

# Black bear subject of symposium



Developing strategies for wildlife management is not an easy task. In this diversified society we live in there are a number of variables used to develop management plans for all of our wildlife species.

The black bear is an species that receives extra attention. A shy and reclusive creature, black bears are often misunderstood by humans. That's why the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Michigan Bear Hunters Association is holding a Black Bear Symposium on Friday, March 10, at the Northfield Hilton in Troy.

A distinguished panel of research biologists will discuss the various human cultures and beliefs, economic factors and land use trends that will influence future bear management in Michigan, North America and other parts of the world.

"Our primary purpose is to enlighten bear hunters, the general public and wildlife managers in the region to better understand what bear management involves today," said DNR

specialist Tim Reis. "There are lots of different state holders with a wide variety of expectations on how the resource should be managed and we want everyone to be aware of this."

"We don't want this symposium to be some hard-core presentation," added Reis. "We want it to be fun and educational and we want people to leave with a better understanding of the resource and the challenges we face now and in the future."

"The theme of the event is, 'People, Bears and Challenges for the 21st Century.'"

"This is an excellent opportunity for hunters and the general public to come out and learn all about the black bear," said Westland's Bill Sutherland, a past president of the Michigan Bear Hunters Association. "When the anti-hunters came here in 1996 and tried to end bear hunting, one of the things we realized as hunters is that people in general, and a lot of hunters, too, don't know a whole lot about bears and bear management."

"This symposium is a good way to learn more about them, and it's totally free."

There is no charge for the symposium, which is slated to begin at 10 a.m.

Researchers scheduled to speak at the symposium include: Dr. Dave Garshelis of the Min-

nesota DNR, who will speak on his extensive research on five of the world's eight bear species; Dr. Frank T. van Manen of the U.S. Geological Survey, Appalachian Field Lab, who will cover the topic of "Black Bear Management Issues in the Southeastern U.S.," Dr. Marilyn Ouard of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, who will talk about "Bear Research and Management in Eastern Canada," and Dr. Larry Visser of the Michigan DNR, who will explain the intricacies of "Black Bear Population Dynamics in the Great Lakes and Northeastern U.S."

In addition, Mr. Bill Rostrom of Public Sector Consultants in Lansing will give a presentation on "Land Use Trends in Michigan," and Dr. Ben Payton of Michigan State University, will cover the topic of "A Social Carrying Capacity for Bears."

The symposium will conclude with a panel discussion among all the researchers and a question and answer period.

"The Michigan Bear Hunters Association deserves a lot of credit for helping us organize the symposium," said Reis. "They made it possible for some of the most knowledgeable people in the world about bear to come to Michigan for this special event."

Take a break from the rigors of

your everyday affairs and step by the Northfield Hilton this Friday. The event promises to be a good one.

## Opfermann makes book

Paul Opfermann of Farmington Hills recently had a tremendously successful hunting trip in the Sonora Desert near Hermosillo, Mexico.

Hunting with a local guide on the Rancho Agua Frio, Opfermann and his hunting partner Dr. Paul Misch, also of Farmington Hills, both returned home with a trophy and memories that will last a lifetime.

Opfermann shot a 5x5 mule deer and a 5x8 coues deer. The coues deer turned out to be a real bonus as it green scored 114 on the Boone & Crockett scoring system. The rack must dry for 60 days before being officially scored. The minimum score for coues deer needed for entry into the Boone & Crockett record book is 110.

Misch also shot a nice coues deer and a 6x5 mule deer.

(Bill Parker writes a weekly outdoor column for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. Hunters and anglers are urged to report their success. Questions and comments are also encouraged. Send information to: Bill Parker, c/o Outdoors, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009).



Hunting trophy: Paul Opfermann of Farmington Hills displays the buck he shot on a hunting trip to Mexico.

# With few exceptions, woodpeckers aren't nuisance birds



Not far from the trail I noticed a dead aspen tree with four feet of its trunk lying on the ground.

Surrounding the trunk section were chips and splinters of wood, some of which were five inches long and an inch in width. A large, ragged, scalloped section of the upright tree where the chips originated was plainly visible.

This was the work of Michigan's largest woodpecker the pileated.

According to the dictionary, Pileated can be pronounced with either a "pile" or a "p" sound. I prefer to use the "p" sound because I think of them as preferring pie to pills.

A pileated woodpecker is about the size of a crow. Their chisel-like bill has no problem creating large chips of wood like I saw on the ground.

Michigan has nine different species of woodpecker. The downy woodpecker is the smallest. This black and white bird is the most likely woodpecker to visit suet feeders in your backyard.

Its cousin, the hairy woodpecker, is similar in coloration, just a little bigger. We only see them one seventh as often as the

downy, according to Christmas bird count data.

Woodpeckers are a stately but active group of birds. They can be colorful like the yellow-bellied sapsucker and red-headed woodpecker, or they can exhibit interesting patterns of muted colors, like the northern flicker. Most are variations of the black and white color scheme.

As a group the woodpeckers do not cause any problems, except in a few cases.

When T-111 siding was installed on the outside of homes, woodpeckers soon took advantage of the hiding places it created for insects. Holes drilled into the siding in perfectly straight rows made it look like they were using a level. Actually

they were just following the openings and grooves created during manufacturing.

Sometimes a territorial woodpecker may find a down spout as a drumming "log." Resounding echoes from these man-made logs create a very impressive sound that deters other males and hopefully lures females into this resourceful male's territory.

Unfortunately, it's not impressive to the home owner at 5 a.m.

Especially on a weekend.

Except for these two faults, woodpeckers are not pesky birds. They feed on insects that invade dead or dying trees.

Woodpeckers do not kill healthy trees. Healthy trees do not have insects in fresh wood, thus they are unable to find food,

and the wood is too hard for them to excavate.

Most woodpeckers stay around all year long. This allows us to view them at suet feeders any time of the year.

Woodpeckers in our yard bring their young to our feeders and show them what to eat and how to eat. Watching this learning process makes us understand that not all behavior is innate or instinctive.

If you travel into the Upper Peninsula you will have a better chance to see three-toed and black-backed woodpeckers that we rarely see in southern Michigan.

## Michigan has nine different species of woodpecker.

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