

The Great Outdoors

Michigan hunters will find wild game abundant

BY BILL PARKER
STAFF WRITER

The arrival of shorter days and cooler temperatures signals the approach of autumn and the start of Michigan's fall hunting seasons.

Overall, the picture looks bright for Michigan hunters with stable or increasing populations among most species, with the exception of pheasants, grouse and quail. Pheasant, grouse and quail numbers continue to remain on the low side. In fact, quail numbers are so low the DNR has cancelled the season for the second year in a row.

Big game, such as deer, bear and elk are thriving and the '95 hunts should be exceptional. Duck and goose numbers are also on the rise, so look for increased numbers of waterfowl migrating through the state.

Following is a brief look at each species and the outlook for the upcoming season:

DEER

Season: Sept. 10-Oct. 26. Hunting is allowed in designated management areas by permit only.

Bag limit: One bear per li-

censed hunter. It is illegal to shoot cubs.

Overview: The bear population in the state is thriving with between 8,000 and 10,000 bears making their home in Michigan. The majority of the bears live in the Upper Peninsula, with approximately 10-percent roaming the swamps and forests of the northern Lower Peninsula.

Licenses are issued through a lottery-style drawing. Last year, 5,096 permits were issued from 19,028 applicants. This year, 5,592 permits have been issued and there were better than 25,000 applications.

"Hunters can expect another outstanding bear hunting season," said DNR bear specialist Tim Reis. "All our field information confirms the bear population is in good shape. There are a lot of bear in the UP, particularly at the western end, and the northern lower looks pretty good as well. It should be a pretty productive year."

Successful hunters are required to have the bear sealed within 72 hours after the time of harvest.

Baiting (76-percent) and hunting behind hounds (20-percent) account for 96-percent of the annual bear harvest in Michigan.



BILL PARKER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Turkey: Hunters can once again pursue wild turkey this fall. The Michigan DNR issued 4,500 wild turkey hunting permits this year after closing the season in 1994.

BOBCAT

Season: Oct. 25-March 1 in Zone I; Jan. 1-March 1 in north-east corner of the Lower Peninsula; Jan. 15-Feb. 15 in the central counties of the northern Lower Peninsula.

Bag limit: Two bobcats per

season, but no more than one in Zone II or on Drummond Island.

Overview: Hunters annually harvest between 400 and 600 bobcats and took just over 500 last year. Reis expects hunters to take another 500 bobcats this season.

"We expect it to be a pretty outstanding season for bobcat hunt-

ers," explained Reis. "Trappers are telling us there are a lot of cats out there and our biologists are seeing evidence of increasing numbers."

Successful hunters are required to have the pelt sealed within five days of the kill. Bobcats are usually trapped or hunted with hounds.

COYOTES

Season: July 15-April 15, statewide. The exception is that it is illegal to shoot a coyote during the firearms deer season in the Upper Peninsula because of the wolf recovery program. It's feared deer hunters may mistake a young wolf for an adult coyote.

Bag limit: There is no bag limit on coyotes.

Overview: Coyote numbers are increasing throughout the state, especially in Zone III. Coyotes feed primarily on small rodents and are found in low brushy areas adjacent to wood lots.

"Coyotes are very adaptable and I'm not surprised the numbers have continued to increase," said Reis. "The best hunting can be found in the northern two zones, but they are really expanding in Zone III, too."

Predator calls or hounds are the most productive techniques used to hunt coyotes.

DEER

Season: Archery season runs Oct. 1-Nov. 14 and Dec. 1-Jan. 1, statewide. Firearm season runs Nov. 15-30, statewide. Muzzle-loading season runs Dec. 1-10 in Zone I and Dec. 8-17 in Zones II and III.

Bag limit: Three licenses available: one per license, but no more than two bucks with antlers three inches or longer. Archers may take an antlerless deer on their first archery license. Antlerless permits are also available and may be used during the firearms season, muzzleloading season and the second archery season. Antlerless permits allow a hunter to take an antlerless deer or a deer with antlers less than three inches. Sept. 24th is the deadline to apply for an antlerless permit. The DNR is issuing 295,524 antlerless permits this year compared to 153,558 last year.

Overview: The whitetail deer is the most popular game animal

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