

## **DNR offering ‘Wildlife Through Forestry’ forums in western U.P.**

Earlier this year, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources launched a project designed to demonstrate to private landowners that they can accomplish their wildlife habitat enhancement goals and objectives by careful implementation of a well-written resource management plan.

As part of this effort, using funding from a Natural Resources Conservation grant, the DNR will offer three “Wildlife Through Forestry” forums in the western Upper Peninsula of Michigan over the next three months.

“This fascinating series of presentations and panel discussions will provide great opportunities for the public to talk with resource professionals, and learn about important wildlife research on major factors affecting white-tailed deer survival, including predators, and black bear behavior and habitat needs,” said DNR forester Gary Willis. “Over the course of these forums, there will also be information presented on management of forest and wildlife resources, including funding, development and implementation of resource management plans for private landowners.”

### **The Wildlife Through Forestry forums:**

- The first forum will be from **6 to 8 p.m. EST March 8 at the Ewen-Trout Creek School, which is located just west of Ewen along Highway M-28 in Ontonagon County.** This event is being sponsored by the Ontonagon Valley Sportsmen’s Club and will feature a presentation on the long-term U.P. Predator-Prey study that is currently ongoing in Ontonagon and Houghton Counties. This study is a collaborative effort between the DNR, Mississippi State University (MSU) and Safari Club International. The project aims to provide a better understanding of the major factors affecting white-tailed deer survival. Factors potentially affecting deer include habitat conditions, winter weather and predation. Understanding the role and interaction of these factors will aid management of the deer herd. Two members of the research team, Nick Fowler and Todd Kautz, both doctoral candidates at MSU, will describe the study and review some of the preliminary findings. There will be a panel of resource professionals available to answer questions following the presentation. For additional information on the Predator-Prey research project, the project’s webpage at: <http://fwrc.msstate.edu/carnivore/predatorprey/>.
- The second forum will be at **7 p.m. EDT April 18 in 135 Fisher Hall, on the campus of Michigan Technological University in Houghton (Houghton County).** This forum will take an in-depth look at black bear biology and habitat needs and provide information regarding resource management plans for habitat enhancement. The featured speaker for this presentation will be biologist Lynn Rogers, PhD, founder of the North American Bear Center in Ely, Minnesota. Dr. Rogers pioneered the research technique of “walking with bear,” which has

revealed their never-before-seen-life. Understanding a species of wildlife's basic needs is the starting point for prescribing management practices that enhance habitat. Resource professionals will make themselves available to meet with the public one hour prior to the meeting (6 to 7 p.m. EDT) to discuss management of forest and wildlife resources.

- A third forum will be from **7 to 9 p.m. EDT May 8 at the Ottawa Sportsmen's Club conference room/banquette hall located on M-38 approximately 7 miles west of Baraga in Baraga County.** The Ottawa Sportsmen's Club is sponsoring this Forum. The speakers will again be researchers from the Predator/Prey study group.
- Presentations will be made by DNR, U.S. Forest Service and the local conservation district at the March 8 and May 8 forums on development of resource management plans, and available financial assistance for their preparation and implementation.

The DNR "Wildlife Through Forestry" steering committee planned specific goals in holding these forums for the western U.P.

"We want to get folks fired up about sound resource management so that they establish a family legacy with their forest ownership," Willis said. "We want to show folks the importance of working closely with a resource professional to accomplish their goals and objectives for ownership. We also want folks to have a good time getting together to discuss topics of interest to us all."

## **Background**

"In 2016, we invited private landowners in the western Upper Peninsula to join the Deer Winter Complex habitat improvement partnership," Willis said. "Through an inter-agency effort that included the DNR, U.S. Forest Service, area conservation districts and the Natural Resource Conservation Service, private landowners were made aware of available funding sources for resource management plans that could prescribe practices for improving deer wintering habitat on their land."

A mailing included an invitation to one of four meetings held in various locations in the west U.P., where resource professionals described white-tailed deer biology and management, along with resource management plan preparation. All four of these meetings were well-attended by landowners interested in learning more about these topics.

This year, the DNR is continuing this interagency outreach effort by establishing the foundation for an ongoing Wildlife Through Forestry forum in the west U.P. Each of these special meetings will feature a different species of wildlife, starting with black bear.

Prior to the April 18 session in Houghton, informational letters will be mailed to many west U.P. private landowners to invite them to the forum, while at the same time, illustrate the value of a well-written, carefully-implemented resource management plan.

A resource professional can evaluate your ownership and prescribe management practices that can maximize the benefit to specific species of wildlife.

### **Assistance and more information**

- More than 150 professional foresters and 20 wildlife biologists develop Forest Stewardship Plans for forest landowners in Michigan. For information about Forest Stewardship Plans or the Commercial Forest Program, contact Gary Willis, DNR Service Forester, 427 US 41 North, Baraga, Michigan, 49908; 906-353-6651, extension 122 or [willisg2@michigan.gov](mailto:willisg2@michigan.gov).
- The Iron-Baraga Conservation District has a forester on staff available for a free site visit to your property. Roger Jaworski can discuss your wildlife habitat and forestry goals and help you decide if there is financial assistance programs that can provide cost sharing for resource management plan preparation and implementation. You may contact Roger at 906-875-3765 or [fap.iron.baraga@macd.org](mailto:fap.iron.baraga@macd.org).

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Photo outline info:

Lynn Rogers, founder of the North American Bear Center in Ely, Minnesota, will discuss bear behavior and habitat needs at a forum April 18 in Houghton. (photo courtesy of Lynn Rogers)

Wildlife personnel work to draw a blood sample from a coyote as part of the ongoing Upper Peninsula predator-prey study. (photo courtesy of Mississippi State University)