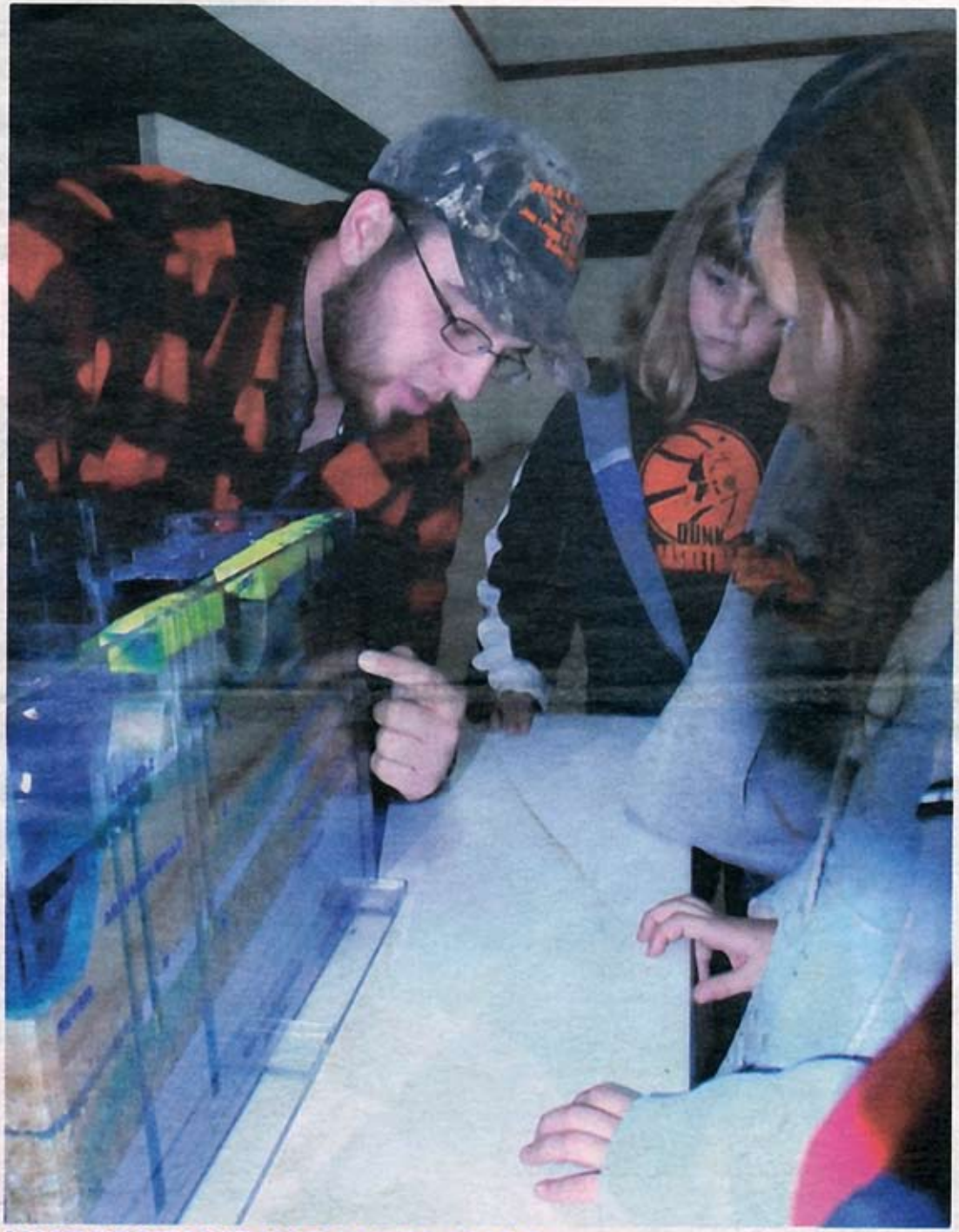


UNDERSTANDING WETLANDS

Grade 4 students, and a few Grade 3 and 5 students, depending on doubled classes, from throughout the northern school group of the Hastings Prince Edward District School Board learned a little about human impact on wetlands at a day-long show and tell of sorts at Joy Bible Camp. Greg Lunn, of the Bancroft office of the Ministry of Natural Resources demonstrated the amazing aquifer and the movement of ground water, and contaminents through soil./Photo by Ken MacPherson

See a related story on page 7

Snow depth affects deer movement

The deer hunt

Deer move to their winter yarding habitat (normally consisting of conifer cover and hardwood browse species) between late November and mid January when snow depths reach about 20 cm or 8 inches. The main limiting factor for deer in Ontario is the capacity of their winter yarding habitat to support the deer population. Snow depth also has an impact on the chance of survival by decreasing a deer's mobility in greater snow depth and thus affecting its ability to access food. In the Mazinaw Bancroft Area, the maximum snow depth last winter (2008-2009) was 71.9 cm. This was the second year in a row that high snow depths would have restricted deer movement and had the potential to impact overall survival. As a result, the OMNR began a trail breaking and emergency winter feeding program in January 2009 where trails were packed down with snowmobiles and specially formulated feed was placed along trails throughout each of the major deer yards. Approximately 12 tonnes of feed was distributed in an attempt to increase the survival of deer through the late winter period.

The snow came early, during the second week of the deer season, and lasted the majority of the winter with regular heavy snowfalls, suggesting mobility for deer may be tough for most of the winter. However, the snow melted earlier than in past years, with deer beginning to leave the yards by the last week of March and first week of April, when they were able to find fresh greened up vegetation shortly after.

Overall, it is anticipated that last winter was not as hard on the deer as the previous one (2007-2008). The results of the deer harvested and deer seen per hunter day index from fall 2008 show a decline in the number of deer seen and number of deer harvested, particularly the harvest of fawns. As seen in the table on the right, the decrease was greater in some WMUs than in others. As a result of the 2008 harvest and survey information and the potential for some winter mortality from this past year, there were some decreases in antlerless tag numbers throughout central and eastern Ontario.

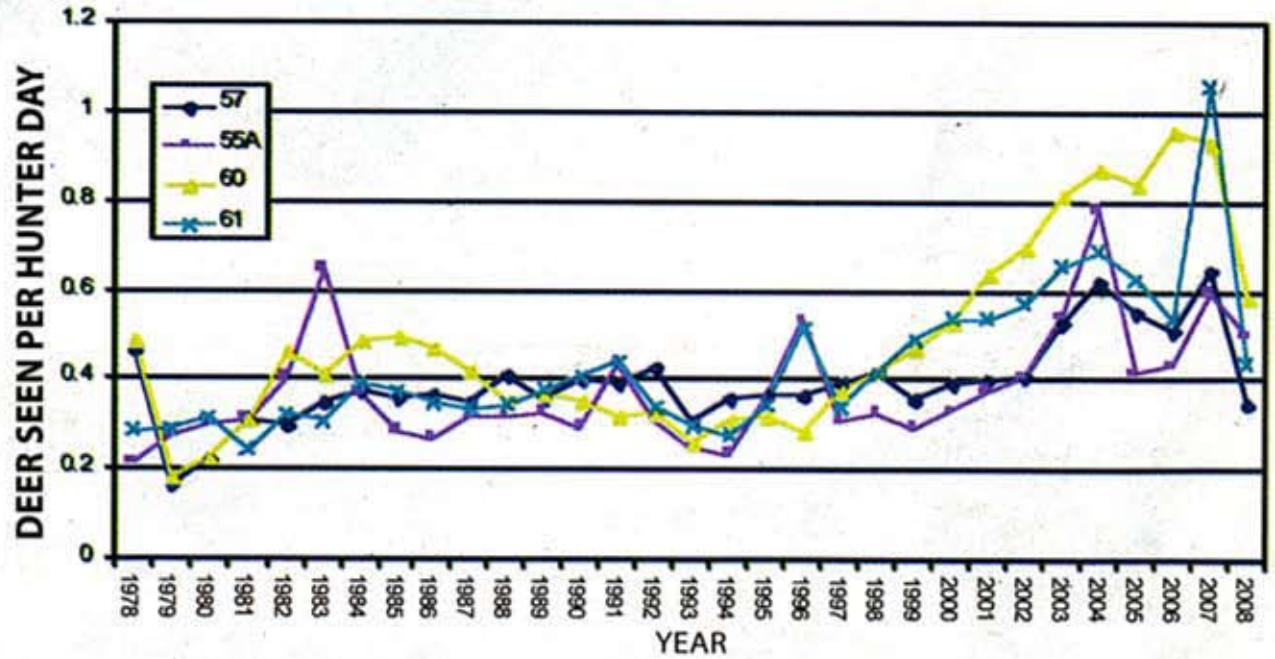
The antlerless tag allocations are set for the deer harvest based on the provincial surveys. The following is a brief status report on deer populations and 2009 tag allocations for the Mazinaw Bancroft Area (deer populations in WMU 62 are managed by Peterborough District and 63 are managed by Kemptville District so they are not included here). Antlerless tag quotas were decreased in WMUs 57 and 61 and remained status quo for WMUs 55A and 60.

WMU		2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
55A	# Antlerless Tags	600	600	600	600	600	600	600	600
	Antlerless Fill Rate	32.71	33.02	32.42	28.49	29.24	35.98	21.3	
	Buck Harvest	237	199	254	128	248	276	196	
	Doe Harvest	117	112	121	105	147	123	96	
	Fawn Harvest	79	86	74	66	27	92	31	
	Total Harvest	433	397	449	365	422	491	323	
57	# Antlerless Tags	2700	2700	2700	2700	2700	2700	2700	2000
	Antlerless Fill Rate	32.03	33.33	35.93	30.4	28.04	34.73	19.2	
	Buck Harvest	620	596	685	767	679	868	592	
	Doe Harvest	415	495	542	432	529	504	310	
	Fawn Harvest	450	405	429	389	229	435	207	
	Total Harvest	1485	1496	1656	1588	1437	1807	1109	
60	# Antlerless Tags	1600	1800	1800	1800	2700	3000	4500	4500
	Antlerless Fill Rate	47.13	47.97	48.22	50.4	43.38	40.91	25.9	
	Buck Harvest	1784	1545	1653	1745	1719	1712	1026	
	Doe Harvest	532	534	607	646	678	799	903	
	Fawn Harvest	223	330	261	261	494	438	325	
	Total Harvest	2539	2409	2521	2652	2891	2949	2254	
61	# Antlerless Tags	1600	1800	1800	1800	2200	2500	3000	2500
	Antlerless Fill Rate	44.52	46.49	45.14	39.3	42.86	39.67	22.3	
	Buck Harvest	646	966	772	742	798	878	615	
	Doe Harvest	435	479	535	512	694	664	466	
	Fawn Harvest	277	358	278	196	250	328	203	
	Total Harvest	1358	1803	1585	1450	1742	1870	1284	

Deer Harvest Results from 2002-2008 and 2009 antlerless tag allocations.

Deer sightings increase while on the hunt

The graph on the right shows the trend in deer seen per hunter day from 1978 to 2008. The general trend was increasing in all four WMUs, until high points were reached between 2004 and 2007. The index shows a significant decline in all four WMUs in the fall of 2008. Although it is believed the deer population has decreased over the last two years, it is important to remember the deer seen per hunter day is an index that is influenced by many things but most commonly by weather. The first week of the season last year was extremely warm, which means deer are more likely to move at night; therefore less likely to be seen during the day, which could partially explain the decrease in the deer seen per hunter day index in 2008.



The elk in the Bancroft/North Hastings area are increasing.

Elk do well

Update on the elk population in the Bancroft/North Hastings area

A helicopter survey was conducted in February and March of 2009 to determine current elk population estimates, in the Bancroft area by Dr Rick Rosatte of the Ministry of Natural Resources Wildlife Research and Development Section. In total, it is estimated the population is at around 300 to 400 animals in the "core" area (from Fraser Lake to Queensboro ~about 2,000 sq km), with 62 per cent being cows, 23 per cent bulls and 15 per cent calves. This constitutes an increase over the March 2008 population estimate. The initial elk reintroduction included a total of 120 animals released over two years (2000 and 2001). There are currently several different social groups of elk occurring in the Lingham Lake/Queensboro area, Fraser Lake area, Hartsmere area, Mephisto/Limerick Lake area, and the Turiff area. A small social group of elk has also been established near Madoc. Elk continue to be reported in many areas including Lanark County, Kemptville, the Ottawa Valley, Bobcageon, Cobourg, and York region. Due to a lack of funding those areas were not flown during the survey. However, conservatively, it is believed there are approximately 500 elk in southern Ontario.

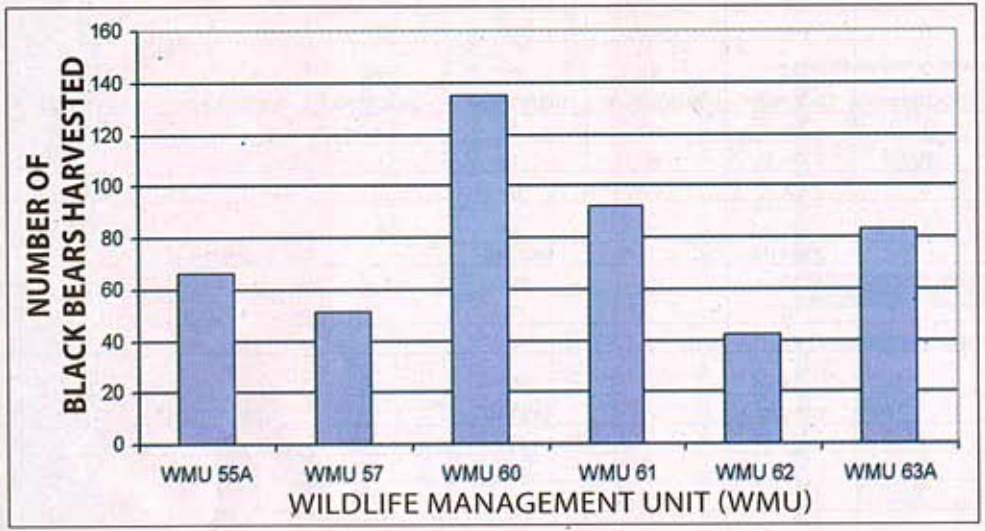
In summary, elk are doing extremely well in the Bancroft/North Hastings area and hunters need to be vigilant and certain of their target when hunting as there is currently no open hunting season for elk in Ontario.

A provincial elk management plan is currently under development that will help to guide future management of elk in Ontario. The management plan will be available for public review and input in the near future.

The bear facts

Historically, black bear harvest is monitored on a Wildlife Management Unit basis through a provincial post card survey for residents and through Mandatory Reporting for non-sesidents, however, as of 2006, mandatory reporting for both groups of hunters is required (see pages 68-69 of the 2009 Hunting Regulations Summary for mandatory reporting requirements). Black bear harvest targets for this area of the province are set at four bears per 100 square km, with no more than 40 per cent of those being female bears. The following graph shows bear harvest within all WMUs managed by the Bancroft/ Mazinaw Area.

In all WMUs except 55A, the total harvest density was below four bears per 100 square kilometres, indicating a sustainable harvest level. At least 40 black bears were harvested in each unit with WMU 57 and 62 being the lowest. The greatest number of black bears harvested was in WMU 60 at 135 animals, partially reflective of the greater size of this WMU in comparison to the others.



This chart shows the 2008 estimated black bear harvest for Mazinaw-Bancroft area.

Sustainable harvest rate for moose

Results from the 2008 moose hunting season

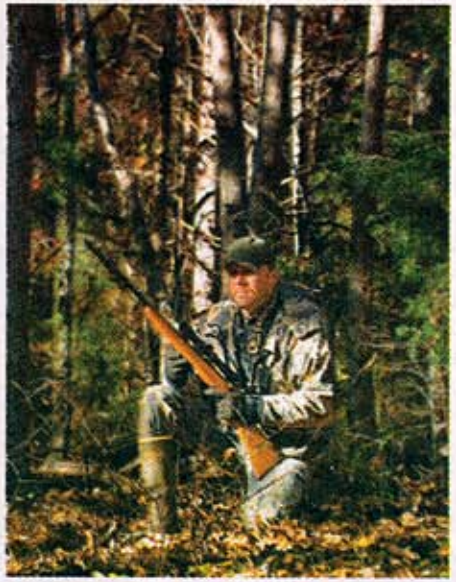
In general, a sustainable harvest rate for moose populations is between 10 to 15 per cent of the herd (ie. 10 to 15 animals out of every 100 may be harvested annually). However, in some areas with high productivity, the harvest rates may be higher. For example, the annual harvest rate in WMU 60 and 61 is 20 per cent of the herd, which allows for more tags to be given out. In WMUs 55A and 57, there is a calf tag system in place, along with an archery season, mandatory hunt reporting and previously a six percent sustainable harvest since 2004 in order to address low calf recruitment issues. The harvest rate for these WMUs has increased to 11 per cent, based on updated population estimates from the 2008 Moose Aerial Inventory. The 2006-2008 harvest results and 2009 tag allocations can be found in the table below.

		2006		2007		2008		2009	
WMU		Gun	Archery	Gun	Archery	Gun	Archery	Gun	Archery
55A	# Tags	4B/3C/5calf	10B/0C/10calf	6B/6C/20calf	10B/0C/25calf	15B/4C/22calf	19B/5C/20calf	15B/5C/13calf	14B/10C/20calf
	Bull Harvest	1	3	4	4	11	6		
	Cow Harvest	1	0	5	0	2	0		
	Calf Harvest	0	0	3	0	2	0		
	Total Harvest	2	3	12	4	15	6		
57	# Tags	7B/3C/3calf	5B/0C/10calf	7B/3C/3calf	5B/0C/20calf	16B/6C/8calf	13B/5C/20calf	14B/8C/5calf	10B/10/20calf
	Bull Harvest	5	4	6	2	5	4		
	Cow Harvest	1	0	1	0	1	1		
	Calf Harvest	1	0	0	0	0	1		
	Total Harvest	7	4	7	2	6	6		
60	# Tags	35B/21C		35B/21C		69B/34C		92B/44C	
	Bull Harvest	20		17		33			
	Cow Harvest	0		10		13			
	Calf Harvest	63		47		50			
	Total Harvest	48		74		96			
61	# Tags	63B/17C		63B/21C		83B/34C		83B/29C	
	Bull Harvest	24		21		27			
	Cow Harvest	3		9		14			
	Calf Harvest	21		47		32			
	Total Harvest	48		77		73			
62	# Tags	10B/0C		10B/0C		10B/0C		10B/0C	
	Bull Harvest	3		5		3			
	Cow Harvest	0		0		0			
	Calf Harvest	8		18		0			
	Total Harvest	11		23		3			
63	# Tags	16B/7C		16B/12C		31B/22C		37B/17C	
	Bull Harvest	3		5		9			
	Cow Harvest	0		3		5			
	Calf Harvest	12		4		2			
	Total Harvest	15		12		16			

Moose harvest results for 2006-2008 and 2009 tag allocations for District WMUs

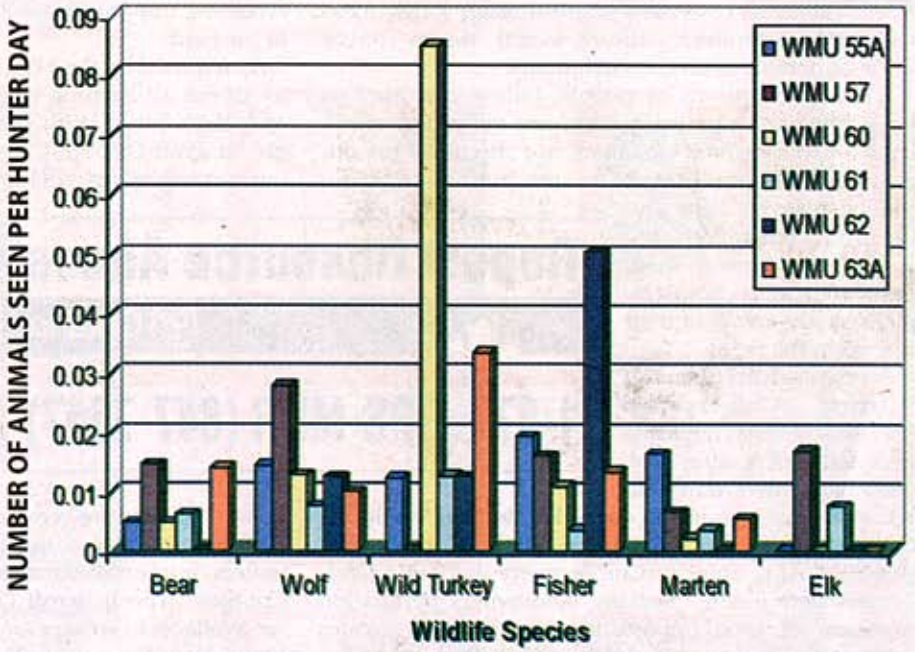
Summary of other wildlife seen while hunting

As part of the regular hunt camp survey that is mailed to local hunt camps, we ask about other types of game animals that are seen while hunting. The graph on the right shows the results of the 2008 hunt camp questionnaire with regards to wild turkey, fisher, marten, bear, elk and wolf. The greatest chance to spot wild turkeys while hunting moose or deer hunting occurred in WMU 60, with a rate just shy of 0.085 wild turkey seen/ hunter day. Fisher were seen most often in WMU 62 (0.05 fisher seen/hunter day), while the other WMUs were relatively similar across the Bancroft/Mazinaw area. Pine marten were observed most often in WMU 55A, at a rate of about 0.015 marten seen/hunter day. Black bear sightings remained relatively similar across all six units, while elk were most prevalent in WMU 57 in terms of sightings by hunters. Elk were seen during the moose and deer hunts at a rate of about 0.017 elk seen/hunter day in WMU 57, followed closely by WMU 61. This is consistent with the documented dispersal of elk from their original release location near Hartsmere, ON. Similarly, wolf occurrences were also highest in WMU 57, observed at a rate of 0.028 wolves seen/ hunter day. It is very likely that many of what the hunters are calling "wolves" are actually coyotes or wolf/coyote hybrids, which are more likely to occur further south in the district where WMU 60, 61, 62, and 63A are located. However, MNR scientists state that the coyote populations are currently at all time highs in the province of Ontario, reflective of very high deer populations a couple years back (an important prey source for



wolves and coyotes). That being said, an increase in coyote/ wolf hybrids in the northerly WMUs of 55A and 57 is not out of the question.

The graph below shows the number of grouse seen per hunter day, which was plotted on a different graph as the numbers of grouse seen are generally much higher than numbers of other wildlife species. The rate of grouse occurrences was quite similar between 0.15 and 0.27 grouse seen/hunter day across all six of the WMUs in the Bancroft/Mazinaw area. There was a slight decrease in WMU 63, and when compared to the results of the 2007 hunt camp surveys, grouse occurrences seemed to be slightly decreased overall. This could be directly reflective of the very wet spring/summer we experienced in 2008, and grouse nest/egg productivity may have been lower than normal.



This chart shows the number of animals seen, but not killed per hunter day. Results from the 2008 moose and deer hunt camp survey combined.

Understanding lake trout spawning

BY SABRINA CARD AND CHRIS BURTON
Staff Writer

This week was another exciting week for the Northern Outdoor Studies (NOS) class. On Oct 13, they went on a field trip to the Ministry of Natural Resources. There, we were given detailed instructions on what we will be doing on Oct. 15 at Wetland Wonder Day held at Joy Bible Camp.

On Oct 14, the NOS class went to Tanglewood Marina on Weslemkoon Lake to collect lake trout eggs for the North Hastings Community Fish Hatchery. We were also joined by Mrs. Drew- Baehre's Grade 9 resource management class.

We took male and female trout and used clove oil to anesthetize them so they would not squirm while we were getting our data. We weighed them, measured their length, and tagged their dorsal fin. We milt the male trout, which is taking their sperm by gently rubbing down their stomach. We also rubbed the females down their belly to collect their eggs.

The eggs were mixed with the male sperm in a bucket to allow them to fertilize. We added water to the eggs to help clean off the sperm once they were fertilized. After the male and female fish were milted and de-egged, we took the fish and recovered them. We did this by putting them in water and moving them back and forth allowing oxygen to enter their bodies so they can get enough strength to swim away. When they were fully recovered we then let them back into the lake. We would like to thank all MNR and Fish Hatchery Staff that came out to volunteer their time.

On Oct. 15, we headed to Joy Bible Camp around 9:00 a.m. When we got there we all went to our assigned stations to get set up for the nine different elementary schools that would be arriving shortly. The students from these schools were between grades two and four. The activities that we were assisting in were: no water off a ducks back, the scoop on dirt, it's a trout's life, creeks and critters', 'time for turtles', 'wetland metaphors', 'what is a wetland scavenger hunt', and 'natural filters'. All of these activities taught the kids about wetlands and the conservation of wetlands.

There were also two very special activities that were going on for the kids. One of the activities was Detector Dog, run by Canine Conservation Officer Colin Cotnam and his trusty partner Tanner the dog, from the Bancroft Ministry of Natural Resources. He explained to the kids all about his dog, Tanner. He talked about how Tanner is trained, what he is trained for, and all the training collars he uses and what they are specifically used for. He took Tanner outside to show the kids his obeying skills. Tanner also performed tracking skills.

The most exciting part of all was when Michael Gunter of the NOS class volunteered to be the test victim for an attack exercise. Michael was wearing a bite sleeve and to get bit safely by Tanner. Colin gave Tanner the signal to attack and as he did, the dog did not hold back and gave a good bite. Tanner was ordered down and taken away, but had second thoughts about getting him again afterwards.

The second activity was called the Retriever Dog run by Dan Rapson of the Bancroft Retriever Club. Dan and his Black Lab put on quite the show for the kids. At this activity somebody out in the field threw a duck without the dog seeing. Then the dog had to go find the duck and retrieve it to Dan. To help guide the dog to the duck, Dan had to use his signals to lead the dog in the right direction.

This year we are back into selling raffle tickets to help raise money for our NOS program. This years raffle prizes include, a 450 E Husqvarna chainsaw with case, spare chain and a 6 pack of oil, Evening Retreat Print, Northern Cross Print, 12 pk Advanced Snowmobile Oil, 5 Cubic Yards of landscaping mulch, Hunting and fishing pkg, 2 20lb Propane cylinder and Golf shirt, Fountain made of concrete and a Small cooler bag and two hats.

Tickets are two dollars each and three for five dollars. All the NOS students have their own set of tickets to sell and will also be selling tickets at local Bancroft businesses. You can also get them in the main office of the high school. The date of the draw will be on Jan. 15, 2010 from 7pm to 9 p.m. All money goes directly back to the NOS program.

NHHS NOS student Logan Gravelle, shows some elementary school students the effect that oil can have on bird feathers, and the difficulty in trying to clean them after events like an oil spill./Photo by Ken MacPherson