

BUFFALOBERRY PATCH



By Greg Freeman, Department News Editor

Fishing Stats Remain Steady

Despite North Dakota's low water levels and ongoing drought concerns, fishing license statistics are still positive.

In 2007, residents and non-residents purchased more than 170,000 North Dakota fishing licenses, and including children, about 200,000 people fished state waters. More than one in four residents ages 16 or older bought a fishing license. The number of nonresidents coming to North Dakota dropped slightly, but remains relatively



MANDY THOMAS

strong with Devils Lake the most popular destination.

The three large fisheries in North Dakota – Lake Sakakawea, Devils Lake and Missouri River/Lake Oahe – lead the state in terms of participation, effort and fish harvest. On average, approximately 825,000 walleye are harvested annually from these three waters combined.

Numerous smaller lakes and rivers also play a large role in

fishing. North Dakota's 270 small lakes, reservoirs and rivers account for nearly 50 percent of all fishing effort. "These fisheries are very important locally," said Greg Power, Department fisheries division chief. "In most cases, first-time anglers are introduced to a smaller lake in their back yard. With good fishing opportunities scattered throughout the state, anglers shouldn't have to travel far from home to find walleye, northern pike, large and smallmouth bass, catfish, trout or panfish."

License sales have held at a high level since rebounding in the mid-1990s. Power attributes this to a decade of decent water levels across most of the state, some very good years of fish reproduction, and a strong stocking program.

However, ongoing drought is a major concern. "With the exception of the extreme southeastern portion of the state, most lakes and reservoirs throughout North Dakota could use more water, and in some cases a lot of water," Power said. "This is especially evident in the western third and south central portions of the state."

Statewide, in the past few years at least 30 water bodies have lost their fisheries due to extremely low lake levels. In addition, even some of the larger systems, including lakes Sakakawea, Oahe and Darling, have taken hits.

"Water is an absolute in supporting fishing opportunities, and though weather patterns will dictate when the impacts of the drought will subside, all efforts to conserve water are essential," Power said.

Cooperate with Creel Surveys

The state Game and Fish Department is currently conducting creel surveys on four North Dakota lakes. Anglers are asked to cooperate with creel clerks and answer questions honestly. Interviews only take a few minutes and information is kept confidential.

A summer creel survey at Odland Dam in Golden Valley County continues through September, and a winter creel begins in December and continues through March 2009. Scott Gangl, Department fisheries management section leader, said this is the first creel survey at Odland. "Information will allow us to evaluate the fishery and the special panfish regulation," Gangl said.

Creel clerks will conduct interviews at Bowman-Haley Reservoir in Bowman County through September. Results will allow Game and Fish staff to evaluate changes in the fishery since the last creel survey in 1992.

A year-long creel survey at Alkaline Lake in Kidder County runs through April 2009. "This survey, in conjunction with a tagging study, will provide information on harvest and exploitation of this newly-popular walleye fishery," Gangl said.

A creel survey at Spiritwood Lake in Stutsman County is ongoing through September. Gangl said this survey will provide updated information since the last creel survey in 1996, and be used to evaluate the fishery and special length regulations.

"In addition to the unique purposes specific to each lake, creel survey information is useful in assessing angler demographics, harvest and catch rates, catch-and-release information, and angling effort," Gangl said.



MANDY THOMAS

Walleye Tagging Continues at Devils Lake

North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries personnel tagged 1,000 walleye this spring at Devils Lake.

Randy Hiltner, Department northeast district fisheries supervisor, said the popular fishery is in the second year of a three-year tagging project. "This allows us to gather information on walleye movements, total fish mortality between years, angling mortality rates and differences in mortality rates between sexes," he said.

Anglers who catch a tagged fish are asked to report it. However, Hiltner said it doesn't mean these fish have to be kept. "Anglers should treat these tagged walleye like any other catch," he said. "If you normally would release the fish, then do so."

Tags from this year are yellow – last year's were orange – and are attached by wire to the top of the fish. The tag does not need to be sent in, just the information: tag number, kept or released, date caught, length, location, and angler's name and address.

The information can be reported by several methods. Anglers are encouraged to report online at the Game and Fish Department website, gf.nd.gov. Otherwise, tag return cards can be filled out at bait shops around the lake, or anglers can bring in the information or call the Devils Lake Game and Fish office at 662-3617.

A follow-up letter will be sent to the angler with information such as when and where the fish was tagged, and fish length at the time it was tagged.



JANET CHENG

Space Available for BOW

Registrations are being accepted for women interested in attending the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman workshop, held August 8-10 at Lake Metigoshe State Park near Bottineau. The cost is \$135 for those 18 years or older with an August 1 registration deadline.

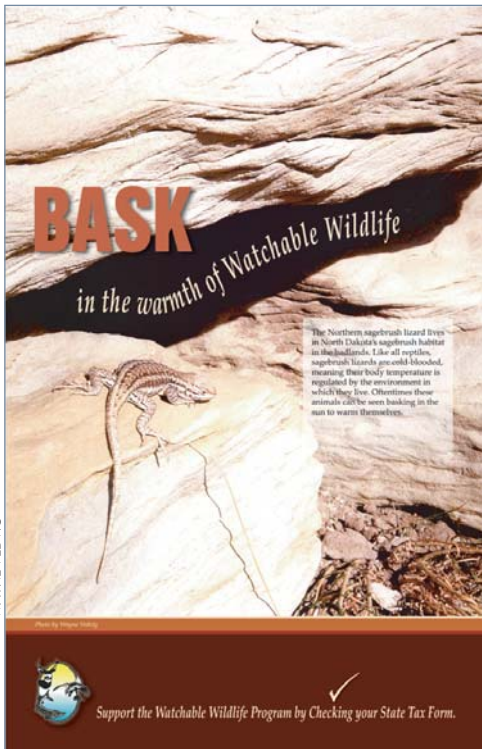
The workshop, sponsored by the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, offers 26 different seminars, ranging from fly-fishing to archery to shotgunning, each of which lasts more than three hours. Classes are held outdoors, and each session contains 45 minutes of lecture with the remainder dedicated to hands-on instruction. Each session has room

for 12 women. Participants are limited to four sessions.

New classes offered this year include basic boating skills, field dressing big game, and tracking and trapping. Other classes include archery, wild backyards, basic birding, canoeing, kayaking, plant identification and predator calling.

Participants will stay in dorms and must provide their own bedding and towels. All camp facilities are handicap accessible. Equipment will be provided unless noted in the course description.

To receive an information brochure and enrollment form, contact Nancy Boldt, North Dakota Game and Fish Department, at 701-328-6312; ndgf@nd.gov; or visit the Game and Fish website at gf.nd.gov.



Watchable Wildlife Photo Contest

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department's Watchable Wildlife Photo Contest is accepting entries. The deadline for submitting photos is September 30.

The contest encompasses all North Dakota wildlife in a variety of categories – nongame

species, game species, insects and plants. The winning photograph will appear on the Department's 2009 Watchable Wildlife program promotional poster.

The photographer submitting the poster winner, and all place winners in each category, receive prizes. Each of the prize-winning photographs will also appear in *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.

The poster image will be selected from entries that are original, vertical-composition transparencies (slides) or a minimum 8.0 megapixel digital image. Prints, slides and digital files are all acceptable formats for entries in each category. Photos are judged on quality, composition, content and general appeal. Preference will be given to nongame species for the poster.

The contest is open to both amateur and professional photographers. Game and Fish Department employees and immediate family members are not eligible. Photographs must be taken in North Dakota.

The contest is limited to 35mm slides or larger format transparencies; 5x7-inch or larger color prints made from color negatives or digital files; or digital files submitted on disk or via e-mail. Photographers are limited to no more than five entries. The overall winner must be in vertical format, or allow for cropping and manipulation into a vertical poster.

The Game and Fish Department reserves the right to copy and print winners to promote the Watchable Wildlife program. By submitting an entry, photographers grant permission to Game and Fish to publish winning photographs in its magazine, *North Dakota OUTDOORS*, as part of the magazine on the Department's web page, gf.nd.gov, and also for use for contest and poster publicity and reference. Appropriate credit will be given in any publication where such photos are used.

Slides, prints or photo disks should be sent to: Watchable Wildlife Photo Contest, North Dakota Game and Fish Department, 100 N. Bismarck Expressway, Bismarck, ND 58501-5095.

E-mailed digital files should be cropped to 5x7 inches at 200 to 300 dpi, but otherwise unaltered, and sent via email to ndgf@nd.gov, with "Photo Contest" noted in the subject line. Digital submissions can be either digital photographs, or scans made from prints or slides. Photographers will need to supply a high-resolution copy of the original file if an image is chosen for publication.

Nonwinning slides and prints will be returned if requested following contest judging. Photo disks will not be returned. All entries must be accompanied by the photographer's name, address, phone number, and e-mail address if available. Other information such as photo site location and month taken would be useful.

Although care will be taken with submitted material, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department assumes no financial responsibility for lost or damaged materials.

Please respect private lands by obtaining permission and be sure to use proper wildlife-watching ethics while photographing.

Pronghorn Deadline Approaching

Pronghorn applications will be available in mid-July, and the deadline for applying is August 6.

Prospective hunters are encouraged to apply at the Game and Fish Department website, gf.nd.gov. The website also contains application forms that can be printed and mailed. Regular license fees apply and no service charge is added.

Applications will be available at Game and Fish offices, county auditors and license vendors.

Applications are also accepted at the Department's toll-free licensing line, 800-406-6409. A service fee is added for license applications made over the phone.

Only North Dakota residents are eligible for pronghorn gun licenses.

Swan Applications Available in July

Applications for North Dakota's 2008 tundra swan licenses will be available in late July and the deadline for submitting an application is August 13.

Residents and nonresidents are eligible to apply. Interested hunters can print out an application for mailing, or submit a lottery application online at the Game and Fish website, gf.nd.gov. Regular license fees apply and no service charge is added.

Applications will also be available from Game and Fish offices, county auditors and license vendors, or by calling 800-406-6409. A service fee is added for license applications made over the phone.

Successful applicants will be issued a license to take one swan during the season. Since swans are classified as waterfowl, nonresidents may hunt them only during the period their nonresident waterfowl license is valid.

September Doe Season Reminder

Deer hunters interested in participating in the September antlerless deer gun season are reminded that a unit 2C or 2D antlerless license is required. Also, hunters must stay in their assigned unit.

The special seven-day season in northeastern North Dakota runs from September 26 (noon) through October 2.

Fight Against ANS Recognized

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department has recognized the Ransom County Water Resource Board for its part in helping to rid Dead Colt Creek of an aquatic nuisance species.

Lynn Schlueter, Department ANS coordinator in Devils Lake, praised the board for its cooperation in the fight against Eurasian water milfoil at Dead Colt Creek. The exotic plant was discovered in the Ransom County fishery in 2005.

"The board has been a delight to work with," Schlueter said. "I wish we had a group like this to work with all over the country. If that were the case, we wouldn't need laws."

SOL Program Successful

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department's Save Our Lakes program has rehabilitated nearly 42,000 feet of shoreline since 2001.

"Our goal is simple – to make the fishery better for fish and people," said Scott Elstad, Department SOL coordinator.

Altogether, there have been 42 separate shoreline projects. Some of the work entails creating sediment dams, low-level draw downs, and planting trees and native grasses on cultivated property. "Our bigger projects include repairing eroded shorelines and removing sediment so fish have habitat and people have access," Elstad said.

Crews have built 44 sediment dams, established buffers on nearly 1,300 acres of riparian corridor, and accomplished work on more than 90 different watersheds.

The program is funded entirely by sportsmen's dollars, with a budget of

slightly more than \$1 million per biennium. Elstad said more than \$4 million has been invested in SOL projects.

"We are looking at spending \$350,000 this year," he said, while noting lakes tentatively scheduled for this year are Cottonwood Park Pond, Gaebe Pond, Spiritwood Lake, Lake Ilo, Red Willow



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Lake, Lake Hoskins and McVille Dam. In addition, Harmon Lake and Pipestem Dam watersheds are scheduled for evaluation this summer.

District fisheries biologists make recommendations of waters best suited for rehabilitation. In addition, various public entities request assistance in lake or watershed improvements.

Even though SOL is designed to improve lakes and reservoirs, Elstad said the program is now including urban fisheries. "This is targeted toward kids," he said. "We want to provide them with the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors, and hopefully establish a lifelong commitment to fishing."

Work on urban fisheries has occurred in Dickinson, Watford City, Williston, Beach, New Salem and Bismarck. Other possibilities include Wahpeton, Grand Forks and New Rockford.

While the SOL program is successful, Elstad reminds anglers that a blue-ribbon fishery doesn't happen overnight. "It takes a few years for a lake or reservoir to recover, but the SOL program certainly can facilitate recovery," he said.



Fur Harvester Classes

The North Dakota Cooperative Fur Harvester Education program is sponsoring fur harvester education classes in Bismarck for anyone interested in trapping or hunting furbearers.

The free 16-hour course is set for August 19 (5:30-9:30 p.m.), 21 (5:30-9:30 p.m.) and 23 (8 a.m.-4 p.m.) at the Game and Fish Department in Bismarck.

For more information, contact Jeff Long, Department education coordinator, at 701-328-6322.

NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS On Television



WILLISTON
KUMV - Tuesday - 10 pm
KXMD - Monday - noon



DICKINSON
KQCD - Tuesday - 9 pm (MT)
KXMA - Sunday - 9 pm (MT)



MINOT
KMOT - Tuesday - 10 pm
KXMC - Monday - noon



BISMARCK
KFYR - Tuesday - 10 pm
KXMB - Sunday - 10 pm
CATV - Saturday - 9:30 am



GRAND FORKS
WDAZ - Wednesday - 5 pm



FARGO
KVR - Sunday - 9 pm



NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH ONLINE

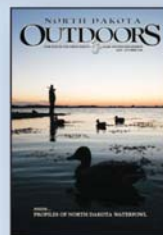
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