

NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

PUBLISHED BY THE NORTH DAKOTA



GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

\$2.00 JANUARY 2012





MATTERS OF OPINION



Terry Steinwand
Director

For those who know me, I'm all about family. I stress this to Game and Fish employees and practice it whenever possible while dealing with issues at work. It doesn't always work the way I want, but I've always tried to give the necessary time to both. I'd have to say my family has probably sacrificed more than the job has over the last 30 years. But because I know my responsibilities, I'll be there for my family when it's important and I'll also be there for the job when it's important.

This past holiday season was memorable to me. My entire family, with the exception of my mother-in-law, was able to make the trip to my house for Christmas. While some family members have passed away, they're still present in spirit during times when we gather. There never seems to be enough time with family to do everything we want, but we make it work as best we can.

I took some time off from work over the holidays with the intent of getting out and enjoying the outdoor resources that North Dakota has to offer. As usual, I didn't get to do everything I wanted to do, primarily because I didn't get my Christmas shopping done until Christmas Eve day. Maybe it's a guy thing, since I seemed to see more males out shopping than females that day.

My original plan was to hunt coyotes with my sons, do a little ice fishing, hunt pheasants and trap muskrats. Timing just didn't work out with one son having to go back to college immediately after Christmas for athletic activities, while one had to go back to work. Even so, I still had one son who was home, so I took advantage of it.

We took a couple days and went back to the home place near Garrison (thanks again Mom for all the home cooking) and checked two of the activities off my wish list. We set traps for muskrats in some high-water sloughs and then set out to call coyotes.

Without any snow for a background, something we haven't had to worry about

for the past three winters, I was thinking it could be more difficult to spot coyotes against the brown landscape. And I was right, at least for my aging eyes. I called for about 10 minutes and then gave it a rest while scanning the surrounding area to see if anything was coming in, hoping to squeak in any interested coyotes the remaining distance. I was ready to stand to leave when my son signaled to stay put and call again. But I still hadn't spotted anything, and after five more minutes I decided to give it up.

Turns out, within five minutes of the original calling, my son spotted a coyote. Since I'd positioned our calling area poorly, the animal evidently got downwind of us, never to be seen again.

It was then time to check the muskrat traps. I won't go into great detail on this, but I can say it was fun, even though I'd forgotten how easy it is to get turned around so quickly on a moonless night. We didn't fare that well in the trapping world, either, but we did garner more muskrats than coyotes.

While the harvest portion of our travels didn't amount to much, the time spent outdoors was priceless. Just having the time to spend with one of my sons was worth more than anything to me. Sometime in the future this may no longer occur as my sons may not have as much time or may not live close by. The memories I've gained over the years, and those in the future, will be more than sufficient for me.

I encourage everyone to spend time outdoors with friends and family. I recently received a letter from an individual who went out of his way to take his son's friend, who comes from a nonhunting family, hunting with him. Such people are special and deserve credit for preserving the hunting heritage many of us hold so dear. It doesn't come without some work or cost, but it's well worth the effort. So get out and enjoy the resources our great state has to offer.

Terry Steinwand

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: Kelly Wike, Melissa Long, Ashley Baker
Information Technology Coordinators: Jerry Gulke, Alan Reile, Sally Sorensen
GIS Specialist: Brian Hlosek
Licensing Manager: Randy Meissner
Assistants: Gail Mosset, Katherine Mernitz, Janet Wolf, Amanda Anstrom

Administrative Assistant - Dickinson: Janel Kolar; Stephanie Richardson
Administrative Assistant - Devils Lake: Lisa Tofte
Administrative Assistant - Jamestown: Tonya Kukowski
Administrative Assistant - Riverdale: Clare Renner
CONSERVATION AND COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION
Division Chief: Greg Link, 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. Grondahl, 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 Kreft, 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; Erik Schmidt, Linton; 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, Fargo; Randy Knain, Rugby; Josh Frey, Devils Lake; Greg Hastings, Cavalier
Region No. 3 Warden Supvr: Daryl Kleyer, Williston
District Wardens: Brent Schwan, Watford City; Michael Raasakka, Stanley; Jim Burud, Kenmare; Al Howard, Minot; Jonathan Toffeland, Bottineau
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 Skurza, Riverdale
Administrative Assistant: Lori Kensington, Bismarck

WILDLIFE DIVISION

Division Chief: Randy Kreil, Bismarck
Assistant Division Chief: Jeb Williams, Bismarck
Game Mgt. Section Leader: Michael A. Johnson, Bismarck
Procurement Officer: Ray Parsons, Bismarck
Pilot: Jeff Faight, Bismarck
Upland Game Mgt. Supvr: Stan Kohn, Bismarck
Upland Game Mgt. Biologist: Aaron Robinson, Dickinson
Migratory Game Bird Biologist: Mike Szymanski, Bismarck
Big Game Mgt. Supvr: Bruce Stillings, Dickinson
Big Game Mgt. Biologists: Bill Jensen, Bismarck; Brett Wiedmann, Dickinson, Jason Smith, Jamestown
Wildlife Veterinarian: Dr. Daniel Grove, Bismarck
Furbearer Biologist: Stephanie Tucker, Bismarck
Game Management Technician: Vacant
Wildlife Resource Management Section Leader: Scott Peterson, Lonetree
Wildlife Resource Mgt. Supvrs: Bill Haase, Bismarck; Brian Prince, Devils Lake; Kent Luttschwager, Williston; Brian Kietzman, Jamestown; Dan Halstead, Riverdale
Wildlife Resource Mgt. Biologists: Arvid Anderson, Riverdale; Randy Littlefield, Lonetree; Rod Compson, 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 Roaldson, Colin Penner, Terry Oswald, Jr., Bismarck; Ty Dressler, Dickinson; Ryan Huber, Riverdale; Nathan Harling, Devils Lake; Renae Heinle, 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 Eeckhout, Jamestown
District Fisheries Biologists: Brandon Kratz, Jamestown
Missouri River System Supvr: David Fryda, Riverdale
Missouri River System Biologist: Russ Kinzler, Riverdale
Fisheries Techs: Shane Shefstad, Williston; Phil Miller, Devils Lake; Pat John, Jamestown; Justen 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.: Wesley Erdle, Bismarck
Fisheries Development Technician: Vacant
ANS Coordinator: Lynn Schlueter, Devils Lake
Administrative Assistant: Janice Vetter, Bismarck

ADVISORY BOARD

District 1 Jason Leiseth, Arnegard
District 2 Robert Gjellstad, Voltaire
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 Kartch, Bismarck
District 8 Wayne Gerbig, Amidon

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.

Editor: Ron Wilson Graphic Designer: Connie Schiff Circulation Manager: Darun Jochim

JANUARY 2012 • NUMBER 6 • VOLUME LXXIV

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURES
2011 in Review 2
2011 Watchable Wildlife Photo Contest 10
Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program at 75..... 16
DEPARTMENTS
Buffaloberry Patch 20



Front Cover

Porcupines are visible creatures during a white winter. With their thick fur and diet of bark found above the snow, they typically have little trouble surviving tough winters.

Photo by Ross McDougall, Rolla



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 • email: 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.



2011 IN

Looks like rain. Get your limit? On any given day in North Dakota the weather or a hunting/fishing related question carry equal weight in kick-starting a conversation.

2011 was a little different in that weather dominated many of those exchanges. For much of the year most evening news casts were dominated by weather related stories: Would we break snowfall records? At what level would the river crest? What happens to farmers who can't get crops planted? What is the effect of weather on wildlife?

We learned the meaning of cubic feet per second, prevented planting, river stage, snowpack moisture equivalent, Army Corps of Engineers, FEMA and so on.

In the fish and wildlife world

some of the negatives were winter mortality, low reproduction, boating access, entrainment (loss of fish through dams), peak of hatch and predator impacts. On the positive it was record fish reproduction, record number of waters supporting game fish populations, first-ever fisher season, waterfowl population increases and an extended migration period.

For the future of fish and wildlife in North Dakota, there are positive and negative signs of what's to come. Negatives are lower game populations over the long-term caused by loss of Conservation Reserve Program acres, and high energy and commodity prices that will reduce the amount of available wildlife habitat and accelerate energy development, grassland conversion and wetland losses. These

dire predictions are a challenge to the Game and Fish Department. However, we can influence the outcome.

On the positive side, at least for the short-term, most upland and big game populations will rebound with proper management and favorable weather. Fisheries resources will be exceptional for the near future, then taper off when the next drought cycle hits.

Long-term challenges facing the Department will be how to fund protection, replacement and improvement of declining populations or degraded habitat and access. For the past 20 years the Department has had sound financial resources based on an increase in resident license sales and increased nonresident revenue.

Recently, revenue from



CRAIG BIRLE

REVIEW

By Roger Rostvet,
Game and Fish Department Deputy Director

nonresident sales exceeded all revenue from residents. It is doubtful that this scenario can continue. Coupled with a reduction in overall license sales is the fact that inflation has taken a big bite out of license revenue buying power. For example, the resident deer license fee has not changed since the early 1990s when it went from \$18 to the current rate of \$20. The same goes for the \$10 resident fishing license. Using the Consumer Price Index, an \$18 deer license purchased in the 1980s would have to sell for nearly \$50 to draw the same purchasing power today.

Here's a more in depth review of some of the top issues from 2011.

Popular Hunting Areas Affected by Flood

Nearly 40,000 wildlife

management acres along the Missouri River suffered the affects of a summer-long flood, forcing animals to relocate and hunters to look elsewhere to hunt.

Jeb Williams, North Dakota Game and Fish Department assistant wildlife division chief, said 15,000 acres of the Oahe Wildlife Management Area were inundated with water, essentially making it swampland that was, at least temporarily, unattractive to wildlife.

"The area south of Bismarck-Mandan has been extremely popular with deer and pheasant hunters, because it provides some of the best wildlife habitat in the state," Williams said. "But the flood changed the dynamics dramatically."

After floodwaters receded, however, it appeared the damage was not as bad as originally feared.

"While a lot of habitat was lost, some remained water-free and provided some opportunities for deer and pheasant hunters ... and some of the backwater areas held a good number of waterfowl species, particularly wood ducks," Williams said.

The challenge to come at Oahe WMA is the sand and silt deposits that are in excess of 4 feet in places. "We remain hopeful that these areas will fill in with young cottonwood seedlings and one day provide another generation of hunters the same cottonwood forest we have come to appreciate," Williams said.

There are 20-plus WMAs from Williston to south of Bismarck on the Missouri River System, and many were entirely or partially flooded through spring and summer, something that hasn't

In summer 2011, North Dakota was as wet as it's been in perhaps the last 150 years. The Missouri River left its banks, flooding homes, farmland and wildlife habitat pictured here on Oahe Wildlife Management Area south of Bismarck.

happened in the last 60 years.

Going into the fall hunting season, Kent Luttschwager, Department wildlife resource management supervisor in Williston, said hunters would have to adapt, as wildlife populations that have called the Missouri River bottoms home were displaced because of high water.

“Lewis and Clark WMA is popular with hunters because it offers some of the most prolific wildlife habitat in the region,” Luttschwager said. “But exceptional wildlife habitat was covered in water for several months.”

Dan Halstead, Department wildlife resource management supervisor in Riverdale, said the spillway channel running through Riverdale WMA near Garrison Dam was originally 30 yards wide, but expanded to nearly 200 yards wide.

“But this area was only covered in water for maybe a week as the water quickly made its way back into the channel,” Halstead said. Because of this, he said hunter access gradually came around and continued to improve through fall.

While no one can predict how much property was lost to the record flood, wildlife managers said it would take time to recover. Fences, roads and other infrastructure up and down the river also needed repair or replacement.

Pronghorn Season Cut Again

Game and Fish Department officials closed the pronghorn season for the second year in a row after a summer survey revealed the statewide population was 30 percent lower than 2010 and down nearly 70 percent from 2008.

Bruce Stillings, Department big game supervisor in Dickinson, said poor winter survival and low fawn production dropped the statewide population estimate to approximately 4,500 animals. Until 2010 when the population fell to 6,500 pronghorn, the statewide population was at or above 10,000 animals from 2003-09, including two years with more than 15,000.

“Our numbers are declining with few young animals observed due to poor production in 2009 and 2010,”

pronghorn in the northern badlands and northern Slope areas were in the poorest condition. Pronghorn in all management regions were well below population objectives.

Northern Great Plains pronghorn are susceptible to dramatic population declines due to extreme winter conditions, Stillings said. The last three years have been a worst case scenario, similar to 1977-79 when three consecutive severe winters hit the region, resulting in closed seasons from 1978-1981.

“The last thing pronghorn needed was another severe winter,” Stillings said. “A much needed mild winter would increase adult survival and leave females in good condition for fawning.”

Mule Deer Production Lowest Ever

Aerial observations during the Game and Fish Department’s 2011 fall mule deer survey indicated production was the lowest since the survey began in 1954.

Stillings said observers counted 1,055 (1,613 in 2010) mule deer in the October survey. While the buck-to-doe ratio of .47 (.45 in 2010) was similar to the long-term average of .43 bucks per doe, the fawn-to-doe ratio of .59 (.72 in 2010) was the lowest on record, and was well below the long-term average of .93 fawns per doe.

“Three straight years of record low production makes additional license cuts likely in 2012,” Stillings said.

The fall aerial survey, conducted specifically to study demographics, covered 24 study areas and 306 square miles in western North Dakota. Biologists survey the same study areas in the spring of each year to determine a population index.



CRAIG BIRLE

North Dakota's pronghorn season was closed for the second year in a row in 2011 after another tough winter took its toll on these and other animals across the state.

“We are going to have some vegetation issues, but the river bottoms in this area are in better condition than Bismarck and Williston, just because of the prolonged effects of overland flooding in those areas,” Halstead said.

Stillings said. “To make matters worse, production this year was the lowest documented since biologists began surveying in the late 1950s.”

Survey results indicated the population in the western Bowman and southern Slope management regions were doing the best, while



CRAIG BHRLE

Pheasants and other upland game bird populations declined in 2011

Upland Game Bird Numbers Down

North Dakota's roadside pheasant survey suggested poor production in spring, leading to lower fall population in all areas of the state.

Stan Kohn, Department upland game management supervisor, said the survey showed pheasants down 36 percent statewide from last year. In addition, brood observations were down 38 percent, but average brood size was up 4 percent.

"Brood survey numbers match closely to numbers from 2001, when hunters harvested 420,000 roosters," Kohn said.

Several factors contributed to the

decline in pheasant numbers, including three difficult winters in a row

with above average snowfall that reduced the adult breeding population; wet conditions during peak hatch in mid-June of 2008, 2009 and 2011 reduced chick survival; and the loss of nesting habitat as more Conservation Reserve Program acreage was removed from pheasant range.

Aaron Robinson, Department upland game management biologist in Dickinson, also said hunters would likely see fewer sharp-tailed grouse, Hungarian partridge and ruffed grouse in 2011.

The spring sharptail breeding population was down 30 percent from 2010, with numbers falling from west to east. Partridge numbers were also down, and more localized than last year while spring statewide ruffed grouse drumming counts dipped 15 percent.

Wetland Conditions Favored Duck Hunters

The Department's annual fall wetland survey indicated good to excellent wetland conditions statewide for duck hunting.

"Most areas of the state have similar conditions to last year, with the exceptions of the northwest and southeast areas," said Mike Szymanski, Department migratory game bird biologist. "The number of wetlands in the northwest part of the state holding water during the survey nearly tripled from last year. However, on the flip side, the southeast part of the

While a third hard winter of significant snowfall in a row was tough on local wildlife, migrant waterfowl found plenty of water across the state in 2011.



CRAIG BHRLE

state has about half as many wetlands with water in them. Nonetheless, there are still abundant opportunities for duck hunters in southeast North Dakota.”

Three consecutive winters with significant snowfall refilled wetlands, and considerable summer rains maintained water levels in more temporary-type wetlands, Szymanski said.

EHD Outbreak in Western North Dakota

Based on continued reports of white-tailed deer mortality in western North Dakota caused by epizootic hemorrhagic disease, Game and Fish suspended the sale of remaining first-come, first-served deer licenses in units 3F1, 3F2 and 4F in mid-October.

In addition, hunters with white-tailed deer licenses in units 3B1, 3D1, 3E1, 3F1, 3F2, 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, 4E and 4F had the option of turning in those licenses for refunds.

Randy Kreil, Department wildlife division chief, said the decision was based on evidence of moderate to significant white-tailed deer losses in some areas that might have affected hunting success in those locations.

“While we first received reports of isolated deer deaths in August, loss of deer to this disease appeared to have extended through September and into October, and covered a large area of western North Dakota,” he said.



CRAIG BIRLE

Mule deer production was low in 2011, likely meaning fewer licenses in years to come.

More than 13,000 white-tailed deer license holders were eligible for license refunds and 637 actually turned back their licenses.

The last time Game and Fish made license refunds an option for hunters because of an EHD outbreak was in 2000.

Mule Deer Tests Positive for CWD

A mule deer taken from unit 3F2 during opening weekend of the deer gun season tested positive for chronic wasting disease.

Dr. Dan Grove, Department wildlife veterinarian, said a hunter shot a doe in western Grant County and submitted the head for testing as part of the hunter-harvested surveillance program.

“According to the hunter, the

animal looked healthy,” Grove said. “It showed no visible signs of having any health issues.”

This is the third deer to test positive for CWD, and all three were from taken from unit 3F2 in southwestern North Dakota. The first two were during the 2009 and 2010 deer gun seasons. All three were within 15 miles of each other.

“The latest positive emphasizes the importance of continued monitoring along with current and expanding CWD restrictions in and around this unit,” Grove said.

Silver Carp Caught in James River

An angler caught a silver carp in October in the James River near LaMoure.

Silver carp, an exotic species, are



GENE VAN ECKHOUT

Record flows in the James River in 2011 made it possible for exotic silver carp to move into North Dakota.

well established in the lower Missouri River and in the James River in South Dakota. This is the first report of this aquatic nuisance species in North Dakota waters.

Lynn Schlueter, Game and Fish aquatic nuisance species coordinator, said Department personnel are disappointed but not surprised that silver carp have entered the state.

“Record high flows in the James River in 2011 facilitated their movements upstream, causing them to move up the James River in South Dakota in recent years,” he said.

Game and Fish staff continued to monitor the river where the unwanted carp was caught, in addition to surrounding areas of the James River. This survey effort turned up one additional silver carp just below Jamestown Reservoir.

Silver carp out-compete native and other game fish in large river systems. They eat phytoplankton, a food item used by zooplankton, which in turn are eaten by small game fish. They concentrate below dams and can drive out desirable fish. When frightened, they can jump several feet out of the water, thereby posing a danger to boaters and skiers.

First Fisher Trapping Season

The state’s first fisher trapping season in eastern North Dakota lasted less than a week as the 10-animal quota was reached in late November.

An expansion of fishers in eastern North Dakota allowed the Game and Fish Department to implement the experimental trapping season. A limit of one fisher per person was allowed.

Grouse Seasons Closed

Hunting seasons for sage and pinnated grouse were closed again in 2011.

For the fourth year in a row, North Dakota didn’t have a sage grouse season, and it was the second year in a row for no season on pinnated grouse, or prairie chickens, in

the northeastern and southeastern parts of the state.

In the last four years, the sage grouse population in southwestern North Dakota has declined by 60 percent. Male prairie chicken spring booming counts have dramatically declined the last three years.

MRS Fish Populations Strong

Fish population sampling in 2011 on the Missouri River System indicated positive results in both Lake Sakakawea and Lake Oahe.

After years of drought, higher reservoir levels gave fish access to gravel and cobble spawning areas that were dry just a few years ago. There is also much more sheltered shallow-water

habitat in the backs of bays that are important nursery areas for many fish species.

Netting operations in Sakakawea found abundant walleyes, with many in the 18-22 inch range. Department fisheries biologists also noted substantial numbers of yearling walleye in the nets, an indication of good reproductive and stocking success in 2010.

Northern pike, yellow perch and sauger were also plentiful in the survey nets. Sauger numbers have been good in recent years, and the size structure is favorable for anglers.

Meanwhile, northern pike and yellow perch reproduction has flourished since the return of water to the reservoirs. Smallmouth bass are rebounding as well.



The sage grouse season in southwestern North Dakota was closed – again – in 2011.

CRAIG BHIRLE



CRAIG BIHRLE

While millions of walleye were stocked in dozens of waters across North Dakota in 2011, many other species of fish, including these trout, were planted in waters frequented by anglers.

Once floodwaters along the Missouri River abated, anglers returned to the river in search of what they missed for most of summer.



CRAIG BIHRLE

On Lake Oahe, the walleye population is still strong. Although larger walleye remain in Oahe, many fish in the nets were less than 14 inches in length, the result of good reproduction since the lake refilled in 2009.

Like many waters in the state, northern pike numbers in Oahe and Sakakawea were exceptional.

Walleye Fingerlings Stocked

More than 8 million walleye fingerlings were stocked in 88 lakes and rivers across the state in summer 2011.

Jerry Weigel, Department fisheries production and development section leader, said while the goal was to meet or exceed 2010's record stocking of 11.5 million walleye, challenges from flooding and cooler spring weather reduced hatchery output.

The Garrison Dam (7.7 million fingerlings) and Valley City (600,000) national fish hatcheries were both hampered by Mother Nature – Valley City with high flows and Garrison Dam with limited food production due to a cool spring and record releases.

Despite those challenges, Weigel said fish quality was good and stocking conditions were great, with lots of cool water and flooded vegetation at the stocking sites.

Fishing Opportunities Plentiful

High water levels across much of the state in 2011 were a benefit to most lakes and fish populations.

Never has the state had so many different water bodies to fish, said Greg Power, Department fisheries division chief.

Going into the ice fishing season, Power said fishing opportunities are abundant statewide.

“The fish populations are high in many areas, and the opportunity is there for people to catch fish,” he said.

Salmon Egg Goal Reached

Fisheries crews completed their annual salmon spawning operation on Lake Sakakawea after surpassing their goal of 750,000 eggs.

Dave Fryda, Department Missouri River System supervisor, said crews collected more than 1 million eggs, the majority from Lake Sakakawea and the remainder from the Missouri River below Garrison Dam. The average size of Lake Sakakawea females was less than 7 pounds, more than a pound lighter than in 2010. The Missouri River females, which are typically larger than lake fish, were similar in size this year.

“The 2011 salmon spawning run was a success, largely due to the presence of good numbers of salmon throughout the spawning run,” Fryda said. “Even though smaller females meant fewer eggs per fish, we were able to capture enough fish to easily obtain our eggs goal.”

Plans for 2012 are to increase the Lake Sakakawea stocking to 250,000 salmon, with none scheduled for the river below Garrison Dam, Fryda said.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011

Income	\$30,569,621
Expenses	\$31,276,391
FUND BALANCES, FIXED ASSETS AND LONG-TERM DEBT	
Game and Fish General Fund	\$31,579,595
Habitat and Depredation Fund	\$873,935
Nongame Wildlife Fund	\$87,381
TOTAL ALL FUNDS	\$32,540,911
FIXED ASSETS	\$37,843,302
DEPARTMENT NET WORTH	\$70,384,213

2010 LICENSES AND PERMITS ISSUED

	Resident	Nonresident
Fishing	46,142	10,077
Husband/Wife Fishing	12,527	3,321
Senior Citizen Fishing	10,835	
Disabled Fishing	455	
Short-Term Fishing		
10-Day		4,880
3-Day		19,978
Paddlefish Tags	2,690	885
Commercial Tags	20	
Retail Bait Vendor	247	
Wholesale Bait Vendor	28	13
Fish Hatchery	3	
2010 Boat Registrations (Third year of 3-year decal)	6,353	
Boat Rentals	23	
General Hunting	50,220	50,751
Small Game Hunting	24,519	33,156
Combination License	57,311	
Waterfowl Hunting		23,624
Furbearer Hunting/Trapping	14,734	3,780
Fur Buyer	35	1
Deer Gun Hunting	101,216	4,421
Deer Gun Hunting (Gratis)	15,564	240
Deer Bowhunting	17,466	3,201
Moose Hunting	150	
Moose Hunting (Preferential Landowner)	23	
Elk Hunting	496	
Elk Hunting (Preferential Landowner)	80	
Bighorn Sheep	5	
Turkey Hunting (Spring)	6,324	
Turkey Hunting (Fall)	5,499	
Turkey Hunting (Gratis Spring)	321	
Turkey Hunting (Gratis Fall)	402	
Habitat Stamp	100,971	
Shooting Preserve	13	
Fishing/Hunting Guide	240	23
Taxidermist	241	
Falconry	3	
Scientific Collector	51	
Swan	1,049	1,051
Sandhill Crane	2,323	6,149

2011 SPECIAL BIG GAME LICENSES

	Licenses Available	Applications Received
Moose	162	12,677
Elk	524	11,485
Bighorn	5	9,854

Watchable 2011 Wildlife PHOTO CONTEST

By Patrick T. Isakson

2011 marks the 22nd year of the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's Watchable Wildlife Photo Contest.

The last decade-plus has provided the opportunity to view thousands of wildlife photos taken in North Dakota, and this year's entrants were again up to the challenge. More than 400 photos were entered in the nongame, game and plants and insects categories. This year, 13 photos were chosen – one overall winner and a winner and three runners-up in each of the categories. The overall winner is a great blue heron in flight taken by Kelly Krabbenhoft of Fargo.

As its name implies, the plumage of the great blue heron is a grey-blue. This big bird also features a black cap on its head and a yellow beak. It is one of North Dakota's largest water birds, standing over 4 feet tall. It has long black stilt-like legs that allow it to move through shallow water undetected to hunt for its prey, mainly small fish and amphibians. But being the opportunistic hunter, the heron will take whatever it can reach with its long neck and beak.

Great blue herons, although common, are difficult to photograph because the birds are wary and rarely stick around a marsh long enough to get their picture taken.

*PATRICK T. ISAKSON is a Game and Fish
Department conservation biologist.*





▲ OVERALL WINNER

*Great Blue Heron
Kelly Krabbenhoft, Fargo
Canon 50D
Photo taken near Center*



▲ GAME 1ST PLACE

*Turkey
Mike LaLonde, Bismarck
Nikon D3X
Photo taken in Burleigh County*



▶ GAME RUNNER-UP

*Sharp-tailed Grouse
Kenneth Miller, Golden Valley
Canon T1i
Photo taken on Upper Souris National Wildlife Refuge*



▲ GAME RUNNER-UP

*Pronghorns
DeVane Webster, Beulah
Canon 7D
Photo taken northwest of Beulah*



▲ GAME RUNNER-UP

*White-tailed Deer Fawn
Shane Carrier, Neche
Sony Cyber Shot
Photo taken in Pembina County*



▲ NONGAME 1ST PLACE

*American Robin
Leona Knopik, Dickinson
Kodak Easy Share
Photo taken north of Dickinson*



▲ NONGAME RUNNER-UP

*American White Pelicans
Troy Gunderson, Jamestown
Canon DIGITAL REBEL XS
Photo taken near Pipestem
Dam northeast of Jamestown*



▲ NONGAME RUNNER-UP

*Sharp-shinned Hawk
Brad Berger, Fargo
Canon 5D
Photo taken near Fargo*



▲ NONGAME RUNNER-UP

*Great Horned Owl
Jean Schuster, New Rockford
Canon Powershot S3IS
Photo taken southeast of New Rockford*



▲ PLANT AND INSECT RUNNER-UP

Ichneumonid Wasp
Jeff Miller, Grand Forks
Canon Powershot SX100 IS
Photo taken southwest of Tuttle



▲ PLANT AND INSECT 1ST PLACE

Crocus
Nancy Secrest, Hettinger
Kodak Z612
Photo taken near Hettinger



▲ PLANT AND INSECT RUNNER-UP

Tiger Lillies
Kelly Krabbenhoft, Fargo
Canon 50D
Photo taken near Center



▲ PLANT AND INSECT RUNNER-UP

Dragonfly
Dave Bruner, Grand Forks
Canon 40D
Photo taken in Grand Forks

WILDLIFE AND SPORT FISH RESTORATION PROGRAM AT 75



With the aid of federal funding, hunting opportunities in North Dakota continue to be improved, thousands of youngsters are taught hunter education and access to public fishing waters are increased.

While wildlife populations in the United States were staggering, some toward extinction, before the 1930s, their plight was maybe never so visible than during the devastating drought of the Dirty Thirties.

As dust and poverty spread across the land, taking with it much of what remained of the nation's wildlife and habitat, conservation leaders called for the need of adequate funding for wildlife restoration projects.

The answer came in 1937 when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, commonly known as the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Act after its legislative sponsors, which provides an 11 percent manufacturer's excise tax on sporting rifles, shotguns, ammunition and archery equipment, plus a 10 percent manufacturer's excise tax on handguns.

In 1950, anglers and the fishing and boating industries established analogous funding strategies through the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act, commonly called the Dingell-Johnson Act after key lawmakers who pushed for the program.

Together, the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration program has contributed more than \$12 billion to fish and wildlife conservation – more than any other conservation effort – in the United States. In 2012, the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration program, which has been rightly hailed as the finest program for restoring wildlife populations bent on apparent irreversible declines, celebrates its 75th anniversary.

“This was one of the few times in American history that people went to Congress and demanded to be taxed following the dark days of the 1930s when wildlife populations were perilously low,” said Randy Kreil, North Dakota Game and Fish Department wildlife division chief. “Hunters and anglers saw a need for a dependable source of funds to restore fish and wildlife populations and their associated hunting and fishing opportunities.”

“Conservation and wise use of the nation’s basic natural resources; soil, water, timber and minerals has been a struggle between exploiters and conservationists ever since thinking men awoke and found that America, like every other nation in the world, must use its resources wisely in order to survive. The mid-1930s brought the problem to the attention of our nation’s leaders. Drought and unwise use of soil were causing dust storms . . . stream and lake pollution was increasingly unchecked. The waste and misuse so prevalent was affecting the nation’s fish and wildlife. Many deer and antelope herds were at all time lows. Conservationists were predicting the extinction of some species of waterfowl and shorebirds,” wrote Wilbur Boldt, Game and Fish Department deputy commissioner, in *North Dakota OUTDOORS* in 1962.

The passage of the Pittman-Robertson Act 75 years ago marked the start of scientific management of wildlife in North Dakota. Until then, Game and Fish activities centered mostly on enforcing game laws, pheasant and fish stocking and the creation of game reserves.

With money and experience in wildlife

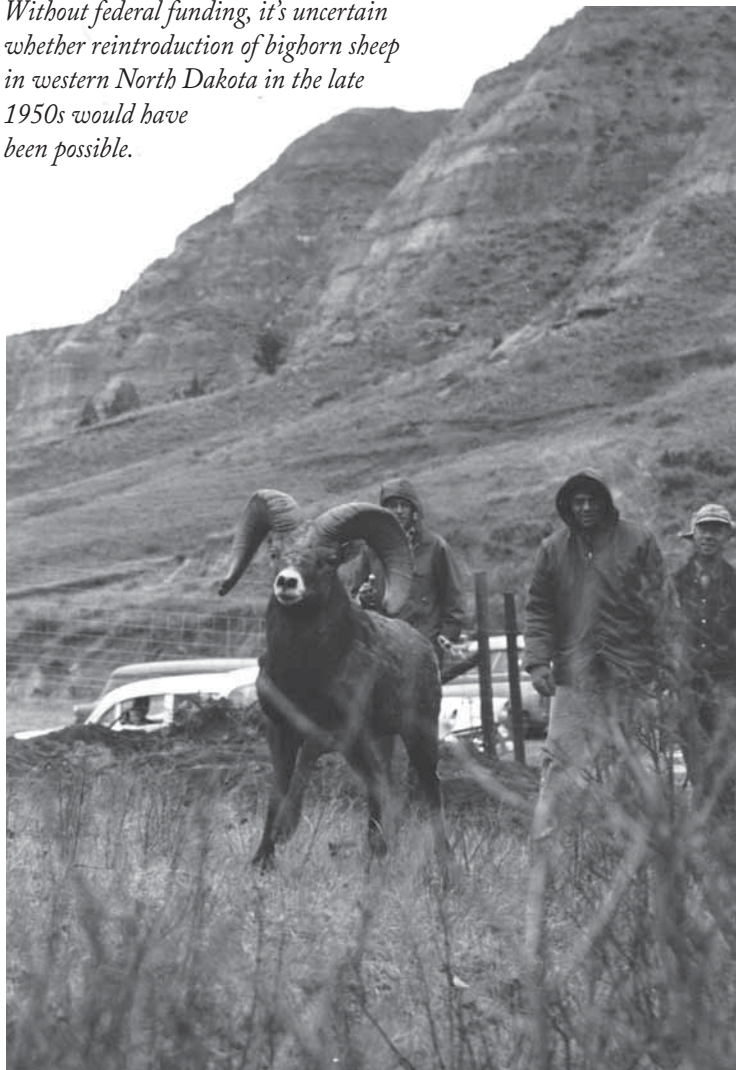
management in short supply, Pittman-Robertson funding allowed the Game and Fish Department to start statewide surveys of game populations, wildlife research, land acquisitions and habitat development.

The Game and Fish Department flew its first aerial big game survey in 1941, pioneering a survey technique that was later adopted by wildlife managers across the country.

The Dingell-Johnson Act places a 10 percent excise tax on fishing gear, such as rods, reels and lures. In North Dakota, these funds were responsible for establishment of initial fisheries management programs in the 1950s. From the start, these funds were instrumental in the development and maintenance of Game and Fish Department fisheries management programs, were the major source of funding for fisheries research, and helped fund construction of fishing waters in North Dakota.

“Without these funds, our fisheries staff wouldn’t be able to do many of the things needed to manage North Dakota’s fishing waters,” said Greg Power, Game and

Without federal funding, it’s uncertain whether reintroduction of bighorn sheep in western North Dakota in the late 1950s would have been possible.



GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT PHOTO

Fish Department fisheries division chief. “While Mother Nature plays a large role in the quality of fishing in North Dakota, so too do the funds that drive surveys, research, production and development.”

In 1984, the Sport Fish Restoration Act was amended to include excise taxes on motorboat fuels and on previously untaxed sport fishing equipment. Power said in recent years Sport Fish Restoration funds account for more than 70 percent of the Department’s fisheries budget.

Based on a user pay/user benefit principle, the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration program operates, in short, like this:

- Anglers, hunters and boaters purchase fishing/hunting equipment and boat fuels.
- Manufacturers pay excise tax on that equipment and boaters pay fuel taxes.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service allocates funds to state wildlife agencies.
- States, such as North Dakota, receive grants.



GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT PHOTO

Having a spring pike spawning crew of this size, pictured at Lake Ashtabula in 1954, was made possible by federal funding. Just a year prior to the Dingell-Johnson Act in 1950, the Game and Fish Department didn’t own a boat or an outboard motor.

- State agencies implement programs and projects.
- Better fishing, hunting, boating and wildlife-associated recreation.

In the last three-quarters of a century, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, like many state agencies, has made vaunted strides in the scientific management of wildlife. Pittman-Robertson dollars greatly expanded its ability to monitor wildlife trends, educate new hunters, manage and develop wildlife management areas, and restore wildlife populations.

“From a wildlife division standpoint, the P-R Act provides 75 percent of the costs for nearly all of our game management surveys, research and harvest surveys, while

How it Works

The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation is the world’s most successful system of policies and laws to restore and safeguard fish and wildlife and their habitats through sound science and active management.

Hunters and anglers are the cornerstones of the North American Model, serving as the foremost funders of conservation. Through self-imposed excise taxes on hunting, shooting, archery and angling equipment, and a tax on boating fuels, these conservationists have generated more than \$45 billion for wildlife and

habitat conservation since 1937.

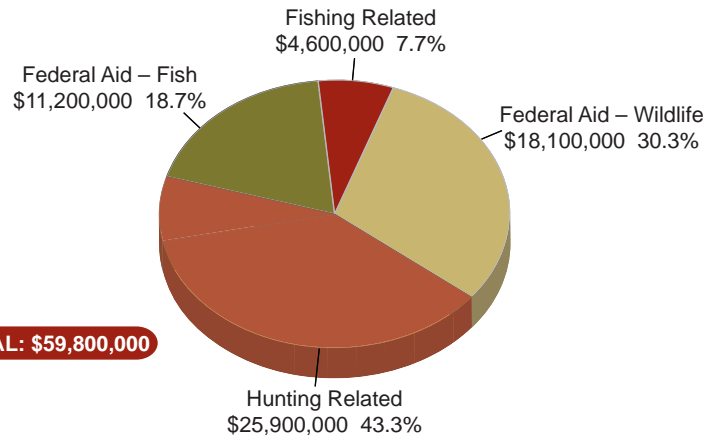
How does the model work? Manufacturers of hunting and shooting arms and ammunition, archery equipment and fishing equipment pay an excise tax on the equipment they produce. These funds, combined with a tax on motorboat fuels, are collected by the federal government and distributed to each state’s fish and wildlife agency. State fish and wildlife agencies then combine these funds with monies collected through the sale of hunting and fishing licenses to conserve, manage and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitats and to create fish and wildlife recreational and educational

opportunities.

Though conservation efforts have focused on wildlife that is legally hunted and fished, the emphasis of management is on restoring and conserving habitats that benefit a wide range of fish and wildlife, including nonhunted species as well as benefiting everyone who enjoys nature.

Currently, there are no alternative, dedicated funding systems in place (beyond excise taxes and license fees) to help support fish and wildlife conservation. Without the most traditional outdoor users’ contributions or new funding streams, America’s conservation legacy could be in peril.

NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT 2011-13 REVENUE PROJECTION



also providing 75 percent of the costs for the management of our WMAs,” Kreil said. “In addition, we have used these federal matching funds to help run the Private Land Open To Sportsmen program. This funding program is huge for North Dakota and every other state, and without it state wildlife agencies wouldn’t be able to function.”

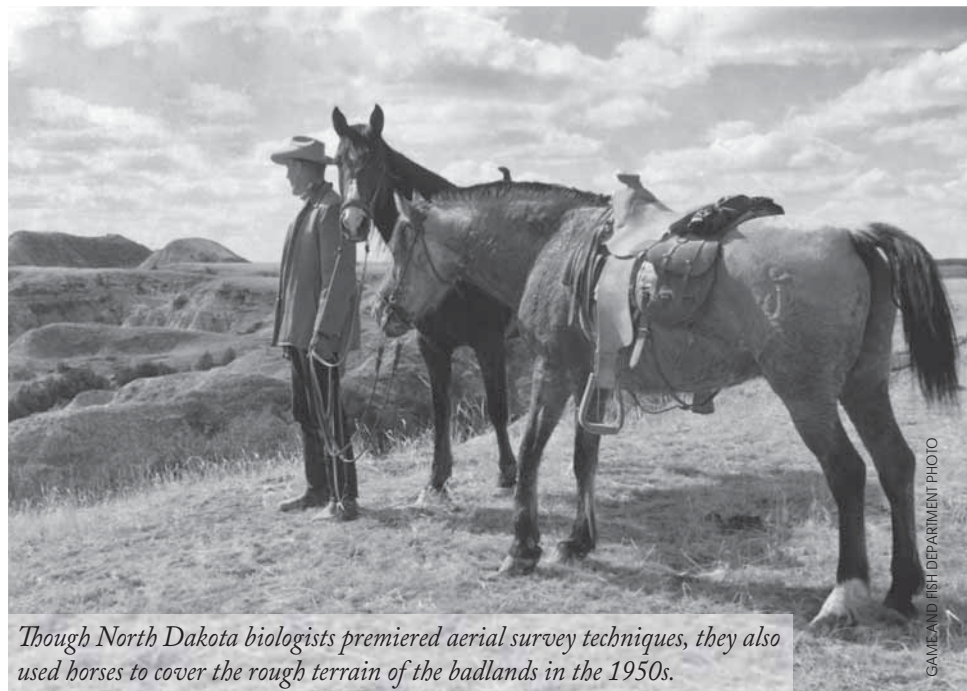
Likely the most celebrated wildlife restoration project in the state thus far is the capture and release of bighorn sheep into western North Dakota in the late 1950s. Without P-R funding, it’s uncertain whether the project to reintroduce animals long absent from the state would have been forever grounded.

“The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration program – Pittman-Robertson – and the dream of bringing bighorns back to the badlands was a marriage made in heaven ... Before Pittman-Robertson, game department budgets were small, and they were spent very conservatively. After P-R, more things seemed possible,” according to Big Game in North Dakota, published by the Game and Fish Department.

The first modern day bighorn sheep hunting season in North Dakota was held in 1975. The season, which featured a limited number of once-in-a-lifetime licenses, continues today.

“The successes of the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration program are many and have been sustained over time due to tangible results and the nearly fanatical support of hunters and anglers,” Kreil said. “Congress never messes around with these funding mechanisms because they are held so dearly and have accomplished so much.”

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.



Though North Dakota biologists premiered aerial survey techniques, they also used horses to cover the rough terrain of the badlands in the 1950s.

Animals by Air

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department flew its first aerial big game survey in 1941, pioneering a survey technique that was later adopted by wildlife managers across the country. Seventy-five percent of the project was paid through Pittman-Robertson Act funds. In the end, it cost the state less than 3 cents per square mile. What follows is an excerpt from an article in the June 1941 *North Dakota OUTDOORS* about the need for the first aerial survey.

“When asked by the Federal Fish and Wildlife Service how many mule deer,

white-tailed deer and antelope were in the state each year, the State Game and Fish Department was compelled to quote figures based more or less on casual observations made by interested sportsmen, game wardens and others. Not only was the Federal government in want of more accurate data regarding North Dakota big game, the state game policies had to be based upon figures gleaned from like sources. The need for a big game census can be realized when these things are taken into consideration.

“Not since 1916 had any serious work been done regarding the ranges and

populations of North Dakota’s antelope, white-tailed deer and mule deer ... It was felt, of course, that nature, modified markedly by the usual proclivities of man, had acted during the past 25 years or so to somewhat change the picture. Especially was this felt regarding North Dakota’s three species of big game, the total numbers and ranges of which, to put it mildly, no one in or out of the state knew within any degree of certainty. To illustrate, the total deer population of the Turtle Mountains, as estimated by various sportsmen and citizens of the state, varied from 20 to 20,000.”

BUFFALOBERRY PATCH



By Greg Freeman, Department News Editor



CRAIG BIRHLE

Male sage grouse in southwestern North Dakota.

North Dakota Part of Sage Grouse Conservation Plan

While southwestern North Dakota is on the edge of the sage grouse's native range, the state still has an important role in improving long-term prospects for this large upland bird.

"North Dakota will continue to do its part to protect the sage

grouse population and to avoid the need for endangered species status and the accompanying land-use restrictions," said North Dakota Lieutenant Governor Drew Wrigley.

Because of a long-term population decline throughout their native range, in 2010 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service considered listing sage grouse under the Endangered Species Act. The service determined that listing was warranted, but other species had a higher priority for federal recovery efforts. The service is scheduled to revisit sage grouse listing in 2015.

"Sage grouse have had a rough time the past decade or more, not just here, but in all the Western states where they exist," said North Dakota Game and Fish Department Director Terry Steinwand. "While we're on the periphery of their range and we don't have a lot of these birds in North Dakota, we need to be part of the long-term population recovery plan."

Part of that long-term plan is a series of public scoping meetings scheduled by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. The only meeting scheduled in North Dakota is January 17 in Bowman, at the City Hall from 5-8 p.m. Mountain time.

Listing under the ESA basically means that the federal government would assume primary management of sage grouse instead of the state, Steinwand said. "We're committed to using whatever resources we can to help get those birds stabilized and headed in the other direction."



CRAIG BIRHLE

Tentative 2012 Season Dates

To help North Dakota hunters prepare for hunting seasons in 2012, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department annually provides tentative opening dates for the coming year.

Opening day for some popular hunting seasons will arrive nearly a week later in 2012 due to the calendar change. For example, opening day of pheasant season is always the second Saturday in October, which in 2012 is October 13. Therefore, nonresidents will not be able to hunt on state wildlife management areas or Private Land Open To Sportsmen acres from October 13-19.

The opening day for deer, which falls on the Friday prior to Veterans Day, is tentatively set for November 9, the second Friday of November. Veterans Day in 2012 is Sunday, November 11.

Dates become official when approved by governor's proclamation. Tentative opening dates for 2012 include:

Spring Crow	March 10
Spring Turkey	April 14
Fall Crow	August 11
Deer Bow, Mountain Lion	August 31
Dove	September 1
Sharptail, Hun, Ruffed Grouse, Squirrel.....	September 8
Youth Deer	September 14
Youth Waterfowl, Sandhill Crane.....	September 15
Early Resident Waterfowl	September 22
Regular Waterfowl.....	September 29
Youth Pheasant.....	October 6
Pheasant, Fall Turkey.....	October 13
Mink, Muskrat, Weasel Trapping	October 27
Deer Gun	November 9
Deer Muzzleloader	November 30

Be Cautious of Ice Conditions

Winter anglers and trappers need to study ice conditions before marching out on any of North Dakota's frozen waters. The Game and Fish Department offers this advice:

- Be aware on snow-covered ice as snow insulates ice, hampering solid ice formation, and it makes it difficult to check thickness. Snow also hides the blemishes, such as cracked, weak and open water areas.
- Avoid cracks, pressure ridges, slushy or darker areas that signal thinner ice. The same goes for ice that forms around partially submerged trees, brush, embankments or other structures.
- Remember, ice thickness is not consistent and can vary significantly within a few inches. Ice shouldn't be judged by appearance alone. Anglers should drill test holes as they make their way out on the lake, and use an ice chisel to check ice thickness while moving around.
- Daily temperature changes cause ice to expand and contract, affecting its strength.



Ice anglers and others who venture onto North Dakota's frozen waters in winter are advised to always be cautious of ice conditions.

CRAIG BIRHLE

- Visit with locals – other anglers and people at local bait shops – before going on an unfamiliar lake.
- The following minimums are recommended for travel on clear-blue lake ice formed under ideal conditions: 4 inches for a group walking single file; 5.5-6 inches for a snowmobile or all-terrain vehicle; 8-12 inches for an automobile; and 12-15 inches for a pickup/truck.

These tips could help save a life:

- Wear a personal flotation device and carry a cell phone.
- Carry ice picks or a set of screwdrivers to pull yourself back on the ice if you fall through.
- If someone breaks through the ice, call 911 immediately. Rescue attempts should employ a long pole, board, rope, blanket or snowmobile suit. If that's not possible, throw the victim a life jacket, empty water jug or other buoyant object. Go to the victim as a last resort, but do this by forming a human chain where rescuers lie on the ice with each person holding the feet of the person in front. To treat hypothermia, replace wet clothing with dry clothing and immediately transport the victim to a hospital.





CRAIG BIRHLE

Fish House Regulations

Winter anglers are reminded that any fish house left unoccupied on North Dakota waters must be made out of materials that will allow it to float.

A popular question this time of the year is if campers qualify as legal fish houses. The answer is the same for any structure taken on the ice – if it's left unattended, it must be able to float; if it's not able to float, it must be removed when the angler leaves the ice.

Other fish house regulations include:

- Fish houses do not require a license.
- Fish house size is not limited.

Occupied structures do not require identification. However, any unoccupied fish house must have the owner's name, and either address or telephone number,

displayed on its outside in readily distinguishable characters at least three inches high.

- Fish houses may not be placed closer than 50 feet in any direction to another house without consent of the occupant of the other fish house.
- Fish houses shall be removed from all waters by midnight, March 15, of each year. They can be used after March 15 if they are removed daily.

Anglers should refer to the 2010-12 North Dakota Fishing Guide for winter fishing regulations.

Becoming an Outdoors-Woman in Winter

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department's Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program has scheduled one-day winter workshops January 26-27 at Cross Ranch State Park, Center, and February 24, 25 and 26 at Lake Metigoshe State Park, Bottineau.

Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing will be offered at Cross Ranch. Snowshoeing and tracking, winter survival and cross-country skiing are available at Lake Metigoshe. The dog sledding class is full.

Women interested in the workshops are encouraged to register online at the Game and Fish website, gf.nd.gov. Those interested should sign up immediately, as each class is limited to 12 participants. The cost is \$50 for the classes. Sign up for a class on two days and receive a \$15 discount. Preregistration with payment is required. Equipment and snacks will be provided.

An information and registration form is available for download by accessing the Department's education/outreach link, or by contacting Nancy Boldt, North Dakota Game and Fish Department, 100 N. Bismarck Expressway, Bismarck, ND 58501-5095; (701) 328-6312; or email ndgf@nd.gov.



GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT PHOTO

One of the activities the Department's BOW program offers in winter is snowshoeing and wildlife tracking.



CRAIG BHRLE

Janice Vetter and Terry Steinwand

Janice Vetter Named Department Employee of the Year

Janice Vetter, administrative assistant for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's fisheries division in Bismarck, received the agency's Director's Award for professional excellence in December.

Terry Steinwand, Game and Fish Director, said Vetter has contributed greatly to the Department's efforts in oversight of all public and private fish stocking efforts. "This includes assisting and sometimes taking the lead in ensuring proper permitting of all trapping, selling and movement of bait and other fish in and out of North Dakota," he said.

Vetter was also recognized for her role on the statewide fishing tournament committee and her work with paddlefish snagging season, private fish hatcheries and bait vendors.



CRAIG BHRLE

Erik Schmidt

Wildlife Officer of the Year

Erik Schmidt, North Dakota Game and Fish Department district game warden in Linton, is the state's 2011 Wildlife Officer of the Year. Schmidt was honored in December by Shikar-Safari Club International, a private conservation organization that annually recognizes outstanding wildlife officers in each state.

In a nomination letter sent to Shikar-Safari, Department chief warden Robert Timian said Schmidt's district in south central North Dakota provides some of the best hunting and fishing opportunities in the state, and with it brings a lot of activity.

"Warden Schmidt is relentless in his pursuit of violators, and at the same time maintains his professionalism," Timian said. "He has demonstrated the ability to document many violations, yet maintain good judgment and uses his discretion appropriately."

In addition, Schmidt also received the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators Officer of the Year award for North Dakota. Each state in NASBLA selects a person for a national award. Among the criteria for receiving the award is boating activity in regards to law enforcement, education, search and rescue, outreach and training.

Special Awards

North Dakota Game and Fish Department Director Terry Steinwand honored a number of employees with performance-based awards in December.

- Kevin Kading, Paul Bailey and Justen Barstad, all of Bismarck, received the Special Projects award, given to an individual or group who implemented a successful new project. Kading, private land section leader, was recognized for his work with deer depredation, while Bailey, south central district fisheries supervisor and Barstad, fisheries technician, were honored for their efforts with paddlefish research.
- Greg Freeman, news editor in Bismarck, received the Solid Foundation award, presented to an employee who demonstrates exemplary work in their field. Freeman was recognized for extra effort by taking on additional responsibilities in the past year, including developing and maintaining a newsletter while covering the state legislature, producing feature articles for the Department's *North Dakota OUTDOORS* magazine and learning new technical processes for helping maintain the Department's website.



Kevin Kading



Paul Bailey



Justen Barstad



Greg Freeman

- Robert Miller, wildlife technician in Riverdale, was presented with the Innovations award, which recognizes staff for implementing a process to improve Department goals and objectives. Miller was recognized for his work to create a new motion detecting device to scare deer away from stored livestock feed supplies.
- Bill Haase, wildlife resource management supervisor, and Wes Erdle, fisheries development project manager, both Bismarck, received the Public Outreach award, presented to an employee or group for showing a significant effort, ability or accomplishment in interacting with the public while promoting the Department's programs. Haase and Erdle were recognized for their efforts in providing boating access while much of the state was immersed in flood waters.



Robert Miller



Bill Haase



Wes Erdle

Long-term Employees

Director Terry Steinwand also recognized long-term employees at the Department's annual staff meeting in December.

- **35 years**

Ernie Dawson, wildlife technician, Jamestown

- **30 years**

Michael Johnson, game management section leader, Bismarck

- **25 years**

Craig Bibrle, communications supervisor, Bismarck

Chris Grondahl, outreach supervisor, Bismarck

Mike Raasakka, district game warden, Stanley

Clare Renner, administrative assistant, Riverdale

Jeff Violett, district game warden, Mandan

- **20 years**

Nancy Boldt, boat and water safety coordinator, Bismarck

Scott Elstad, aquatic habitat supervisor, Bismarck

Greg Freeman, news editor, Bismarck

Paul Freeman, warden supervisor, Devils Lake

Bill Jensen, big game management biologist, Bismarck

Brian Kietzman, wildlife resource management supervisor, Jamestown

Randy Littlefield, wildlife resource management biologist, Lonetree

Kent Luttschwager, wildlife resource management supervisor, Williston

Mark Pollert, district game warden, Jamestown

Lisa Tofte, administrative assistant, Devils Lake

Janice Vetter, administrative assistant, Bismarck

Bluem Receives Honor

Jerad Bluem, Department district game warden from Belfield, was named the North Dakota State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation Wildlife Law Enforcement Officer of the Year in December.

NWTF officials praised Bluem for being proactive and professional while conducting investigations, and promoting and developing better rancher/landowner relationships in western North Dakota.



Jerad Bluem

STAFF Notes



Randy Meissner

Meissner Named Licensing Manager

Randy Meissner, Department IT Coordinator since 1994, has been named the agency's licensing manager. Meissner's duties include running the online licensing and lottery system, in addition to managing license distribution and sales around the state.

Erdle New Fisheries Project Manager

Wes Erdle has been promoted to fisheries development project manager. Erdle has been the fisheries development technician for nearly five years.

back cast

By Ron Wilson



One dog has gained weight and the other is less than absorbed in the hunt, refusing early on to leave my side no matter how hard I encourage him to “find a bird.”

This is the cost of spending a good part of November hunting deer while my dogs hoggged the leather couch and filched low-hanging pizza crust from my 8 year old. We’re not exactly at the top of our game, and won’t likely get back there this season, but with only a hint of snow on the ground in places it seems ridiculous not to be outdoors stomping around.

We’d basically conceded to winter by this time last year (and the year before?) as snow and cold – and plenty of both, for sure – came early and hung around like uninvited company. It was difficult to get jazzed about wading through knee-deep drifts, and when we did, it was easy to surrender and go home after just a few short hunts.

With a good part of December still in front of us, we head into the wind at a spot that was good to us in October when we hunted in shirt sleeves and took a break in the shade of a tree, eating jerky and drinking from a water bottle. This

morning it’s 19 degrees, and likely won’t get much warmer according to the weather guy on the radio.

I always worry a bit about hunting this spot because there is an assortment of discarded metal – some of which I can identify, like an old washing machine, and some of which I can’t so it must be some kind of farm machinery – that threatens to open new wounds on my dogs. More than once we’ve flushed pheasants tucked tight to the rusted metal that is about two shades darker than the russet on a rooster’s chest.

Not today.

After about a quarter-mile we turn north without giving it much thought. We’ve yet to flush a bird, not even one wildly at 200 yards which is so common this late in the season. But it’s early, not even noon, so there is still hope to bump into something to put a skip in all our steps.

After three difficult winters, and iffy brooding conditions across much of the state, we entered the 2011 season with sensible expectations, anticipated less, but have had a pretty good season thus far nonetheless. We haven’t shot limits of

birds, but ran into enough, maybe more than enough at times, to keep things interesting.

When we turn to wander back in the direction of the vehicle, there are three tree rows to choose from, no one different from the other. The dogs head to the middle row, making the decision for us.

At the top of a rise where a big tree branch has snapped at its base and crash-landed in the harvested sunflower field, the dogs finally get excited and the older one freezes, pointing his nub of a tail skyward. I love this part because you never really know exactly what comes next – the flush of a lone sharp-tailed grouse, the chaotic rise of a handful of roosters or nothing at all, a false alarm that quickens the heart nonetheless because I understand the possibilities.

Today, it’s the latter, but that’s OK because we’re just getting started. There’s plenty of daylight to burn and the end of the season, which signals the start of the long wait until we can do this again, seems like a ways off.

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.



A CLOSER LOOK

By Ron Wilson



DEVANE WEBSTER

Piebald Deer

The underside of the tail on a white-tailed deer is, of course, white. Its belly is white, too, as is the patch under its chin and around its eyes.

While the color of the white-tail's coat changes seasonally – from brownish during warmer months to grayish when the weather turns cold – we know what a typical whitetail looks like.

The deer pictured above isn't representative of the majority of the white-tailed deer we see on the Northern Plains. Its pelage is more pronghorn-like. Scientists call this a piebald deer.

Scientists tell us that a recessive gene produces the piebald condition in deer, not diseases or parasites. The condition is considered rare as less than one in

1,000 deer bear this coloration.

"The range in coloration for piebald deer can vary greatly," said Bill Jensen, North Dakota Game and Fish Department big game management biologist.

Four or five years ago Jensen shot a whitetail south of Bismarck along the river that, unlike the deer in the photograph, simply had three "white socks" and pink hooves, while everything else looked normal.

"And a few years before that, there was a deer shot in the Steele-Dawson area, I believe, and that deer even had some black in its coat."

Piebald deer are mostly colored white and brown similar to a pinto pony. Sometimes they appear almost entirely white. No matter the color variation,

piebald deer are unmistakable from other animals in the herd.

Jensen said he's even seen distinctively-colored piebald deer from the air while flying deer surveys in the badlands in western North Dakota.

"Last year I saw one in the Wing area," he said. "That one looked a lot like the animal in the photograph. At first I thought it was a pronghorn."

While a recessive gene gives piebald deer their unique look, Jensen said hunters needn't worry about the venison.

"These deer may look different, but their meat tastes just fine," he said.

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.