

Moose Lake News

By Jim Onarheim

Last week I ran out of space so my first fishing report for the year had to wait until this week. On Friday the 12th of April John Myhre and myself went fishing on Lower Clam Lake for some crappies. I have never fished Lower Clam Lake, so I was excited to give it a try. John has all the greatest electronics that you can imagine. Both Hummingbird and Garmin locators. The most interesting was his Garmin Live scope 360 degree. We were finding fish, but they still had to bite. We did catch some fish, but you had to work at it. It was a tough bite, or should I say they bit very lightly. The day was very warm with temperatures around 60 degrees with some wind. The water temperature was 47 degrees. The fish we were catching came out of 18 feet of water and the fish were very cold when we unhooked them.

On Sunday April 14th we went out again but this time we went out on Moose Lake. We both know Moose Lake very well. We tried several different spots that we thought would produce some panfish. One here and one there. Mostly rock bass is what we caught. I had one about 11 inches. Both days we stayed on the water until around 7 PM. I will say John out fished me both days. I can use the excuse that his live scope 360 that he was using did help him out. The most important thing with this type of electronics is knowing how to use it and knowing how to read it. Expensive but nice. I better start to save up.

On Tuesday April 16th my friend Rob Sparhawk and I went to a meeting in Park Falls WI that was organized and sponsored by the popular hunting advocacy group Hunter Nation. The meeting was held at the American Legion in Park Falls, WI at 6:00 PM. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss a plan of action to push for much stricter management of gray wolves across Wisconsin. Chris Vaughan is the director for the group's Wisconsin chapter. He says the group wants to de-list the wolves from the endangered species list and bring back something more like the wolf management plan from 1999, which capped the population at 350 wolves. This number that was used was very much debated at the meeting. The one hundred and fifty men and women in attendance felt that the DNR is still using that number today as far as management practices are concerned. On the DNR Website the DNR presently feels that the numbers today are near or even just over 1,000 wolves in our state, give or take. But there is not 1000's more like some people feel.

Hunter Nation who sponsored this meeting has their own count of wolves in Wisconsin. There were 48 counties that posted 72 photos since February 2023. Also 207 towns / townships also posted photos. The total count between Feb. 2023 to March 31, 2024, was 2,425. The accuracy of the count can be debated. Hunter Nation sought any photos or documentation that could be recorded throughout the state, even Grant, Dane and Jefferson counties which are in the extreme southern part of our state. I'm sure when the DNR did their survey they could not survey every county in the state. This would be too much to do and would be very labor intensive. This just would not be practical, especially knowing that these counties have a very high population of people. If there were wolves in these counties the DNR or News Media would know about it.

The meeting was well attended with approximately 150 in attendance which included State Representative Chanz Green, State Senator Rob Stafsholt of the 10th District and Senator Romaine Quinn.

All three were very interesting to talk with personally about the Gray Wolf problem that we may possibly have in Wisconsin.

The plan that the DNR used in the past before the US Government put the wolves back on the endangered list worked exceptionally well," said Chris Vaughan. "Wolves have rebounded, they're flourishing in our state. For that reason, we think that a numeric population goal would help identify what that quota will be once de-listed."

Following a federal court ruling on Feb. 10, 2022, gray wolves are listed as an endangered species in the lower 48 states (excluding the northern Rocky Mountains region). As such, wolves are federally protected. Harvest and lethal depredation control are prohibited.

Wisconsin's wolf population remains healthy and secure in the state. The department will continue its robust wolf population monitoring program and the development of an updated wolf management plan. The DNR will continue to partner with USDA-Wildlife Services to address wolf conflicts in Wisconsin.

The Michigan DNR recently said that their last survey shows the Upper UP had a population that is stable," said Brian Roell, a Marquette-based wildlife biologist with the DNR. "We have reason to believe gray wolves may have reached their biological carrying capacity in the UP."

So, you the reader understand -Carry Capacity is the number of animals that habitat can support all year long. The carrying capacity of a certain tract of land can vary from year to year. It can be changed by nature or humans. Factors that limit the potential production of wildlife include disease / parasites, starvation, water, predators, pollution, weather, accidents, old age, other, and hunting. Hunting of course is excluded from the Gray Wolf because there is no hunting season for wolves. Management and Conservation principals are everyone's responsibility.

The Michigan DNR conducts a wolf population survey every other winter like Wisconsin. Because the population has consistently been estimated between 618 and 695 since 2011, it is believed U.P. wolves have reached the maximum population their habitat can sustain. Several factors, including food, water, shelter and conflicts with humans influence how many wolves can coexist with other wildlife and human habitations in the U.P. According to the DNR, the fact that the wolf population has remained stable for a decade suggests the current population has reached an equilibrium that should be maintained.

In about six decades, the Wisconsin landscape has gone from being devoid of wolves to supporting one of the most robust wolf populations in the Lower 48 states per Hunter Nation. Today, wolf packs are established in about half of all Wisconsin counties, primarily in the forested northern and central parts of the state. Statewide winter population estimates suggest approximately 1,000 wolves have occupied the state in recent years. Hunter Nation has received reports that there is 2425 wolves in the state. Yes, a farmer may have reported that they had a livestock kill on their property in the southern part of the state. Do they have a photo? Could this have been a coyote or some other predator. One lonely wolf may be wondering by himself like one lonely elk was 6 months ago in southern Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin wolf population is part of a larger and well-connected wolf population that extends east into the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and west into Minnesota. Today, these states collectively support a northern Great Lakes regional wolf population of over 4,000 wolves, with thousands more connected to the north across the Canadian border. In the last decade, population growth and range expansion have

generally slowed and stabilized in all three states, suggesting wolves have fully recolonized most available habitat in the region.

Wolves are an important part of the state's natural and cultural heritage and are deeply significant to Wisconsin's Tribal Nations. As apex predators, wolves play an important role in the landscape and provide numerous ecological benefits. Their presence contributes to healthier, more biologically diverse ecosystems, ultimately providing benefits for all. The recovery of this native species in Wisconsin stands as a wildlife success story and a testament to righting the conservation wrongs of the past.

The return of wolves also generates challenges related to living alongside a population of large carnivores. Wolves occasionally kill livestock, hunting dogs and pets and these events can carry significant financial and emotional costs.

On April 3, 2024, this press release came out. On Friday, March 31st, Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers vetoed 41 bills which had been passed by the state's legislature. Among the vetoed bills was Senate Bill, SB139, which would have set a target population goal for the gray wolf which would have helped manage the state's out-of-control and currently unmanaged wolf population. The veto was immediately condemned by Wisconsin hunters, farmers and residents in the areas most impacted by the increasing wolf population, and around the nation by groups who see the move as purely political.

The state's Department of Natural Resources had recently presented a new wolf management plan which eliminated the previous plan's inclusion of a target wolf population. As a result of the DNR's new plan, State Senator Rob Stafsholt told those present at the meeting that he introduced SB139 to mandate the DNR to set a goal for the state's wolf population. Senator Stafsholt had several comments that he made directed at Governor Evers. Senator Stafsholt feels the wolves should be delisted which would allow Wisconsin to even have an annual hunt for the Gray Wolf.

Stafsholt said, "If we are not managing to a specific goal number, the DNR has essentially allowed there to be no trigger to reduce the population, despite the many problems caused by having too many wolves on our landscape, such as depletion of our deer population and loss of cattle to farmers." Chanz Green State Representative who was present also, agreed.

Wisconsin Congressman Tom Tiffany commented after the Governor's veto. "Governor Evers' decision to veto sound wolf management legislation should make it clear, rural Wisconsin and hunters are roadkill for Evers' anti-hunting and anti-wildlife management agenda." "Wolves have been used as political pawns for far too long, and this veto is pure politics," stated Keith Mark, founder of Hunter Nation a national non-profit organization protecting the hunting lifestyle.

"In his list of reasons for the veto, Evers puts 'social complexities' at the top, making it very clear he prioritizes his big city constituents, those least affected, over the people who live and recreate where he wants wolves to roam unchecked," insisted Chris Vaughan, Wisconsin State Director of Hunter Nation.

After Governor Evers Veto, Keith Mark stated, "This should focus national attention on the need for gray wolf management," Mark went on to say. "I am calling on Wisconsin Senators Ron Johnson and Tammy Baldwin to join with Representative Tom Tiffany and pass his legislation to delist the gray wolf immediately, with no judicial review. If we don't start managing the gray wolf, there won't be any deer or moose left to hunt and it will be the American Hunter who becomes extinct." Mark concluded.

What I said at the meeting was this group should start with the State Conservation Hearings by submitting a resolution. The Conservation Hearings were set up so residents could voice their opinion on conservation issues if they thought there was a problem. I was at the Conservation Hearing this year on the 8th of April in Sawyer County. I did not see one question of the 49 that we voted on pertaining to the so-called problem with the wolves in Wisconsin.

The deer kill numbers in 2023 were down but the fantastic year that we had in 2022 may be the reason according to the DNR. I do remember this happening in the years past. You have a really good year then the following year things are down hill. The wolf is always the scape goat. The wolf gets blamed for killing way too many deer in northern Wisconsin. That is myth. How many deer get killed by vehicles? How many get killed by coyotes. The state of Michigan DNR Biologist recently stated that coyote's kill more deer than you realize. Bears are also to blame for killing several young fawns. Don't always blame the wolf. I feel they are presently at the maximum carry capacity for our area. And should stay at the numbers that they are presently at. I am not a wildlife biologist, but this is my opinion after all the research that I have done on this subject for this article. Thanks for reading.

Pool League met last Thursday but we only had three teams because of the ATV area ride that took place Thursday afternoon. Winners, it is easy to explain. There was a three tie for first place. Jack Brown and partner Maggie Brown, Scott Gilkey and Jim Onarheim, Darryl Enk and Laura Gilkey. Our party is next Thursday which will wrap it up for this season.

Birthday greetings this week go to Jerry Enders whose birthday is on April 28th. Happy birthday Jerry. There is one anniversary also this week. Chad and Wendy Olson on the 27th of April. Wendy was Wendy Duray prior to marrying Chad. Happy anniversary to both of you.

Stay safe everyone and enjoy your beautiful week. Please send your items of interest to my new e-mail address emta984@gmail.com or call my landline at 715-462-4448 or my cell at 715-577-8880. Moose Improvement association website is <http://mliahaywardwi.org> The Town of Round Lake Web site is <https://www.townofroundlakewi.org> and the NEW Round Lake Fire Department website is <https://townofroundlakefire-rescue.org>