

2006 SHAREHOLDERS REPORT

The Lake Superior Area DNR wildlife management team has a lot going on in your area. Through this year-end newsletter we would like to share some information with you about the things we have been working on and invite you to participate in enjoying and managing Wisconsin's wildlife resources.

THE DNR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT TEAM

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Turkeys

Unbelievable! That is how many of us describe the success of the turkey introduction program in the Lake Superior Area. While many people were skeptical about the ability of turkeys to survive and propagate in this area others were more optimistic. To date turkeys appear to be doing better in our Area than almost everyone thought or hoped for, even better than what most of the optimistic hoped for!

In 2004, 164 turkeys were released in 6 locations in Douglas and Bayfield Counties and 53 turkeys were released in 2006 at 2 sites in Iron County. Since these releases turkeys have successfully reproduced and expanded their range far from the release sites. Turkeys are now present across much of our 4 counties. With 3 years of experience it now appears that turkey numbers and distribution will both continue to increase in our Area.

In 2006 three new Turkey Management Zones (TMZs) in northern Wisconsin were open for the spring turkey season. With the opening of these 3 new TMZs the entire state is open for spring turkey hunting.

While the number of permits in TMZ 46 was kept small to protect the new and growing turkey population 46 birds were harvested in 2006 and 62 in 2007. This included 4 birds harvested each of the last two years during a youth [Learn-To-Hunt program](#) that was held in southern Douglas County. This event is held the weekend prior to the regular turkey season and is sponsored by the Gitchee Gumme chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, with 15 youth participating each year.



2006 BEAR SEASON

The 2006 bear season was another good one for bear hunters in Wisconsin and in the Lake Superior Area. The statewide harvest goal of 2,525 bears was exceeded with approximately 3,026 harvested in 2006. The harvest goal for 2007 will be 2,650 bears statewide with about 4,405 permits available. There will be 550 permits available for Zone A1 and 1680 in Zone A for 2007. Bear populations in Zones B and C are also stable or increasing and permit levels for 2007 will be the same or slightly higher in 2006.

The "Learn to Hunt Bear" program is being formalized after two successful years in a trial program. This program will allow youth with no prior bear hunting experience to learn about bear biology and bear hunting methods. Up to 70 youth annually will be offered this opportunity by utilizing a portion of the unsold permits to allow youth participation in bear hunting.

New for 2007

- Hunters who draw Class A licenses can now purchase their license at any time. However, licenses purchased after opening day are not valid until the third

day after purchase (Example: purchase license on Monday, valid on Thursday).

- Bears hunters must wear blaze orange during the youth gun deer hunt on Oct. 6 and 7.
- Members of the armed forces and National Guard who are on active duty and unable to hunt can defer their class A permits.

2007 Hunting Season Dates (Zones A and A1)

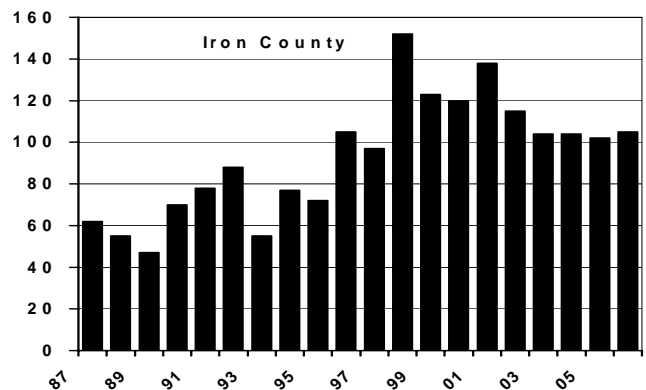
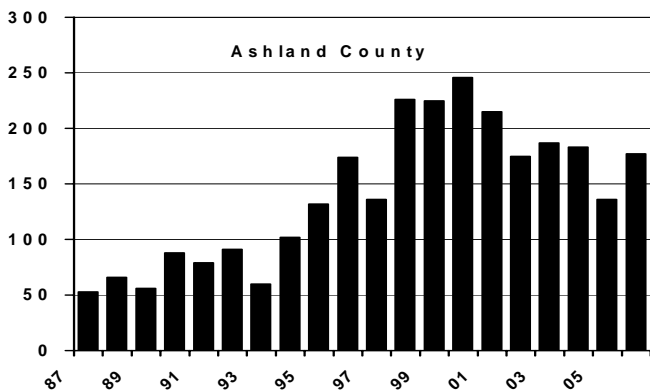
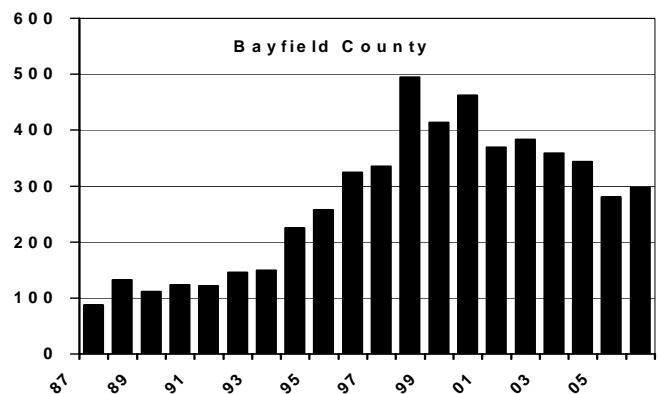
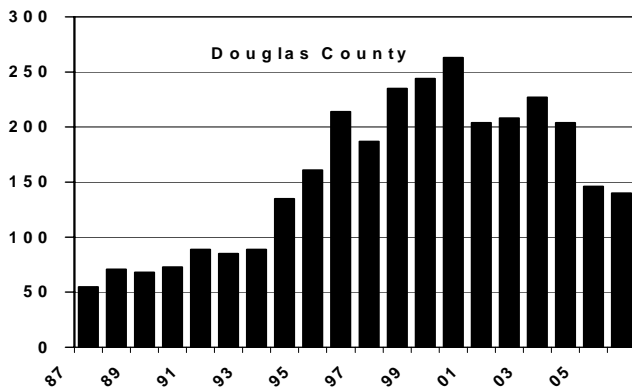
September 5-11: Hunting with the aid of dogs only.

Sept. 12- Oct. 2: All legal methods

Oct. 3-9: Hunting with the aid of bait and other methods **not** utilizing dogs.

Hunting applications for the 2008 season are due December 10, 2007.

Note: Zone A1 will become an independent Zone D for 2008 season. Zone A permit holders will be restricted to this zone only as "sub-zone" A1 will no longer exist.



The 2006 Deer Seasons

While the 2005 deer seasons were a 'return to normal' type seasons for most hunters compared to 2004, the 2006 seasons had changes for all hunters. Changes included:

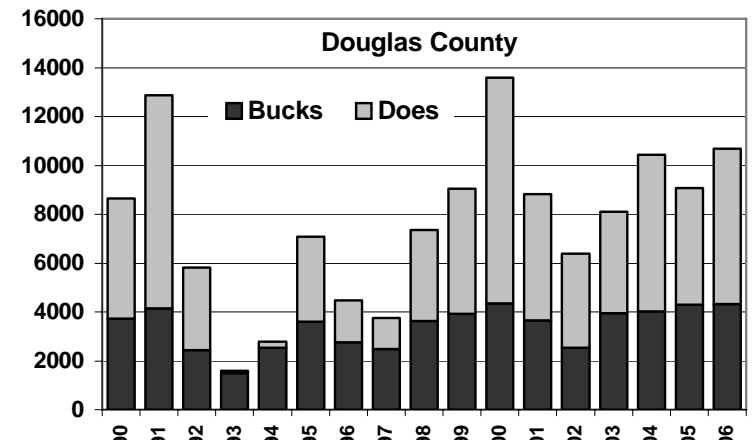
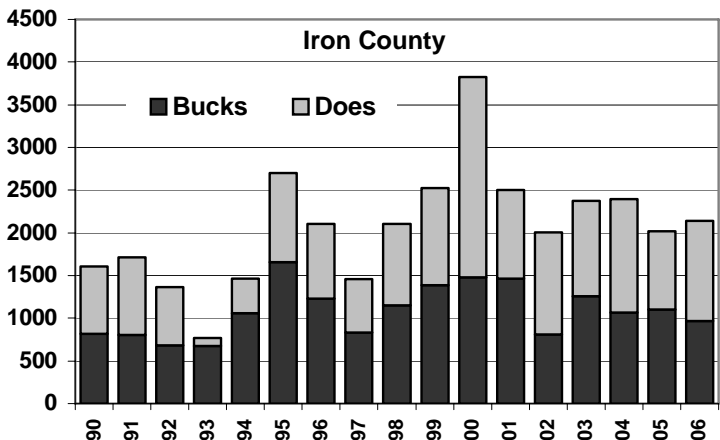
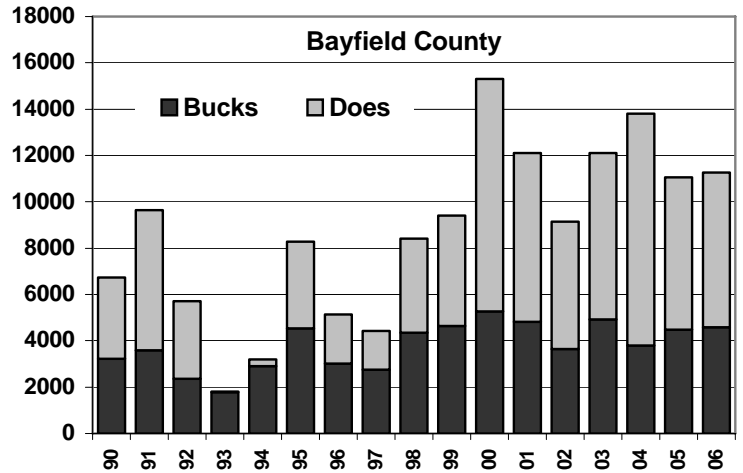
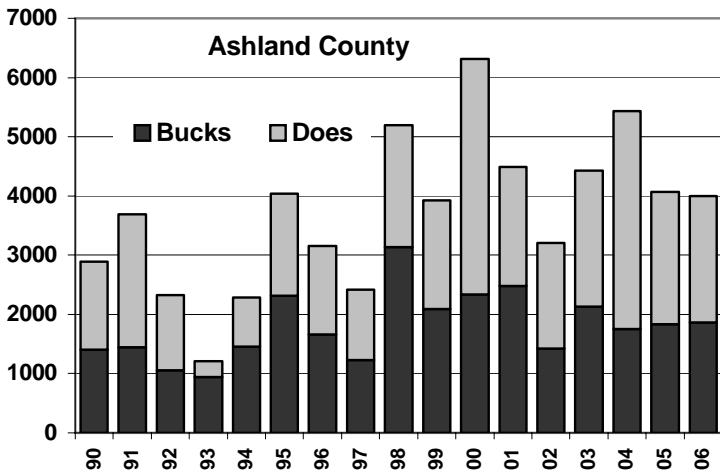
- Hunter Choice permits were eliminated and replaced by unit specific antlerless only permits.
- T-Zone unit name/designation was changed to Herd Control Unit (HCU) with no change in the criteria for the designation.
- Archery licenses were changed to 1 statewide any deer permit (this will be a buck only permit beginning in 2007) and 1 statewide antlerless permit.
- Gun licenses were changed to 1 statewide buck permit.
- Both licenses now included 1 HCU antlerless permit.
- The 4 day October antlerless gun season was eliminated on a 2 year trial basis.
- A statewide 4 day December antlerless gun season was implemented.

All of the changes made in 2006 will remain in effect for the [2007 seasons](#).

Statewide and locally most hunters had great deer hunting in 2006. A state archery harvest record was set with nearly 114,000 deer harvested. The total number of deer harvested (nearly 507,000) in all seasons was the 3rd highest.

In our counties: archery harvest increased over 2005, especially for antlerless deer, and while the gun harvest was generally similar to the 2005 season the harvest varied by deer type and season from last year to this year.

The mild winter of 2006-'07 will result in above average winter survival of deer and an above average fawn crop in 2007. Deer populations in many of our units remain above the populations goals and will be HCUs in 2007. Our other units will have liberal antlerless quotas.



Iron County Forest Songbird Survey

We applied for and received a [State Wildlife Grant](#) (SWG) to survey songbirds on the Iron County Forest (ICF) in 2006. The SWG program was created to address wildlife needs that are not being met by traditional funded programs paid for by sportspersons that appropriately concentrated efforts on harvested species and their habitat; nor by programs which concentrate work on endangered, threatened, or rare species. Of course these traditional programs have always benefited many non-game species and non-consumptive wildlife users. The goal of the SWG program is to keep 'common' species common, or abundant enough that they do not become rare, threatened or endangered.

The SWG program is a federally funded grant program administered by each state. The Federal grant funds need to be matched by local and/or state funds. ICF used its State Wildlife Grant Program (frequently called Dime-an-Acre) as match for this grant. Hence this project was a three way partnership between the Federal, State, and County government.

Biologist [Ryan Brady](#) was hired to conduct the inventories which involved conducting surveys at 14 sites and along 3 road routes. The sites chosen represented unique habitats within the ICF. Several sites such as the Penokee Biological Reserve (1,700 acres) have already been given special protection in the ICF Management Plan. Other sites such as the Tyler



Forks Muskeg was relatively unknown, but "looked good" for finding valuable bird habitat. Several waterfall sites were surveyed to learn if adjacent habitat needed additional protection for aesthetic values and wildlife habitat. At each site point counts were conducted which identified and tallied breeding birds. For the 3 road routes (about 20 miles each), the USF&WS Breeding Bird Survey technique was used.

The survey found several breeding birds in important numbers on the ICF. These included Golden-winged Warblers; Black-throated Blue Warblers; Canada Warblers; Yellow-bellied Flycatchers; Least Flycatchers; Olive-sided Flycatchers; Swainson's thrush; Black-backed Woodpeckers; Gray Jays; and Boreal Chickadees. Sites ranged from older forest stands to open bog habitats. The birds found in each site were recorded. The importance of the ICF to northern forest species was well documented.

Information obtained was entered into the DNR's statewide [Natural Heritage Inventory](#) data base. A county-wide bird list was developed by combining this data with the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage's bird list and other county bird records. The results of this study were printed on the new ICF's Sportsman Map (10,000 copies). Information from the survey will be used to complete ICF's new 15 year management plan.

The partnership between ICF, the SWG and the DNR worked well in obtaining valuable information on ICF's wildlife.



Property Highlight: White River Fisheries Area

The White River Fishery Area near Delta saw work on two ongoing projects.

A Fisheries Management crew completed the following stream habitat improvement work on a 1500 foot portion of the South Fork of the White River:

- 9 failed boom covers were removed and 11 new ones installed
- 4 independent wing dams were constructed
- similar deflectors were incorporated at the downstream end of several boom covers
- the stream was narrowed to 9-12 feet in 14 places and the stream's meander was increased in 7 spots
- 7 inside bends log structures and 4 mid-channel log structures were installed.



The end result of all of this habitat work will direct the energy of the moving water to scour the bed in places, while also creating sheltered areas in other parts of the stream. A lot of hard physical work went into this project.



The Wildlife Management program completed the following work on upland areas:

- 10 miles hunter walking trails were mowed to remove the encroaching woody vegetation
- numerous grassy forest openings were maintained by cutting the encroaching woody plants.

Each of these tasks involved the use of a brush mower where possible, but some hand work was required to complete the job.

A 65-acre timber sale was established on the White River Fishery Area. This sale was offered for sale in March of 2007 and will be harvested during winters of 2007-2009.

Avian Influenza

Avian influenza (AI), or bird flu, is a group of viruses that affect both wild and domestic birds. The viruses are only found in a small number of birds in the wild, usually waterfowl and shorebirds, and rarely cause disease in these birds. The viruses are transmitted in fecal droppings, saliva, and nasal discharges.



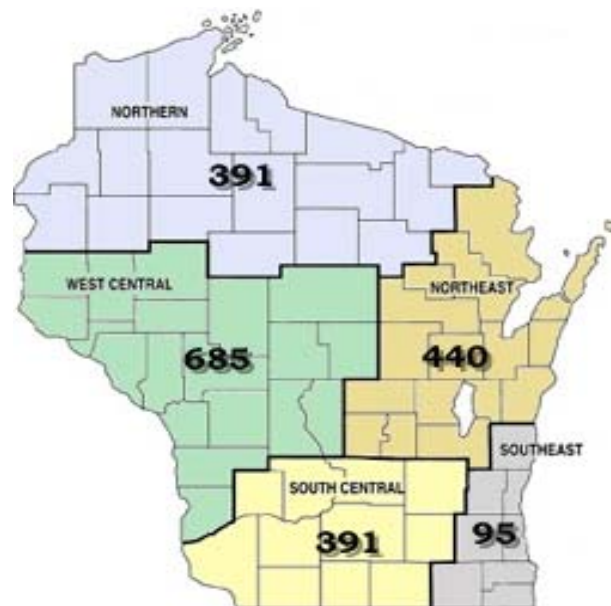
Since 2003, a virulent form of AI has emerged in Southeast Asia, and now has been detected throughout Asia, parts of Europe, and parts of Northern Africa. This highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 virus has resulted in the deaths of millions of domestic poultry, most euthanized to prevent the spread of AI.

As of early 2006, there have been about 200 human cases of H5N1 reported (primarily in Asia), half of which were fatal. The actual number of human cases and fatalities due to H5N1 is low when compared to the 36,000 deaths annually just in the U.S. from human influenza viruses, but has caused concern due to the high death rate in those people who are sick with H5N1. Currently most human H5N1 infections are thought to be from close contact with infected poultry or contaminated materials, or by eating uncooked poultry products, and not through wild bird to human transmission. There is only one case documented where H5N1 is thought to have been transmitted directly from wild birds to people. However, there are approximately 200 human cases where poultry to human transmission of the virus is suspected. **To date, H5N1 has not been detected in wild birds, domestic poultry, or humans in North America.**

Bird migration from Asia or Europe is only one possible route of introduction of avian influenza H5N1 into North America. Illegal smuggling of birds and poultry products and travel by infected people or people traveling with virus-contaminated articles are possible means of

introducing the new strain of highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 virus into the United States. The most effective way to prevent transmission of H5N1 is to improve bio-security around poultry farms thereby preventing contact with wild birds.

The WDNR has had a surveillance program to investigate wild bird deaths for decades. In 2006, WI screened 2,002 samples from 44 species of alive and dead birds for evidence of H5N1. **No evidence of H5N1 avian influenza was found in the birds sampled in 2006.**



Distribution of wild birds sampled for AI in 2006.

Please call the WI Dead Bird Hotline (1-800-433-1610) to report a bird dead from unknown causes. If an unusual bird mortality is observed (such as a large number of dead birds) contact your local DNR service center.

Gray Wolf (*Canis lupus*)



- **Legal status in WI:** A "Protected Wild Animal".
- **2006-07 Numbers in Wisconsin:** 540-577
- **Length:** 5.0-5.5 feet long (including 15-19 inch tail)
- **Height:** 2.5 feet high
- **Weight:** 50-100 pounds/average for adult males is 75 pounds, average for adult females is 60 pounds.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS) announced the delisting of the gray wolf from the Threatened/Endangered List in Wisconsin on March 12, 2007. After a period of 30 days management responsibility of the gray wolf was transferred to Wisconsin. The [Wisconsin Wolf Management Plan](#), approved by the Natural Resources Board and the USF&WS in 1999, now directs wolf management in WI.

"This truly is a success story – one that we can all be proud of," DNR Secretary Scott Hassett said. "Wisconsin has some great natural places – many of them preserved forever by the Stewardship Fund – that support and nurture wildlife like our wolves."

Unregulated shooting and trapping, encouraged by a state bounty, resulted in the extirpation of the wolf in Wisconsin by 1960. Wolves reentered the state on their own from Minnesota in the mid-1970s. After enjoying protected status for the past three decades, the wolf population in Wisconsin has grown to an estimated 540 to 577 [gray wolves](#) across Wisconsin over the winter of 2006-07. This is about 16 percent higher than the winter in 2005-06 estimate. These wolves were comprised of 138 wolf packs – each consisting of at least two adult wolves.

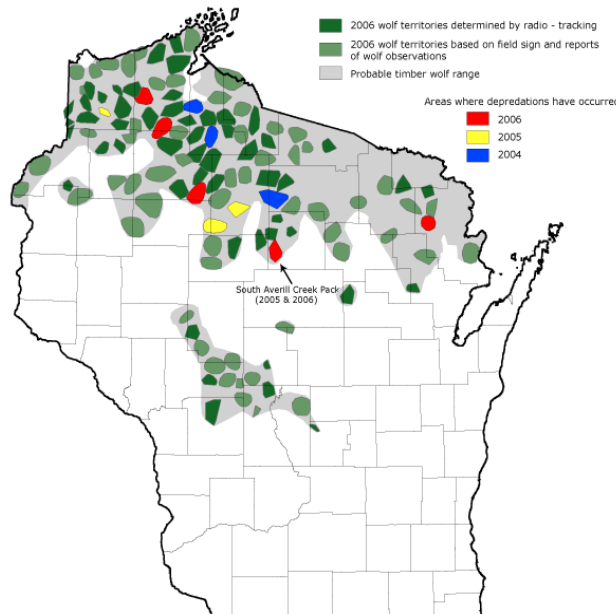
"This number represents the estimated number of yearling and adult wolves in the population prior to the birth of pups this

spring," says Adrian Wydeven, mammalian ecologist for the DNR. "The population probably doubles after pups are born before leveling back down in fall and winter."

The winter count of wolves is used to gauge the status of the wolf population and direct management. It is compiled using aerial tracking of radio collared wolves, snow track surveys, and collections of public reports on wolf observations. This count of wolves has been conducted annually since the winter 1979-1980 when there were 25 wolves in the state.

Now that WI has the primary management authority for wolves in the state the DNR and in some specific circumstances, landowners may use lethal control in dealing with depredating wolves. "The gray wolf is still a protected wild animal, delisting it gives the DNR the necessary tools – tools we haven't always had – to deal with problem wolves. We are standing ready to take responsibility for managing our state's wolf population," Secretary Hassett said.

The state will continue to reimburse livestock, pet, and bear dog owners for verified wolf depredations. Direct assistance in avoiding future problems, abatement, as well as direct lethal control will be used to minimize livestock losses.



Forest Openings

Small grassy openings within blocks of public forestlands provide necessary habitat for many animals such as flickers, cedar waxwings, chestnut-sided warblers, mourning warblers, broad-winged hawks, smooth green snakes, leopard frogs, badgers, and bear. They also provide critical feeding areas to deer after severe winters. Encroachment of trees and shrubs into forest openings is a constant threat. Maintaining forest openings helps keep this important habitat on our public forests. This is a high priority wildlife management program.

The four Lake Superior Area counties have approximately 2,000 openings on State and County Forest lands that are maintained by the DNR and County Forest Departments. Openings are maintained by a variety of methods including mowing, hand cutting, and herbicide treatment of woody vegetation. Access trails, used as hunter walking trails, are maintained along with the openings. There is approximately ½ mile of hunter walking trails maintained for every mowable opening.

Bayfield County Forest: A total of 99 openings comprising 77 acres were maintained. Fifty-nine openings (35 acres) were treated by hand, and 40 openings (42 acres) were mowed.

Douglas County Forest: A total of 208 openings comprising 225 acres were maintained, 171 openings were mowed and 37 were hand cut.

Iron County Forest: A total of 83 openings comprising 110 acres were maintained. Six openings (10 acres) were hand cut, and 77 openings (100 acres) were mowed.