

DNR Previews Fall Hunting Season...Part I

If the weather cooperates, hunting seasons should be productive throughout Michigan this fall. Most game species are on an upward trend or stable on a statewide basis. That's the word from wildlife biologists with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Part I of this exclusive small-game preview by the DNR Wildlife Division covers upland game birds. In Part II, biologists will preview rabbits, squirrels, ducks, and geese.

For the 2006 hunting seasons, turkey hunting should be excellent and ruffed grouse appear to be at the beginning of an upward slope in their population cycle. Prospects for getting the bag limit for woodcock and pheasant also are a definite possibility for those who know where to hunt.

Two new laws are in effect for the 2006 hunting seasons: one that lowers the hunting age and the other that creates an apprentice hunter program.

The new hunting age law lowers the age for hunting small game from 12 to 10 years old, and lowers the age for hunting deer, bear, and elk with a firearm on private land only from age 14 to 12. Under the new law, other than on land where their parent or guardian lives, youth hunters must be supervised in the field by a licensed adult hunter who must maintain unaided visual and verbal contact with the younger hunter at all times.

The apprentice hunter program allows individuals to hunt without the required hunter education course if accompanied and closely monitored by a licensed hunter 21 and older who is mentoring them in the sport. An apprentice hunter may participate in the program for two years before being required to take a hunter safety course.

These new laws now let par-

Cemetery: Indian Preservation Society Signs 99-Year Lease

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as an Indian cemetery. Over the past 60 years, management of the cemetery has bounced between the township and Our Lady of the Snows, until the Native American Society for Historic Preservation signed a 99-year lease with Clark Township to use and maintain the cemetery.

Clark Township decided to convey the property to the organization to relieve the township of liability and maintenance costs.

NASHP began excavating a new section to add more than 200 new burial sites in 2005.

"The NASHP is thrilled with the township's decision to deed the land to the organization," Mrs. Yarnell said. "The NASHP has been negotiating this action for quite some time and with a lot of work, effort, and cooperation between NASHP, Clark Township, and Our Lady of the Snows, this has finally come to fruition. We couldn't be more pleased."

Our Lady of the Snows Church, which is next to the cemetery, and NASHP have a memorandum of understanding to exchange property.

"The NASHP will be deeding a portion of land to Our Lady of the Snows, since part of that land infringes on the church parking lot and directly behind the church," Mrs. Yarnell said. "In return, Our Lady of the Snows has agreed to deed to NASHP the access to the cemetery and additional land to use for expansion."

The cemetery will be approximately two acres in size after the



Outdoor Matters

A column from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources



Hunters will find the ring-necked pheasant in the open country often associated with farm fields in southern Michigan. The bird prefers knee- to head-high cover (farm fields that have been idle for a few years are ideal), where it feeds on grains, berries and insects. Though it flies well, the pheasant prefers to escape predators on foot and often will flush only when a hunter is about to step on it. (DNR photographs by David Kenyon)

ents determine whether or not their children are ready to hunt. The apprentice program also gives adults who have not hunted before a chance to be mentored by an experienced hunter, so they can try the sport first before making a substantial commitment. The DNR encourages parents, guardians, and other adult hunters to take a youngster hunting this year. In passing on an important heritage to a new generation of hunters, they also will be helping them learn valuable lessons about responsibility, outdoor ethics, and wildlife conservation.

All in all, the stage is set for a very good hunting season. Hunters are reminded to make it a

land exchange.

Some of the sites at the cemetery still do not have names on them, so anyone with historical information about the cemetery or grave sites is asked to call (906) 647-2694 or 484-2721.

The Native American Society for Historic Preservation is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of culturally significant areas.

safe one.

Ruffed Grouse

Season: September 15 to November 14. After the firearm deer season ends, the grouse season reopens from December 1 to January 1 in the Lower Peninsula. The bag limit for grouse is five per day/10 in possession in Zones 1 and 2, and three per day/six in possession in Zone 3.

Outlook: The ruffed grouse population is most likely in the beginning of an upward slope of the population cycle. Thus, we expect about the same number or more grouse to be harvested this fall. The population was at the low end of its cycle last year and may be starting a recovery. Previous peak years were 1975, 1981, 1989, and 1999. Hunters should note that increased or decreased abundance of birds on a regional scale does not ensure the same trend locally. Areas of good habitat will continue to provide the best grouse hunting opportunities. Grouse are most abundant in the Upper Peninsula, followed by the northern and southern Lower Peninsula. Young, dense aspen stands with an understory of fruit-bearing shrubs provide some of the best habitat for ruffed grouse. Grouse

and woodcock hunters are reminded to assist the DNR in monitoring grouse and woodcock populations by providing information about their hunts. The cooperators form can be found on the DNR Web site at www.michigan.dnr.

Woodcock

Season: September 23 to November 6. The bag limit will be three woodcock per day/six in possession.

Outlook: Woodcock hunters may expect a season similar to last year. Hunters could take up to 140,000 woodcock this fall. Although good numbers of grouse and woodcock can be found in all parts of Michigan, the highest densities are located in the northern two-thirds of the state. The west end of the Upper Peninsula should have good numbers of birds during the early season. The best spots may be in thicker, younger cover along streams and the edges of swampland. During mid-October, migrating woodcock may be found in Alpena, Montmorency, Otsego, and Roscommon counties. Woodcock are a migratory game bird, so hunters are reminded to have the Harvest Information Program (HIP) endorsement printed on their small game license. See the 2006 Michigan Hunting and Trapping Guide for details.

Pheasant

Season: October 10 to October 31 in the Upper Peninsula. The Lower Peninsula runs from October 20 to November 14. The bag limit is two male pheasants per day/four in possession. The late pheasant season in part of Zone 3 will be open from December 1 to January 1 with a bag limit of two male pheasants/four in possession.

Outlook: The pheasant population is expected to be similar to last year. Birds came through the winter in good shape due to mild winter conditions. Some of the best pheasant habitat is located on private lands. Hunters are encouraged to contact private landowners prior to the fall hunting season to gain access to these areas. Counties with some of the highest pheasant numbers include Ingham, Ionia, Hillsdale, Huron, Lenawee, Livingston, Montcalm, and Tuscola. Idle fields and warm season grasses adjacent to agriculture lands are prime areas to

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