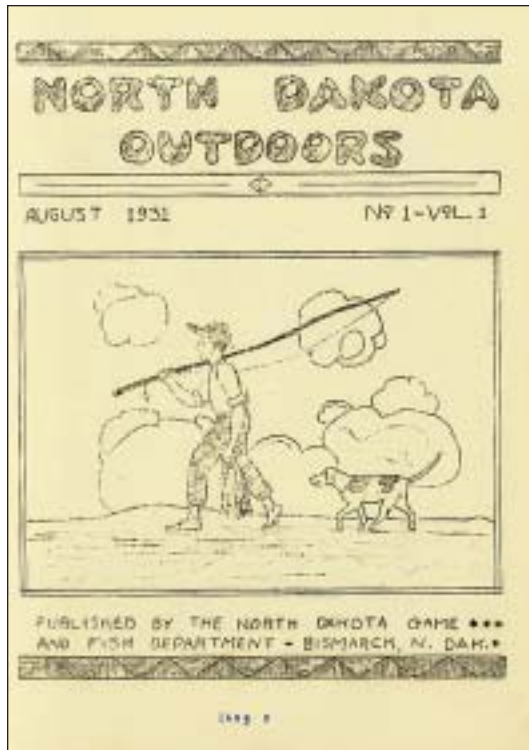


# 75 years

## IN PRINT



By Ron Wilson

*North Dakota OUTDOORS* has reached a milestone as 2006 marks the 75th year of publication.

In August 1931, the first issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS* – simply a five-page bulletin, if you don't count the cover – was published and made available to the public. At the time, it was believed that educating and informing people was one of the most important fields in conservation work.

That view hasn't changed in 75 years.

*“With this issue the North Dakota OUTDOORS makes its entry into the extensive list of publications devoted to the cause of conservation . . . It is the hope of those responsible for the compiling of*

*this bulletin that its contents will be such as to provoke serious thought on the part of the readers to the problems of perpetuating and conserving the many varieties of game that are native to this state,”* according to the first issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.

Here's to 75 more years of serious thought.

In 1951, North Dakotans hunted pronghorns for the first time in more than a half-century. "Bowman, Beach and Watford City had become overcrowded cities. One woman in Bowman reported that, although she was not in business of renting out rooms, she had seventeen telephone calls requesting a place to sleep ..." according to the November 1951 *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.

The hunter pictured here shot her pronghorn buck in western North Dakota in 1957, just the sixth season (the season was closed in 1953) in many, many years.

"North Dakota is the eastern edge of the pronghorn's range. Historical records show that the pronghorn was abundant in the 1800s, ranging statewide. Following the arrival of settlers, and subsequent land-use changes, the population fell to an estimated 225 animals in the 1920s and to about 50 animals in 1940," according to February 2005 *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.

In 2005, the pronghorn population in the state was estimated at 15,000 animals. That year the largest number of pronghorn gun licenses ever was issued to hunters in North Dakota.



Restoration of giant Canada geese in North Dakota is a success story. Nearly extinct in the 1920s, efforts to reestablish the big bird began in 1969 when a flock was established at Slade Lake National Wildlife Refuge near Dawson.

Large-scale releases of hand-reared Canada geese began in 1972. This photograph taken July 15, 1974, documents one of those releases near Ryder in Ward County.

"The success of the releases will be measured to a large degree by the number and distribution of nesting Canada geese in the state in the years to come," according to February 1973 *North Dakota OUTDOORS*. "A restoration project is well on its way to fulfillment when released geese and their offspring nest successfully, migrate and return, and ... behave in a wild manner."

Mission accomplished.

"Resident Canada goose numbers in North Dakota remain high and are well above objective levels," reported in the 2006 August-September *North Dakota OUTDOORS*. "The Department's May breeding duck survey showed an increase from 190,670 Canada geese in 2005 to 206,860 birds in 2006."

Since 2000, North Dakota has held an early September season statewide to help reduce the resident giant Canada goose population.



Chinook salmon were introduced into Lake Sakakawea three decades ago and have since provided anglers with the opportunity to catch a hard-fighting fish that is many, many miles removed from its native waters.

*“The last two falls, many North Dakota fishermen met the chinook salmon, and liked what they met,”* reported the November 1980 *North Dakota OUTDOORS*. *“Almost unbelievable . . . it is now possible to catch big chinooks here in North Dakota, far from their North Pacific home. Several hundred chinooks weighing over 12 pounds have been caught by fishermen, with the largest weighing over 19 pounds.”*

This 1980 photograph, shot just four years after the chinook’s introduction into Sakakawea, was taken during fall spawning operations at Sakakawea.

The 30-year story of salmon in the big lake has been somewhat of a rollercoaster, following the rise and fall of a reservoir that is, many would argue, managed more for downstream interests than upstream recreation. When Sakakawea water levels are down – as they have been for several years – populations of the salmon’s main forage, rainbow smelt, decline.

*“The decline of the smelt population was/is ultimately manifested in the salmon population,”* according to November 1993 *North Dakota OUTDOORS*. *“Due to the continued decrease in the forage base, salmon began to show signs of stress. The most obvious indicator was poorer growth . . .”*

These deer hunters, pictured near a Dickinson café in 1957, filled two of only 33,000-plus licenses issued to hunters that year. The 1957 North Dakota deer gun season was also just the fourth season held without interruption. From 1931 to 1953, the state held just 13 seasons. During that 22-year stretch, North Dakotans were lucky to get a season every other year or so.

*“On the seventh of next month, North Dakota deer hunters will sally forth with the best chances for success that they have ever had,”* reported the October 1952 *North Dakota OUTDOORS*. *“Estimates of the total deer population this fall range all the way up to 45,000 deer. As always, heaviest populations of deer are along the course of the Missouri River, but greater numbers are found in each section of the state than at any time in recent history. It is doubtful if there ever was a time when the state held more deer than it does today.”*

Things have changed.

For six years running, starting in 2001, the Game and Fish Department has made available more than 100,000 licenses to hunters – more than double the estimated statewide deer population in 1952.





The July 1989 issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS* was dedicated entirely to the Game and Fish Department's enforcement division. This may have been the most in-depth – but certainly not the only – look into the duties of game wardens in North Dakota. Photos, like this one from the 1950s of a Game and Fish warden checking a trapper, have appeared often.

*“The game warden appears early in the history of the Game and Fish Department. He was the principal symbol of authority at a time when wildlife management strategy consisted of stocking game and fish and enforcing law to protect them. Later, when wildlife management crossed the threshold to a more scientific approach to problems of wildlife restoration, the game warden's role broadened and was integrated into the overall mission of the Game and Fish Department,”* reported the July 1989 *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.

In just the fifth issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS* in 1931, the functions of a game warden were detailed: *“The warden is expected to be the eyes and ears of the Department in the district which is assigned to him . . . regardless of weather and road conditions he is called upon to investigate the complaints received from his district, and in the performance of these duties he encounters no small amount of physical discomfort.”*

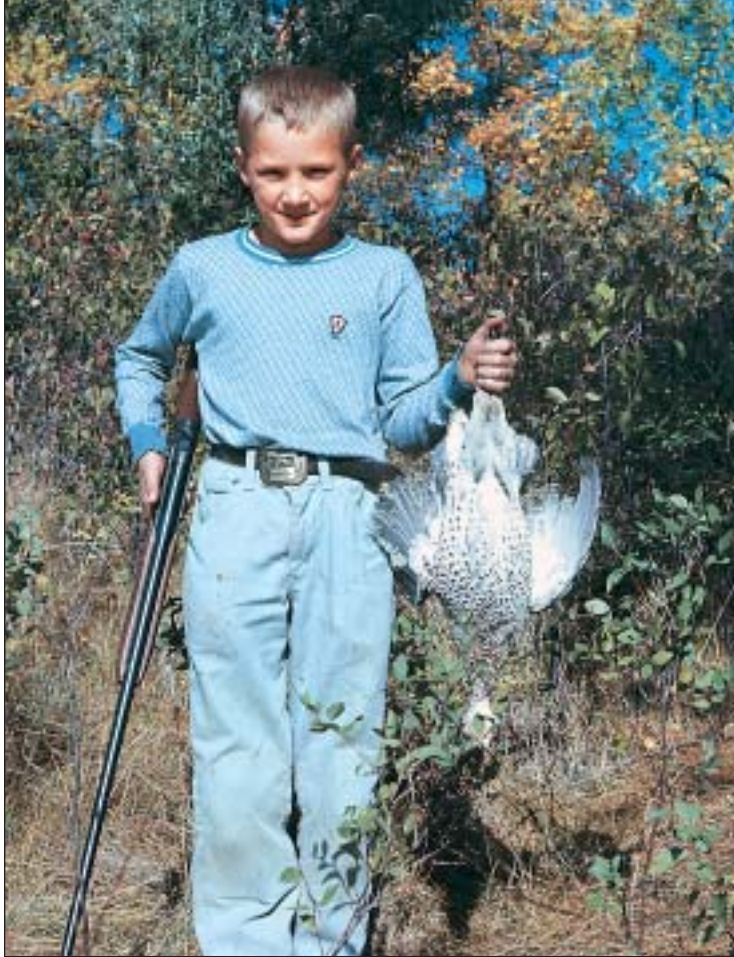
*“North Dakota raises about five times as many ducks each year as our local hunters take during the season,”* according to the November 1951 *North Dakota OUTDOORS*. These two North Dakota waterfowl hunters' bag, photographed sometime in the 1950s, consisted of redheads and canvasbacks.

For 75 years, articles in *North Dakota OUTDOORS* have chronicled waterfowl in North Dakota. It's been a rollercoaster ride for these popular migrants as seen in magazine headlines:

- “Biggest Duck Flight in 15 years . . .” (1942)
- “Let's Face the Waterfowl Crisis” (1947)
- “Spring Duck Numbers Down Again” (1990)
- “Duck Brood Numbers Second Highest on Record” (1995)

*“Whatever the regulations, when the North Dakota hunter goes afield in quest of waterfowl, he is extremely fortunate. With large areas to hunt over, a wide variety of species to choose from, comparatively few hunters afield, and great number of both geese and ducks available, he enjoys hunting conditions that few other areas can offer,”* according to the November 1951 *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.





Longtime *North Dakota OUTDOORS* readers may recognize the youngster in this photo (or at least the name), posing with his first sharp-tailed grouse in the late 1960s. It's Tom Bry, son of Ed Bry, editor of this magazine for about 24 years, starting in December 1962.

Many photos of friends and family have often appeared in *North Dakota OUTDOORS* over the years, which make sense, considering these are the people we spend most of our time with outdoors.

The theme of sharing time outdoors in North Dakota with those we are closest to has been a staple in the magazine for years.

*"My mind drifted back to the promise I made to a little girl, almost seven years ago. On this day that promise was kept: on this day she showed me she was ready. Whether Rachel decides to hunt or not is of little importance. She knows that hunting is more than killing and she has the qualities that I want in a partner,"* wrote Harold Umber in the November 2002 *North Dakota OUTDOORS*, of taking his granddaughter on her first sharp-tailed grouse hunt. Umber was the editor of this magazine for 16-plus years.

Pick up just about any issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS* published in the last 75 years and you'll invariably find something having to do with habitat. It might be an article about tree plantings, providing the proper cover to help the state's animals endure winter weather, or simply a photo (like the one shown here) of a wildlife manager surveying available habitat.

Wildlife managers 75, 50 and 25 years ago understood what today's professionals preach – the importance of habitat. Little has changed. *"In the mid-'30s when biological principles were applied to game management, it soon became apparent that habitat restoration was the key to natural game abundance,"* according to the March 1961 *North Dakota OUTDOORS*. *"It still is the key ..."*

Ditto in the 2000s: *"However, the common thread for wildlife survival has been and continues to be abundant habitat ... Supplemental feeding of wildlife is of very little benefit to the animal for survival. As we often mention, the key is cover. It begins and ends with habitat,"* according to the November 2005 *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.

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