

Bill may jeopardize state's archery deer season



BILL PARKER

The liberalized 77-day archery deer season in Michigan may be in jeopardy unless concerned archers can head off a pair of bills that would legalize crossbows for the archery deer season.

Introduced this spring by senator Joseph Conroy (D-Flint), SB 932 would redefine the term bow to include crossbow and SB 933 would authorize the use of a crossbow during the archery deer season. The bills are currently resting in the Senate Committee for Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs. But the committee could take action on the bills as early as September.

Bow hunting is an extremely challenging sport for the archer. A bow is a self-limiting, short-range

weapon. It is hand-drawn, hand-held, and hand-released. To be a successful bow hunter, the archer must first learn the weapon's potential and the range in which it is effective. The draw and release of an arrow must be as instinctive as drinking water. But these tasks can only be accomplished through considerable practice — which is half the fun of the sport.

The thrill of bow hunting is in the chase. It's gaining the know-how and the hunting prowess to encounter your quarry at very close range. It's not how far you can shoot an arrow, but how close you can get to the game. The national average kill shot with a bow is less than 20 yards.

A big difference

The crossbow may have a time and a place in the woods, but it isn't during the archery season in Michigan, which is what proponents of the bill — mainly the

crossbow industry — are shooting for.

"If crossbows are allowed during the archery season, with the increased kill, the season (length) would be in jeopardy," said Tom Moran, MBH District 10 Governor. "Bow hunting is supposed to be a challenge. It's not supposed to be easy. We want to keep bow hunting as it is right now."

By comparison, a crossbow is closer to a gun than a bow. It has a stock, a trigger, sights and it is carried fully loaded. Click off the safety and squeeze the trigger.

A bow is most effective at ranges of 30 yards or less while a crossbow is capable of producing three-inch groups at ranges of 60 yards or more with very little practice. Bows have pull weights averaging 65 pounds and less while most crossbows are set at pull weights of 150 pounds or more.

Once a crossbow is sighted in it shoots much like a rifle. Minimal practice is required. And the trigger

eliminates the possibility of human error on the release. It is much easier to shoot something that is already cocked at full draw rather than having to draw down on your quarry when it moves into range.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to realize how much of an impact such a weapon would have on the success rate during the archery season.

The battle rages

"We already have a problem with some legislators who say we don't need a 77-day season," explained Jerry Keck, editor of the Michigan Bow Hunters News and a member of the crossbow committee for the professional Bowhunters Society. "If crossbows are legalized there is no question it would ruin our season as we know it. We don't feel crossbows should be legalized any more than we feel a 30.06 should be legalized during bow season."

This isn't the first time there has been a push to legalize crossbows. Bills have been introduced in the past that called for legalization of crossbows for handicapped hunters and legalized crossbow hunting during the firearm deer season.

"Since the late 70's they've been trying to get their foot in the door here in Michigan," Keck said. "We know the industry will never be happy if crossbows are just legalized for the handicapped or for the firearm season. There are 500,000 deer hunters in Michigan who haven't come around to archery and these are the people the industry wants to get to. In Ohio, the crossbowers got their foot in the door and they took over the archery season."

In Ohio, where they have a fraction of the number of hunters and deer that we have in Michigan, crossbows were legalized for use during the firearm deer season in 1976. (The season bag limit in Ohio is one deer whether it is taken with a firearm, bow, crossbow or muzzle-loader.) Crossbow hunters experi-

enced marginal success that year, taking just 27 deer.

By 1981 the number had risen to 193. Crossbows were legalized for the archery season in 1982 and Ohio crossbow hunters took 446 deer. By 1990 the crossbow hunters had overtaken the archery hunters 6,494 to 5,593 and last season crossbow hunters took 9,401 compared to just 7,708 for archery.

Let's face it, with the number of hunters we have in Michigan and the liberal bag limit crossbow hunters would have a huge impact on the harvest numbers during the archery season.

"I urge all bow hunters to write to their senators and express their views," Keck said. "We've been fighting the crossbowers for a long time and this is the biggest push they have ever made. Once they get their foot in the door they're here to stay. They started at the end of the Ohio season now they run the whole season. We don't want that to happen here in Michigan."

Enough said.

OUTDOORS CALENDAR

UPCOMING EVENTS

ARCHERY SHOOT

- Detroit Archers will hold a broadhead shoot Sunday on its walk-through range in West Bloomfield, 624-8140. A Bow Hunter's Jamboree (42 3D targets) begins at 9 a.m. Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 12-13. Call the Detroit Archers 24-hour hotline for upcoming events, 661-2550.
- Royal Oak Archers will hold a 28-target broadhead shoot beginning at 8 a.m. Sunday on its walk-through range in Lake Orion, 693-9799 or 693-1369.
- The Western Wayne County Conservation Association will hold a broadhead shoot Sunday, Sept. 13, on its walk-through range in Plymouth Twp., 453-9943.

DATES/DEADLINES

- Early elk season opens Sept. 9.

Bear season opens Sept. 10.

- December elk hunt applications must be postmarked by Sept. 15.

Rabbit, squirrel, woodcock and grouse seasons opens Sept. 15.

- Antlerless deer permit applications must be postmarked by Sept. 15.

FIREARM SAFETY CLASSES

- Michigan Hunter Education Clinic (Safe Hunter Certification Course) will be held Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 12-13, at the Michigan State Fairgrounds. Additional clinics will be offered Oct. 10-11 and Oct. 31-Nov. 1, 827-3203.

Safe Hunter Certification Course will be offered Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 20-27 at the Wayne County Sportsman's Club in Romulus, 453-9285.

SHOOTING EVENTS

- The 1992 Michigan State Sheet Championships will be

held Friday, Saturday and Sunday at the Detroit Gun Club in Walled Lake, 265-6092.

FISHING CLUB MEETINGS

- The Four Seasons Fishing Club meets 7:30 p.m. the first Wednesday of each month at the Meadowood Center in Garden City, 477-3816.

Romeo B.A.S.S. Busters meet 7 p.m. the first Tuesday of each month at the Romeo Community Youth and Civic Center, 286-6469.

FISHING EVENTS

- Fishing contests will be held through Sept. 7 on Crooked Lake at Independence Oaks County Park, 625-0877, and on Buhl Lake at Addison Oaks County Park, 693-2432.

Motor City Charity Bass Classic Tournament will be held Sunday, Sept. 20, in Mt. Clemens, 949-0151.

FUND-RAISERS

- A Wild Affair, featuring a sit-down dinner, auctions, raffles and prizes, begins at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 2, at the Timber Ridge Golf Course in East Lansing. Proceeds will benefit the Michigan Wildlife Habitat Foundation, (517) 882-3110.

HUNTING CLINICS/SHOWS

- Woods-N-Water News Outdoor Weekend, featuring seminars, speakers, exhibitors, entertainment and more, will be held Friday, Saturday and Sunday Sept. 11-13 at the Eastern Michigan Fairgrounds in Inlay City, 724-0254 or (517) 323-0868.

NRA Whitetail Deer Hunting

Clinics begin at 9 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 13, and Saturday, Oct. 17, at the Western Wayne County Conservation Association in Plymouth Twp., 453-9843.

METROPARKS

BOATS ON THE BEACH

- A four-day boat show featuring more than 300 boats will be held through Sunday at Kenilworth.

NATURE'S NIGHTLIFE

- A naturalist-led hike in search of creatures that become active after

dark, begins at 8:30 p.m. Friday at Indian Springs.

BIRCHMARK AND BRUNCH

- An opportunity for family members to help paddle the 34-foot Voyager Canoe, begins at 10 a.m. Sunday at Stony Creek.

METROPARK REQUIREMENTS

- Most Metropark programs are free, while some require a nominal charge. Advanced registration and a motor vehicle permit are required, 1-800-47-PARKS.

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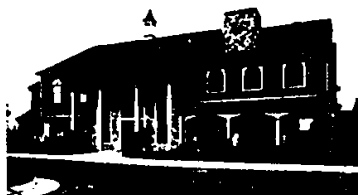
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