

# IN DA WOODS - SPECIAL EDITION

By Melanie B. Fullman, Bessemer District Ranger, US Forest Service

## Hunting & Fishing Opps. on the Ottawa National Forest



There are nearly 1 million acres on the Ottawa National Forest, located at the western end of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Here, the Ottawa extends from the south shore of Lake Superior to the Wisconsin border. This is an area rich in wildlife viewing opportunities, breathtaking scenery, and hundreds of lakes, rivers, and waterfalls. Spectacular fall colors, fluffy snowfalls, and springs and summers full of wildflowers and wildlife make the Ottawa a great place to visit, and LIVE!

In particular, the Ottawa National Forest offers premier hunting and fishing. In addition to the information below, we hope you will contact us at one of our District offices, call our Forest Headquarters (906-932-1330), or check-out our website: [www.fs.fed.us/r9/ottawa](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/ottawa).

### Hunting

Hunting is a major recreational activity on the Ottawa National Forest. Deer, black bear, and grouse hunting is considered to be excellent. Hunting for small game, waterfowl, and furbearers is also quite

popular. The big game deer season, along with dispersed camping, is probably the biggest attraction.

All hunters on the Ottawa are required to obtain and possess a valid State of Michigan hunting license and to obey all fish and game regulations. Most forest campgrounds are open during the hunting season, although roads may not be plowed and potable water is usually not available. In campgrounds on the Ottawa Forest, campers and tents can be placed only on the campsites provided. There is a limit of 8 people per campsite and a maximum stay limit of 14 days in developed campgrounds. Dispersed camping is allowed elsewhere on the Forest with a maximum stay limit in one location of 16 days.

Trapping is another popular activity. With over 500 named lakes and 2,000 miles of rivers and streams, opportunities are abundant. All trappers must abide by the State of Michigan Trapping rules and regulations and must hold a license if required.

### Fishing

In the Upper Peninsula, the Michigan trout season runs from the last Saturday in April to Sep. 30. Later seasons are set for bass, walleye, northern pike, and muskellunge. Generally, May and June are the best months for lake fishing on the Ottawa; July and August are somewhat slower, with September and October somewhere in between.

Stream fishing for salmon and steelhead usually picks up around April 1 in streams with an extended trout-salmon season, such as the East Branch of the Ontonagon River, north of M-28, or those with no closed season, such as the Black River. The best fishing on these streams starts around mid-Sep. and lasts until snow. Stream fishing for resident trout is generally best near the end of the legal season, especially for brook trout, which begin their upstream migration at this time.

Walleye and crappie tend to bite under low light conditions in early morning, late evening or on overcast days. You will probably want to fish for bass, crappie, pike, and panfish near logs, brush, or in weedy areas. In bright sunlight and after storms or cold snaps, most fish tend to go deeper and are harder to get to bite. Live bait and deeper, slower fishing works better under these conditions.

All fishing activities are regulated by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (MDNRE). Michigan Fishing Guides are generally available wherever fishing licenses are sold; please check the Guide for specific legal fishing dates and other fishing regulations.

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