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Grafton man believed to have suffered aneurysm while in tree stand in Marathon

Shawn Lemanski

Opening day of gun deer hunting season turned tragic for a local family when Shawn Lemanski of Grafton was found dead at the bottom of his tree stand in the Town of Marathon.

Lemanski apparently died of a brain aneurysm that caused him to fall from the stand, his wife Lisa Gelhar said.

“The autopsy wasn’t conclusive, but the coroner said it probably was an aneurysm,” Gelhar said.

Lemanski’s death occurred during what Department of Natural Resources termed a safe opening weekend to the gun season, with only three two-party gun-related injuries reported statewide.

Lemanski had tied himself to the tree stand as a safety precaution, but the rope broke in the fall, his wife said.

Lemanski was found at 5:30 p.m. by his brothers, who went looking for him when he didn’t return. He was hunting on land owned by his brother and father.

Deer hunting is a family tradition that Lemanski looked forward to all year, his wife said.

“He was a deer hunter at heart,” she said.

His funeral was scheduled for Wednesday, Nov. 21, in Marathon.

A complete obituary can be found on page 13B.

The news of Lemanski’s death stunned his boss and co-workers at Eddie’s Service in

Saukville, where he was a mechanic.

“It was a shock,” said Paul Krauska, owner of Eddie’s Service. “Shawn loved hunting. His whole family did. He was a character, always laughing and joking. He loved working on cars. He was a good employee.”

According to DNR figures, the opening weekend of this year’s gun season was successful with more deer registered statewide and in Ozaukee County than last year. Statewide, 134,722 deer were registered, a 19% increase over last year.

In Ozaukee County, 201 deer — 95 bucks and 106 anterless deer — were registered. That is a 28% increase over last year when 157 deer — 79 bucks and 78 anterless deer — were registered opening weekend.

Although not an official registration station, activity at Blau’s Saukville Meats, which processes deer, is usually a good indication of how successful hunters are. This is the busiest they’ve been so early in the season.

“I don’t know how many deer we have, but we have two semi-trailers full,” owner Mark Blau said Tuesday.

“With the warm weather, everybody had to bring them in right away. I would hope they’re all going to processors and not hanging.”

Normally, hunters trickle in with their deer with the biggest influx near the end of the gun season, but not this year, he said.

“We’ll have to wait until the end to see if more deer are taken,” Blau said. “I haven’t heard any good stories. We’ve learned to keep conversations short otherwise you hear all the stories.”

About a dozen deer processed at Blau’s have been donated to food pantries in Port Washington, Saukville and Random Lake and Family Sharing in Grafton.

At Harrington Beach State Park, hunters, who can use only bows or muzzleloaders, took several deer, but Andrew Krueger, park manager, does not know how many since hunters don’t have to report to him.

The muzzleloader season goes until Wednesday, Dec. 5, and the bow season until Jan. 6.

Hunters are not allowed around Quarry Lake and the Welcome Center, which are popular places for hikers, but visitors should be cautious, Krueger warned. Hunting areas are posted.

Ten hunters were issued permits to hunt at Ozaukee County-owned Lion’s Den Gorge Nature Preserve in the Town of Grafton, which is closed during the gun season. The park will reopen Monday, Nov. 26, but bow hunters can hunt through Jan. 6, so visitors should also be cautious there.

No hunting-related complaints were received by the Ozaukee County Sheriff Department, and only a few complaints were reported to DNR Warden Sean Neverman.

Some people complained about deer drives on public land, but drives are allowed, Neverman said. There was also a report of a hunter not wearing blaze orange and several reports of hunting after hours.

“The deer hunt has been good,” Neverman said. “I’ve talked with a lot of hunters in the county and they’ve seen a number of deer.”

Private lands that are open for hunting and other uses in exchange for tax credits were being used, he said, and no problems were reported.

“One man said his son got a six-point buck on one of the parcels,” Neverman said.