

# An October Deer Hunt

## Taking Time to Participate in the Early Antlerless Deer Hunt.

Terry Bitz of Outdoor Convergence

I stepped out of the garage early last Saturday morning to find the skies completely clear. Even with the moon shining brightly, the stars were easily visible. Looking up, the first constellation I saw was Orion who in Greek mythology was a great hunter. It was a fitting sight considering I was heading out to do some deer hunting that morning.

Saturday and Sunday were last 2 days of the 4 day antlerless deer hunt. The October hunt returned this year after a one year suspension. It occurs only in those deer management units that the DNR has designated as CWD or Herd Control zones. I haven't hunted the early deer hunt for a long time, but decided at the last minute to hunt Saturday and Sunday even if only for a few hours each of the days.

I drove out to the 1200 acre New Munster Wildlife Area which is located near Twin Lakes. I have spent little time actually deer hunting this location but, I have a couple of spots that I have marked into my handheld GPS for such an occasion.

When I arrived at the hunting area, I quickly gathered my gear and raced off to make sure I would be the first hunter to one of those spots. Once there, I settled in and relaxed knowing I had 40 minutes before the legal start of the hunting day. My chosen location was the side of a path that allowed me to look over part of a partially picked corn field and also a large area of prairie grass that lead to one of the area's many marshes.



In the dark, I could hear other hunters making their way into the woods including one hunter that must have scared up a flock of geese resting on one of the nearby ponds. That hunter's heart probably skipped a few beats when those geese noisily took flight.

**Two pheasant hunters who were sharing the woods with deer hunters**

As the shooting start time came and went, there were no gunshots ringing out either nearby or in the distance; possibly not surprising considering the small size of the local herd. I didn't hear any shots until after sunrise and those that I did hear were far away and sounded like waterfowlers unleashing a barrage instead of a deer hunter firing a slug or bullet.

Though I was disappointed in the lack of deer activity, it was turning out to be a beautiful sunrise. The rising sun lit up the fall colors on the trees to my west while the early morning fog draped the hills like a blanket. It was a scene fit for a calendar.

It was during one of my moments staring at the hills that I heard a noise to my right. I slowly turned my head to see a hunter coming around the corner heading towards me. He stopped and asked if I had seen any deer. When I replied in the negative, he asked if I had seen any pheasants. Again I said, "No".

It turned out he was pheasant hunting. I had forgotten it was the opening day of the pheasant hunting season. After a couple minutes, he left to continue his own hunt. It dawned on me as he rounded a bend out of my sight that the pheasant season didn't actually start until noon. That hunter was out a little too early. I heard him fire a shot 15 minutes later. I have no idea if he hit his target.

About an hour later I noticed a male pheasant crossing the trail to my left. He settled down into one of the partially picked corn rows amongst some pushed over corn stalks. I wondered if he was the one the hunter had taken a shot at.

The morning quickly passed and I decided to call it a day just before 11 am as there was work needing to be done at home and there didn't appear to be much deer activity.

While walking out, I stopped to chat with another hunter named Bob Mahoney who had just settled in for some deer hunting of his own. I found out that Mahoney, who lives in Racine, is knowledgeable about firearms and ammunition. We talked for a bit about firearms and he gave me some advice about ammunition for my rifle. I wished him luck then I headed to my truck.

When I got there, the parking lot was filling up and much of that was due to pheasant hunters coming out for opening day. There were hunters and dogs all over the place. The thought came to my mind that it would be an interesting afternoon to be out in the woods with large numbers of deer and pheasant hunters sharing the same area. I am sure the deer and pheasants were not nearly as amused.

Terry Bitz