

2012 Fall Hunting & Trapping Forecast

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources



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2012 Fall Forecast Contents

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Dear Hunters and Trappers;

It's an exciting time of year. We've pulled together information in this forecast that we hope will help enhance your fall hunting and trapping seasons.

Last year, I had the thrill of bagging my first deer. For the uninitiated, it is hard to describe that feeling of connection with the land and pride. Deer hunting is special in Wisconsin. And, with the release this summer of Dr. Kroll's – the deer trustee – report, we have expert ideas and are taking a thorough look at how we manage deer, and how we can do it better. We are listening to you, the hunters, and we want to work with you to keep Wisconsin one of the best deer hunting experiences in the nation.

It's very important to me that we build the next generation of hunter and trapper conservationists so that our grandchildren and great grandchildren can enjoy the outdoor pursuits we have today. There are many ways to share hunting and trapping – youth hunts, mentored hunts, learn to hunt programs – but they all depend on you and me sharing our skills, our hunt, and our trapline with somebody new to the sport. If you can do it, this year invite someone interested to try hunting or trapping and make a lasting contribution to our sport.



Wisconsin's hunting and trapping traditions are rich and treasured, and I know what an important aspect of your quality of life they represent. Whether your passion is waterfowl, deer, squirrels, or furbearers, I wish you good hunting and trapping and lifetime memories this season. Thanks for all you do to work with us to protect and enhance Wisconsin's wildlife resources.

See you in the woods!

Cathy Stepp

WILDLIFE RULES AND REGULATIONS

Update On Use Of Dogs for Wolf Hunting

A recent judicial ruling temporarily prevents the use of dogs for hunting wolves and also training of dogs to hunt wolves.

This is a temporary ruling and it could be lifted at a future date. The Department of Natural Resources will announce any changes in this policy immediately through news releases, social media, hunter contact lists, and on the [DNR website](#), keyword '[wolf](#)'. Please visit this webpage regularly to stay up-to-date on any changes.

Reduced Fees For New and Returning Hunters and Anglers

Wisconsin's strong hunting heritage contrasts national trends that show hunting participation is declining rapidly in many states. Wisconsin is seeing slower declines in hunting participation due to our strong rural population and connection to the hunting tradition.

License Type	New Buyer/ Returning Hunter Cost	Regular Cost
Resident Gun Deer	5.00	\$24.00
Resident Archery	5.00	\$24.00
Resident Small Game	5.00	\$18.00
Resident Trapping	5.00	\$20.00
Resident Class B Bear	5.00	\$14.00
Resident Spring/Fall Turkey	5.00	\$15.00
Resident Annual Fishing	5.00	\$20.00

That said, hunting participation in Wisconsin is declining slowly right now but the decline is expected to intensify unless we all cooperate to find some effective, innovative strategies to recruit hunters. Introducing new individuals to the shooting sports is vital to sustaining our traditions and so is retaining those persons who have hunted in the past but for a variety of reasons may not have hunted recently.

Beginning in 2012, a new class of license fees was created to make both entry to hunting and returning to hunting easier and less expensive.

The New Buyer license is a reduced rate license that is offered to customers as a means to introduce them to the sport of hunting. It is also available for any customer who has not purchased a license for more than 10 years. The new buyer license is also available to anglers.

Additionally, active members of the armed forces qualify for resident small game and resident fishing licenses, free of charge.

Hunter recruitment and retention in Wisconsin

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has a long history of promoting safe and accessible hunting and shooting.

In response to trends indicating a decline in the number of hunters in the future, DNR has implemented a number of programmatic and planning actions to encourage participation in hunting and the shooting sports.

A new report, the [2012 Annual Report on](#)



Eugene Hester - USFWS

[Hunter Recruitment and Retention and Shooting Sports Programs](#) is just now available.

The report highlights accomplishments achieved in 2011 and 2012 by DNR and its partners toward the goal of slowing the anticipated decline of hunter numbers and improving access for hunters and recreational shooters to safe local shooting.

New Law Allows Expanded Use Of Crossbow

Commonly referred to as a 'lesser weapon' provision, 2011 ACT 252 allows resident, non-resident, and youth hunters to use, at their choice, a crossbow, a bow and arrow, or a firearm while hunting under the authority of any Wisconsin firearm hunting license during a hunting season open to the use of a firearm.

There is more information on this new opportunity on page 4 of the 2012 Wisconsin Deer Hunting [Regulations](#).

Previously, hunters who wanted to use a crossbow had to be at least age 65 or possess a disabled hunting permit that authorizes the use of a crossbow. Under the lesser weapon provision, any hunter age 10 or older can choose to use a crossbow regardless of their disability status.

Viewed as a new hunting opportunity, the new law allows hunters of all ages to use a variety of weapons during any firearm season.

An archery license still only allows hunting with a bow and arrow, except that a person age 65 or older and certain qualified disabled hunters may use a crossbow.

Hunters may choose to hunt with a firearm, bow and arrow, or crossbow while hunting under the authority of a firearm hunting license during a season open to the use of a firearm.

Seasons in which hunters may choose to use a firearm or 'lesser weapon'

- All gun deer seasons, including the 9-day season, muzzleloader season, any antlerless season, and the youth hunt;
- Bear;
- Small Game;
- Turkey; and
- Migratory Bird.

Hunting licenses that authorize use of a firearm or 'lesser weapon'

- Conservation Patron;
- Sports;
- Small Game;
- Turkey
- Gun Deer;
- Bear; and
- Non-resident Furbearer Hunting.

New Requirements for ATV and UTV Owners

Several changes in laws covering all terrain (ATV) and utility terrain vehicles (UTV) kicked in on July 1, 2012.

The main changes were that all utility terrain vehicles kept in Wisconsin now have to be registered, whether used on private or public property. Another big change is that all ATVs and UTVs must create a registration ID plate and display it on the rear of their machine if it is registered for public use. Private Use registration, Private – Agricultural Use registration, and Trail Pass owners are not required to display a rear ID plate.

These changes surprised a number of ATV/



WDNR



UTV owners and the department is doing what it can to both inform owners and the general public of these changes.

“As is usually the case when new laws of this kind are implemented, the department takes an educational approach to the new laws initially,” said Conservation Warden and DNR ATV Administrator, Gary Eddy. “However, enforcement decisions will be made on a case by case basis.”

“The legislation creating these new requirements had strong support from the ATV/UTV community and land managers, and it is the DNR’s responsibility to implement these changes. The rules are modeled after similar rules in place in Minnesota.”

Like on a car, the plates will help with identification when it comes to theft prevention, complaints, and questions about trail use or operation, Eddy said.

Some of the other major changes that took effect on July 1, 2012 include:

- UTVs will follow nearly all the ATV laws (such as snow removal laws), except where specifically referenced.
- UTVs will have a specific UTV registration decal.
- A new 5-day ATV and UTV non-resident trail pass.
- Registrations and annual trail passes will expire March 31.
- A late fee will be assessed for customers renewing their registration after the expiration date.
- UTV operators hitting the trails will have to be at least age 16 and must have graduated from an ATV Safety Course.
- UTV passengers may not ride in the vehicle’s bed.

Hunters are reminded that firearms and bows must be fully unloaded while being transported or while inside or on the passenger area. A loaded firearm may be leaned against a vehicle or placed on a vehicle, such as placement on the tailgate or in the bed of the vehicle. Whatever your mode of transportation while hunting, always practice the four rules of firearms safety.

UTV owners must check with local authorities to find out which ATV trails and routes have been legally designated as open to UTVs.

For more information search ‘[ATV](#)’ on the DNR [website](#). A downloadable [pamphlet](#) that details the changes in the law is also available.

TAB-K

Four Rules of Firearm Safety

1. **T**reat every firearm as if it was loaded;
2. **A**lways point the muzzle in a safe direction;
3. **B**e certain of your target and what’s beyond;
4. **K**eep your finger outside the trigger guard until ready to shoot.

UPLAND GAME SEASON FORECASTS

Contributed by Scott Walter

Ring-necked Pheasant

Visitors to the DNR's [ring-necked pheasant page](#) this fall will find the 2012 Pheasant Stocking Information Sheet, which identifies public hunting grounds slated for pheasant stocking. This fall, the DNR plans to stock around 71 public hunting grounds with approximately 54,000 game farm pheasants. This is an increase over 2011 when just shy of 50,000 game farm pheasants were stocked. Please note that the 2012 stocking numbers are preliminary and

that final numbers will not be known until after the season is complete.

Hunters heading out to Wisconsin's fields in search of ring-necked pheasants will find this year's pheasant hunting regulations included in the 2012 Wisconsin [Small Game Hunting Regulations](#) booklet. Hunters will need to purchase a 2012 Pheasant Stamp and Small Game License and carefully verify which public hunting grounds have a 2:00 p.m. weekday closure time and/or allow hen pheasant hunting.

For the fourth time in the past five years, results from the 2012 [Rural Mail Carrier](#) (RMC) pheasant survey show a decrease in the number of pheasants seen during the April survey period. The number of pheasants seen per 100 miles driven was 0.31 in 2012, a 26% drop from the 0.42 pheasants seen in 2011. The counties with the highest number of pheasants seen per 100 miles driven were Lafayette (1.66), Fond du Lac (1.28), Polk (1.18), Pierce (0.51), and Dunn (0.48).

Results from the 2012 Spring Pheasant [Crowing Count Survey](#) indicate that rooster abundance is essentially unchanged from 2011, with 0.89 roosters heard per square mile this spring compared to 0.91 in 2011. However, survey results by project area showed considerable variation, as some projects showed large increases in observed roosters while others showed large decreases. This stabilization comes after four years of declining pheasant numbers, and can likely be ascribed to a mild winter in 2011-2012 and a warm, dry spring and early summer across much of the state. However, changes in agriculture and land-use patterns are still contributing to long-term declines in ring-necked pheasant populations. Enrollment in the [Conservation Reserve Program](#) (CRP), a U.S. Department of Agriculture program which pays landowners to retire their cropland for a 10- to 15-year period by planting it to permanent cover (such as grass or trees), has declined significantly in Wisconsin.

CRP enrollment in the state peaked in the mid-1990s with over 700,000 acres. Current enrollment is just less than 370,000 acres and the current high crop prices likely will continue to push CRP acres back into row crops in the near future. The CRP has been shown to provide important habitat for pheasants and other grassland wildlife and the loss of habitat in recent years is likely impacting pheasant populations statewide.

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Pheasant Season Information

2012 Season Dates:

October 20 (noon) – December 31

Bag Limit:

1 cock daily October 20 and 21;
2 cocks daily remainder of season



Dave Herr

Looking Ahead to Fall 2012

Given the loss of grassland acres on the landscape and relatively low pheasant numbers, hunters may need to scout actively to locate suitable pheasant cover. Those who do can expect moderate success during the 2012 season. Landscapes that include an intermixture of several cover types are most likely to yield birds. Hunters should find areas composed of at least 10-15% grassland or idle ground that also have quality winter cover readily available to pheasants. Cattail marshes, shelterbelts, and dense shrub thickets provide protection for pheasants during harsh winter weather, and landscapes that include these habitat elements will likely still hold pheasants. The recent mild winter and dry spring produced conditions amenable to good pheasant production, and hunters may find good pheasant numbers in areas adjacent to idle grasslands that provide quality nesting and brood-rearing habitat. Brood survey information for 2012 will become available later in the summer.

During the 2011 pheasant hunting season, an estimated 44,886 hunters spent a total of 388,107 days in search of pheasants and reported harvesting 178,722 birds. The top counties for harvest included Fond du Lac, Dodge, and Polk.

The 2012 pheasant hunting season opens statewide on October 20 at noon and closes on December 31. On October 20 and 21, the daily bag limit is 1 cock and the possession limit is 2. For the remainder of the season, the daily bag limit is 2 cocks and the possession limit is 4. Some stocked public hunting grounds have both hen (which require free leg tags) and cock pheasant hunting and/or 2:00 p.m. weekday closure times.

Look for pheasant survey results on the [Wildlife Reports](#) page of the [DNR website](#).



Jerry D. Davis

Wild Turkey

This fall, 96,700 wild turkey permits will be available to hunters; 1,000 more permits than were made available for the fall 2011 wild turkey hunting season. This increase is the result of the Wild Turkey Committee's decision to increase availability by 600 permits in Zone 2 and 400 permits in Zone 7.

Using Dogs During the Fall Season

This fall will mark the third fall season that hunters have been allowed to use dogs to hunt wild turkeys statewide. This change is

the result of a pilot program, initiated in 2007, that allowed the use of dogs to hunt turkeys in a limited 9-county area. Following review, the decision was made to extend this opportunity statewide and make it permanent. While recent hunter surveys suggest that relatively few hunters (about 2% of fall turkey hunters) have used dogs to hunt turkeys in Wisconsin, this provides an exciting option for serious turkey hunters or dog enthusiasts to explore.

Leftover Permits and Extended Season

Following the 2012 fall turkey permit drawing, remaining permits went on sale Saturday, August 25, at 10:00 A.M. Please note that in previous years, sales opened at noon each day; the decision was

made to allow permit sales two hours earlier in order to increase hunter access to leftover permits. The fall 2012 season will run from September 15 through November 15 for all permit holders. An additional extended season for Zones 1-5 ONLY will take place from November 26 through December 31.

Bag Limit

The 2012 fall bag limit is one turkey of any age or sex per fall turkey permit (also referred to as a carcass tag). Hunters should also be aware that the process for registering turkeys in Wisconsin changed considerably starting with the 2011 fall season. The previous system, which required hunters to transport their turkey to a local registration station, has been replaced with more convenient online or phone-in registration options. Hunters must register their turkey either by calling 1-888-HUNT-WIS (1-888-486-8947) or by going to dnr.wi.gov, keyword: 'turkey registration', to use the online system. Hunters are still required to register their turkey by 5:00 p.m. on the day after harvest.

Turkey Tactics

The restoration of turkeys in Wisconsin ranks as one of the greatest wildlife management success stories in the state. Absent from Wisconsin as recently as the 1970s, turkeys are now so abundant that Wisconsin spring turkey harvests rank among the largest in the nation. They have also proven surprisingly tolerant of harsh winter weather, with populations established throughout the northern part of the state. After 20 years of rapidly increasing turkey populations and turkey harvests, turkeys in Wisconsin now seem to be stabilizing at levels suitable to the available habitat on the landscape. Turkey numbers and, in turn, turkey harvests, will now likely ebb and flow in response to natural factors such as weather and food availability. Hunters can expect some annual variation in both their personal success and turkey harvests, as Wisconsin's turkey population stabilizes across the state and is nudged upward or downward from year to year by weather and other influences.

Fall turkey hunters can maximize their chances of success by understanding turkey behavior. Come fall, there is generally a shift in habitat use with turkeys moving from more open field habitats to forested habitats. Flocks make extensive use of areas dominated by oak and hickory. This habitat shift coincides with food availability as succulent vegetation and insects become less available and mast becomes more available. In years of poor mast production, turkey flocks are drawn to localized areas where food can be found. This often results in turkeys frequenting farmland and open fields where they become more visible and vulnerable to hunters. Turkey hunters should monitor the mast crop in the area they hunt in order to determine where turkeys will be feeding. Spending a few evenings prior to the season locating

Wild Turkey Season Information

Fall 2012 Season Dates (All Zones):

September 15 – November 15

Extended Fall Season (Zones 1-5 ONLY):

November 26 – December 31

2013 Youth Hunt:

April 6 and 7

Spring 2013 Season Dates:

Period A April 10 – April 16

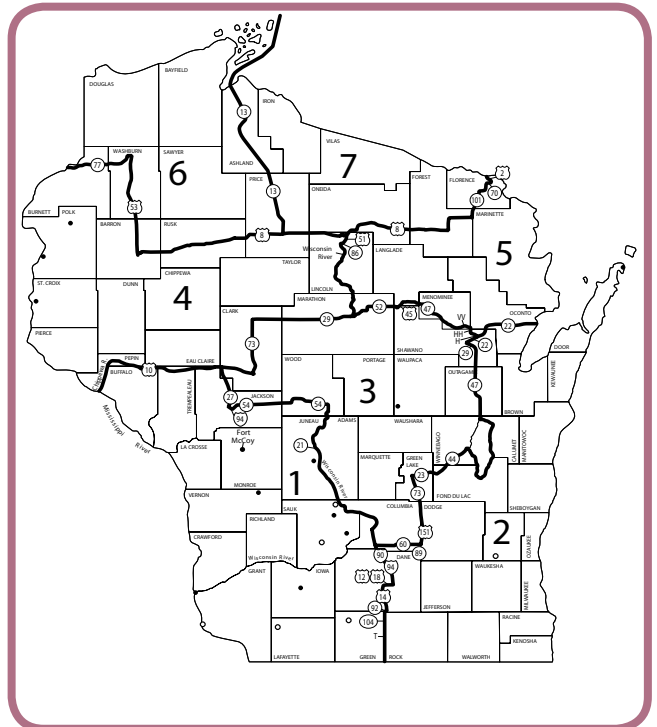
Period B April 17 – April 23

Period C April 24 – April 30

Period D May 1 – May 7

Period E May 8 – May 14

Period F May 15 – May 21



Turkey Hunting Zones

roosting areas will also help hunters find birds once the season begins.

Additional information on the wild turkey is available on the DNR's [wild turkey page](#). Brood counts will be completed in August and will provide additional information on brood survival.

Hunters should also remember that most turkey hunting occurs on private land, so it is important to keep landowner relationships a high priority. Landowners in Wisconsin are usually willing to allow hunters to use their land as long as hunters ask politely for permission to do so and are respectful while there. And as always, remember to focus on safety during the fall hunt!

Wild Turkey Management Plan Being Updated

During late April and early May of 2012, 11 public input sessions were held around the state where attendees were asked to share their thoughts and experiences, and complete a survey regarding Wisconsin's current Wild Turkey Management Plan. Citizens could also provide comments and complete the survey online.

"The current Wild Turkey Management Plan was written in 1996," said Scott Walter, DNR upland game biologist, "and we felt it was time to consider revising it to be sure it addresses today's issues and ideas about wild turkey management in Wisconsin."

Following their successful reintroduction to Wisconsin in the 1970s, wild turkeys have expanded their range so that they now occupy all counties in the state, and spring and fall turkey hunting have become very popular outdoor activities. A critical part of the revision process includes soliciting, gathering, and analyzing input from the public regarding challenges and opportunities in turkey management and hunting in Wisconsin.

Results from this survey show strong support of current practices, with:

- 80% of respondents indicating they believe the current seven turkey management zones provide good hunting opportunity,
- More than 75% respondents favored the six separate time periods of the spring hunting season.
- There is strong approval of the current permit drawing process for the spring season, but suggested that it might be time to make some changes to the fall permit drawing process, with over half of the survey takers indicating that they'd support elimination of the fall permit drawing in favor of over-the-counter permit sales.



Steve Maslowski - USFWS

The information provided by this survey will help all of the partners involved in managing our state's turkey flock in development of a plan that protects the turkey resource, but also optimizes recreational opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts. Those interested in reviewing the survey results can do so by going to dnr.wi.gov and searching for '[turkey management](#)'."

Turkey Hunting by the Numbers

Total number of turkeys harvested in all seasons in 2011:	45,656
Total number of turkey permits available for all seasons in 2011:	322,286
Total number of turkey permits issued for all seasons in 2011:	265,333
Overall success rate for the 2011 spring turkey season:	19.1%
Overall success rate for the 2011 fall turkey season:	10.1%

Ruffed Grouse

Each spring, biologists, wardens, foresters, members of the [Ruffed Grouse Society](#), and other volunteers travel survey routes in order to record [ruffed grouse drumming](#) activity. Drumming is the sound produced by a male grouse during the spring breeding season. The male will display on a drumming log, rapidly beating his wings, producing a drumming sound with the intention of attracting a female. Ruffed grouse drumming surveys have been used since 1964 as an indicator of ruffed grouse population trends. Brood

data is also collected during July and August, after eggs have hatched and the young birds are a month or two old. These data will be available in early September. Collectively, these surveys provide a good picture of ruffed grouse production levels and population trends in Wisconsin.

Statewide, the ruffed grouse population decreased by 25%, from 1.23 drums per stop in 2011 to 0.93 in 2012. The southwest region of the state showed the greatest decrease in drumming activity over the last year with a 33% drop. The central and northern regions also showed similar decreases of 21% and 26%, respectively. The southeast region did show a substantial increase of 233% in the number of drumming males heard on routes, but as this region contains far less suitable grouse cover than the rest of the state, even minor changes result in great variation in the data.

Grouse populations in northern Wisconsin tend to cycle predictably over an 8- to 11-year period. Survey results suggest that grouse populations in the state may have peaked in 2011 and are now headed downward. However, with good conditions for production this spring, hunters should still expect moderate to good ruffed grouse hunting in the state this year.

Grouse hunters are very in tune with where grouse numbers are relative to the population cycle, as both the number of hunting days spent in the field and overall harvests vary significantly from year to year.

“During the 2011-2012 grouse season, 82,886 hunters reported spending 721,382 days in the field hunting grouse with roughly 336,530 grouse harvested,” said Scott Walter, DNR upland wildlife ecologist. “To some extent, we see participation in grouse hunting ebb and flow in response to the grouse cycle, with



Herbert Lange



Mdf

more hunters hitting the woods more often when grouse numbers are up. As we head toward the cyclic low over the next few years, grouse hunters should remember that grouse will tend to become concentrated in the best cover available. At low grouse densities, marginal habitats that held birds a few years ago may be empty, but hunters willing to search out high-quality habitat can still experience good success.”

Hunters may have to scout different sites in order to find the pockets where good numbers of birds can be found. Ruffed grouse use a variety of habitat types, but young, early-successional forest types are most important when trying to find a good grouse-hunting location. Seeking out the densest woody cover available is usually the quickest way to locate grouse in a new hunting area. Checking the crops of harvested birds can also let hunters know what the grouse are currently feeding on and may suggest likely hunting locations.

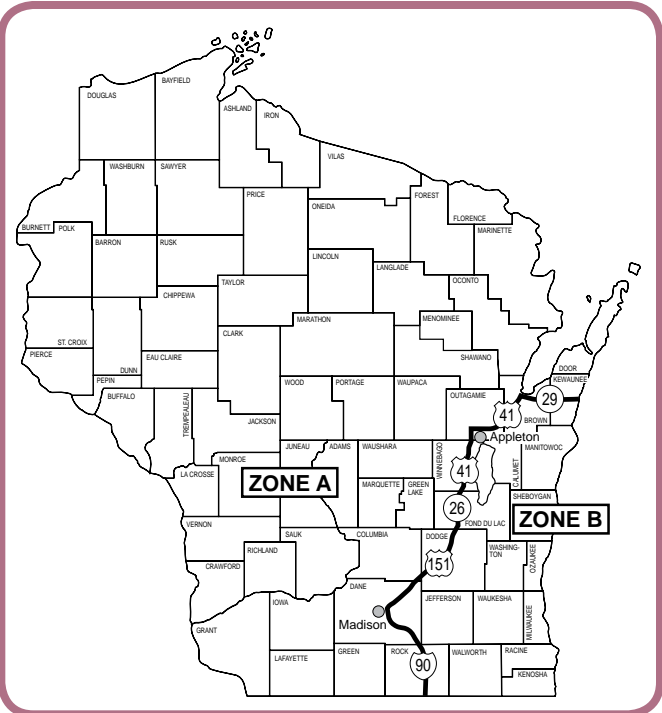
Hunters are reminded that there are two grouse hunting zones; **Zone A**, which occupies the northwestern portion of the state, and **Zone B**, which occupies the southeastern portion of the state. The Zone A ruffed grouse hunting season opens September 15 and closes January 31, 2013. The Zone B season runs from October 20 through December 8, 2012. The daily bag limit is 5 birds for Zone A and 2 birds for Zone B. The possession limit is twice the daily bag limit (i.e., 10 birds for Zone A and 4 birds for Zone B).

Additional information on ruffed grouse can be found on the DNR’s [ruffed grouse page](#), as well as by reading the 2011 and 2012 [drumming survey reports](#).

Ruffed Grouse Season Information

Zone A:
 September 15, 2012 – January 31, 2013
Daily Bag: 5

Zone B:
 October 20 – December 8, 2012
Daily Bag: 2



Ruffed Grouse Hunting Zones

Ruffed Grouse Hunting by the Numbers

Estimated grouse harvest for the 2011-2012 season:	336,530
The number of people hunting grouse in 2011-2012:	82,886
Percentage of small game hunters pursuing ruffed grouse in 2011-2012:	35.2%
Estimated total number of grouse hunting days in 2011-2012:	721,382



Sharp-tailed Grouse

Sharp-tailed grouse are one of four native grouse species found in Wisconsin, which also includes the Greater Prairie-chicken, Ruffed Grouse, and Spruce Grouse. Like ruffed grouse, the sharp-tailed grouse is considered a game species and has a short hunting season each fall beginning in mid-October.

Dancing Ground Surveys

Sharp-tailed grouse are monitored each year by DNR, partner, and volunteer efforts using dancing ground surveys. A complete census of sharp-tails visiting these displaying grounds is attempted on properties specifically designated as sharptail management tracts. Sharp-tailed grouse are also surveyed on unmanaged lands concentrated within a portion of northwestern Wisconsin (primarily in Deer Management Units 2 and 9), and are often located on private lands.

During the spring 2012 sharp-tailed grouse survey, the number of dancing males observed on managed properties increased by 21%, from 108 in 2011 to 131 in 2012, whereas slight declines were noted on non-managed properties and private lands.

The sharp-tailed grouse is native to Wisconsin and historically occupied a large portion of the state using primarily young, open, pine and oak barrens or savanna ecosystems. Long-term population declines across North America, including Wisconsin, have occurred since the early 1900s.

“Although once wide-spread throughout Wisconsin, sharp-tailed grouse are currently only found in the far northwestern corner of the state,” noted Walter. “They are very dependent upon barrens habitat, which have been lost on a broad scale to natural forest succession. Management for sharptails therefore necessitates the use of fire or other disturbance to create and maintain the open conditions they thrive in.

“The Wisconsin DNR has been involved with many partner groups during recent years to identify specific population and habitat management objectives that have the best chance of increasing grouse numbers in the state. We’re coming off some very insightful research regarding how grouse populations operate on the landscape level and the Natural Resources Board recently approved a management plan for these birds that provides very forward-thinking and specific objectives. If we’re able to partner successfully with the various landowners in the northwest counties to implement this information and meet these goals, I think the long-term outlook for sharptails in the state is really quite positive,” said Walter.

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2012 Season and Permit Availability

Hunters interested in hunting sharp-tailed grouse must submit an application to enter a drawing for a hunting permit. Permit-level decisions are made on an annual basis and incorporate sharp-tailed grouse survey data, past permit levels, and success rates. Last fall, 123 applicants applied for 250 permits, and hunters reported harvesting 8 birds during the 2011 season. For the 2012 sharp-tailed grouse season, 200 permits will be available in DMU 2 and 35 permits will be



Richard Baetsen - USFWS

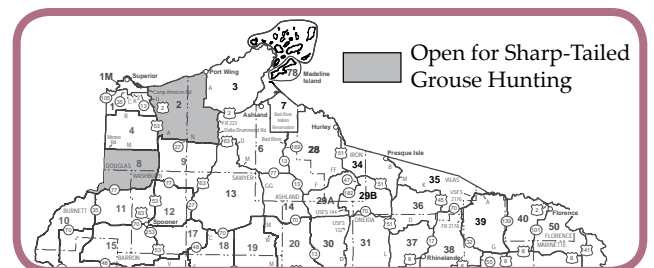
Sharp-Tailed Grouse Season Information

2012 Season Dates:

October 20 - November 11

Bag Limit:

Daily bag determined by permits



Sharp-tailed Grouse Hunting Zones

available in DMU 8.

“Sharp-tailed grouse provide an outstanding and unique opportunity for Wisconsin’s hunters,” noted Krista McGinley, DNR assistant upland wildlife ecologist. “Given the limited distribution of these birds in the state, a great deal of care is taken to insure that permit levels are conservative and reflect the status of local grouse populations. This year, given increases in the number of grouse observed on key properties, we were again able to offer limited hunting opportunities in DMU 8.”

Two other units (DMU 9 and DMU 10) open to sharp-tailed grouse hunting in previous seasons will again be closed this season due to low survey numbers.

Hunters wishing to pursue sharp-tailed grouse should be prepared to do a fair bit of scouting to be successful. Sharp-tailed grouse naturally exist at low densities on the landscape and can often be challenging to locate. Because of this, hunters are encouraged to anticipate this challenge and allow themselves to enjoy the outdoors and the experience of the hunt, rather than going just for the opportunity to harvest a bird. All hunters interested in hunting sharp-tailed grouse must go through the application process. Additional information on sharp-tailed grouse can be found on the DNR’s [sharp-tailed grouse page](#).

Bobwhite Quail

Data on male bobwhite quail densities have been collected biennially since 1991 using roadside surveys along predetermined transects in the 15 counties which comprise the species’ primary range. Annual surveys initially began in 1949, and have been run biennially since 1991. The number of whistling males heard during a two-minute period is recorded. Although no surveys were conducted in 2012, the results of the 2011 bobwhite quail survey indicated no change from 2009 with an average of 0.013 whistling males heard at each stop for both years. The overall trend in bobwhite quail numbers shows a significant decline throughout southern and western Wisconsin. Hunters are encouraged to check the [wildlife reports](#) page of the DNR [website](#) for more information.



Bobwhite quail were long considered to be a species that coexisted nicely with agriculture and high quail densities were once common in the farm country of south and west-central Wisconsin. Quail favored the highly-interspersed habitats found on the small farms of decades ago with numerous small fields, idle lands, small grains, and brushy fencerows providing for their annual habitat and foraging needs. Large-scale mechanized farming has greatly simplified the landscape in farmed regions and the removal of fencerows, enlarged fields, and emphasis on row crops has diminished the ability of these areas to support quail and other grassland-dependent wildlife. As a result, quail populations have been declining across North America for the past 20 years. These declines have been dramatic in states like Wisconsin that are on the northern edge of the species’ range as quail are even more susceptible than pheasants to the effects of deep snow and cold during winter.

In order to help bobwhite quail, the DNR has been working for decades with numerous partners to improve habitat conditions in agricultural regions via implementation of Farm Bill conservation programs such as the [Conservation Reserve Program](#) (CRP). These programs have historically been instrumental in putting quality habitat on the landscape here in

Bobwhite Quail Season Information

2012 Season Dates:

October 20 (noon) - December 12

Bag Limit:

Daily bag of 5, Possession limit of 10

Wisconsin.

Given the long-term loss of appropriate habitat and recent severe winters of 2008 - 2010, quail are patchily distributed and at very low densities across their former range in Wisconsin. Few Wisconsin hunters currently focus on quail while in the field. Hunters interested in encountering quail should focus their efforts on areas with significant grassland intermixed with dense winter cover.



Frank Doyle - USFWS

Cottontail Rabbit

Cottontail rabbits are a very popular small game animal and typically provide for great recreational opportunities across the state. Rabbits are extremely prolific and their annual reproduction is usually dependent upon local weather conditions during the breeding seasons. Portions of the state with adequate rainfall, resulting in plenty of green, succulent vegetation, should see good rabbit production and good hunting opportunities this fall.

Surveys for cottontail rabbits are conducted in unison with the biennial bobwhite quail surveys. All cottontail rabbits seen on the bobwhite quail survey routes are recorded. The results of the 2011 survey indicate that the number of cottontail rabbits seen per stop decreased by 12.5%, from 0.16 in 2009 to 0.14 in 2011. Hunters are encouraged to check the [wildlife reports](#) page of the DNR [website](#) for more information.

During the 2011-2012 hunting season, the results of a mail-in survey indicated that 26,718 hunters harvested approximately 85,086 cottontail rabbits, with the top counties for harvest being Dodge, Grant, and Kewaunee.

Cottontail Rabbit Season Information

Northern Zone:

September 15 - February 28, 2013

Daily Bag Limit: 3

Southern Zone:

October 20 (noon) - February 28, 2013

Daily Bag Limit: 3

Gray and Fox Squirrel Season Information

2012 Season Dates:

September 15 - January 31, 2013

Bag Limit:

Daily bag of 5, Possession limit of 10

Snowshoe Hare Information

Open year-round statewide with an unlimited bag limit



Whppq

Gray & Fox Squirrel

Squirrels are a popular game species and can provide some great early season hunting opportunities, especially for beginning hunters. Squirrel production and resulting harvest opportunities are strongly tied to the previous year's mast production, so hunters should key into these locations when choosing a site to hunt squirrels.

During the 2011-2012 hunting season, the results of a mail-in survey indicated that 50,476 hunters harvested approximately 338,782 squirrels, with the top counties for harvest being Grant, Sauk, and Richland.

Snowshoe Hare

During the 2011-2012 hunting season, the results of a mail-in survey indicated that 5,426 hunters harvested approximately 6,494 snowshoe hares, with the top counties for harvest being Price, Sawyer, and Rusk.



dankarl

MIGRATORY BIRD SEASON FORECAST

Contributed to Kent Van Horn

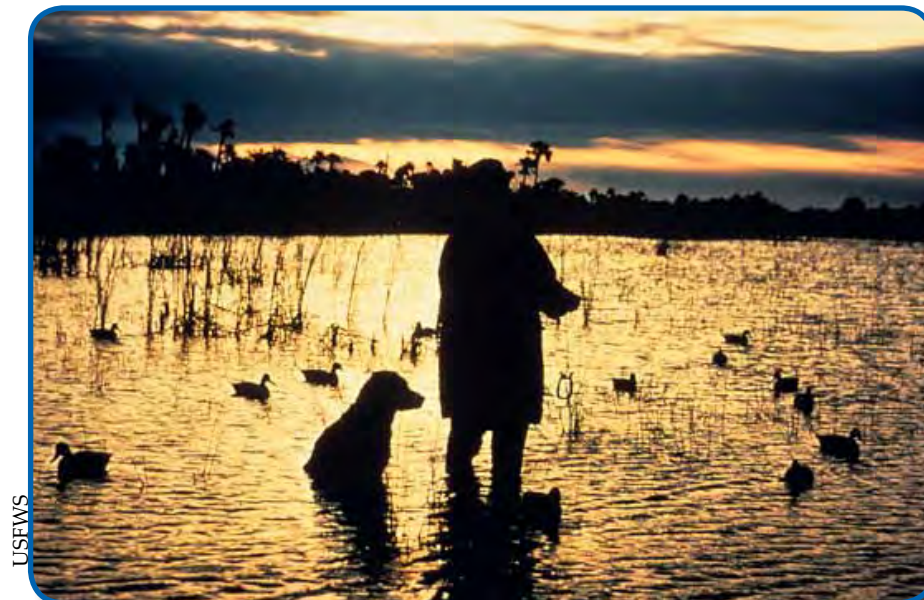
“Despite the generally dry conditions across important duck breeding areas in Wisconsin this spring, the total breeding duck numbers in Wisconsin appear to be near the average of the last 10 years,” said Kent Van Horn, Department of Natural Resources migratory game bird ecologist. “2012 should provide fair to good duck production across Wisconsin and duck numbers continentally are encouraging. Northern Wisconsin has good to average conditions while southern breeding areas have become increasingly dry as the summer progressed. Late summer and early fall rains will be particularly important to providing fall waterfowl habitat this year.”

Variation from year to year in wetland conditions and breeding ducks is part of the natural cycle in the world of wetland wildlife. Wetlands need dry periods to maintain long-term productivity and ducks are able to adapt to changing wetland conditions among years and across the continent. Conservation dollars and efforts of waterfowl hunters over the decades have protected and managed wetland and upland habitats important to breeding ducks. Protection of these areas even in dry years provides the

setting for good duck responses when the rainfall increases during wet years.

Three primary sources of information on yearly waterfowl breeding conditions are used to determine the fall season structure for Wisconsin, according to Van Horn.

The Wisconsin Breeding Waterfowl Survey was completed in April and May, and is very significant because a large proportion of the ducks harvested in Wisconsin are also raised in Wisconsin.



The second source of information is a cooperative survey of Canada geese, the Mississippi Valley Population (MVP) Breeding Survey, organized by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

The final piece is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service breeding waterfowl survey for the northern U.S., Canada, and Alaska, which was released in early July.

Wetland conditions

Canada

Waterfowl breeding areas in parkland and prairie Canada for spring 2012 were drastically different from the widespread excellent conditions in 2011. However, most areas were in fair to good condition with a small area in southeast Saskatchewan rated as excellent.

U.S. Prairies

Spring habitat conditions for the Dakotas and Minnesota were also drier than the wet conditions of last year. In North Dakota, the 2012 wetland count was 57% below 2011 and 6% below the long term mean.

Following the excellent duck production of 2012, there were still abundant ducks on the landscape. The 2012 total breeding duck estimate of 4.8 million for North Dakota was 16% higher than 2011, and 112% above the long term mean. Similar to Wisconsin, Minnesota had a very dry early spring and survey numbers showed a 37% decrease in wetland numbers from 2011, but spring rains following the survey filled many wetlands and created flooding in some areas. The Minnesota total duck estimate of 479,000 was 32% lower than 2011, and 33% below the state's long term mean.

Wisconsin

In Wisconsin, despite overall dry conditions in late April and early May and challenges related to survey timing, the total estimated breeding ducks were similar to last year and the average for the last 10 years. The total breeding duck population estimate for 2012 was 521,079, which is similar to the 2011 estimate of 513,746 and the average of the last 10 years at 545,240.

“These are population estimates – not exact counts – so changes of near 20 percent up or down in the estimates each year may not reflect any real change in the actual population,” Van Horn said.

Ducks - Wisconsin

The four most abundant ducks in Wisconsin's fall hunting harvest are mallards, wood ducks, green-winged teal, and blue-winged teal. Van Horn notes that many of the ducks harvested in Wisconsin come from birds that breed in Wisconsin, in contrast to other states in the flyway that rely more heavily on birds raised in the prairies or boreal forests of Canada.

Mallards

The 2012 total mallard population estimate of 196,950 is similar to the 2011 estimate of 187,862 mallards and 8% above the long-term average (39 year). Mallards contribute to nearly 40% of the state duck harvest in Wisconsin. Overall, the breeding population of mallards in Wisconsin has leveled off near 200,000 in recent years depending on annual wetland conditions. For 2012, hunters should expect average production and fall mallard numbers.

Blue-winged Teal

The 2012 blue-winged teal breeding population estimate of 105,791 is near the long-term average for breeding blue-winged teal in Wisconsin. The 2012 blue-winged teal estimates should be interpreted with caution since the teal arrived early in March but migration and breeding activity stalled when cooler temperatures returned in April. The 2012 teal numbers likely include a higher than normal proportion



Erwin & Peggy Bauer - USFWS

of migrating teal which were passing through Wisconsin to more northern breeding areas. While blue-winged teal populations have recently been at some of the highest continental population levels in over 50 years of surveys, their breeding population in Wisconsin is much lower than during the early 1970s. A continued commitment to grassland conservation, which is important for blue-winged teal nesting habitat, is important to the future of blue-winged teal in Wisconsin. Based on the 2012 May habitat conditions and estimated breeding population, we expected fair to good blue-winged teal production this year. However, continued low rainfall in June and July has resulted in a decline in brood habitat.

Wood Ducks

The second most abundant duck in the fall harvest is the wood duck and breeding wood duck populations continue to provide an encouraging outlook for ducks in Wisconsin. In 2012, the population estimate for wood ducks of 106,626 is 36% above the long-term average. Since many wood ducks nest adjacent to more permanent water and a high proportion of Wisconsin's wood ducks nest in northern Wisconsin, brood production for wood ducks in Wisconsin is expected to be good. This is important because wood ducks have been growing in importance in our harvest and now contribute about 20% of the total duck harvest.

Dr. Thomas G. Barnes - USFWS



“These numbers are good news since it has now been four years since we increased the daily bag limit on wood ducks from two to three ducks to provide more hunting opportunity,” says Van Horn.

Duck Season Information

Northern Zone:

September 22 (9:00 A.M.) - November 4 and
November 10 - 25

Closed November 5 - 9

Southern Zones:

September 29 (9:00 A.M.) - October 7 and
October 13 - December 2

Closed October 8 - 12

Mississippi River Zone:

September 22 (9:00 A.M.) - September 30 and
October 13 - December 2

Closed October 1 - 12

Bag Limit:

Six ducks total to include not more than 4 mallards of which only 1 may be a hen, 3 wood ducks, 2 redheads, 4 scaup, 1 canvasback, 2 pintails and 1 black duck. For species of ducks not listed, such as teal and ring-necks, the combined total with all other species may not exceed 6 ducks.

Ducks – Continentally

The total duck population estimate across the traditional survey area of the breeding grounds in 2012 was a new record high at 48.6 million ducks. Across North America, mallard numbers were up 15% from 2011 and 40% above the long-term (57 year) average in the traditional survey area of the US and Canada. The mid-continent mallard population estimate combines the U.S. and Canada prairie mallard estimate with the breeding mallard numbers from the Great Lakes states (i.e., MN, MI, and WI), for a total of 10.96 million breeding mallards in 2012 which is up from 9.2 million in 2011.

All duck species except pintail were up or unchanged from 2011. Breeding pintails rely heavily on seasonal wetlands and much of the ‘decline’ can be explained by birds overflying the prairie breeding areas, which is corroborated by increased counts in northern Canada and Alaska. Pintail numbers were at 3.5 million and 14% below the long-term average. Continental blue-winged teal breeding numbers (9.2 million) were up 41% from 2010 and 94% above the long-term average.

The picture for several other species of ducks that breed outside of Wisconsin, but are of interest to Wisconsin hunters, is relatively good as well. Scaup

(5.2 million) numbers have been on the rise for seven years and it is promising that they are now at their long-term average. Canvasback estimates (760,000) are similar to last year and 33% above the long-term average.

Overall, 2012 looks like a good year for duck numbers and average for production across North America. However, especially given the dry conditions this summer, a duck hunter's success in the fall will depend upon fall weather, water conditions, and preseason scouting. A recent survey of Wisconsin duck hunters indicates that hunters who did not scout prior to hunting harvested an average of 4.8 ducks per season, those who scouted once harvested 7.1 ducks, those who scouted twice harvested 8.1, and those who scouted three or more times harvested 14.7 ducks. The clear message is be flexible and scout before the duck opener and during the hunting season in order to have a successful hunt.

In 2012, Wisconsin will have a 60 day duck season with a daily bag of 6 ducks in total. Of the 6 ducks, the bag can include no more than: 4 mallards of which only 1 may be a hen, 3 wood ducks, 1 black duck, 2 redheads, 4 scaup, 2 pintail, and 1 canvasback. In addition a daily bag may include 5 mergansers but not more than two hooded mergansers. For species of duck not listed, such as teal and ring-necks, the combined total with all other species may not exceed six ducks. The coot daily bag is 15.

One important change proposed by duck hunters during the public involvement process was a Monday through Friday closure to the duck and goose seasons from November 5 through 9 in order to extend the north zone duck season to November 25, adding to late season opportunity. Some hunters will be excited about this change while others have concerns over the closed days in early November. We will see how this season goes and can decide next year if the hunters would like to continue with this change.

Canada Geese

"Although success will vary depending on fall weather conditions and bird movements, hunters should have good Canada goose hunting this fall. Hunting early in the fall and adapting as the geese change movement patterns throughout the fall will be important." Van Horn says.

One population, called resident giant Canada geese, nests in Wisconsin. The 2012 Wisconsin breeding Canada goose population estimate of 145,386 is down 17% from 2011 and is 62% percent above the long-term (25 year)

average. The 2012 data on resident breeding Canada geese should be interpreted with caution because we know they were well into their nesting period by the time of the survey, which may have reduced their detectability. The early and warm spring generally resulted in better Canada goose production and field reports indicate that goose broods are 1-2 weeks older than normal at this time of year and survival looks good.

"We expect good Canada goose hunting opportunities this fall, particularly for the Early September Canada goose season (September 1-15 with a 5 bird daily bag limit)," says Van Horn.

The second Canada goose population in Wisconsin is the Mississippi Valley Population (MVP), which is made up of slightly smaller birds that nest along the coast of Hudson Bay in northern Ontario and migrate through Wisconsin and other Midwestern states. The 2012 breeding population estimate of 268,900 is nearly unchanged from the 2011 estimate of 269,840. The MVP breeding population remains

Michele Woodford - WDNR



about 25 percent below the long-term average. Spring weather conditions suggest that goose production in northern Ontario should be about average.

The harvest of MVP geese is shared by several other states and provinces. From 2007-11, these states agreed to stable and generally liberal Canada goose hunting seasons while monitoring harvest rates and population size for both MVP and Temperate Breeding giant Canada geese. The management goals were to increase harvest on giant Canada geese and stabilize population growth while stabilizing harvest and population size on the MVP. The results were reviewed during winter 2012, and outcomes were mixed. While the desire to have harvest rates on giant Canada geese increase was achieved, the MVP decreased in population size. Therefore, it was agreed to proceed cautiously with additional harvest liberalizations.

The regular Canada goose hunting seasons in Wisconsin include the Exterior Zone season which has been extended from 85 to 92 days and a two bird daily bag.

The Horicon Zone season is 92 days with six harvest tags per hunter. The Horicon Zone will be divided into two permit periods again this year: Period 1 with dates of September 16 - October 28; and Period 2 which runs from October 29 - December 16.

Early Canada Goose Season

The early Canada goose hunting period specifically targets local breeding giant Canada geese and is held before migratory geese begin to move into Wisconsin. Last fall's harvest of 18,746 was similar to other recent years.

"This has become a popular early hunting season and an important part of our resident Canada goose population management," Van Horn says, noting that the early season also now makes up one-third of our total statewide goose harvest. Hunters should remember that this statewide season requires a separate permit and \$3 fee and does not affect your ability to participate in either the Exterior Zone or the Horicon Zone during the regular season.

The Early Canada goose season will run statewide from September 1 - 15, with a daily bag of five geese.

Youth Waterfowl Hunt

This special hunt aims to recruit new hunters in Wisconsin. In recent years, about 2,500 youth have taken advantage of this opportunity and harvested almost 9,000 ducks and about 250 geese annually. The dates for this year's youth hunt are September 15 and 16, and normal bag limits apply. On September 15 a youth would need an Early Goose Season permit, and may harvest five geese. Because September 16 falls during the regular goose season, in the Exterior goose zone a youth must possess an Exterior permit to hunt geese. In the Horicon zone, a youth possessing a valid tag for either time period may hunt geese.

Canada Goose Season Information

Statewide Early Canada Goose:

September 1 - September 15

Bag Limit: 5

Horicon Zone*:

Period 1: September 16 - October 28

Period 2: October 29 - December 16

Bag Limit: 2

Exterior Zone:

North Portion:

September 16 - November 4

November 10 - December 21

Closed November 5-9

South Portion:

September 16 - October 7

October 13 - December 21

Closed October 8 - 12

Mississippi River Subzone:

September 22 - September 30

October 13 - January 3, 2013

Closed October 1 - 12

Bag Limit: 2

Check the 2012 Migratory Bird Regulations for more information on harvest limits of other goose species.

Mourning Doves

Remember: Hunters *must* be HIP registered when hunting doves, and if hunting on DNR managed lands hunters *must* use non-toxic shot.

Wisconsin's tenth dove hunting season will again run from September 1 - November 9. Approximately 10,000 to 15,000 dove hunters are expected to take to the field at some point during the season.

Hunters are again being asked to examine harvested doves closely for any leg bands. For the seventh consecutive year, Wisconsin is participating in a national plan to monitor mourning dove populations for harvest management. Biologists set a goal of capturing and banding a total of 850 doves from several locations throughout the state with a small aluminum U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service leg band. Hunters who harvest a banded dove are asked to report them to the [Bird Banding Lab](#) or if you do not have internet access, by phone at 1-800-327-BAND (2263).



Dr. Thomas G. Bames - USFWS

In recent years, the continental population of mourning doves was estimated at about 350 million birds, making it one of the most abundant birds in North America. The 10-year composite population trend for the Eastern Management Unit (states east of the Mississippi) has held stable, showing a 0.5% increase. Hunters should expect to see numbers of doves similar to the last several years.

Mourning Dove Season Information

September 1 - November 9

Bag Limit: 15

Regulations and license requirements for dove hunting are contained in the *2012 Small Game Hunting Regulations* pamphlet, which is available at any location that sells hunting licenses or on the [hunting regulations](#) page of the DNR [website](#). Hunters are reminded that mourning doves

are migratory game birds so hunters must be HIP certified and hunt with a plugged shotgun that only holds 3 shells. They must also use non-toxic shot when hunting on federal or DNR managed lands, and if they choose to use lead shot elsewhere, be mindful that possession of lead shot would prohibit them from hunting waterfowl.

"Doves use a wide range of habitats but fields with an abundance of weed seeds or grain, open gravel areas, and water sources are all good locations to find doves. Successful hunting is usually a product of good location scouting. If you are looking for a way to introduce a new hunter to bird hunting then dove hunting is a good opportunity," said Van Horn.



Guizomo_68

Woodcock

Over the last 30 years, the woodcock population across its range in the Midwest and northeast U.S. has shown a steady decline, which biologists believe is primarily related to changes in forest habitat. However, this decline appears to have leveled off in recent years. Interest in pursuing the 'timberdoodle' throughout the forests of Wisconsin remains high, with about

15,200 woodcock hunters participating in 2011. Wisconsin has ranked second or third in the nation for woodcock harvest in recent years, with 42,600 birds harvested last year. Overall, hunters should expect to see woodcock numbers similar to the last few years and, depending on the weather, should enjoy a good fall. Hunters are reminded that they must be HIP certified while hunting woodcock.

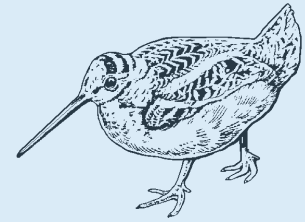
More information on [waterfowl hunting](#) in Wisconsin can be found on the DNR [website](#).

Woodcock Season Information

September 22 - November 5

Bag Limit: 3

You've checked your gear
You've checked the regs
Now, get H.I.P.



Harvest Information Program registration

It's easy when you buy your license,
It's free, and it's the **LAW**
if you intend to hunt these species:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ducks and Geese | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mourning Dove |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sora and Virginia Rail | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coot and Moorhen |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Snipe | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mergansers |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Woodcock | |

The harvest information that you provide is used for no other reason than management of migratory game birds.



DEER SEASON FORECAST

Contributed by Kevin Wallenfang, Scott Roepke, and Dan Hirschert

Before you know it, the 2012 deer season will be upon us, so let's take a moment to look back on the successes of the previous season and prepare for the upcoming season.

Wisconsin hunters annually harvest more deer and more record class bucks than almost every other state. Hunter success during the 2011 deer hunting season varied across the state, but overall proved to be a successful one for many hunters. Gun hunters harvested the most bucks since the 2007 season and bow hunters harvested the third highest number of bucks on record! In total, deer hunters in Wisconsin tallied 347,711 deer in 2011, an increase over both the 2010 and 2009 seasons. With the mild winter conditions measured across the state during the 2011-12 winter and early spring, deer numbers should see growth across the forest regions where numbers were below goals in some areas, and can be expected to increase throughout the rest of the state for the upcoming season.



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Although it was a productive season for many hunters in the state, others had less than desirable seasons. Especially in the forested regions, hunters reported seeing fewer than normal numbers of deer and stated their desires to see more deer and have more opportunities to harvest deer during the season. The number of deer harvested in a given year is at least a partial indicator of the population size. Antlerless permit levels in many forest units have been conservative in recent years and are again in 2012, so hunters in many units should see more deer and have more opportunities to put meat in the freezer this fall, ultimately making for a more enjoyable hunt.

Hunters across the state should take into consideration that deer densities are not consistent across the landscape. Local deer populations are often influenced by the quality of habitat (e.g., amount of food, water, and security cover), predators, and human disturbance present in the area. Hunters will be most successful if they scout their hunting area to locate the best hunting locations as well as to acquire realistic expectations as to how many deer are present in the area. Trail cameras and early morning/late

evening field observations are great ways to see how many deer are present and what kind of bucks are in the area. If you aren't finding the number of deer in the area you hoped to hunt, be prepared to adjust, perhaps scouting out some new hunting ground for the upcoming season.

The season structure for the 2012 deer season will be similar to the 2011 season. Most of the DMU's in the northern and central forest regions of the state will have limited or no antlerless harvest in an effort to maintain or increase deer populations. The farmland regions will remain either herd control units or CWD units. In these areas, deer are abundant and are controlled through the harvest of antlerless deer. But again, local abundance can vary greatly across a unit.

Hunters in CWD units will have an opportunity to harvest additional bucks (called 'Bonus Bucks') beyond their one gun and/or archery buck carcass tag if they harvest antlerless deer prior to harvesting the bonus buck(s). The elimination of Earn-A-Buck (EAB) allows hunters to harvest a buck without having to first harvest an antlerless deer. Hunters within the CWD units may receive free antlerless deer tags, valid only in CWD units.



What's New in 2012

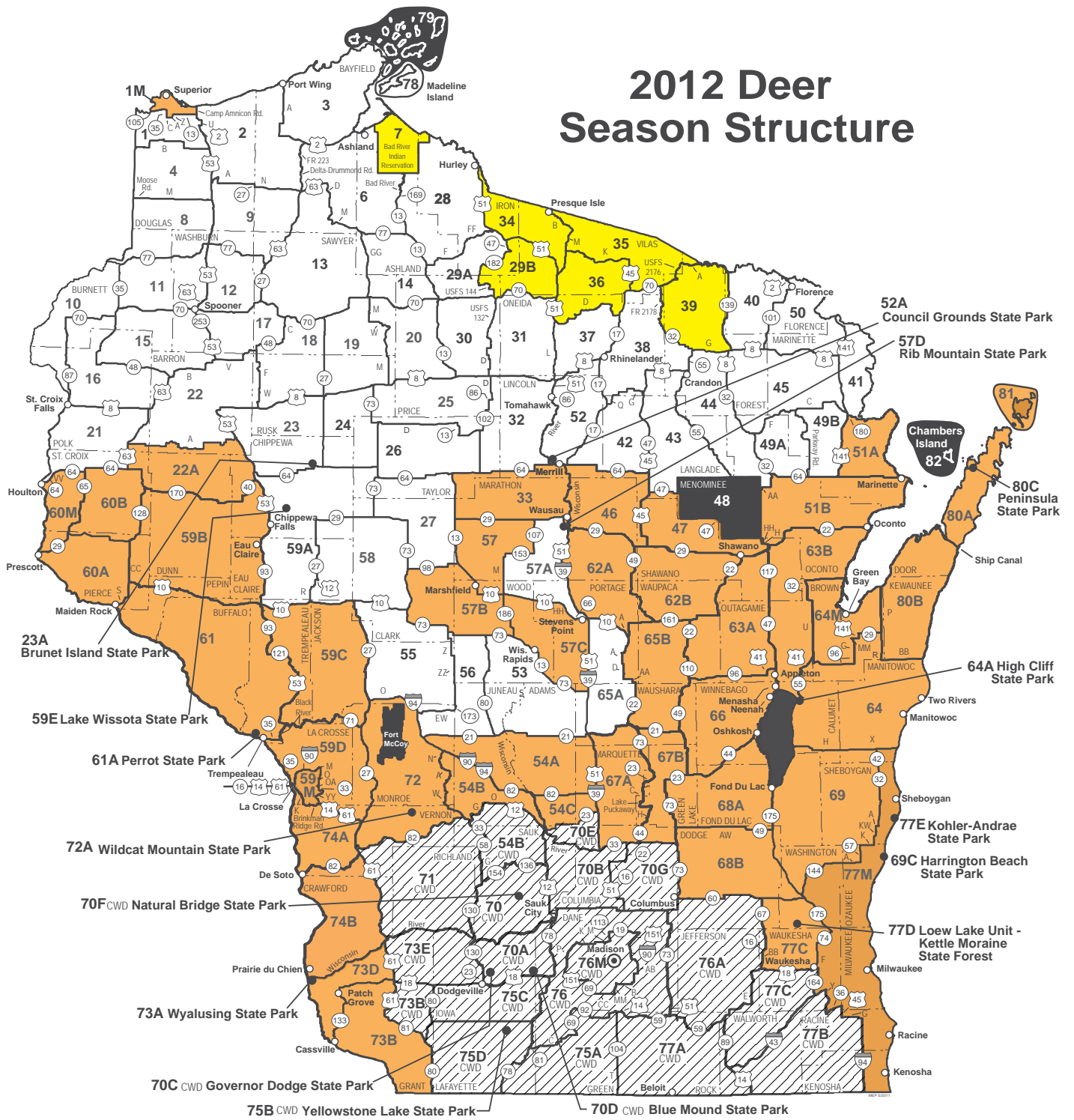


There are a number of rule and regulation changes this year that may be of interest to hunters. The most notable changes are listed here. Check the [2012 Deer Hunting Regulations](#) for more information.

- Archery and gun antlerless deer carcass tags are not available in units 7, 29B, 34, 35, 36, and 39. Only bucks may be taken in these units, except by Armed Forces members, youth ages 10-17, and certain disabled-hunting permit holders.
- In the CWD-MZ, more than one antlered buck may be taken under 'bonus' buck opportunities. To harvest an additional buck(s), the hunter must possess a Buck Authorization Sticker obtained after harvesting and registering an antlerless deer, or the buck must be accompanied by an unregistered antlerless deer tagged by the same hunter until both deer are registered together. The harvest of an antlerless deer is NOT required before harvesting a buck using a Gun Buck Deer Carcass Tag or Archery Buck Deer Carcass Tag.
- During any gun deer season, hunters can use a firearm, bow and arrow, or crossbow as their weapon of choice while hunting under the authority of their gun deer license and a gun deer carcass tag. During the 10-day muzzleloader season, a hunter can use a muzzleloader, bow, or a crossbow as their weapon of choice while hunting under the authority of their gun deer license and a gun deer carcass tag.
- Archery deer season will be open concurrently with the 9-day November firearm deer season statewide.
- Rifles may now be used for deer hunting in Waupaca County, including during the 2-day youth gun deer hunt.
- Reduced hunting fees are in place for hunters purchasing certain types (i.e., small game, wild turkey, or deer) of hunting licenses for the first time, or the first time in 10 years.
- The October antlerless-only hunt will not be occurring in 2012.



2012 Deer Season Structure



- Regular Unit** - Bucks plus \$12 bonus antlerless permits
- Herd Control Unit** - Bucks plus \$2 antlerless permits
- Bucks Only** - (DMUs 7, 29B, 34, 35, 36, & 39)
- Non-Quota Area** - No permits issued by DNR
- CWD Unit** - 1 archery buck, 1 gun buck, plus antlerless permits. Bonus Buck rules apply.

• Unit 48 firearm season is for tribal members only - season set by Menominee Tribe

Deer Management Units in 2012

Regular Units

Deer populations are at or near goal in these deer management units. For the 2012 season, most Regular units will have a limited number of unit specific antlerless deer carcass tags available. Antlerless tags went on sale Saturday, August 18 at 10:00 A.M. and remain available until sold out or until the hunting season ends. Hunters may purchase one antlerless tag per day. Tags are \$12 each for residents and \$20 each for non-residents. Units with lower numbers of available permits can be expected to sell out quickly. Hunters may want to monitor permit availability online, which is updated periodically. Hunters must purchase a 2012 Wisconsin deer hunting license before purchasing a unit-specific antlerless tag.

Buck-only Units

Six Regular units will allow the harvest of only bucks for both the gun and archery season. No unit-specific antlerless tags will be available for the following units: DMUs 7, 29B, 34, 35, 36, and 39. Some hunters will be allowed to harvest antlerless deer in these units, but only under the following conditions:

- Youth deer hunters ages 10-17 who receive one free antlerless deer tag with the purchase a gun license. Contact the DNR at 1-888-936-7463 for questions about the free tags. These special tags are valid in any DMU statewide and can be used with a gun or archery license.



WDNR

Land Open for Public Hunting

If you are looking for a place to hunt this fall, please visit the DNR's [website](#), keyword: '[state lands](#)'. Wisconsin has an abundance of land open to hunting, including state, national, and county forests, state-managed wildlife, fisheries, and natural areas, and private land enrolled in the Managed Forest Law (MFL), Forest Crop Law (FCL), Voluntary Public Access (VPA), or Wisconsin Damage and Abatement Claims (WDACP) programs. Combined, hunters have access to nearly seven million acres of land throughout Wisconsin!

- Class A and C disabled permit holders may harvest a deer of either sex using their one Gun Buck Deer Carcass Tag during any gun deer season in any unit statewide. Class A and C disabled permit holders may use their Archery Antlerless Carcass Tag on antlerless deer they shoot during the archery season in any unit statewide.

- U.S. Armed Forces members, who are Wisconsin residents or were residents when they went into active service, and are currently on furlough or leave from active service, may harvest a deer of either sex using their

one Gun Buck Deer Carcass Tag during any gun deer season in any unit statewide.

- Farmers who have agricultural damage shooting permits may distribute special tags, which authorize the shooting of an antlerless deer only on the farmer's property, to hunters.
- Chippewa treaty rights allow certain tribes to harvest antlerless deer on a unit by unit basis within the ceded territory.

Herd Control Units

Herd Control units are designated when deer population estimates are 20% or more above established overwinter goals. The 2012 Wisconsin gun and archery deer hunting licenses will each include one free Antlerless Deer Carcass Tag that may be used in any of the Herd Control or CWD units. Archery licenses will include a second antlerless tag which is also valid in Herd Control units. There is no limit on how many additional Antlerless Deer Carcass Tags can be purchased at \$2 each for use in Herd Control units. Tags can be purchased at any DNR license sales location or at the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources [Online Licensing Center](#).

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Management Zone

The DNR remains committed to working with hunters and landowners to slow and contain the spread of CWD. Within the DMUs that make up the CWD zone, all hunters may harvest one buck deer per



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unused Gun Buck Deer Carcass Tag and one buck deer per unused Archery Buck Deer Carcass Tag. Additional bucks may be harvested under the new 'Bonus Buck' opportunity, where a 2011 or 2012 buck authorization sticker earned for registering an antlerless deer may be used. Hunters can pick up CWD Deer Carcass Tags, which are valid for a deer of either sex, free of charge (limit 4 per hunter per day) at registration stations and license vendors in the CWD Management Zone.

Metro Units

Metro units 1M, 59M, 60M, 64M, and 77M will be Herd Control units in 2012. These units will have an extended regular gun season that will take place from November 17 – December 5, and will also have an

extended late archery season that will end on January 31, 2013. Other season dates that apply to Herd Control units will be in effect. Metro Unit 76M, around Madison, is a CWD Management Unit and all CWD gun and archery deer seasons will apply to this unit. Shotgun restrictions will apply to all metro units except unit 1M, which will allow rifle hunting. Check local ordinances to see if other weapon restrictions apply to areas within metro units.

State Park Units

State Park units 23A, 52A, 57D, 59E, 61A, 64A, 69C, 72A, 73A, 77D, 77E, and 80C allow deer hunting during one or more deer hunting seasons. Hunters wanting to hunt in these state parks may have to purchase a \$3 State Park Access Permit [online](#) or at any DNR license location for the state park of their choice. Special weapon restrictions or hunting season dates may apply to some parks. Check the 2012 Wisconsin Deer Hunting [Regulations](#) for details before purchasing your permit or hunting in these units. State Park Access Permits will be available for purchase starting on August 18.

Those who purchase a state park access permit early will have the park's special deer hunting regulations mailed to them before the season, or they may find the regulations online. A state park sticker is required for all vehicles in a state park. Access permits are also required to deer hunt in state parks that allow deer hunting within the CWD Management Zone, but are free of charge and are not limited in quantity. Access permits for CWD state parks can be obtained at DNR Service Centers within the CWD Management Zone, at the state park's office, or the DNR [website](#). Visit '[hunting state parks](#)' on

the DNR's webpage for more information on hunting within state parks, trails, and recreation area properties.

October Antlerless-only Hunt in CWD Units

In 2012, the October antlerless-only hunt will not be occurring in CWD units.

Statewide December Antlerless-Only Hunt

The four-day December antlerless-only deer hunt will be held December 6 - 9, 2012 in all DMUs statewide except state parks outside of the CWD Management Zone and non-quota areas. Hunters will need to possess or be in a group that possesses at least one antlerless deer carcass tag valid for the unit in which they are hunting. All hunters, except waterfowl hunters, are required to meet blaze orange requirements during this hunt.

Youth Gun Deer Hunt

The [Youth Gun Deer Hunt](#) will be held October 6 - 7, 2012. This special hunt was established to provide youth an opportunity to hunt under conditions with low hunting pressure with the guidance of a mentor. The hunt will be held in all DMUs statewide, except in State Parks and non-quota areas. Resident and non-resident youth hunters ages 10 to 15 who possess a gun deer hunting license may participate in this hunt. Youth must be accompanied by a parent or guardian even if they have completed Hunter's Education. Qualified youth hunters may harvest one buck deer using their Gun Buck Deer Carcass Tag and additional antlerless deer with the appropriate carcass tag(s). If the youth



has not completed Hunter Education, they must follow the rules of the [Mentored Hunting Program](#). No more than two youth

hunters may be accompanied by an adult, and adults supervising youth hunters may not hunt while accompanying or mentoring a youth. All hunters, except waterfowl hunters, are required to meet blaze orange requirements on these two days statewide.

Venison Donation Program

Contributed by Laurie Fike

County wildlife damage staff across the state is gearing up to roll out this season's deer donation program. The DNR deer donation website will be updated as venison processors sign on, and these processors will be ready to accept deer when their information is posted. This year, the last day to donate

Deer Season Dates

See page 28 for season dates in the CWD-Management Zone

Archery

Early Season: September 15 - November 15

Late Season: November 17 - January 6, 2013

NOTE: Archery harvests in all units on December 6-9 will be antlerless-only. Deer hunting in Buck-only units for this time period will not be allowed.

Gun

Disabled Gun Hunt: October 6 - 14 (qualified disabled permit hunters on sponsored properties only)

Youth Gun Hunt: October 6 - 7

Regular Gun: November 17 - 25

Muzzleloader: November 26 - December 5

Antlerless-only Gun Hunt: December 6 - 9 (statewide with valid carcass tags)

Holiday Gun Hunt: December 24 - January 6, 2013 (CWD units only. Bonus Buck regulations apply).

Metro

Early Archery Season: September 15 - November 15

Late Archery Season: November 17 - January 31, 2013

Youth Gun Hunt: October 6 - 7

Gun: November 17 - December 5

Antlerless-only Gun Hunt: December 6 - 9 (statewide with valid carcass tags)

a deer is Friday, February 1, 2013.

We expect to have about the same number of processors as last year; nearly half of all licensed Wisconsin venison processors participate in the program. Wisconsin has a network of venison donation efforts including: [Hunt for the Hungry](#), which operates in the Green Bay area; Target Hunger, which handles donations from the CWD Management Zone; and the Wisconsin Deer Donation Program, which covers all remaining areas of the state. USDA - Wildlife Services staff also help administer the programs in 49 counties.

Deer taken in the CWD Zone and registered with a red metal tag may be donated to participating processors in the Target Hunger program. These processors are located within or near the CWD Zone. Deer donated to Target Hunger will be tested for CWD and only negative-tested deer will be processed for food pantries.

Groups supporting Target Hunger include:

- [Southwest Community Action Program](#), Dodgeville
- [Community Action, Inc.](#), Janesville
- [Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin](#), Madison
- [Central WI Community Action Council](#), Wisconsin Dells

Since the program began in 2000, hunters have donated nearly 80,000 deer which were processed into over 3.6 million pounds of ground venison. In addition to donating venison, over 41,000 hunters have donated more than \$125,000 to this program through the ALIS license sales system since 2002.

Hunters, you can help feed needy people throughout Wisconsin this fall by taking five simple steps:

- Donate any legally harvested deer taken outside the Chronic Wasting Disease Zone by dropping it off at a participating processor by February 1, 2013. Deer taken outside the CWD Zone are registered with a silver metal tag. Only silver tagged deer may be donated to this program.
- Field dress the deer and register it at a Wisconsin DNR registration station prior to donating the deer.
- Call First! Contact one of the participating processors before dropping the deer off to verify the processor has space to accept your deer.
- Donate the entire deer to receive the processing for free. The head and/or antlers may be removed for mounting. Please handle the carcass as if it were destined for your own table. A couple bags of ice placed in the cavity will help preserve the carcass in warm weather.
- When dropping your deer off at a processor, please sign the simple log sheet indicating your desire to donate the deer, and we'll do the rest. The donated deer will be processed and the venison will be distributed to charitable organizations to help feed Wisconsin's needy.

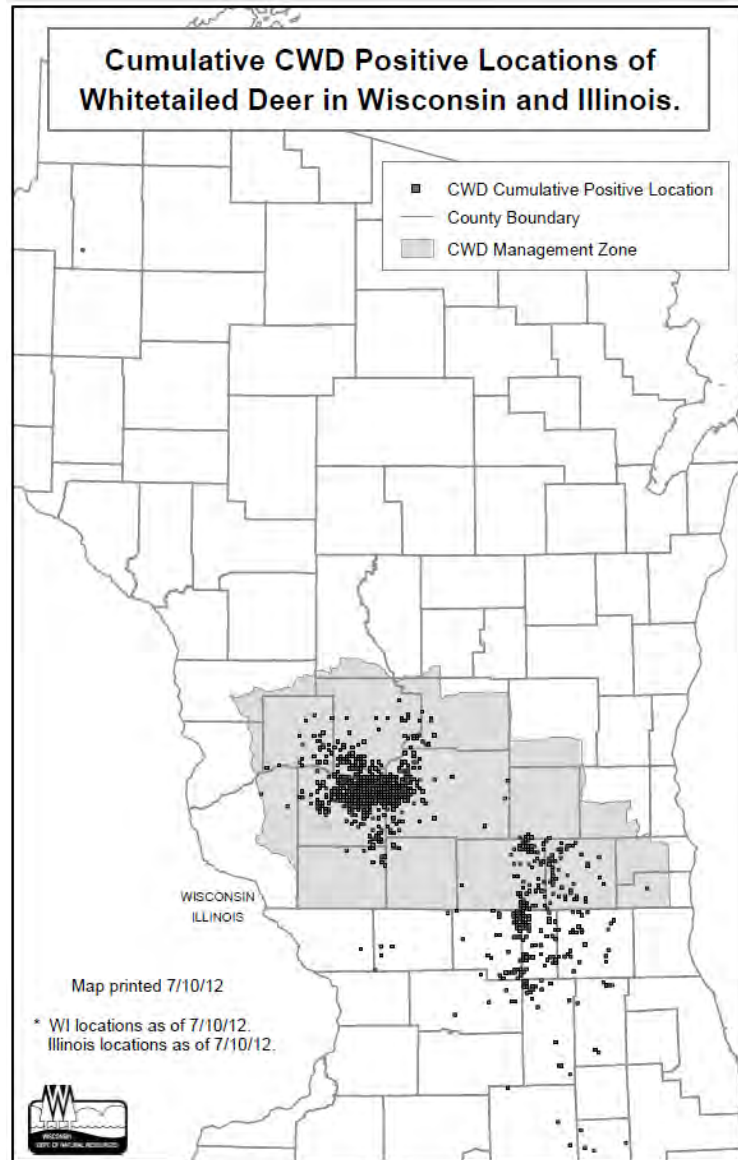


Hunters are encouraged to make the switch to non-toxic (non-lead) ammunition to eliminate exposure to lead in venison. Page 23 of the [2012 Deer Hunting Regulation](#) booklet lists important information to reduce potential exposure to lead in venison and web links to find copper bullets and non-toxic ammunition for hunting. Information on participating processors will be updated as soon as processors are signed up. Please check our website for updates. Thank you for your interest and good luck hunting!

Chronic Wasting Disease Surveillance

Contributed by Brian Glenzinski

Wisconsin has intensively monitored [Chronic Wasting Disease](#) (CWD) for ten years. Between 2002 and March 2012, we tested nearly 172,000 free-ranging deer, of which over 1,800 have tested positive for CWD. The positive cases have been found within the current CWD Management Zone (CWD-MZ) and Washburn County. Wisconsin has two separate cores of disease infection in the CWD-MZ, one in the southwest part of the state and one in the southeast. The southeast CWD outbreak is contiguous with a CWD area in northern Illinois where 372 CWD-positive deer have been found since 2002. Continued surveillance is occurring in Washburn County to determine the level of disease prevalence and distribution.



CWD Prevalence in Wisconsin

Since 2002, CWD prevalence within our western monitoring area has shown an overall increasing trend in all sex and age classes. During the past ten years, the trend in prevalence in adult males has risen from about 8% to nearly 18%, and in adult females from about 3% to approximately 7%. During that same time, the prevalence trend in yearling males has increased from about 2% to about 6% and in yearling females from 2% to about 5%. We continue to see similar trends in the eastern monitoring area as well, albeit at lower prevalence levels.

We continue to find that disease prevalence is higher in males than in females, and higher in adults than in yearlings. It is important to keep in mind that annual prevalence estimates are subject to sampling variation and that trends over time give us better information. These annual monitoring data are important for Wisconsin's understanding of CWD distribution and prevalence.

2012 CWD Sampling in Wisconsin

We will continue to sample deer within the CWD-MZ, including both the southwestern and southeastern core infection areas, to track changes in both CWD prevalence and distribution. The exact locations of sampling within the CWD-MZ, as well as any possible locations outside of the CWD-MZ will be available at registration and

sampling stations and on our website prior to the opening of the 2012 archery season.

We will also sample deer in Washburn County to assess the prevalence and distribution of the disease in the area. Sampling will be focused in a 2-mile radius around a CWD-positive deer killed in the Shell Lake area in 2011 to obtain as many samples as possible. Outside of the 2-mile radius and within a 10-mile radius we would hope to get 1-2 samples per square mile. Outside of the 10 mile radius we will accept samples as requested by hunters.

CWD in North America

As of 2012, 17 states and provinces have identified CWD within their free-ranging cervid (deer, elk, and moose) herds. In some of those, CWD has been detected in only a handful of deer, while in others, vast geographic areas and large numbers of animals are affected.

In Colorado and Wyoming, states where CWD has infected wild deer for several decades, recent studies have documented high prevalence rates (20-40%) and lower survival of CWD-infected deer when compared to uninfected deer. In Wyoming, high prevalence rates (~35%) have been identified across extensive geographic areas. Researchers suggest that CWD may be

Donald Savoy



limiting deer numbers in these populations. Examining CWD in other states helps us anticipate the future impacts of CWD in Wisconsin. This knowledge will assist us in making the best management choices for our state.

Successfully managing CWD in Wisconsin will require a sustained effort over many years, necessitating cooperation and communication among the DNR, hunters, agricultural agencies, landowners, farmed-cervid producers, and the many citizens of the state who benefit from a healthy deer herd. Although successful CWD management is very challenging for everyone involved. As we learn more about CWD, we will strive to make the best decisions for the current and future benefit of both Wisconsin's deer and the people who value them. For information on our current plan for CWD in Wisconsin, go to dnr.wi.gov and search the keyword '[CWD](#)'.

Thank you for your role in helping to manage CWD over the past ten years. Wisconsin is very fortunate to have citizens with such a great conservation ethic and appreciation for the natural world. Hunters are the cornerstone of conservation and wildlife management and your help and assistance is greatly appreciated.



CWD Season Dates

Archery Season:

September 15 - January 6, 2013

Bonus Buck rules apply unless using the Archery Buck Deer Carcass Tag

Youth Hunt:

October 6 - 7

Bonus Buck rules apply unless using the Gun Buck Deer Carcass Tag

Traditional 9-Day Firearm Season:

November 17 - 25

Bonus Buck rules apply unless using the Gun Buck Deer Carcass Tag

10-day Muzzleloader Season:

November 26 - December 5

Bonus Buck rules apply unless using the Gun Buck Deer Carcass Tag

Antlerless-Only:

December 6 - 9

Applicable to firearm and archery hunters

Holiday Firearm Season:

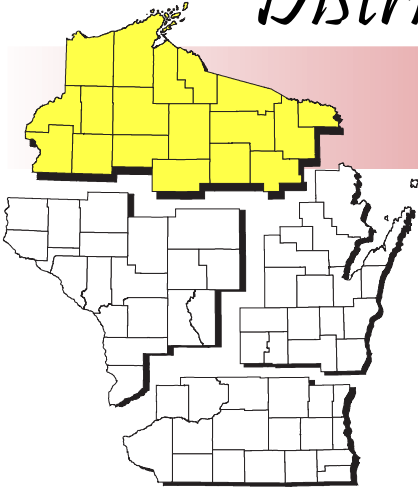
December 24 - January 6, 2013

Bonus Buck rules apply unless using the Gun Buck Deer Carcass Tag

District Deer Season Forecast

Northern District

By Mike Zeckmeister



Deer populations in northern Wisconsin got a real boost this past year. An extremely mild winter combined with early spring conditions really helped deer come out of the winter in great shape. The early spring green-up allowed deer to put weight back on quickly and likely contributed to heavier weight fawns and multiple fawns surviving. In the past, these conditions usually result in good antler development in bucks. I would expect hunters

will see this during the 2012 deer hunting season. Local DNR deer managers in the north recognize that deer are not equally distributed across the landscape. In other words, in some areas there may be very few deer and other areas more deer. This can be very frustrating for the deer hunter, me included.

The DNR also recognizes that we do not have all the answers and we need to rely on others for more information. This year, for example, our quota recommendations were developed based on reasonable and realistic levels from input we received from hunters attending our public deer forums. We also rely on what hunters see out in the field. It is especially important to receive this information prior to the hunting season from the [Summer Deer Observation](#) survey during the months of August and September. Anyone can participate in this survey and send the results into the DNR. We always welcome more input and help with managing our deer herd. We share responsibility in this valued resource.

"These conditions usually result in good antler development"

Another challenge we are all facing in Northern Wisconsin is the detection of a CWD-positive deer in Washburn County. This deer showed up as a 'sick' deer on the opening weekend of the nine-day gun season last year. It was euthanized and the test results clearly indicated it was CWD-positive. We are taking this very seriously, but we are also approaching it in a calm manner. We have developed a community-based approach to manage CWD in this area. We are reaching out to people in the community for ideas and feedback in how we should proceed. Our first step is to determine the extent of the disease and to share this information widely. We have been collecting samples from road-killed deer and from willing landowners who are interested in getting more deer tested from their own property prior to the hunting season. During the fall deer season we will

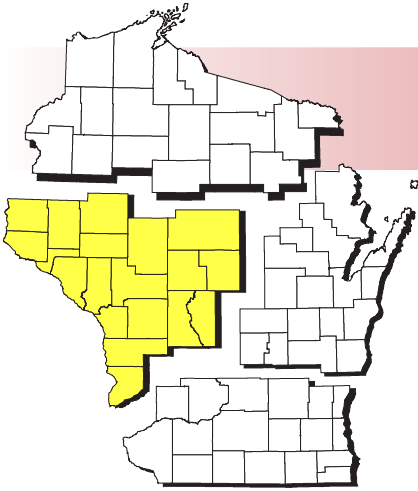


Ed Alt

be testing hunter-harvested deer from an area over 300 square miles in size around this CWD-positive sample. This will be the first step to determine the extent of the disease. We must first determine if this is a 'spark' that can be snuffed out or a 'widespread fire' that we may have to manage. We will be relying on hunters in this area to make sure they get any adult deer harvested in this area sampled. After we learn about the extent of this disease, we will then collectively determine the appropriate response based on our community-based approach to manage CWD in northwest Wisconsin.

West Central District

By Dave Matheys



Twenty-one of the district's 30 deer management units are at least 20% over their overwinter population goal and will have a Herd Control Unit season framework to help hunters manage deer in these units. Herd Control antlerless permits issued with deer licenses will be valid in these units, and additional antlerless permits will be available for \$2.00 each. The nine remaining deer management units that have deer

populations close to their overwinter goal will have a Regular Unit season framework, meaning the Herd Control tag issued with your deer license is not valid in these units; hunters who would like to harvest an antlerless deer in these units will need to purchase a unit-specific antlerless deer carcass tag. These tags are available starting on August 18, and cost \$12.00 for residents or \$20.00 for non-residents.

"Preseason scouting will increase any hunter's chance of success"

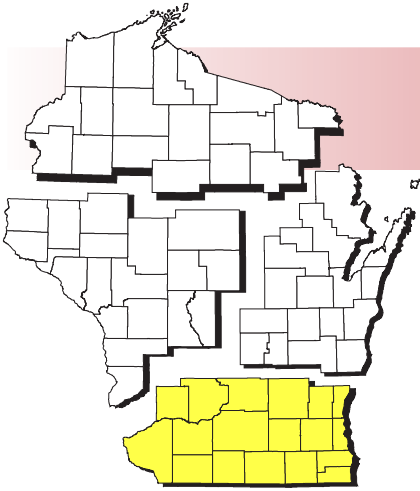
Mike Soergel, wildlife technician at Baldwin, notes that deer hunters should be aware of additional hunting opportunities on private lands enrolled in the [Voluntary Public Access](#) program. There are participating landowners in 10 counties scattered across the West Central District.



WDNR

According to Wayne Hall, Wood County wildlife biologist, the moderate mid-summer drought in the southern half of the district may impact deer and deer hunters if it continues much longer. Lack of moisture certainly influences vegetation which, in turn, influences deer behavior. Hall also reminds deer hunters that it remains important to understand that deer are not evenly distributed across the landscape. Preseason scouting to look for habitat changes, food resources, bedding areas, and deer movement patterns will increase any hunter's chance of success.





Southern District

By Don Bates

From the rural ridge and valley country with its higher concentration of habitat in the northwestern portions of the district, to the scattered farmlands, grasslands, and urban centers in the south and east, the Southern District's deer herd varies as much as does the habitat. Good opportunities for deer hunting exist throughout the district, but deer distribution varies greatly, depending on habitat and hunting pressure.

In general, the Southern District deer herd has grown slightly from last year, and hunters should have excellent opportunities this fall.

A mild winter followed by early spring brought does through winter in excellent shape and this year's fawns were born into a lush environment that turned hot and dry through the summer. While the drought shouldn't affect the number of deer, it will result in parts of the district

experiencing poor agricultural crop and acorn production and reduced ground cover which may result in localized changes in deer movement. If drought conditions continue into the fall, reduced food availability may require deer to travel more to find available food sources which has the potential to increase deer visibility as well as hunter success.

"Good opportunities for deer hunting exist throughout the district"



Herbert Lange

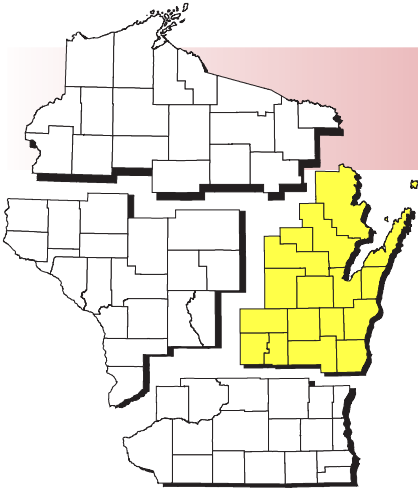
Most of our southern deer are harvested on private lands which make up more than 90% of the landscape, but good deer hunting can also be found on the hundreds of thousands of acres of county, [state](#), and federally owned lands open to deer hunting in the Southern District. Hunters that are interested in finding public land available for hunting should check out the Wisconsin DNR

website at dnr.wi.gov; keyword: [Explore Outdoors](#). Hunters interested in hunting on private lands are advised to get out well in advance of deer season to meet with landowners and seek permission to hunt.

Lastly, hunters should remember that the majority of the Southern District falls within the CWD Management Zone, so specific rules apply for this area. In particular, hunters have additional hunting opportunities provided to them through extended December seasons and Bonus Buck rules that are in effect in those areas.

Northeast District

By Jeff Pritzl



Deer populations in the Northeast Region continue to increase after three consecutive years of conservative antlerless harvest and good fawn production. All of our Deer Management Units (DMU) south of State Highway 64 and DMU 51A to the north remain in Herd Control status. None of these unit populations were reduced measurably by the 2011 season, and most showed continued herd growth. Hunting parties in Herd Control units

should strive to harvest at least two antlerless deer for each buck taken to do their part to maintain the flexible harvest options that we have had the previous three seasons.

The northern forest DMUs in our district experienced nice increases in buck harvest in 2011 and none of our units will be 'buck-only' in 2012. Most northeast forest units are close to goal populations, except 49A which continues to experience productivity challenges.

"Fawn productivity will likely be good again this year"

Donna Dewhurst - USFWS



Antlerless harvests in our farmland units increased modestly in 2011, but not enough to keep up with herd productivity in most cases. Fawn productivity will likely be good again this year, and although some hunters will remain understandably conservative with antlerless harvest in pockets of low deer numbers, farmland unit hunters generally need to be comfortable harvesting antlerless deer in order to stabilize herd size and avoid more aggressive harvest regulations in the future. Hunters are crucial to management of deer populations, and can demonstrate their value to all Wisconsin citizens and future generations of hunters by maintaining deer populations in balance with the ecological and social landscapes. Utilizing antlerless tags not only promotes responsible deer management, it produces a naturally healthy and sustainable source of red meat protein for the family freezer inventory.



DEER RESEARCH UPDATE

Buck Survival and Deer Mortality

Contributed by Michael Watt

In 2011, the DNR began an ambitious deer research study in Wisconsin looking into the survival rate of bucks and causes of death among both sexes and across all age classes of deer. During the months of January, February, and March in 2012, researchers and volunteers captured deer using a variety of techniques including box and netted cage traps, drop nets, and darting. Captured deer were fitted with radio collars and ear tags or just ear tags. Pregnant does were fitted with transmitters that would indicate when they gave birth. In late May and early June researchers again took to the woods (and swamps) to locate the newborn



WDNR

fawns which also were fitted with expandable radio collars and ear tags.

We have just finished up our second year of capture and are really pleased with the number of deer we have caught and all the help we have received. This is a great opportunity to get involved with research on the ground for anyone who has an interest in deer. In addition to the hundreds of landowners who let us trap on their land, we had over 500 volunteers help us in the 2012 capture season alone! We have had kids as young as five and men and women in their 60s and 70s participate. We owe these people a debt of gratitude and we certainly couldn't have done it without their help.

The goal of this study is to learn more about the specific causes of death of Wisconsin deer whether it be from weather, disease, predators, vehicles, or hunters. This knowledge will be used to refine the DNR's population estimating formula and to understand the impact various types of mortality have on deer survival.

Volunteers Still Needed

The need for volunteers will continue through winter 2014 in the case of the adult deer mortality study and possibly through spring 2013 for the fawn recruitment study. If you want to volunteer or learn more about this and other deer research, go to dnr.wi.gov; keyword: 'deer research'.

WDNR



Citizen Involvement in Wisconsin's Deer Management

As a Wisconsin hunter and steward of the state's wildlife, the DNR is asking for your help in gathering essential information necessary for proper management of Wisconsin's wildlife. Hunters and outdoor enthusiasts are excellent sources for gathering real world data from all across the state, which helps biologists effectively manage the state's resources. Through this effort, we examine registered harvest, estimate population levels, set permit levels and season lengths, and disseminate harvest and population information for most hunted and trapped species in Wisconsin.

Fall Deer Hunter - Wildlife Observation Survey

The Wisconsin DNR is asking for your help in monitoring the relative abundance and distribution of deer and other mammalian and avian wildlife species in the state. The wildlife we are most interested in are deer, raccoon, skunk, porcupine, red and gray fox, turkey, ruffed grouse, coyote, bear, otter, fisher, bobcat, house cat, badger, wolf, opossum, and elk, or other wildlife not normally seen in your area. Since deer hunters often spend many quiet observation hours in the woods, you can provide valuable information about species that are often very difficult to measure.

Data collected will become more meaningful as the number of survey years increases to show wildlife population and distribution trends over time. Results from past surveys can be found at dnr.wi.gov keyword: '[wildlife surveys](#)'.

The online wildlife observation reporting system will once again be available for the 2012 deer hunting season from September 15 – January 6, 2013. We hope archery and gun deer hunters from all corners of the state continue to take part in the survey, and for new hunters to begin participating. A field observation sheet is available for hunters to keep track of their observations throughout the season, so they can enter their data at a later time.



J. Glover

Operation Deer Watch - Wisconsin Summer Deer Observation Survey

The DNR is also asking the citizens of Wisconsin to help monitor deer reproduction in Wisconsin. The department is interested in sightings of bucks, does, and fawns. Data from [Operation Deer Watch](#) is combined with DNR observations to help determine the fawn-to-doe ratio and, ultimately, deer population estimates.

Participation by Wisconsinites is critical to the success of Operation Deer Watch. The vast amount of observation data that citizens can provide will help the Department of Natural Resources effectively monitor Wisconsin's deer reproduction. The number of deer seen and the number of fawns seen with each doe are indicators of annual production of our deer herd. We ask that you participate in this important survey by taking the time to document information about your summer deer observations. The survey period begins August 1 and continues until September 30. You can help by recording and reporting YOUR observations of deer during these two months.

Submit Those Trail Camera Photos!

People often place trail cameras in the woods as scouting tools. These cameras can serve as a valuable resource in documenting rare or endangered animals' existence and location in the state. Trail camera photos of rare and endangered wildlife can be sent in from any season of the year; please consider sending in any interesting off-season photos you may have taken. If you have trail camera photos of moose, Canada

lynx, cougar, American marten, stone marten, wolverine, Franklin's ground squirrel, or badger, or if you have photos of an animal (e.g., bobcat, fisher, river otter, etc.) not normally seen in your area, or an unidentified animal, please e-mail them to [wildlife management](#). In your email, please include the photo(s), the approximate date, county, and civil township of the photos. Wildlife management staff will work with others in the WDNR and try to positively identify all photos submitted.

If you have any questions about the survey, how to record your observations, or how this data will be used, please contact Brian Dhuey by [E-mail](#) or via phone (608)221-6342. Thank you for your cooperation in this wildlife survey project and your concern for Wisconsin's wildlife. Have a safe, memorable, and rewarding deer season.

Matt Theisen



Hunters!

If you see a deer with one of these,



Or one of these,



It's part of a DNR study on deer mortality.

Treat marked deer like any other deer in the woods.

Don't shy away from shooting it if it has a collar or tag.

We want to measure hunter kills as part of the study.

Thanks for your help! Good luck, and have a safe season!

BEAR SEASON FORECAST

Contributed by Kevin Wallenfang, Scott Roepke, and Dan Hirschert

The 2012 Wisconsin bear hunting season promises to provide excellent hunting opportunities for those pursuing one of the state's most prestigious big-game species. Across the north, bears are abundant! In 2012, 9,015 permits have been awarded, a slight increase over the 9,005 permits issued last year.

Annually, Wisconsin ranks among the leaders in bear harvest in terms of both numbers and record-book entries. Increased permit levels in 2011 resulted in hunters registering 4,257 bears, the second highest harvest ever recorded in the state, following the record kill of 5,133 bears in 2010. In 2011 Wisconsin harvested more bears than any other state

Zone A led all zones with 1,592 bears harvested. Zones B and D had nearly identical harvests, with 969 and 975 bears harvested, respectively, while zone C was responsible for 715 bears. Overall, hunters were most successful in zones B and D (64% and 66% success rates, respectively) followed by zone A (46%) and zone C (28%).

Bayfield, Price, and Sawyer counties were the leading counties in harvest totals. The bear population in southern Wisconsin continues to expand, with hunters harvesting bears as far south as Trempealeau, Monroe, Juneau, Portage, Waupaca, and Outagamie counties. Hunters harvested 3,612 of the bears with a gun, while bowhunters accounted for 552 bears. Hunting bears with bait was the primary hunting method with 2,705 bears harvested with this method, while dog hunters harvested 1,446 bears. Fifty-seven bears were harvested without the aid of bait or dogs.

This year hunters not utilizing dogs will have the first week of the season to themselves. After the first week, hunters using dogs will be allowed to pursue bears during the same time frame with those who do not use dogs (except in Zone C where the use of dogs is not permitted). The last week of the season in zones A, B, and D is reserved for hunting with the aid of dogs only.

Jim Martin



Again this year, hunters will be required to submit both a tooth and rib sample to the DNR at the time of registration to aid wildlife managers in estimating the age of harvested bears and in estimating the size of the state's bear population. These data are essential for managers to properly manage Wisconsin's bear population; maximizing hunting opportunities while maintaining a robust statewide bear population to ensure future generations of hunters will also have opportunities to bear hunt. All of the materials necessary to submit these samples will be available at the registration station. We would like to thank all of the successful hunters for taking the time to submit these samples as your cooperation will help to ensure the future of bear and bear hunting in Wisconsin.

If you are looking for a place to hunt bears, please visit the DNR's [website](#) keyword '[state lands](#)'. Wisconsin has an abundance of land open to hunting, including state, national, and county forests,



Collecting a rib sample from a bear

Bear Season Information

Zone C:

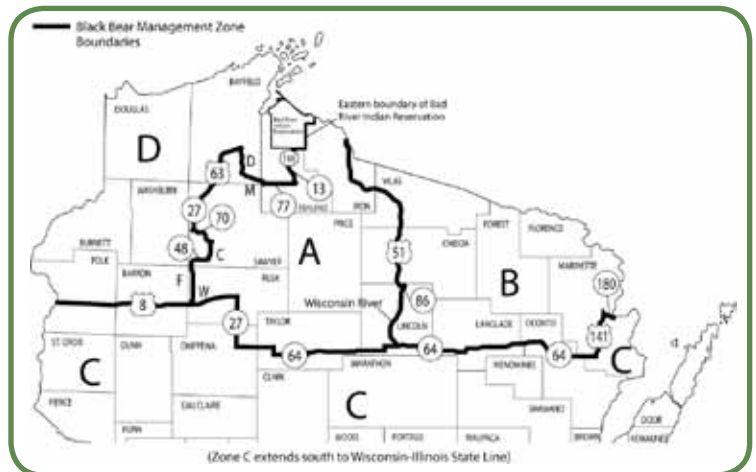
September 5 - October 9: With the aid of bait or other legal methods **not** utilizing dogs

Zones A, B, and D:

September 5 - 11: With aid of bait and other legal methods **not** utilizing dogs

September 12 - October 2: With aid of dogs, bait, and other legal methods

October 3 - 9: With aid of dogs only

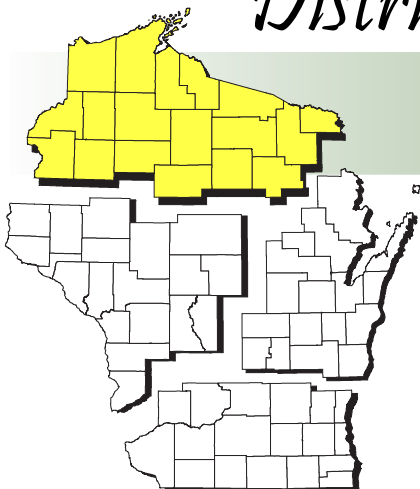


Bear Hunting Zones

state-owned wildlife areas, and private land enrolled in the Managed Forest Law (MFL) or Voluntary Public Access (VPA) programs. Combined, hunters have access to nearly seven million acres of land throughout Wisconsin!

Detailed information on bear hunting in Wisconsin, including the updated bear hunting [regulations](#), is available on the DNR's [bear hunting](#) website. Remember, the deadline to apply for the 2013 bear season is December 10, 2012. You may apply [online](#), by telephone at 1-877-945-4236, at any DNR [service center](#), or at a DNR [licensing agent](#).

District Bear Season Forecast



Northern District

By Mike Zeckmeister

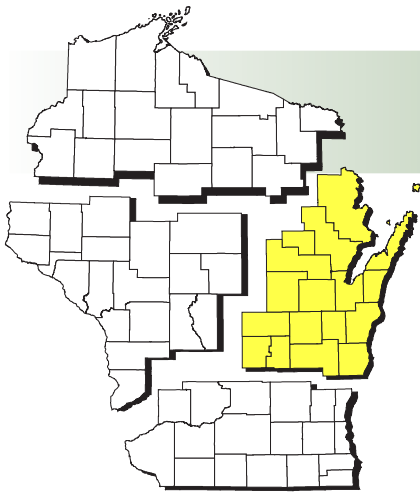
The combination of a very mild winter and early spring conditions indeed benefited bears. This should be evident in the upcoming season. We have had several reports of bear litters of 2-4 cubs, even into mid-summer. Farmers were able to get into their fields earlier this year to get a jump start with their planting, and this will likely affect when crops are harvested. We did have some spring freezes that appeared to affect soft mast production, at least compared to last year in many parts of

"A very mild winter and early spring conditions benefited bears"

the North. One biologist for northeast Wisconsin, noted an abundant blackberry crop in Vilas County reporting, "The blackberry canes were LOADED with berries like I've never seen before. Conversely, raspberries were hard to find. Blueberries were very spotty and the fruits were small."

How all this plays into bear movements during the bear season will remain to be seen. The level of bear nuisance complaints appear to be high, especially in Zones A and D. This could be an indicator of high bear numbers in these zones, or that they are having difficulty finding food. Bear complaints in Zone B appear to have tapered off compared to past years when the bear population was too high. If you

are fortunate to draw a tag this year, enjoy your time pursuing this truly magnificent big game animal in the northwoods. Advanced scouting and really 'sticking it out' will maximize your opportunity. Being flexible is another really good tip. Bears have a habit of changing their movements...it is the key for their survival and hunters often need to adjust to these changes. That is what makes hunting a challenge. Enjoy your time!



Northeast District

By John Huff and Dave Halfmann

The Northeast District has portions of Bear Management Zones B and C. The harvest quota in Zone B was reduced slightly in 2012, but the permit level remains high. In Zone C, the harvest quota was increased slightly. Hunters might experience some competition pressure, particularly on public lands in Zone B. Bear are abundant in Zone B with recent harvests

appearing to stabilize or slightly reduce the number of bears. In Zone C, bears are most abundant in the northern part of the zone. They are expanding their range and may be found in areas where bears were absent until the recent past. Preseason scouting for hunting locations is important in both zones.

For hunters using hounds, the department has a [website](#) showing areas where dogs have been lost to wolves. In general hunters using dogs should use caution in most areas of the bear range as wolves

are protective of their territories, particularly rendezvous sites, especially to 'trespass' by other canids.

The blueberry, cherry, and service berry crop is very poor this year due to frost and dry, hot conditions. Blackberries may have a fair crop although dry conditions are affecting the fruit. Bait sitters may see good activity early in the season. The hazelnut crop appears good but it is too early to determine the success of acorn production.

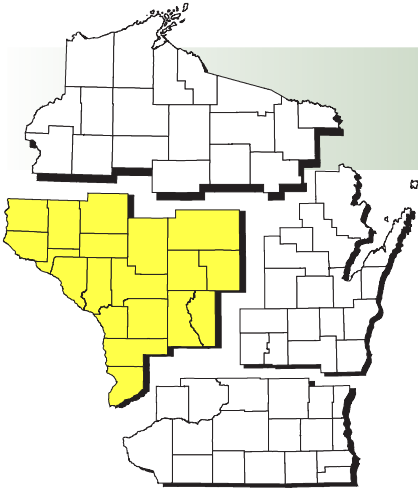
"Bears are expanding their range"



Herbert Lange

West Central District

By Wayne Hall



The bear population throughout the west central region continues to grow. Increased sightings reported in the southern and southwestern part of the region continue as bears expand their range into these areas. Based on early reports it appears the percentage of bait stations being visited by bear are similar to last year. Reports of nuisance complaints received by biologist this year vary

across the West Central district from numerous complaints in Jackson County to a few complaints in Marathon County. People in the southern area where bear range is expanding are becoming more acclimated to seeing bears.

"The bear population continues to grow"

In 2011, there were 2,550 permits available in Zone C. Hunters harvested 715 bear for a 28% success rate. Of these, 357 bear were harvested in the West Central region. Most of the West Central region's harvest took place in Chippewa, Clark, Jackson, and Marathon counties, but several bear were harvested further south towards Monroe and Juneau Counties.

For 2012, Zone C harvest permits were increased 16% to 2,970 permits as we work to manage the expanding population to minimize bear damage and nuisance complaints. While traditional hunting grounds in the northern parts of the region still hold plenty of bear, increased numbers throughout the region offer hunters the opportunity to spread out and perhaps hunt closer to home.



Steve Hillebrand - USFWS

FURBEARER SEASON FORECAST

Contributed by John Olson

Wisconsin, has a wonderful diversity of common, unique, and rare mammals known as *furbearers*. Beaver, coyote, raccoon, and muskrat are good examples of the more abundant and common species across our large region. Stone marten is a non-native rather unique furbearer, and American marten is our native, endangered furbearer of northern Wisconsin. In contrast, the more secretive bobcat, fisher, and river otter are present in the northern one-half of the state and expanding southward to the pleasure of most.

“Usually by mid-summer folks begin to ask, ‘How are things going out there?’ or, ‘What can I expect to see this upcoming fall and winter?’,” says DNR Furbearer Specialist, John Olson. “From paddlers, to berry pickers, trekkers to trappers, folks are excited about potential opportunities for viewing and harvest this fall and winter.”

Raccoon

Raccoons are found in a wide variety of both rural and urban habitats. Those areas close to a wetland or farmland mosaic have the highest populations, with even the northern forests now being home to raccoons.

“We have large populations of raccoons with the highest densities in southern and western portions of the state,” reports Geriann Albers, assistant furbearer specialist for the Department of Natural Resources, “Raccoons are still very abundant in all counties in a wide variety of habitats, often to nuisance levels, with populations extending northward into portions of southern Canada where the ancient language of Native Americans doesn’t even include the word raccoon!”.

On the western front, Kris Johansen, wildlife biologist for Buffalo and Trempealeau counties reports, “Raccoon numbers remain abundant, though not quite as high as the past couple of years. Despite high numbers, they seem to be healthy, as we’ve not experienced any major disease outbreaks in our counties. Raccoons are doing well, making this species a great opportunity to gain access to private lands, as farmers and landowners experience nuisance and damage problems. Hopefully trappers and hunters will utilize this renewable resource while their numbers are high, and help to maintain this population in a healthy condition.”

In southern Wisconsin, Conservation Officer Nate Kroepelin reports “As always there’s an abundance of raccoon in the south-central region. Populations seem healthy with no reports of raccoons being found dead or sick from [Canine Distemper Virus](#).”

Lindsey Long, department wildlife veterinarian, notes, “High populations of raccoons can produce localized effects or pockets of Canine Distemper Virus (CDV) infection. In the past, there have been widespread problems with CDV not only causing raccoon deaths, but also spreading to other mammals.”

According to Long, infections were found in less commonly affected furbearers including badger, opossum, and mink in recent years, adding, “Everyone should take special care with abnormal acting

Raccoon Season Information

Resident Season:

October 20 - February 15, 2013

Non-resident Season:

November 3 - February 15, 2013

Except: The Mississippi River zone opens the day after the duck season closes, or the second Monday in November (November 12, 2012), which ever occurs first, and ends on February 15, 2013.

Bag Limit: Unlimited

raccoons, as the distemper clinical signs mimic those of the [rabies](#) virus. Rabies is a fatal viral disease for humans and other warm-blooded mammals, and cannot be differentiated from canine distemper without laboratory testing.”

Occasionally raccoons can cause problems and property owners are reminded that there are no poisons approved for use on raccoons.

“There are no legal toxicants or poisons approved for use on raccoons and it’s against both state and federal law to use pesticides such as fly bait and rat poison in a manner inconsistent with package labeling,” Brad Koele, wildlife damage specialist, said. “Non-target animals like the family pet dog or cat, or other wildlife may ingest the poison.”

Depending on the situation, there are a number of alternatives property owners can choose from when dealing with raccoons. Removing food sources, harassment, exclusion, and live trapping and relocation are all non-lethal options to consider. Anyone relocating animals must have the landowner’s permission when releasing the animal.

If lethal control is needed, trapping and shooting are also options. State law allows landowners or occupants of land to trap or shoot raccoons year-round and without a hunting or trapping license, with the exception of the 24-hour period preceding the gun deer season.

Anyone conducting removal efforts on behalf of the landowner must possess a valid trapping

license if they are trapping the raccoons or a valid small game license if they are removing raccoons by shooting, and in both cases they must have written permission from the landowner. Individuals must also follow all other trapping and hunting regulations. If at all possible, we urge landowners to consider contacting licensed hunters or trappers who are trained and could possibly utilize the animal during the fall harvest seasons.

Wildlife managers from around the state suggest that 2012 will be a good year to ask

permission to trap or hunt furbearers on new lands. Raccoons are a species where landowner permission to hunt or trap is normally not a problem, but ask for permission early – landowners appreciate it and then you’re ready well before the season opener. Nate Kroeplin also reminds folks interested in trapping in road right-of-ways that, “Permission is needed from the owner of the land underlying any public road, street, or highway.”

Mike Zeckmeister, Northern Region wildlife supervisor from Spooner urges trappers and hunters to “Make sure to do your homework with pre-season scouting, and obtain permission from landowners well in advance. Through pre-season efforts, hunters and trappers can make their efforts more efficient, while reducing fossil fuel consumption. This saves money and reduces our carbon footprint.”

The raccoon season opens statewide for residents on October 20, 2012 with the exception of the Mississippi River Zone where the season opens with the muskrat and mink season. The non-resident raccoon trapping season is from November 3, 2012 to February 15, 2013.



Herbert Lange



Beaver

Sluggish fur prices and poor ice at the start of the 2011 season, followed by a steady decline in spring pelt values may have

affected trapper interest. Statewide, the beaver population estimate is around 82,000 animals, based on helicopter surveys of Beaver Zones A and B in 2011. This is an increase from 2008, the lowest statewide population estimate since these surveys began in 1992, at roughly two-thirds of the 1995 estimate.

Chuck Szmurlo



Concerns over this decline are being addressed by fish and wildlife biologists, fishermen, trappers, user groups, and interested citizens.

Regionally, beaver numbers in southeastern Wisconsin and on the Mississippi River appear to be stable or increasing, while stable or decreasing elsewhere. Dave MacFarland, wildlife researcher from Rhinelander, coordinates the intensive aerial surveys conducted every three to four years in the northern portions of the state. Following our fall surveys of 2011, Dave stated "We have a population of approximately 31,000 beaver in northwestern Wisconsin, known as Zone A, compared to 28,000 in 2008 and 41,000 in 2005. In Zone B in northeastern Wisconsin, the 2011 population estimate was 24,000 compared to 18,000 beavers in 2008 and 29,000 in 2005."

In Zones A and B, where more intensive beaver control programs exist, the long term beaver population decline has reduced damage to trout streams and town roads, but with this decline are concerns about other resources dependent on beaver ponds and flowages. Because beaver populations are now at or below acceptable levels, the trapping season in Wisconsin opens in November, rather than mid-October, with southern Wisconsin, or Zone C, closing at the end of March rather than the end of April. A Beaver Task Force, comprised of citizens and agency personnel is currently reviewing overall beaver management in Wisconsin with initial recommendations expected in late 2012.



Beaver Season Information

Zone A (Northwest):

November 3, 2012 – April 30, 2013

Zone B (Northeast):

November 3, 2012 – April 30, 2013

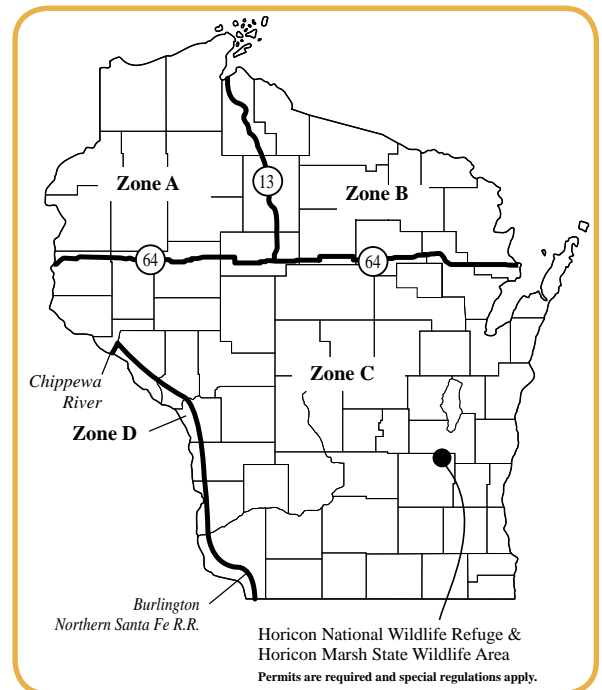
Zone C (South):

November 3, 2012 – March 31, 2013

Zone D (Mississippi River):

Day after duck season closes to March 15, 2013

Bag Limit: Unlimited



Beaver Trapping Zones

Otter

“Factors that impact beaver populations have similar effects on otter,” according to DNR Furbearer Specialist John Olson. “Beaver are herbivores that prefer the inner bark of aspen, willow, alder and cottonwood for food, and their branches for construction of dams and lodges, while otter prefer other animals for food, mainly small fish, crayfish, and amphibians.”

Current statewide otter populations are below management goals of approximately 13,000 animals. Although a majority of the population is found in the north, otter numbers in southern Wisconsin are increasing. They’re now present in many of our major river systems of the south and southwest, namely the Kickapoo, Black, Chippewa, Buffalo, Trempealeau, Mississippi, and Wisconsin rivers and tributaries.



Brian Gratwicke

Otter, like many of our furbearers, are associated with and depend on clean rivers, lakes, and streams. As Dale Katsma, area wildlife supervisor from Plymouth in southeastern Wisconsin suggests “People interested in river otters should thank those who have worked so hard to improve the water resources of southern Wisconsin – farmers, landowners, DNR, [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#), Land and Water Conservation Districts, and [Trout Unlimited](#) to name a few. Most people are thrilled when they see otters, while a few trout farmers are not. If damage occurs, permits are issued, and we only issue a few permits a year.”

“The otter harvest is highly regulated, which helps to control harvest pressure at a time when recent fur prices have strongly fluctuated,” says Todd Naas, wildlife biologist for Ashland County. Permits are issued based on annually adjusted quotas, estimated fall populations, and expected success rates. In 2012-13 harvest quotas will continue to remain conservative, at 900 statewide.

Kris Johansen, wildlife biologist for Buffalo and Trempealeau counties, reminds us that, “trappers that plan to trap within the Upper Mississippi Fish and Wildlife Refuge need to apply for a permit for trapping through the District Fish and Wildlife Service offices located along the big river. For further information on refuge opportunities contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s [Brian Stemper](#) at 507-494-6221.

Pat Beringer, wildlife biologist for Price County, states that, “The statewide opening date for otter is the same as beaver, November 3, and continues until March 31, 2013 in the Central and South Zones, and April 30, 2013 in the North Zone. Anyone interested in trapping otter must [apply for a permit](#) by August 1.”

Otter Season Information

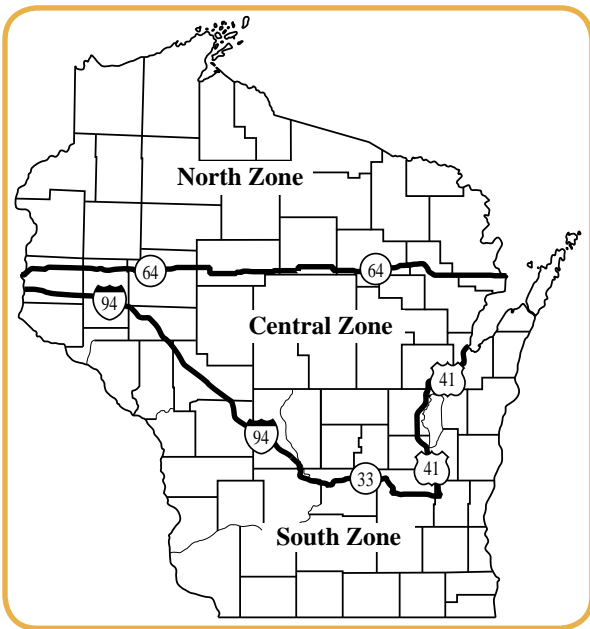
North Zone:
November 3, 2012 – April 30, 2013

Central Zone:
November 3, 2012 – March 31, 2013

South Zone:
November 3, 2012 – March 31, 2013

Bag Limit: One per permit

Application Deadline: August 1



Otter Trapping Zones



Fisher

Strong interest in fisher harvest has resulted in more applicants than permits, especially in Fisher Management Zone A, in northwestern Wisconsin, and in Fisher Management Zones E and F, in west-central and southern Wisconsin. Permit numbers are down in northern zones and the same or slightly higher in southern zones, but the number of [applications](#) received for each zone will determine whether a trapper receives a permit in their zone of choice or is awarded a preference point.

Kris Belling, Western District wildlife supervisor at Eau Claire further explains, "There are six fisher management zones in Wisconsin. Southern portions of Fisher Zones A through D have the highest fisher populations, with much lower fisher numbers in northern portions of these zones. Zone E is in west-central Wisconsin and has a growing fisher population." Kris suggests that, "in Zone E, the best opportunities will be in the northern portions of the zone, namely Chippewa, Clark, Eau Claire and Marathon counties."

Zone F

includes the remainder of the state and will be open for harvest in 2012 for the ninth consecutive year. In this zone good opportunities exist in southern Marathon, Shawano, and Oconto counties. As Cortney Schaefer, wildlife biologist at Wausau observes, "Marathon County trappers have the best opportunity with four different zones and good fisher populations, but be sure you have landowner permission prior to applying for harvest permits."

However, even in areas where fishers have flourished for over four decades, biologists are experiencing localized declines, while adjacent areas have strong numbers.

"Fisher numbers remain spotty in Price and southern Ashland and Iron counties," says Biologist Pat Beringer, "Although localized areas may still have considerable fisher, many trappers reported low numbers of fisher during the last several years." Yet in other areas, wildlife biologists are reporting an increase in fisher presence. Jess Carstens, wildlife biologist for Dunn and Pepin counties, and Harvey Halvorsen, area wildlife supervisor from Baldwin, observe a growing population in west-central Wisconsin, especially St. Croix County.

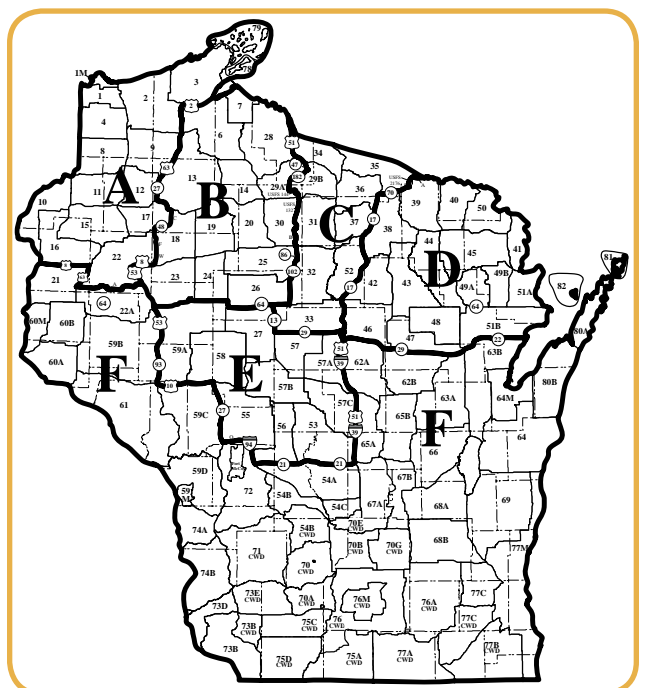
Fisher Season Information

All Zones:

October 20 - December 31

Bag Limit: One per permit

Application Deadline: August 1



Fisher Trapping Zones



Erwin Bauer



Bobcat

The northern forest bobcat population increased through the early 2000s, stabilized, and may now be on a decline.

“Even though we’re on the northern edge of bobcat range, we do have relatively good habitat and mild winters compared to regions north of Lake Superior,” states Robert Rolley, DNR wildlife researcher who studied bobcats as his doctoral thesis. “The population apparently peaked at over 3,000 animals in the early 2000s, but is now likely at the low end of our population goal of 2,000 to 3,000 bobcats north of U.S. Highway 64. Some of this decline appears to be due to lower pregnancy rates, especially in yearlings, likely a result of reduced prey availability. Due to a combination of reduced reproduction and a decline in the winter track survey index, a significant reduction in the harvest quota will occur in 2012-13.”

A preference system allows the continuous applicant a bobcat tag about every five to six years. Wildlife biologists and wardens in central and southern portions of the state report an increase in bobcat sightings. In 2010, a road-killed bobcat in Columbia County wore ear tags from a research project in Iowa! Brian Dhuey of our Wildlife Research unit reports that a recent citizen-based trail camera survey suggests, “We can now well document the presence of bobcats in central and southwestern Wisconsin with several citizens providing great trail camera photos.”

Beginning in 2010, a \$3.00 fee increase on bobcat [permit applications](#) has earmarked funds specifically for bobcat research in Wisconsin. Dave MacFarland, furbearer researcher out of Rhinelander, notes that, “The money generated from this fee increase is being combined with Pittman-Robertson funds to further understand bobcat populations and habitat quality south of highway 64. DNR personnel are cooperating with [Dr. Eric Anderson](#) and graduate student John Clare, both of UW-Stevens Point, who are conducting this new research.”

Bobcat Season Information

North of Highway 64 only:

Period 1: October 20 - December 25

Period 2: December 26 - January 31, 2013

Bag Limit: One per permit

Application Deadline: August 1



Herbert Lange

As with fisher and otter, bobcat must be tagged at the point of harvest and registered with the department. Hunters and trappers keep the pelt, but bobcat carcasses, and in some years otter and fisher carcasses, are collected from the trapper or hunter.

“Registration and carcass collections allow biologists to gather important management information such as harvest pressure, overall age structure of the population, reproductive age, and previous litter sizes,” according to Michele Woodford, wildlife biologist from Woodruff.

During the 2012 – 2013 seasons, carcasses will be required from all bobcat, all river otters, and fishers from Fisher Zones E and F.

New Season Structure

The bobcat harvest season is split between two time periods: early, October 15 – December 25, and late: December 26 – January 31, 2013, with permits valid for the season selected.

“After a two year experimental season framework this split season is now going permanent,” said Olson.

The bobcat harvest quota will be equally split between the two time periods, but permit levels will be lower for the later season due to higher success rates. Generally, snow cover increases harvest success because permit holders can locate bobcats easier and quicker compared to non-snow conditions.

“We will take a reasonable, conservative approach until we have a better understanding of how this new season works,” says Olson.

Also, in addition to registering bobcat harvest with a conservation warden, successful hunters and trappers are required to report their bobcat harvest using a call-in system. Within 24 hours of a kill, successful permit holders need to call 1-800-994-6673. The automated system will ask the caller to provide basic details regarding the harvest.

“Call-in reporting will allow DNR officials to monitor and potentially close the season early if harvest levels exceed the established quota”, according to Bill Vander Zouwen, who oversees the furbearer program in Wisconsin.



Herbert Lange

Coyotes, Foxes, and Wolves

Coyotes, the second largest of Wisconsin’s native canids, have expanded their range throughout southern and western Wisconsin. In the remainder of the state they continue to do well with their greatest challenge being in established gray wolf territories, where coyotes have bounced back, having learned to be less vocal and avoid their larger cousin!

An adaptable animal, coyotes seem to fair equally well in rural, urban, and suburban settings. Wildlife managers and conservation officers across much of central and southern Wisconsin are reporting a marked increase in coyotes. The same is being observed for both gray and red fox, with ‘reds’ closer to human dwellings and grays in the brush land and woods.

“There is an abundance of coyotes on the landscape in south-western and west-central Wisconsin,” according to Area Wildlife Supervisor, Kris Johansen. “Trappers in southern Wisconsin will be able to start trapping two weeks earlier as this year the north and south coyote and fox season dates are combined. This will provide trappers south of highway 64 additional days during a pleasant time of year to be afield with coyote and fox sets.”

Bruce Bacon, recently retired wildlife biologist from Mercer adds, “Cable restraints are proving more effective for coyotes every year as folks are learning to use this relatively new tool. This year would be a great year to try this technique out to extend trapping opportunities into the winter. Cable restraint trapping also gets trappers out and about during snow cover, a great time to read sign and learn about animal behavior.”

“The cable restraint was thoroughly tested during three years of science-based research and was remarkable in its ability to restrain, without injury, any wild or domestic canine,” says Steve Hoffman, wildlife biologist from Grantsburg. After eight years of use by licensed trappers, things are going well.”

For additional information on use of cable restraints, request DNR Publication [WM-443-2004](#), 'Cable Restraints in Wisconsin, A Guide to Responsible Use'.

"Foxes, the smallest of our three native canids, prefers a more rural setting," says Southeastern Wisconsin wildlife biologist, Dale Katsma, who also reports that, "coyote numbers are stable and steadily increasing in the southeast portion of the state, where they've been known to cause quite a stir around some communities."

Red fox numbers have increased across many areas of the north, with mange and coyote competition impacting populations in western and southern portions of the state. A density dependent disease, *sarcoptic mange*, was observed across Wisconsin in susceptible canid species including red fox, coyote, and gray wolf in 2003, but has diminished significantly. Gray fox have fewer cases of mange and appear to be doing well in southern and central Wisconsin.

Wolf

In January 2012, the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) made a final decision to delist the gray wolf. A [state law](#), passed later that same month established a regulated wolf harvest season to begin this fall. In rapid order, rules required to implement this law were developed through a public involvement process and presented to the Natural Resources Board which approved the rules on an emergency basis in order for a hunting and trapping season to be in place for 2012.

An available harvest quota of 201 wolves was established with up to 116 wolves available to public hunters and trappers; up to 85 wolves could be harvested by the Tribes according to established Ceded Territory agreements. Updates and additional information is available on the DNR's [website](#) under the keyword: '[wolf](#)'.

"The public is encouraged to report their observations, especially hunters and trappers who are intimately familiar with their area of the state. This kind of information is valuable in our efforts in monitoring populations. Every observation counts and we welcome the help," says DNR mammalian ecologist and wolf expert, Adrian Wydeven. "Trappers who have incidentally captured a wolf in a coyote trap can help by checking with the local DNR office to see if a wildlife biologist is available nearby to radio collar and help release the wolf. "Every additional collared wolf on the air helps us do a better job keeping track of wolves in the state.



Flicka

Coyote Season Dates

Trapping (statewide):

October 20 - February 15, 2013

Note: An extension of the season closure is possible in an attempt to combine similar seasons together. With the established wolf season running through the end of February, for simplicity sake a similar season for all wild canids is recommended.

Hunting:

Year round.

Note: The seasonal closure of coyote hunting during the gun deer season in select northern sites has been removed.

Bag Limit: None

Fox (all species) Season Dates

Hunting and Trapping (statewide):

October 20 - February 15, 2013

Bag Limit: Unlimited

Wolf Season Dates

Hunting and Trapping (statewide):

October 15 - February 28, 2013

Note: Specific rules and regulations are being developed. Stay tuned by checking the DNR website at [dnr.wi.gov](#) and search under 'wolf'

Muskrat and Mink

Mink and muskrat populations appear to be doing relatively well in most of the state, with pockets of good numbers and other spots with low numbers.

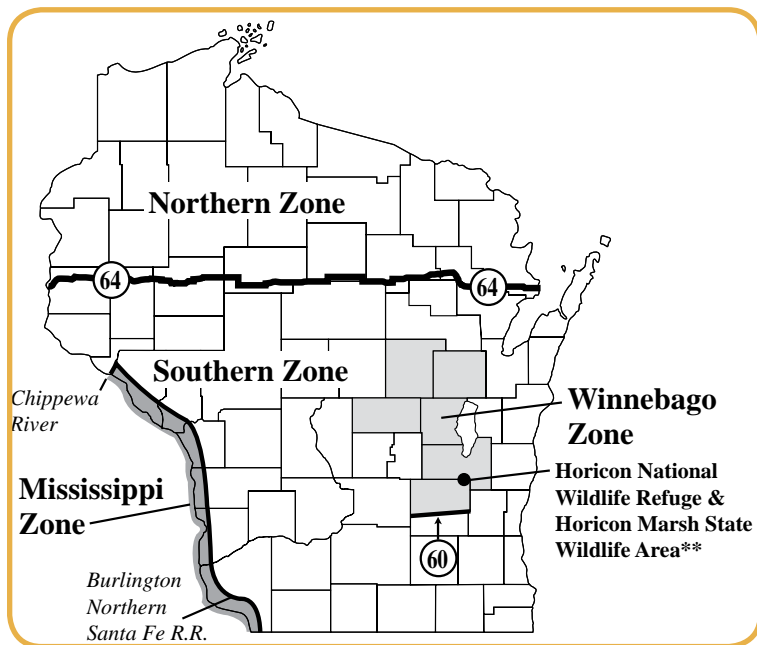
On a statewide basis, opportunities to trap these species are quite good, as they exist in most areas where permanent water can be found. Brian Glenzinski, wildlife biologist in Southern Wisconsin observes that, "Muskrats are doing really well and it should be a great year for them." John Nelson, retired wildlife technician for the Mississippi River Unit suggests muskrat populations on the big river "appear to be having a rough time of it. High water levels last fall and through the winter months, combined with the same high water this spring has reduced populations and seriously affected trapper access on the big river."



Trappers on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service properties on the Mississippi River need a USFWS trapping permit and tags, as well as the Wisconsin license in order to trap.

Aaron Buchholz, wildlife biologist in Mishicot observes "I handle numerous calls from property owners and municipalities regarding muskrat damage caused by their excavating activity. I always strongly encourage these folks to reach out to a local trapper for help and remind them that big muskrats make little muskrats every year....consider having someone trap muskrats every year, as annual maintenance is the effective way to mitigate damage from muskrats."

"[Colony traps](#) were legal beginning in 2011" explains DNR Conservation Warden Tom Van Haren. "This tool is useful in select locations and specific for muskrat harvest and muskrat control."



Muskrat and Mink Trapping Zones

Muskrat and Mink Season Information

Northern Zone:
October 20 – February 28, 2013

Southern Zones:
October 27 – February 28, 2013

Winnebago Zone:
October 27 – March 15, 2013

Mississippi River Zone:
Begins the day after duck season closes or the second Monday in November, whichever occurs first – February 28, 2013

Bag Limit: Unlimited

American (Pine) Marten

American marten, also known as ‘pine marten’, are a state protected mammal and currently the only furbearer on Wisconsin’s endangered species list. Reintroduced into the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests in northwest and northeast Wisconsin decades ago, their numbers remain very low.

“Martens are a rare and unique member of our northern forest ecosystems, and require additional assistance to remain in Wisconsin for future generations,” said Jim Woodford, conservation biologist for DNR’s Endangered Resources Bureau. “To assist martens in Wisconsin, the [Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest](#), the [Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission](#), and the department have recently completed a three year project to stock 90 additional martens from northern Minnesota into the Chequamegon National Forest.

Approximately half of the marten released into the state have been fitted with radio collars. The data generated from these animals are being analyzed to determine causes of mortality and to improve our understanding of the habitats best suited to their survival. This information will help direct and inform our future recovery efforts.

Although they have not ventured far from the original release sites, we’ve discovered additional martens in northern Iron County. Zach Wilson, private naturalist, and retired Wildlife Biologist Bruce Bacon, both of Iron County, lead a citizen science effort with local Iron County high school students. Zach Wilson



WDNR

observed that “Local trappers in Iron County have helped us determine where these rare marten have been living for the last ten years, and through their help we may learn of their connection with martens in our neighboring state of Michigan.”

These two biologists and students have radio-collared several marten over the last 6-7 years, and Bacon states martens are “being tracked as part of the Woods and Waters program in the Hurley and Mercer High Schools.” He also adds “Fisher depredation may be an important factor in the success or failure of the marten re-introduction efforts, and with fisher numbers down in the north it may be a factor in the success of martens in Iron County. Trappers are urged to consider using [live trapping techniques](#) such as cage traps, in areas occupied by martens.”

Regulated trapping with special restrictions is allowed within Wisconsin’s two Marten Protection Areas. These special restrictions allow for regulated take of several furbearers while protecting marten, and are found in our trapping [regulations](#). Monitoring these restrictions is critically important to the future of American martens in Wisconsin.

Anyone with a marten observation should contact their local wildlife biologist, or [James Woodford](#) at 715-365-8856.



Stone Marten

A European cousin of our marten, the stone marten began to appear in southeastern Wisconsin nearly 70 years ago. This was the result of an escape or release of specimens from a fur farm in the Burlington area.

[Jonathan Pauli](#), assistant professor with the University of Wisconsin - Madison explains that, "The stone marten or beech marten is a furbearer native to central and southern Europe. In Wisconsin they're present in our deciduous woodlots of southeastern Wisconsin while our American marten inhabit northern, mixed hardwood-coniferous forests, with these two species hundreds of miles apart."

The two martens can be identified by the throat patch, with the stone marten having a white throat patch (like our native mink), whereas the American marten has an orange or tawny colored throat patch. Dr. Pauli and the department are interested in the presence and distribution of stone marten. As an unprotected species it's a legally harvested species but with low fur value. We would appreciate hearing from anyone who either observes or harvests a stone marten so we can collect location information and tissue samples. For more information about stone marten, contact [Dr. Pauli](#) at 608-890-0285.

Additional Responsibilities

Incidental Take

Trappers are required to turn in incidentally trapped animals to local conservation officers. They can use the 1-800-TIP-WDNR hotline (1-800-847-9367) to report incidentals. These specimens are used in furbearer research and training workshops. If pelts are sold, the proceeds are used in our growing trapper education program. Virgil Schroeder, President of the Wisconsin Trappers Association encourages trappers to use this service and turn in rare incidentally taken furbearers. "It's easy, it's important, and it's the right thing to do. Your efforts will not only help our furbearer education program but will be used to test new tools and new techniques you might use in the future that could increase opportunity and reduce incidental take."

Local Ordinances

Some villages, cities, and towns throughout the state, primarily in urban areas, require special permits and/or have ordinances that restrict trapping, or the discharge of firearms or bows. Check with local town or village offices before you hunt or trap to see if special rules apply! A quality hunting or trapping experience can be found on public or private lands, but pre-season scouting and permission from landowners is critical.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Trapping

In a progressive effort to improve the science of furbearer management, the State of Wisconsin, [Wisconsin Trappers Association](#), [Wisconsin Conservation Congress](#), and individual trappers have been actively involved in an international effort to develop [BMPs for Trapping](#). This is one of the largest collective trap research efforts ever undertaken, with the final product being information and suggestions that each state and their trappers can use to improve on animal welfare and trapping in general, but specifically,



in their trapper education programs. There are now 18 BMP studies completed and available at www.fishwildlife.org.

“Advances in trapping through scientific study are the future of resource management in Wisconsin and in the United States, where our natural resources belong to all citizens,” says Tom Hauge, director of the Bureau of Wildlife Management. “Regulated harvests, combined with science-based knowledge, a caring public, and highly trained conservation officers will provide us with reasonable tools with which we can continue to manage wildlife populations while enjoying the immense pleasure and knowledge of having intact, natural systems.”

If you are interested in becoming a trapper, completion of a 12-hour [Trapper Education](#) course is mandatory. The cost of the course is \$12.

“If you would like to learn about furbearers, trapping history, responsibilities, and ethics of the modern-day trapper, consider taking the trapper education course offered by the department and taught by dedicated volunteer instructors of the Wisconsin Trappers Association,” invites Nicole Shumaker, trapper education coordinator for the WTA.

To locate a current class near you, contact your local DNR office or check the DNR [website](#), keyword ‘[trapping](#)’.



Mike Kortenhof



Questions about the content of this forecast?

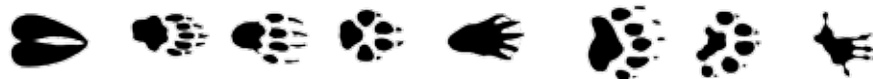
Call the DNR Call Center toll-free at:
1-888-WDNR INFO (1-888-936-7463) • local 608-266-2621.
Staff are available 7 days a week from 7:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m.

Spanish and Hmong are spoken

dnr.wi.gov

General mailing address:

Department of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707



Support Ethical Responsible Hunting Report Violations

CALL: 1-800-TIP-WDNR (1-800-847-9367; toll free) or #367 from your cell phone (free for U.S. Cellular customers). **Note:** this is NOT an information number.

TEXT: Text a tip to TIP-411 (847-411), only available from 7 am - 10 pm. Standard text rates apply.

EMAIL: le.hotline@wisconsin.gov

