



## 2019 Hunting Season

**Grouse:** Hunters reported a generally successful season for ruffed grouse. Major issues stemmed from above average rainfall resulting in wet access roads and trails. The weather station at Norris Camp recorded just under 12 inches of rain throughout September, and another five inches of rain during October. A generally wet fall was punctuated by seven inches of rain on September 21 that resulted in some road closures. This made for soggy hunting conditions throughout most of the fall, but hunters willing to engage reported some success.

**Deer:** The total harvest in Deer Permit Area 111 was down by 25% in 2019. In addition, both the number of antlered bucks shot, and the proportion of hunters who harvested an antlered buck declined in 2019. These are likely indicators of a population decline. It is possible that this is the result of extremely deep snow in the forest during late winter in 2019. Regulations in 2020 may be increasingly conservative in order to increase the population size, which is currently below goal levels.

**Bear:** Bear hunters in Zone 12 have been consistently successful for the last several years. This year, 60 bears were harvested out of 125 permits available. This equates to a 48% success rate among bear hunters, which is very high relative to most bear hunting opportunities in Minnesota and elsewhere. The regulations in Zone 12 are intended to provide the opportunity

for a successful hunt while also allowing the population to grow in size or remain stable.

## Spruce grouse project

DNR grouse biologist Charlotte Roy has received funding from the Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Natural Resources (LCCMR) to study spruce grouse in Minnesota. Concerns about spruce grouse populations in Minnesota and the desire to learn more about the species stems from anecdotal reports indicating that the population may be declining, lack of historical population information, the species' status as a game animal, and climate change predictions indicating that spruce grouse habitat may be extirpated from Minnesota in the future.

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*Charlotte Roy with a female spruce grouse. December 2019.*

### ***(Spruce Grouse – continued from Page 1)***

The study is designed to gather some of the information necessary to validate or alleviate some of these concerns. The DNR hopes to better define spruce grouse habitat preferences in Minnesota, better understand the impact of timber harvest on habitat use, and develop a population growth model for the species that will allow the DNR to determine if the population size is increasing, decreasing, or remaining stable in Minnesota.

Spruce grouse habitat in Minnesota includes jack pine and black spruce forests following a line roughly north of State Highway 2. Two study areas have been identified for research, one near Big Falls and one near Norris Camp. At each location, spruce grouse will be captured and fitted with radio transmitters. This will allow researchers to better understand the habitat requirements of spruce grouse in Minnesota. Researchers will be interested in site-level characteristics of habitat such as tree species and canopy density, but also landscape-level metrics like habitat connectivity. This will help define not only what constitutes quality habitat but also what habitat size requirements may be necessary to maintain a viable spruce grouse population.

This project is building from a pilot study conducted several years ago at Norris Camp. From that study, DNR staff learned that persistent researchers could capture spruce grouse using trained dogs and a noose pole. Dogs are used to find the grouse and then researchers are required to capture the birds using a 25-foot pole with a noose at the end. Spruce grouse are notorious for their lack of fear of humans, and researchers are taking advantage of this behavior to find and capture the grouse with nooses. These efforts are currently underway with the assistance of gracious volunteers who have made the capture efforts possible. Staff will also be

experimenting with using traps and recorded grouse vocalizations to locate and capture grouse during different seasons of the year.

We hope that these efforts will help researchers develop a better understanding of this cryptic species and that this can lead to forest management that will benefit spruce grouse. The ultimate goal is to ensure that spruce grouse remain a viable component of Minnesota's forests for years to come.

## **Norris Camp Micro-Grid**

Plans are still underway for Norris Camp to go off the electrical grid next summer. The project design is complete and it will be bid out this winter for a contractor to install the solar panels, batteries, and generator next summer. Look for more about this in future newsletters.

## **School Field Trips**

More school groups have been coming out to Norris Camp for field trips. These schools include Warroad, Baudette, Red Lake, Grygla, and Goodridge. From planting trees and learning about the history of the place to looking for tracks in the snow, it is always a good opportunity to get kids learning in the great outdoors.



## Deer Population Goal Setting

The DNR is revisiting deer population goals in certain parts of the state. This happens routinely and the current process will span 4 years to cover the entire state. The DNR will be hosting open public workshops in each goal block to increase public input. There will be two “consensus workshops” held between the end of January through February in several deer permit area blocks in northwest Minnesota, including Deer Permit Areas 114, 105, 111, 103, and 110 in the areas around Norris Camp.

During the first workshop, participants will be presented with background information and will identify key issues of interest. In the second workshop, participants will discuss solutions to the issues and create recommendations. The DNR is shifting to a “workshop-style” because it will allow more people to participate than with a “advisory council” model and because a workshop style caters to hunter preferences on how they wish to provide input based on results from a 2017 Hunter Opinion Survey.

The workshops are open to everyone and will take about 3 hours. Discussions from the workshops will help inform DNR decision-making and season setting. DNR staff are currently working to finalize dates and locations of workshops. Keep an eye on DNR news releases or call Norris Camp at 281-783-2521 if you wish to participate or be kept apprised of meeting dates and locations.

## Bee Survey

Norris Camp contracted with entomologist Erin Maxson (pictured to the right with a portion of her collection from 2019) to survey bees in Lake of the Woods County during 2019. Erin is a hymenoptera expert. Hymenoptera is a large group of insects comprised of over 150,000 species that includes bees, wasps, ants, and

sawflies. Very little survey work has been conducted on this group of species in Lake of the Woods County and survey work is important to establish baseline population conditions.

Bees were sampled at five locations throughout the summer by placing multicolored bowls on the ground filled with soapy water. The colored bowls mimic flowers to attract insects and the soap breaks the surface tension of the water so insects are less able to escape when they land in the water. Collected insects were stored in ethanol, washed, dried, pinned, labelled, and identified.

Total results include pinning 978 individual bees from 61 species. The most numerous species was *Bombus ternarius*, the tri-colored bee. Important findings include 54 County records, four potential State records (pending verification), *Bombus frigidus*- a rare species not found in Minnesota until 2019, and 3 possible Rusty Patched Bumblebee (*Bombus affinis*) occurrences. Some of these records still need to be verified, but could be significant because these species are rare or endangered, as is the case with the Rusty Patched Bumblebee.





*(Bee Survey – continued from Page 3)*

Future work will include additional sampling, identifying bycatch from 2019, consultation with other taxonomists to confirm identification of rare species, and integration of collection records into the Minnesota Biological Survey database. Ultimately, these records help identify baseline data for this area that will be used in the future to identify population changes.

## **DNR to Update MN Wolf Management Plan**

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is updating the state's wolf management plan and is looking to the public for input.

To that end, the agency is creating a new wolf plan advisory committee to help inform the update to the management plan. Applications are



now open for the committee, which is one of several ways the DNR will engage with the public on the plan.

Drafted in 2001, the [state's wolf management plan](#) provides the framework that guides the state's decisions about wolf regulations, population monitoring, management, damage control, education, research, and other issues.

### **How to apply for the wolf plan advisory committee**

The DNR seeks committee members who represent diverse perspectives, including hunting and trapping; wolf advocacy and animal rights; livestock and agriculture; forestry, conservation and environmental protection; and local governments.

People interested in serving can find information about the advisory committee's structure and functions, expectations of members, and how to apply on the [DNR website](#). The application deadline is Dec. 20. The DNR will select members in January, and convene the committee's first meeting in February.

The goal of the wolf management plan is to ensure the long-term survival of wolves in Minnesota while addressing wolf-human conflicts.

Meetings and engagement opportunities will begin in spring 2020 and continue through the summer. The plan is expected to be ready for final public review and comment next October and finalized in December 2020.

## **Norris Camp Historic Grant**

The Legacy grant from the Minnesota Historical Society is nearing completion. Mina Adsit, an architect who specializes in historic structures, has finished her work evaluating all 14 of the original Norris Camp buildings and is close to finalizing her report. The report includes a description of the structural condition of all the buildings, estimated costs for repairing them, and a priority list for which buildings need work first and which can wait. The plan is to apply for another grant after this one to have construction plans prepared for a subsequent construction grant to repair some buildings.

## **Red Lake WMA Master Plan**

Much of the descriptive work for the master plan for Red Lake WMA has been completed. This includes history sections for both the natural and human history of the area as well as land ownership and hydrology descriptions. The habitat planning portion is still in progress.

**Friends of Norris Camp  
Treasurer's Report  
By June Foss**

Account Balance = \$7,579.54

**Thanks so much** to the following people  
for donations they have made since  
November 2019:

**Dan Moss, Jeff Moss, and Tim Bettcher**



**Address Updates Needed!**

We have had to delete several names from our mailing list as people have moved and the forwarding time for mail has ended. If you know of anyone who would like to be added to our mailing list – just let us know.

In addition, if you have an e-mail address, please let us know so we can send you a digital copy of this newsletter and save a stamp.

We can be reached at:  
[Redlake.wildlife@state.mn.us](mailto:Redlake.wildlife@state.mn.us) or at (218) 783-6861

**Thanks!**

