

Deer less cautious during rut season

OUTDOOR INSIGHTS



BILL PARKER

The mature buck ambled up over the top of the oak ridge with his nose predictably glued to the damp, forest floor.

He stopped briskly and confidently along the crest of the hardwood ridge following a path to some heavy bedding cover below. Not surprisingly, it was the same path three does had followed just minutes earlier.

It was mid-afternoon on a brisk fall day in the peak of Michigan's whitetail rut. The warm and welcome morning sunshine had melted the frost and dampened the forest floor, which made moving quietly much easier for both predator and prey.

Unable to remain in my stand any longer since I was already cutting it close and was due at work in little over an hour, I was sneaking my way back to the car, along an adjacent ridge, when the buck appeared to my left.

I had just enough time to drop to my knees and duck behind a small, sparse patch of thistle before the high-timed, 8-point crested the ridge.

I watched from 30 yards away as the beautiful buck crossed behind me and headed further down the ridge. I held tight in my impromptu blind and let the buck pass before I made a move.

Once I was out of his direct line of vision, I turned slowly, raised my bow and gave a soft, subtle grunt on my tube call.

The buck stopped in his tracks. He swiftly swung his head in my direction to look for the boisterous intruder. He was closer to 50 yards away now and looking directly at me.

I worried that he'd see my hazy breath hanging in the cold fall air, or hear the deafening beat of my heart as it thumped away in my ears.

His large, dark eyes quickly surveyed the ridge and when he found no adversary the buck grunted three times then turned to a nearby young beech tree and thrashed the sapling back-and-forth with his mighty antlers.

After he had ripped up the tree enough to leave a slightly messy scene, the buck turned back to his task and rambled down the ridge and out of sight.

The rut is on. Bucks are on the move and does are on the run.

Over the next couple of weeks nature provides bow hunters with a terrific opportunity to cross paths with a mature buck.

When the mating urge strikes a buck instinct takes over and locating a receptive doe is of utmost importance.

Feeding and resting become secondary endeavors.

With his sex drive in overdrive, a rutting buck is always on the lookout for an estrus doe. Bucks are more active and on the move more during the rut than at any other time of the year.

Serious bow hunters will spend as much time as humanly

possible in the woods over the next few weeks. Bucks will abandon some of their survival tricks — like becoming nocturnal — during the rut.

They'll leave their traditional heavy cover at all hours of the day and will frequent areas that consistently hold does.

If you've been hunting an area and seen lots of does but not many bucks, sit tight. The boys are on the way.

Hunting asapelines during the rut can also be a productive technique. If you locate a hot scrape, or a line of scrapes, be careful not to disturb them — don't touch them or walk on them — and don't contaminate the area with human scent.

Set-up your blind on the downwind side of a scrape or scrape-line, approximately 18-25 yards off the trail. Be sure you have a clear shot and don't be afraid to clear a few twigs and branches to ensure a clear shot.

Bucks will often use their nose to check scrapes from downwind and won't go directly to the scrape. Know the area you're hunting and be sure you have open shots to the areas you expect a buck to travel.

Get out and enjoy Michigan's bountiful autumn.

Hunt hard and be safe.

(Anglers and hunters are urged to report your success. Questions and comments are also encouraged. Send information to: Outdoors, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. Fax information to (248) 644-1314, send e-mail to bparker@oe.com or call Bill Parker evenings at (248) 901-2573.)

Barred owl impressive bird

NATURE NOTES



TIM NOWICKI

It's always a pleasure to see birds of prey.

They are large enough to be seen from a distance and yet you can still distinguish details of the plumage. Whether perched on a telephone pole, soaring overhead, or flying through the woods, they are impressive birds.

Just last week I had the opportunity to watch a barred owl for several minutes. It was perched on a branch about twelve feet above the ground and in clear view.

Though it was dusk, there was still enough light to see the bars and stripes that help identify this owl.

Under the bill, or the chin and neck area of the barred owl, are horizontal bars that move up the sides of the head and encircle the face. Below the bars are vertical stripes that cover the breast and belly.

Barred owls do not have "l" or "n" like some owls. They have a very rounded head.

As I looked at its head, the black eyes were very noticeable. In fact, black eyes are a unique feature of the barred owl. All other owls have a light colored iris.

Even though it was perched facing away from me, it had no

difficulty turning its head 180 degrees to look at me with those dark eyes.

Owls have to be able to turn their head more than most animals because they cannot move their eyes in their sockets.

In order to look to the side, they must turn their head in the proper direction. And by the way, they cannot turn their heads in a complete circle. They can only complete three-quarters of a circle, or 270 degrees.

I was fortunate to have had my binoculars with me, and while looking at it with the field glasses I could see the large talons protruding from its toes.

Those talons are designed to catch small rodents like mice, voles and squirrels. While I was watching the owl a squirrel was watching the owl. When the squirrel felt it was safe to move, it quickly scurried into a tree cavity.

Barred owls do not build a

nest, they occupy a tree cavity, a squirrel's nest or an abandoned crow's nest.

I typically associate them with wet forest areas, but they can nest and hunt in dry upland hardwood forests as well.

Historically, barred owls were very common, but soon after the settlers began cutting down forests to make agricultural land, the barred owl population began to decline.

In the 1950s their numbers dwindled. Since then their numbers have increased.

Lack of forests in the southern lower peninsula of Michigan limits their population. The Upper Peninsula and the northern Lower Peninsula have satisfactory populations of barred owls.

As more forests in these areas mature, there will be more chances for owls to nest.

Maintaining mature forests for them is important, too.

OUTDOOR CALENDAR

ARCHERY

JUNIOR OLYMPICS

The Oakland County Sportsman Club in Clarkston offers a Junior Olympic Archery Development Program beginning at 1 p.m. on Sundays. Call (248) 623-0444 for more information.

JUNIOR ARCHERS

A weekly program for junior archers begins at 9 a.m. Saturdays at Detroit Archers in West Bloomfield. Call (248) 681-9610 or (313) 835-2110 for information.

CLASSES

SNOWSHOEING

This informative clinic, which begins at 7 p.m. Wednesday Nov. 11, at REI in Northville, will introduce participants to the sport of snowshoeing and cover such topics as snowshoe construction, features available on different models, accessories, clothing and more. REI is located at 17559 Haggerty Road (at Six Mile) in Northville. Call (248) 347-2100 for more information.

FLY TYING

Paint Creek Outfitters in Rochester offers a variety of fly tying classes for beginners and advanced tyers. Call (248) 650-0440 for more information or to make a reservation for an upcoming class.

CLUBS

SOLAR

The School for Outdoor Leadership, Adventure and Recreation (SOLAR), a non-profit organization interested in promoting the appreciation of outdoor activities, meets at 7:30 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month at the Colony Hall in Southfield. Call (248) 988-6658 for more information.

CLINTON VALLEY BASS

Clinton Valley Bass Anglers club is seeking new members (boaters and non-boaters are welcome.) The club meets monthly at Gander Mountain in Waterford. Call Mike Daly at (248) 666-8910 for more information.

METRO-WEST STEELHEADERS

Metro-West Steelheaders meets at 7:30 p.m. on the first Tuesday

of each month in the cafeteria at Garden City High School. Call Dominic Liporato at (248) 476-5027 for more information.

MICHIGAN FLY FISHING

The Michigan Fly Fishing Club meets at 7 p.m. the first and third Wednesdays of each month at Livonia Clarenceville Junior High School. Call (810) 478-1494 for more information.

FOUR SEASONS

The Four Seasons Fishing Club meets 7:30-9:30 p.m. the first Wednesday of each month at the Livonia Civic Park Senior Center. Refreshments will be served and visitors are welcome. For information call Jim Kudej at (734) 591-0843.

FISHING BUDYS

Fishing Buddys Fishing Club meets monthly in Rochester Hills. The meetings are open to all anglers. Call (248) 656-0556 for more information.

BASS ASSOCIATION

The Downriver Bass Association, a non-tournament bass club, meets at 6:30 p.m. the fourth Tuesday of every month at the Gander Mountain in Taylor. Call (734) 676-2863 for more information.

SEASON/DATES

DEER

The first half of the archery deer season runs through Nov. 14.

The firearms season runs Nov. 15-30 statewide. The second archery season runs Dec. 1-Jan. 3 statewide. The muzzleloading season opens Dec. 4 in Zone I (Upper Peninsula) and Dec. 11 in zones II and III (Lower Peninsula). There are several other special seasons. Check the 1998-99 Michigan Hunting and Trapping Guide for details.

DUCK

The open season on ducks, mergansers, coots and gallinules is through Dec. 1 in the North and Middle zones and through Dec. 8 in the South Zone.

ELK

The late elk season will be held Dec. 8-14, by special permit and in designated elk management units only.

GOOSE

There will be a special late Canada goose season Jan. 9-Feb. 7 in the southern Michigan

Goose Management Unit. Check the 1998-99 Michigan Waterfowl Hunting Guide for specific boundaries.

GROUSE

Ruffed grouse season runs through Nov. 14 statewide. A special late season will be held Dec. 1-Jan. 1 in the Lower Peninsula.

PHEASANT

Pheasant season runs through Nov. 14 in Zones II and III. There is a special late season in southern Michigan, which runs Dec. 1-15. Check the 1998-99 Michigan Hunting and Trapping Guide for exact boundaries of the December hunt.

RABBIT/HARE

Rabbit/hare season run through March 31 statewide.

SQUIRREL

Squirrel season runs through Jan. 1 statewide.

TURKEY

The fall wild turkey season runs through Nov. 8 in designated areas of the state by special permit only.

QUAIL

Quail season runs through Nov. 11 in 22 counties throughout southern Michigan. Consult the 1998-99 Michigan Waterfowl Hunting Guide for specific openings.

METROPARKS

1998 PERMITS

The 1998 Huron-Clinton Metroparks annual vehicle entry permits and boat launching permits are on sale at all Metropark offices. Vehicle entry permits are \$15 (\$8 for senior citizens). The annual boat launching permits are \$18 (\$9 for senior citizens). Call 1-800-47-PARKS for more information.

BASIC ORIENTEERING

Families, homeschoolers and scouts ages nine and older will learn beginner map and compass skills during this program, which begins at 1 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 8, at Indian Springs.

WATERFOWL WATCH

Take a drive through the park and view some of the many kinds of ducks and water birds that migrate through the area during this program, which begins at 2 today at Kensington.

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