They’re Back — Ontario’s Elk Restoration Program

Having been extirpated for over 100 years, elk have made a comeback in the province thanks to restoration programs during the 1940s and more recently in the late 1990s to early 2000s.

Elk, native to Ontario, disappeared from the province during the late 1800s primarily because of unregulated hunting and culling to reduce competition with domestic stock.

In an effort to restore the population, the Ministry of Natural Resources and 17 partner organizations designed a program to reintroduce elk in Ontario.

Over the course of four years from 1998 to 2001, a total of 443 elk were acquired from Elk Island National Park in Alberta, and released into four areas of Ontario (Lake of the Woods, Lake Huron/North Shore, Nipissing/French River and Bancroft North/Hastings areas) (see Table 1).

The goal of the program was to establish a healthy, sustainable elk population for non-consumptive uses such as wildlife viewing and photography, and for consumptive uses such as potential future hunting opportunities.

A provincial research and monitoring program coordinated by Dr. Rick Rosatte was initiated in all release areas during 2000/01.

(...continued on Page 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Nipissing/French River (NFR)</th>
<th>Bancroft/North Hastings (BNH)</th>
<th>Lake of the Woods (LOW)</th>
<th>Lake Huron North Shore (LHNS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>40 (pilot)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>69 (pilot)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>60</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>443</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 1: Number and location of elk released in Ontario 1998 — 2001

Elk (Cervus canadensis) is one of the largest deer species in the world and one of the largest mammals in North America. Elk range in forest and forest-edge habitat, feeding on grasses, plants, leaves, and bark.
Message From the District Manager

Dear Hunters,

I am pleased to provide you with this year’s copy of the Renfrew County Hunt Camp News. The issue we have prepared this year is geared to be an informative and interesting look at up to date information about wildlife management you can use to have a safe and successful hunt. We also hope to enhance understanding of the ecological, cultural, recreation and economic benefits wildlife provides to us all through the discussion of species at risk, the rich tradition of the hunt camp, new hunting opportunities and the value of partnerships.

This time of year always reminds me of change, reminders of which are generally in plain sight. We see the seasons change with the splendour of fall colours, geese heading south and those chillier mornings crunching through the frost on the way to the stand or blind. The work weekend is generally wrapped up at the camp and the wood is in for the hunt.

We can also see a change in hunting opportunities made available this fall with first elk hunt in Ontario since their reintroduction to the province.

And we see how technology is helping us change through MNR’s new Fish ON-Line website where you can visit local or distant lakes to view information available for those water bodies, all from the comfort of your home.

Another change you may not notice as plainly is my arrival as the new District Manager in Pembroke in late spring. It’s been clear since my arrival that there are tremendous partners we work with which includes the hunting community. Partners are an integral and critical part of the work we do to ensure we are delivering meaningful and valuable results for wildlife management in the district that benefit us all. An inspiring example of partners coming together culminated in the celebration of Renfrew County’s 150th anniversary this past summer.

I can proudly say that one thing that doesn’t change at MNR is the dedication and passion that our staff demonstrate year round to deliver results on a diverse portfolio of programs and to provide great service for the people of Ontario.

I wish you a safe and enjoyable hunt this season on behalf of all the staff in MNR’s Pembroke District.

Rick Watchorn
Well, another fire season has come and is almost gone. Pembroke fire staff had another busy summer responding to fires in Renfrew County and beyond. The spring started off with some of our crews helping out in Alberta when devastating fires burned into the town of Slave Lake.

After a few quiet fire seasons in Ontario, staff were quite busy this year in northwestern Ontario. Dry conditions and lightening fires pushed our resources to near maximum capacity. The ensuing fires and community evacuations kept fire crews busy for much of July and August.

The Pembroke Fire Management Headquarters would like to remind folks that the fire season continues on until October 31. The fall weather forecast looks dry and this can produce the potential for runaway camp fires, which could ruin your hunt.

Please ensure your lunch fire is completely out and cold before you head out for the next chase. And be extra careful if you plan to burn that fall brush pile. Wait for a calm, wet evening and be sure to check local burn regulations.

While we’re on the subject of burning, have you ever given some thought to ensure your hunt camp is “FireSmart”? During the month of August in Pembroke District, at least three remote structures have been lost to fire. No one wants to drive into the hunt camp to find a pile of charred debris. Take a good look around the camp and ask yourself “Would our camp survive an approaching forest fire? Is the woodpile a safe distance away from the camp? Is our wood stove and chimney in good shape? Are the gutters clean and free of leaves?” If you answered no to any of these questions consider contacting your local MNR office for tips to ensure your camp is FireSmart.

Safe hunting...

The remains of a burned out Renfrew County hunt camp.
They’re Back – Ontario’s Elk … (continued from Page 1)

Data collected during those programs indicated that elk in two of the release areas (Bancroft/North Hastings and Lake Huron North Shore) were, and still are, doing exceptionally well. However elk were struggling in the other two release sites. Reasons for this include wolf predation, illegal shooting and winter severity.

Elk in Bancroft / North Hastings

By 2005, the Bancroft/North Hastings (B/NH) elk population had increased at a substantial rate; there was a need for continued monitoring in the area. Elk are large ungulates that can impact the environment (i.e. over-browsing, transmission of diseases and parasites) and come into conflict with humans (e.g. crop and fence damage).

In the fall of 2008, a new three-year study on the Bancroft/North Hastings elk population was implemented in conjunction with studies in the other three release areas. This initiative was a collaboration among MNR and NGO organizations, such as public elk committees and the OFAH and the Safari Club International. The goal was to fit state-of-the-art GPS satellite collars on elk to provide ecological and behaviour data. These data would assist with the development of an elk management program for Ontario. Along with collaring, annual aerial elk surveys would provide information about elk herd productivity and provide a population estimate which will assist managers in determining elk tag allocations for hunting during future years.

The GPS satellite collars used have accuracy within two meters and allow researchers to monitor the activity of elk using a web link in real time on the internet. By transmitting two locations per day for each collar, location data provides information on home range, distances travelled, dispersion, and mortality.

In addition to collaring elk in the B/NH area, helicopter surveys were conducted over three winters to estimate calf survival and to collect data to determine elk population size and annual growth. In the summer of 2010, a calving habitat survey was initiated to find out the type of habitat that was used by calving cows.

Table 2: Estimates of Ontario’s elk population (2004 - 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Provincial population estimate</th>
<th>Lake of the Woods (LOW)</th>
<th>Lake Huron North Shore (LHNS)</th>
<th>Nipissing /French River (NFR)</th>
<th>Bancroft/North Hastings (BNH)</th>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>375-440</td>
<td>35-45</td>
<td>60-65</td>
<td>110-130</td>
<td>170-200</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>339-442</td>
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<td>65-70</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>375-452</td>
<td>35-45</td>
<td>70-80</td>
<td>&gt; 120</td>
<td>150-207</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>not available (2)</td>
<td>35-45</td>
<td>75-85</td>
<td>&lt; 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>426-647</td>
<td>35-45</td>
<td>80-100</td>
<td>128-148</td>
<td>183-354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>535-670</td>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>100-115</td>
<td>110-120</td>
<td>300-400</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>110-130</td>
<td>not available (3)</td>
<td>330-766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>679-1026</td>
<td>35-45</td>
<td>135-165</td>
<td>160-175</td>
<td>349-641</td>
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</table>

(Rosatte 2009b, Rosatte et. al 2010)

(1) Elk population estimates were acquired using a variety of techniques. Due to difficulties in observing elk from the air during surveys, population estimates are reported either as an approximate range or as the average value within that range.

(2) Info not available as a survey was not done in an area that year.

(3) Info not available due to poor survey conditions in the area during the 2010 survey.
All of the data collected is used to provide valuable information on elk population growth and dispersion, as well as habitat use of elk in the greater Bancroft/North Hastings area. This will help MNR in managing elk for future generations.

Between 2008-2011, about 70 elk in the B/NH area had (both GPS and VHF) collars. It is estimated that the current population for the 2500 sq km core elk area around Bancroft is between 349 to 641 elk. There are many elk outside of the core zone (Table 2).

Managing Elk

The once extirpated elk has returned and the elk population continues to grow at a healthy rate in the Bancroft region since being restored over ten years ago. Research findings contributed to the development of a provincial elk management plan.

The Bancroft elk population is now healthy enough to support the first elk hunt in more than a century this upcoming fall. The hunt will help manage the population in this area, and will be carefully monitored to ensure a long-term sustainable elk population. For more information on the hunt, visit: www.ontario.ca/elk

Research will continue to assess the impact of the first modern day elk hunt on elk dispersion and population size.

Partners who helped with the elk restoration include Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Safari Club International (Ontario and Ottawa chapters), Parks Canada, Quinte Elk Restoration Committee, Lake Huron North Shore Elk Restoration Committee, Sudbury Elk Restoration Committee, Bancroft-North Hastings Elk Restoration Committee, Lake of the Woods Elk Management Committee, Cambrian College and other individuals.

For more information about elk research in Ontario, contact:

Dr. Rick Rosatte, Senior Research Scientist
Wildlife Research and Development Section, MNR, Peterborough, Ontario
rick.rosatte@ontario.ca

Interesting Facts About Elk

In the deer family, moose is the only species larger than elk. And, interestingly enough, the word elk actually comes from the European word for moose.

Elk (Cervus canadensis) appear similar to red deer (Cervus elaphus) found in Europe, and in fact some people thought elk might actually be a sub-species of red deer. But a 2004 study of mitochondrial DNA confirmed elk as a distinct species.

Male elk have large antlers which are shed each year. Males also engage in ritualized mating behaviors during the rut, including posturing, antler wrestling (sparring), and bugling (a loud series of vocalizations which establishes dominance over other males and attracts females).

Elk range in forest and forest-edge habitat, feeding on grasses, plants, leaves, and bark. Although native to North America and eastern Asia, they have adapted well to countries where they have been introduced, including Argentina, Australia, and New Zealand. Their great adaptability may actually threaten native species and ecosystems into which they have been introduced. And their re-introduction into Ontario has not come without controversy.

www.ontario.ca/elk
Renovation Plans? — Do Your Homework

Does your camp have more pans for catching rain than cooking? Or maybe the cabin houses more hunters than it has square footage?

If you are part of an LUP Rec Camp, it is important to understand what is allowed and what you might need to do before starting a renovation.

With a Land Use Permit (LUP) camp, before you make any changes to the buildings or the property, you need to contact MNR.

These changes could include new buildings, major additions, creating a parking lot, adding sheds...and the list goes on. An application for a renovation should include a letter explaining the proposed work with accompanying drawings and photos or diagrams.

You don’t have to contact us if you’re doing regular maintenance work on the buildings or property. But if you have any doubt give us a call.

Keep in mind that your permit is issued for a specific purpose...a Recreation Camp. So MNR is unlikely to approve additions or renovations that are inconsistent with that purpose.

When considering upgrades to the camp, it is also important to remember you don’t own the land. You have a Land Use Permit for half of a hectare. That fact in itself may limit the extent of the financial investment you want to make.

And, invest some time in building consensus among your hunt camp members about any renovation plans so everyone knows who is going to do the work, and who is going to pay for it.

Once you have a plan in place, you need to contact the other authorities that may have requirements. This usually includes the local municipality for possible health requirements, building code standards, waste disposal and so on. Depending on your plans you may also need speak with the MNR’s Fire Management Section about restrictions on burning wood or other construction material.

MNR will provide a formal approval for the project by letter. Once construction starts keep in mind that the site must be keep in a clean, safe and sanitary condition. All waste must be disposed of at an approved facility.

MNR has not issued new Land Use Permits for hunt camps in Renfrew County since the mid 1960s. So many of the existing camps are getting on in years.

Look around. Maybe the walls need some paint, or worse, maybe the roof won’t make it through another winter. The most important question to ask is...Is this building safe.

If you find yourself seriously considering anything from an upgrade to a complete rebuild, give us a call. We would be happy to walk you through the process and answer any questions you may have.

Patrick Soulliere
Ministry of Natural Resources, Pembroke
613-732-5587
### Approximate Sunrise and Sunset Table For Pembroke

**October - December 2011**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>October</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunrise</td>
<td>Sunset</td>
<td>Sunrise</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>7:47 am</td>
<td>31</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**IMPORTANT NOTES:**
- You may only hunt from a half-hour before sunrise to a half-hour after sunset.
- Daylight Saving Time ends at 2 am Sunday November 6, 2011.
- **CAUTION** The above sunrise and sunset values are for the City of Pembroke. The times increase the further west you are. For example, the sun rises and sets approximately ten minutes later in North Bay on the west side of WMU 48.
Have a Plan to Deal with your Trash

It is truly surprising how much trash you can produce when you bring eight or ten people into a camp for a week of hunting.

A small portion (paper and cardboard…the burnables) can make their way into the wood stove or fire pit. But for the rest of the trash you need to have a plan to deal with it.

In some cases, hunt camp owners do not make good choices when it comes to garbage disposal.

The Township of Head Clara Maria, which operates two municipal waste disposal sites, has problems with hunt camp garbage every year. It appears that hunters too often try to dump garbage at their sites while the disposal sites are closed. The problems include:

- driving around the locked gates to dump garbage
- leaving bags of garbage at the gate
- throwing garbage over the gate
- not separating recyclables

Other municipalities in Renfrew County have the same issues.

Please remember that it is illegal to:

- dump garbage at a disposal site without an attendant on-duty
- dump garbage on private land
- trespass on municipal property (enter a closed site)
- dump garbage on Crown land

It is also irresponsible and illegal to dispose of contaminants in a way that is harmful to the environment.

Ministry of Natural Resources conservation officers actively pursue people who improperly dispose of garbage on Crown land. The maximum penalty for dumping garbage on Crown land is $10,000 plus $1,000 per day for each day the offence continues. The OPP becomes involved when dumping occurs on private land.

Please make a plan to dispose of your hunt camp garbage properly, even if it means hauling it home.

Send Us Your Hunt Camp Stories

There is a long history of hunt camp use in Renfrew County. Many of the camps go back three generations or more. We enjoy celebrating that history in the Renfrew County Hunt Camp News.

If you have any old photos or stories, please let us know. Include the names of the people in the photos if you can.

Send photos and stories to the Renfrew County Hunt Camp News, Ministry of Natural Resources, 31 Riverside Drive, Pembroke, ON, K8A 8R6

Be sure to include your name and address on the back of any photos you send us, so we can return them. You can also send us stories and scanned images (150 - 300 dpi, jpeg) by e-mail to
doug.skeggs@ontario.ca
If You Go Out In The Woods Today...

By late August this year the number of reported bear occurrences in Ontario was about 4,000. Last year, over the same period, there were 5,725 reported occurrences. So, although there appeared to have been a couple of hot spots, the overall numbers are down in Ontario this year.

And that certainly was true in Renfrew County where reported bear occurrences dropped to 90 from 130 in 2010.

Locally, the downward trend we’re seeing this year is due to several factors. 2011 has been an exceptionally good natural food year for bears. There has simply been more food available to them in the wild so they are less likely to wander into “people places” in search of food. And, we believe we’ve had considerable success with the Bear Wise program, which reduces the potential for bear encounters.

Since the inception of Bear Wise in 2004 we have placed great emphasis on education and public awareness. This helps reduce the number and severity of human-bear conflicts. And in a quiet year like 2011 our staff are able to spend more time on communication side of Bear Wise, visiting schools, talking to community groups, and distributing information products.

If you know of a group or organization that would benefit from our Bear Wise information, let us know.

While you are in your hunt camp, please take the time to “Bear-Wise” the property, remove all the attractants (bird feeders, table scraps, animal parts) and manage your garbage in and around your hunting areas. Make sure to clean the barbecue.

Bears are a valuable resource to all forest users. When you’re in the forest, you’re in their home. Please do not put them or yourself at risk. Choose to reduce the potential for problems.

To report a bear problem call our Bear Wise line: 1 866 514 2327

For more information visit our website: bears.mnr.gov.on.ca

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Bear Facts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult Length</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Cubs          | Birth month - January  
Birth Weight - 250 to 500 grams  
Weight at 1 year - 7 kg to 60kg  
Litter size - 2 to 4 cubs  
Record litter size - 6 cubs |
| Hibernation   | In Ontario, 2 to 7 months depending upon latitude and food supply |
| Life Span     | 21 - 33 years or more |
| Habitat       | Forest areas with a variety of fruit and nut producing species. Lowlands and wetlands are important sources of succulent vegetation. Streams and pools are needed for drinking and cooling. Larger trees as refuges for spring cubs. |
| Running Speed | Lean bears may exceed 45 km/hour |

source: http://ontarioblackbears.com/facts.html
Blue-green Algae is Ugly Stuff

Blue-green algae, or cyanobacteria, is ugly stuff. We’re talking about thick, slimy scum that spreads across the surface of the water, fills the air with a peculiar stench and even threatens the health of animals and humans.

Cyanobacteria, are primitive microscopic plants commonly found in freshwater. When conditions are right, they can form a blue-green scum on the surface of the water. These algae blooms give off a bad smell and are visually unappealing.

But there is a more important issue with blue-green algae. When the algae die they can release toxins which may cause health problems in aquatic species, humans, pets and livestock.

Algae blooms are a growing problem in Ontario’s lakes. Most recently, blue-green algae was confirmed in Muskrat Lake near Cobden.

Blue-green algae is also showing up in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, and in the United States. It is important to understand that these problems are preventable. Although the processes involved in blue-green algae blooms are natural, to a great extent, we are contributing to the problem.

We are allowing too many nutrients into our lakes, rivers and streams from a variety of sources:

- untreated sewage
- storm water loaded with fertilizers
- agricultural run-off ripe with manure
- faulty septic systems
- consumer products with high phosphorous content (like automatic dishwasher soaps)

What can you do to prevent these blooms from affecting your lake or pond?

Primarily, we need to reduce the amount of phosphorus entering our lakes and rivers. The following actions will help:

- Restore shoreline vegetation
- Limit the use of chemical fertilizers, compost and manure on lawns
- Use phosphate-free soaps and cleaning products
- Ensure your septic system is working properly

Health risks

Some cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) produce toxins, called cyanotoxins. These include anatoxin-a, anatoxin-as, aplysiatoxin, cylindrospermopsin, domoic acid, microcystin LR, nodularin R (from Nodularia), or saxitoxin.

Cyanobacteria reproduce explosively under certain conditions. This results in algal blooms, which can become harmful to other species if the cyanobacteria involved produce toxins.

These toxins can be neurotoxins, hepatotoxins, cytotoxins, and endotoxins, and can be toxic and dangerous to humans as well as other animals and marine life in general.

For more information:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyanobacteria
http://www.waterkeeper.ca/2011/08/17/blue-green-algae-is-a-very-serious-very-solvable-problem/
One More Endangered Species: The Rusty-Patched Bumble Bee

The rusty-patched bumble bee (Bombus affinis) is an eastern bee whose workers have a small rust-colored patch on their back (in the middle of their second abdominal segment).

This bee was once commonly distributed throughout the east and upper midwest of the United States and up into eastern Canada, but has steeply declined in recent years.

The rusty-patched bumble bee is an excellent pollinator of wildflowers, cranberries, and other important crops, including plum, apple, alfalfa and onion seed.

Although this species was formerly found through most of its range, surveys since 2003 have found very few. Recently, the rusty-patched has been found in small numbers in isolated areas in the northern part of its range.

Bumble bees are important pollinators of wild flowering plants and crops. Loss of bumble bees can have far ranging ecological impacts. In Britain and the Netherlands, where multiple bumble bee and other bee species have gone extinct, there is evidence of decline in the abundances of insect pollinated plants.

Bumble bees are also excellent pollinators of many crops. Bumble bees perform a behavior called “buzz pollination”, in which the bees grab the pollen producing structure of the flower and vibrate their wings which dislodges pollen that would have remained trapped in the flower. Some plants, including tomatoes, peppers, and cranberries, require buzz pollination.

There are a number of threats facing bumble bees, including: commercial bumble bee industry practices, pests and diseases, habitat destruction or alteration, pesticides, invasive species, and climate change.

Commercial bumble bee rearing may be the greatest threat to the rusty-patched. Bee experts say that the commercial bee industry was responsible for the importation of a bee disease from Europe (probably a virulent strain of the microsporidian Nosema bombi).

The North American bumble bees would have had no prior resistance to this pathogen which appears to have now spread to wild populations of at least three species of bumble bees, including the rusty-patched.

Bumble bees are also threatened by many kinds of habitat alterations which may destroy, alter, fragment, degrade or reduce their food supply (flowers that produce the nectar and pollen they require), nest sites (e.g. abandoned rodent burrows and bird nests), and hibernation sites for over-wintering queens.

Insecticide applications on farms and in forests also poses a direct threat to foraging bumble bees.

Bumble bees are also threatened by invasive plants and insects. The small hive beetle is an invasive parasite of the honeybee, and it also infests bumble bee colonies.

Global climate change also poses a real threat to bumble bees. Evidence seems to indicate that some of the bumble bee species adapted to cool temperatures are in decline, whereas warmer adapted species are expanding their ranges.
Moose Populations in Renfrew County

WMU 48

The moose population in Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) 48 continues to respond well to the special regulations established in 2004. The population response has meant increasing hunting opportunities for resident hunters, tourist outfitters and Aboriginal hunters.

The population has grown from a low of 564 animals in 2002 to approximately 1069 animals in 2009 (our last confirmed population survey). The unit may be flown again this coming winter, providing a further opportunity to confirm continued growth in the population.

Based on computer modeling, we may be nearing the population target of 1,350 moose in WMU 48, which is getting close to the high population numbers seen in the 1980s and early 1990s. Once we reach the target population we will switch to maintenance mode, which will make additional hunting opportunities available. That does not mean that an open-calf harvest will be reinstated in the unit. Having spent 10 years re-building this moose population it would not make sense to return to the conditions that contributed to the population decline.

WMU 55B

This is a mixed deer/moose unit with a relatively small moose population. The unit is very fragmented with large patches of farm land making the landscape more suited for deer.

WMU 55B is one of the units that were part of the Eastern Ontario Moose Round Table process which resulted in the establishment of special hunting regulations in 2004.

The current objective is to grow the herd while continuing to provide hunting and viewing opportunities. The small moose population has been growing slightly since 2004 and by 2008 had reached and estimated total of 141 animals. However, a survey flown last winter indicates the population has dropped back to 100 animals. This is a significant decline.

This may involve several factors related to the movement of moose within the unit and in and out of Algonquin Park, habitat changes, and hunting and harvest patterns. Moose do seem to be moving southward and small populations are growing in other units such as WMU 58.

One interesting note from the 2010 hunt in WMU 55B is that a calf was mistaken for a cow and harvested on a cow tag. The mistake was caught at the check station. The hunter was then charged with harvesting a moose without a valid tag. Please take care to identify your animal before shooting. Check out MNR’s on-line Moose Identification Guide:

http://www.web2.mnr.gov.on.ca/mnr/enforcement/interactive/moose_id/id_guide.swf

Alces alces, the largest member of the deer family. We are maintaining healthy moose numbers on the landscape, and even growing the populations in WMU 48. With careful management these animals, and opportunities to hunt them, will be with us in the future.
Moose Tag Supply and Demand

Did you ever wonder how decisions are made about how many moose can be harvested, or how many tags can be issued?

It is a complicated process, but here it is in a nutshell.

You take the mid-winter population of moose in a WMU (say 100 animals).

You can harvest a percentage of the population based on your objective:

a) 8 percent harvest if you want to grow the population
b) 10 percent if you want to maintain the population
c) 12 percent of the population for higher hunting pressure

Let’s say we choose b) above, 10 percent of 100 is 10 animals.

Then you look at past hunter success and calculate a projected tag fill rate, which will be different for bulls, cows and calves, for gun vs. archery and for different WMUs with different terrain, road networks, etc.

With a projected fill rate of say 50 percent on bull tags, if we want to harvest 10 bulls, we can issue 20 tags.

That is the simple version.

But it gets more complicated...

You also have to monitor the bull-cow ratio in your population. It can vary based on a number of factors but generally you want to have two or three cows for every bull for a healthy balance that promotes recruitment. So typically, you will see more bulls than cows available for harvest.

Then have to watch your cow-calf ratio. Obviously calves are your future population so you have to protect some of them, but you can also make some available for harvest.

A cow-calf distribution of 50 calves per 100 cows in the mid-winter population is considered healthy and should provide for good recruitment.

So with all that you calculate the fill rates and issue tags. The tables below show the results.
After almost 10 years of sampling, there is no indication yet that Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) has made its way into Ontario.

However, the disease is present in the neighbouring states of New York, Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin.

CWD is a fatal disease which infects members of the cervidae family such as white-tailed deer, elk, and moose.

CWD is caused by abnormally folded proteins, which result in lesions on the brains of infected animals and often leads to death. The disease is not known to infect any species outside the deer family.

There is no indication that CWD has made it into Ontario, but some experts think it is likely that it will.

CWD has become endemic in several states in the western United States and has been identified in Alberta and Saskatchewan. More recently the disease has also gained a foothold in eastern United States.

In the primary infection area of the western U.S., white-tailed deer, elk, and mule deer have been shown to be very susceptible to CWD, and more recently a small number of moose have also tested positive for CWD.

With increasing concern about Ontario’s white-tailed deer and elk herds, MNR has established a provincial CWD surveillance program to monitor our wild herd populations.

The program involves the collection of samples in the fall, relying on volunteer participation from hunters. Small crews of MNR staff travel through a designated patrol area, asking hunters for permission to remove brain and lymph node samples from their harvested deer.

A total of 1,393 white-tailed deer samples were collected and sampled from CWD surveillance zones 3, 4 and 5 in 2010. All samples were collected between September and December of 2010.

All test results proved negative for presence of CWD.

Renfrew County (Zone 8) was last sampled in 2007.
Deer Populations Still Recovering
From a Couple of Tough Winters

WMU 48

The antlerless allocation for WMU 48 was increased to 1,100 in 2009 with a management objective of reducing the number of deer in the northwest corner of the unit.

This year antlerless tags were increased an additional 500 to 1,600 with the same objective.

WMU 55B

The deer population in WMU 55B is in growth mode.

The plan for 2010 was to harvest 657 deer. Only 599 were taken. Antlerless tags were increased by 100 to a total of 600 this year, with further assessment and possible adjustments in 2012.

WMU 58

The management objective is to continue to grow the deer population in WMU 58 by maintaining the antlerless tag reductions (1,700 tags available) put in place in 2009.

This may put additional pressure on bucks (2010 harvest was 50:50). The unit will be re-assessed in 2012 to determine if tags can be increased to meet hunter demand.

WMU 59

High harvests and a couple of tough winters led to a reduction in antlerless tags to 1,500 from 2,000 in 2009.

Relatively mild winters since then and slightly lower harvest levels have put the WMU 59 deer population into recovery mode.

The tag reduction remains in effect in an effort to rebuild the population to 2007 levels. This will be reviewed in 2012.
In a few short years, in 2023, the Black Donald Hunt Camp will celebrate its centennial year. Although camp records were not faithfully kept until 1931, information about the camp’s founding have been dutifully passed down to new generations of members.

Our camp is located between Dacre and Griffith, and to get to the hunt camp in the early days the gang drove south on highway 41 to the Merchand / Lacourse road and up to the Johnny Merchand farm. It was there that the gear and provisions were loaded onto a horse drawn wagon for a long, rough trip into the hunt camp. We used this method until 1974 when MNR hired the Kelly brothers of Griffith to build a forestry road in from Highway 41 across the road from the lower Twin Lake. We still call it the Kelly Road, but with the 911 system the name changed to Doorley Creek Road. A new spur road was then put into camp which obviously changed things for the better!

Over the years we have been keeping what we call the Hunt Camp Bible, which is a continuous account of every hunt from 1931 to present. It is fascinating to read the camp news from the 1930s and view the old black and white photos of the first camp, which was not much more than a small log cabin. It was later replaced with a frame building with additions made to it over the years to sleep our numerous hunters and guests.

There were usually about ten hunters in camp and most years they got their count. The journal notes that for a while they only hunted the first week, but as more hunters arrived, they eventually broke the gang up into a first and second week hunt. Deer were numerous in the early days with up to a dozen or more shot every year, although the last few years the numbers have certainly been down from those long-ago counts!

By the 1950s some of the older hunters were no longer hunting, but a new generation of their sons had taken their place. Now in the new millennium that last generation has retired from the hunt and the next generation of hunters is stepping up. As I turn the pages in the journal, the photos show each new generation bringing with them technology’s
latest gadgets like amphibious vehicles, ATVs, generators, walkie-talkies and GPS units.

From the early writings and pictures in the camp book, it’s clear camp life brought out the boyhood days of the hunters from the pranks they played on one and other. There are many mentions of the trips to the Hunters’ Ball or down to one of Eganville’s finest hotels. Or maybe a day of fishing at McMaster Lake, the work parties, the notorious and long games of cribbage played for the Camp Championship, plus poker, euchre or the old game of 28s! It was the life of the boy scouts in camp, something their spouses back home just could never comprehend as they’d wonder how can you enjoy a November week in a cold, draughty old cabin in the middle of nowhere!

The writings also allow us to follow the hunt history such as whether a particular chase was better as dusk approached or better results found at daybreak? It is also interesting to learn how they made or adapted the names of the various chases and watches we still use today: the Twin Maples, Between the Creeks, the Tea Pail, the Hole in the Fence, the Birches, Merchand Mountain, the Lonesome Pine and the Clock in the Rock. Names you learn quickly if you wanted to fit in as a new hunter!

These days we try to continue on the well-established traditions. We still entertain many guests, though reading from the journal we haven’t had an Ambassador through lately! We continue to have great neighbouring camps and the old defined hunting areas are well respected by all.

One tradition we always do though every year is to make sure we add to the Hunt Camp Bible with our own hunt story and photos!

As we look back on nearly 100 years of hunting a constant theme is that after a hard day’s hunt, with a good fire going in the wood stove, a sumptuous meal consumed and a few drinks into you with good friends around, there is nothing like a good night’s sleep at the Black Donald Hunt Camp!

Guy Jamieson
Black Donald Hunt Camp trustee
guyjamieson@sympatico.ca

Some of the more recent crop of hunters at the Black Donald Camp in 2003, from left: Bob Elliott (now deceased), Guy Jamieson, Blair Dawson, Clarence Sharpe, and Ron Ferguson.
Tracking the American Eel in the Ottawa River

Eels are one of those fish species that have not fared well in modern times, primarily because of our habit of constructing barriers on rivers, dams large and small that serve valuable purposes in flood control and power generation.

The problem is related to the incredible life cycle of this fish. Eels are born in salt water in the Sargasso Sea in the middle of the north Atlantic Ocean. Then almost immediately they begin the long journey up our fresh water rivers where they will live out most of their lives. As fully mature adults eels then make a one-way journey back to the Sargasso Seas to spawn.

We know that eel populations in the Ottawa River are a small fraction of what they once were. But incredibly, it appears that they are still managing to make their way up the river as far as the Rapids des Joachim section near Rolphston.

The Arnprior and District Fish and Game Club has taken on the challenge of finding eel in the Lac des Chats section of the river, tracking their movement and studying their habitat.

In 2007 the club worked with MNR to create an eel fact sheet that was distributed to the local media to collect base-line information on eels current and past distribution within Renfrew County. We hoped to connect with some older folks who were around before the dams were built, and might remember what parts of the river eel were plentiful in prior to their collapse in the 1980s.

The Arnprior club, with some help from MNR has been catching, radio tagging, and tracking eels in the river every year since. The information they are collecting is critical in understanding eel movement and habitat.

2011 Success

Beginning in early May this year, over the course of five weeks, ten American eel were captured in Lac des Chats. Nine of them ended up with successfully implanted transmitters.

Through the efforts of club volunteers, the eel are then tracked by boat and by air.

The project has also attracted some attention from Carleton University grad student Maria Bugajski. She has been working closely with Eric Smith collecting telemetry data in hopes of producing a thesis from the results.

One of the things we would like to achieve through this work is to understand what happens when mature eels decide to begin their journey back to the Sargasso Sea. We don’t know for certain if any of them make it through or by the large dams and generating stations on the river. If we can understand how, when, and where they choose to make the descent, we may discover ways to help them make it safely.

From what we’ve seen so far, it appears that September is the time of year the eels attempt to head downstream.

We don’t know what the future holds for eels in the Ottawa River, but one thing is certain. Thanks to the dedication and efforts of the Arnprior fish and game club they may not disappear entirely.
Bringing Young People into the Hunting Tradition

In a world full of computer and video games, who is going to continue the hunting tradition?

The recruitment of new hunters is a significant challenge in ensuring a hunting heritage is maintained and carries on to future generations.

People who keep track of these kinds of things say that young people do not explore outdoor pursuits today. Experts see a decline in the number of youth participating in wildlife activities (hunting, fishing, viewing). Kids are simply too busy with things like organized sports, or are distracted by television, video games, computers, and social networking.

What does this lead to? Well for example, the number of Canadian duck hunters has dropped from 500,000 in the late 1970s to 135,000 today.

This has also led to a reduced appreciation for and understanding of the natural world and the importance of hunting in wildlife management and conservation.

But we can change this trend. This fall, 15 local youth will have an opportunity to participate in a hunt through a new program being offered by the Renfrew County Stewardship Council, Arnprior Fish and Game Club, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Pembroke Outdoors Sportsman Club, and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

The program objectives are to provide youth with:

1) A greater understanding and appreciation of the importance of wildlife conservation and management and the contribution of hunters to these initiatives.

2) Knowledge about the historical and contemporary importance of Canada’s hunting heritage and wildlife management and conservation.

3) Basic knowledge about biology, wildlife ecology, and wildlife habitats.

4) Hunter Education and Firearms Safety training, mentorship, and certification.

5) Opportunities to participate in many hands-on activities including blind building and placement, dog training, decoy placement, and the cleaning and cooking of wild game. Youth will also have the opportunity to get out on a morning waterfowl hunt with their mentors.

This program would not be available without the dedication of many volunteers willing to share their time, expertise and passion for hunting with our youth.

For more information contact the Renfrew County Stewardship Council:

Karen Stokes 613-732-5523
Have you Seen one of These?

The American eel is a Species At Risk protected under Ontario’s Endangered Species Act. Do not fish for eel. If you catch one, it must be released unharmed.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and the Arnprior & District Fish & Game Club are working together to assess American eels and their habitat in the Ottawa River and its tributaries.

You Can Help

If you catch an American eel please record:

LENGTH  WEIGHT  GIRTH  BAIT USED  LOCATION
APPROX. WATER DEPTH  APPROX. DISTANCE FROM SHORE

AND CONTACT:

Ministry of Natural Resources
Ph: 613-732-5565
email: kirby.punt@ontario.ca

Arnprior & District Fish & Game Club
Ph: 613-623-5450

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