



MATTERS OF OPINION



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Director

After a summer that couldn't make up its mind weatherwise, we're moving into the season when cool mornings bring out the desire to go hunting. Kids are back in school, insect populations have kicked into high gear in preparation for the first freeze, leaves start turning, harvest is in full swing, and the list goes on.

Recently, I had a discussion with an individual who lived in California for awhile and absolutely loved it there. While I've visited California a few times, I really don't think I'd want to live there. I love our four seasons, each providing something unique to our lives.

Spring is the rebirth of life on the Northern Plains. Summer is typically getting outdoors as much as we can to fish, hike, boat, camp and swim. Fall, for many North Dakotans, is a time of year when the blood starts to move a little faster, thanks to the anticipation of hunting seasons. And, of course, there's winter, our leanest and most mysterious season as we never know how cold or how much snow we're going to receive.

The other day I was reminiscing about fall in my younger days. Back then it wasn't uncommon to take off a day from school (with permission, of course) with some buddies and go hunting.

I remember one day during waterfowl season when the morning was misty and cool. We didn't have any decoys, but we knew the landscape quite well so we went on a "puddle jumping" tour, going from slough to stock pond and stock pond to

slough. I really don't remember how well we did, but I do know we had a lot of fun.

Like today, the deer opener back then was a big deal, second only to Christmas on the list of holidays in my opinion. I don't remember having an official excused day off from school on the deer opener, but like most high school kids back then, I wasn't in class.

As we all know, the memories are many times better than the actual experience, which is why I look back on those days as some of the best of my life. While those days are gone, many of the feelings are the same, as fall certainly remains a time of anticipation. We have many hunting seasons to choose from, plus fall fishing as water temperatures slowly decline. At times the options become impossible to prioritize because we want to do it all.

This issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS* will provide a preview of the fall hunting seasons. Given the brutal winter of 2008-09, many wildlife species are in much better shape than we could have imagined, while others are near where we expected them to be.

Remember that getting out with family and friends in arguably our most celebrated of seasons can create some good memories. Fall and what it has to offer in our great state is part of the quality of life we've come to expect. Whatever you choose to do this autumn, enjoy and be safe.

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