

# MICHIGAN OUT-OF-DOORS™

OCTOBER 2001

A PUBLICATION OF MICHIGAN UNITED CONSERVATION CLUBS™ [www.mucc.org](http://www.mucc.org)

\$3<sup>50</sup>

## FARMLAND WHITETAILS

**BEATING**  
*String Jump*

**Houghton Lake**  
**DUCKS**

*Homemade*  
**FIELD BLINDS**

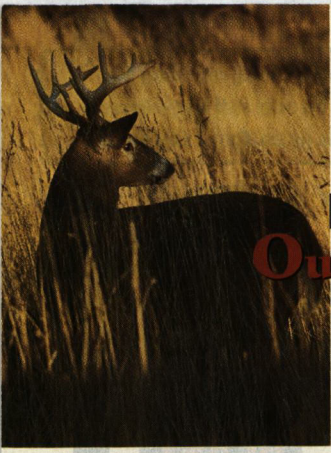
New-Millennium  
**RIFLES**

### **Also:**

- *Salmon Success*
- *1856 Bear Hunt*
- *How CCW Works*
- *Art of Taxidermy*



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## Our Cover

Michigan deer often are farmland game animals, like this buck in a grain field photographed by Ron St. Germain. In this issue, writer Gordon Putnam discusses hunting whitetails in agricultural areas in both the archery and firearm seasons, Tom Nelson instructs on how to keep a low profile in the deer woods, and Michael Veine describes how bow hunters can overcome a deer's ability to react before the arrow arrives.

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# MICHIGAN MEANDERS

BY TOM HUGGLER



## MAKE MINE A MUSKIE

From 20 miles away, buildings in Detroit looked like cardboard cutouts in the hazy heat of late June. Rubbing tears of stinging sweat from my eyes, I squinted to see them better from our vantage point on the Canadian side of Lake St. Clair.

We were trolling for muskellunge in the shallow, bathtub-warm water, not far from the Detroit River drain plug, when somebody yelled "Fish on!" for—according to my notes—the 16th time that afternoon.

Six of those muskies had spit crankbait hooks back at us. This one, hopefully number 10 to come aboard, appeared to be well-hooked—a good sign because this was no 10-pound fish. It was bigger than 20 pounds, than 30 pounds, and it was as long as a railroad tie. It was a 33- to 35-pound muskie. We'll never know for sure because after angler Erik Moin of Grosse Pointe Farms fought the monster fish into submission, Capt. Don Miller hoisted it aboard for a quick photo and measurement (it taped exactly 50 inches) and gently returned it to the lake.

"I haven't lost a muskie in five years," said Miller, who helps clients catch at least 200 each season from early June to October from his 30-foot Baha Cruiser, *Muskie Hunter*.

Something has changed on Lake St. Clair, arguably North America's most famous muskie hole. Muskellunge now have to be at least 42 inches to keep on both the American and Canadian portions of the lake. No one wants to kill a fish that big in these days of digital photography and replica mounts. Accordingly, the lake has responded with both quality and quantity of fish.

Last year a fly fisherman caught and released a 62-inch brute that weighed 52 to 55 pounds. Muskies that big are extremely rare. Since Miller began fishing for them 30 years ago as a 17-year-old in a rowboat, his best fish is a 56-inch, 44-pounder, a muskie he says was only "one walleye meal away from the Michigan record of 47 pounds, 12 ounces."

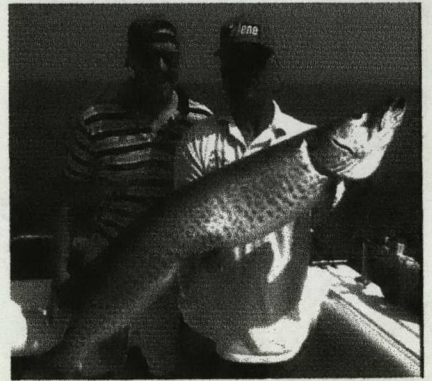
The moody, hard-to-catch muskellunge is supposed to be "the fish of 10,000 casts," according to legendary Lake St. Clair professionals like the late Percy Haver and Homer LeBlanc who competed for records during the fishery's heyday shortly after WW II. They killed fish in those days of liberal limits and long angling seasons. Today, barbless hooks and catch-and-release are

the norm.

A larger, more stable population and refined catching tactics give anglers more opportunity to hook up with what some claim is freshwater fishing's ultimate trophy. Everything about today's sport is specialized: 40-pound-test monofilament with 100-pound-test leaders, saltwater-tough reels, stove poker-stiff power rods to 10 feet long, and massive trolling plugs with names like Terminator and Believer. LeBlanc, who died in 1994 at age 92, invented the core tactic of speed-trolling at 5 mph with lures close to the boat, a method still in vogue.

Capt. Miller fished with LeBlanc late in the old guide's life. "Before Homer died, he gave me 70 years of fishing records," Miller says. "On winter days I read them and continue to learn from the master."

Our seven-hour troll, which covered almost 34 miles, was a phenomenal day of action. Especially lucky was Moin, who



As Erik Moin looks over his shoulder, Capt. Don Miller prepares to release the 50-inch muskie Moin battled on Lake St. Clair. *Outdoor Images photo by Tom Huggler*

caught the day's other big fish—a 46-inch, 24-pounder.

For information about guided muskie fishing on Lake St. Clair, contact Capt. Don Miller at 734/429-9551.

## TRACKS™ QUIZ

BY CHRISTIE BLECK



### THE SQUIRREL FAMILY

The October *Tracks Magazine*™, published by the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, features *Sciurus* the fox squirrel. Most people are familiar with the antics of this common mammal, and may even take it for granted, for it's a really interesting animal. Take this quiz to find out why. To learn more, ask for a free October issue by contacting Christie Bleck, Michigan United Conservation Clubs, Box 30235, Lansing, MI 48909; 517/346-6464; [cbleck@mucc.org](mailto:cbleck@mucc.org)

1. Fox squirrels open nuts by a levering technique of their: A-Upper incisors. B-Lower incisors. C-Molars. D-Hands.
2. Fox squirrels can mate: A-In summer only. B-In spring and summer. C-In late autumn. D-Any time of the year.
3. The eyes of young fox squirrels typically open in the: A-First few days. B-First week. C-Fifth week. D-12th week.
4. Which Michigan squirrel family member comes in two color phases? A-Fox squirrel. B-Gray squirrel. C-Red squirrel. D-Woodchuck.
5. The patagium of a flying squirrel is: A-A flap on its tail. B-A flap between its limbs. C-Webbing between its toes. D-Its jaw line.
6. Which Michigan squirrel has a prominent white eye ring? A-Red squirrel. B-Southern flying squirrel. C-Fox squirrel. D-Gray squirrel.
7. Which typically is the favorite food of fox squirrels? A-Beetles. B-Eggs. C-Nuts. D-Gall insects.
8. Which of these Michigan squirrel family members is nocturnal? A-Eastern chipmunk. B-Gray squirrel. C-Woodchuck. D-Southern flying squirrel.
9. This is the largest arboreal, or tree-dwelling, squirrel in Michigan. A-Fox squirrel. B-Gray squirrel. C-Northern flying squirrel. D-Red squirrel.
10. Young fox squirrels have milk teeth that are replaced by permanent teeth when they are this age: A-One month old. B-Two to three months old. C-Six months to one year old. D-One to two years old.

ANSWERS: 1-B 2-C 3-B 4-A 5-A 6-B 7-C 8-D 9-B 10-C