

Hunters await start of '96 firearm deer season



BILL PARKER

The count-down has begun. Only eight days remain before opening day of the 1996 firearms white-tail deer season. Despite having already spent dozens of hours in the woods during the early archery season I know I'll be as giddy as a kid on Christmas when the eve of opening day rolls around. The excitement and anticipation will build throughout the night as I wrestle with restless sleep. I'll set the alarm clock, but I know I'll be awake before it rings. When sunrise dawns I'll be comfortably seated in my blind hoping for that one opportunity to treat myself to a bow hunter's success.

Bow hunters have been experiencing good success so far, particularly in southern Michigan where the deer population is at an all-time high. There were 1.8 million deer in Michigan as of Oct. 1, which is about 10 percent fewer than last year. Although there are more deer in the southern Lower Peninsula, hunters headed to the northern Lower and the Upper Peninsula are likely to see fewer deer than last year. Winter losses were estimated at nearly 200,000 last year in the Upper Peninsula, which is about one-third of the herd after the hunting season.

Don't get the wrong message here. Last year was a record-setting season and this year there may be fewer deer, but there are still plenty of whitetails around. In fact, because of an increase in the number of antlerless permits available this year, DNR biologists expect the 1996 harvest to top 600,000 and eclipse last year's all-time record of 476,960 whitetails. (The DNR issued 295,000 antlerless permits in 1995 compared to 406,000 this year.)

The DNR divides the state into 13 management districts. Following is a brief outlook for each district according to DNR wildlife biologists. The accompanying phone numbers are for the corresponding DNR district offices.

Districts 1&2: Baraga/Cryptic Falls (901) 875-6822: The western Upper Peninsula was hit hardest by the severe winter and the whitetail population suf-

fered, particularly in eastern Gogebic and Iron counties, Dickinson and Ontonagon counties. An estimated 100,000 deer were lost to winter kill last year in these two districts alone.

Best bets are where last year's winter timber harvest helped the deer survive.

District 3: Escanaba (901) 786-2351: A record harvest of 23,000 whitetails in 1995 coupled with a long, hard winter has resulted in approximately 30-percent fewer deer in District 3 than last year.

Best bets are around the farming regions of south-central Menominee and western Delta counties. However, most of the land in this area is private and access may be difficult to obtain. Public land near the farms provides good opportunities, but hunting pressure is normally high.

District 4: Newberry (906) 293-5153: Winter took a toll in District 4 as well and DNR biologists estimate there is 20 to 25 percent fewer whitetails this fall than last year.

South Chippewa, western Mackinac and southern Schoolcraft counties have the highest concentrations. Early snow storms will drive deer into the winter cover along M-28.

District 5: Gaylord (517) 732-3541: The 1995 season will be good for hunters in the Gaylord District as deer numbers appear to be higher than in 1995 levels in quite a few areas.

Best bets are in the farm-forest areas of western Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, Alpena and Presque Isle counties.

District 6: Cadillac (616) 775-0727: A severe winter took its toll on the 7- to 10-month-old deer and a large buck harvest took a toll on the older buck population. Breeding does came through the winter fine and the overall population is close to what it was last year, but there will be more antlerless deer than bucks. As usual, there are more deer on private land than on public and more deer south of M-65 than north.

Best bets are the oak ridges. There is a great mast crop in the district this year.

District 7: Mio (517) 820-3211: Expect another good season in District 7 with population levels comparable to what they were last year. An all-time record buck harvest last year has resulted in fewer 2 1/2-year-

old and older bucks, but bowhunters are reporting a good number of 1 1/2-year olds.

Best bets are on private land in agricultural areas with mixed woodland habitat in Clare, Gladwin, Arenac, Iosco, Ogemaw and Alcona counties.

District 8: Bay City (517) 684-9141: The outlook is excellent for District 8. Hunters should take more deer of both sexes in this district this fall as compared to last year. The number of bucks is apparently up, but there is a large number of spike bucks in the herd. Agricultural harvests will be later than usual, which means the deer will be dispersed over a wider area. Hunting will get better as the corn is cut.

Best bets are the agricultural areas of Sanilac, Huron and Isabella counties and parts of Tuscola County.

District 9: Grand Rapids (616) 466-5071: Deer numbers are up across the district, but

there are fewer bucks than in 1995. Hard and soft mast crops are better than last year while autumn olive and thornapple have also produced well.

Best hunting will be on private lands across the district. Responsible hunters willing to harvest an antlerless deer stand a better chance of obtaining permission from landowners than buck-only hunters.

District 10: Livonia (313) 953-0241: Deer numbers are similar to last year across the district with the exception of Lapeer County and northern St. Clair County where there are more deer than last year. Most of the land in this district is private and permission is often difficult to obtain in northern Oakland and Macomb counties. Some of the more urban areas have restrictions against the discharge of a firearm so be sure to check with the local unit of government for specific regulations.

Best hunting is near the agricultural areas, particularly after the corn is cut.

District 11: Shiawassee (617) 625-4000: The deer population in District 11 is showing a slight increase over last year, particularly in Eaton, Genesee and Shiawassee counties. The overall harvest is expected to be excellent, but standing corn early in the firearm season could be a disadvantage to hunters.

Best bets are southern Shiawassee, western Livingston, western Ingham and southwestern Eaton counties. The Maple River corridor should also offer some excellent hunting opportunities.

District 12: Plainwell (616) 685-9851: Expect an excellent season in District 12. The late, wet spring had a dampening effect on hard and soft mast crops so hunters who can locate some mast crop will undoubtedly have located a whitetail hot spot. Best bet is Cass County, which

continues to hold some of the highest deer densities in the district. Also check in and around unharvested corn and scattered oaks.

District 13: Jackson (617) 780-7900: Based on all indicators the deer population is up in District 13 and the harvest should correlate with the population increase. Crop removal may be a little late this fall so there could be a large amount of standing corn.

Best bets are Deer Management Units 147, 250 and 251, which corresponds to Calhoun County and portions of Branch, Jackson and Washtenaw counties.

Anglers and hunters are urged to report their success. Questions and comments are also encouraged. Send information to 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48409. Fax information to (810) 644-1314 or call Bill Parker evenings at (810) 901-2573.

Hunters, anglers encouraged to report successful ventures

Bow hunters, anglers, bird hunters, you name it, the success reports are rolling in. If you, a family member or friend has experienced success give me a call or drop me a line and let me know about it. Send information to 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48409. Fax information to (810) 644-1314 or call me in the evening at (810) 901-2573. Now, on with those success reports.

• **Luke Orion's Chuck Economou** had his best finish to date recently in the BASMASTER Tournament Trail Computing in the BASMASTER Tennessee Top 100 tournament, Oct. 17-19 on Old Hickory Lake in Hendersonville, Tennessee. Economou finished seventh overall in the field of 114 of the world's best bass anglers. Economou caught 14 bass which weighed 31-pounds, 1-ounce. He earned \$9,000 for his effort, plus 94 points in the race to qualify for the prestigious BASMASTER Classic. Economou finished better than such legendary greats as Larry Nixon (8th), Kevin VanDam (9th), Gary Klein (11th), Jimmy Houston (23rd), Roland Martin (33rd) and many others.

• **Jason Hickmott** arrowed his first buck while hunting in Oakland County on Oct. 12. Hunting from a tree blind in a patch of

hardwoods surrounded by corn, the 19-year-old Oxford resident dropped an 8-point during an evening hunt.

• **Greg Moore**, of Troy, shot a doe on Oct. 6 while hunting over bait from a tree blind in Otsego County, Blount.

• **Metamora's Larry Kammerer** shot an 8-point buck in northern Oakland County on Oct. 24.

• **Garden City's Ted Patton** started bow hunting last year. He took his first deer with a bow on Oct. 5 when he shot a spike buck from a ground blind in Tuscola County.

• **Birmingham resident Steve Rock** served himself a Halloween treat when he dropped a button buck on Oct. 31. Rock was hunting over bait from a tree blind in Lapeer County.

• **Oxford's Bob Collins** caught a 250-pound Blue Fin tuna while charter fishing in Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. He received a catch-and-release certificate for his catch. In addition, member Collins, Ed Spinnazola, Jim Klauza, Stan Sala, Mike Sauer and Carl Zoff participated in a pheasant hunt at the House of Burgess on Harsens Island, which produced 65 birds. Spinnazola, of Utica, announced with an 8-point buck the first week of October while hunting at his lodge in Gladwin.

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED BUDGET FOR THE OAKLAND COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION FOR THE YEAR 1997

Notice is hereby given that the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission will hold a public hearing on the proposed budget for the year 1997. The hearing will be held on Wednesday, December 4, 1996 at 9:00 a.m., Eastern Standard Time, at the Administrative Office Building, 2600 Watkins Lake Road, Waterford, Michigan.

Interested citizens may appear and present written and/or oral verbal comments on the proposed budget.

1997 PROPOSED BUDGET SUMMARY

REVENUES	AMOUNT
Three Fees	\$8,364,100
Thru, Charges, Miscellaneous	6,106,049
Total	\$14,470,149
TOTAL APPROPRIATION	\$14,470,149

A copy of the proposed 1997 budget will be available at the above address on and after Monday, November 16, 1996.

Publish November 7, 1996