

# 2013 Fall Hunting & Trapping Forecast

## Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources



# 2013 Fall Forecast Contents

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## ***Dear Hunters and Trappers;***

Fall is in the air and I hope you are looking forward to the upcoming hunting seasons as much as I am!

To help you prepare and enhance your fall hunting and trapping experiences, DNR biologists have summarized information in this forecast for your waterfowl, upland bird, furbearer, deer, and bear pursuits.

Each season brings opportunities to connect with friends and family, creating new memories that will last a lifetime.

Every time you go out, you are helping to ensure the future of Wisconsin's hunting traditions and outdoor heritage. You are also playing a very important role in conservation. We thank you for this partnership.

This will be my third year as a deer hunter. I followed up the harvest of my first deer in 2011 with the shooting of my first buck last year! The excitement only builds for me with each season.

I want other potential hunters to experience the excitement and camaraderie of the seasons too. It's a continuing priority of mine to build the next generation of hunters and trappers.

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. This year, consider inviting someone along to hunt or trap for the first time.

Again this year, first-time hunters and trappers, or those returning after 10 or more years away, can get a price break on many licenses. Wisconsin resident first-timers can buy a \$5 annual license for fishing, trapping, or many hunting seasons. Nonresidents also qualify for discount rates.



Additionally, state residents who recruit three or more new hunters, trappers or anglers in one license year, can earn points towards a discounted license for next year. Make sure your recruits know to recognize you in order to earn these points!

If you'd like more information on discounted first-time or recruiter licenses, or have questions about the fall seasons, our friendly DNR Call Center staff is ready to talk with you at 1-888-WDNRINFo (1-888-936-7463).

Finally, I want to emphasize the importance of the feedback we at DNR receive from you. From the Deer Trustee Report implementation process to waterfowl season setting, your feedback is heard and informs our management practices. After all, these are your wildlife resources, and we are your DNR.

Thanks again for continuing to be our partners in conservation. See you in the woods!

***Cathy Stepp***

# UPLAND GAME SEASON FORECASTS

Contributed by Scott Walter and Krista McGinley

## Ring-necked Pheasant

Visitors to the DNR's [ring-necked pheasant page](#) this fall will find the 2013 [pheasant stocking information sheet](#), which identifies public hunting grounds slated for pheasant stocking. This fall, the DNR plans to stock 92 public hunting grounds with approximately 75,000 pheasants, a significant increase from the 54,000 pheasants stocked on 70 properties in 2012.

The pheasant stocking program has become very popular among hunters, and the increased stocking efforts this year will provide additional opportunities on all of the previously stocked hunting areas plus 21 new properties. These 2013 stocking numbers are preliminary. Final numbers will not be known until after the season is complete.

This year's pheasant hunting regulations are included in the 2013 Wisconsin [Small Game Hunting Regulations](#) booklet. Hunters will need to purchase a 2013 pheasant stamp and small game license and carefully verify which public hunting grounds have a 2 p.m. weekday closure and which allow hen pheasant hunting.

Results from the 2013 [rural mail carrier pheasant survey](#) show an increase in the number of pheasants seen during the April survey period. The number of pheasants seen per 100 miles driven was 0.36 in 2013, up 16 percent from the 0.31 recorded in 2012. The counties with the highest number of pheasants seen per 100 miles driven were Barron (1.19), Kenosha (0.84) and Polk (0.84).

Brood production was up for pheasants during the summer of 2012. This past winter was average for temperature and below-average for snowfall early in the season and normal to above-average late in the season across much of the pheasant range. However, despite good brood production in 2012 and favorable weather conditions for much of the winter, the increased number of pheasants seen in 2013 is still below the long-term average of 0.58 pheasants per 100 miles driven.

### Pheasant Season Information

#### 2013 Season Dates:

October 19 (noon) – December 31

#### Bag Limit:

1 cock daily October 19 and 20;  
2 cocks daily remainder of season



Herbert Lange

so pheasant detection rates can be estimated; these detection rates are vital in helping wildlife managers monitor population trends over time.

Wisconsin is one of the first states to incorporate detection estimates across a statewide annual gamebird survey, and this revision will provide DNR with better tools to effectively manage harvest and habitat

management programs for ring-necked pheasants. The number of pheasants recorded in 2013 (0.42 birds per stop) was slightly below the five-year average of 0.48 birds per stop. While there appears to be a slight increase in birds per stop from 2012 to 2013, the overall six-year trend shows a decline. Estimated pheasant abundance was highest in west central Wisconsin and lowest in south central.

Changes in agriculture and in 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 10 to 15 year periods – 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-1990's at more than 700,000 acres. Current enrollment is approximately 318,000 acres and current high crop prices will likely continue to push CRP acres back into row crops for the near future. CRP has been shown to provide important habitat for pheasants and other grassland wildlife and the loss of habitat in recent years is likely affecting pheasant populations statewide.

### *Looking Ahead to Fall 2013*

Given the loss of grassland acres on the landscape and relatively low pheasant numbers, hunters may need to scout diligently to locate suitable pheasant cover. Those who do can expect moderate success during the 2013 season. Landscapes that include an intermixture of several cover types are most likely to yield birds. We recommend hunters scout for areas composed of at least 10-15 percent grassland or idle ground with 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.

Brood survey information for 2013 will become available later in the season.

During the 2012 pheasant hunting season, an estimated 46,421 hunters spent a total of 432,460 days in search of pheasants and reported harvesting 220,869 birds. The top counties for harvest were Fond du Lac, Dodge and Dane.

The 2013 pheasant hunting season opens statewide October 19 at noon and closes December 31. On October 19 and 20, the daily bag limit is one cock, and the possession limit is two. For the remainder of the season, the daily bag limit is two cocks and the possession limit is four. Some stocked public hunting grounds have both hen (which require free leg tags) and cock pheasant hunting. Others have a 2 p.m. weekday closure times, and some have both these features.

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



Steve Maslowski - USFWS

## **Wild Turkey**

This fall, 96,700 wild turkey permits will be available to hunters, the same number of permits offered in 2012.

### *Using Dogs During the Fall Season*

This fall will mark the fourth fall season during which 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 nine-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 two percent 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 2013 fall turkey permit drawing, remaining permits went on sale Saturday, August 24, at 10 a.m. Prior to 2011, sales opened at noon each day. The earlier sale time was instituted to increase hunter access to leftover permits. The fall 2013 season will run from September 14 through November 21 for all permit holders.

An extended season for Zones 1-5 only will take place December 2-31.

### *Bag Limit*

The 2013 fall bag limit is one turkey of any age or sex per fall turkey permit (also referred to as a carcass tag).

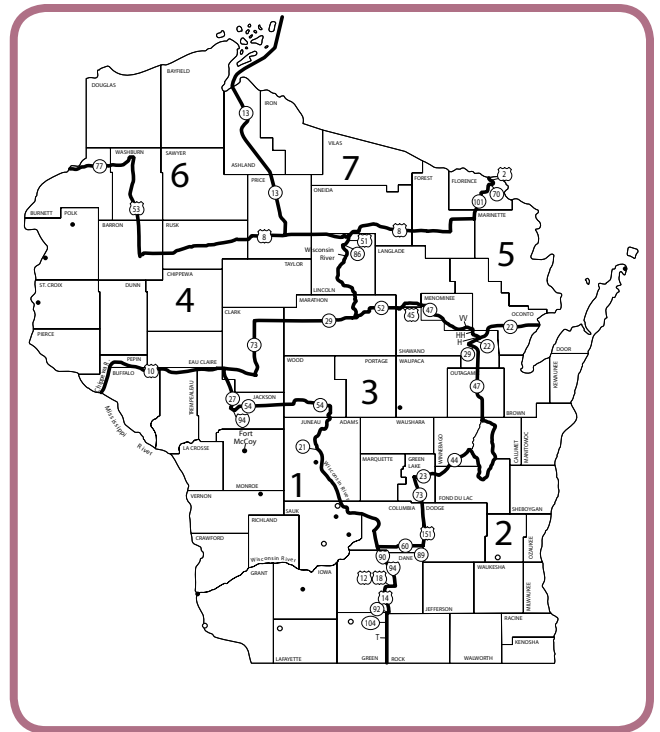
The process for registering turkeys in Wisconsin changed considerably with the 2011 fall season. The previous system, which required hunters to transport their turkey to a local registration station, has been replaced with more convenient online or phone-in registration options. Hunters must register their turkey either by calling 1-88-HUNT-WIS (1-888-486-8947) or by going to [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov), keyword "[turkey registration](#)", to use the online system. Hunters are still required to register their turkey by 5 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 1970's, turkeys are now so abundant that Wisconsin spring turkey harvests rank among the largest in the nation. Wild turkeys have also proven surprisingly tolerant of harsh winter weather, as populations have become established throughout the northern part of the state. After 20 years of rapidly increasing turkey populations and turkey harvests, turkey numbers in Wisconsin now seem to be stabilizing at levels suitable to available habitat.

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



**Turkey Hunting Zones**

**Wild Turkey Season Information**

**Fall 2013 Season Dates (All Zones):**  
September 14 – November 21

**Extended Fall Season (Zones 1-5 ONLY):**  
December 2 – December 31

**2014 Youth Hunt:**  
April 12 and 13

**Spring 2014 Season Dates:**

- Period A April 16 – April 22
- Period B April 23 – April 29
- Period C April 30 – May 6
- Period D May 7 – May 13
- Period E May 14 – May 20
- Period F May 21 – May 27

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 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 reproduction.

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.

Most importantly, please focus on safety during your fall hunt.

## Turkey Hunting by the Numbers

Total number of turkeys harvested in all seasons in 2012:	49,666
Total number of turkey permits available for all seasons in 2012:	331,134
Total number of turkey permits issued for all seasons in 2012:	256,484
Overall success rate for the 2012 spring turkey season:	21.1%
Overall success rate for the 2012 fall turkey season:	12.9%



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## 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. With the intention of attracting a female, the male will display on a drumming log and rapidly beat his wings to produce a drumming sound.

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 9 percent, from 0.93 drums per stop in 2012 to 0.84 in 2013. The southwest region of the state showed the greatest decrease in drumming activity over the last year, with a 35 percent drop. The central and southeast regions also showed similar

decreases of 18 percent and 25 percent, respectively. The northern region did show a two percent increase in the number of drumming males heard on routes.

Grouse populations in northern Wisconsin tend to cycle predictably over a 9 to 11 year period. Survey results suggest that grouse populations in the state may have peaked in 2011 and are now headed downward.

According to Scott Walter, DNR upland wildlife ecologist, maturation of southern Wisconsin's forest community in recent decades, and the resulting loss of dense, brushy areas that grouse need for cover, has contributed to lower numbers of grouse in that region.

Grouse numbers within a single year are also closely tied to the weather, according to Gary Zimmer, coordinating biologist for the Ruffed Grouse Society.

"Weather, especially during the brood-rearing period in late May and early June, plays an important role in ruffed grouse numbers," said Zimmer. "The slight increase shown in this spring's northern region drumming counts, even in a downward cycle, can definitely be tied to 2012's excellent brood-rearing conditions with its lengthy dry, warm period in June. Unfortunately, this spring's weather is not following the same pattern and it is doubtful fall grouse numbers will be comparable to last year. However, even with lower populations, Wisconsin still has some of the best grouse hunting in the country."

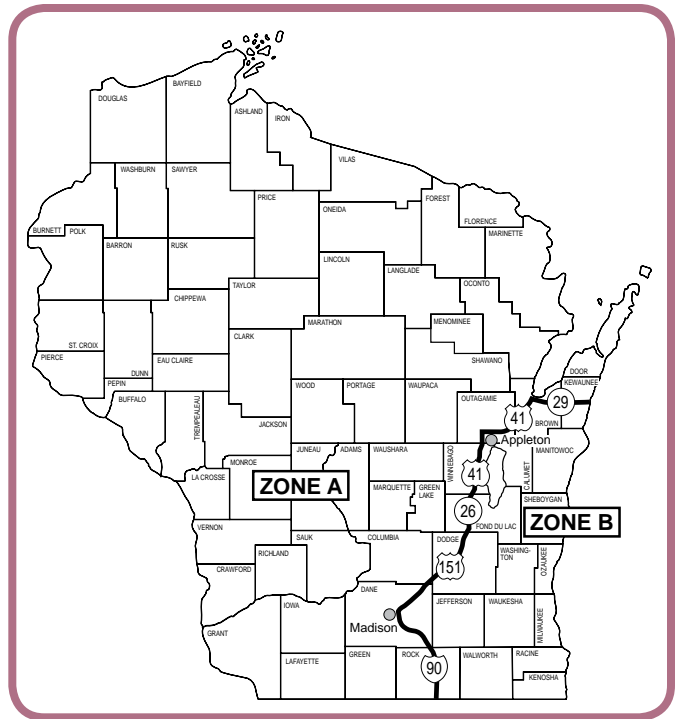
Grouse hunters are very much in tune with grouse numbers relative to the population cycle, as both the number of hunting days spent in the field and overall harvests vary significantly from year to year.

During the 2012-13 grouse season, 87,159 hunters reported spending 747,073 days in the field hunting grouse with roughly 353,066 grouse harvested.

"To some extent, we see participation in grouse hunting ebb and flow in response to the grouse cycle, with more hunters hitting the woods more often when grouse numbers are up," said Walter. "As we head toward the cyclic low over the next few years, grouse hunters might consider 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 forests are most important when trying to find grouse. 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.

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. Zone A ruffed grouse hunting season opens September 14 and closes January 31, 2014. The Zone B season runs from October 19 through



**Ruffed Grouse Hunting Zones**

### **Ruffed Grouse Season Information**

**Zone A:**

September 14, 2013 – January 31, 2014

**Daily Bag:** 5

**Zone B:**

October 19 – December 8, 2013

**Daily Bag:** 2



December 8. The daily bag limit is five birds for Zone A and two birds for Zone B. The possession limit is twice the daily bag limit; in other words 10 birds for Zone A and four 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 2012 and 2013 drumming survey reports.

## Ruffed Grouse Hunting by the Numbers

Estimated grouse harvest for the 2012-2013 season:	353,066
The number of people hunting grouse in 2012-2013:	87,159
Percentage of small game hunters pursuing ruffed grouse in 2012-2013:	36.8%
Estimated total number of grouse hunting days in 2012-2013:	747,073



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## 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. Though the results of the 2013 bobwhite quail survey indicate a slight increase, from 0.013 in 2011 to 0.015 in 2013, the overall trend in bobwhite quail numbers still 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

### Bobwhite Quail Season Information

#### 2013 Season Dates:

October 19 (noon) - December 11

#### Bag Limit:

Daily bag of 5, Possession limit of 10

the small farms of decades ago with numerous small fields, idle lands, small grains and brushy fence rows providing for their annual habitat and foraging needs. Large-scale, mechanized farming has greatly simplified the landscape in farmed regions and the removal of fence rows, 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 with numerous partners for decades 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 Wisconsin.

Given the long-term loss of appropriate habitat and recent severe winter conditions, 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.

## Small Mammals

### *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. Their annual reproduction is usually dependent upon local weather conditions during the breeding seasons. Portions of the state with adequate rainfall which results 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 2013 survey indicate that the number of



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cottontail rabbits seen per stop increased by 21.42 percent, from 0.14 in 2011 to 0.17 in 2013. Hunters are encouraged to check the [wildlife reports](#) page of the DNR website for more information.

During the 2012-2013 hunting season, the results of a mail-in survey indicated that 29,606 hunters harvested approximately 113,448 cottontail rabbits, with the top counties for harvest being Kewaunee, Grant and Sheboygan.

### *Gray and 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 2012-2013 hunting season, the results of a mail-in survey indicated that 53,053 hunters harvested approximately 361,579 squirrels with the top counties for harvest being Grant, Pierce and Jackson.

### *Snowshoe Hare*

During the 2012-2013 hunting season, the results of a mail-in survey indicated that 6,395 hunters harvested approximately 5,835 snowshoe hares, with the top counties for harvest being Douglas, Clark and Taylor.

### Cottontail Rabbit Season Information

#### Northern Zone:

September 14 - February 28, 2014

Daily Bag Limit: 3

#### Southern Zone:

October 19 (noon) - February 28, 2014

Daily Bag Limit: 3

### Gray and Fox Squirrel Season Information

#### 2013 Season Dates:

September 14 - January 31, 2014

#### Bag Limit:

Daily bag of 5, Possession limit of 10

### Snowshoe Hare Information

Open year-round statewide with an unlimited bag limit



Herbert Lange



D. Gordon E. Robertson

# MIGRATORY BIRD SEASON FORECAST

Contributed to Kent Van Horn and James Christopoulos

Biologists are looking ahead to the upcoming waterfowl season with optimism. "With good habitat conditions here in Wisconsin and on the U.S. and Canadian prairies, and a high total number of ducks, the outlook for fall 2013 is promising," said Kent Van Horn, migratory waterfowl biologist for the state Department of Natural Resources.

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

The Wisconsin [Breeding Waterfowl Survey](#) was completed in 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 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

According to Van Horn, waterfowl breeding areas in park land and prairie Canada for spring 2013 had mostly good to excellent conditions, so duck breeding is expected to be favorable overall. Some areas of Saskatchewan saw the best conditions in decades. Spring habitat conditions on the U.S. prairies were also encouraging this year.



Dave Menke - USFWS

### U.S. Prairies

Spring in the Dakotas and Minnesota was delayed and it was wetter than last year. In North Dakota, following several years of good production there were abundant ducks on the landscape. The 2013 total breeding duck estimate for North Dakota was 73 percent above the long-term mean. Minnesota's total duck estimate of 683,000 was 46 percent higher than 2012 and 10 percent above the state's long-term mean, which is similar to an average.

### Wisconsin

In Wisconsin, despite the late spring and challenges related to survey timing, the total estimated number of breeding ducks was similar to last year. While annual variations draw interest, it is important to remember the long-range trends provide the best picture of populations. Current landscape conditions, along with good precipitation, seem to be supporting more than a half million breeding ducks. The total breeding duck population estimate for 2013 is 527,340 which is similar to the 2012 estimate of 521,079 and the 10-year average, which is at 544,628.

## Duck Season Information

### Northern Zone:

September 21 (9:00 A.M.) - November 19

### Southern Zones:

September 28 (9:00 A.M.) - October 6 and  
October 12 - December 1

**Closed October 7 - 11**

### Mississippi River Zone:

September 21 (9:00 A.M.) - September 29 and  
October 12 - December 1

**Closed September 30 - October 11**

### 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, 3 scaup, 2 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.

The daily bag limit for coot is 15.

### Possession limit:

Federal rules on possession limits have changed, and now allow three times the daily bag limit. In Wisconsin, that means a hunter can possess up to 18 ducks.

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

## Ducks - Wisconsin

The four most abundant duck species in Wisconsin’s fall hunting harvest are mallard, wood duck, 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 2013 total mallard population estimate of 181,200 is down slightly from the 2012 estimate of 196,950 and equal to the long-term, 40-year average. Mallards account for nearly 40 percent 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. These mallard breeding pair survey numbers, combined with fair wetland numbers in the key breeding areas, suggest we will have average mallard production in Wisconsin this year.

### *Blue-winged Teal*

The 2013 blue-winged teal breeding population estimate of 74,483 is down from 2012 and 35 percent below the long-term average for Wisconsin.

Blue-winged teal migration and breeding behavior is highly variable in relation to regional water conditions and weather so survey results in Wisconsin tend to be variable from year to year. The 2013 blue-winged teal estimates should be interpreted with caution because a high percentage of the teal observed were in groups, indicating birds still in migration. The lower estimate may be a result of survey timing and a late spring rather than a decline in breeding blue-winged teal.

Still, while blue-winged teal continentally have recently reached record population levels, their breeding population in Wisconsin is much lower than during the early

Dan Pancamo



1970's. Though annual variation in wetland conditions and subsequent duck movements around the continent are normal, we remain concerned about long-term decreases in the secure grassland nesting cover important to this duck species in Wisconsin.

A continued commitment to grassland conservation is critical to the future of blue-winged teal in Wisconsin.

Based on breeding conditions, we expect a fair number of teal to be raised in Wisconsin this year, but as always, warm weather leading up to opening weekend will increase the number seen by hunters.



## 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. In 2013, the population estimate for wood ducks – 91,516 – is down from last year but still 14 percent above the long-term average.

“Wood ducks continue to be an important component of Wisconsin’s breeding duck population and hunters’ fall bag,” said Van Horn. “We suspect the 2013 estimates to be more a factor of survey challenges than an actual population decline.”

Most of the decrease from last year was observed in portions of the north, where ice and snow had only left the region about one week prior to the survey. The breeding wood duck population showed significant gains in the 1980's and early 1990's and appears to be leveling off around 120,000. Wood ducks now account for about 20 percent of the total fall duck harvest. Based on improved water conditions and our best interpretation of the survey results, we expect wood duck production in 2013 to be good and similar to recent years.

“We have been fortunate for the added opportunity provided by a three-bird, daily bag limit on wood ducks over the past several years,” Van Horn said. “Biologists regularly evaluate harvest rates to ensure sustainable populations.”

## Ducks – Continentally

The estimated total duck population across the traditional survey area of breeding grounds in 2013 was the second highest recorded, at 45.6 million ducks. Across North America, mallard numbers were roughly unchanged from 2012 and 36 percent above the 58-year average in the traditional survey areas of the U.S. and Canada.

The picture for other species of ducks of interest to Wisconsin hunters is relatively good as well. Most had populations similar to or increased from the generally high levels in 2012. These include green-winged teal, canvasback, redhead, pintail and wigeon.

Scaup were the exception. After an increase to the long-term average in 2012, scaup numbers have decreased 17 percent, falling to a level similar to that of recent years. We think it noteworthy that scaup numbers had otherwise been increasing for several years and though somewhat below their historical average in quantity, they are still one of our more numerous duck species with an estimated total population of 4.2 million birds.

Pintail numbers are estimated at 3.3 million and are equal to the long-term average. The number of continental blue-winged teal, at 7.7 million, is 61 percent above the long-term average. The canvasback

estimate, 780,000, is up slightly from last year and is 37 percent greater than the long-term average.

Overall, 2013 looks like a good year for duck numbers and production across North America. While 2013 and 2012 both saw encouraging continental duck numbers, the drought last year highlights the fact that a duck hunter's success in the fall will depend heavily upon fall weather, water conditions and preseason scouting.

A recent survey of Wisconsin duck hunters indicates 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 made three or more scouting trips harvested 14.7 ducks. The conclusion is clear: **While hunters cannot change the weather, they can improve their odds by being flexible and by scouting before and during the season.**

In 2013, Wisconsin will have a 60-day duck season with a daily bag of six ducks in total. Of the six ducks, no more than four can be mallards and only one of these can be a hen. The bag can contain (in combinations that do not exceed six birds) up to three wood ducks, one black duck, two redheads, three scaup, two pintail or two canvasback. In addition, of the six birds, five can be mergansers but no more than two of these can be 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.

### *Possession Limit*

Federal rules on possession limits have changed and now allow three times the daily bag limit. In Wisconsin, that means a hunter can possess up to 18 ducks at any one time.

## Canada Geese

"Despite a late spring, hunters can realistically hope for good Canada goose hunting," Van Horn said. "Hunting early in the fall and adapting as geese change movement patterns throughout the season is the key," Van Horn said.

Wisconsin hunters harvest primarily from two populations of Canada geese during the regular seasons. Those that nest in Wisconsin and adjacent states make up about 40 percent of the harvest while Canada geese breeding in northern Ontario make up about 60 percent.

The 2013 population estimate for Wisconsin breeding Canada geese, at 138,925, is statistically unchanged from last year, near the 10-year average and 51 percent greater than the long-term average, which goes back 26 years. Late spring and heavy rains resulted in some failed nests, but many pairs re-nested and this fall's outlook remains promising.

"We expect good hunting opportunities this fall, particularly for the early season, which runs September 1 - 15 with a five bird daily bag limit," Van Horn said.

The second Canada goose population 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 2013 breeding population is

### **Canada Goose Season Information**

#### **Statewide Early Canada Goose:**

September 1 - September 15

**Bag Limit: 5**

#### **Horicon Zone\*:**

**Period 1:** September 16 - October 27

**Period 2:** October 28 - December 16

**Bag Limit: 2**

#### **Exterior Zone:**

##### **North Portion:**

September 16 - December 16

##### **South Portion:**

September 16 - October 6

October 12 - December 21

**Closed October 7 - 11**

##### **Mississippi River Subzone:**

September 21 - September 29

October 12 - January 2, 2014

**Closed September 30 - October 11**

**Bag Limit: 2**

**Check the 2013 Migratory Bird Regulations for more information on harvest limits of other goose species.**



estimated at 319,693, up 16 percent from the 2012 estimate of 268,900. The MVP breeding population remains about 10 percent below the long-term average. Reports suggest that production is good in spite of the late spring.

The regular Canada goose hunting seasons in Wisconsin include the Exterior Zone season which will again allow for 92 days of hunting with a two bird daily bag. When combined with the 15 days in the early season, this gives Wisconsin hunters the maximum number of days (107) allowed by international treaty.

The Horicon Zone season is 92 days with six harvest tags per hunter. Horicon will be divided into two permit periods again this year: Period one is Sept. 16 – Oct. 27 and Period two is Oct 28 – Dec. 16. Proposed changes to the Horicon zone boundary and tagging rules do not take effect until 2014.

## Early Canada Goose Season

The early Canada goose hunting period specifically targets locally breeding, giant Canada geese, and is held before migratory geese begin to move into Wisconsin. Last fall's harvest of 21,302 was up somewhat from other recent years and the fifth highest since the season was created.

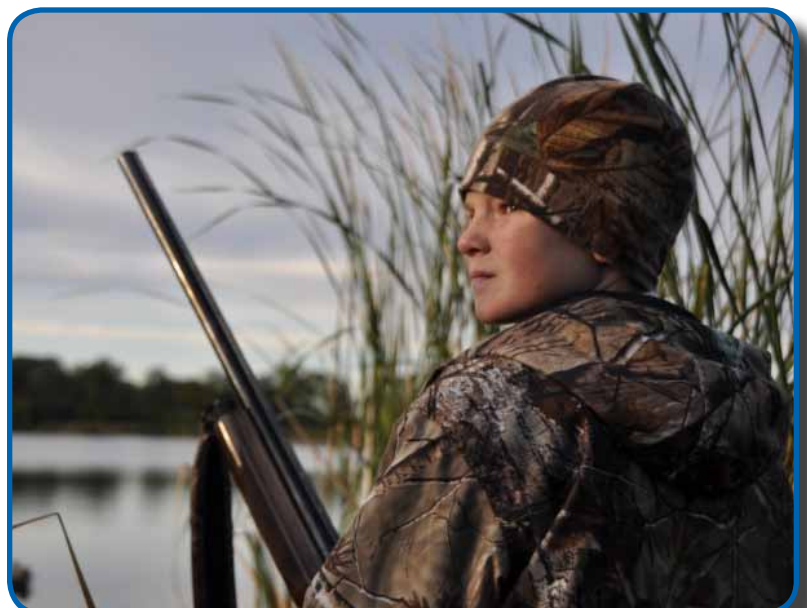
"This has become a popular early hunt and an important part of our resident Canada goose population management," Van Horn said. "The early season now accounts for a third of our total statewide goose harvest."

This statewide season requires a separate permit and \$3 fee and does not affect an individual's ability to hunt in any zone during the regular season.

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

## Youth Waterfowl Hunt

This special hunt is designed to provide opportunity and to recruit new hunters in Wisconsin. In recent years, about 2,500 youth have taken advantage of this opportunity and they annually harvest nearly 9,000 ducks and about 250 geese. This year's youth hunt takes place September 14-15. Licenses and stamp requirements are waived for eligible young duck hunters, ages 10-15, during the youth hunt, but normal bag limits apply. Youngsters who wish to harvest geese do need an Early Canada goose season permit.





# Mourning Doves

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

Wisconsin's 11th dove hunting season will again run September 1 – November 9th. The daily bag limit is 15 doves. Possession limits for doves are now three times the daily bag limit.

Approximately 10,000 to 15,000 dove hunters are expected to take to the field during the season. More information on [doves](#) and [DNR properties managed for](#)

[dove hunting](#) is available online at [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov), keyword "[dove](#)."

Hunters are again being asked to examine harvested doves closely for any leg bands. For the eighth consecutive year, Wisconsin is participating in a national plan to monitor mourning dove populations for harvest management. Biologists set a goal of capturing 850 doves from several locations throughout the state and banding them 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).

## Mourning Dove Season Information

September 1 - November 9

**Bag Limit:** 15

Based on recent estimates, the continental population of mourning doves is placed at roughly 350 million, making it one of the most abundant birds in North America. The 10-year population trend for the eastern management unit, which includes the states east of the Mississippi River, has been stable, showing a 0.6 percent increase. Hunters should expect to see numbers of doves similar to past years.

Regulations and license requirements for dove hunting are contained in the [2013 Small Game Hunting Regulations](#) pamphlet, which is also available at any license vendor. Mourning doves are migratory game birds so hunters must be HIP certified and hunt with a plugged shotgun that only holds three shells. They must also use non-toxic shot when hunting on federal or DNR-managed lands.

Hunters who choose to use lead shot elsewhere should know 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," said Kent Van Horn, migratory game bird ecologist.

If you are looking for a way to introduce a new hunter to bird hunting then doves present a great opportunity.

"Taking a kid dove hunting is the wing-shooting equivalent to taking them pan-fishing" Van Horn said. "It doesn't require a lot of specialized gear, you don't need to be up at 'O'dark-thirty', and the potential for action makes it an experience they are not likely to forget."





Richard Baetsen



# Woodcock

During the past 35 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 young forest habitat. However, this decline has leveled off in recent years with 10-year averages showing a stable population. Interest in pursuing the “timberdoodle” throughout the forests of Wisconsin remains high, with about 15,000 hunters. Wisconsin has ranked second or third in the nation for woodcock harvest in recent years, with 40,400 birds harvested in 2013. Overall, surveys in Wisconsin and regionally indicate a stable population, so depending on the weather, hunters should expect to see woodcock numbers similar to the past few years and enjoy a good fall. Hunters must be HIP certified while hunting woodcock and must hunt with a plugged shotgun that only holds three shells (magazine and chamber combined).

## Woodcock Season Information

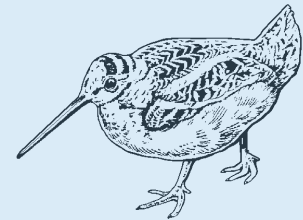
September 21 - November 4

**Bag Limit: 3**

Woodcock season: Sept. 21 – Nov. 4, with a daily bag of three birds. Note that possession limits have changed for woodcock as well, and are now three times the daily bag limit.



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

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 Sam Jonas*

Wisconsin is one of the best places in North America to hunt deer.

Typically in the top three states for total harvest, in 2012 Wisconsin was ranked first among the states and Canadian provinces for producing trophy bucks by the venerable [Boone and Crocket Club](#).

Each hunter's experience is different, though, and harvest success during 2012 varied across Wisconsin.

Many factors were in the hunter's favor last year, including the earliest possible gun opener on the calendar, good rut activity during the gun season and the fact that 90 percent or more of the agricultural crops were picked by mid-November. Good hunting conditions throughout the fall and higher numbers of deer resulted in the third consecutive year of increased deer harvest.

Gun hunters took the most bucks since the 2007 season and bow hunters harvested the highest number of bucks on record, including a new all-time, state-record typical archery buck. In total, deer hunters in Wisconsin harvested 368,314 deer in 2012, an increase over each of the previous three seasons.

Although it was a productive season for many hunters, others found it less than desirable. In the eastern half of the northern forested region, hunters shot fewer deer than in the previous year. Antlerless permit levels in many forest units have been conservative in recent years and will be even more so in 2013. While this strategy is designed to increase deer sightings in the future, the number of antlerless deer harvested this year can be expected to decrease in many areas due to the simple fact that fewer permits are available.

Hunters understand that deer densities are not consistent across the landscape. Local deer populations are influenced by the amount of high quality habitat, the abundance and distribution of predators and the level of human disturbance. These factors can shift from year to year.



DNR photo

Trail cameras and field observations in the early morning and late evening are great ways to see how many deer are present and what kind of bucks are in a given area. If you are not finding many deer in the area you hope to hunt, you might consider scouting out some new hunting ground for the upcoming season.

The season structure for the 2013 deer season will be almost identical to 2012 with a few changes in individual deer management units, or DMUs, designated as “herd control” or as “regular” units. Most DMUs in the northern and central forest regions will have limited or no antlerless harvest in an effort to increase deer populations. The farmland regions will remain as either herd control or CWD units. In these areas, deer are generally abundant in relation to their local habitat and are controlled through the harvest of antlerless deer.

Still, local abundance can vary greatly across a unit. One factor that will likely affect distribution across the forested regions is winter weather. Last winter arrived late and stayed long into spring. Deer, along with migrating birds, found ice and snow-covered ground instead of succulent shoots of new growth.

Late summer fawn and doe observations will provide clues to winter’s impact. However, no drastic losses of deer were reported, and the prospects for increased deer abundance look promising in most areas.



## What's New in 2013



There are a number of rule and regulation changes this year that may be of interest to deer hunters. The most notable changes are listed here. Please check the [2013 Deer Hunting Regulations](#) for more information.

- The coyote season no longer closes in the northern portion of Wisconsin during the gun deer season.
- There are now expanded opportunities for hunting and trapping in state parks.
- Baiting and feeding deer is no longer allowed in Washington County.
- Rifles might be allowed statewide for hunting deer during the 9-day November gun hunt and the four-day December antlerless gun deer season (subject to local ordinances that restrict use of certain firearms). At the time of publication, this rule change had not completed the legislative review process. Contact the DNR in early fall to check the status of this change.

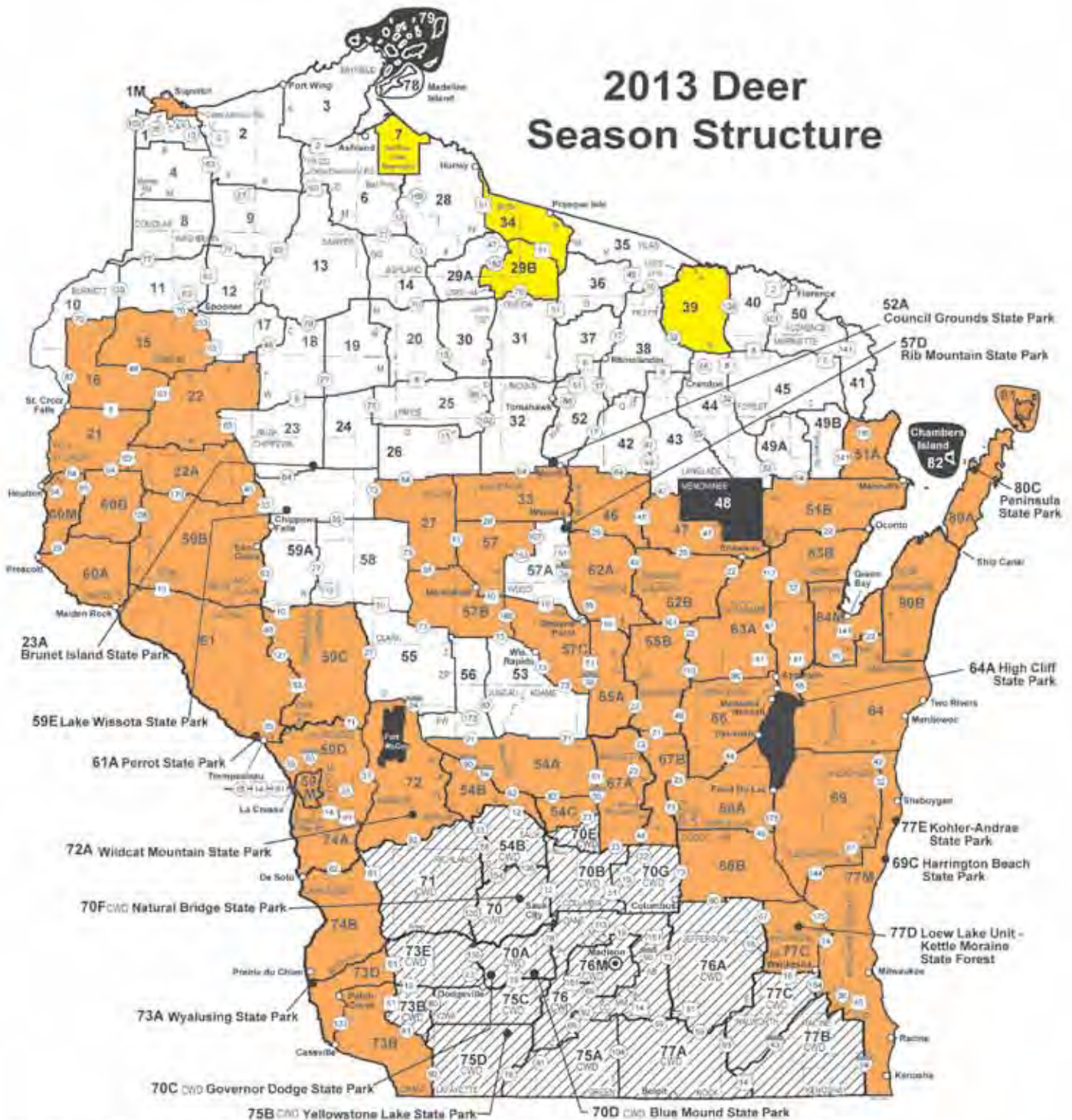


## Deer Management Units in 2013

### *Regular Units*

Deer populations are at or near goal in these deer management units. For the 2013 season, most regular units will have a limited number of unit-specific antlerless deer carcass tags available. Antlerless tags went on sale Saturday, August 17, at 10 a.m. and will 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 2013 Wisconsin deer hunting license before purchasing a unit-specific antlerless tag.

# 2013 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, & 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

## Bucks Only Units

Four regular units will allow the harvest of bucks only for both the gun and archery season. No unit-specific antlerless tags will be available for the following units: DMUs 7, 29B, 34 and 39. Only certain hunters will be allowed to harvest antlerless deer in these units under the following circumstances:

- Youth deer hunters ages 10-17 will 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 during any archery or gun season.
- 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 who 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 to hunters, which authorize them to shoot antlerless deer only on the farmer's property.
- 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 significantly above established overwinter goals and when increased harvest is needed to reduce numbers. The 2013 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 the archery antlerless deer carcass tag that is valid in any unit statewide

except buck-only units. There is no limit to 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 per unused

## Land Open for Public Hunting

If you are looking for a place to hunt this fall, please visit the DNR's [website](#), keywords: '[state lands](#)' or '[public access to tax law land](#)'. 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 Abatement and Claims](#) (WDACP) programs. Combined, hunters have access to nearly seven million acres of land throughout Wisconsin!



Herbert Lange

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 using a buck authorization sticker that was earned in 2012 or 2013 by first registering an antlerless deer. Hunters can pick up the antlerless tags free of charge, with a limit of four 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 2013. These units will have an extended regular gun season that will take place from November 23 – December 11, and will also have an extended late archery season ending January 31, 2014. 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 [2013 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 August 17.

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 hunt deer in state parks within the CWD Management Zone that allow deer hunting, 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 WDNR website. Please visit [dnr.wi.gov](#), keyword ‘[hunting state parks](#)’ for more information on hunting within state parks, trails and recreation area properties.

### *Statewide December Antlerless-Only Hunt*

The four-day December antlerless-only deer hunt will be held December 12-15 this year in all DMUs statewide except state parks outside of the CWD Management Zone, non-quota areas and buck-only

units. Hunters will need to possess or be in a group that has at least one antlerless deer carcass tag valid for the unit in which they are hunting. All gun and archery deer hunters and small game hunters are required to meet blaze orange clothing requirements during this hunt statewide.

### *Youth Gun Deer Hunt*

The youth gun deer hunt will be held October 5-6. This special hunt was established to provide youth an opportunity to hunt with low hunting pressure and the guidance of a mentor. The hunt will be held in all DMUs statewide except state park and non-quota



DNR photo

areas. Resident and non-resident youth hunters ages 10 to 15 who possess a gun deer hunting license may participate in this hunt. These young hunters must be accompanied by a parent or guardian for this hunt even if they have already completed Wisconsin's mandatory hunter education course.

Qualified youth hunters may harvest one buck deer using their gun buck deer carcass tag and additional antlerless deer with the appropriate carcass tag. Youth who have not yet completed hunter education, or who are age 10 or 11 must follow all [Hunting Mentorship Program](#) rules, including be within arm's reach from an adult mentor. No more than two youth hunters may be accompanied by an adult. Adults supervising youth hunters may not hunt deer while accompanying or mentoring a youth. All deer, turkey and small game hunters, with the exception of waterfowl hunters, are required to meet blaze orange requirements on these two days statewide.

## Get Involved in Wisconsin's Deer Management!

There are many opportunities for you to take an active role in the management of white-tailed deer in Wisconsin. We encourage you to visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and type in the keywords mentioned below to participate and help monitor the state's deer herd. The information you provide is used for deer management.

### *Deer Hunter Wildlife Survey*

Help monitor the relative abundance and distribution of deer and other wildlife species in Wisconsin. Use the online form to record your experience and submit information you collected during your time afield. The keyword phrase is "[deer hunter wildlife](#)".

### *Operation Deer Watch*

Help monitor deer reproduction in Wisconsin. Keep a tally sheet in your car to record all deer sightings during the time period of August 1 – September 30. DNR biologists are interested in all deer sightings of bucks, does and fawns. Your data is combined with DNR staff observations to estimate fawn-to-doe ratios and ultimately the deer population estimates. Keywords: "[deer watch](#)".

### *Trail Camera Photos*

Trail cameras can serve as a valuable resource in documenting the distribution and abundance of various wildlife species, especially rare or endangered animals. Send in your photos during any season of the year. Keywords: "[deer hunter wildlife](#)".

## Deer Season Dates

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

### Archery

**Early Season:** September 14 - November 21

**Late Season:** November 23 - January 5, 2014

**NOTE:** Archery harvests in all units on December 12 - 15 will be antlerless-only. Deer hunting in Buck-only units for this time period will not be allowed.

### Gun

**Disabled Gun Hunt:** October 5 – 13 (qualified disabled permit hunters on sponsored properties only)

**Youth Gun Hunt:** October 5 - 6

**Regular Gun:** November 23 - December 1

**Muzzleloader:** December 2 - 11

**Antlerless-only Gun Hunt:** December 12 - 15 (statewide with valid carcass tags)

**Holiday Gun Hunt:** December 24 - January 5, 2014 (CWD units only. Bonus Buck regulations apply).

### Metro

**Early Archery Season:** September 14 - November 21

**Late Archery Season:** November 23 - January 31, 2014

**Youth Gun Hunt:** October 5 - 6

**Gun:** November 23 - December 11

**Antlerless-only Gun Hunt:** December 12 - 15 (statewide with valid carcass tags)

## Deer Herd Forums And Online Surveys

Informational meetings are held around the state each March. It's a perfect opportunity to speak directly to your local wildlife biologist and learn about deer biology and management, population estimates and harvest statistics for your favorite hunting areas. Participants at the in-person forums and those using online tools provide their personal input to the DNR. Keywords: "[deer hunter forum](#)."

## Conservation Congress Spring Hearings

The Wisconsin Conservation Congress holds its annual meeting to provide citizens with the opportunity to comment and vote on proposed fish and wildlife rule changes and to submit resolutions for future rule changes. This meeting is held in every county of the state on the second Monday in April. It's an opportunity unique to Wisconsin and plays a significant part in determining how you enjoy your time in the outdoors. Keywords: "[spring hearings](#)."

## Contact Your Local Biologist

Wildlife biologists are available to speak with you and to answer questions, address any concerns you have and to gather input when setting the upcoming deer season framework. Keyword: "[contact](#)."

# Chronic Wasting Disease Surveillance

Contributed by Tim Marien

Wisconsin has intensively monitored Chronic Wasting Disease for eleven years. Between 2002 and March 2013, DNR tested more than 178,000 free-ranging deer of which more than 2,100 have tested positive for CWD. Wisconsin has two separate cores of disease infection in the CWD management zone (MZ): the southeast and the southwest. The southeast CWD outbreak is contiguous with a CWD area in northern Illinois where 372 CWD-positive deer have been found since 2002.

CWD was found outside of the CWD-MZ in Washburn County in 2011, and in Juneau, Adams, Portage, Waukesha, and Grant counties in 2012. In 2012, CWD was also found for the first time in Racine County, in the portion of the county which is within the CWD-MZ.



DNR photo

## CWD Season Dates

### Archery Season:

September 14 - January 5, 2014

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

### Youth Hunt:

October 5 - 6

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

### Traditional 9-Day Firearm Season:

November 23 - December 1

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

### 10-day Muzzleloader Season:

December 2 - 11

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

### Antlerless-Only:

December 12 - 15

Applicable to firearm and archery hunters

### Holiday Firearm Season:

December 24 - January 5, 2014

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

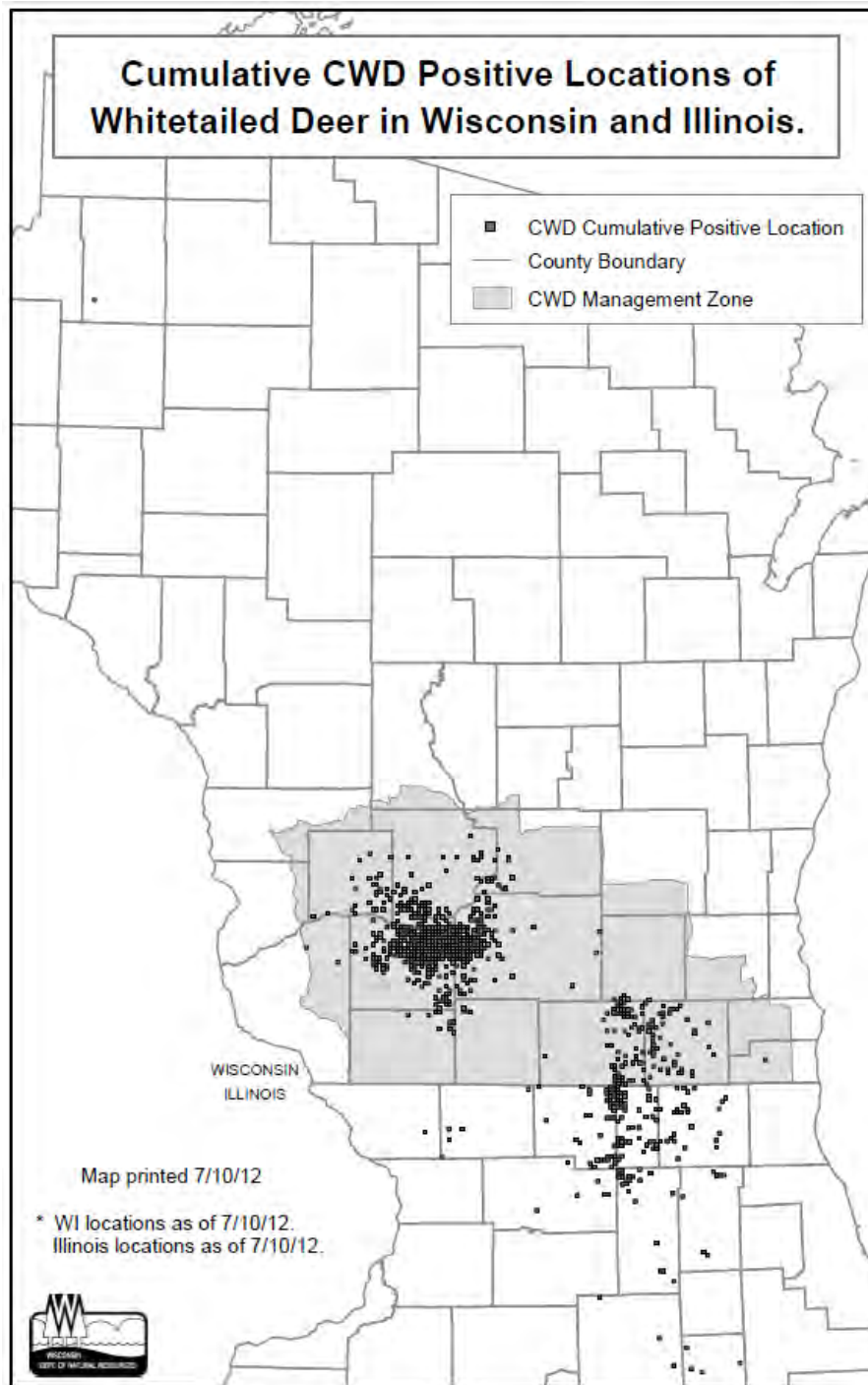


With the release of the [Deer Trustee Report](#) this past summer, DNR is working both internally and with the public to incorporate recommendations from the report into the season framework. This process began in March and everyone is working hard to have these changes in place in advance of the 2014 deer hunting season. Please stay tuned.

### *CWD Prevalence in Wisconsin*

Since 2002, CWD prevalence within the western monitoring area has shown an overall increasing trend in all sex and age classes. During the past eleven years, prevalence in adult males has risen from 8-10 percent to more than 20 percent and in adult females from about 3-4 percent to approximately 9 percent. During that same time, disease prevalence in yearling males has increased from about 2 percent to about 6 percent and in yearling females from roughly 2 percent to about 5 percent. There are similar trends in the eastern monitoring area, albeit at lower prevalence levels.

We find that disease prevalence is higher in males than females and higher in adults than yearlings. Annual monitoring is important to track CWD distribution and prevalence.



### *2013 CWD Sampling in Wisconsin*

DNR will continue to sample deer within the CWD zone, including both the southwestern and southeastern core infection areas, to track changes in both CWD prevalence and distribution. The exact locations for sampling within the CWD-MZ, as well as locations outside the CWD-MZ will be available at registration and sampling stations and on the DNR website prior to the opening of the 2013 archery season.

DNR will also sample deer in Washburn, Adams, Juneau and Portage counties around the areas where CWD-positive deer were found to assess the prevalence and distribution of the disease in these areas. In Washburn County, sampling efforts will be focused on the area within a two mile radius of where the CWD-positive deer was found. In Adams, Juneau and Portage counties, sampling efforts will focus on an area within a 10 mile radius of where CWD-positive deer were found in these counties.

# Venison Donation Program

By Dan Hirschert

DNR employees across the state are gearing up for this season's deer donation program. The DNR [deer donation website](#) will be updated as venison processors sign up to participate, and these processors will be ready to accept deer as soon as their information is posted. This year the program will be extended with Saturday, February 1, 2014, being the final day to donate a deer.

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 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 deer free of the disease 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; and
- [Central WI Community Action Coalition](#), Wisconsin Dells.

Since the program began in 2000, hunters have donated over 83,000 deer which were processed into over 3.7 million pounds of ground venison. The voluntary venison processing donation code added to the DNR's licensing system in 2002 has netted more than \$131,000 from some 42,000 hunters.



**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 (CWD) Zone by dropping it off at a participating processor by February 1, 2014. Deer taken outside the CWD Zone are registered with a silver metal tag. Only silver tagged deer may be donated to this program. Deer harvested within the CWD Zone can be donated to Target Hunger processors.
- Please field dress the deer and register it at a 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. (Head or antlers or both 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

DNR photo



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 22 of the [2013 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 at [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov), keyword: '[deer donation](#)' for updates. Thank you for your interest and good luck hunting!



*We have been contacted by hunters that would like to have the Venison Donation Program available as soon as archery season starts because they are anticipating a good year and want to donate to this worthy cause.*

## Deer Research

By Daniel Storm

### *Survival Rates and Causes of Mortality*

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. The goal is to learn more about specific causes of death of Wisconsin deer whether 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 overall deer survival.

The study is ongoing and we continue our field research. The winter of 2012-2013 was our third year of deer captures. With the much-needed assistance of an army of over 500 volunteers, we had another

banner year, catching over 350 deer. Our deer-capture tool kit includes box and netted cage traps, drop nets and darting, and we fitted captured deer with radio collars, ear tags or both. In late May and early June researchers and volunteers again took to the woods and swamps to collar and ear tag newborn fawns. This was our third and final year of fawn capture, and we were fortunate enough to catch 74 fawns.

### *Volunteers Still Needed for Winter Deer Capture*

We have one more winter of deer capture ahead. Volunteer opportunities will be available for both our Winter and Shiocton study areas. This is a great opportunity for anyone who has an interest in deer to get involved with research on the ground. If you want to volunteer or learn more about this and other deer research, go to [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search "[deer research](#)". You can also check out our deer research blog at [widerstudies.blogs.govdelivery.com/](http://widerstudies.blogs.govdelivery.com/).

DNR photo



# Hunters!

If you see a deer with one of these,



Or one of these,



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

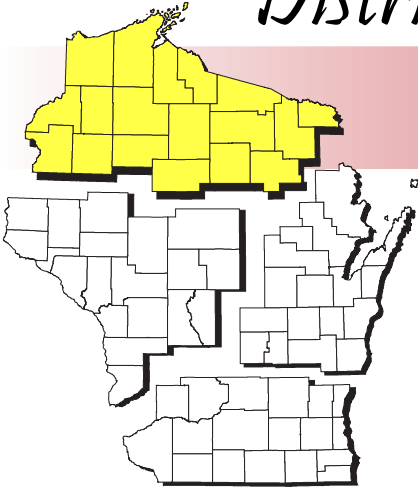
**Treat marked deer like any other deer in the woods.**

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!**

# District Deer Season Forecast



## Northern District

By Mike Zeckmeister

Whenever we talk about how deer are doing in northern Wisconsin, we start with conditions last winter and late spring. We experienced a colder than average February and March with snow coming later and lingering longer into April. Snow depths as of April 1, in many locations, set historic records. Our past experience in the north is that this has a greater impact than snow coming early with more moderate temperatures mid-winter.

Across the north, mild “winter severity index” readings were not fully reflective of winter impacts on deer, with broad variations locally. Severe “crusty” snow conditions were noted in many areas and this made it much more difficult and strenuous for deer to move. Overnight lows in the mid-teens made this crust more pronounced due to daytime melting. As a result, this past spring we received numerous reports of deer in poor shape. Local field biologists were attentive to this and examined bone marrow from deceased deer (car-killed deer, for instance). These examinations confirmed that deer had a difficult time this past winter in many areas of northern Wisconsin.

*“There are many areas where deer populations are still very high.”*

Although we did not expect significant direct mortality, we do expect reduced recruitment. The late spring resulted in a delayed green-up and likely compounded the stress caused by late winter conditions. For this reason we ratcheted down the antlerless quota in many forested units. This means fewer antlerless permits, if any, in many units across northern Wisconsin.

This begs the question “Why harvest any antlerless deer, especially in the north?” The short answer is that these conditions did not occur everywhere and some level of antlerless harvest is almost always a good management principle. There are many areas, especially in our farmland fringe areas, where deer populations are still very high. The following are some more detailed reasons for a low quota compared to a zero quota in our primarily forested deer management units:

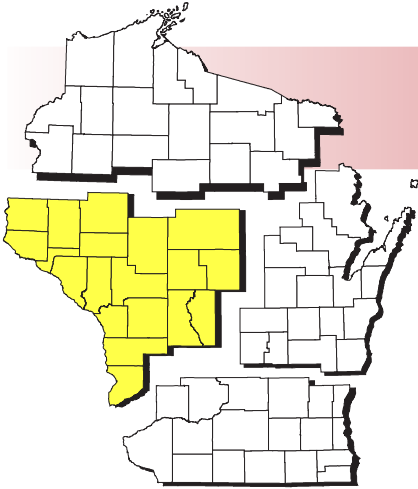
- The majority of the public commenting (both on-line and in-person at the annual herd status meetings) preferred low quotas to zero quotas.
- Since these units can sustain an antlerless harvest, zero quota means we will likely have to play catch up the following year with a much higher quota. A big jump makes



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it harder for people to have confidence in the management strategy.

- It gives archery hunters the opportunity to harvest an antlerless deer.
- It gives interested gun hunters and especially novice hunters a better opportunity to harvest a deer.
- It reduces waste of antlerless deer that are inadvertently shot and left untagged.
- It provides better integrity of data with deer being registered and reported more consistently in the correct unit.
- It helps reduce large swings in the population.



## West Central District

By Dave Matheys

Despite a late winter, cold damp spring and scattered winter mortality in several of the 19 counties that make up the west central district, deer numbers across the region are doing well. Most wildlife biologists believe that overall deer numbers should be on par with last year if not higher. Of the district's 30 deer management units, 22 have deer populations that exceed overwinter goals and these will have a herd control framework to help hunters manage deer in their

units. The remaining eight units have deer populations closer to their overwinter goals and will have a regular season framework, meaning that hunters need to purchase a tag for their specific unit in order to be able to harvest an antlerless deer.

*"Deer numbers should be excellent for fall hunting seasons."*

Jess Carstens, wildlife biologist for Dunn and Pepin Counties, said that with the 2013 gun

deer season occurring late in November, deer activity will likely be different than during last year's earlier season. Deer should be plentiful in these two counties, however, for archers and gun hunters alike. Black River Falls wildlife supervisor Tim Babros said deer are abundant in Buffalo and Trempealeau counties. Many twin fawns are being reported even though the area experienced a prolonged winter and late spring. Deer numbers should be excellent for fall hunting seasons. The central forest deer management units – continuing into Monroe, Juneau and Adams counties – are experiencing deer population increases which should be noticeable to hunters. Spring turkey hunters, bear hunters and other recreationalists report many deer observations in these areas.

Wisconsin Rapids area wildlife supervisor Kris Johansen notes that a fair amount of commercial timber harvesting in deer management units 55 and 58 may change the look of



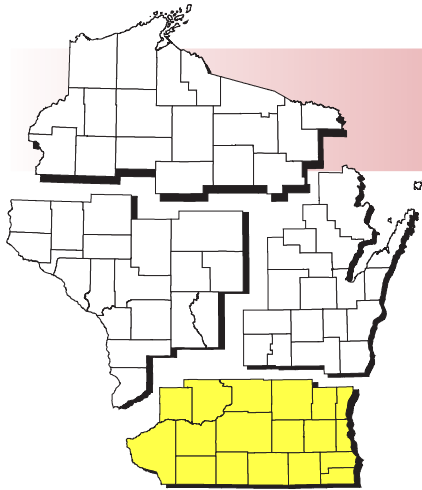
Herbert Lange

the landscape and the movements of deer. The timber harvests should provide significantly improved habitat for deer and for other wildlife species that depend on young forests.

Johansen said the DNR will ask deer hunters to assist with CWD monitoring in Portage, Juneau and Adams Counties. This fatal disease of deer and elk was newly discovered in these counties last fall. In an effort to better understand the disease's distribution, DNR staff will be collecting tissue samples from hunter-harvested deer throughout the archery and nine-day gun deer seasons. The discovery of CWD in these counties is not altering the deer season structure in any way. More information on how hunters may donate tissue samples will be forthcoming as the deer season approaches.

Recent law changes have opened up additional state parks to deer hunting. Cortney Schaefer, wildlife biologist in Wausau, said a larger area of [Rib Mountain State Park](#) is now open to deer hunting, with a major portion of the park designated for archery deer hunting only. Similarly, Jon Robiadek, wildlife biologist in Adams and Juneau Counties, reminds deer hunters that there have been recent changes governing deer hunting at [Buckhorn State Park](#) and adjacent wildlife areas. Deer hunters are encouraged to check with Buckhorn park staff at 608-565-2789 or look online before hunting the park or adjacent wildlife areas. Information on deer hunting in state parks may be found at [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov), keywords: '[hunting state parks](#)'.

Wildlife biologists said deer hunters might want to monitor the progress of local wild foods eaten by deer, such as acorns, hazelnuts and berries. It appears that lingering effects from last year's drought, a slow start to this year's growing season and heavy June rainfalls have affected many highly sought after deer foods. Check your hunting area often to monitor food production and subsequent deer use.



## *Southern District*

**By Don Bates**

**T**he southern district deer herd in 2013 will offer hunters ample opportunity to see and harvest deer this fall. Aerial surveys in January and February indicate a stable to slowly increasing deer population. The southern district encompasses a wide range of deer habitat in the southern farmland portion of the state, from the wooded ridges and coulees in the southwest to the flatter, intensely agricultural landscape along the Illinois border to the rolling southern kettles in the east and the extensive wetland and woodland

areas of Columbia County.

The southern Wisconsin herd came through last winter in very good shape, despite the late spring. Fawn production was excellent throughout the farmland region. In general, deer populations in the northern tier of southern district counties (i.e., Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Jefferson, Waukesha, Iowa and Sauk) show a slight increase over past years. The southern tier of counties (i.e., Grant, Lafayette, Green, Rock, Walworth, Racine and Kenosha) has had a relatively stable population during the past five years. But the trouble with such a general statement on deer populations over such a broad area is that it tells a very simple story when actual land use and habitat conditions are complex. Local deer numbers can vary dramatically from one square mile to the next.

*"The herd came through last winter in very good shape..."*

Southern district hunters who take the time to scout their hunting areas and set up along active trails have an excellent chance to both see deer and put venison in the freezer. Deer hunting is almost always

enjoyable, but every hunt can be enhanced by doing your homework before taking bow or gun to the deer stand. Deer shift their movements each year according to changing food sources, changing habitat and human activity. A hunter sitting in the same stand that yielded deer year after year a decade ago may be hard pressed to see a deer now because the deer have shifted their patterns of movement.

One strategy is to get out well before the season, look for active game trails linking bedding areas with feeding areas and then to set up hunting stands accordingly.

Remember, you are in the deer's living room where it is difficult to go unnoticed. Once the season starts, avoid letting the deer pattern you. Use different routes to get to and from your stands, don't hunt the same time of day every time out and consider using varied stand locations depending on wind direction.

Most of our southern district deer are harvested on private property, which makes up more than 90 percent 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 who are interested in finding public land available for hunting can check out the DNR website at [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov), keywords '[state lands](#).' 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.

The majority of the southern district falls within the CWD Management Zone. The disease continues to increase in the herd with the overall infection rate of adult males at about 20 percent in the western CWD core area, and 6 to 8 percent in the east. With the discovery of two positive deer in northern Waukesha County last year, Washington County has been added to the list of counties where feeding and baiting of deer is prohibited. Specific rules and additional late-season hunting opportunities are in place for the entire CWD zone. An updated list of locations where hunters can get their deer tested will be posted on the DNR website prior to the season opener.

A second malady that affected southern district deer this past August and September was a midge-transmitted viral disease called [epizootic hemorrhagic disease](#) (EHD). The conditions that fostered EHD last year were hot weather and drought which created mud flats and limited water sources that concentrated deer and midges in the same areas. While we've experienced hot conditions over the summer, rainfall has been well above average. Ditches, ponds and marshes have plenty of water in them this summer. We will continue to monitor the deer herd for EHD, and we need the help of hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts. Citizens are urged to report any suspicious deer deaths, especially any groups of dead deer they may encounter.

The venison donation program will again be in place so that hunters can donate deer to food pantries throughout Wisconsin, including in the CWD zone. The CWD season framework provides extra days of hunting opportunity not offered in the rest of the state, and even if hunters fill their freezers early, the [Target Hunger](#) initiative is in need of venison from hunters wanting or willing to stay afield. Field dressed deer can be donated at no cost to the hunter in each county and will go to needy families within those counties. This is an extremely valuable program that fills an ever growing need. A list of participating butchers and pantry drop-off sites will be available on the DNR website, at local deer registration sites and at food pantry locations as we get closer to deer season.

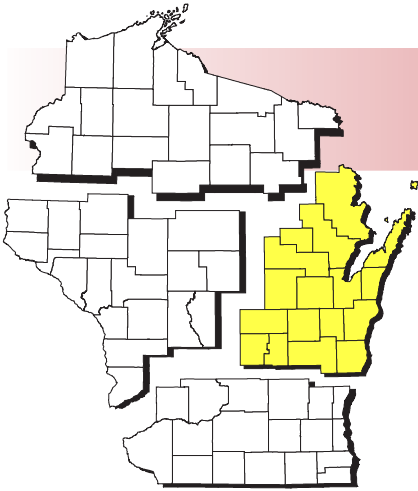


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## Northeast District

By Jeff Pritzl



Deer populations in the northeast district continue to be a tale of two stories, generally divided by Hwy 64 through Marinette and Oconto counties. North of Hwy 64 (except for Unit 51A) buck harvests took a small dip last fall. Given this and the long, late winter, antlerless harvest quotas have been reduced significantly. However, there will be no “buck only” units in this area.

During public input sessions, hunters told us they understand the merits of having small antlerless quotas that would still allow for herd growth. We expect the buck kill in these units to be similar to last year or possibly a bit lower in some areas. Although record keeping hadn't begun at the time of this writing, observations of this year's fawns indicate their numbers seem to be up. The late spring doesn't appear to have affected production significantly.

South of Hwy 64, it's a different story. Deer populations continue to trend upward as antlerless harvests have remained stable or increased slightly over the past four years. Even in those units where antlerless harvests have been increasing, it has not kept up with or stabilized deer productivity, and many farmland units are approaching or have exceeded record high numbers. Buck harvests are expected to again increase across the farmland units, although the late date of the gun season opener may dampen buck movement and the subsequent harvest.

*"Increasing the antlerless harvest will help prevent winter starvation and the over-browsing of natural vegetation."*

During the prolonged winter in March and April, we received reports of starved deer throughout the eastern farmland region. Most of these deer were fawns. This reflects the high production that occurred in 2012 and a deer population at the edge of the land's biological carrying capacity. The losses that occurred this spring, however, will have little effect on continued high productivity. Increasing the antlerless harvest this fall will help prevent winter starvation and the over-browsing of natural vegetation that comes with it.

Deer are not spread evenly on the landscape and even in units that are at or near record populations there are certainly areas that do not contain high numbers. Hunters in these areas will understandably be reluctant to shoot antlerless deer. But the ramifications of deer numbers continuing on their current upward trend are serious. Hunters can feel comfortable harvesting antlerless deer, a local and sustainable source of healthy food, knowing they are making a responsible contribution toward sustainable deer management.



Donna Dewhurst - USFWS

# BEAR SEASON FORECAST

*Contributed by Dave MacFarland and Scott Roepke*

Bear hunting in Wisconsin has been great in recent years, and 2013 should offer yet another excellent season.

A robust bear population provides Wisconsin hunters with some of the highest success rates in the U.S. Annually, Wisconsin ranks among the leading states in bear harvest both in terms of numbers and national record book entries. This healthy population, combined with increased permit levels, has resulted in hunters registering near record numbers of bears during the past few years.

In 2012, hunters harvested 4,646 bears, the second highest harvest on record. Zone A led with 1,907 bears harvested, followed by Zone D with 1,082, Zone B with 841 and Zone C with 810. The bear population in southern Wisconsin continues to expand with hunters harvesting bears as far south as Trempealeau, Monroe, Juneau, Portage and Waupaca counties. Bears have been spotted as far south as the Illinois border, creating unique hunting opportunities in the southern farmland if you know where local bears are residing.

Overall, hunters were most successful in Zone D with an 81 percent success rate followed by Zone B with 67 percent, Zone A with 56 percent and Zone C at 27 percent. Price, Sawyer, Rusk and Bayfield were the leading counties for harvest totals. Interest in Wisconsin's bear hunt continues to grow with more than 106,000 people applying in 2013. In 2013, the number of preference points required to draw a harvest permit ranged from 3 in Zone C to 9 in Zone B.

While high success combined with high demand leads to more restrictive permit opportunities, these opportunities are of very high quality.

Gun hunters harvested 3,816 bears in 2012 while bow hunters accounted for 770. Hunting with the aid of bait was the primary method, accounting for 3,399 animals or 74 percent of the total. Hunters using dogs harvested 1,078 bears. Another 111 bears were harvested without the aid of bait or dogs.

This year, 8,560 permits were awarded to hunters, compared to 9,015 permits issued last year. Four straight years of high harvests have resulted in the intended effect of lowering the population, in part to reduce nuisance and agricultural damage complaints. Estimates indicate the population has decreased slightly from 2011 to 2012 in Zones A and B while it has increased in Zones C and D. To meet



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management objectives while providing quality hunting, 2013 quotas were reduced in Zones A and B and increased in C and D.

In Zones A, B and D hunters using dogs will have the first week of the season to themselves this year while the last week of the season is reserved for hunting without the aid of dogs. In Zone C the use of dogs is not permitted. This zone, covering the southern two thirds of Wisconsin, is open for all non-dog methods throughout the season.

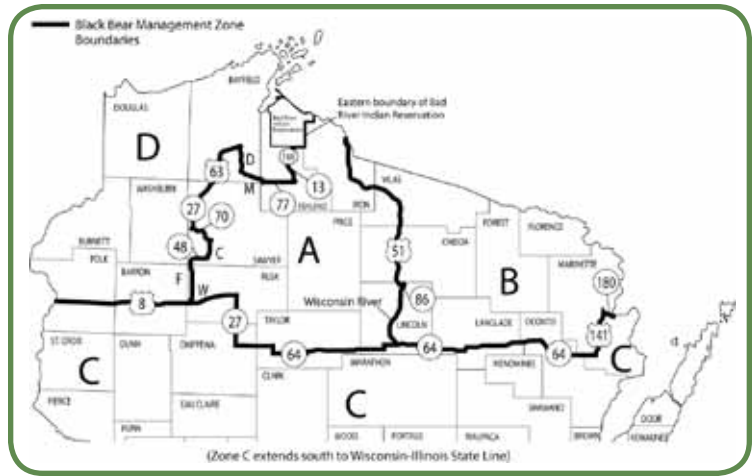
During the upcoming bear hunting season, hunters will be required to submit a tooth sample to the DNR at the time of registration to aid wildlife managers in estimating the age of harvested bear. This age data is used as a component of a population model that estimates the size of the state's bear population. Rib samples will not be collected in 2013. All of the materials necessary to submit the tooth samples will be available at the registration station.

If you are looking for a place to hunt bears, please visit the [DNR's website](#) to learn more about public access lands in Wisconsin. Wisconsin has an abundance of [land open to hunting](#), including state, national, and county forests, 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 updated [regulations](#), is available

on the DNR's [bear hunting](#) web pages. Remember, the deadline to apply for the 2014 bear season is December 10, 2013. You may apply online, by telephone at 1-877-945-4236, at any DNR service center or at a DNR licensing agent. Hunters are reminded they must apply for a preference point or harvest permit at least once every three years to maintain their accumulated preference points.

Hunters who have drawn a harvest permit and are interested in transferring the permit to a youth can find more information on the [bear transfer](#) web page.



**Bear Hunting Zones**

## Bear Season Information

### Zone C:

**September 4 - October 8:** With the aid of bait or other legal methods **not** utilizing dogs

### Zones A, B, and D:

**September 4 - 10:** With aid of dogs only

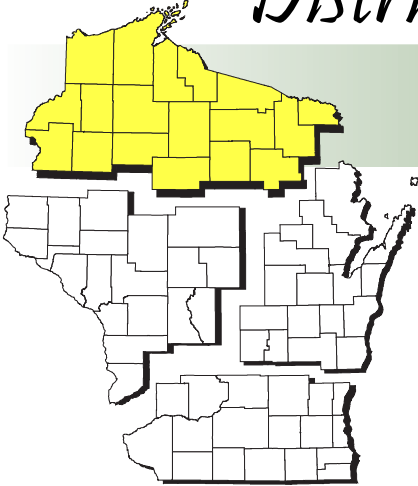
**September 11 - October 1:** With aid of dogs, bait, and other legal methods

**October 2 - 8:** With aid of bait and other legal methods **not** utilizing dogs



DNR photo

# District Bear Season Forecast



## Northern District

By Mike Zeckmeister

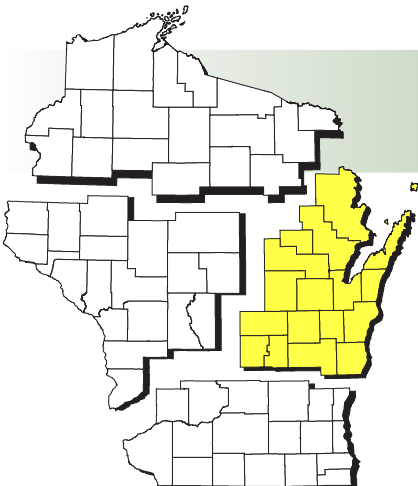
A late spring, with a relatively harsh late winter, has had an impact on bear behavior. It will likely affect hunting conditions for the 2013 season. The late spring green-up seems to have delayed the growth of vegetation, including agricultural crops, by at least two weeks in northern Wisconsin. Soft mast crops should fare better than last year when we had an unusually early spring green-up and most flowering shrubs were hit with a

killing frost. This did not happen this year. We continue to hear reports of bear litters of two to four cubs, even into mid-summer.

The level of bear nuisance complaints is high, especially in the southern portions of zones D and A. This could be an indicator of still high bear numbers in these zones, or it could mean bears are having difficulty finding food. Bear complaints in Zone B appear to have tapered off compared to past year when the population was too high.

If you are fortunate enough to draw a tag this year, enjoy your time pursuing this magnificent big game animal in the northwoods. Advanced scouting and really “sticking it out” will maximize your opportunity. Being flexible is another really good strategy. Bears have a habit of changing their movements, especially in response to changing food conditions. This is a key for their survival, and hunters often need to adjust to these changes. That helps make hunting a challenge. Enjoy your time in the field.

*“Advanced scouting... will maximize your opportunity.”*



## Northeast District

By John Huff

Portions of bear management zones B and C are included in the Northeast District. The harvest quota and corresponding permits for bears in Zone B has been reduced for the 2013 season. In Zone C, the harvest quota and corresponding permit

level have increased. Hunters might experience some competition, particularly on public lands in Zone B. The bear population in Zone B is healthy with recent harvests appearing to stabilize or slightly reduce bear numbers. 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 recently. Preseason scouting

*“...the blueberry, cherry and service berry crops are looking good”*

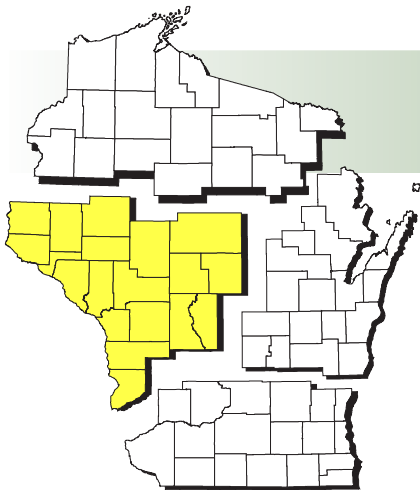
is important in both zones.

Bear season starts September 4. In Zone B, hunters using hounds go first and will have the woods to themselves until September 11, when hunters not using hounds can join them. In Zone C, where the use of dogs is not allowed, the season runs from September 4 to October 8.

During registration, successful hunters will be asked to provide a tooth from their bear. A rib sample is NOT needed this year. The tooth sample provides information important for estimating the size of the bear population. Taking this sample is easy and materials and instructions will be available at all registration stations. Tooth samples can be left at the registration station for pick-up by DNR staff. Visit the [bear](#) page on the [DNR's website](#) for more information and resources.

For hunters using hounds, DNR has a website showing [areas where dogs have been lost](#) to wolves. This website gives a description and map of caution areas and is updated as new information becomes available. In general, hunters with dogs should use caution in most areas of bear range. Wolves are protective of their territories, particularly rendezvous sites, and do not tolerate "trespass" by other canines.

Despite a slow, cool start to the growing season, the blueberry, cherry and service berry crops are looking good, although local areas may have lost soft mast crops due to frost. Blackberries should have a fair crop if periodic rains continue through the rest of the summer. The hazel nut crop appears good. Acorn production is unknown yet.



## West Central District

By Wayne Hall

The black bear population continues to grow throughout west central Wisconsin but at a slower rate. Based on early reports it appears the percentage of bait stations being visited is down slightly compared to last year. The number of bear nuisance complaints received by biologists this year is similar, perhaps a bit lower, throughout the west central district.

In the meantime, reports of bear sightings in the southern and southwestern parts of the district are becoming more frequent each year. On the whole, most people in these southern parts of the district are becoming more acclimated to seeing bears.

In 2012, there were 2,970 permits available in Zone C, and hunters harvested 810 bear for a 27 percent success rate. Of these, 444 bear were harvested in the west central region. Most of the region's harvest took place in Chippewa (135), Clark (81), Jackson (81) and Marathon (88) counties, but a small number of bear were taken further south in Monroe and Juneau Counties and even east into Portage County.

For 2013, Zone C harvest permits were increased by 28 percent (to 4,110) to manage the growing bear population at a tolerable level and to minimize damage and nuisance concerns. While traditional hunting grounds in the northern parts of the region still hold plenty of bear, increased numbers throughout the region offer hunters opportunities to spread out and perhaps hunt closer to home.

Here's a final piece of advice: "Bears hunters need to scout and then scout some more and then scout even more to be successful."

*"The bear population continues to grow..."*



# FURBEARER SEASON FORECAST

*Contributed by John Olson*

The broad diversity of Wisconsin wildlife includes a group of mammals, some common and some both rare and endangered, known as “[furbearers](#)”.

Beaver, coyote, raccoon and muskrat are some of the more abundant and common species across our large state. Stone marten is a non-native, rather unique furbearer scattered within the Kettle Moraine State Forest, and American marten – our native, endangered furbearer – exists in remote sections of northern Wisconsin. In contrast, the more secretive bobcat, fisher and river otter are present in the northern half of the state and are expanding south to the pleasure of most citizens.

As we move through late summer and early fall many citizens and outdoor enthusiasts begin to ask: “How are things going out there?” From trekkers to trappers, folks are excited about opportunities for viewing, or harvesting, during late fall and winter seasons.



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## 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, but even the northern forests are now 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 DNR. “Raccoons are relatively abundant in all counties and in a wide variety

of habitats, with populations extending northward into portions of southern Canada where the ancient language of Native Americans doesn’t even include the word ‘raccoon’.”

However, with such large populations we can and have experienced fluctuations due to drought or disease, specifically [Canine Distemper Virus](#). Conservation warden Nate Kroeplin of Dane County stated that: “Many trappers reported catching fewer raccoons this past fall and attributed this to the drought of the summer of 2012.” Chris Cole, wildlife technician from our Horicon office received reports last fall from trappers of multiple dead raccoons in Dodge, Clark and Green counties.

On the western-central front, Jon Robaidek, wildlife biologist for Adams County reports: “Raccoon numbers seem to remain high, with nuisance problems and road kills quite evident. Despite high numbers, they seem to be healthy, as we’ve not documented any major disease outbreaks in our area.”

Raccoons are doing well and this creates a great opportunity to gain access to private lands, as farmers and landowners are experiencing nuisance and damage problems.

“Ideally, trappers and hunters will use this renewable resource while numbers are high and help maintain this population in a healthy condition,” Robaidek said.

In northwestern Wisconsin, Mike Zeckmeister, regional wildlife supervisor, reports numerous cases of sick and dead raccoons during late winter and spring. Mike states that: "Disease testing of these animals confirmed distemper as the causative agent."

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

Infections have been found in less commonly affected furbearers including badger, opossum and mink in recent years

"Everyone should take special care with abnormal-acting raccoons, as the clinical signs of distemper mimic those of the rabies virus," said Lindsey Long, DNR wildlife veterinarian. "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 with large populations a few frustrated individuals have resorted to the illegal practice of poisoning.

"There are no legal toxicants or poisons approved for use on raccoons" said Brad Koele, DNR wildlife damage specialist.

"Individuals choosing to illegally use poisons are taking a big risk not only of receiving a citation for illegally poisoning wildlife – with a maximum penalty of around \$2,100 and three years revocation of all hunting, fishing and trapping privileges – but also killing non-target animals like dogs, cats and other wild critters that may ingest the poison."

Depending on the situation there are a number of alternatives that property owners can choose from when dealing with raccoons. Non-lethal options include removal of food sources, harassment, exclusion

and live trapping with relocation. Anyone relocating animals on private property must have the landowner's permission.

For lethal control, trapping and shooting are options.

"State law allows landowners or occupants of land to trap or shoot raccoons year-round and without hunting or trapping licenses, with the exception of the 24-hour period preceding the gun deer season," said administrative warden Tom Van Haren.

Anyone removing raccoons on behalf of a 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 must have written permission from the landowner. Individuals must also follow all other trapping and hunting regulations."

## Raccoon Season Information

### Resident Season:

October 19 - February 15, 2014

### Non-resident Season:

November 2 - February 15, 2013

**Except:** The Mississippi River zone opens the day after the duck season closes, or the second Monday in November (November 11, 2013), which ever occurs first, and ends on February 15, 2014.

**Bag Limit:** Unlimited



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We urge landowners to consider contacting licensed hunters or trappers who could possibly use the animal during the fall harvest seasons. Raccoon meat is highly edible and nutritious. The animal's hide has value, assuming the trapper is skilled at skinning and handling fur.

Wildlife managers across the state suggest 2013 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 Kroepelin 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".

Kris Johansen, wildlife supervisor from Black River Falls urges trappers and hunters to "make sure to do your homework with pre-season scouting. Obtain permission from landowners well in advance."

The raccoon season opens statewide for residents on October 19 this year with the exception of the Mississippi River Zone where the season opens with the muskrat and mink season. The non-resident raccoon trapping season runs from November 2 to February 15, 2014.

## Beaver

Recovering fur prices and a late spring with ice cover until mid to late April are two factors of interest to trappers. Statewide, the beaver population is estimated at 82,000 animals based on helicopter surveys of beaver zones A and B in 2011.

This is an increase from 2008, which produced the lowest statewide population estimates since these surveys began in 1992. It is roughly two-thirds of the 1995 population estimate. 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 they are stable or decreasing elsewhere.

DNR wildlife researcher, Robert Rolley, coordinates and analyzes the helicopter aerial surveys conducted every three to four years in the northern portions of the state.

"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," Rolley said of the 2011 survey. "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."

However, the recent increase in precipitation and re-charge of the ground water could change things, said Pat Beringer, wildlife biologist from Park Falls.

"With the high water we've noticed a dispersal of beaver into places that haven't held beaver for years," Beringer said.

In Beaver zones A and B, in the northwoods, where

### Beaver Season Information

#### Zone A (Northwest):

November 2, 2013 – April 30, 2014

#### Zone B (Northeast):

November 2, 2013 – April 30, 2014

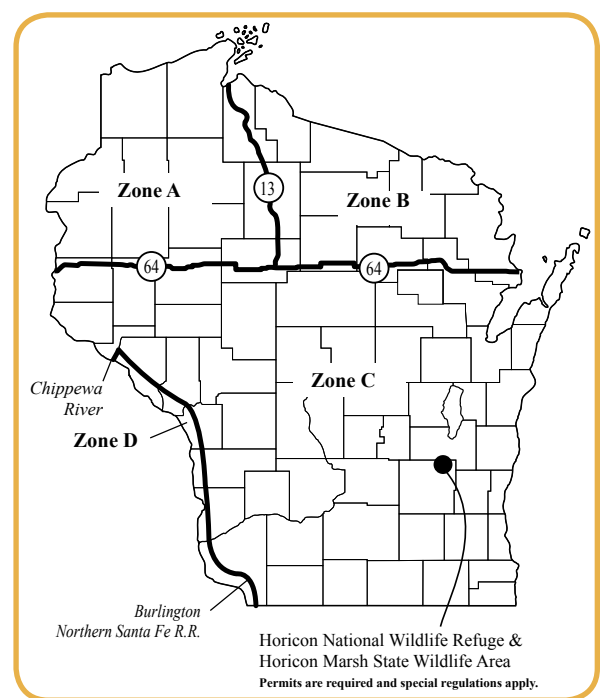
#### Zone C (South):

November 2, 2013 – March 31, 2014

#### Zone D (Mississippi River):

Day after duck season closes to  
March 15, 2014

**Bag Limit:** Unlimited



### Beaver Trapping Zones

Wisconsin DNR 2013 Fall Hunting Forecast





more intensive beaver control programs exist, the long-term decline in beaver populations has reduced damage to trout streams and town roads.

“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 the end of March rather than the end of April.

The [Wisconsin Beaver Task Force](#), comprised of citizens, tribal members and agency personnel is currently reviewing overall beaver management in Wisconsin with initial recommendations expected in late 2013.

## Otter

“Factors that affect beaver populations have similar effects on otter,” said John Olson, furbearer specialist out of the Ashland office. But the diets are quite different.

“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,” Olson said. “Otter prefer other animals for food – mainly small fish, crayfish and amphibians.”

Current statewide otter populations are below the management goal of approximately 13,000 animals. Although a majority of the population is found in the north, otter numbers in southern Wisconsin are on the increase. They are 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 their tributaries.

Dmitry Azovtsev



Otter, like many of our furbearers, are associated with and depend on clean rivers, lakes and streams.

“People interested in river otters should thank those who have worked so hard to improve the water resources of southern Wisconsin,” said Dale Katsma, wildlife supervisor from Plymouth.

“Groups that have joined the DNR in this effort include farmers, landowners, 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,” Katsma said. “If damage occurs, permits are issued, with only a few permits issued a year.” The otter harvest is highly regulated.

“This helps to control harvest pressure at a time when recent fur prices have increased,” said Brandon Stefanski, wildlife technician from Wisconsin Rapids. “Permits are issued based on annually adjusted quotas, estimated fall populations and expected success rates. This fall, harvest quotas will continue to remain conservative at 1,200 statewide.”

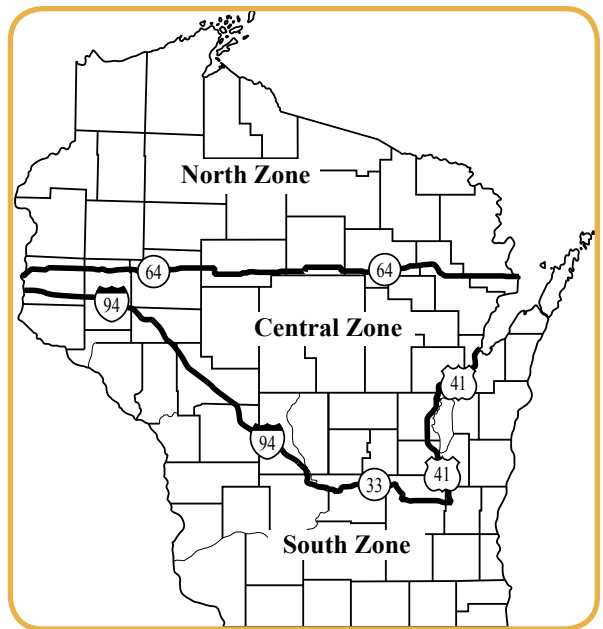
A special permit is required to trap within the [Upper Mississippi Fish and Wildlife Refuge](#), said Ron Lichtie, wildlife biologist from La Crosse.

Trappers that plan to trap within the refuge can apply for a permit through U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service offices located along the “Big River”.

For further information on refuge opportunities contact U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologist Brian Stemper at Winona: [Brian\\_Stemper@fws.gov](mailto:Brian_Stemper@fws.gov) or phone 507-494-6221.

The statewide opening date for otter is the same as beaver, November 2, and continues through March 31, 2014, in the central and southern Otter zones, and through April 30, 2014, in the northern Otter zone.

The annual deadline to apply for an otter permit is August 1.



**Otter Trapping Zones**

### Otter Season Information

**North Zone:**

November 2, 2013 – April 30, 2014

**Central Zone:**

November 2, 2013 – March 31, 2014

**South Zone:**

November 2, 2013 – March 31, 2014

**Bag Limit:** One per permit

**Application Deadline:** August 1



## Fisher

Strong interest in harvesting fisher 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 lower 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.

“There are six fisher management zones in Wisconsin” said Kris Belling, western district wildlife supervisor at Eau Claire. “Southern portions of fisher zones A through D have the highest fisher populations with much lower

NYSED

fisher numbers in northern portions of these zones. Zone E is in west central Wisconsin and has a growing fisher population."

Zone F includes the remainder of the state and will be open for harvest in 2013 for the tenth consecutive year. In this zone, good opportunities exist in southern Marathon, Shawano and Oconto counties.

"Marathon County trappers have the best opportunity, with four different zones and good fisher populations," said Cortney Schaefer, wildlife biologist at Wausau. "It's a good idea to be sure you have landowner permission prior to applying for harvest permits."

However, even in areas where fishers have flourished for more than four decades, we're experiencing localized declines, while adjacent areas have strong numbers, said Pat Beringer, DNR wildlife biologist at Park Falls.

"Fisher numbers remain spotty in Price and in southern Ashland and Iron counties," Beringer said. "Although localized areas may still have considerable numbers of fisher, many trappers reported low numbers of fisher during the last several years."

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, have both observed a growing population in west central Wisconsin, especially in St. Croix County.



Fisher Trapping Zones

### Fisher Season Information

**All Zones:**

October 19 - December 31

**Bag Limit:** One per permit

**Application Deadline:** August 1

## Bobcat

The number of northern forest bobcat increased through the early 2000's, then stabilized and then entered a period of slow, steady decline. Now there has been a slight increase.

"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," said Robert Rolley, the DNR wildlife researcher who studied bobcats as his doctoral thesis.

Herbert Lange



The population apparently peaked at over 3,000 animals in the early 2000's, but then declined to the low end of the DNR's population goal of 2,000 bobcats north of U.S. Highway 64.

Winter track surveys and reproductive information now suggest an increase, likely near the mid-range of our goal, near 2,500. The decline appears to be due to lower pregnancy rates, especially in yearlings, likely a result of reduced prey availability.

“However, due to the measurable increase in bobcats north of Hwy 64, the harvest quota this fall has increased slightly,” Rolley said.

A preference system allows the continuous applicant a bobcat tag every six to seven years or so.

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.

“We have easily documented the presence of bobcats in central and southwestern Wisconsin with several citizens providing great trail camera photos,” DNR wildlife researcher Brian Dhuey who recently completed a citizen-based, trail-camera survey.

Beginning in 2010 a \$3 fee increase on bobcat permit applications has been earmarked specifically for bobcat research in Wisconsin.

“The money generated from this fee increase is being combined with Pittman-Robertson funds to further understand bobcat populations and habitat quality south of Hwy 64,” said Dave MacFarland, DNR large carnivore specialist out of Rhinelander.

DNR personnel cooperated with Dr. Eric Anderson and graduate student John Clare, both of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, who recently completed a central Wisconsin bobcat research project. Results are expected later this year.

As with fisher and otter, bobcat must be tagged at the point of harvest and registered with the DNR. 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,” said Michele Woodford, DNR wildlife biologist at Woodruff.

During the 2013 – 2014 season, carcasses will be required from all bobcats, and skulls will be required from all fishers statewide.

### *New Season Structure*

The bobcat harvest season is split between two time periods with permits valid for the season selected.

When applying for a bobcat tag, applicants will request either the early season (October 15 – December 25) or the late season (December 26 – January 31, 2014).

This two-season format was a test case for two years and now is permanent going into its fourth year with the bobcat harvest quota split equally between the two time periods. However, permit levels are lower for the latter season due to higher success rates.

“Generally, snow cover increases harvest success because permit holders can locate bobcats easier,” said DNR wildlife biologist Geriann Albers. “Permit levels are calculated using previous success rates for each specific time period.”

In addition to registering bobcats 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 must 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,” said Bill Vander Zouwen, the DNR wildlife ecology section chief who oversees the furbearer program in Wisconsin.

**Bobcat Season Information**  
**North of Highway 64 only:**  
**Period 1:** October 19 - December 25  
**Period 2:** December 26 - January 31, 2014  
**Bag Limit:** One per permit  
**Application Deadline:** August 1

# Coyotes, Foxes, and Wolves

Coyotes have expanded their range throughout southern and western Wisconsin. The coyote is the second largest of Wisconsin's native canids.

In the remainder of the state, coyotes continue to do well with the greatest challenge having been in established gray wolf territories. There, the highly adaptable coyotes have bounced back, having learned to be less vocal and to avoid their larger cousin, the gray wolf.

Coyotes seem to fare equally well in rural, urban and suburban settings. Wildlife managers and conservation officers across much of central and southern Wisconsin are reporting an increase in coyote numbers.

The same is being observed for both the gray and red fox, with "reds" being comfortable closer to human dwellings and grays staying in the brush and woods.

"There is an abundance of coyotes on the landscape in southwestern and west central Wisconsin," wildlife supervisor Kris Johansen reports. "Trappers in southern Wisconsin will be able to start trapping two weeks earlier than in years past, as the dates for north and south coyote and fox seasons are now identical."

Bruce Bacon, retired wildlife biologist from Mercer said the new season dates will provide trappers south of Hwy 64 additional days during a pleasant time of year to be afield with coyote and fox sets.



Flicka



Herbert Lange

"Cable restraints are proving more effective for coyotes every year as folks are learning to use this relatively new tool," Bacon said. "This year would be a great time to try this technique to extend trapping opportunities into the winter. Trapping with cable restraints also gets trappers out and about when the ground is snow covered, a great time to read sign and learn about animal behavior."

After nine years of use by licensed trappers, things are going well with cable restraints.

"This tool 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," said Steve Hoffman, DNR wildlife biologist from Grantsburg.

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

"The fox, smallest of our three native canids, prefers a more rural setting," says southeastern Wisconsin wildlife biologist Dale Katsma.

Red fox numbers over the past several years have increased across much of the north. In western and southern portions of the state, mange and competition from coyotes is depressing red fox numbers. In 2003, a density-dependent disease, sarcoptic mange, was observed across Wisconsin in red fox, coyote

and gray wolf, but since has diminished significantly. Gray fox have fewer cases of mange and appear to be doing well in southern and central Wisconsin.

In 2003, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) down-listed the eastern gray wolf in Wisconsin from endangered to threatened status, yet a court challenge in early 2005 re-listed them as a federally endangered species. Wolves were completely delisted in March 2007, returning all management authority to the states, but another legal challenge caused wolves to again be re-listed in September 2008. A new delisting attempt was started in May 2009, but again a legal challenge caused wolves to be re-listed in July 2009. Then, in

John and Karen Hollinsworth



January 2012, the USFWS issued a final decision to once again delist the gray wolf. A Wisconsin state law, passed later that same month established a regulated wolf harvest with the first hunting season taking place in the fall of 2012. The same emergency rules required to implement this law are currently in place for the wolf hunt that begins October 15, running through February 2014. Permanent rules are expected to be in place for the wolf season beginning in the fall of 2014.

Wolf trapper education workshops are available in four locations this fall. These are sponsored by the DNR, the [U.S. Department of Agriculture – Wildlife Services](#) and the [Wisconsin Trappers Association](#), and are designed primarily for successful wolf permit applicants interested in learning more about the specifics of trapping wolves.

This workshop is an advanced training course and does not fulfill the state's trapper education requirement for wolf trapping. All workshops begin at 9 a.m. and end at 4 p.m. Break refreshments will be provided, however participants are asked to bring their own lunches. Cost of the workshop is \$15. Workshops will be held at the following locations:

1. September 21, 2013: Crex Wildlife Area Education Center, 102 E. Crex Ave, Grantsburg.
2. September 28, 2013: DNR Furbearer Training Center, 4439 Buckley Rd., Madison.
3. October 12, 2013: Cedric A. Vig Outdoor Classroom, 4321 South Shore Dr., Rhinelander.
4. November 2, 2013: Mead Wildlife Area, S2148 County Road S, Milladore.

Pre-registration is required. For more information or to register, please contact John Irwin, Wolf Trapper Education Coordinator for the Wisconsin Trappers Association, at [jdi1956@yahoo.com](mailto:jdi1956@yahoo.com) or at 715-346-7386 from 6:30 a.m.–3 p.m.

### **Coyote Season Dates**

#### **Trapping (statewide):**

October 19 - February 15, 2014

#### **Hunting:**

Year round except closed outside of the CWD Zone on November 22.

**Bag Limit:** Unlimited

### **Fox (all species) Season Dates**

#### **Hunting and Trapping (statewide):**

October 19 - February 15, 2014

**Bag Limit:** Unlimited

### **Wolf Season Dates**

#### **Hunting and Trapping (statewide):**

October 15 - February 28, 2014

**Bag Limit:** One per permit

or at 715-341-7596 after 3 p.m.

Updates and additional information is available on the DNR's website: [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov), keywords "[wolf trapper ed.](#)"

The gradual increase in gray wolf numbers and the expansion of their territory across northern and west central Wisconsin offers hunters and trappers the best opportunity in decades to observe and track these wild and magnificent canines.

"Occasionally wolves are observed in southern Wisconsin, and in spring of 2009 one was shot by a turkey hunter who mistook it for a coyote," said Eric Lobner, DNR southern region wildlife supervisor from Fitchburg. "We encourage the public to report wolf observations, especially hunters and trappers who are intimately familiar with their area of the state. This kind of information is valuable in our efforts to monitor populations. Every observation counts and we welcome the help."

DNR large carnivore ecologist Dave MacFarland, stationed in Rhinelander, urges trappers who have incidentally captured a wolf in a coyote trap to check 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," MacFarland said.

## Muskrat and Mink

Mink and muskrat populations appear to be doing relatively well in most parts of the state. On a statewide basis, opportunities to trap these species are quite good as they exist in most areas where surface water exists year round, but there are pockets with low numbers.

"Muskrats are doing really well and it should be a great year for them," said Chris Cole, a DNR wildlife technician in Horicon.

Dan Leveille



It's a different story on the Mississippi River, said Brian Stemper, wildlife biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Muskrat populations on the Mississippi River appear to be having a rough time of it," Stemper said. "High water levels this past 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."

**Important note:** On the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Refuge (USFWS) systems of the Mississippi River, individuals need a USFWS trapping permit and tags as well as the Wisconsin license in order to trap.

Elsewhere in Wisconsin it is not unusual for the DNR to receive numerous calls from property owners and municipalities regarding the damage caused by muskrat excavating.

"We strongly encourage these folks to reach out to a local trapper for help and remind them that big muskrats make little muskrats every year," said Aaron Buchholz, DNR natural resource manager in Green Bay. "They might want to consider having someone trap muskrats every year as annual maintenance is the most effective way to mitigate damage from muskrats."

## Muskrat and Mink Season Information

### Northern Zone:

October 19 – February 28, 2014

### Southern Zones:

October 19 – February 28, 2014

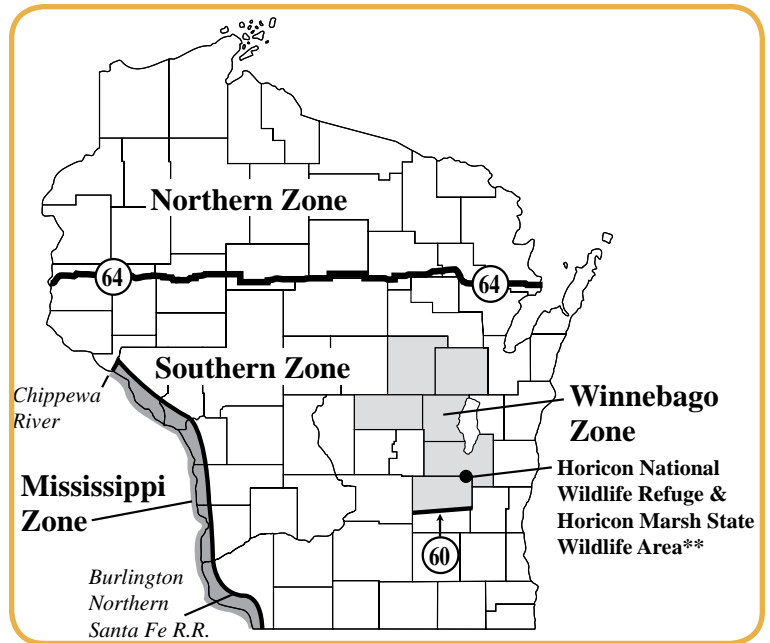
### Winnebago Zone:

October 26 – March 15, 2014

### Mississippi River Zone:

Begins the day after duck season closes or the November 11, whichever occurs first – February 28, 2014.

### Bag Limit: Unlimited



**Muskrat and Mink Trapping Zones**

“Once again the use of colony traps is legal in Wisconsin. To be legal, colony traps must have the maximum outside dimensions 6 inches by 6 inches by 36 inches”, said administrative warden Tom Van Haren.

“Due to information on our website that some might find confusing, we encourage anyone with an interest in these traps to check with their local conservation warden on the exact language of the law and what is acceptable, especially if you’re constructing traps yourself,” Van Haren said.



Bailey Parsons

## American (Pine) Marten

American marten, also known as “pine marten”, is 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 still remain very low.

“Martens are a rare and unique member of our

northern forest ecosystems that require additional assistance and conservation measures to remain in Wisconsin for future generations,” said Jim Woodford, conservation biologist for the DNR’s Natural Heritage Conservation program.

The DNR, in cooperation with the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest and the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, stocked 90 additional martens from northern Minnesota into the



Chequamegon National Forest during a four-year period ending in 2011. Currently, these three partners have been working with the University of Wisconsin–Madison to conduct studies of the existing American marten core populations, habitat quality, juvenile dispersal and survival in the Chequamegon National Forest to provide information on the success of the restocking efforts.

Carly Lapin, research scientist for the Natural Heritage Conservation program said results from this research will direct management efforts for continuing and future recovery efforts.

“They will also provide genetic information about the Chequamegon marten population and possibly provide a population size estimate, something that has been previously unavailable for this area,” Lapin said.

Approximately half of the marten released into the state have been fitted with radio collars. The data generated by 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 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 wildlife biologist Bruce Bacon, both of Iron County, lead a citizen science effort with local Iron County High School students.

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

These two biologists and the students have radio-collared several marten during the past seven years.

Martens are being tracked as part of the [Woods and Waters Program](#) in the Hurley and Mercer High Schools, Bacon said.

“Depredation by the larger fisher may be an important factor in the success or failure of marten re-introduction efforts,” Bacon said “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, found in the [trapping regulations](#), allow for regulated take of several furbearers while protecting marten. Following these restrictions is critically important to the future of American martens in Wisconsin.

Anyone with a marten observation is encouraged to contact their local wildlife biologist or Jim Woodford at [James.Woodford@wisconsin.gov](mailto:James.Woodford@wisconsin.gov) or 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.

“The stone marten or beech marten is a furbearer native to central and southern Europe,” said Jonathan Pauli, assistant professor with the University of Wisconsin-Madison. “In Wisconsin they’re present in deciduous woodlots of southeastern Wisconsin while our American marten inhabits northern, mixed hardwood-coniferous forests. These two species exist hundreds of miles apart.”

You can tell the two apart by the throat patch. The stone marten has a white throat patch, much like our native mink, whereas the American marten has an orange or tawny colored throat patch.

Pauli, along with DNR biologists, is interested in the presence and distribution of stone marten. As an unprotected species it can be legally harvested but has a low fur value. These scientists would appreciate hearing from anyone who either observes or harvests a stone marten, and would be further interested in the possibility of collecting location information and tissue samples.

Pauli can be contacted at (608) 890-0285. Additional information is available at <http://labs.russell.wisc.edu/pauli/>

## Additional Responsibilities

### *Incidental take*

Trappers are required to turn in incidentally trapped animals to local conservation wardens. Trappers can use the 1-800-TIP-WDNR (1-800-847-9367) hotline to report incidental takes. 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 follow these procedures.

“We encourage trappers to use this service and turn in those rare incidentally taken furbearers,” Schroeder said. “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 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 any 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 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 [Best Management Practices](#) (BMPs) for trapping. This is one of the largest collective trap research efforts ever undertaken.

DNR photo



The final product will contain information and suggestions that each state and tribe, and trappers in general, can use to improve on animal welfare and trapping. Specifically, the research is designed to improve trapper education programs.

“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,” said Tom Hauge, director of the DNR 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 to manage wildlife populations while enjoying the immense pleasure and knowledge of having intact, natural systems.”

There are now 20 BMP studies completed and available at: [www.fishwildlife.org](http://www.fishwildlife.org).

## *Trapper Education*

Mike Widner, trapper education correspondence coordinator for the [Wisconsin Trappers Association](http://Wisconsin Trappers Association), points out that the 12-hour, \$12 trapper education course is mandatory for anyone interested in becoming a trapper in Wisconsin.

“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,” Widner said.

To locate a current class near you, contact your local DNR office or check the DNR website at: [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov), keywords “[Trapper ed.](#)”

For additional information on furbearers in Wisconsin, please contact John Olson, furbearer specialist, at [Johnf.Olson@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Johnf.Olson@wisconsin.gov) or at 715-685-2934, or Geriann Albers, assistant furbearer specialist, at [Geriann.Albers@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Geriann.Albers@wisconsin.gov) or at 608-261-6452.



Mark Loka

# 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](http://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](mailto:le.hotline@wisconsin.gov)

