

# DNR Releases Small Game Forecast: Plenty of Rabbits, Squirrels, Ruffed Grouse for Hunters

Most fall hunting seasons are right around the corner and Department of Natural Resources biologists say hunters will find plenty of opportunity this year with populations of most small game species stable in Michigan's woods and wetlands.

For the 2008 hunting seasons, small-game hunters will find plenty of rabbits and squirrels available. Ruffed grouse populations are in ascension as part of their normal cycle, woodcock populations are stable, but pheasant populations may be in somewhat of a decline. Turkey hunting should be excellent this fall. The prospects for ducks are similar to last year, but resident Canada goose populations are up slightly.

All in all, the stage is set for a very good hunting season. Make it a safe one.

## Rabbits

Season: Cottontail rabbits and varying or snowshoe hare can be hunted from September 15 through March 31, statewide. Hunters may take a limit of five per day and 10 in combined possession.

Outlook: Cottontail populations are good throughout their range and they remain among the most popular small game animals in Michigan. Last year hunters harvested about 366,000 cottontails.

Snowshoe hare populations, however, are down somewhat due to

the cyclical nature of their populations and somewhat declining habitat in parts of their range. Last year hunters harvested 43,000 hares.

## Squirrels

Season: September 15 through March 1. Hunters can bag up to five per day and have 10 in combined possession.

Outlook: Both fox and gray squirrels are at moderate to high levels throughout their range. Look for good populations in areas that had a good mast crop last year or in woodlots adjoining corn fields. Last year hunters took 514,000 squirrels.

## Ruffed Grouse

Season: September 15 through November 14. After the firearm deer season ends, the grouse season reopens from December 1 through January 1. 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 outlook for the upcoming season is good; last year hunters took 312,000 ruffed grouse and, as populations usually cycle over a 10-year period, populations are on an upswing. The next peak is predicted to occur around 2010 or 2011. Hunters should note that increased or decreased abundance of animals at a regional scale does not ensure the same trend locally, as good habitat is the most important variable for grouse numbers. Grouse are most numerous in young

forests, in young to moderate-aged aspen stands, and around tag alder thickets. Areas with good fall berry crops often produce well. Grouse are most abundant in the Upper Peninsula and the northern Lower Peninsula and less abundant in the southern Lower Peninsula. The best counties in the Upper Peninsula are in the central U.P., although there are ample opportunities on both the east and west sides, as well. There is good hunting across the northern Lower Peninsula with good numbers of grouse to be found in the northernmost counties of southern Michigan, on the west side of the state. In southeast Michigan, some areas of the Thumb have good habitat, often associated with game management areas. Grouse and woodcock hunters are asked 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](http://www.michigan.dnr).

## Woodcock

Season: September 20 through November 3. The bag limit will be three woodcock per day/six in possession.

Outlook: Woodcock hunters may expect a season similar to last year, when hunters harvested about 118,000 woodcock. 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 2008 Michigan Hunting and Trapping Guide for details.

## Pheasants

Season: October 10 through October 31 in the Upper Peninsula. The Lower Peninsula runs from October 20 through November 14. The late pheasant season in most of the southern Lower Peninsula will be open from December 1 through January 1, with a bag limit of two male pheasants/four in possession.

Outlook: Pheasant populations were down last year – hunters took about 65,000 birds – and there's no reason to expect them to be up significantly, especially after last winter's tough conditions. However, grassland nesting situations were ideal, so there is cause for optimism. As always, private lands hold more birds than public lands so hunters

who get out, knock on doors, and get permission to hunt on private lands will have the best chance for finding birds. Significant habitat improvements have been made on many private lands in recent years thanks to cooperative work with conservation partners. The best counties include Shiawassee, Livingston, Lenawee, Hillsdale, Huron, Ionia, and Montcalm. Look for fields of warm-season grasses, especially farm fields that have been idled for a few years. Late season hunters should concentrate their efforts in cattail and shrub wetlands near picked agricultural fields.

## Quail

Season: October 20 through November 14. Quail can be hunted only in Branch, Calhoun, Clinton, Eaton, Genesee, Gratiot, Hillsdale, Huron, Ingham, Ionia, Jackson, Kent, Lapeer, Lenawee, Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Montcalm, Oakland, Saginaw, St. Clair, St. Joseph, Sanilac, Shiawassee, Tuscola, Washtenaw, and Wayne counties. All other counties are closed to quail hunting. The bag limit is five per day/10 in possession.

Outlook: Although patchy in distribution and abundance, quail can be found throughout southern Michigan. Hunters killed an estimated 1,700 quail last year.

## Wild Turkey

Season: October 6 through November 14 in 12 management units including most of southern Michigan, five counties in the northern Lower Peninsula, and the entire turkey management area of the Upper Peninsula. The bag limit is

one bird, of either sex. A total of 59,050 licenses were available through a lottery, but leftover licenses will be available over the counter beginning September 18 at 10 a.m. for individuals who did not apply for a fall turkey license.

Outlook: Turkey numbers should be excellent in all areas open for fall hunting. Turkey populations are at or near historic highs and good spring nesting conditions should have produced a good crop of young birds. Last fall hunters killed 5,300 wild turkeys in Michigan.

## Ducks

Season: The season for ducks and mergansers (excluding scaup) is October 4 through December 2 in the North Zone (Upper Peninsula); October 4 through November 30 and December 6 and 7 in the Middle Zone (northern Lower Peninsula). New this season is a variable limit on scaup (bluebills); hunters may take one per day for 40 days of the 60-day season and two per day for the remaining 20 days. Consult the 2008 Michigan Waterfowl Hunting Guide for two-bird scaup dates. The bag limit is six ducks per day; no more than four mallards (one hen), three wood ducks, two redheads, one pintail, and one black duck. There is no open season on canvasbacks this year. In addition, hunters may take up to five mergansers, no more than two of which may be hooded mergansers, daily. The possession limit is twice the daily bag limit.

The youth waterfowl hunting weekend will be September 20

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Village Council Voted With Common Sense

To the Editor:

It is disappointing, and a bit surprising, that Mackinaw City's village president, Ron Wallin, continues to express opinions that are in complete contrast to the facts presented at the September 4 village council meeting.

Lending institutions are currently scrutinizing loans at an unprecedented level. These loans are typically granted against a specific, tangible, preferably liquid asset, equal to or greater than the amount of the loan. Any change in those assets can, and often does, result in the loan being called or restructured. Rezoning of an asset, held as collateral against a loan, will certainly bring about such scrutiny, as he was clearly informed in the council meeting.

I would not presume to tell any business owner that they should simply accept a rezoning that would surely reduce the value of a piece of property, or that they should simply change the mix of assets to restructure to the lending institution's satisfaction.

It also needs to be clarified that the zoning that he alone favored does not stop "development" of the properties in question. Structures of defined dimensions and specified heights could still be built on these sites, that would every bit as much, and maybe more, obstruct our shorelines.

Citizens of any municipality have an expectation that their elected leaders will set aside their personal biases and vote on issues based on common sense, the laws and ordinances that apply, and the facts as presented. In this case, the village council of Mackinaw City did exactly that.

William K. Marvin  
Mackinaw City

### Why Did City Not Cut Costs Before Raising Permit Fees?

To the Editor:

Last winter I wrote several poignant letters over my concern with the blatant waste of taxpayers' money, especially concerning the building inspection department. Those who read the letters will recall I pointed out that city hall paid for the unused vacation days of the city building inspector who, by the way, takes several months of comp time in the south each year. He also received a larger than average raise for a local government employee, and that \$45,000 a year is way out of line for a part-time employee, in a city that has had no construction. These are some of the reasons the department is in arrears.

It doesn't take an accountant to solve this problem. First, there is no construction taking place in the city, so you must cut costs, not raise building permit fees. Secondly, as I had suggested last winter, you must contact the state building inspector, who serves several townships in Mackinac County, including Brevort Township. This service is at no charge to the community. Of course, there will still be the normal building permit fees.

I believe city hall owes the taxpayers of St. Ignace a reason why they did not attempt to cut costs, before they raised the taxes (building permit fees).

Joe Durm  
St. Ignace

### Ride Across the Mackinac Bridge Was Awesome

To the Editor:

We wanted to write and let you know about the most awesome experience we have ever had. We were among the 600-plus tractors September 12 that paraded through Mackinaw City, over the Mighty Mac, through downtown St Ignace, and ended at the Kewadin Shores Casino. Wow, this was equivalent to an extreme sport! What a rush to be on the Mackinac Bridge on an antique tractor. My husband drove a 1949 John Deere B, I drove a 1941 John Deere B, and our son drove a 1953 Farmall Super H.

The Mackinac Bridge Authority, Mackinac County Sheriff, Mackinaw City Police, St. Ignace Police, Kewadin Shores Casino, Owosso Tractor Parts, and especially the people who cheered us on made this historic event a memory for our family.

God bless you all. See you next year.

Kim, Beverly, and James Smith  
Stockbridge

## St. Ignace News Policies

### Letters:

All responsible letters will be considered for publication and may be edited. They must be signed and a telephone number must be included for verification. Personal thank-you notes, personal attacks against other people, form letters, and letters promoting political candidates are not accepted, although letters for or against ballot proposals are welcome.

### Obituaries:

The St. Ignace News maintains a policy of not charging for obituaries and we do often add information or rewrite them for clarity and reader interest. Obituaries that the family wants published exactly as submitted can be placed in the newspaper for \$75. Photographs are welcome at no charge.

### Weddings:

Weddings with photographs are published without charge within 45 days of the ceremony. After 45 days, a photograph can be included for \$35.00.

### Internet:

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The quotation under the flag of *The St. Ignace News* on Page 1 is from the 10 triads written by Dr. Fred Newton Scott, creator and teacher of the first continuous course in journalism in the United States at the University of Michigan in 1890. The 10 triads are chiseled on the parapet of the Detroit News Building at 615 Lafayette Boulevard, Detroit. They were headed "Ideals of the Press" or "The Newspaper in a Free Society," and serve as a reminder of what a free press means to us.

## Michigan Politics

By  
George Weeks



### Ebb and Flow of Great Lakes Funding

It was a big loss for the state Senate in 1993 when Grand Rapids Republican Vern Ehlers left to become a congressman.

As he was in Lansing, he has been low-key but highly effective in Washington, and has been a leading advocate of environmental protection.

This was underscored last week when the House overwhelmingly passed and sent to the Senate the bill that Ehlers co-authored with Minnesota Democrat James Oberstar to triple to \$150 million the amount of annual environmental clean-up funding under the Great Lakes Legacy Restoration Act.

Michigan leads all Great Lakes states in federally designated "areas of concern" (AOC) about toxic pollution in rivers and harbors feeding into the lakes. It has 31 contaminated AOC sites, ranging from the Upper Peninsula to Detroit.

Six of the sites are in waters located wholly or partially in the district of Representative Bart Stupak (D-Menominee) – Saginaw River and Bay, Menominee River, Manistique River, Deer Lake, Torch Lake, and St. Marys River.

Stupak fought successfully for the Environmental Protection Agency's 2007 clean-up of Tannery Bay in Sault Ste. Marie. It was part of the St. Marys AOC, being polluted from by-products left behind by the Northwestern Leather Company, which operated in the area from 1900 to 1958.

The clean-up removed 88,000 pounds of chromium and more than 70 pounds of mercury from the bay and wetland on Tannery Point. Stupak said that of the total spent on the \$8 million project, \$4.8 million was provided through the Great Lakes Legacy Act.

During House discussion last week, Representative John Dingell (D-Dearborn) said, "The Great Lakes Legacy Act has been an incredibly successful program."

In fact, the first success story from the Legacy Act is in Dingell's district, in Trenton. He said:

"Black Lagoon, as it had been named in the 1980s because of the oil and grease that had accumulated between the 1940s and the 1970s, was renamed Elias Cove just one year ago after the area was remediated. Without the Great Lakes Legacy Act, the \$9.3 million clean-

up would not have been possible."

But "incredibly successful" are not words often heard these days about the Great Lakes, or in getting the politicians along Pennsylvania Avenue, from the White House to Capitol Hill, to deliver on all promises.

As noted previously in this space, earlier in the Bush administration there was talk, but lack of action, on a strategy to mobilize various agencies, led by the Interior Department, to create \$20 billion in programs for the Great Lakes as recommended by a group called The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration.

The current recommendation of the administration's Interagency Task Force on the Great Lakes is that the \$20 billion be funded from existing programs. There was no prospect for this even before Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson said last week that "hundreds of billions of dollars" are needed to rescue financial markets.

Dingell criticized President George W. Bush's "dearth of adequate funding of Great Lakes restoration and protection programs during his eight-year tenure."

He said, "the Great Lakes are a national treasure. However, to date, they have not been treated as such. The Lakes have seen deterioration of water quality, the introduction of aquatic invasive species, and the contamination of toxic sediment, among other things. While the Great Lakes region has worked diligently over the past several decades to help clean up the Lakes, it is clear more must be done on the federal level to implement the streamlined strategy already in place."

As evidenced by Black Lagoon in Dingell's district and Tannery Bay in Stupak's, long-abandoned industries left behind a legacy of toxic pollution.

Stupak said, "I look forward to working with the next administration to make Great Lakes clean-up a real priority."

Both John McCain and Barack Obama, who released a Great Lakes plan last week, promise priority attention.

We'll see.

George Weeks retired in 2006 after 22 years as political columnist for *The Detroit News*. His weekly *Michigan Politics* column is syndicated by *Superior Features*.