

FIELD REPORTS

Details for DNR deer population goals available online

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Details of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' upcoming 2015 deer population goal-setting process now are available on the DNR website at mndnr.gov/deer.

Deer population goals will be set for 40 of Minnesota's 128 deer permit areas during the upcoming process, including several areas in Northeastern Minnesota. The goal-setting process will begin in October and conclude in May 2015, DNR officials said.

Northeastern Minnesota permit areas selected for goal-setting in 2015 are 117, 122, 126, 127 and 180.

DNR to auction equipment

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources will auction surplus equipment starting at 9:30 a.m. Saturday at the DNR Northeast Regional Office, 1201 East U.S. Highway 2, Grand Rapids. More than 100 items will be sold, including automobiles,

trucks, ATVs, snowmobiles, tractors, lawnmowers, outboard motors, boats, trailers, tractor implements and heavy equipment. Photos and a listing of available items are posted at minnbid.org. On-site inspection of items will be available from 8 to 9:30 a.m. on the day of the auction.

To avoid standing in line the day of the sale, bidders are encouraged to preregister for the auction online at minnbid.org.

Fewer Minnesotans hunted small game in 2013

The number of pheasant hunters, ruffed grouse hunters and duck hunters in Minnesota all declined last year, according to the Department of Natural Resources. Pheasant hunter numbers dropped the most, down 19 percent from 2012. Pheasant hunters took an estimated 169,100 pheasants, down 36 percent from 264,000 in 2012 and the lowest harvest since 1986. Pheasant hunters took an average of 2.7 pheasants

last fall.

An estimated 77,900 people hunted ducks, down 5 percent from 2012. Duck hunters took more than 782,000 ducks, an average of 10.2 ducks each in 2013.

The number of grouse hunters last fall was estimated at 81,100, down 11 percent from 2012. Grouse hunters harvested an average of 3.6 grouse in 2013, compared to 3.7 in 2012. The overall grouse harvest was 288,410, the lowest since 2005-06. The ruffed grouse population fluctuates on about a 10-year cycle and is currently in the lower range of that cycle.

The hunter numbers and harvest figures are based on a survey of small-game hunters by the DNR.

South Dakota pheasant numbers up

South Dakota's pheasant-per-mile index is up 76 percent from last year, according to the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department. The survey is not a

population estimate, but rather compares the number of pheasants observed on the routes and establishes trend information.

"With favorable weather conditions this past winter and spring, along with the availability of quality nesting habitat across the state, we are going to see an increase in this year's pheasant population," Jeff Vonk, department secretary, said in a statement. "Survey results show pheasant numbers rebounded the strongest in central South Dakota; especially in the Pierre, Chamberlain, Mobridge and Winner areas. Results also indicate that pheasant numbers are substantially higher than 2013 throughout much of eastern South Dakota."

The 2014 statewide pheasant-per-mile index of 2.68 is up from 1.52 in 2013. The statewide pheasant-per-mile index is similar to 2002 when hunters harvested 1.26 million roosters.

South Dakota's traditional statewide pheasant hunting season opens on Oct. 18 and runs through Jan. 4, 2015.

QUOTABLE

"What, pray tell, would I buy? There is nothing out here that is not free for the asking. Can you buy a sunrise? Is there a price to the exhilaration we feel from the thunderstorm that rages outside?"

"Nature is the truest democracy, and not the richest man in the world is served a grander sunset than the beggar."

Michael Furtman, "A Season For Wilderness"

Do It

North Shore color

As fall comes on, there's no better place to see its glories than along the Superior Hiking Trail on Lake Superior's North Shore. Pick a segment of the trail, pack a lunch and go. For mileage and information on various segments, go to shta.org, the website of the Superior Hiking Trail Association.

Calendar

- Monday** — Minnesota bear opener.
- Wednesday** — Wisconsin bear opener (check regulations for zones/methods).
- Saturday** — Minnesota early goose season opens.
- Sept. 8** — Minnesota's smallmouth bass season becomes catch-and-release only.
- Sept. 13** — Minnesota and Wisconsin small game, archery deer openers; Minnesota youth waterfowl day.
- Sept. 20** — Minnesota woodcock season opens.
- Sept. 20-21** — Wisconsin youth waterfowl hunt.
- Sept. 27** — Minnesota and Wisconsin waterfowl season openers.
- Oct. 11** — Minnesota pheasant opener.
- Nov. 8** — Minnesota firearms deer opener.
- Nov. 22** — Wisconsin gun deer opener.

Shoot for fun and a good cause Saturday

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The 16th annual "Shoot for Fun" sporting clays event will be held Saturday at the Old Vermilion Trail Hunting Preserve north of Duluth. The event is a fundraiser for the Northland branch of the Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute.

The event typically attracts more than 450 shooters and last year raised \$104,000 for the Northland branch, said Eric Larson, supervisor of the sports and recreation department for the agency. The overall budget for the Northland branch is about \$250,000, Larson said.

Shooters pay \$100 each to shoot a 50-target round of sporting clays plus other shooting games. The money raised supports opportunities for people with disabilities to take part in sea-kayaking, sailing, hand-cycling, power-wheelchair soccer, archery, downhill and Nordic skiing, water-skiing clinics and a one-day dogsledding clinic, and also supports equipment loans, Larson said.

The program serves 300 to 350 people, both youth and adults, per year in the Northland, he said.

"It's not the masses of people," Larson said. "It's just identifying people who might not be actively taking part in a recreational activity because of a perceived barrier. Once you get through that, you can ride a bike and sit down and pedal with your hands. You're getting the same benefit of exercise and connecting with other people. Sometimes, people just need a bit of a nudge."

Though scores are kept and prizes awarded at Shoot For Fun, the event is mostly about raising money.

"It's about having a good time enjoying the shooting sports and impacting the community for people with disabilities," Larson said.

Some openings remain for shooters. For information, call Larson at (218) 726-4762, ext. 2; email shootforfun@allina.com or eric.larson@allina.com. Visit the event's website at allina.com/shootforfun.

► Veterans

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It was a classy event from the start on a cool northern Minnesota morning. A color guard presented the flags. The strains of "The Star-Spangled Banner" drifted over the water. A hen mallard quacked through the invocation.

Then these vets, all from northern Minnesota, trooped down the dock to their boats and went fishing. Several fished from three big pontoon boats and found plenty of fish near the Canfield Portage.

On one of those boats, four vets representing three branches of service fished with guide Rob Bryers of Tower. The vets included Marine Darrel Lindgren of Cook, who served in Vietnam; Lloyd Lamppa of Virginia, who served with the Navy in World War II; Ray Anderson, a World War II Army vet from Cook; and Lof-back.

As always happens when veterans gather, there were the friendly barbs aimed at those from other branches of service. Bakken, a Navy man, had quipped from the send-off ceremony that there would be plenty of Dramamine available for the Army, Air Force and Marine vets.

Out on the water, someone asked Lindgren how the mix of vets on the pontoon boat was getting along.

"It took a while to get everyone calmed down," Lindgren joked. "But it's working out. Now the guide is lipping off."

And they all chuckled. Clearly, everyone was having a good day. Temperatures rose into the 70s. Bald eagles performed stately fly-overs. Loons patrolled the waters for invading minnows. The small American flags affixed to each boat snapped in the breeze.

Guide Dave Schaeffer



Jim Charles (left) of Tower and Gene Jenkins (right) of Cook fish for walleyes Thursday morning on Lake Vermilion with guide Cliff Wagenbach of Tower. Charles and Jenkins were among 46 veterans whom members of the Lake Vermilion Guides League took fishing on Thursday. Photos by Sam Cook / scook@duluthnews.com



Veterans Gene Jenkins, 88, of Cook and Jim Charles, 91, of Tower, walk up the dock at Fortune Bay Resort Casino on Thursday afternoon. They were among 46 veterans that members of the Lake Vermilion Guides League took fishing on the lake that day.

of Tower took Skare, 85, and me to some of his walleye spots. We scratched out a few fish and put them in the live well. Skare was looking forward to taking some fillets home.

Skare had been in the Army Reserves starting in 1950 and was called up to active duty in 1954 as the Korean War was winding down. As a first lieutenant, he served at a base in Seattle, doing counter-intelligence work with the Army in cooperation with the FBI.

"It was the McCarthy era and the big Communist scare," Skare said, watching a slip-bobber. "We were debriefing Korean War veterans who had been captured and brainwashed by the North Koreans."

He and his wife, Marilyn, bought Westhaven Lodge on Lake Vermilion in the 1970s and operated it for 35 years.

Fishing with guide Cliff Wagenbach of Tower, Jim Charles and Air Force vet Gene Jenkins of Cook had caught 18

walleyes and three nice perch. Vets in guide Mike Levy's boat, trolling crankbaits on lead-core line, landed a dozen fish, including three over 20 inches.

The guides and anglers would gather later at Fortune Bay for a fish fry.

Looking at those fishing boats flying their American flags during the event, it was easy to wonder what these veterans thought about when they saw the Stars and Stripes. One couldn't help imagining these colors flying over lands and seas around the globe in places where these veterans had served long ago or recently.

But talk of those wars rarely came up on Thursday. These veterans weren't there to tell stories or unearth long-buried memories. They were just happy to be recognized for their service to the country.

As one veteran said privately, away from the crowd, after being interviewed, "Don't make me sound like a hero."

Thursday morning on Lake Vermilion, it was enough to be appreciated and catch a few walleyes.

► Cook

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I had no idea where I was for 10 days. We paddled and portaged 110 miles. I think they figured the best way to keep 10 rammy Scouts in line was to wear us down every day. It worked.

One day, our leader from the Scout base, Jerry, promised to prepare us blueberry muffins in a reflector oven after supper. He did. I never tasted one of them. I had collapsed in the tent and didn't wake up until morning.

We caught fish and fried them for supper. We stood under a waterfall and let a warm river pound our shoulders. We drank water off our canoe

paddles, straight from the lake.

Somewhere along the way, the change that always comes over those on an extended wilderness trip kicked in. We began to shoulder our packs like men. We carried canoes as if we were voyageurs. No headwind was too strong. When it rained, we put on our ponchos and kept paddling.

We had reached that sweet place where we all knew there was nothing we couldn't handle. We had come from a place where roads run at right angles every square mile, and we were completely at home in a land where the only landmarks were occasional blaze marks on the trees.

I realize now, all these

years later, that my first trip into the Quetico-Superior wilderness opened my eyes to a new way of engaging the planet and fired an unquenchable desire for travel in untamed country. Passing through a remote and lightly visited landscape, even with our superficial skills of observation and an incomplete understanding of the forces in play, inspires a humility that we are unlikely to cultivate at home.

As the years rolled on, some of us sought more distant horizons and nearly untouched ecosystems. Wild rivers. Deep canyons. Treeless mountains. The wilderness has amazed us at every turn.

Look — a gyrfalcon nest on that ledge. Look — isn't that a polar bear

pouncing on our canoes? Look — see the interlacing trails of caribou on the tundra.

We have been to where a glacier gives birth to a cold river. We have paddled with beluga whales. We have watched a grizzly digging for ants.

Because somebody from back home led us into the wilderness way back when. And because others fought to set aside those wild places.

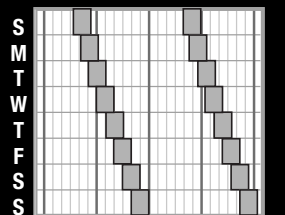
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Solar-lunar

Some people think fishing and hunting are better at these times because of the activity patterns of fish and game animals:

2-hr. periods of peak activity (applies to all time zones)

Best times



SOURCE: U.S. Naval Observatory © 2012 MCT



Outdoors with Sam Cook

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