

Clam Lake Elk Herd Update

Laine Stowell & Matt McKay

July through September 2008; Vol. 08, Issue 3

Photo by: Chris Frasch



Current Status: We reported in Vol. 8, Issue 2 (as of July 5th) we estimated we had 150 elk. Since then we documented 2 mortalities of marked animals. Extrapolating marked to unmarked for the cohorts of those lost, leaves us 146 elk at the end of the 3rd quarter. Loss of the marked animals, battery failures and dropped collars from bulls 188 and 192 leave 74 elk with functioning collars.

Elk Research on the Clam Lake Herd: No word from Trina Weiland—apparently her graduate thesis on liver fluke and brain worm infestation of Clam Lake Elk is still pending. We will share those findings when they arrive.

In early September Elk Project staff applied 4 tons per acre lime on the three 1.5 acre treatment plots of the forage quality project. Next April we will place forage cages on treatment and control areas and apply the nitrogen and potash fertilizer immediately after the ELF line firms up, probably in early May. Then in mid June we will again measure plant composition, forage quality differences, and elk activity on treated and control sections.

Elk Health Issues: We received mortality signals for yearling heifer 210 in August and bull calf 239 at the end of September. Both were confirmed wolf predations.

Population Monitoring: During this quarter we made 970 telemetry location determinations and 1,898 telemetry mortality checks.

Public Education: During this quarter we gave 6 elk presentations to a total of 822 participants. We also gave 2 print and 2 radio interviews.

Third Quarter Highlights:

- Current Elk Populations = 146 elk
- Two new Conservation Easements Projects
- CWD Testing in Northern Wisconsin
- The Bugling season comes to a close



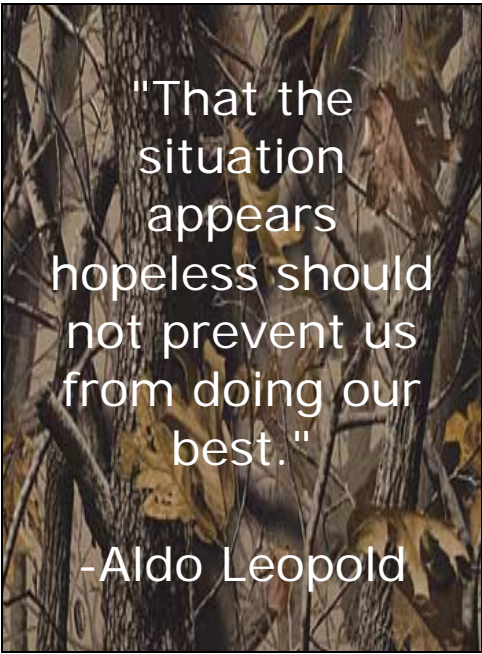
For more information please contact:

Laine Stowell
WI DNR
10220 State Hwy 27
Hayward, WI 54843

715-634-9658x3527

Or on our Web Site at:

<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/Elk/>



"That the situation appears hopeless should not prevent us from doing our best."

-Aldo Leopold

Habitat Development: In September we had contractor Doug Lebal remove debris and stumps and "root-rake" a 1.8 acre site on the Reierson property south of Clam Lake and a 3.5 acre site on the Chisholm property northwest of Clam Lake. These sites were then picked of stones, disked, dragged, and planted to orchard grass, timothy, alsike and New Zealand white clover. Both sites were completed on September 19th and the plantings have germinated and are growing. Both areas are in hot spot elk use areas, in particular, high use calving areas, plus, both sites border and augment other habitat development projects. They will provide high quality forage for pregnant and lactating cows during the calving and rearing season. Special thanks are due to Matt Waldvogel and Doug Lebal for donating their operating time and use of their "front end loaders" for picking stones, plus the diligent efforts, sweat and tears of the dozens of RMEF and Whiskey Jack volunteers who hand picked many a ton of stone! Also thanks to Lowell Tesky and Todd Zawacki for their lumberjack expertise in preparation of said sites.

2008 Mating Season: We heard our first bugle on August 25. The first half of September was cool. There was an above average level of bugling by bulls this year, with bugling extending into the second half of September. The second half of September was warmer, but probably not to the extent that bull fertility was impacted. We estimate that there were about 10 herd bulls with harems with adequate satellite bulls to keep healthy competition going. This seasons activity was similar to what we observed in 2005, so we're concerned that we might again have a long drawn out calving season like we saw in 2006. We'll see.

Partnerships: We continue to provide support to UWSP and USFS on their elk related projects. The USFS has finalized their Travel Management Rule that goes into effect in January. Jean Higgins, Forest Superintendent, selected Alternative 3, which includes seasonal closures during the calving season of several select roads and permanent closure of one small section that goes through an elk wintering and calving area in close proximity of State Highway 77 where numerous elk vehicle collisions have occurred.

With technical assistance by Jason Kugel of TAPCO, Jeff Morden brought back on-line the middle warning light receiving station in mid September. It had been put out of action by lightning. After some parts were repaired, others replaced, these 2 were able to get this section of the warning system functional again.

Upcoming Events: WDNR Wildlife Staff will be conducting health monitoring in the 18 Northern Region counties this fall by collecting lymph nodes from car killed and hunter harvested deer. This activity will occupy much of Elk Project staff's time this fall. If you harvest an adult deer this fall please cooperate by providing your deer's head to WDNR Wildlife Staff. Contact you local WDNR Service Center for directions. In Sawyer County Collection sites are at the Hayward and Winter deer registration stations, and at "White-tail Country" and "Whiskey Ridge" deer processors. Matt McKay will be at Chequamegon Junction on Saturday and Sunday, October 18th and 19th during the "October Antlerless T Zone. Later, in December, Elk Project staff will begin winter elk trapping to place and replace radio collars.



Bugling Bull - Clam Lake, WI

Photo by: Bill Thornley