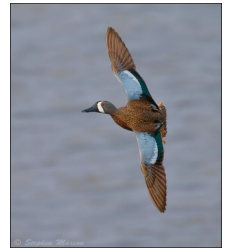


Photos by Stephen Maxson ©

Norris Camp News

News from the Red Lake Wildlife Management Area Headquarters
PO Box 100, 11536 Faunce-Butterfield Rd SW, Roosevelt, MN 56673
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources – Wildlife Division
Issue 37—October 2017



2017 Hunting Season Updates

Bear season began September 1 and will continue through October 15. Year to date harvest is down about 25% from last year, but permits were down as well. The 2017 harvest total is similar to totals from the last five years.

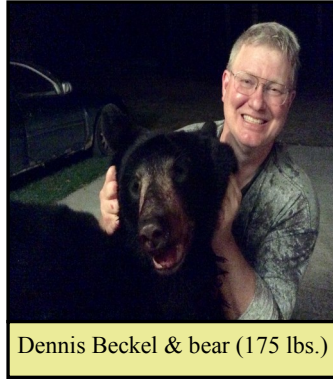
Grouse season began on September 16. Spring drumming counts throughout the state were higher, on average, than last year. Grouse enthusiasts are expecting a good year in the woods, but initial reports have been slow. Rain and dense foliage are hindering success.

Deer season begins November 4 statewide for firearms hunters. Deer permit area 111 again has a lottery for antlerless permits. The number of available permits has increased from 100 in 2016 to 350 this year. This is a number that reflects the increasing size of the population in the forest but will also allow the population to continue to grow. Deer numbers are still low, but recreationists and DNR staff are seeing more deer, and we are already noticing the effects of the increased population on regenerating tree species, especially pines.

Another busy fall in the forest has already begun. Late summer and early fall were exceptionally dry in the forest, with many days of high fire danger. Recent rains have somewhat alleviated wildfire concerns, but forest campers are reminded to be careful with campfires and use common sense.

Temporary Road Closures

The Elkwood, Mary's, and Stotts Forest Roads are closed until next spring to allow for repairs to naturally vegetate. They are currently open to walking traffic only.



Dennis Beckel & bear (175 lbs.)

Fall Land Management

Visitors entering the forest from the south on Dicks Parkway may notice a burned area on the west side of the road. This was a prescribed burn completed in September that is intended to maintain early successional sedge meadow habitats for openland bird species such as snipe, rails, bobolinks, sandhill cranes and sharp-tailed grouse.

This burn was also part of an experiment to identify responses of sharp-tailed grouse to the timing of habitat work. Anecdotal evidence suggests that sharp-tails may use smoke as a cue to indicate that suitable habitat has been created by fire, and that birds may be most likely to respond to smoke cues during the fall dispersal period. This area was surveyed both before and after the burn for sharp-tail use and several roost sites were discovered after the burn showing some birds had indeed moved in. There are several other sites across the state that are part of this study.



Above: Aerial view of a prescribed burn conducted in early September at the intersection of Dicks Parkway and Moose River Forest Roads.

Ecological Impacts of White-tailed Deer

by Jodie Provost, Adam Murkowski, Andrew Norton

Adapted from the 2017 Oct/Nov MFA Newsletter

White-tailed deer are one of Minnesota's most socially, economically and ecologically important critters. Their importance stems from their beauty, popularity as a prized big game animal, nutritious venison, useful hides, impressive antlers, and ability to create fun family hunting memories and boost revenue for local businesses and outdoor industries. However, deer also collide with vehicles, can damage gardens, crops and forest, and contribute to spread of parasites and disease. In this article, we'll focus on their ecological impact or how they interact with plants and other animals in their environment. As the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) develops the state's first ever strategic, long-term, deer management plan, and our fall deer hunting seasons approaches, it is a timely topic.

Bounce Back Ability: Deer existed throughout central and southern Minnesota at the time of European settlement. In northern Minnesota, where forest habitat was much different than today, they were absent or rare. Instead, other members of the deer family were dominant - moose and woodland caribou in the north, and elk in the prairie and prairie-forest transition zone. As settlement cleared forests for lumber and farmland, and large predator populations were reduced by humans, suitable deer habitat and deer numbers expanded geographically, increasing in the north outside of their historic range.

Keystone Species: White-tailed deer fill the niche, or role, in ecosystems of both herbivore and prey. They are affected by, and themselves affect, their ecosystem. In forests, they have been described as a "keystone species" because their feeding activity can directly and indirectly affect many plants and animals. Their populations fare best in forests with both diverse age structure and plants, such as aspen, oak and conifer, and in neighborhoods of mixed farmland and forest. Young, early successional habitats with openings, edge and open woodland get the sunlight needed to stimulate deer food. In spring and summer they eat grasses, forbs such as wildflowers, mushrooms, and leaves of woody plants. As summer transitions to fall, foods higher in carbohydrates are sought, including acorns, fallen fruits and some crops. In winter, deer browse on woody vege-

tation such buds, twigs, young bark, and conifer foliage, particularly liking white cedar, mountain maple, red-osier and other dogwoods, and hazel. Deer in turn are preyed upon by wolves, coyotes, bears, bobcats, and humans and their carcasses and gut piles also sustain eagles, ravens, crows, magpies, and other birds and scavengers.



Forest Habitat Impacts: No wildlife species in Minnesota has a more direct impact on habitat health than deer. When their numbers are too high for their habitat, they pose challenges to our forests and themselves. Aldo Leopold wrote in *A Sand County Almanac* (1949), "I now suspect that just as a deer herd lives in mortal fear of its wolves, so does a mountain live in mortal fear of its deer." Their feeding habits and preferences affect the plants in a habitat. When excessive, it harms and changes forests for decades to centuries. Plants that are tolerant to browsing, or not preferred by deer, can increase and outcompete others. Deer avoidance of white spruce, Pennsylvania sedge and garlic mustard (a non-native, invasive) for example, can make them more prevalent and spread faster. Chronic browsing kills or hinders growth of preferred plants like trillium, orchids, Canada yew, oaks, white pine, and northern white cedar, lowering regeneration success and leaving them in low numbers or absent.

Forest Wildlife Impacts: A decline in plants, their variety, and habitat quality not only means less food and cover for deer, especially during critical periods such as fawning or winter, but also for other wildlife. Cascading effects extend to insects, birds, and other mammals. Insects' (including pollinators such as bees, moths and butterflies) ability to find the plants needed in their life cycle are affected. Nesting sites for forest songbirds in understory shrubs and saplings, as well as the insect supply they rely on for food, can become limiting.

Ecological Impacts of Deer-continued

Deer also affect other wildlife through their ability to carry and spread disease and parasites. Ongoing research continues to point to deer as a vector for disease and parasites, such as brainworm and liver flukes. These parasites have been significant contributing factors to the population declines of moose studied in northern Minnesota. To address this concern, six deer permit area boundaries in northeastern Minnesota have changed beginning this fall to better reflect the distribution of deer and moose, allow more fine-tuned management of deer numbers, and enhance management of both species. Finally, deer numbers also affect other wildlife through their role as prey. As the primary prey of wolves, wolf populations are directly dependent upon condition of the deer herd.



Hunting - Our Best Management Tool: Deer numbers must be considered in order to keep our forests diverse and resilient, and their habitats and wildlife healthy and sustained. Public hunting is our primary tool for managing our deer numbers, with the goal of maximizing their positive impact while minimizing the negative. Hunting season structures, regulations, quantity and quality of habitat (such as sufficient browse and conifer cover in winter), and severity of winter weather (snow depth and duration) are currently the most significant influences on our deer numbers. As part of our natural and hunting heritage, deer should remain valued and managed wisely. Both short and long term, we'll be glad we supported the collective functioning of our forest parts for sustainability of the whole. Wishing you a safe and memorable deer season with family and friends!

For More Information on deer management and the deer plan under development in Minnesota, see the DNR white-tailed deer management web page:

<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/mammals/deer/management/planning/index.html>

From the Past...



This photo was taken in 1910, near Wannaska, MN. The moose was found as a small calf. It had fallen into a hand dug well behind a beaver dam. The man who found it, Willie Williamson, had dug the well and returned to check for water and found the calf. He enlisted the help of others and pulled it out and nursed it with milk. It stayed around for over two years, then disappeared. They tied a big red ribbon around it when they went away to try to protect it from hunters.

**You are invited to the "50th Anniversary"
of the Gerdes Nation!**

Saturday, 21 October 2017

**Norris Camp Picnic Area
Shelter**

Lunch is served at noon with
a video program to follow.
Please come and celebrate
with us, stories and laughs
are welcomed.



Chronic Wasting Disease

Folks who are attuned to issues associated with white-tailed deer may have heard about Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) and efforts that the DNR is making to eliminate the disease in Minnesota. These efforts are the result of positive CWD tests found in wild deer in Filmore County in southeast Minnesota. Several captive deer from farms in Crow Wing and Meeker counties also tested positive for CWD. Deer harvested by hunters in these areas will be tested for CWD and deer management in these areas is designed to minimize or eliminate the spread of the disease. These testing regulations will not affect hunters here in the Beltrami Island State Forest. In this area, deer numbers have increased slightly, but hunters will still need a lottery tag to shoot an antlerless deer.

Several School Groups Spend Time at Norris Camp

The Warroad 1st grade and Baudette 4th grade classes made their annual field trips out to Norris Camp last May. About 80 1st graders and 40 4th graders had a great time exploring the outdoors, learning about the history of Norris Camp, and planting



trees. They were provided direction from the staff from Red Lake WMA, Fisheries, Forestry, Enforcement, and a couple of helpful volunteers, Jeff Birchm and Ell-Kay Foss. We used the bell that had been moved

here from the old Benedix School to signal the time to change learning stations. We've also had some visits by a group of high school students from Red Lake. Here are a few pictures to show the wonderful experience had by all...

LUP Land Exchange

Motorized Use on state lands is governed by several plans, and the Beltrami Island State Forest OHV Plan is currently being revised. At a meeting this summer, the public asked the DNR to consider an ATV trail that would cross the

Roseau River at the old "Dam 4" site. The lands at this location happen to be Land Utilization Plan (LUP) land that is owned by the US Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the National Wildlife Refuge system. Developing an ATV trail that crosses a river is likely not a compatible use on Wildlife Refuge lands, so the DNR and the US Fish and Wildlife Service are identifying options to deal with this site and several other LUP sites, such as Penturan Church and Winner Silo. One option is that these LUP sites could be traded for State owned lands. That would allow for further recreational development of the current LUP parcels. We are still working out the details of this complicated process.

Friends of Norris Camp

Treasurer's Report

by June Foss

Account Balance = **\$6,957.37 on 9/14/2017**

Thanks so much to the following people for donations they've made since **April 2017**:

Gerald & Barbara Bartell

Given in Memory of Bill Itzen

CONTACT

For more INFORMATION

Red Lake WMA Headquarters
11536 Faunce-Butterfield Road SW, PO Box 100
Roosevelt, MN 56673
Phone: (218) 783-6861

redlake.wildlife@state.mn.us

