

NORTH DAKOTA  
**OUTDOORS**

PUBLISHED BY THE NORTH DAKOTA



GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

\$2.00 FEBRUARY 2011





# MATTERS OF OPINION



**Terry Steinwand**  
*Director*

I know I'm not alone in saying that it's already been a long winter, made so by almost daily accumulations of snow. While the weather wears us down, challenging our hardy Northern Plains' attitudes, imagine how the deer, pheasants and other animals in the state feel.

These animals are being challenged by the third harsh winter in a row. I continually talk about habitat and what it means to the animals and ultimately the hunters and anglers of the state. From nesting cover, to thermal cover, to travel lanes and food, habitat is critical for the life cycle of any bird, mammal or fish. It's winters like this one that, unfortunately, identify habitat shortfalls on the landscape.

This issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS* highlights the deer drawing results for 2010. License numbers were down and some units that hadn't sold out in previous years had no licenses left. This winter won't help those numbers rebound, and we can only guess what deer license numbers will be for 2011, but if I were to bet, I'd say they're going down even more.

The Game and Fish Department has heard from many people who are quick to blame lower deer numbers, and subsequently licenses, on coyotes.

These predators do account for some deer mortality, but are not the primary causative factor. The harsh winters, paired with our

aggressive approach to reducing deer numbers in some areas, are the primary reasons. Many of you have probably heard me or someone from the Game and Fish Department say that almost 300,000 deer have been harvested over the last five years. If half of those antlerless deer harvested had only one fawn over that same time frame (which is highly unlikely) we've conservatively removed 450,000 deer from North Dakota's landscape. That's a sizeable number. Our goal is to make available about 125,000 deer gun licenses, but that's not likely for 2011.

Many animal populations in North Dakota can be managed "by the gun," meaning hunters of the state are crucial to managing populations at acceptable levels. We've held this philosophy for some time and will continue to do so. We urged the National Park Service to use this tool in reducing the elk herd in Theodore Roosevelt National Park. To their credit, they did, and it appears to have worked the way it was intended. Inside this issue is a more in-depth look at this program and the results of the first year's effort. I congratulate the National Park Service for taking this bold step.

Remember, spring is only a few short months away. If we, and the wildlife of the state, can survive a couple more months, we'll once again see the rebirth of North Dakota in many ways. Until then, go out and enjoy the great North Dakota outdoors.

*Terry Steinwand*



# NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

PUBLISHED BY THE NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

*The mission of the North Dakota Game and Fish Department is to protect, conserve and enhance fish and wildlife populations and their habitats for sustained public consumptive and nonconsumptive use.*

FEBRUARY 2011 • NUMBER 7 • VOLUME LXXIII

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### FEATURES

Theodore Roosevelt Park Elk Reduction Effort Successful .....	2
Drawing for Deer in 2010 .....	6
Furtive Felids .....	10
Tracks for the Snow .....	16

### DEPARTMENTS

Buffaloberry Patch .....	18
Back Cast .....	25

*Front cover: Cedar waxwing. Photo by Mike LaLonde, Bismarck.*



Official Publication of the North Dakota Game and Fish Department (ISSN 0029-2761)  
100 N. Bismarck Expressway, Bismarck, ND 58501-5095

Website: [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov) • E-mail: [ndgfd@nd.gov](mailto:ndgfd@nd.gov)

Information (701) 328-6300 • Administration (701) 328-6305

Hunter Education (701) 328-6615 • Licensing (701) 328-6335

24-Hour Licensing by Phone: (800) 406-6409

The TTY/TTD (Relay ND) number for the hearing or speech impaired is (800) 366-6888

*North Dakota OUTDOORS* is published 10 times a year, monthly except for the months of April and September. Subscription rates are \$10 for one year or \$20 for three years. Group rates of \$7 a year are available to organizations presenting 25 or more subscriptions. Remittance should be by check or money order payable to the North Dakota Game and Fish Department. Indicate if subscription is new or renewal. The numbers on the upper right corner of the mailing label indicate the date of the last issue a subscriber will receive unless the subscription is renewed.

Permission to reprint materials appearing in *North Dakota OUTDOORS* must be obtained from the author, artist or photographer. We encourage contributions; contact the editor for writer and photography guidelines prior to submission.

The NDGFD receives federal financial assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the NDGFD joins the U.S. Department of the Interior and its bureaus in prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex (in education programs or activities) and also religion for the NDGFD. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as described above, or you desire further information, please write to: N. D. Game and Fish Department, Attn: Chief Administrative Services, 100 N. Bismarck Expressway, Bismarck, ND 58501-5095 or to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Attn: Civil Rights Coordinator, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Mail Stop: MBSP-4020, Arlington, Virginia 22203.

Periodical Postage Paid at  
Bismarck, ND 58501  
and additional entry offices.  
Printed in the United States

**POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:**  
*North Dakota OUTDOORS*  
100 North Bismarck Expressway  
Bismarck, ND 58501-5095

*Report All Poachers (RAP) 800-472-2121*

In cooperation with North Dakota Wildlife Federation and North Dakota State Radio.

#### DEPARTMENT DIRECTORY

Governor Jack Dalrymple

#### ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION

Game and Fish Director: Terry Steinwand

Deputy Director: Roger Rostvet

Chief, Administrative Services: Kim Molesworth

Business Manager: Corey Wentland

Administrative Assistant: GERALYN M. EVANS

Administrative Officer/Building Maint. Supvr: George Lee

Building Maint. Tech: Dustin Repnow

Chief Accountant: Terry Kreiter

Accountants: Carl Edgerly, Kelly Wike, Melissa Long

Data Processing Coordinator: Randy Meissner

Information Technology Coordinators: Jerry Gulke, Alan Reile, Sally Sorensen

GIS Specialist: Brian Hosenk

License Section Supervisor: Carrie Whitney

Assistants: Gail Mosset, Katherine Mernitz, Janet Wolf, Amanda Schroeter

Administrative Assistant - Dickinson: Janel Kolar

Administrative Assistant - Devils Lake: Lisa Tofte

Administrative Assistant - Jamestown: Tonya Kukowski

Administrative Assistant - Riverdale: Clare Renner

#### CONSERVATION AND COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION

Division Chief: Paul T. Schadeewald, Bismarck

Administrative and Water Safety Coordinator: Nancy Boldt, Bismarck

Communications Supervisor: Craig Bihle, Bismarck

Editor, *North Dakota OUTDOORS*: Ron Wilson, Bismarck

Website Editor: Pat Headrick, Bismarck

News Editor: Greg Freeman, Bismarck

Video News Director: Tom Jensen, Bismarck

Videographer: Mike Anderson, Bismarck

Information Specialist: Dawn Jochim, Bismarck

Graphic Artist: Connie Schiff, Bismarck

Outreach Supervisor: Chris D. Grendahl, Bismarck

Outreach Biologists: Doug Leier, West Fargo; Greg Gullickson, Minot; Marty

Egeland, Grand Forks; Pat Lothspeich, Bismarck

Education Coordinator: Jeff Long, Bismarck

Hunter Education Coordinator: Jon Hanson, Bismarck

Conservation Supervisor: Steve Dyke, Bismarck

Resource Biologists: Alexis Duxbury, John Schumacher, Bruce Krefst, Bismarck

Conservation Biologists: Sandra Johnson, Patrick Isakson, Bismarck

#### ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

Division Chief: Robert Timian, Bismarck

Investigations Supvr: Bruce Burkett, Bismarck

Investigator: Scott Winkelman, Bismarck

Pilot: Amy Jo Brown, Bismarck

Region No. 1 Warden Supvr: Corey Erck, Jamestown

District Wardens: Mark Pollert, Jamestown; Jason Scott, Fargo; Erik Schmidt, Lin-

ton; Tim Phalen, Wyndmere; James Myhre, Dawson; Andrew Dahlgren, Edgeley

Region No. 2 Warden Supvr: Paul Freeman, Devils Lake

District Wardens: Gene Masse, New Rockford; Kurt Aufforth, Cando; Gary Rankin,

Larimore; Michael Sedlacek, Cavalier; Randy Knain, Rugby; Chris Knutson, Devils

Lake

Region No. 3 Warden Supvr: Daryl Kleyer, Williston

District Wardens: Brent Schwan, Watford City; Michael Raasakka, Stanley; Jim

Burud, Kenmare; Josh Frey, Bottineau; Al Howard, Minot; Cory Detloff, Williston

Region No. 4 Warden Supvr: Dan Hoenke, Dickinson

District Wardens: Bill Schaller, Killdeer; Arthur Cox, Bowman; Courtney Sprenger,

Elgin; Jeff Violett, Mandan; Jerad Bluem, Belfield

Region No. 5 Warden Supvr: Doug Olson, Riverdale

District Wardens: Jackie Lundstrom, Bismarck; Ryan Tunge, Hazen; Tim Larson,

Turtle Lake, Ken Skuza, Riverdale

#### WILDLIFE DIVISION

Division Chief: Randy Kreil, Bismarck

Assistant Division Chief: Greg Link, Bismarck

Game Mgt. Section Leader: Michael A. Johnson, Bismarck

Procurement Officer: Ray Parsons, Bismarck

Pilot: Jeff Faught, Bismarck

Upland Game Mgt. Supvr: Stan Kohn, Bismarck

Upland Game Mgt. Biologists: Aaron Robinson, Dickinson

Migratory Game Bird Biologist: Mike Szymanski, Bismarck

Big Game Mgt. Supvr: Roger Johnson, Devils Lake

Big Game Mgt. Biologists: Bill Jensen, Bismarck; Bruce Stillings,

Brett Wiedmann, Dickinson

Wildlife Veterinarian: Dr. Daniel Grove, Bismarck

Furbearer Biologist: Stephanie Tucker, Bismarck

Game Management Technician: Jason Smith, Jamestown

Lands/Development Section Supvr: Scott Peterson, Lonetree

Wildlife Resource Mgt. Biologists: Brian Prince, Devils Lake; Jeb Williams,

Bismarck; Kent Luttschwager, Williston; Brian Kietzman, Jamestown; Dan Halstead,

Riverdale

Assistant Wildlife Resource Mgt. Biologists: Arvid Anderson, Riverdale; Randy

Littlefield, Lonetree; Rodd Compton, Jamestown; Judd Jasmer, Dickinson

Wildlife Techs: Tom Crutchfield, Jim Houston, Bismarck; Dan Morman, Robert

Miller, Riverdale; Ernest Dawson, Jamestown; Morgan Johnson, Seth Gaugler,

Lonetree; Alan Roller, Williston; Scott Olson, Devils Lake

Private Land Section Leader: Kevin Kading, Bismarck

Asst. Private Land Coordinator: Doug Howie, Bismarck

Private Land Field Operation Coordinator: Casey Anderson, Bismarck

Private Land Biologists: Jon Roldson, Colin Penner, Terry Oswald, Jr., Bismarck;

Caroline Littlefield, Lonetree; Ty Dressler, Dickinson; John Bauer, Riverdale; Ryan

Huber, Williston; Nathan Harling, Devils Lake; Renae Martinson, Jamestown

Administrative Assistant: Dale Repnow, Bismarck

Lonetree Administrative Assistant: Diana Raugust, Harvey

#### FISHERIES DIVISION

Division Chief: Greg Power, Bismarck

Fisheries Mgt. Section Leader: Scott Gangl, Bismarck

Northwest District Supvr: Fred Ryckman, Williston

Southwest District Supvr: Jeff Hendrickson, Dickinson

North Central District Supvr: Jason Lee, Riverdale

South Central District Supvr: Paul Bailey, Bismarck

Northeast District Supvr: Randy Hiltner, Devils Lake

Southeast District Supvr: Gene Van Eckhout, Jamestown

District Fisheries Biologist: Brandon Kratz, Jamestown

Missouri River System Supvr: David Fryda, Riverdale

Missouri River System Biologist: Russ Kinzler, Riverdale

Fisheries Technicians: Shane Shefstad, Williston; Phil Miller, Devils Lake; Pat John,

Jamestown; Justin Barstad, Bismarck; Brian Frohlich, Riverdale; Jeff Merchant,

Dickinson

Production/Development Section Supvr: Jerry Weigel, Bismarck

Aquatic Habitat Supvr: Scott Elstad, Bismarck

Fisheries Development Supvr: Bob Frohlich, Bismarck

Fisheries Dev. Proj. Mgr.: Bill Haase, Bismarck

Fisheries Development Technician: Wesley Erdle, Bismarck

ANS Coordinator: Lynn Schlueter, Devils Lake

Administrative Assistant: Janice Vetter, Bismarck

#### ADVISORY BOARD

District 1 ..... Jason Leiseth, Arnegard

District 2 ..... Richard Anderson, Willow City

District 3 ..... Tracy Gardner, Devils Lake

District 4 ..... Ronald Houdek, Tolna

District 5 ..... Loran Palmer, West Fargo

District 6 ..... Joel Christoferson, Litchville

District 7 ..... Frank Karch, Bismarck

District 8 ..... Wayne Gerbig, Amidon

# Theodore Roosevelt Park Elk Reduction Effort Successful

By Craig Bihrlle



*Elk in the South Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park.*

**T**rent Hieb lost 30 pounds during his tenure as a team leader for the National Park Service during the recent elk population reduction effort in Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

Three days a week for 12 straight weeks, starting November 1 and ending January 20, Hieb and four other team leaders each accompanied small groups of volunteers into the park's rugged south unit, searching some 46,000 acres mostly on foot in an effort to locate elk and humanely harvest them with firearms.

Because of their strenuous effort, and logistical support of other fulltime and seasonal park employees, the first year of the elk population reduction project was successful beyond anyone's expectations, according to park superintendent Valerie Naylor. Naylor provided a preliminary recap of the reduction effort January 22 in Medora, announcing that team leaders and

more than 180 volunteers removed 406 elk from the south unit, more than twice as many as set out in initial objectives. "We thought ... if we could get maybe 150 in the park and then 100 outside the park, we'll meet 250, which is what we felt we needed to be successful," Naylor said.

"Outside the park," is the take by licensed hunters during North Dakota's regular elk season in units E3 and E4 which surround the park's south unit. While Game and Fish biologists did not have a final tally on elk taken in the units outside the park as of February 1, the number will likely fall between 150 and 180, according to State Game and Fish Department wildlife chief Randy Kreil.

"From the very beginning our Department believed that using volunteers to accomplish the elk reduction in Theodore Roosevelt National Park was a viable option and would be successful," Kreil said. "However, we never anticipated it would

work as well as it did. The fact it worked so well is an indication that the National Park Service took the problem seriously. Clearly, they did an outstanding job on implementing this option."

## Why Reduce Elk in the Park

Theodore Roosevelt National Park's south unit is located just north of Medora about 135 miles west of Bismarck. Elk were first introduced in 1985, and at the time, Naylor said, biologists felt that about 360 elk was a number that would balance well with other wildlife in the park, yet still provide frequent viewing opportunities for visitors.

In an environment considered as excellent elk habitat, and where hunting was not allowed, the elk population grew quickly. When the population exceeded 360, park personnel held roundups in 1993 and 2000, where they herded elk into pens and transported some of them to other





CRAIG BIRRE

parts of the country.

As the population grew again, in 2002 the emergence of chronic wasting disease as a threat to wild deer and elk led to a moratorium on the NPS moving elk.

In 2002 the park elk population was not above the target level, but Naylor said if the NPS could no longer round up and move elk, then it needed to evaluate some other tools for reducing the population when needed.

At the same time the elk population inside the park was growing, the number of elk on public and private land outside the park also increased. Some animals routinely moved in and out of the park, while others established themselves outside the park. Game and Fish first held a season for elk outside the park starting in 1997, and the number of licenses available has gradually increased to about 400 in units E3 and E4 in recent years.

In 2004, Naylor said, the NPS started

what is typically a lengthy environmental review and public input process to develop a new population management plan.

By the time the process was completed in June 2010 with a final Record of Decision, the south unit had more than 950 elk.

“I want to stress that we saw no damage to park vegetation from those elk,” Naylor stated. “At 950, we are able to sustain that, but for how long ...? If you have 950, how many are you going to have the next year and the next year?”

Throughout the long planning process, many ideas

for how to reduce the herd size came and went. Kreil says the method the Game and Fish Department advocated from the beginning was to allow qualified volunteers to harvest elk with firearms and keep the meat, in similar fashion to hunters outside the park, but with caveats because the activity was inside a national park where hunting is not allowed.

Use of qualified volunteers was an alternative considered by the NPS in its draft Environmental Impact Statement, but the initial language did not provide for a way for volunteers to keep any of the elk meat.

Eventually, however, the NPS amended the alternative so it could transfer the meat to the state Game and Fish Department, (which could then distribute meat to volunteers) and selected that as the “Preferred Alternative” in the final version of the EIS.

“The issue of allowing the use of

volunteers, and being able to keep some of the meat, was strongly supported by many people in North Dakota,” Kreil said. “We are a state that believes in hunting as a management tool and using what we harvest.”

While the entire planning process took several years, once the Record of Decision was signed, Theodore Roosevelt park employees had about four months to plan and implement a reduction effort for 2010. That involved developing computer programming for selecting volunteers (see sidebar for more volunteer information), deciding timing and duration of the volunteer effort, and how to accomplish the objectives without overly disrupting other park functions.

“We didn’t want it to be all about elk,” Naylor said. “It was very important that we didn’t impact the visitors very much.”

For that reason the reduction effort didn’t start until mid-October when park visitation is low. The park was basically open as usual for that time of year, except the back country was closed on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, the days the volunteer teams were in the park. “We didn’t really get any complaints about that,” Naylor added.

The NPS also dedicated several employee positions to the effort during that time, in addition to temporary hires such as team leaders.

After two weeks of training for team leaders, the first group of volunteers arrived November 1. Their first order of business was a three-hour orientation, followed by the shooting proficiency test.

“If they did not pass ... they did not get to participate at all,” Naylor said. “... We think that’s very important that we had this (test). It’s important for efficiency, because this is not a recreational experience. The purpose of this was to reduce the elk herd.”

## Role of the Team Leader

The primary task of the team leader was to locate elk and get the volunteers in position to shoot. Unlike a typical group hunting situation where individuals might spread out to cover a lot of territory, the teams held together. “We moved as one

group,” Hieb said. “They (the volunteers) weren’t allowed to go around this butte and say, ‘I’ll cut ‘em off and chase them,’ it just didn’t work that way.”

Each day the five teams would focus on areas of the park where they were unlikely to interfere with each other. While 46,000 acres is a lot of territory, elk typically hang out in small herds and if you cover enough ground you’ll eventually run into some.

In addition, after the first few weeks the team leaders had access to information on signals from some elk that were previously fitted with radio-collars for other park research purposes. So starting out in the morning, the teams had a general idea where at least some elk were located.

Later, when elk were visually spotted, team leaders tried to work their group into shooting position. “We’d try to get to a 200-yard distance,” Hieb said. “Anything

over that it was marginal whether we wanted to shoot or not, depending on the circumstances.”

Just like the stalking process, shooting was also tightly controlled. Shot distance was measured with a laser rangefinder, and shots were taken mostly from the prone position. “We knew exactly how far the elk were before we pulled the trigger,” Hieb noted.

For the entire effort, the average shot was 196 yards, and no shots were taken over 300 yards or at running animals.

Prior to each stalk, team leaders designated which volunteer would be the primary shooter. The other volunteers acted as spotters, while the team leader was the backup shooter. If the first elk didn’t fall immediately, the team leader followed up until the animal was down.

“...We concentrated on that first

Because of that strict regimen for taking shots, out of 406 elk killed, only an additional five were believed struck by bullets but not recovered.

“(That’s) because the shots were very controlled as to who was going to shoot what elk, and that they didn’t take running shots, because we wanted this to be humane, and we wanted it to be efficient,” Naylor emphasized. “And so this was very different than if we just had people out there hunting in the park ... these teams were very tightly controlled.”

Once an elk was down, the hardest work began. Teams took a variety of flesh and organ samples for tests, such as for chronic wasting disease and bovine tuberculosis (all tests for CWD were negative). Volunteers and team leaders removed the meat (quarters) from the carcasses and in many cases packed it back to their vehicles themselves.

For elk taken in remote or difficult areas, the NPS had contracted with packers who were called in to take out the animals with horses and mules. Packers handled about one-third of the total elk killed.

After the two weeks of training, the five teams that went into the park three days a week averaged more than 30 elk per session. The highest weekly total was 47 the first week of January and the lowest was 22 the fourth week of November. Teams went out regardless of the weather, which on occasion featured high winds, below zero temperatures and heavy snow.

## Exceeding Expectations

No one really anticipated such a high harvest the first year. While the park had and still has hundreds of elk, they are not confined to the park. While research indicates about 75 percent of the elk don’t leave the park, 25 percent do go in and out and the others still have the option.

Once the population reduction project started, park elk did not change that overall pattern. Hieb said the elk did become aware of gunshots and would flee from that activity, “...but as for elk movement, we never saw a mass movement out of the park, or anything like that.”

Some elk did move into the interior of the park, into the more rugged areas, “But where we went in November to find elk,



*The park elk reduction project focused on cow elk. Antlered bulls (inset/bottom) were not targeted by volunteers participating in the effort.*



CRAIG BHIRLE

CRAIG BHIRLE

animal, took the shot, and made sure that animal was down,” Hieb said. “If we could still get on another animal at that point, that’s when I would move to the second shooter.”

If a second opportunity was not possible, volunteers took turns on the next stalk, so by the end of three days in the field, each would have had one or more chances to take an elk.

It wasn’t a fast process, Hieb added, because as team leader he wanted to make sure the targets were adult cow elk and not calves or spike bulls.



there was still elk there (later), still in large numbers,” Hieb said. “Those herds pretty much stayed and acted normally the length of the project.”

## Elk Outside the Park

In most years there is a movement of some elk back into the park after the regular elk hunting season starts. As such, it wasn't unreasonable to expect some level of reverse elk movement, and therefore increased activity for elk hunters outside the park, when the reduction effort started.

According to anecdotal Game and Fish reports, however, the elk season outside the park was similar to the previous couple of years.

Based on elk numbers outside the park, and the cooperative effort with the NPS to reduce elk numbers overall, Game and Fish is not planning a major reduction in elk licenses in units E3 and E4 for 2011.

## The Future

Inside the park, the NPS's objective is to reduce the elk population to under 200 animals. The park's EIS calls for population reduction over five years to achieve that level, but if the effort in 2011 is similar to 2010, that would get the park close to its goal in only two years. “I do hope this will be over sooner rather than later because we were so successful this year,” Naylor said.

“It was very time consuming, very energy consuming, and it took a lot of our thought and effort for many, many months. And it's not cheap either,” Naylor concluded. “But we did come in under budget, (with) double the success we expected, and no injuries.”

Kreil says the Game and Fish Department believes the successful implementation of this strategy at Theodore Roosevelt National Park can serve as a template for other national parks.

“Everyone needs to remember just how much of a landmark event this is,” Kreil emphasized.

---

*CRAIG BIHRLE is the Game and Fish Department's communications supervisor.*



PHOTO COURTESY OF NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

*Great Plains Food Bank partnered with North Dakota Community Action Partnership by providing a truck and trailer to transport elk meat donated through the Theodore Roosevelt Park elk reduction project. NDCAP is a nonprofit organization that serves low-income families throughout the state, and also administers the state's Sportsmen Against Hunger deer donation program. More than 250 agencies in North Dakota will have access to this quality protein source.*

## The Volunteers

- 5,192 individuals from 46 states submitted applications to participate in the elk reduction effort. About 50 percent were from North Dakota and 26 percent from Minnesota. Many applied for more than one week to increase odds of selection, but once selected, volunteers were only allowed to participate during one week.
- Of 240 volunteers initially selected, about half were from North Dakota and 19 states were represented. Some of those originally selected decided not to participate, so the NPS drew more names to fill the spots. From that point on, anyone else who dropped out was not replaced, which meant that during some weeks, some teams had fewer than four volunteers.
- From the second list of 240, another 30 people decided they couldn't participate after all and informed the NPS, and 11 more just didn't show up for their designated week. Of the 199 who eventually arrived at the park, 13 did not pass the shooting proficiency test, and a few others did not complete their week of time for other reasons. In all, 181 volunteers completed a four-day commitment.
- Volunteers had to self-certify that they were physically fit enough for three days of hiking in the park's badlands terrain and packing out elk meat. The benchmark the NPS suggested was the ability to walk 10 miles per day and carry a pack weighing 75 pounds.
- Volunteers also had to self-certify that they could proficiently shoot a rifle using nonlead bullets. In addition, on orientation day each volunteer had to pass an actual shooting proficiency test, which meant hitting an 8-inch target three times in five shots from 200 yards away, from whatever shooting position the volunteer chose, except for shooting from a bench rest. Prior to the five-shot test, the volunteer could fire up to 10 practice rounds.
- Volunteers had to provide their own transportation to and from the park, and were responsible for their own rifle (.25-caliber or larger), ammunition, lodging, food, clothing and other incidentals.
- If the team was successful in harvesting elk during the week, each volunteer could take home meat from at most one elk.

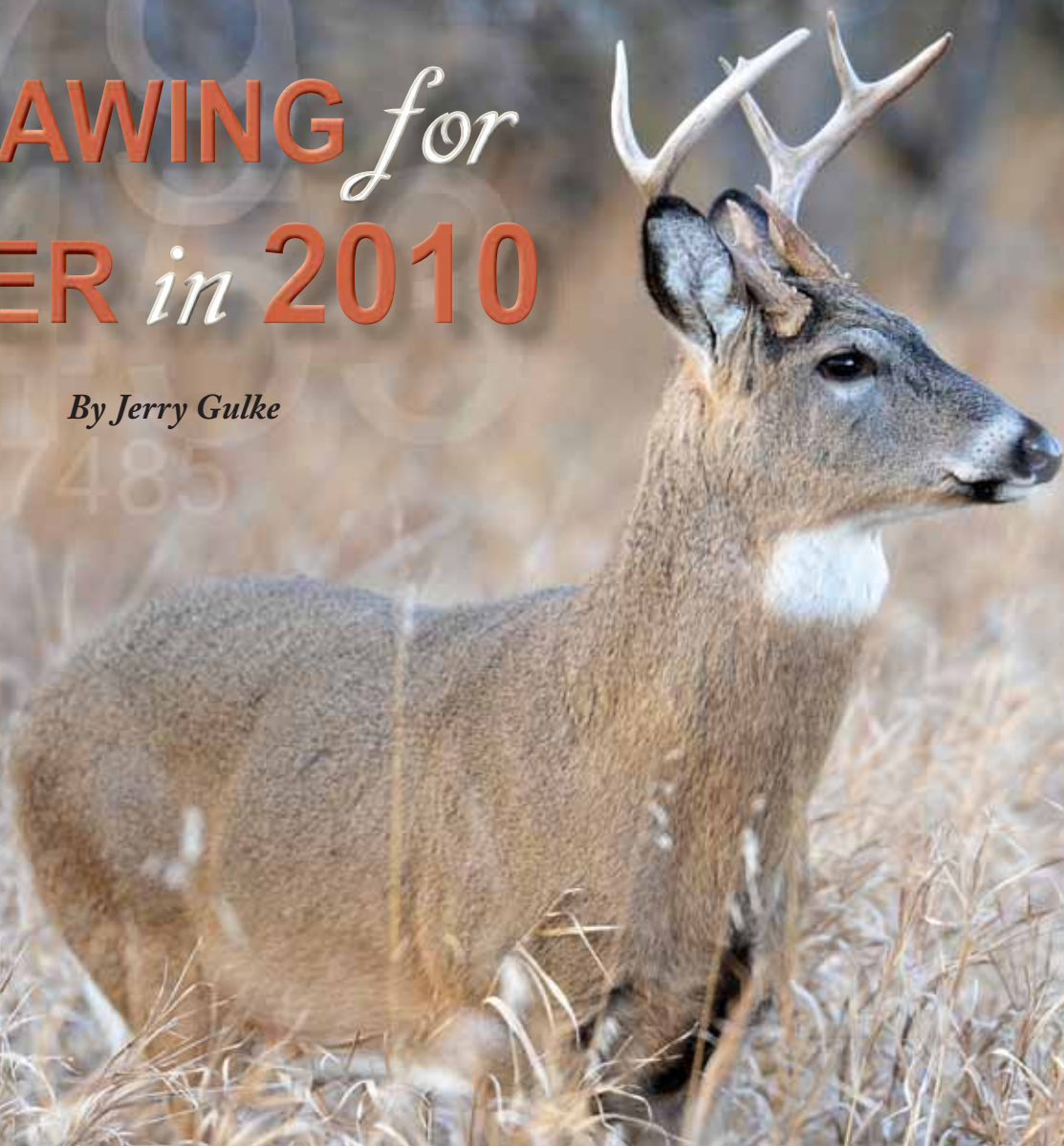
## Meat Distribution

The total effort provided 64,152 pounds of elk meat.

- Volunteers received 29,294 pounds, or an average of about 161 pounds each.
- The balance of the meat was donated as follows:
- North Dakota Native American tribes and tribal services: 21,543 pounds.
- North Dakota Community Action Partnership, which administers the state's Sportsmen Against Hunger statewide game donation effort: 13,315 pounds.

# DRAWING *for* DEER *in* 2010

*By Jerry Gulke*



**T**he North Dakota Game and Fish Department has been aggressive in trying to reduce the state's deer population for a number of years. Back-to-back tough winters, coupled with liberal hunting seasons, have done just that.

We have reached management goals in many units and are no longer aggressively trying to reduce deer numbers in many areas. Therefore, the number of licenses in 2010 – 116,775 – was reduced nearly 27,000 from 2009.

Game and Fish has used a bonus point system for years to help improve the odds for hunters who have not drawn their first license choice in a number of years.

Drawing a buck license became even more difficult in 2010. There were several deer hunting units – 2A, 2G1, 2J1 and 3A1 – where some hunters did not even draw a doe tag because all licenses were issued in the first drawing. In addition, all doe licenses in units 3B1 and 3A3 were issued in the second drawing.

In many other units only a few extra antlerless licenses were available after the second drawing. This reflects a lower deer population and hunters need to consider this when applying in 2011.

With the way this winter is shaping up, more reductions in license numbers are likely. Drawing a doe license in some

units will not necessarily be a sure thing.

After census data revealed the state-wide pronghorn population was 37 percent lower in 2010 than 2009, and down more than 50 percent from 2008, the Game and Fish Department closed the 2010 pronghorn archery and gun seasons. Therefore, a lottery drawing for the latter was not held. Biologists will continue to monitor pronghorn numbers. When the population returns to a level capable of withstanding a harvest the season will reopen.

---

***JERRY GULKE** is a Department information technology coordinator.*



*Back-to-back tough winters, coupled with liberal hunting seasons, have reduced the state's deer population.*

once in the previous two years.

You receive additional chances in the drawing for each bonus point accumulated. For points one through three, you are entered in the drawing two times the number of points you have. So, if you have two points you would get four additional chances to be drawn, compared to a person who got his or her first choice the previous year. If you're both competing for the same license, you have five chances, he or she has one.

When you accumulate four or more points, the number of additional chances of being drawn is determined by cubing your bonus points. So, when you have four points, you will be in the drawing 64 additional times, 125 times if you have five points, and so on. Bonus points are accumulated as long as you do not draw your first license choice and apply in the first drawing at least every other year. You do not receive bonus points in years you do not apply.

Each drawing is still random, but the more bonus points you have, the better your odds. When you receive your first license choice, you lose your bonus points and start over. Bonus points can only be earned, or used, in the first drawing for each species in each year.

The license lottery consists of four separate drawings, one for each choice on the application. First, we hold a drawing for the first unit/first deer choice. When those have been issued, we draw for the first unit/second deer choice, then the second unit/first deer choice, and finally the second unit/second deer choice.

### **2010 Lottery Results**

- 116,775 deer licenses, down 27,625 from 2009.
- 3,200 mule deer buck licenses were available in 2010, down from 3,450 in 2009. Hunters who applied for these licenses increased from 9,892 in 2009 to 10,145 in 2010.
- 76,072 people applied for deer licenses (not including gratis, nonresident, youth or muzzleloader), up from

74,393 in 2009.

- 68,914 hunters applied for buck licenses as their first choice, but less than half of the licenses available, 48,650, were buck licenses. About 40,000 buck licenses were available after gratis and nonresident licenses were deducted.
- All buck licenses were issued in the first unit/first choice drawing except for unit 3F2.
- Applicants could have had as many as 17 bonus points, but the highest number of points in the 2010 drawing was 11.
- 2,912 applicants had four or more bonus points, and 1,863 drew their first license choice.
- Applicants who applied for a mule deer buck license accounted for 26 percent of those with four or more bonus points. Those who applied for a muzzleloader buck accounted for an additional 63 percent.
- The number of people with four or more bonus points increased significantly in 2010, from 2,470 to 2,912. This reflects the lower number of licenses available. Allowing hunters to sit out a year without losing bonus points also contributed to the increase.
- A muzzleloader buck license was again the most difficult to draw, with more than eight times more applicants than licenses. An any-buck license in Unit 3C was second, with more than seven times as many applicants as licenses.
- There was no pronghorn season in 2010.
- 6,540 spring turkey licenses were available in 2010, while 7,135 were available in 2009. The number of applicants in 2010 decreased from 7,655 to 6,832.
- The number of fall turkey licenses available in 2010 decreased from 6,805 to 5,755. The number of applicants also decreased, from 4,561 to 4,116.



CRAIG BHIRLE

### **Lottery Refresher**

The lottery process did not change in 2010. Even so, there are questions every year concerning how the lottery system works. Using deer as the example, though pronghorn and turkey work the same way, here is a refresher.

If you fail to draw your first license choice in any given year, but apply within the next two years, you receive a bonus point. You do not have to apply in the same unit, or for the same deer type, to qualify. You get an additional bonus point each year you apply and do not receive your first license choice, as long as you have applied in the first drawing at least

# 2010 Deer Lottery Results

Percent of applicants who received their first choice of license in the 2010 deer drawing.

RON WILSON

		POINTS										
LICENSE TYPE		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	OVERALL	
1	A Any Buck	83.5	100	100							84.3	
1	B Any Doe	96.3	100								96.3	
2A	A Any Buck	19.7	51.1	70.5	85.2	100					38.1	
2A	B Any Doe	47.3	69.8	66.7							54	
2B	A Any Buck	78.1	98.9	100	100						80.4	
2B	B Any Doe	98.8	100	100							98.8	
2C	A Any Buck	72.9	96.9	100	100						76.4	
2C	B Any Doe	99	100								99.1	
2D	A Any Buck	84.8	100	100							85.5	
2D	B Any Doe	98.1	100	100							98.2	
2E	A Any Buck	44.3	79.5	95.5	100	100					53.4	
2E	B Any Doe	98	93.8								97.7	
2F1	A Any Buck	99.8	94.1	100	100	100					99.7	
2F1	B Any Doe	100	100								100	
2F2	A Any Buck	42.2	83.3	93.2	100	100					56.3	
2F2	B Any Doe	97.2	100	100	100						97.5	
2G	A Any Buck	68.3	95.7	100		100					69.8	
2G	B Any Doe	97.3	100								97.4	
2G1	A Any Buck	46.1	88.7	88.9	100	100					54.9	
2G1	B Any Doe	98.8	100	100							98.9	
2G2	A Any Buck	40.9	79.8	93.3	100						48.9	
2G2	B Any Doe	97.5	100	100							97.7	
2H	A Any Buck	30.9	68.8	77.5	88.9	100					45.7	
2H	B Any Doe	97.3	100	100							97.6	
2I	A Any Buck	37	70.8	88.3	100	100	100				49.2	
2I	B Any Doe	99.5	96.4	100	100						99.2	
2J1	A Any Buck	7.1	23	35.2	44.1	100	100	100			23.5	
2J1	B Any Doe	96.4	94.7	80	100						95.6	
2J2	A Any Buck	61.9	94.1	100	80	100					70	
2J2	B Any Doe	97.5	100								97.8	
2K1	A Any Buck	15.6	36	53.9	65.3	97.1	100				32.7	
2K1	B Any Doe	99.1	89.5	100	100	100					97.8	
2K2	A Any Buck	43.7	82.7	94	100	80	100				56.6	
2K2	B Any Doe	96.3	100		100						96.7	
2L	A Any Buck	99.8	100	100	100		100				99.9	
2L	B Any Doe	100									92.2	
3A1	A Any Buck	16.2	40.2	56	50	100	100				29.2	
3A1	B Any Doe	92.8	95	100							93.2	
3A2	A Any Buck	42.4	82.6	93.5	100	100			100		56.3	
3A2	B Any Doe	97.1	100	100	100						97.3	
3A3	A Any Buck	13.1	34.5	47.9	64.9	100	100				29.2	
3A3	B Any Doe	98.5	96.9	100							98.3	
3A4	A Any Buck	48.2	86.1	94.4	100	100					59.8	
3A4	B Any Doe	97	100	100							97.3	
3B1	C WT Buck	10.6	26.3	31.1	38.2	100		100			22	
3B1	D WT Doe	94.5	77.8								90.8	
3B1	E MD Buck	27.3	64.9	78.6	84.2	100		100			46.2	
3B1	F MD Doe	88.9	100	100							92.2	
3B2	C WT Buck	44.3	63.7	86.5	87.5	100					57.4	
3B2	D WT Doe	98	100	100	100						98.3	
3B2	E MD Buck	40.7	76.5	80	100						55.4	
3B2	F MD Doe	100	100								100	
3B3	A Any Buck	8.9	23.8	33.8	48.6	100	100	100			22.6	
3B3	B Any Doe	93.9	83.3	100	100						92.9	
3B3	C WT Buck	90.5	95.7	95.8	83.3	100	100				91.1	
3B3	D WT Doe	96.9	100	100	100						97	

		POINTS										
LICENSE TYPE		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	OVERALL	
3C	A Any Buck	6.9	10.2	10.3	18.4	91.3	100				13.4	
3C	B Any Doe	93.6	85.7	100	66.7	100					92.5	
3C	C WT Buck	59.8	93.3	98	100	100	100				71.7	
3C	D WT Doe	97.6	91.7	100							96.9	
3D1	A Any Buck	26.5	51.4	61.8	100	80					38.9	
3D1	B Any Doe	97.6	100	100							97.9	
3D1	C WT Buck	83.3	100	100							85.7	
3D1	D WT Doe		100								100	
3D2	A Any Buck	13.8	48.6	62.7	70.3	100	100				35.1	
3D2	B Any Doe	96.6	88.9	100		100					96.2	
3D2	C WT Buck	96.7	100	100	100						97.3	
3D2	D WT Doe	80									80	
3E1	A Any Buck	21.9	50.2	59.5	78.1	100	100	100			38.1	
3E1	B Any Doe	97	100	100	100						97.6	
3E1	C WT Buck	97.1	93.9	100	100	100					96.6	
3E1	D WT Doe	100	100								100	
3E2	A Any Buck	25.2	54.5	65.4	87.8	100	100				42.4	
3E2	B Any Doe	94.4	92.6	100	100	100					94.2	
3E2	C WT Buck	99	100	100	100	100					99.2	
3E2	D WT Doe	100	100								100	
3F1	A Any Buck	28.5	57.4	76	86.8	100	100				50.1	
3F1	B Any Doe	92	83.3	100							90.9	
3F1	C WT Buck	99.1	100	100	100	100					99.3	
3F1	D WT Doe	100	100			100					100	
3F2	A Any Buck	16.7	33.5	52.4	71.8	100	100				37.8	
3F2	B Any Doe	92.4	100		100						93.2	
3F2	C WT Buck	99.6	100	100	100	100	100				99.7	
3F2	D WT Doe	100									100	
4A	C WT Buck	23.8	62.2	69.1	90.9	100					43.3	
4A	D WT Doe	100	75	100							95.7	
4A	E MD Buck	6.1	18.6	33.2	33.1	100	100				24.1	
4A	F MD Doe	100	100	100							100	
4B	C WT Buck	76	91.7	100	100						79.2	
4B	D WT Doe	100	100								100	
4B	E MD Buck	7.5	14.9	30	33.6	98.7	100	100		100	22.5	
4B	F MD Doe	91.1	77.8	66.7	100	100					88.6	
4C	C WT Buck	93.2	100	100	100	100					94.1	
4C	D WT Doe	100	100								100	
4C	E MD Buck	1.9	6.2	5.7	17.4	80.1	92.1	66.7			15.6	
4C	F MD Doe	90.4	88.9	100							90.3	
4D	C WT Buck	95.8	91.7	100	100	100	100				95.7	
4D	D WT Doe	100	100								100	
4D	E MD Buck	7.2	0.3	29.3	37	100	100	100	100		17	
4D	F MD Doe	90.6	93.8	100							91.3	
4E	C WT Buck	100	100	100	100						100	
4E	D WT Doe	100	100								100	
4E	E MD Buck	20.6	50.7	68.9	70.8	100	100				37	
4E	F MD Doe	100		100	100						100	
4F	C WT Buck	98.7	100	100							98.9	
4F	D WT Doe	100	100								100	
4F	E MD Buck	66.7	97.9	100	100						73.6	
4F	F MD Doe	100	100								100	
MUZ	C WT Buck	0.9	1.9	4	4.9	40	62.9	77.3	100	0	9.6	
MUZ	D WT Doe	100	100	100	100	100					100	



## 2010 Turkey Lottery Results

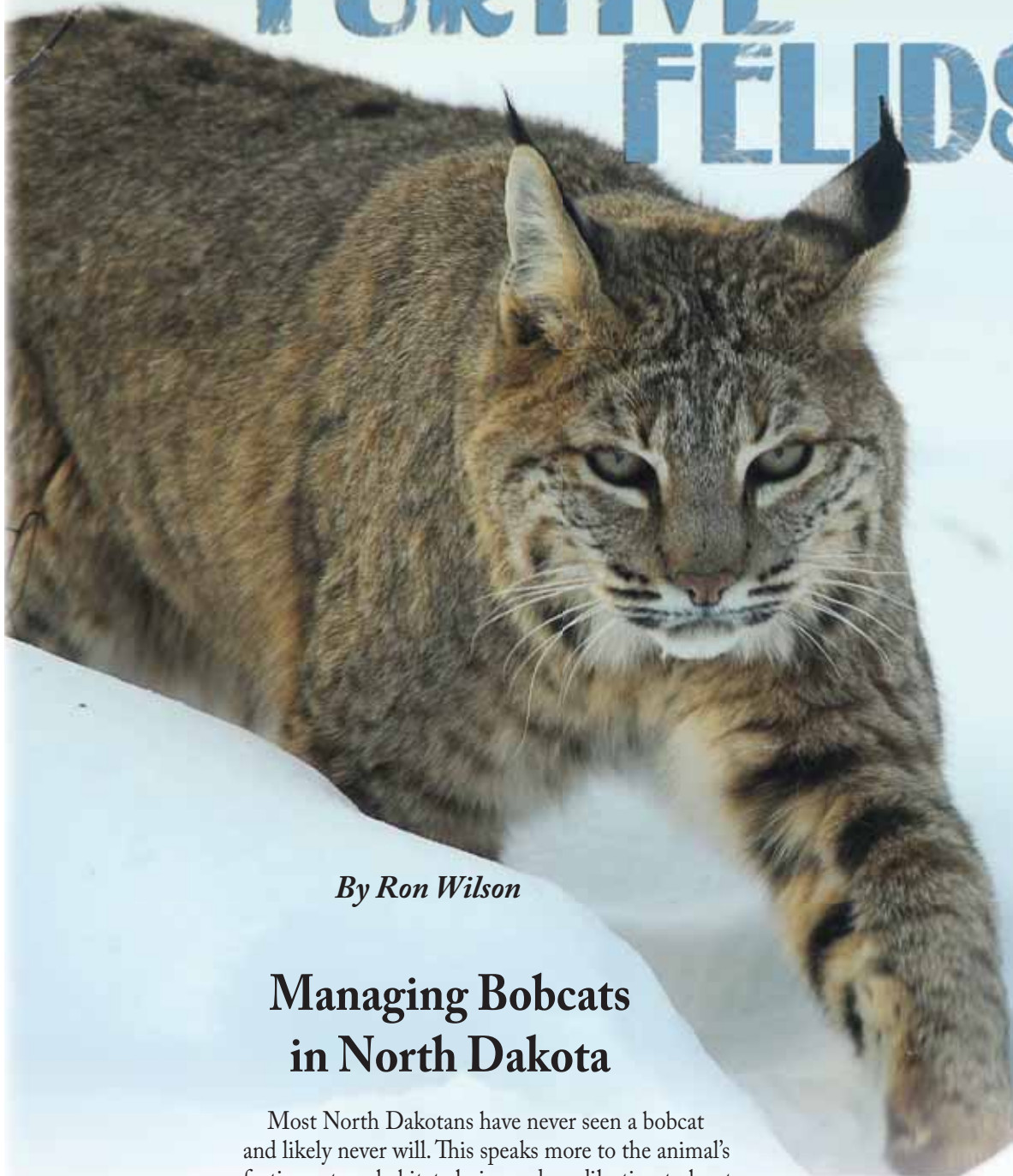
*Percent of applicants who received their first choice of license in the 2010 spring turkey drawing.*

*Percent of applicants who received their first choice of license in the 2010 fall turkey drawing.*

		POINTS									
LICENSE TYPE		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	OVERALL
02	S	94.6	100	100	100						95.8
02	IS	100									100
03	S	92.8	100	100							94.2
03	IS	100									100
04	S	100	100								100
04	IS	100									100
06	S	100	100								100
13	S	100	100								100
13	IS	100									100
17	S	99.6	100	100							99.6
17	IS	100									100
19	S	100	100								100
19	IS	100									100
25	S	91.2	100	100	100			100			91.8
25	IS	100									100
27	S	70	97.1	100							73.4
27	IS	100									100
30	S	100	100	100							100
30	IS	100									100
31	S	100		100							100
31	IS	100									100
37	S	50.2	88	98.3	100	100					61.9
37	IS	100									100
40	S	67.5		96.3							71.6
40	IS	100									100
44	S	100									100
44	IS	100									100
45	S	100	100								100
45	IS	100									100
47	S	100	100	100							100
47	IS	100									100
50	S	45.4	74.4	100	100						52.3
50	IS	100									100
51	S	100									100
51	IS	100									100
53	S	27.1	66.7								33.3
53	IS	100									100
98	S	91.3	100	100							92.2
98	IS	100									100
99	S	100	100								100
99	IS	100									100

		POINTS									
LICENSE TYPE		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	OVERALL
02	F	44.1	73.3	100							49.5
03	F	100									100
04	F	100	100								100
06	F	100									100
13	F	100									100
17	F	100	100		100						100
19	F	100	100								100
25	F	100									100
27	F	100									100
30	F	100	100								100
31	F	100									100
37	F	83.1	98.9	100	100	100					86
40	F	100	100								100
44	F	100									100
45	F	100									100
47	F	100	100	100							100
50	F	75.3	98.5	100	100						80.5
51	F	100	100								100
98	F	100	100								100
99	F	100									100

# FURTIVE FELIDS



*By Ron Wilson*

## Managing Bobcats in North Dakota

Most North Dakotans have never seen a bobcat and likely never will. This speaks more to the animal's furtive nature, habitat choice and predilection to hunt in low light, rather than its abundance in the wild. Like a whisper quietly slipping through the cedar and sage of the rugged badlands, the bobcat spends much of its existence unnoticed.

Just because these predators aren't as conspicuous on the landscape as, say, white-tailed deer or Canada geese, doesn't mean wildlife managers discount their presence. Quite the opposite, as bobcats in North Dakota are carefully managed.

Since the late 1970s, pelts from harvested bobcats

have required a tag issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Service in order to be transferred or sold. Prior to that, bobcat harvest in the state was unregulated. From 1944-62 there was even a bounty on the animals.

Stephanie Tucker, Game and Fish Department furbearer biologist, said there has never been an annual quota on bobcats in North Dakota. (Just the opposite is true for mountain lions. The quota on the bigger cat was, for example, 10 in 2010 in the badlands unit.) However, starting in the 1979-80

CRAIG BIRKLE



season, bobcat harvest was restricted to south and west of the Missouri River. Since 1981, the Department has required mandatory tagging of all bobcat pelts regardless of whether they were transferred or sold.

Today, bobcat pelts and carcasses must be presented to Department personnel no later than 14 days after the close of the hunting and trapping season, which runs roughly from November to mid-March most years. Carcasses remain with Game and Fish for further study, the results of which help to determine how bobcats are doing in the state. Tucker handles every bobcat legally harvested in North Dakota, determining, among other things, reproductive rates, age and health of the animals.

"The problem with live bobcats is that they are almost impossible to survey," she said. "They hide from people and don't pack themselves together in bunches like deer and stand around to be counted. Much of what we know about the state's bobcat population comes from dead animals."

Tucker is very familiar with what she calls the most widely-spread felid in North America. She researched bobcats in southern Iowa for about five years starting in 2003. The project involved trapping and radio-collaring bobcats in an effort to determine habitat use and population dynamics in an agricultural landscape.

The Game and Fish Department is looking at funding a similar study in western North Dakota. While wildlife biologists feel the state's bobcat population is stable, such a study could provide a better estimate on cat numbers, and some insight into habitat use and survival.

Because Game and Fish officials believe the population is stable, no significant changes have been made to the bobcat season in some time. "The number of bobcats harvested each season has a lot to do with fur price," Tucker said. "In years when pelts average \$250 apiece, we'll have a lot of people out after them. Bobcat harvest in North Dakota drops when fur prices go down, or when we get a bad winter and the hunters and trappers can't get out after them."

North Dakota's bobcat harvest the last two winters averaged 50-75 animals, which is about what it's been the last 20 years. "We don't have a lot of bobcats so the harvest isn't that high, especially when you compare it to places like the Black Hills in South Dakota where they are averaging 300-400 animals per season," Tucker said.

Having a firm understanding on bobcat numbers in the state is important because overharvest can easily stagger the population. "Recruitment for bobcats is low compared to fox or coyotes," she said. "They have one litter a year and the average litter size is 2-3 kittens, while coyotes can have huge litters of up to 6-10 pups.

If you set the bobcat population back, it takes that much longer to recover. We use more caution when setting regulations for that reason."

Tucker said Department officials suspect heavy snow has significantly decreased the bobcat harvest of late as compared to, say, four years ago. "But because we have a fairly long season and no limit, we want to make sure we are not overharvesting during those mild winters and high pelt price years."

In North Dakota, bobcats breed from February through March. Unlike members of the dog family, bobcats do not form lasting pair bonds. Male and female bobcats generally associate with each other only for brief periods during the breeding season. Once mating is complete, the male moves on.

Young are born in late April or May in hollow logs, rock piles, small caves or overhanging rocky shelves. Young stay in the den for the first two months, during which their diet shifts from the adult female's milk to meat. Young bobcats typically hang around their mother for the first winter before moving on.

"They have that natural, engrained desire to disperse from their natal home range," Tucker said. "This is especially true with young males. It's been documented that a young male will move up to 100 miles looking for a new home range."



*Stephanie Tucker, Game and Fish Department furbearer biologist, works on a mountain lion, the biggest of the felids found in North Dakota.*

Every year, one or two bobcats – mostly young males striking out for territory of their own – are hit by vehicles or trapped in the central part of the state and elsewhere. And while there is even a small breeding population in the Pembina Hills area in northeastern North Dakota, home for the majority, however, is the badlands. “Seventy-five percent or more of the bobcats turned in every year to us come from the badlands,” Tucker said.

In North Dakota, bobcats prey mostly on cottontail rabbits, but these opportunistic predators will eat most anything from rodents to insects to deer carcasses. Their hunting methods vary, but most often they take prey by ambush or stalking. The rugged, uneven terrain of the badlands suits their patient style of hunting.

“They are so well camouflaged, so stealthy ... they could be watching you tramp around in the badlands for an hour and you’d never even know that they were there,” Tucker said.

It’s unknown, Tucker said, what kind of

influence increased energy exploration and activity in the badlands might have on bobcats. She said predators can put up with a lot of disturbance compared to, say, bighorn sheep. “In Iowa we saw bobcats trickling back into the heavily-farmed areas, but it took a long time,” she said. “The indirect effect of the disturbance in the badlands is what concerns me. If what they need to hunt to survive goes down, then the bobcats will follow suit.”

Just because bobcats are secretive, elusive critters that are mostly out of sight, Tucker said they certainly shouldn’t be out of mind. “This is a native species that has been around for a long, long time,” she said. “To me, that is reason enough to be concerned about how they are faring and making sure that we manage the population properly. They’ve always been here, so we should care.”

---

*RON WILSON is editor of North Dakota OUTDOORS.*

*Before becoming a furbearer biologist for the Game and Fish Department, Stephanie Tucker worked on a bobcat research project in Iowa where animals were trapped and fitted with radio collars. At the top of the photo is a plastic tag used to mark bobcats harvested in North Dakota.*



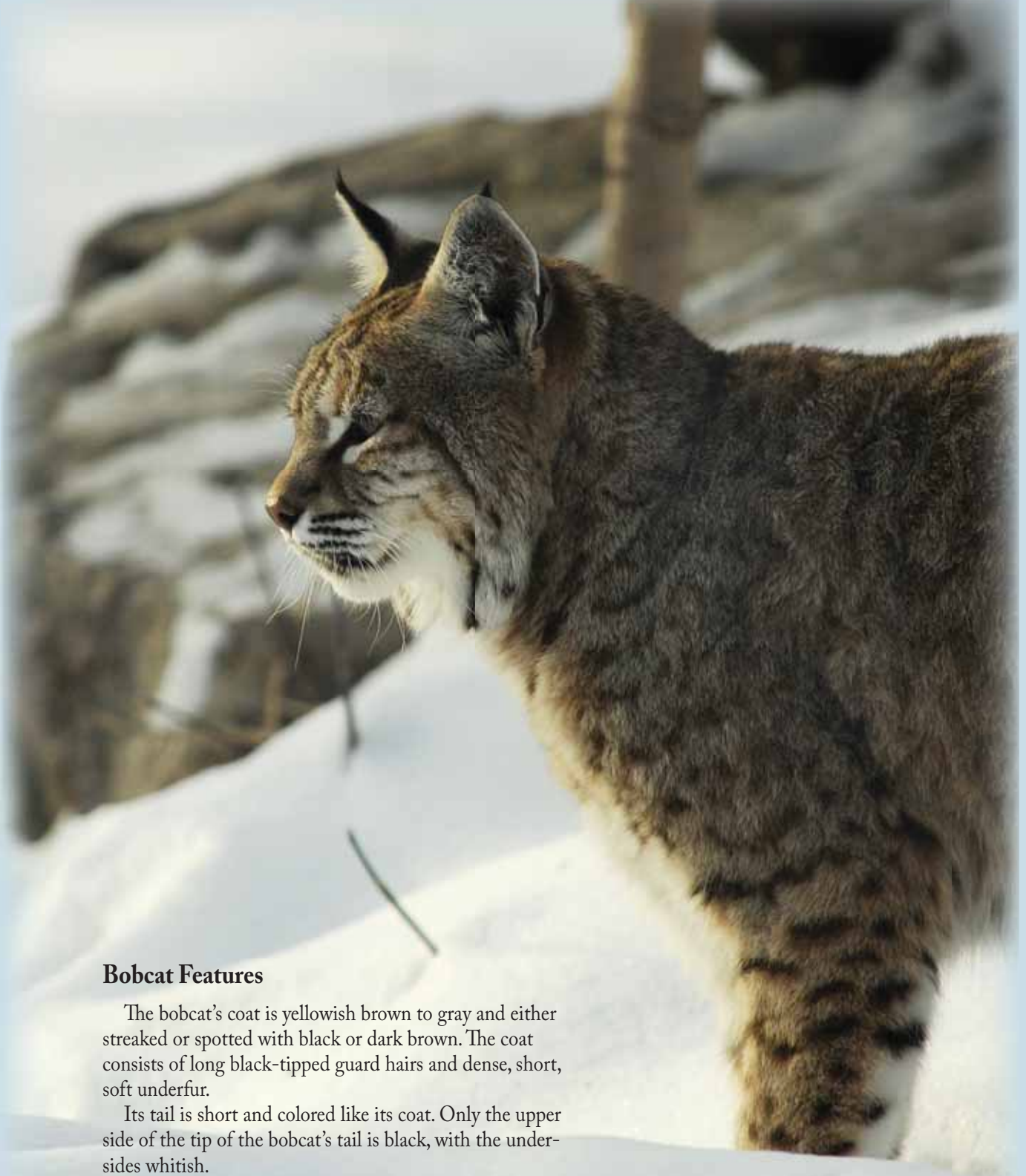
SUBMITTED PHOTO

## **Bobcats as Prey**

Harvest data from the 2008–09 season:

- 57 bobcat mortalities (including road kills) confirmed by Game and Fish Department personnel. This is a 67 percent decrease compared to 2007–08. Record snow likely contributed to the reduction in harvest.
- The majority of bobcats were harvested via snaring (36 percent), shooting (32 percent) and trapping (23 percent). The majority of individuals who harvested bobcats took only one. The highest number of bobcats harvested by an individual was seven.
- The average price paid per adult was \$178, or 40 percent lower than the average pelt price in 2007–08.
- Bobcats were harvested from 10 counties. Billings and Bowman counties (12 bobcats each) were the top counties for harvest.
- Since 1981–82, the highest bobcat mortality in North Dakota was 173 in 2007–08. The low was nine animals in 1990–91.





## Bobcat Features

The bobcat's coat is yellowish brown to gray and either streaked or spotted with black or dark brown. The coat consists of long black-tipped guard hairs and dense, short, soft underfur.

Its tail is short and colored like its coat. Only the upper side of the tip of the bobcat's tail is black, with the under-sides whitish.

Bobcat's have prominent eyes with elliptical pupils, a ruff of cheek hair whiskers on each side of the face and long, pointed ears tipped with tufts of black hair.

Bobcat's in North Dakota weigh between 15-25 pounds, with males being slightly larger. Standing, these cats measure about 19-23 inches at the shoulder. Overall body length is about 34 inches.

*The bobcat is a secretive predator that seldom shows itself, preferring to use rugged terrain to its advantage when hunting and avoiding danger. (Live bobcat photos on page 10 and above, and lynx photo on page 15, taken at Dakota Zoo, Bismarck.)*

CRAIG BIRLE

Taken in the early 1960s, this photo shows Louis Zieman of Shyenne and most of the 39 lynx he trapped in northeastern North Dakota. At the time, Zieman had trapped for 45 years and these were the first lynx he had trapped.



GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT PHOTO

## Lynx “Explosion”

The bobcat and Canada lynx are similar in appearance. Yet, if you do spot one of these secretive felids in North Dakota, odds are better than good you’re looking at a bobcat.

The lynx is longer-legged and appears heavier, but usually does not weigh as much as the bobcat. The lynx has larger feet, longer ear tufts and isn’t as heavily spotted as the bobcat. Both have stubby tails, but only the lynx’s is tipped in black on both the top and bottom.

The lynx is a forest inhabitant and its main range is north of here in Canada’s brush country. Trees and prey have occasionally lured lynx into North Dakota’s Turtle Mountains and Pembina Hills over the years. While the bobcat is a resident of the state, lynx are more like visitors.

The last lynx sighting in North Dakota was 2006, but the report was never confirmed, said Stephanie Tucker, North Dakota Game and Fish Department furbearer biologist. The last verified sighting was 1973. “There is always the potential for lynx to show up in North Dakota,” she said.

Historical reports, however, indicate that lynx were shot and trapped in the 1800s in North Dakota. Reports have been scarcer since 1900. The exception was the early 1960s. An article in *North Dakota OUTDOORS* by Arthur “Bud” Adams, Game and Fish Department furbearer biologist, in 1963 details what was then described as a lynx “explosion” in the state. He wrote:





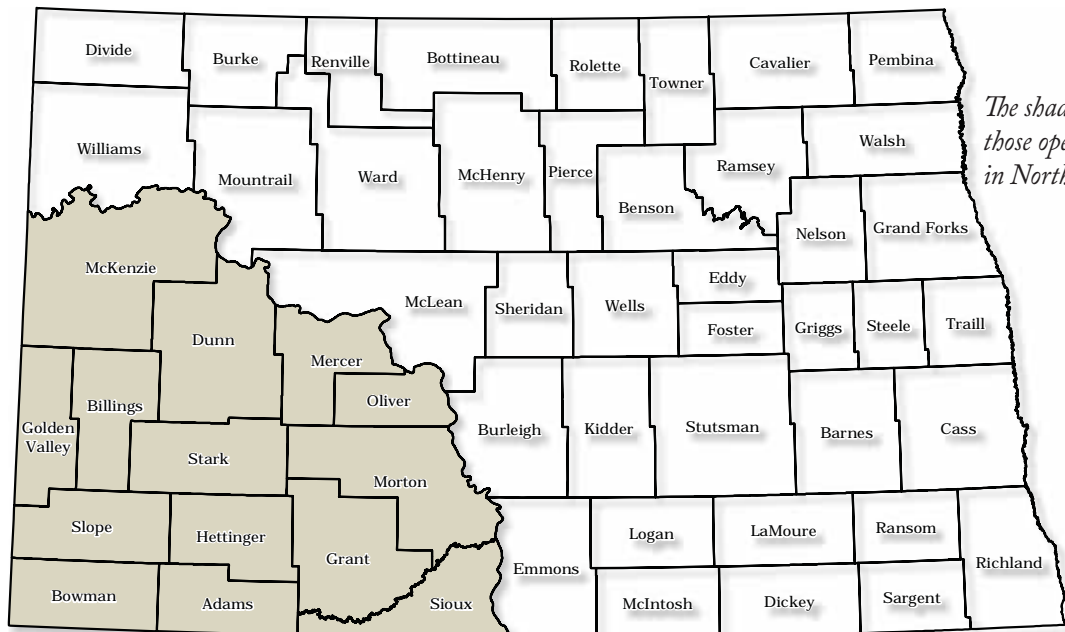
CRAIG BIHRLE

*“The major food item for the lynx is the snowshoe hare ... The large numbers of lynx in North Dakota during the past year or so were victims of a snowshoe hare die-off in Canada. In talking with some of the game biologists from Manitoba and Saskatchewan, I found that they experienced a decline in snowshoes starting in 1961. The lynxes which moved down into the states (Montana, Minnesota and Michigan) were seeking food.”*

Many of the cats taken in 1962, Adams reported, were adults. Yet, family groups were also seen and some juveniles killed. Evidently, lynx reproduced in North Dakota and found food and living conditions favorable.

Adams continued: *“People now have lynx rugs or mounted lynx who didn’t know what a lynx was two years ago. Certainly many have had some thrilling hunting experiences. Some trappers have adapted their fox sets and now take an occasional lynx – some have quit fox trapping and now go out exclusively for lynx. Louis Ziemann from Sheyenne, North Dakota, trapped 20 lynx in one week last winter.”*

*Today, sightings of Canada lynx, shown left, are rare in North Dakota. Yet, when food supplies farther north in Canada dwindle, forcing the predators to seek out better hunting grounds, it’s never out of the question for these animals to drift into the state.*



*The shaded counties are those open to bobcat harvest in North Dakota.*

COLIN PENNER



# TRACKS for the Snow

*Story and Photos by Craig Bihrlé*

---

*Game and Fish Department wardens are getting full use of a new tracked vehicle on Devils Lake this winter, as snow conditions have made traditional access difficult.*





## New Vehicle Improves Lake Patrol on the Ice

Ice anglers are by and large a social bunch, mostly content to set up their shelters in clusters related to where the fish are biting, or at least, where fish have the potential to bite.

These gatherings are routine stops for game wardens on patrol. In one spot, a game warden team can interact with multiple anglers, checking to make sure that all are properly licensed and adhering to rules on daily limits, bait and the number of lines for fishing.

It's not such a routine patrol, however, in years like this when lakes are covered with deep snow, vehicle access is difficult, and anglers are fewer and more spread out. "The way the snow has been on the lakes of late," says Paul Freeman, the State Game and Fish Department's warden supervisor for northeastern North Dakota, "about the only way to patrol is with some kind of tracked vehicle."

Tracked vehicles like snowmobiles are nothing new, and most game wardens have access to one for winter patrols. But snowmobiles have their limitations and recently the Game and Fish Department began testing the feasibility of an off-highway vehicle fitted with tracks in winter instead of regular tires.

So far, the enforcement division has one such vehicle based at Devils Lake, where it has received considerable use since it arrived last winter.

In the winter of 2009, Freeman said, it was

extremely difficult to get around on Devils Lake, which influenced the decision to try another type of machine.

The new vehicle has a cab that accommodates two people, has some heat, and has an equipment box. "In the past we've used snowmobiles, which by and large are a one-person outfit," Freeman noted. "In the winter we like to have two officers working together, so then you have to run two sleds. With this machine, two officers can work together, and probably spend all day out on the lake and be relatively comfortable."

On a lake as large and as popular as Devils Lake, some anglers also have tracked vehicles so they can fish when others can't get around. "We can at least get to them," Freeman says. "We feel we should be at least as well equipped as the people we're checking."

The tracked OHV is also more powerful than a snowmobile so it can be used for heavy work such as removing fish houses left out on a lake beyond the deadline (March 15) or helping with rescue missions.

Another bonus is that in spring, tires can replace the track. "A snowmobile you can only use in the snow," Freeman said. "This is a year-round machine, so cost-benefit, it's probably a better deal."

---

**CRAIG BIHRLE** is the Game and Fish Department's communications supervisor.

---

*District warden Kurt Aufforth makes the rounds on Devils Lake, checking for activity in areas that were not accessible by pickup.*

---

*On a lake as large and as popular as Devils Lake, some anglers also have tracked vehicles so they can fish when others can't get around. "We can at least get to them," Paul Freeman says. "We feel we should be at least as well equipped as the people we're checking."*

# BUFFALOBERRY PATCH



By Greg Freeman, Department News Editor



CRAIG BIRRE

## 44 Eagles Counted on Survey

The annual midwinter bald eagle survey conducted January 6 along the Missouri River from Bismarck to the Garrison Dam revealed 44 bald eagles, according to Patrick T. Isakson, conservation biologist for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department.

The aerial survey is conducted nationwide to estimate the number of bald eagles wintering in the lower 48 states. "We count the birds as close to a target date as possible to minimize the chance that birds are counted more than once," Isakson said.

The number of bald eagles wintering in the state generally depends on the amount of open water and availability of prey – fish and waterfowl. "This year's count was slightly above average, a bit of a surprise as waterfowl numbers along the Missouri River are low," Isakson said. "A majority of the eagles counted were in a stretch of river from Stanton to the Garrison Dam, the area with the highest concentration of waterfowl."

Eagles are relatively easy to spot as they prefer to perch in large cottonwood trees along the river. Adult bald eagles have a

white head and tail and a dark brown body, while immature bald eagles are brown with irregular white plumage. Golden eagles, which are also counted, are dark in color and have a gold cap on their head.

## Hunting and Fishing Legislation on Web

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is again tracking hunting and fishing issues during the 2011 legislative session.

Interested outdoor enthusiasts can follow proposed outdoors-related bills by logging onto the Game and Fish Department website, [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov).

A brief description of each bill will be included, along with the bill sponsor and hearing schedule. To view each bill in its entirety, click on the hot-linked bill number.

## Snowmobile Reminder

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department reminds snowmobile enthusiasts to stay clear of wildlife and wildlife habitat so animals do not suffer additional stress.

Snowmobiles cannot be used to flush, chase or pursue wildlife. Running snowmobiles near, through or around winter habitat such as thickets, cattails and wooded areas may inadvertently scare wintering wildlife, causing them additional stress or injury.

Snowmobiles can be used off an established trail while fox or coyote hunting, but chasing a coyote through cover or across an open field on a snowmobile is illegal.

Observers witnessing harassment or chasing of wildlife are encouraged to call the Report All Poachers hotline at (800) 472-2121.

Riders are encouraged to use snowmobile trails and avoid situations that could disturb wildlife. Information on the North Dakota trail system is available at the Snowmobile North Dakota website at [snowmobilednd.com](http://snowmobilednd.com).



Visit the North Dakota Game and Fish Department website, [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov), to follow hunting and fishing issues during the 2011 legislative session.



*While the spring light goose season opens this month, it's unlikely hunters will encounter birds in North Dakota until sometime in March or even early April.*



CRAIG BIHRLE

## Spring Light Goose Season Opens

North Dakota's spring light goose season opens February 19.

The spring season is part of an effort to reduce the Mid-Continent Light Goose Population, which has more than tripled in three decades.

Snow geese tend to move through the state fairly quickly in spring, with arrival and departure depending on weather conditions. Snow geese typically migrate through the state in March and early April.

Licensing information and regulations are available on the North Dakota Game and Fish Department website at [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov), or by calling (701) 328-6300. The 2010-11 hunting license is still valid for residents. Nonresidents need a \$50 spring license. New Harvest Information Program certification is required for all hunters. Call (888) 634-4798 to register, or visit the Game and Fish website.

## Earth Day Patch Contest

The state Game and Fish Department's annual Earth Day awareness campaign is accepting entries for design of a 2011 Earth Day patch. North Dakota students ages 6-18 are eligible to participate.

The entry deadline is March 15.

The Game and Fish Department will announce a winner in three age

categories – 6-9, 10-13, and 14-18. Each winner will receive a pair of Leupold compact binoculars. The final patch design will be chosen from the three winners.

The winning design will be used on a patch given to members of Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, 4-H clubs and any school participating in Earth Day cleanup projects on state-owned or managed lands in North Dakota in April and May.

The patch should incorporate some aspect of Earth Day – celebrated April 22 – or keeping North Dakota clean. It must be round and three inches in diameter. There is a limit of five colors on the patch, and lettering must be printed. Name, address, age and phone number of the contestant must be clearly printed on the entry form. Only one entry per person is allowed.

Earth Day patch entry and reporting forms are available on the Department's website, [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov). For more information, contact Pat Lothspeich at (701) 328-6332.



*2010 Earth Day overall winner  
Michelle Risan, Parshall*



CRAIG BHIRLE

## Darkhouse Spearfishing Closes March 15

Anglers are reminded that North Dakota's darkhouse spearfishing season closes March 15.

Interested individuals who would still like to get out for the first time this year must register with the North Dakota Game and Fish Department. Registration is available through the Department's website, [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov), or through any Game and Fish Department office.

March 15 is also the deadline for anglers to remove permanent fish houses from state waters.

*The darkhouse spearfishing season closes in North Dakota in mid-March, but ice fishing opportunities will likely remain for those reluctant to store their ice augers.*

## Midwinter Waterfowl Survey Completed

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department's annual midwinter waterfowl survey revealed an estimated 7,300 Canada geese wintering on the Missouri River in early January.

Game management section leader Mike Johnson said numerous snowstorms in December with below zero temperatures pushed most waterfowl out of the state. "Late fall was generally warm and mild through Thanksgiving, but December's weather pushed a lot of geese through the area," he said.

Johnson said it's likely this year's count is underestimated because of poor lighting conditions during the morning of the survey, and the tight flocking behavior of roosting geese.

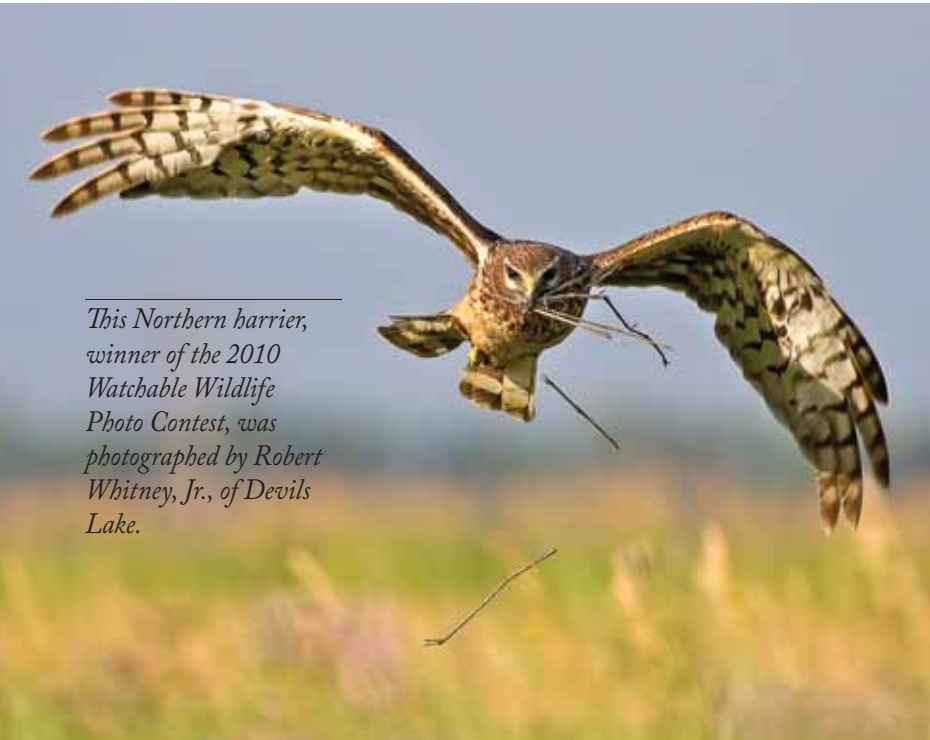
Last year, 25,400 geese were staging on the Missouri River in North Dakota during the midwinter survey. In 2009, only 9,700 geese were counted. Between 2005 and 2008, a new record high was established every year, reaching 175,000 geese in 2008. Record numbers in the mid-to-late 2000s coincided with years of unseasonably mild winter weather.

From 1998 to 2004, the number of Canada geese on the river during the midwinter survey was between 2,000 and 89,000. Prior to 1998, the count was rarely more than 10,000.



CRAIG BHIRLE





*This Northern harrier, winner of the 2010 Watchable Wildlife Photo Contest, was photographed by Robert Whitney, Jr., of Devils Lake.*

ROBERT WHITNEY, JR.



### Checkoff for Wildlife

North Dakota citizens with an interest in supporting wildlife conservation programs are reminded to look for the Watchable Wildlife checkoff on the state tax form.

The 2010 state income tax form gives wildlife enthusiasts an opportunity to support nongame wildlife like songbirds and birds of prey, while at the same time contributing to programs that help everyone enjoy all wildlife.

The checkoff – whether you are receiving a refund or having to pay in – is an easy way to voluntarily contribute to sustain this long-standing program. In addition, direct donations to the program are accepted any time of year.

To learn more about Watchable Wildlife program activities, contact the North Dakota Game and Fish Department at (701) 328-6300 or e-mail [ndgf@nd.gov](mailto:ndgf@nd.gov).

### Another Tough Winter for Wildlife

It may sound like a broken record, but North Dakota's weather in February and March will once again be critical to the health of the state's wildlife populations.

Randy Kreil, North Dakota Game and Fish Department wildlife chief, said wildlife populations have had to struggle with tough conditions through three consecutive winters. "Animals definitely could use a reprieve," he said. "They are not as resilient as they were in the beginning of winter. The longer winter drags on, the greater the impact to wildlife populations and next fall's hunting opportunities."

Record to near-record snowfall has blanketed much of North Dakota each winter since 2008-09. Because of winter mortality, the number of deer licenses in 2010 was significantly reduced by nearly 30,000, and the pronghorn population was too low to sustain a hunting season last fall.

This winter, the Game and Fish Department has received reports of pheasant losses, but the extent is unknown. Kreil said birds seem to be

doing okay in some areas, but no doubt have suffered losses in other areas.

"What this winter will mean in terms of pheasant hunting opportunities next fall is hard to tell," he added. "For the most part, birds were able to adapt the past two winters under similar conditions. But then again, good nesting habitat in spring allowed them to rebound. However, with the continued loss of Conservation Reserve Program acres, their ability to rebound could be impaired."

Reports of dying or dead deer are not uncommon in tough winters, and this holds true this winter as well. Mostly fawns and older deer are affected by the cold and wind. In addition, heavy snow cover prevents deer from accessing their usual food sources, which can result in deer dying because of grain overload – a result of deer switching their natural diet to a diet comprised of mostly corn and/or other grains.

Because deer often gather near farms and ranches in winter, Department personnel are working with approximately

200 livestock producers to protect stored feed supplies. This number is similar to last year at this time, but is still far below the winter of 1996-97 when Game and Fish staff worked with more than 1,000 different producers on deer depredation issues.

No wildlife species has suffered the harsh realities of winter more so than pronghorn, as the population has declined by more than 50 percent since 2008. Kreil said there is little doubt pronghorn are in a vulnerable state due to deep snow, and in some cases have limited movement because herds are prevented from moving to areas with less snow.

While this winter so far has been tough on wildlife, Kreil said the next several weeks are critical. "Animals have been stressed for a couple months now, and they don't have the energy they had in early winter," Kreil said. "A mild February and March is much needed, and if we get a break we will see the benefits next fall. If not, then hunters will need to adjust their expectations in 2011."



## Game and Fish Receives Federal Award

A cooperative venture between three North Dakota state agencies is among a select group recognized by the Federal Highway Administration as an “Exemplary Ecosystem Initiative.”

The State Game and Fish Department is included in the award for its role in accepting more than 3,000 acres of diverse habitats into its wildlife management area system.

Other partners are the North Dakota Department of Transportation and State Land Department.

The project has its roots in the early 1970s when the state DOT designated roadsides along U.S. highways 2 and 83 as “no-mow” areas to offset habitats lost to road construction.

While unmowed roadsides can provide useful grassland habitat for ground-nesting birds such as ducks and pheasants, the benefits were often minimized by drought emergencies that allowed adjacent landowners to cut the grass for hay.

The frequent haying led to concerns from resource agencies that wildlife values of undisturbed grasslands were compromised too often and the no-mow areas weren't contributing enough wildlife habitat value to adequately offset the habitat lost to road construction.

This periodic conflict led to a call for resolution from the state legislature and eventually led to the state DOT purchasing about 3,400 acres of state school land from the State Land Department, with DOT then leasing the land to Game and Fish for use as state wildlife management areas. In turn, DOT was able to remove the no-mow restrictions along the two federal highways.

While the tracts of state school land were always open to hunting, many had little wildlife value before Game and Fish took over. Today, these areas are managed for wildlife and remain open to hunting and other compatible outdoor recreation activities.

The FHA called this land-trade project “Exceptional Environmental Stewardship” and recognized all three partners for going beyond FHA rules for environmental compliance to achieve environmental excellence.



*Horseshoe Lake (top) and Willow Lake (bottom) wildlife management areas are part of the Game and Fish Department's WMA system because of the project that earned the agency its "Exemplary Ecosystem Initiative" award from the Federal Highway Administration.*







### March Deadline

Applications for this fall's elk, bighorn sheep and moose hunting seasons must be in the mail and postmarked before midnight March 30.

In early March, prospective hunters can print out, or submit a lottery application online at the Game and Fish Department website, [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov). Applications will also be available at Game and Fish offices, county auditors and license vendors.

## GAME AND FISH STAFF NOTES



*Lynn Schlueter*

Lynn Schlueter, the Game and Fish Department's aquatic nuisance species coordinator, recently received the Water Stewardship Award from the Devils Lake Basin Joint Water Resource Board.

The award recognizes individuals or groups who contribute significant efforts to improve land and water stewardship in the basin. Schlueter was honored for his tireless work to promote awareness of aquatic nuisance species and how they would hurt North Dakota waters if introduced.

In addition, Schlueter was instrumental in coordinating an agreement between government agencies and individual landowners that led to construction of an earthen berm designed to keep carp, perhaps the state's most visible and well-known aquatic nuisance species, from naturally entering the Devils Lake basin.

The Devils Lake Basin Joint Water Resource Board consists of representatives of nine counties in northeastern North Dakota that have land encompassed by the Devils Lake basin.



*Rachel Bush*



*Megan Moore*

### Agencies Name Farm Bill Biologists

Rachel Bush and Megan Moore were hired as farm bill biologists in January.

Bush received a bachelor's of science degree from Lake Superior State University in Michigan and a master's degree from North Dakota State University. She is stationed in Jamestown.

Moore received a bachelor's of science degree from Southern Illinois University Carbondale. She is stationed in Hettinger.

Farm bill biologists work out of USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service offices, and are funded by NRCS, North Dakota Game and Fish Department, Pheasants Forever, PF chapters and the North Dakota Natural Resources Trust.

# NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

PUBLISHED BY THE NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

## on television

 <b>WILLISTON</b> KUMV - Tuesday - 10 pm KXMD - Monday - noon	 <b>MINOT</b> KMOT - Tuesday - 10 pm KXMC - Monday - noon	 <b>GRAND FORKS</b> WDAZ - Wednesday - 5 pm
 <b>DICKINSON</b> KQCD - Tuesday - 9 pm (MT) KXMA - Sunday - 9 pm (MT)	  <b>BISMARCK</b> KFYZ - Tuesday - 10 pm KXMB - Sunday - 10 pm CATV - Saturday - 9:30 am	 <b>FARGO</b> KVRV - Sunday - 9 pm



## NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH ONLINE

visit <http://gf.nd.gov>

**PURCHASE** and Print Licenses and Apply for Lottery Licenses

**VIEW** North Dakota OUTDOORS Magazines

**EXPLORE** North Dakota PLOTS Guide

**WATCH** Outdoors Online Weekly Webcasts and TV Features



### MORE FEATURES

- Current wildlife and fishing news
- GIS map creation
- Review important season dates and regulations
- Register for hunter education classes



NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT  
 100 North Bismarck Expressway  
 Bismarck, ND 58501-5095  
 701.328.6300  
 E-mail: [ndgf@nd.gov](mailto:ndgf@nd.gov)





# back cast

By Ron Wilson



I haven't seen a lot of pheasants lately. Like many animals having to endure this marathon of a winter, I worry about them – unselfishly because I don't like to see things suffer and selfishly because I want some around to hunt in fall.

Since I don't have an answer for the weather, other than impatiently riding it out, my mind effortlessly wanders from hiking across the prairie in just a T-shirt to trailing behind eager dogs bent on flushing birds that must smell so darn good to them. Landing here in this particular midwinter reverie isn't much of a reach considering the only bird hunting we do this time of year is on contrived outings in our heads stirred by the littlest of things – spotting a rooster in a snowy ditch or picking a burr from my dog's chest that has been hitchhiking unnoticed since late November.

Three years ago this month, I answered an advertisement in the newspaper and picked the only male puppy from a litter of golden retrievers in a small garage in Bismarck. While his litter mates chewed on an old blanket, squeaky toys wet with slobber and eventually my bootlaces, my new charge slept in a big bowl of dried dog food, with his backside hanging over the edge. When I paid the woman, it was only a guess who was getting the better end of the deal.

My son, a head-over-heels skateboarder, named our pup after an aerial skateboarding trick invented in the late 1970s. Three weeks in his new home, Ollie ate a sock he couldn't pass and the trick quickly became coming up with the money to have it surgically removed. We did get the sock back, though. It was black.

The name fit from the start. It was something I could imagine hollering on the prairie or out the back door when it was time to come in. It wasn't a mouthful or corny. Ollie. That's a good dog's name, I told my boy.

Ollie's running mate is Merle (think "Okie from Muskogee" and you'll get it). Before that there was Boomer, Deke and two Foleys. Foley No. 1 ate rat poison and Foley No. 2 was hit by a car. I gave up on the name, considering it jinxed, even though I was at one time attached to it for

sentimental reasons that I won't go into.

An old friend has given all his bird dogs the same name. Last I knew, he was on his third or fourth Duke. He argued that he did this not because of a lack of imagination, but because he simply liked the name. I argued that, like puppy breath, coming up with a name is one of the best things about welcoming a new furry friend into your home.

Of the bird dog owners I talked to at work, female names dominated – Sasha, Izzy, Katy, Maggie, Abby, Brandy and Zoey – which sunk my theory that like personalized license plates, a dog's name says a little something about the owner. With this group, I expected to come across maybe a Buck, Teal, Goose or Moose. (There was one Camo mentioned, but that dog has passed.)

Walk into about any fly shop in the West and there's likely a bird dog (nine times out of 10 it's a retriever) sacked out by the door or checkout counter. If the shop is located near a famous river, odds are better than cruddy the animal is named after it. If not, try Hatch, Caddis, Creek, Sage, Winston or Loomis (the only fly shop dog names I can remember from over the years) and you're likely close.

The first bird dog I remember hunting behind was Barometer, a high-strung springer spaniel that was more interested in chasing deer than birds. While Barometer is a mouthful for a dog's name, you can't argue about its uniqueness. I've also hunted behind Coot, Bob and Pete. All good, solid names, easily hollered in the field, but somewhat confusing when I thought about it too much because Pete, it turned out, was owned by a hunter named Bob.

Unfortunately, with the snow and cold seemingly going nowhere in a hurry, it feels as if we can't even see spring from here, even though the calendar promises its official arrival on March 20. That means it will be months until we get to carry shouldered shotguns behind dogs that adore us completely no matter what we call them.

RON WILSON is editor of North Dakota OUTDOORS.





CHUCK BUSH

## Rodent Folklore

No groundhog in North Dakota is going to claw from its burrow in early February to forecast what we already know, to portend the unfortunate reality that winter is far from over.

Holiday folklore aside, groundhogs, or more commonly woodchucks, on the Northern Plains are curled into balls, noses resting on lower abdomens, and hibernating. February, typically, is too early for a peek above ground, no matter if the calendar announces Groundhog Day.

In North Dakota, woodchucks are found mostly in the eastern third of the state along the Red, Sheyenne and Pembina river valleys. They prefer the edges of brushy woodlands, and burrow beneath rocks, stumps and dead trees.

Equipped with short, strong legs and sturdy claws, woodchucks are respected diggers. Burrows can

be up to 5 feet deep and 30 feet long, featuring a pile of dirt at the entrance. Secondary escape routes are not as conspicuous, or so the animal hopes as it tries to elude foxes, coyotes and large raptors.

Hibernation lasts from four to six months, ending sometime in late March or early April. While underground in a sealed winter chamber in the burrow, the woodchuck's heartbeat will slow from 75 beats per minute to a ridiculous four beats per minute. During this state of torpor, the woodchuck could pass for dead.

An adult woodchuck is 20-27 inches long, sporting coarse brown hair, lightly grizzled with white. A 10-pound woodchuck is considered large. This stout rodent has a short bushy tail and short ears. If you were to spot its tracks in the soft dirt outside the burrow, its fore print would show four long toes and the hind print five.

Woodchucks are not social animals. Adults seldom share burrows, except at times during the mating season in March or April. While young are born blind and helpless, it takes only about six weeks until they are weaned and later start to wander from the burrow.

With the lean winter months behind them, woodchucks feed on just about anything green and growing, eating up to one third of their weight per day. While they are most active during early morning and evening hours, woodchucks can be seen about any time of day. They are decent runners, capable swimmers and can even climb trees.

Their ability to foretell the length of our winters, however, is simply folklore.

---

**RON WILSON** is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.