related recreation. The Wildlife Division prioritizes potential acquisitions by region and pursues the highest ranked projects pending available funding. These key acquisitions consolidated state ownership while providing additional wildlife habitat, increased public recreation, and wetland, grassland, and forest management opportunities.

County	Managed Area*	Acres (approx.)	Funding Source	Features
Allegan	Allegan SGA	10	Gift from Dale and Maria Koelling	Adjacent to the game area on two sides with road frontage on 46th Street; upland forest
Eaton	Potterville SGA	444	MNRTF and NWTF	New SGA in southern Michigan; frontage on Vermontville and Gresham highways;
Hillsdale	Lost Nation SGA	32	MNRTF	Frontage on the St. Joe River and Reading Road; wetland and upland habitats
Roscommon	State Forest at Houghton Lake Flats SWMA	17	LEFF	Consolidates public ownership out to Yeager and North Harrison roads; wetlands
Van Buren	Cornish SGA	101	MNRTF and LEFF	Completes public ownership on the west end of Grass Lake; grasslands, wetlands, and several acres of oak forest

LEFF - Land Exchange Facilitation Fund; MNRTF - Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund; NWTF - National Wild Turkey Federation; SGA - State Game Area; SWMA - State Wildlife Management Area.

## Land Survey Unit

The Land Survey Unit completed 35 surveys in FY2020 including: 17 boundary surveys to document trespass or resolve boundary disputes; 7 boundary surveys associated with the sale, purchase or exchange of land; 6 topographic or land surveys to assist with design of construction projects; and 5 surveys associated with timber sales, road abandonment, and utility easements.

# Public Outreach and Engagement

## Providing Excellent Customer Service

As noted several other places in this report, 2020 was a challenging year and adaptability was vital. In March, our Customer Service Team switched over to a new computer-based phone system, quickly learning the new software and seamlessly providing outstanding customer service. In 2020 our team responded to over 12,100 phone calls and over 4,900 emails from the DNR-Wildlife@michigan.gov mailbox.

## Coyote Hazing Video

Each winter, spring, and summer, we get hundreds of phone calls and emails from individuals who are concerned about coyote sightings in their urban and suburban neighborhoods. Coyotes are rarely dangerous and only occasionally do they become troublesome for neighborhoods. To ensure that communities have the tools they need to work together in keeping coyotes at bay, we put together a video detailing tips for scaring coyotes away (hazing). This video is an important outreach tool for many of our urban and suburban communities. In its first year, the video has had more than 6,900 views and we expect many more in 2021!

## 2019-20 Wildlife Curricula by the Numbers

- ◇ A Year in the Life of a Michigan Black Bear (6-8th grades) - 4,000 students reached.
- ◇ Go Wild for Michigan's Wildlife (K-5th grades) - 71,000 students reached.
  - What in the Wild Card Game - 22 single deck games and 40 classroom packs (5 decks apiece) provided free of charge to educators.
- ◇ Elk University (9-12th grades) - 1,600 students reached.
- ◇ Wetlands and Waterfowl (6th-8th grades) - 8,900 students reached.
- ◇ Deer Camp 2019 (K-5th grades) - 3,000 students reached.
- ◇ Turkey Time - NEW (released in Feb. 2020 for all grade levels) - 750 students reached.

## Web, Podcast and Social Media

### Top Visited Webpages

Michigan.gov/Deer - 1,056,359 pageviews  
Frogs and Toads - 55,822 pageviews

### Top 3 Performing YouTube Videos in FY2020

60-Second Snakes: The Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake - 49,620  
Michigan Deer Baiting, Feeding and Food Plots - 45,593  
60-Second Snakes: The Eastern Milk Snake - 20,444

### Wildtalk Podcast

28,600 plays  
Top 3 Episodes: Restoring the Arctic, She's Got Game and Deer, Deer, Deer

### Social Media

Wildlife Division Twitter Account - 4,650 Followers, 253,476 Tweet Impressions  
Instagram Wildlife Content - 46,300 Followers, 26 Posts, Likes 40,309  
Facebook Wildlife Content - 236,764 Followers, 58 Posts, 151,191 Reactions (Likes, etc.), 23,210 Comments, 42,605 Shares

# Wildlife Health

## 2020 Wildlife Health Section Highlights

2020 brought some unique challenges, with the Wildlife Disease Lab shutting its doors from March through September due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the lab closure however, lab staff remained hard at work on wildlife health topics behind the scenes.

### Necropsy

Our average annual necropsy caseload is around 1,250 specimens. Submissions were down by over 50% due to lab and field office closures during the pandemic. The three most frequently submitted species for necropsy during 2020 were bald eagles, white-tailed deer and raccoons.

The top three diagnoses in 2020 were trauma (frequently vehicular traumas), canine distemper and pneumonia.

### Partnerships and Research

The WDL hosted three veterinary externs in FY2020. Through these externships we were able to publish two manuscripts on chronic wasting disease and eastern equine encephalitis in the Journal of Wildlife Diseases.

The WDL, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Wildlife Research Center, National Animal Disease Center, and Michigan State University's Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, was funded to assess a field vaccine for bovine tuberculosis (bTB) in free-ranging deer. Associated modeling will also examine the relative contributions of deer and cattle vaccination, on-farm biosecurity, culling and habitat manipulations for controlling bTB transmission at the wildlife/livestock interface.

The WDL built partnerships with academic collaborators for additional projects such as: a new genetic population estimator for upper peninsula black bears, the development of a white-tailed deer genomic panel and a database to permit genomic data sharing, a platform for the sharing of chronic wasting disease data, laboratory tools to improve the detection of chronic wasting disease and efforts to optimize chronic wasting disease surveillance across jurisdictions.

### Deer Disease Testing

In FY2020, Lab staff tested 22,989 deer for bovine tuberculosis and 18,178 deer for chronic wasting disease.



# Wildlife Program Support



In a way, our year was highlighted by our response to COVID-19 challenges and our goal of providing support to division staff. With that in mind, we felt the following highlights best describe our work this past year.

## **Overall Support**

Our section continued to be the support hub of the division and aided all employees seamlessly throughout the timeline of Executive Orders and Directives.

## **Health/Safety**

We developed and distributed additional safety protocols for each approved work activity. Staff distributed personal protective equipment and sanitization supplies across the state including more than 3,000 disposable face masks, over 400 face shields, 300 safety glasses, more than 300 cases of latex gloves, over 500 gallons of hand sanitizer, approximately 1,400 cannisters of sanitizing wipes, and touchless thermometers at each field location.

## **Teleworking**

Our section helped to get 160 people successfully teleworking within seven days of the Stay Home, Stay Safe Order with network connectivity, telecommunications, hardware, and software.

## **Getting Staff Paid**

We administered over 5,500 timesheets and 29 federal grants.

## **Navigating the Human Resources Waters**

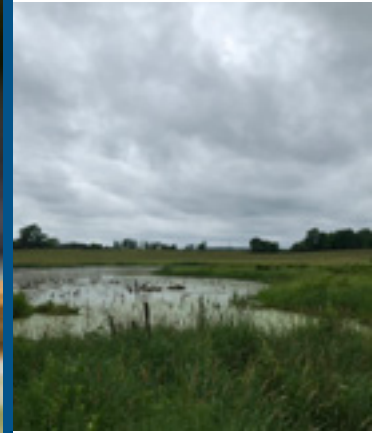
We helped staff use a new federal 2020 emergency sick leave benefit, and helped staff understand the workshare program.

## **Continuing to Employ Michiganders**

Section staff employed over 40 seasonal short-term positions in 2020, including student assistants, state workers, and non-career wildlife assistants.



# Wildlife Species Management



## Deer Regulations Sprint Team

The deer program was busy in 2020 reviewing and planning two sets of deer regulations as part of the three-year regulation cycle (2020), and to address changing long-term trends (2021). Declines in hunter numbers precipitated many of the recommended regulations. Michigan has seen hunter numbers decrease by over 300,000 since 1992, with a projected decline of 100,000 hunters over the next decade. Drops in hunter numbers have led to increasing deer population trends throughout lower Michigan. The recommended regulations were created by a sprint team made up of field staff, policy experts, conservation officers and other DNR staff. This new approach to regulation setting allows for diverse viewpoints and ensures all subject matter experts are involved in the planning process.

## Bird Banding Program

Despite the challenges of pandemic-related work restrictions, hiring restrictions and the inability to use volunteers, our staff banded 5,691 waterfowl. 1,330 Canada geese and 4,361 ducks. Statewide banding quotas for both mallards and wood ducks were met.

## New Voluntary Wetland Restoration Program

In late 2018, new wetland permitting laws were passed that were the result of collaboration among DNR, EGLE, Ducks Unlimited, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the conservation community. The new laws attempt to streamline the permitting process for restoring, enhancing, and managing wetland habitats across Michigan to advance restoration efforts and reduce time delays and costs, freeing up precious resources to be invested in wetlands restoration and protection for fish, wildlife, and recreational users. These laws went into effect on April 27, 2019 and created a new Voluntary Wetland Restoration (VWR) Program that is co-lead by EGLE and DNR staff.

The Unit has been a key partner in the development and implementation of the new program accomplishing the following in 2020:

- ◇ Hired a Wetland Habitat Biologist - half of the biologist's time is dedicated to the new VWR Program and the other half, working with partners and coordinating wetland habitat planning and management efforts throughout the state. Ducks Unlimited provides financial support for this position in addition to the DNR.
- ◇ Thirty-one permits have been issued through the new VWR program and 23 pre-application meetings have been held to evaluate project design and discuss potential permitting hurdles.
- ◇ Continued to work with EGLE to develop VWR Program including revising the Joint Permit Application for wetland restoration, hosting a virtual training workshop series for restoration partners, evaluating programmatic guidelines, and reconfiguring the internal structure of processing permit applications.

# Financial Summary

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the governor enacted spending and hiring restrictions on March 30, 2020. These restrictions significantly impacted the division's spending during fiscal year 2020. Executive Directive 2020-3 restricted discretionary spending regardless of the fund source. This included all non-essential contracts, grants, and purchases in addition to travel, training and any other spending that did not meet specific exemption criteria. The exemption criteria included:

- a. COVID-19 response activities coordinated through the State Emergency Operations Center necessary to address the emergency.
- b. Activities required by specific legal mandate, federal mandate, or court order.
- c. Activities critical to protecting the health, safety, or welfare of Michigan residents, including residents of a state institution or facility.
- d. Activities necessary to produce budgetary savings, protect existing state revenue, or secure additional state revenue.

Executive Directive 2020-4 placed a moratorium on state hiring, creation of new positions, filling vacant positions, transfers, and promotions. As a result, the division did not fill any positions or process any transfers or promotions during fiscal year 2020 after March 30.

## Funds



2020 Wildlife Appropriations by Fund	Amount
General Fund	6,388,200
Federal	25,581,100
Game & Fish	13,686,800
Other State Funds	4,293,400
DRIP	1,940,900
Turkey	1,017,000
Nongame	435,600
Total	53,343,000

2020 Wildlife Expenditures by Goal	Amount
Goal 1	11,306,681
Goal 2	7,467,825
Goal 3	768,034
Goal 4	933,235
Goal 5	4,481,941
Goal 6	8,578,876
Goal 7	869,128
2020 Total Wildlife Expenditures	34,405,721

2020 Wildlife Expenditures by Fund	Amount
General Fund	7,793,565
Federal (Annual)	12,460,498
Federal (Competitive)	844,118
Game & Fish	10,978,045
DRIP	582,264
Turkey	617,803
Nongame	217,747
Other State Funds	911,680
2020 Total Wildlife Expenditures	34,405,721

# Fund Sources

## Federal Apportioned Funds

These funds are automatically apportioned to states, provided they meet certain eligibility requirements. Although transferred to the states in the form of grants, the states do not have to compete for these funds. These funds are particularly important because states can count on the monies being available and can plan for funding staff and long-term projects, as the level of funding is relatively predictable.

Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act Grants (PR)

State Wildlife Grants (SWG)

Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund, Traditional Conservation Grants

## Federal Competitive Funds

These are funds that certain federal agencies make available through a competitive application process. The types of funds and the funding programs available can vary from year to year. These opportunities pose planning and budgeting challenges because of the uncertainty in the Wildlife Division's abilities to secure them; however, some have become very important to the division's ability to accomplish certain aspects of its mission. Once successful in competing for these funds, most are available to be expended over multiple years so long-term projects can be supported. These funds, however, are difficult to use to assist in planning and supporting permanent staff positions and add additional administrative and reporting responsibilities.

Competitive State Wildlife Grants (cSWG)

Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund, Nontraditional Grants Program

National Coastal Wetlands Conservation (NCWC) Program

Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act (GLFWRA)

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service - Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP)

USDA Wetlands Mitigation Program

## State Funds

Game and Fish Protection Fund

This legislatively established fund is principally derived from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses; the cost of licenses is set legislatively.

Game and Fish Protection Fund - Deer (DRIP)

This legislatively established fund comes from \$1.50 of each deer license sold.

Game and Fish Protection Fund - Turkey

This legislatively established fund comes from a portion of each wild turkey license and application sold (\$9.50 resident/non-resident, \$1 senior resident and \$3 application).

Game and Fish Protection Fund - Waterfowl

Historically known as duck stamp revenue, this legislatively established fund comes from the \$12 for each waterfowl license sold.

Nongame Fish and Wildlife Fund/Non-game Fish and Wildlife Trust Fund

This legislatively established fund comes through Michigan's Conserve Wildlife Habitat license plate, the sale of certain merchandise by the Wildlife Division, and donations.

## General Fund-General Purpose (GF/GP)

General Fund-General Purpose revenues, collected in the main state operating fund, are not dedicated to a specific purpose by statute. The Wildlife Division's GF/GP is used primarily for wildlife disease monitoring and privately owned Cervidae facility oversight.

# THANK YOU



## **DNR Mission**

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the state's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations.

## **Wildlife Division Mission**

To enhance, restore, and conserve the state's wildlife resources, natural communities, and ecosystems for the benefit of Michigan's citizens, visitors, and future generations.