



# Thrill of the hunt never dies



Chuck Connelly, left, and his brother-in-law, Matt Arntson, adjust the handgun Connelly uses for hunting deer Wednesday at Orwell Dam during the annual Midwest Outdoors Unlimited disabled deer hunt. Connelly, of Fergus Falls, suffered a stroke last May.

## Deer harvest down in OTC 2,304 taken this year versus 2,698 in 2012

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS— Blustery weather is likely a major reason why Minnesota's firearms deer harvest is down 6 percent from the same point last season, the Department of Natural Resources said Wednesday.

Two weekends into the season, the agency said hunters had registered 128,814 deer.

State Permit Area 239, which includes the city of Fergus Falls and areas east of Highway 78, was down about 15 percent from 2012 based on those preliminary numbers, according to Area Wildlife Supervisor Don Schultz. A preliminary total of 2,304 deer were harvested this year, compared to 2,698 last year.

The season ended Sunday across much of the state except for the series 100 permit zones in northeastern and north-central Minnesota, where the season runs through this coming weekend. A late firearms season begins in part of southeastern Minnesota on Saturday and runs through Dec. 1.

"The weekends really drive the harvest," said Leslie McInenly, the DNR's big game program leader. She noted that opening day Nov. 9 was "wildly windy" in much of the state and it was rainy and windy this past weekend. "The rain had an influence," she said.

Statewide, the antlered buck harvest was down 7 percent and the antlerless harvest was down 5 percent from a year earlier. Deer have seemed especially hard to find in northeastern Minnesota, where the antlerless deer harvest was down 25 percent and the buck harvest was down 9 percent from a year earlier. McInenly said that's partly due to the harsh winter of 2012-13, which affected deer survival over the winter and the number of fawns born this year.

The deer numbers are still preliminary and may change as additional registrations trickle in, she said.

At least three hunters were injured in gun accidents during the opening weekend, said Capt. Mike Hammer of the DNR's enforcement division. The most serious case involved a man whose rifle fell from his deer stand near Long Prairie and discharged when it hit the ground. The bullet struck him in the chest. "He's a lucky man. Should recover," Hammer said.

The other two hunters were less seriously hurt while they were trying to drive deer toward other members of their parties, Hammer said. And there have been a few serious injuries resulting from falls from tree stands, he added.

There have also been a few reports of bullets striking vehicles. McInenly said the state's hunting safety record is improving. She cited firearms safety classes and efforts to educate hunters on deer stand safety.

## Disabled hunters may still enjoy sport with help from friends, Outdoors Unlimited

By Heather Rule  
Daily Journal

Chuck Connelly, of Fergus Falls, suffered a stroke May 1. As a result, he lost the use of his right arm, verbalization and has trouble walking on his own.

"He can put four or five words together," said his brother-in-law, Matt Arntson.

Connelly and Arntson went hunting together all the time. Though things might be a little different after Connelly's stroke, he still had the chance to go hunting this week. He joined five other disabled hunters, their companions and volunteers this week for an annual deer hunt out at Orwell Dam near Fergus Falls.

It's the seventh annual hunt organized at Orwell by Midwest Outdoors Unlimited, a company that provides outdoor recreational activities for disabled American veterans, disabled individuals and disabled youth in Minnesota.

Arntson and Connelly found out about the hunt through the Internet. With the affects of the stroke, Connelly isn't able to hold a shotgun on his right shoulder anymore. He now uses a handgun, and the 40-foot range makes hunting more difficult.

"He never used a handgun before his stroke," Arntson said.

Still, there were plenty of deer around



Heather Rule/Daily Journal

Randy Falknor, of Sartell, gets help from Sam Hunter, of Midwest Outdoors Unlimited, pointing a gun Wednesday at Orwell Dam during the annual Midwest Outdoors Unlimited disabled deer hunt.

for him to choose from. Connelly was so excited about the hunt that he was even sitting in the truck ready to go to Orwell a couple hours before they needed to leave.

"This is just an opportunity that's amazing," Arntson said. "It's a great lift-me-up. He's been looking forward to it."

Midwest Outdoors Unlimited organizes the hunt each year, at no cost to the hunters.

The non-profit organization does accept donations for the hunt.

Ron Welle, CEO and president of Midwest Outdoors Unlimited, started

the hunt "after seeing all the people that needed this," he said.

"Help the ones that weren't as blessed as I was," Welle said. "We don't realize how lucky we are. It's just a challenge to get the right shot for them."

Randy Falknor ranks this hunt right up there with his wedding, the births of his two children and an elk hunt he was on last year.

"My fifth-best-ever experience," Falknor said.

Falknor saw more deer Tuesday than he had in five years at Camp Ripley, he said.

## Romberg decks out church lobby

By Chris Reinoos  
Daily Journal

Mary Ann Romberg lives in a small house with her husband, Loren, both retired schoolteachers. Since retiring, Mary Ann has become passionate about decorating, but her house isn't quite big enough for all the projects she thinks up.

But a few times a year, CrossRoads Church provides the space Romberg needs for these projects.

Romberg has worked as the church's decorator for the last four years, setting up Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter displays. This year's two Thanksgiving displays, one in the foyer and the other



Chris Reinoos/Daily Journal

Mary Ann Romberg and her husband, Loren, set up the Thanksgiving display at CrossRoads Church this year. She likes to use all kinds of products, from branches found in roadside ditches to pumpkins grown in her home garden.

## Some Otter Tail Power customers fall victim to scam

By Chris Reinoos  
Daily Journal

Otter Tail Power Co. officials are warning customers to be on the lookout for potentially suspicious phone calls as part of a utility scam.

Some people have been receiving calls from a person claiming to be a representative from Otter Tail Power. In other instances, a caller has claimed to be from Xcel Energy and has falsely indicated Otter Tail Power is a subsidiary of Xcel.

The caller's phone ID appears to come from the utility company, a practice known as "spoofing."

See **Church** — Page 3

See **Scam** — Page 2

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**OBITUARIES**  
 In today's Journal, **Page 2**  
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