



## 2021 Trapping Season

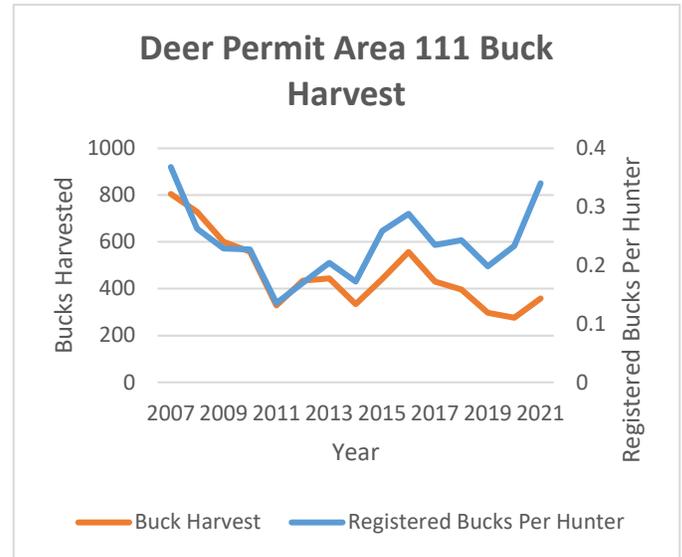
Furbearer harvest was low this season. Red Lake WMA staff registered the fewest furs in over a decade. Registration was lower than during recent years for all species, including bobcat, otter, fisher, and marten. Staff do not believe this is related to population declines, but is instead related to reduced trapper effort during the season. Snow was deep for portions of the season and access was difficult.

## 2021 Bear Season

Bear hunters also continued to enjoy high success this fall in the Red Lake WMA area. There were 125 bear licenses available in Bear Management Unit (BMU) 12 and 71 bears were registered. This is a success rate of 57%, which is exceptionally high. The bear population and harvest levels seem stable in this area. The average harvest in BMU 12 since 2016 is 69 bears.

## 2021 Deer Hunting Season

Deer harvest was low again in the greater Beltrami area during the 2021 hunting season. The area was designated as Bucks Only and hunters registered 358 deer in Deer Permit Area (DPA) 111. For the last three years (and for 8 of the last 9), Deer Permit Area 111 has been designated as either a Lottery or Bucks Only area. Both of these designations are intended to allow the deer population to grow in size. Indeed, the buck harvest increased from 276 in 2020 to 358 in 2021. The hunter success rate during 2021 was also the highest since 2007. This could mean several things: it could mean that there are more deer in DPA 111 than in the recent past, or it could mean that hunters were simply more effective during 2021 season. The number of deer hunters in DPA 111 has been declining over the last decade, so it's also possible that the remaining hunters exert more effort than hunters who no longer hunt this DPA.



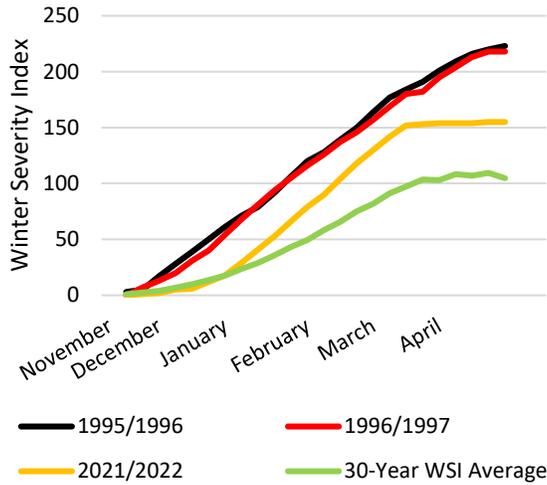
## Winter Conditions and Deer

The winter weather continues at Norris Camp. As of Monday, April 18 we are measuring 16 inches of snow. We have previously recorded more severe winters at Norris Camp, but this year we reached 32 inches of snow during February and also recorded 80 days with temperatures below 0°F throughout the winter. We reached a low of -44°F on February 13 and recorded a Winter Severity Index of 155 as of April 18.

Winter Severity Index (WSI) is a crude measure of the stress that winter may have on wildlife, and has been shown to correlate with deer mortality. A WSI point is accrued for each day when the temperature is below 0°F and an additional point is accrued for each day with a snow depth of 15 inches or deeper. A winter with over 100 WSI points is considered a severe winter, although at Norris Camp we have previously recorded WSI values over 200 during multiple winters. For more information on the Winter Severity Index and deer you can check this webpage:

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/mammals/deer/management/wsi.html>

## Years of Notable Winter Severity at Norris Camp



The winters of 1995-1997 were severe throughout Minnesota and resulted in widespread deer mortality. This winter was not as severe as those winters, although DNR staff members throughout the northern portion of the State are noticing some dead deer. Norris Camp staff

are only aware of a single deer that has succumbed to winter conditions in this area, although there are likely more. Other deer in the forest look healthy upon casual observation. Deer season setting is currently underway. If you would like to discuss deer or other wildlife around Norris Camp, we encourage you to call the office at 218-783-6861.

### Friends of Norris Camp Treasurer's Report

By June Foss

Account Balance = \$8,036.40

**Thanks so much** to the following people  
for donations they have made since  
September 2021:

**Dan Moss, Jeff Moss, Gavin Bettcher &  
Tim Bettcher**



*Sharp-tailed grouse photo by Beth Siverhus.*

## I Am Retiring

After 31 years as the manager of Red Lake WMA, I will be retiring at the end of this month. Ever since I started as an enrollee with the Minnesota Conservation Corp doing bag checks at Thief Lake in 1983, my career with the MN DNR has been wonderful and fulfilling. I will miss the incredible colleagues I have had the pleasure of working with who have been both talented and dedicated to public service and to making Minnesota a better place.

Just a little bit about my career history. I got my wildlife management degree from the University of Minnesota. I was fortunate to get a summer job before I graduated working on ruffed grouse with Gordy Gullion. After I got my degree, I worked for the DNR on a roadside pheasant habitat study out of Madelia, I banded ducks around Bemidji, and I was a wildlife technician for the Nongame program in Brainerd as well as at Carlos Avery and Thief Lake WMAs. I was then hired as an assistant wildlife manager in Thief River Falls in 1988. I was promoted to the wildlife manager position here at Red Lake WMA in 1991.

I have had numerous highlights throughout my time with MN DNR. I got to work with the elk herd (chasing them out of agricultural fields) while I was at Thief Lake. I helped with a lot of prescribed burning which maintained open landscape habitats for sharp-tailed grouse and other wildlife throughout northwest Minnesota. The NW MN Moose Research Project in the 1990s led to a lot of discoveries about how parasites and climate change brought down a once vibrant moose population. The moose project also resulted in the great low of my career – the deaths of my friends and colleagues Eric Cox and Grant Coyour when their plane crashed while they were surveying for moose calves in 1999.

I have been so lucky to have been able to manage tens of thousands of acres of federal (LUP) lands that are part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's wildlife refuge system. Norris Camp is a leftover gem from the Great Depression which I have had the privilege to interpret for so many

visitors. I've worked and learned so much from ecologists, hydrologists, foresters, fishery managers, soil scientists, engineers, historians, heavy equipment operators, educators, and other wildlife managers.

My hope is that Red Lake WMA and Norris Camp will continue to be an important destination for hunters, birders, native plant enthusiasts, photographers, history buffs, and all those who appreciate the wild land and history there.

I am now looking forward to more time to read, garden, hunt, fish, do some hobby work like knitting and woodworking, and, most especially, take time to wander the woods and fields and explore and just lay in the grass and do nothing but breath in this beautiful world we all live in. I also hope to continue public service by volunteering at the school, the local historical society, and, yes, the DNR.

**My absolute best to you all!**

Yours in Conservation,  
Gretchen Mehmel



*Here I am with a real Beltrami Island Forest Turkey last year. My plan for my first retired day on April 27 is to go turkey hunting!*