

outdoors

Deer numbers down; parks ready for winter

By Lem Messee
outdoors writer

Deer hunting conditions in southeastern Michigan are excellent, but the numbers of deer and hunters are down.

State Department of Natural Resources field officers say hunting pressure is down by half. That may be because of widespread reports that deer population would be down because of the severe winter of 1981-2.

Rabbit hunting has been good to excellent this year, and duck hunters on the lower Detroit River and Lake Erie had a fine season.

BEFORE LONG, the browning grass will be covered with snow, and area Huron-Clinton Metroparks are gearing up for winter activities.

Stony Creek Metropark, northeast of Rochester, features facilities for winter sports, including ice fishing, ice skating, sledging, tobogganing, cross-country skiing and ski rental service.

Ice skating will be available on Stony Creek Lake at the boat launching site. The building at the site will serve as a warming shelter and has heated restrooms and vending machines. Cross-country ski trails dot the park, and a ski rental service is offered at the Ski Touring Center. Nature trails are open year-round.

Because snow and ice conditions vary daily, persons are advised to contact parks before arriving. Phone numbers are: Stony Creek, 781-4242; Metro Beach, 983-3022; Kensington, 683-1561; Indian Springs, 961-5865.

KENSINGTON Metropark near Millford is one of the most popular winter playgrounds because it offers facilities for ice skating, tobogganing, sledging, cross-country skiing and ski rental service, ice fishing, nature hikes and photography.

General ice skating and hockey rinks will be on Kent Lake in front of the boat rental building, with skating hours from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. The building has a heated lounge, fireplace, restrooms and food service.

The hilly slopes at the toboggan area are ideal, with five toboggan runs and separate areas for sledging. A nearby shelter has a fireplace and tables for snacks.

There are 12 miles of cross-country ski trails.

Many fishing shanties dot Kent Lake during the peak winter months, as fishermen try to catch bluegills, crappies and pike.

throughout the winter months with farm animals and displays for public viewing.

GOOD PERCH fishing can be found at Metro Beach Metropark on Lake St. Clair. Fisherman can use the canals, boat basins, Black Creek and Lake St. Clair.

There is a place for ice skating, complete with a food bar and warming shelter. Weather permitting, the lighted general ice skating hours are 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily, while hockey rink hours are 10 a.m. to dusk, with a one-hour limit on Saturday, Sunday and holidays. Coin-operated lockers are available for clothes checking.

Near Clarkston, Indian Springs Metropark, a new 1,448-acre site, will offer cross-country ski trails, sledging and nature trails. There are no toboggan runs or ski rental facilities. The nature center, featuring seasonal exhibits, is the only building at the site. The entrance to the park is along Crosby

Lake Road, via Andersonville Road, which intersects Telegraph at Waterford.

UPCOMING EVENTS for the next week:

• Snowshoe workshop — Saturday, Dec. 4, at 8:30 p.m. at the nature center of Indian Springs Metropark near Clarkston. Naturalist Mike George will provide the kits and "know-how" to help you to build and tie the off-way-style snowshoes. The kits come in two sizes: medium for people 170 lbs. or less and large for those more than 170 lbs. The kits cost \$35 and \$40, respectively. A \$10 deposit is required. Space is limited, and advance registration is required by calling 625-2781.

• Winter bird walk — Sunday, Dec. 5, at 10 a.m. starting at the nature center of Kensington Metropark and lasting 1½ hours. Naturalist Mark Scarb will point out and discuss some of the winter bird residents of southeastern Michigan. Binoculars are essential, and

both beginning and experienced bird enthusiasts will enjoy it. The program is free, but advanced registration is required by calling the park office at 685-1581.

• Attracting birds to your backyard — Saturday, Dec. 4, from 10 to 11:30 a.m. starting at the boat house of Independence Oaks County Park, Sashabaw Road 2½ miles north of Clarkston. Naturalist Kathleen Dougherty will talk about what seeds will attract which species to your yard, and what to do about marauding squirrels. Pre-register by calling the parks office at 685-0903 during business hours.

• Ice fishing pole workshop — Sunday, Dec. 5, at 1 p.m., for youths ages 7 to 12 years old, at the nature center of Indian Springs Metropark. A youngster will enjoy ice fishing more if he has built his own fishing pole. The program will last approximately two hours, and there is a \$1 per person charge to cover materials. Register by calling 625-2781.

County sets up refund pot for homeowners

The Oakland County Board of Commissioners voted 17-1 to establish a special tax fund for 1983 containing \$2.8 million that may be returned to county taxpayers.

The \$2.8 million is the same amount the Michigan State Tax Commission collected during 1982 as a result of its imposed levy to raise the State Equalized Value on residential property.

The tax commissioner's ruling on the basis that it raised some homeowners tax bills above the 50-percent level allowed by the state constitution. However, the county recognizes it may lose the court battle and wants to refund the money to Oakland taxpayers.

The \$2.8 million will come out of the General Fund.

Commissioner Lawrence Pernick, D-Southfield was the lone dissenter.

OCC begins winter sign-up

Applications currently are being accepted for Oakland Community College's 1982 winter semester.

New students should contact an admissions counselor at the campus of their choice for a schedule of classes and information on admission procedures.

from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Jan. 3 and 4 according to an alphabetical schedule.

Classes begin at 8 a.m. on Jan. 5.

Students may register at any one of the following OCC campus locations: Auburn Hills Campus in Auburn Heights (853-4200); Highland Lakes campus in Union Lake (360-3000); Orchard Ridge Campus in Farmington Hills (471-7500);

Regular registration will be held

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