

OUTDOORS

No surprises with bucks-only season

Bright spot: More fawns being seen

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

A 10-point buck taken by Jared Pearson of International Falls opening weekend is among the 102,000 deer Minnesota hunters registered through the second weekend of firearms deer season.

Registration of deer is down 31,000 from the same period in 2013, according to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Larry Petersen, DNR area wildlife supervisor in International Falls, said the decrease in harvest is expected with the lower deer population bringing a bucks-only season.

“I am hearing from hunters there are no surprises,” he said. “It is what they expected to see, really, with the trend we’ve had for the last several years of the population going down because of the bad winters we’ve had. They are seeing fewer and fewer deer the last few years.”

Borderland’s deer season in the northern rifle zone ends Sunday. In much of Minnesota, the deer season concluded a week earlier, Nov. 16.

Petersen said some hunting parties have reported doing reasonably well this

deer season based on their expectations. And he said some hunters are reporting seeing a few more fawns this season.

“With a few more fawns spotted — that is a hopeful sign,” Petersen said. “The first sign we see in a recovering population is that recruitment of young: they are born and surviving and maturing and will produce more young.”

Severe winters often bring a poor crop of fawns, he said, similar to how some factors lead to a poor wall-eye fry crop.

Deer are very productive, with 1 to 1-1/2 year-old does often producing fawns, with average reproduction at age 2, said Petersen.

“It’s not like other species, where they wait until 4 or 5 years to reproduce,” he said. “Hopefully a few more fawn sightings lead to a more productive population.”

Petersen said neither he or his wife Patti have yet harvested a deer.

He joked that he is using having a nasty cold for the past couple weeks “as justification for being wimpy, otherwise I would be happy to be out in these elements.”

So far this year, hunters during special hunts, and the archery and firearms

seasons, have harvested 115,000 deer, down from the 2013 to-date harvest total of 147,500.

The DNR’s ongoing deer management work also includes upcoming revisions to the deer population goals for large portions of north-eastern, north-central and east-central Minnesota. This is part of a multi-year goal-setting process for the entire state. People interested in helping set these deer population goals can get more information on the process and opportunities for involvement at www.mndnr.gov/deer.

Additional deer will be harvested during the late southeastern season, which runs Saturday through Nov. 30; and the muzzleloader season, which begins Nov. 29, and continues through Dec. 14. The archery season also runs through Dec. 31.

Early wolf season

About half dozen wolves harvested in the northwest zone’s early hunting and trapping season have been sampled by Petersen. The season ends locally with deer season Sunday.

As of Thursday, 71 of the targeted 83 wolves have been harvested in the northwest zone, the only zone that remains open in the state. The other two zones have



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Jared Pearson takes a big 10-point buck at 9:30 a.m. the Sunday morning of opening weekend. He took the buck on property owned by his eldest son, Mike Pearson, less than five miles from town. The same property has yielded a 10-point buck for Jared last year and a 5 pointer the year before.

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Larry Petersen
DNR area wildlife supervisor

been closed.

Petersen said the harvest appears to be on track.

Hunters must skin the animal and bring the pelt and carcass to a DNR office for inspection. Petersen said samples are taken from the carcass to assist in as-

sessing the health of the population.

Of the half dozen he’s inspected, just one has shown mange, a parasite that inhibits hair growth and can cause the animal to die of exposure during the winter months.

“In years past we’ve had a higher percentage with mange,” he said. “The fur is looking pretty good, but with such a small sample it’s difficult to project what that means across the population, but it seems encouraging.”

In addition, he said the wolves brought to his office have had a satisfactory amount, but not a lot, of fat on them. “So they appear to be in good condition,” he said.

The late season for hunting and trapping wolves begins Nov. 29 and runs until Jan. 31 in all zones. The season closes earlier if the target harvest in a zone is reached.

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