



BUFFALOBERRY PATCH

BY GREG FREEMAN, DEPARTMENT NEWS EDITOR

2006 Prairie Chicken Season

A total of 30 prairie chickens and 52 sharp-tailed grouse were taken during the state's 2006 prairie chicken hunting season.

The nine-day October season was open in two units – the north unit in Grand Forks County and the south unit in southeastern North Dakota. Fifty resident hunters were awarded licenses in each unit.

In the north unit hunters bagged 12 prairie chickens and 33 sharptails, while hunters took 18 prairie chickens and 19 sharptails in the south unit.

Hunters had a season limit of two prairie chickens, and a sharptail limit of three daily and 12 in possession.

In the north unit three hunters were successful in taking two prairie chickens, and six hunters bagged one each. In the south unit, six hunters took a limit of prairie chickens, and six other hunters bagged one.

The Department received 299 applications – 175 for the north unit and 124 for the south unit.

The application process and 2007 season information will be announced in July.

CWD Test Results Negative

North Dakota deer and elk populations remain free of chronic wasting disease, according to test results recently received by the Game and Fish Department.

Samples for CWD testing were sent to the Wyoming State Veterinary Lab last December. "We are always hopeful that this will be the outcome," said Erika Butler, North Dakota Game and Fish Department wildlife veterinarian. "We will continue to be aggressive. In addition to testing any suspect animals throughout the year, we plan to continue our hunter-harvested surveillance in the fall."

Samples in 2006 were collected from hunter-harvested deer from all deer hunting

units in the state. "Our volunteer cooperation is overwhelming," Butler said. "We couldn't achieve our goals without their help. Hunters, meat processors, taxidermists and the assistance from other agencies are vital in this process."

Since 2002, nearly 8,500 North Dakota deer and 147 elk have tested negative for CWD. To date, CWD has not been diagnosed in wild or farmed deer or elk in North Dakota.

Chronic wasting disease affects the nervous system of members of the deer family and is always fatal. Scientists have found no evidence that CWD can be transmitted naturally to humans or livestock.

Hunting Guide and Outfitter Test Set

The next guide and outfitter written examination is May 19 at 1 p.m. at the North Dakota Game and Fish Department office in Bismarck. The test is given periodically to anyone interested in becoming a hunting guide or outfitter in the state.

In addition to passing a written exam, qualifications for becoming a guide include a background check for criminal and game and fish violations; certification in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and standard first aid; and employment by or contract with a licensed hunting outfitter.

Hunting outfitter eligibility requirements include the guide qualifications, as well as an individual must have held a hunting guide license for two years; and must have proof of liability insurance.

Those interested are required to preregister by calling the Game and Fish Department's enforcement office at 328-6604.



GREG GULLICKSON

It's never a bad idea to take a kid fishing. And the weekend of June 2-3, it's free.

Free Fishing Days

North Dakota anglers are reminded they can fish for free June 2-3.

That is the weekend North Dakota residents may fish without a license, except for paddlefish. All other fishing regulations apply.

Refer to the 2006-08 North Dakota Fishing Guide for season information.

NDWF Camp for Kids

The North Dakota Wildlife Federation will hold a youth conservation camp August 5-11 at the Triangle Y Camp near Garrison on Lake Sakakawea. Boys and girls ages 12-16 are invited to participate.

Hands-on activities include firearms safety, archery, dog training, boating, fishing, water ecology, outdoor survival, trapshooting, and soil and range studies.

Cosponsored by the Game and Fish Department, the camp is limited to the first 80 kids registered. Cost is \$200, which covers meals and accommodations. For more information, contact the North Dakota Wildlife Federation at 888-827-2557.



RON WILSON

More than 110,000 deer were taken by hunters in 2006.

Record Number of Deer Taken

While the number of deer gun licenses issued in 2006 was not a record, more deer than ever were taken last fall, according to the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's annual harvest survey.

The Department allocated 143,500 deer gun licenses in 2006. Survey data reveals more than 100,000 deer were taken during the gun season, and combined with bow, muzzleloader and youth seasons, the harvest was more than 110,000 deer.

The overall hunter success rate of 76 percent was the same as in 2005 and about average over the past 15 years.

Hunter success for antlered and antlerless white-tailed deer was approximately 76 percent each. Mule deer buck success was 82 percent, while mule deer doe hunters had a success rate of 86 percent.

Bowhunters had a success rate of 42 percent, and 75 percent of the deer harvested by bowhunters were adult bucks. Muzzleloader season hunters had a success rate of 44 percent.

The success rate by young hunters during the youth season increased slightly to 53 percent.

Deer Deadline Nears

Applications for the 2007 deer gun, youth and muzzleloader seasons will be available by about May 15. The deadline for applying is June 6.

Applicants can access the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's website at gf.nd.gov to submit a lottery application online, or to print an application for mailing.

Lottery and gratis applications will be available at Game and Fish offices, county auditors and license vendors. You can also apply by calling 800-406-6409.

Bighorn Sheep Receive Financial Boost

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department received three checks totaling \$95,000 at the Minnesota-Wisconsin Chapter of the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep annual meeting in March.

North Dakota's 2007 bighorn sheep auction license, which allows the winning bidder the rare privilege of pursuing a North Dakota bighorn on a self-guided hunt, sold for a record \$50,000. Along with an annual grant of \$25,000, the Minnesota-Wisconsin conservation group also presented \$20,000 to Game and Fish for last January's transplant of 20 bighorns from Montana's Missouri River Breaks.

The funds will be used to enhance management of North Dakota's bighorn sheep, said Brett Wiedmann, big game biologist, Dickinson. "Minnesota-Wisconsin FNAWS continues to be a strong supporter of bighorn sheep management efforts in North Dakota," Wiedmann said. "They see all the gains we have made, and their enthusiasm is reflected on a national level by the interest shown in our auction tag."

The grant and license auction are part of a 10-year agreement, signed in 1999, between the Department and the Minnesota-Wisconsin conservation group.

Six licenses were issued in 2007, with one auctioned by Minnesota-Wisconsin FNAWS and five allocated by lottery.



CRAIG BHIRLE

Funds collected at the Minnesota-Wisconsin Chapter of the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep annual gathering helps to enhance management of North Dakota bighorns.

Canada Goose Depredation Assistance Available to Landowners

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will combine resources to provide North Dakota agricultural producers with the necessary tools to manage chronic crop depredation caused by Canada geese, according to Greg Link, assistant wildlife chief for the state Game and Fish Department.

The program, in place each spring and summer since 2002, provides landowners with equipment and technical assistance to ward off depredating Canada geese. "As with most problems, an integrated approach using a combination of tools has proven to be the best way to deal with Canada goose depredation," Link said. "In most cases, nonlethal methods work quite well. However, the special depredation permit provides an additional last resort prescription that deals with persistent geese in chronic cases."

Landowners experiencing Canada geese crop depredation for the first time need to contact Wildlife Services so their situation

can be assessed and properly addressed, Link said.

Landowners who were issued and complied with special permits last year already should have received a special permit application packet in March. The special depredation permit, which is valid from April through July, allows each eligible landowner to kill up to 30 geese and destroy 15 nests.

North Dakota's authorization from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service allows for the taking of no more than 6,000 geese and 1,000 nests, including all the eggs.

This is the sixth year the special permits are available to North Dakota landowners. In 2006, 94 landowners used the special permit, taking 1,070 Canada geese (615 adults and 455 goslings) and destroying 101 nests under provisions provided by the permit. Canada geese were taken in 25 counties in eastern and northwestern North Dakota.

Landowners wanting more information about Canada goose depredation assistance can contact the Game and Fish Department at 328-6300.

WMA Users Reminded of Public Use Regulations

A popular springtime activity involves looking for and observing wildlife, and a standard destination is state wildlife management areas.

"We encourage people to get out and use our public lands, and to look at the habitat and watch for the wildlife they support," said Nathaniel Umphrey, Department outreach biologist. "But we also want people to be aware of the public use regulations designed to protect the primary purpose of these areas, which is hunting, fishing and wildlife production."

A complete list of WMA regulations is available by contacting the Game and Fish Department at 701-328-6300, or email ndgf@nd.gov. WMA use regulations are also available on the Game and Fish website at gf.nd.gov.

Some of the regulations include:

- Unless otherwise designated, the use of motorized vehicles is restricted to constructed roads, well-worn trails, and parking areas normally used for passenger cars.
- Watercraft cannot be left unattended unless it is used on a daily basis.
- Littering or the disposal of waste material is prohibited, except in garbage containers where provided.
- Property may not be removed without a permit from the Game and Fish Department.
- Commercial enterprise, including guiding, is prohibited except by lease or permit from the Game and Fish Department.
- Camping for longer than 10 consecutive days is prohibited.
- Group activities involving more than 25 people require a permit issued by the Game and Fish Department.
- Training of hunting dogs is prohibited April 1 through August 15.
- Glass containers are prohibited.
- Fireworks, model rocket engines, or combustible or explosive materials are prohibited.
- Baiting wildlife for any purpose is prohibited.

Defining Sovereign Land

In North Dakota state law, sovereign land is defined as “those areas, including beds and islands, lying below the ordinary high watermark of navigable lakes and *streams*.”

That statement describes *what* sovereign land is. A new publication from the North Dakota Office of the State Engineer will help guide future determinations of exactly *where* sovereign land exists.

Sovereign land is public land, owned by all citizens and managed by the state engineer’s office. A good recognizable example is the sandbars and islands in the Missouri River. These are public lands, even though one or both sides of the river in the same area are privately owned.

While islands are relatively easy to define, sovereign land often extends inland from the water’s edge. The point where sovereign land becomes private land is the “ordinary high watermark.”

The exact location of that line between public and private land has been a point of contention on many occasions in the last few decades. Some examples are attempts to include sovereign land as part of private property sales, private landowners trying to prevent people from hunting on sovereign land, and developers trying to encroach on public land.

The new publication, “Ordinary High Water Mark Delineation Guidelines,” is a



CRAIG BIRKLE

These islands/sandbars in the Missouri River north of Bismarck would be considered sovereign land and open to public access.

resource for Office of State Engineer staff to use for defining the boundaries between public and private land.

Unlike most property boundaries, which are usually fenced or otherwise marked, the line between sovereign and private land is often determined by succession of vegetation. The high watermark is defined in law as “that line below which the action of the water is frequent enough to prevent the growth of vegetation or to restrict its growth to predominantly wetland species.”

Not only are sovereign land boundaries not surveyed, they can change over time as river courses change or a lake’s water level rises.

The guideline is a product of a statewide

sovereign land planning process. During the planning stages it became apparent that in order to improve consistency and efficiency in defining sovereign-private land boundaries, a specific set of guidelines was necessary.

“This guide should help regulators in delineating those problem areas where land use or access conflicts have arisen between private property owners and the public,” said Steve Dyke, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department’s conservation section supervisor.

The high watermark guidelines are available on the State Water Commission website at <http://www.swc.state.nd.us>, under the Reports and Publications tab.

NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS
ON TELEVISION

| City | Station | Day | Time |
|-------------|---------|-----------|-----------|
| WILLISTON | KUMV | Tuesday | 10 pm |
| | KXMD | Monday | noon |
| DICKINSON | KQCD | Tuesday | 9 pm (MT) |
| | KXMA | Sunday | 9 pm (MT) |
| MINOT | KNOT | Tuesday | 10 pm |
| | KXMC | Monday | noon |
| BISMARCK | KFYR | Tuesday | 10 pm |
| | KXMB | Sunday | 10 pm |
| | CATV | Saturday | noon |
| GRAND FORKS | WDAZ | Wednesday | 5 pm |
| FARGO | KVRR | Sunday | 9 pm |



WARDEN STORIES



Bill Schaller

Over the Limit

By Bill Schaller

The rumor line was generating reports of people taking over-limits of trout from Davis Dam, a small water-

shed reservoir west of Amidon in Slope County. Since local anglers would possibly recognize the local district game warden, I was assigned to head down there from my home base in Killdeer to see if I could come up with anything.

While the trip is more than 100 miles, it was not unpleasant duty, as Davis Dam is one of the more scenic fishing spots in the state. Nestled in the heart of the southern badlands, in most years it's also a good trout, bass and bluegill fishery.

I took off early one morning in my own pickup, and after I arrived, began to fish just like everyone else who would show up later. I did not have a uniform on so I fit in pretty well.

I didn't use any bait so I wouldn't have to worry about actually catching a fish that might distract me. I threw in two lines, sat back, watched, took notes and enjoyed the day.

Several parties came and left without exceeding the limit, littering or otherwise messing up. Then an older couple arrived and parked about 50 yards away. I didn't

even need to use binoculars to observe them.

They began catching trout and I began counting for them. The limit on trout was three per angler, and it didn't take them long to catch six fish. They produced a bucket, filled it with water, put the last fish in it, and stuck it under the hood of their pickup.

Then they each caught one more fish – exceeding their legal limit – and put those in the bucket under the hood as well. At that point, I walked down the shoreline toward them.

As I approached, I heard a splashing sound from under the pickup. Much to the couple's surprise, one of the trout fell to the ground and began flopping around. Can you imagine their reaction had a uniformed officer approached them?

As it was, they were even more surprised when I showed them my badge, completed the necessary paperwork, and seized all the fish.

We never did find out if those two were the source of the over-limit reports, but if they were, it's a good bet they kept things legal for awhile.

BILL SCHALLER is the Department's district warden at Killdeer.



GAME & FISH STAFF NOTES

Repnov Joins Staff

Dustin Repnov has been named building maintenance technician at the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's main office in Bismarck. He accepted the position in March.



Dustin Repnov

Frohlich Hired as Fisheries Technician

Brian Frohlich, a long-time Game and Fish Department seasonal employee, was hired as a fisheries technician in Riverdale April 1. His primary responsibility will be working on district lakes in north central North Dakota.



Brian Frohlich

INSTANT LICENSING

Online at gf.nd.gov or by phone
800-406-6409

Most types of Game and Fish licenses and applications are available both online at the Department's website, or over the phone. Online license purchases have no surcharge, while instant licensing over the phone carries a service charge of \$4 for transactions of \$70 or less, and \$10 if the cost is more than \$70.