

# Safety remains an issue for state's deer hunters

The 1998 firearms deer season was safer than last year, but also more deadly. The number of hunting accidents dropped from 27 in 1997 to 21 during the recently completed 16-day season. Unfortunately, four of those accidents resulted in the death of a fellow hunter, compared to just two fatalities last year.

While 21 accidents statistically makes hunting a safe form of recreation, with an accident rate of less than three per 100,000, that's still 21 accidents too many.

Hunting is a recreational activity. Death and serious injury should not be a part of it. As responsible hunters we should all strive to reduce these numbers even further. Most every hunting accident can be traced back to a reckless or thoughtless act. That's why we must make safety a priority above everything else.

If every hunter used common sense and followed a few safety rules there's no reason we couldn't have an injury-free hunting season. Unfortunately, in our quest for success, hunters sometimes throw caution to the wind and take shots without making sure their field is clear, or make reckless mistakes that result in accidental discharge.

There has been a drastic reduction of better than 60 percent in the number of hunting

## OUTDOOR INSIGHTS



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accidents since a couple of laws were enacted in the 1970's. In 1971 the DNR implemented mandatory hunter safety classes for first-time hunters born since Jan. 1, 1960. In 1977 a law was passed that requires hunters to wear a hat, cap, vest, jacket or rain gear of highly visible color commonly referred to as hunter orange.

There are still a lot of hunting opportunities before the seasons of 1998 come to a close. Be safe and be sure you're hunting with others who stress safety before success.

A majority of hunting accidents occur between members of the same hunting party. If you have a reckless hunter in your party let him know how dangerous he is and that his actions will not be tolerated. Don't be shy. Let the individual know you won't stand for him jeopardizing your safety and if his recklessness continues refuse to hunt with him - for your own safety.

"With an accident rate of fewer than three accidents per 100,000 hunters, hunting continues to be one of the safest forms of recreation," Herb Burns, DNR law enforcement chief, said. "But by obeying all hunting regulations and using common sense while handling firearms we can keep Michigan as the safest state east of the Mississippi."

## Hunter success

Success reports from area hunters continue to roll in. Remember, if you, a friend or family member tagged a deer this fall let me know, then look for details in an upcoming issue of the Observer & Eccentric Newspaper. My address, phone

number and e-mail address are listed at the bottom of this column.

■ Sixteen-year-old Justin Kosik had a tremendous 1998. The Plymouth resident and junior at Salem High School bagged a gobbler during the spring turkey season while hunting in Hillsdale County. Kosik returned to Hillsdale County for opening day of the firearms deer season and shot his first buck, a dandy 6-point. A first-year bow hunter, Kosik also shot a doe during the early archery season.

"The outdoors give us a great chance to spend many hours together," said Justin's father, Dick. "We go fishing or hunting together on almost every weekend."

■ Dan Piergentili shot a 4-point buck on Nov. 28. The Redford resident was hunting along the edge of a corn field in Hillsdale County when the buck walked out into the middle of the cut cornfield.

■ Billy Edwards of Lake Orion shot a doe with his hand gun while hunting in Oakland County.

■ Rochester's Bob Haynes shot a doe with his bow and arrow and took a spike buck on opening day of the firearms season. Both deer were shot from a tree blind overlooking a swamp in Monroe County.

(Anglers and hunters are urged to report successes. 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@ec.homecomm.net or call Bill Parker evenings at (248) 901-2573.)



First buck: Sixteen-year-old Justin Kosik of Plymouth was all smiles after tagging his first buck on opening day of the firearm deer season.



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