

# NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

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GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

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# MATTERS OF OPINION



**Terry Steinwand**  
*Director*

It's snowing as I write this in early October. I'm sure it will be gone soon, but it's hard to believe that 24 hours earlier it was 80-some degrees.

However, that snow and a 50-degree drop in temperature is the perfect formula to get the fall hunting juices flowing. I've been out a couple times, but it was too warm for me to enjoy it much. I guess I'll always have the North Dakota attitude that your fingertips must be half frozen to have much fun hunting. Or, I have to fall asleep in the crisp morning air as the sun comes over the horizon, waiting for geese to show up in the decoys.

Such experiences help drive my anticipation and excitement for fall.

In my teenage years and early 20s, it was all about going out hunting with friends and shooting as much as we could within limits. While my father certainly instilled in me a love of hunting and respect for the wildlife I pursued, it wasn't until later that I understood what he'd really passed on. Get outdoors, enjoy the hunt, and do it with people with whom you enjoy spending time.

As I aged, married and had children, my attitude on who I hunted with changed some. When my sons were younger I took them along so we could spend time together, but I also wanted to develop in them those same beliefs about hunting my dad instilled in me. And now, as they've grown older and moved away from home, that bond still exists when fall rolls around, and I'm looking forward to hunting trips this fall more than ever.

My oldest son has a young dog, a bundle of energy that I believe has a lot

of potential. We haven't tested her fully, but we will before the end of the season. My oldest loves to hunt geese and deer. While we haven't had a goose hunt this year, plans are in the works to do so before season's end. Time and cooperation from the geese are required. Hopefully, my son stays around so he can roll me out in a wheelchair years from now so we can still harvest some geese together.

My second son is more into ducks and deer, but given his time constraints he'll take what he can get. I'm hoping he'll be able to stay around so we can continue to criticize each other's shooting skills.

Deer and pheasants are definitely the target for my youngest son. He hasn't had the opportunity or time to hunt deer for the last four years due to commitment to college athletics, but we were lucky enough to draw antlerless deer licenses this fall and I'm anxiously awaiting a weekend of hunting with him and his brothers.

My daughter hasn't shown much interest in hunting and my wife hasn't hunted in years. Still, I'm hoping to get both of them out with me to enjoy a walk across the landscape.

In my opinion, the experience, especially with family, is the most important part of the hunt. Those memories of time spent with my father and my kids will always be with me.

I hope this fall will bring many of those same experiences to you as well. I encourage you to step outside and make your own memories in one of the greatest places on earth, North Dakota's outdoors.

*Terry Steinwand*

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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.*

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### Front Cover

While pheasants get most of the attention this month, fall turkey season also opens for several thousand hunters.

*Photo by Craig Bihrlé, Bismarck*



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RON WILSON

*Bowhunters (top) should use a haul line to bring up bows, arrows and other equipment into tree stands. While safely tethered to a tree, Steve Goroski, Bismarck, (right) takes a practice aim from his tree stand.*







# Tethered to Trees

*By Ron Wilson*

**F**or years, North Dakota bowhunters literally went out on an untold number of limbs in pursuit of the state's most popular big game.

Bill Helfrey, Bismarck, climbed his first tree to ambush passing white-tailed deer in 1956, knowing that getting off the ground several feet would, if nothing else, provide him with a better view.

"I understood my chances of being scented were less than being on the ground," he said. "Plus, unlike generations of whitetails that have followed since those early years, deer weren't looking up into trees when they were walking through the woods."

While archers have been hunting deer in North Dakota for more than a half-century, starting with the first statewide season in 1954, it's a relatively new pursuit by comparison. The state held its first regular gun season in 1931, albeit with some closed seasons until the early 1950s.

Initially, bowhunters weren't allowed to take any foreign materials – even homemade wooden seats to jam between trunk and limb – into trees with them to sit or stand on. The way Helfrey and other longtime archers remember it, it wasn't until sometime in the 1960s that tree stands became legal on public lands in the state.

"I took a lot of deer leaning against a tree trunk and standing on a limb," said Skip Balzer, Bismarck, who started bowhunting in 1959-60. "That's the way we did it back then ... it was the only way to do it if you wanted to get off the ground."

Balzer joked that going from limb to limb today would be out of the question. "I was only 160 pounds back then," he said. "Back then, I didn't even think about it. We'd walk around in the woods and search for the right kind of tree with a good crotch for standing comfortably. I'd go up 12-15 feet, some hunters went higher, but I didn't because I don't like heights that much."

Compared to today, when archers are encouraged to wear a fall arrest system that is manufactured to Treestand Manufacturer's Association standards, most bowhunters didn't bother, or even think, to tie themselves off to trees for safety purposes.

"I never fell and never thought about tethering in," Balzer said. "I had a buddy who fell three different times. One night I came back to the truck after sitting up in a tree and my buddy was waiting there with a lump this big on the side of his face."



RON WILSON

*Steve Goroski tightens his climbing steps to a tree.*

## Tree Stand Safety Study

A study of Vermont and North Carolina bowhunters revealed the following:

- 74 percent of accidents occurred when climbing up or down or when installing or removing a stand.
- 7 percent of tree stand hunters surveyed had an accident in the last 10 years.
- 73 percent said poor judgment and carelessness caused their fall.
- 80 percent said safety was a concern, but actually believed that a fall “wouldn’t happen to me.”
- 58 percent of hunters who fell were not wearing a full-arrest system.
- 34 percent of hunters surveyed now wear a full-arrest system because of an accident.
- 39 percent of the accidents occurred at less than 10 feet.
- 21 percent of the accidents were related to structural failure.

*(Source: National Bowhunter Education Foundation)*

Helfrey came up with a tethering system back in the day just in case he slipped off a limb. “I’ve never fallen, but I came close once,” he said. “I have a good friend who fell before the day of tethers. Many people have been injured from falling. I wouldn’t think of sitting in a tree stand without being tethered in because I have more hunting I want to do and I won’t be able to do it if I’m injured.”

Jeff Long, North Dakota Game and Fish Department education coordinator, said tree stand safety is a point of emphasis in the Department’s bowhunter education course. Most archers nowadays, Long would like to believe, make tethering to a tree while hunting from an elevated stand a priority.

“Maybe it’s an age thing, and with age comes wisdom, but I don’t see many people, especially those who I hunt with, who aren’t tied off to a tree,” he said. “The last thing I want to do is fall and end up with a broken shoulder, or worse, and have it mess up my fall hunting season. Wearing a full-body harness, like wearing a seatbelt, can turn what could be a very serious accident or tragedy, into nothing.”

While the emphasis is mostly on bowhunters, Long said many gun or muzzleloader hunters hunt out of elevated stands and should heed the same safety recommendations.

“I had one near fall where I caught my foot on something coming out of my stand,” he said. “I caught myself and thought ‘Man, that happened fast.’”

Long offers these tips for getting in and out of a stand:

- Always have three points of contact (two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand) when climbing in or out.
- Take your time and tether yourself to the tree immediately.
- Use a haul line to pull your bow or gun up from the ground to your stand.
- Secure plenty of steps into the tree.

“You see some guys, for one reason or another, using too few steps,” he said. “This can be a problem when you’re climbing out of stand in the dark and you’re reaching around with your foot trying to find, stretch and reach that darn step ...”

When tree stands became legal in the state, archers got inventive and created platforms that made long hunts off the ground much more tolerable. “Back then, we made everything, so coming up with an idea and building a tree stand was the natural progression,” Helfrey said. “Everyone came up with different ideas for frame structures and how to attach them to trees. Some guys even used seatbelts.”

Today’s archers have their choice from hang-on stands, climbing stands, tripod and ladder stands. Each, trying to appeal to the hunter’s eye, features everything from one-piece cast aluminum platforms, rugged steel construction with black powdered-coated finish, large mesh seat supports, self-leveling platforms, easy cinch draw straps, and so on. Plus, there are a number of accessories such as bow hangers, tree stand umbrellas and lights, locks, bow hangers, pull up ropes, climbing stirrups and camera arms because everybody and their partner are seemingly filming their hunts nowadays.

“After going years without stands, I built my own in 1972-73 out of a ladder that extended to 11 feet,” Balzer said. “It had



a bow rest and a little folding, cloth chair like you use for fishing. I still have that ladder stand. I never owned a regular hang-on stand.”

The only nick in Balzer’s design was the weight of the stand. “When I first made it, I was able to drive up to the edge of the woods and carry it maybe 50 yards and set it up,” he said. “If I wanted to hike much farther, I would leave it behind.”

Balzer shot his biggest whitetail buck the old fashioned way, standing on a tree limb in the Missouri River bottoms. “I had to hike back in more than a quarter-mile and I couldn’t haul my ladder stand that far back in,” he said.

When it comes to stand height, some bowhunters will argue the higher the better. Long said his stand placement is often dictated by the terrain, cover and the direction he expects deer to move. If he can get

away with it, he said, the lower the better because as the height of the tree stand increases, the size of the kill zone on the animal decreases because of the steeper shot angle.

“One of my favorite stands that I’ve shot deer out of, and have had many deer walk by without even knowing I was there, is only about 8 feet off the ground,” Long said. “It’s a situational thing and that spot doesn’t call for me going high up a tree.”

Helfrey said most of his stands are set at 15-16 feet. “I don’t feel it’s necessary to get any higher than that,” he said. “But no matter how high you are, you should be tethered in. Like buckling the seatbelt in your vehicle, both are proven to save lives.”

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*RON WILSON is editor of North Dakota OUTDOORS.*

## **Bowhunting Safety Tips Online**

For more bowhunting safety tips, see the North Dakota Game and Fish Department’s Outdoors Online webcast on the Department’s website at [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov).

## **Tree Stand Regulations, Etiquette**

It’s important to follow all regulations of the managing agency when using tree stands on public hunting areas.

One regulation requires tree stands left unattended on North Dakota Game and Fish Department wildlife management areas to have an identification tag displaying the owner’s name, address and telephone number. This allows Game and Fish personnel to contact the owner if a conflict should arise, and will likely deter theft of tree stands on public land.

Hunters are also reminded that the deadline for removing tree stands from WMAs is January 31. The archery season has extended into January in recent years, and this will allow bowhunters plenty of time to remove their stands.

A hunter may set up a tree stand on a Private Land Open To Sportsmen tract, but the stand must be removed when he or she leaves, and it cannot be left unattended overnight unless permission is granted from the landowner.

The Game and Fish Department also recommends that bowhunters check with landowners before erecting or using tree stands on private property; do not use the tree stand of another hunter without permission; and do not remove or tamper with stands without the owner’s or landowner’s permission.

Tree stands are private property and theft constitutes a criminal violation that should be reported to the local sheriff’s department.



# WAITING FOR A REBOUND

*By Ron Wilson*

*It's not easy for animals big or small to live on the Northern Plains. Winters can be difficult and summers can be dry, and wildlife populations may fluctuate. While in 2009 the Game and Fish Department made available 4,150 mule deer doe licenses in the badlands, today it's a much different story.*

## Mule Deer, Pronghorn Populations Down in Western North Dakota

Mule deer and pronghorn populations are down in western North Dakota, which isn't unprecedented.

These prized big game animals living on the eastern edge of their historic range have been staggered by weather extremes and other influences before.

Following the winter of 1996-97, arguably one of the worst on record, the State Game and Fish Department in 1998 issued the fewest mule deer licenses since the mid-1980s, cutting buck licenses by 22 percent and doe licenses by 39 percent.

Mule deer reproduction was down in spring of 1997. The fawn to doe ratio – a measure of reproductive success for the year – of .72 fawns per doe was the lowest since the early 1960s.

Pronghorn, of all of North Dakota's big game animals, may have been hit hardest by the winter of 1996-97, as biologists estimated a decline of nearly 40 percent in the statewide population from 1996. In the southern badlands, pronghorn numbers fell nearly 65 percent. The fallout was that the majority of pronghorn units were closed to rifle hunting, and only the far western portion of the state was open to archers. Similarly, after another tough winter in 1977-78, the pronghorn season was closed altogether until 1982.

Yet, in the years that followed winter 1996-97, mule deer, pronghorn and other animals big and small rebounded. While Game and Fish made available just 2,675 mule deer licenses – 1,850 bucks and 825 does – in 1998, a decade later license numbers climbed to nearly 6,800 – 2,700 bucks and 4,050 does.

“Populations fluctuate on the Northern Plains, and when you have extended periods of difficult winters, or nice winters, like we did for about a decade or so after 1996-97, those fluctuations can be exaggerated one way or the other,” said Randy Kreil, Game and Fish Department wildlife division chief.

In 1998, Department biologists estimated the statewide pronghorn population at about 4,000 animals. By 2007, the population had increased to about 15,200, and for the second time in three years, the Department issued a record number (6,095) of pronghorn licenses.

Today, the statewide population is estimated at about 3,600 animals or nearly 12,000 fewer than the high in 2007.

Given the mild winter of 2011-12, many hunters may have expected notable gains in big game populations this year, but factors contributing to the recent





CRAIG BHIRLE

setbacks are a bit different, which may extend the recovery period, given adequate weather conditions.

“What we are facing now is the influence three difficult consecutive winters had on wildlife,” Kreil said. “The rebound may take longer because wildlife populations were affected over the course of three years instead of one.”

For the first time since Game and Fish developed the unitized system for deer hunting in 1975, Department officials decided not to issue any mule deer doe gun licenses in the badlands, or allow bowhunters to shoot does in prime mule deer units.

“This was done to try and jumpstart the rebound in the population by taking all hunting pressure off mule deer does,” Kreil

4F, 3B1 and 3B2 in the badlands. Only 1,200 mule deer buck licenses were issued, 3,350 fewer than 2011.

“We decreased mule deer buck licenses significantly because of fewer deer and lower hunter success in previous years,” Kreil said. “Prior to the three difficult winters we were at or near record mule deer population levels.”

Stillings said a healthy predator population, plus habitat changes in the badlands can also conspire against a mule deer comeback. “We’ve seen Rocky Mountain juniper expand across the badlands, out-competing vegetation that would be more beneficial to mule deer,” he said. “Fragmentation of the habitat is making the world of the mule deer in western North Dakota smaller. Mule deer thrive in open habitat with young shrubs and grasses.”



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said. “The decision to forego any mule deer doe harvest was strongly supported by landowners and hunters alike.”

Figuring heavily into the decision to safeguard antlerless deer to help spur a mule deer rebound, according to Bruce Stillings, Game and Fish Department big game management supervisor, Dickinson, was record low fawn production following the three tough winters.

“During tough winters you lose some adults and the ones that make it through have poor reproduction,” Stillings said.

Mule deer fawn production was .74 fawns per doe in 2009, .72 in 2010, and the new record low of .59 in 2011. The long-term average for fawn production in the badlands is .93.

These recent years of poor production, Stillings said, teamed with higher adult mortality rates, was apparent in the 2012 spring population index of five mule deer per square mile, which was 23 percent lower than 2011 and 33 percent below the long-term average.

Game and Fish did not issue any antlerless mule deer licenses for this fall in units 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, 4E,

For pronghorns, following this summer’s survey that revealed the statewide population was 20 percent lower than 2011, Game and Fish Department officials decided not to hold a hunting season for the third year in a row.

“We have detailed information from our pronghorn survey this summer and it wasn’t good,” Stillings said. “Fawn production just wasn’t good. Earlier in September I spent all weekend checking elk hunters and I saw four pronghorn fawns all weekend. That observation was consistent with results from our summer aerial pronghorn survey which revealed only 49 fawns per 100 does.”

Pronghorn are the most susceptible of North Dakota’s big game species to the influences of tough winters because of the habitat they use, food sources they rely on and their inability in today’s modern world to migrate southward due to human-made impediments such as interstate highways.

“When pronghorn movement is restricted, they can’t get to open forage in winter, and mortality rates greatly increase,” Stillings said.

While last winter’s mild weather was a positive for pronghorn and mule deer, Stillings said wildlife

*Pronghorn are the most susceptible of North Dakota’s big game species to the influences of tough winters.*

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*“The decision to forego any mule deer doe harvest was strongly supported by land-owners and hunters alike.”*

biologists have yet to see the influence the open winter had on animals. “We haven’t started to see the pronghorn population take an upward turn,” he said. “After the almost nonexistent winter, we saw only a slight increase in fawn production. What these animals went through after those three tough winters, it’s not surprising. Region-wide, Montana and South Dakota saw much of the same thing.”

As such, one mild winter is a start, but it will likely take a few more nice winters,

coupled with conservative or no hunting seasons, to get mule deer and pronghorn populations anywhere near where they were five years ago.

“People will need to be patient in this recovery effort,” Kreil said. “Hopefully that patience will be rewarded with increased hunting opportunities as these populations gradually expand.”

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*RON WILSON is editor of North Dakota OUTDOORS.*

## Confidence Higher in Whitetail Comeback

While state wildlife officials are reserved in their forecast for a rapid rebound in mule deer and pronghorn populations, they are more confident in whitetails bouncing back statewide from three consecutive hard winters and an epizootic hemorrhagic disease outbreak in 2011 in western North Dakota.

Last year, more than 13,000 white-tailed deer license holders were eligible for refunds in 11 deer hunting units, following reports of moderate to significant numbers of whitetails dying of EHD. However, Game and Fish Department officials were quick to point out that the entire whitetail population wasn’t decimated, and a good harvest was still needed in many areas.

EHD, a naturally occurring virus that is spread by a biting midge, is almost always fatal to infected white-tailed deer, while mule deer do not usually die from the disease.

“Last year, the units affected by EHD were the only ones where the deer population was above Department management objectives,” said Bruce Stillings, North Dakota Game and Fish Department big game management supervisor. “Even though there was a severe EHD outbreak last year, whitetails numbers in the area are looking good.”

Compared to mule deer and pronghorn, whitetails are more adaptable. “Whitetails are generalists and will adjust, while mule deer and pronghorn need larger, wide open spaces,” Stillings said.

The Game and Fish Department made available 65,300 deer licenses for the regular gun season this fall, which is 44,650 fewer than 2011. The vast majority of those licenses would have been “any deer” licenses, typically filled by white-tailed deer.

The good news, according to the winter severity index, is that last winter ranked as one of the milder winters in 62 years, boosting expectations for a possible increase in fawn recruitment across the state.



RON WILSON

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*If given a break in coming winters, wildlife officials are confident in whitetail populations bouncing back across North Dakota.*

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Bill Jensen, Department big game management biologist, said white-tailed deer are more productive in terms of fawn recruitment than mule deer and typically bounce back quicker when their numbers are down.

“Preface this with speculation on my part, but I think a lot of it has to do with nutrition. When you look across the badlands, which is primarily mule deer range, the portion that is in farmland is pretty minimal, whereas as you get farther east, anyone with a keen eye for the obvious can see how much more food is out there,” Jensen said. “Behaviorally, whitetails are more plastic than mule deer. When a food source disappears, by getting fenced off in winter or whatever, whitetails just pack up and move on to the next and nearest food source.”



# Mule Deer Study in Western North Dakota

The Game and Fish Department heads a collaborative five-year study beginning in 2013 in western North Dakota to determine the influence of oil and gas development on mule deer populations.

Today, North Dakota is one of the top oil producing states and it's expected that development will continue in the badlands.

"As our agency witnessed energy development intensify over a matter of just a year or two, and heard projections that this activity was likely to extend over several decades, our biologists had questions and concerns about the associated impacts to our state's wildlife and natural resources, none more than concerns surrounding our highly-prized mule deer, pronghorn, bighorn sheep and elk," said Greg Link, Game and Fish Department conservation and communications chief.

Department Director Terry Steinwand said based on literature from other areas of the country, some wildlife species may be influenced by energy development. "But we also know that while animals may react the same given similar conditions, there are enough differences to be unsure of the magnitude of the impact," he said.

The North Dakota Petroleum Council contacted the Game and Fish Department about doing a study on mule deer in the badlands, eventually titled, "Effects of Oil and Gas Development on Mule Deer Populations in Western North Dakota." Department officials forwarded a proposal for the nearly \$700,000 project to the Oil and Gas Research Council of the North Dakota Industrial Commission for a potential matching grant.

With backing and financial contributions from The Mule Deer Foundation and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management to round out the Game and Fish Department's partner match, the grant was approved. Dr. Josh Millsbaugh of the University of Missouri was selected as the study's principle investigator. Millsbaugh oversaw a state-of-the-art pronghorn study in North Dakota a few years ago and is recognized as one of the country's best big game researchers.

The goal of the research is to identify how energy development affects North Dakota's mule deer population, which will provide valuable information to the Department and oil industry on how to avoid or minimize any potential impacts.

Mule deer are a valuable component of the North Dakota landscape – in 2009, more than 10,500 hunters applied for 2,886 mule deer buck tags.

Currently, it's estimated that about 18 percent of primary mule deer range in western North Dakota is moderately affected by oil and gas development and another 1.7 percent highly affected, with much of the development occurring in the last five years.

Bruce Stillings, Department big game management supervisor in Dickinson, said the study areas in western North Dakota will be divided into five sites that have zero or little oil and gas development, five moderately developed areas, and five highly developed areas.

At each of the sites beginning in January 2013, researchers, with the assistance of helicopter net-gunners, will capture and fit six female mule deer with global positioning system radio tags, for a total of 90 radio-marked animals. Stillings said the plan is to obtain a random representation of deer by not capturing animals located together.

Some of the animals fitted with radio tags will be fawns so researchers can monitor fawn mortality during North Dakota's leanest months.

Stillings said GPS tags have several advantages over traditional radio-collars, including the ability to collect multiple locations of deer each day at predetermined times. The tags will be programmed to collect locations at five-hour intervals year-round, allowing researchers to monitor deer throughout the day at different time periods.

"With this study, we are going to let the mule deer tell us how they respond to the changing landscape and how they are utilizing the habitat," Stillings said. "In the end, it will be interesting what they tell us."





A scenic view of a river with a boat and autumn trees. The river is calm, reflecting the sky. In the background, a dense line of trees with yellow and orange autumn foliage stands against a clear sky. A small boat with two people is visible on the right side of the river.

# When Temperatures Drop, **FISHING HEATS UP**

*By Ron Wilson*

*The Missouri River is a magnet for walleye anglers in spring and summer, but some of the best fishing of the year is in fall when water temperatures cool.*

**W**hen leaves turn from green to a flamboyant watercolor that rivals the plumage of a ring-necked rooster, most people with an interest in North Dakota's outdoors turn to hunting, abandoning thoughts of fishing until ice-up.

While you can't blame them for eagerly striding into fall and its waterfowl, upland and big game hunting opportunities, some of the best fishing of the year is in autumn as waters cool and fish eagerly feed in preparation for North Dakota's leanest months.

North Dakota is home to a variety of fish species, including bass and sunfish that prefer warmer water temperatures, and trout and salmon that are better adapted to colder water.

"In between are coolwater fish like pike and

walleye, the latter of which is easily the most sought after species in the state," said Scott Gangl, North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries management section leader. "While these fish adapt to the cold waters of winter and the warm waters of summer, it's in spring and fall that their metabolism is adapted best to preferred temperatures. This is especially true for pike."

Like roosters or deer, walleye are where you find them, but Gangl said not to ignore shallower waters in October and November.

"If you look at it from a walleye or pike's point of view, a lot of the young-of-the-year fish, fish that walleye and pike want to feed on, tend to be shallower in fall," Gangl said.

Because most North Dakota fish species spawn in late spring and early summer, young-of-the-year





CRAIG BIHRLE

have put on some weight and length by fall, providing predators with a quality meal.

“If you are a walleye looking for a meal in fall, you can expend less energy for more energy intake because the prey is now bigger,” Gangl said. “Predators like walleye and pike can really put on some fat this time of the year.”

Unfortunately, after a dry summer when water levels declined rather than climbed, forage fish populations are down in many waters, giving predators little to choose from. Then again, this too can work in the autumn angler’s favor.

“Other than fathead minnows in district lakes, there is a general lack of a lot of forage in many waters,” said Greg Power, Department fisheries division chief. “This should increase the odds even more for anglers.”

One of the beauties of fall fishing is the lack of competition most days. “If the fishing is just off the charts good, some people are going to drag their boats out,” Gangl said. “But for the most part, this is typically the offseason because people have other interests and responsibilities, like sports, kids in school and hunting. Unfortunately, fall is such a short season here on the Northern Plains, but it’s certainly one of our most prized because you can hunt in the morning and fish in the afternoon.”

Whether factual or folklore, it is believed by many that your odds of catching a big fish are enhanced in fall compared to other seasons, Power said.

“More big walleye are caught in spring, however, because angler effort is much greater in spring than it is in fall,” he said. “But there is no question that fall is a good time to catch some really nice fish that are feeding hard, readying for winter.”



MIKE ANDERSON

*Game and Fish officials increased the northern pike limit from three to five in response to a record number of pike and pike waters across the state.*



North Dakota anglers typically have walleye on their minds when it comes to fishing, yet Gangl said northern pike opportunities are greater today than years past.

“With the wet conditions we’ve had the last handful of years, North Dakota has more pike lakes and more pike in those lakes than ever before,” Gangl said. “We increased the daily pike limit from three to five, further opening up fishing opportunities for people who like to fish for pike and eat pike. There are plenty of lakes with plenty of northerns out there, with extra to spare.”

*Fall means hunting to many people who enjoy North Dakota's outdoors, but enjoying a nice autumn day at a local fishing hotspot is hard to beat.*



CRAIG BIRHLE

The beauty of pike fishing today is that it's not localized, but statewide. That could change, however, as the window for good pike fishing could close before you know it.

“Always of concern to fisheries biologists is a serious drought and low and behold, it appears we are entering one,” Power said. “I think many waters are in good enough shape to get through this winter, but if we get significant snow, especially early, we could lose a number of lakes to winterkill.”

Gangl said the message is simple: pike fishing opportunities are plentiful today, so take advantage of them. “We don't know what next year is going to bring, but with the wet and dry cycles we have in North Dakota, the dry cycles seem to be more prevalent,” he said. “If past history holds true, we are going to lose some of those lakes. We don't know if it's going to be next year or in five years.”

Trout are another species that provide good fall fishing in North Dakota. “Don't overlook trout because we have a lot of good trout lakes in North Dakota,” Gangl said. “There are some bigger fish in reservoirs in the western part of the state.”

Game and Fish Department fisheries personnel also stocked a number of lakes this fall with rainbow trout from a hatchery in Wyoming, including Fish Creek Dam and Harmon Lake, both Morton County; McGregor Dam, Williams County; Northgate Dam, Burke County; Lightning Lake, McLean County; North Woodhaven Pond, Cass County; and Mooreton Pond, Richland County.

“They're nice fish, about 12 inches or so,” Gangl said. “We like to stock trout in places where we know anglers will utilize them.”

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



### Removing Y Bones

While there is more than one way to remove Y bones from northern pike, this simple method has worked for many readers over the years.

Check out this method on the North Dakota Game and Fish Department website at [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov).





MIKE ANDERSON

## Fish Reproduction Fell in 2012

*Some gizzard shad, but not many, turned up in the annual fall reproduction survey in Lake Oahe, which could provide some seed to grow the lake's forage fish population.*



**After a number of years of outstanding reproduction in waters across much of North Dakota, the tally of young-of-the-year fish netted during annual fall surveys was down in 2012.**

"For the most part, 2012 is looking to be fair at best in terms of reproduction of all young fish species," said Greg Power, North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries chief.

In years prior in many waters across the state, flooded vegetation from increased water levels created excellent spawning habitat for northern pike and yellow perch. Flooded and slowly deteriorating vegetation also dramatically increased productivity in these same waters, while providing spawning and rearing habitat for forage fish that fuel growth and improve the condition of walleye and other species.

"What our fisheries personnel found this fall in their survey efforts is not unexpected because it really dried out this summer," Power said. "Unlike the past few years, we lost water instead of gained water. The productivity from flooded vegetation just wasn't there this year like in years past."

Power said Department fall

reproduction surveys date back more than 40 years for lakes Oahe and Sakakawea. Fall sampling started on Devils Lake about 20 years ago, while some of North Dakota's smaller waters date back prior to that.

"With so many new waters out there today, some of our fisheries biologists are sampling 35 or more lakes in their districts alone, and this is going on statewide," Power said.

Power said fall reproduction sampling provides biologists with an index that measures natural reproduction and stocking success. It allows biologists to see if fish did spawn, and how fingerlings survived summer.

The one exception to the "fair at best" verdict, Power said, was Devils Lake. "Devils Lake had a spectacular walleye hatch," he said. "The water is still near record high, the water in the lake is relatively fresh, and there are lots of beautiful gravel spawning beds that the walleye favor, so spawning

conditions in the lake are really good right now."

Power said the majority of Devils Lake has not been stocked since 2007. Yet in the past five years, there have been a number of years of outstanding walleye natural reproduction, including 2012. About 4 million walleye fingerlings were stocked in Sakakawea, but it appears many of those fish didn't survive.

Power said Sakakawea received little mountain or prairie runoff in 2012, which decreased the big lake's productivity. "That means there wasn't a lot for the young walleye to eat in terms of zooplankton and phytoplankton," he said.

Power said fall surveys did turn up some gizzard shad in Lake Oahe, which could provide some seed to grow the lake's forage fish population. "Other than that, the forage population in Oahe is dismal," he said.



# *Sounds of* **AUTUMN**

*By Wayne Muth*



*Judy Muth scouts for a once-in-a-lifetime elk in the badlands in western North Dakota.*

WAYNE MUTH

**K***a-whop ... Ka-whop ...*

My wife, Judy, and I listened in disbelief at the head-smashing fight song of bighorn sheep echo off the badlands walls.

I searched the canyon through binoculars for the bighorn combatants that few North Dakotans get to hear, let alone see. Then I swung across the ravine to check the cow elk we had spotted earlier, and followed the search to a clearing into which we anticipated a bull might step.

It was elk we were after, not sheep, and Judy held a coveted tag that would allow her to shoot a cow or a bull, but she wanted to go after the latter. She had taken many good mule deer in the past, but this would be a much more challenging hunt.

But let's back up.

The 2011 hunting season started like many others, shed hunting in early spring, early season scouting and readying gear for fall deer hunting. But it wasn't until I purchased my archery license at the North Dakota Game and Fish Department in late spring that the good luck scale started tipping in our favor.

As the clerk handed me my bow license, she said, "You get the first one."

Number 0001, the first one sold in the state. Little did I know how the number "one" would reveal its significance come fall.

A few months later it was Judy's turn when she drew an elk license. "Oh my god", she said. "Am I

going to be able to kill an elk?"

Time seemingly flew by as we readied for our fall adventures, including several scouting trips over summer to the badlands, talking with numerous ranchers.

Opening weekend of elk season found us perched high on a butte glassing for these tan nomadic creatures. While we had scouted the area prior to the season, and I had spotted a cow elk in that very drainage, Judy had yet to see an elk in these rugged badlands.

Dawn broke quickly, bringing with it a brisk crosswind that whistled through the valley floor. We soon spotted several mule deer bucks, including one loner, with deep forks and beautiful velvet, feeding contently along a creek bottom.

Judy mentioned a number of times how nice he was and soon was coaxing me into going after the buck. Though I had my bow with me just in case, and I agreed that he was in a spot for a stalk, I hesitated, not wanting to mess up her hunt if elk were in the area. Several more minutes passed and several more times she pushed me to give it a try.

It looked like a tough stalk, but I had three things in my favor. The buck was alone, the wind was right and Judy's good luck would be on my shoulder.

Dropping down off the big butte, I quickly closed ground using the timbered ravines for concealment, while Judy watched through binoculars.



WAYNE MUTH

*The first archery tag of 2011 was sold to Wayne Muth, which he later wrapped around the antlers of a nice mule deer buck in the badlands.*



*The author with the mule deer buck he stalked and shot while his wife, Judy, watched through binoculars.*



With an arrow knocked, I reached a tree near the creek and saw antler movement to my left. I quickly ranged the buck at 31 yards, drew my bow, settled the sight pin on his chest through the tall grass and squeezed the release.

The buck was hit hard and I quickly backed out of the area and signaled to Judy to bring the packs. The smile on her face was as if she had shot the buck herself, having watched the entire hunt through binoculars.

As I notched the month and day from my license I glanced at the 0001 number and pieced together the significance: day “one” of the season, “one” stalk, “one” arrow, and the “one” time Judy watched me shoot a great velvet buck.

Now, we had another license to fill.

Days later, we started the evening like several others, picking an area we hoped would hold elk and hiking to a vantage point to glass. What we spotted were other hunters, so we went the other direction. As we skirted the top of a deep cedar ravine, I squeezed my cow call and received a pronounced “mew” in return.

The expression on my face was a mixture of surprise and disbelief – we found some elk. Judy immediately knew it was a cow and asked, “Do I shoot a cow?”

My response was an emphatic “no.”

Attempting to close the distance, we cautiously

backed away and took a different approach. Using trees for concealment, we glassed and called again and received another response, this time from deeper in the canyon.

We studied the area hard with binoculars, but the setting September sun made it difficult. I soon spotted a bull and pointed to a cut bank in the shaded end of the canyon. After fighting off the sun’s glare, Judy located him, too. Moments later a cow stepped into a small opening in the timber.

Just then, the *ka-whop* of the bighorns filled the canyon like background music in a thriller movie. As the bull disappeared into the shadows, Judy rested her rifle on a rock, focusing on the opening. I knew the bull would follow the cow and perhaps present a clear shot.

Judy struggled to see through the scope because of the sun. To help, I placed my cap over the front of her scope to shade it just enough.

The bighorn bashing continued for several minutes while we waited for the bull. I searched to see the rutting sheep, while keeping an eye on the cow elk directly across the canyon. The excitement of the moment escalated when the bull stepped into the clearing. “315 yards,” I said. “Put your crosshairs right on him.”

The bark of Judy’s rifle instantly drowned the bighorn head butts. The bull bucked and trotted into the canyon timber. The rifle’s recoil knocked

my cap off the scope, making it impossible to see through the glare for another shot.

“Dang sun ... I can't see,” Judy said, panic and frustration evident in her voice.

I quickly reassured her that the bull was hit and still in the deep ravine. We waited a few minutes and moved to get a better angle, and hopefully another shot. The bighorns *ka-whopped* once again.

Relocated, Judy found the bull standing in the thick timber. She shot again and the bull rolled and rolled to the bottom. I thought, “Oh my god, we are going to work to get him out.”

Words could not describe the expression and excitement on Judy's face when she turned to me. I couldn't tell if it was tears of joy or relief, or just sweat coming down her face, but a hug and kiss of congratulations was never sweeter.

We descended to the beautiful 6x6 North Dakota bull, did a short photo session, field dressed the animal and hiked out in the dark. At dawn we navigated a route back to the bull trying to find the easiest exit to pack him out.

The chores of skinning and quartering are daunting, but with the adrenaline push of success, the task was fulfilling. Judy, and our good rancher friend, Neal, began packing as I quartered and de-boned. After three trips each we had the meat, antlers and cape out of the canyon and eventually to the vehicle.

Driving out of the badlands stirred a memory of another harvested elk, my elk 10 years earlier. Ten years to the date. September 10, 2001 my arrow downed a 6x6 Montana bull. Judy took her 6x6 on September 10, 2011, and both animals were packed out on September 11. Was it fate or simply coincidence? Or maybe some things are just meant to be.

No matter, because these are the memories you never forget.

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*WAYNE MUTH* of Mandan has been bowhunting in North Dakota for more than 30 years.

*We waited a few minutes and moved to get a better angle, and hopefully another shot. The bighorns ka-whopped once again.*



WAYNE MUTH

*Judy Muth (top) waits before approaching her bull elk pictured in the background. She (bottom) shot her 6x6 prize elk in 2011.*



WAYNE MUTH





# BUFFALOBERRY PATCH

By Greg Freeman, Department News Editor



## PHEASANT BROOD DATA SUMMARY

North Dakota's roadside pheasant survey conducted in late July and August suggests much improved production this spring, meaning more young birds added to the population and a better fall population in all areas of the state.

Stan Kohn, Game and Fish Department upland game management supervisor, said the survey shows total pheasants statewide are up 59 percent from last year. In addition, brood observations were up 65 percent, and the average brood size was up 16 percent.

"The increase in numbers from last year is encouraging, but hunters are cautioned that the landscape has changed since last fall," Kohn said. "A great deal of habitat has been either hayed or converted to cropland as Conservation Reserve Program acres continue to diminish."

Several factors influenced the increase in brood numbers, including a mild winter, spring weather that was near perfect for upland game production, and nesting/brooding habitat was in fair condition this spring.

Statistics from southwestern North Dakota indicate the number of broods was up 37 percent and number of birds observed was up 30 percent from 2011.

Results from the southeast show the number of birds observed was up 134 percent from last year, and the number of broods was up 144 percent. "Even though this district shows a large percentage increase, pheasant numbers were pretty low last year," Kohn said. "With that said, hunters should see more pheasants than in 2011, especially after row crops are harvested."

Statistics from the northwest indicated pheasants are up 258 percent from last year, with broods up 268 percent. "Similar to the southeast, hunters should temper expectations because numbers were low in this district last year," Kohn said.

The number of birds in the northeast district, which generally contains secondary pheasant habitat, was up 155 percent, and the number of broods was up 275 percent. "Hunters should concentrate their efforts in the southern counties of this district for the best potential to find birds," Kohn said.

## BIGHORN NUMBERS INCREASE

While many of the state's western big game species remain at low population levels, bighorn sheep numbers are holding their own.

A summer survey showed a minimum 299 bighorn sheep, a slight increase from last year and just 17 below 2008's record summer survey. "Our bighorn sheep population remained stable following three epic winters, so we're pleased to see an increase subsequent to last winter's mild conditions," said Brett Wiedmann, Game and Fish Department big game biologist.

The current population includes a good number of young rams, Wiedmann added, which should lead to increased hunting opportunities in future years as these animals start reaching maturity. In 2012, Game and Fish reduced the number of sheep licenses from six to four, due to a declining number of mature rams.

Survey results revealed 89 rams, 155 ewes and 55 lambs – a record 251 in the northern badlands (an increase of 18 from last year) and 48 in the southern badlands (down nine). "Bighorn sheep are doing very well in the northern badlands, but continue to struggle south of the interstate," Wiedmann said, while noting that a record 51 lambs were observed in the north, but only four in the south. "Despite poor lamb numbers in the southern badlands, the total number of lambs observed this summer was just shy of the record count in 2008."

Biologists suspect that chronically low lamb survival and declining numbers throughout the southern herds persists due to pathogens introduced from domestic goats in the late 1990s that resulted in an extensive die-off of bighorn sheep.

## BAITING OF BIG GAME PROHIBITED IN FIVE DEER UNITS

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department reminds deer hunters that hunting over bait is now prohibited in deer units 3C, 3E1, 3E2, 3F1 and 3F2.

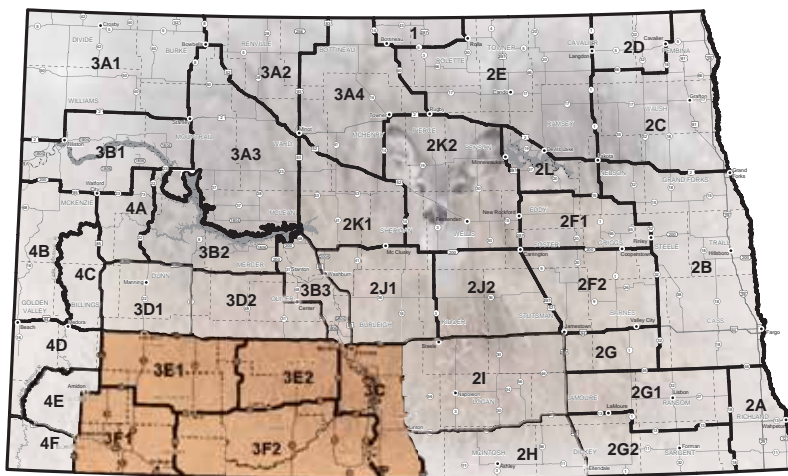
Hunting over bait is defined as the placement and/or use of bait(s) for attracting big game and other wildlife to a specific location for the purpose of hunting. Baits include but are not limited to grains, minerals, salts, fruits, vegetables, hay or any other natural or manufactured foods. The designation does not apply to the use of scents and lures, water, food plots, standing crops or livestock feeds used in standard practices.



**In addition to the units where hunting over bait is no longer allowed on either private or public land, hunting over bait is also not allowed on most other public land through the state, including state wildlife management areas; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service national wildlife refuges and waterfowl production areas; U.S. Forest Service national grasslands; and all North Dakota state school, state park and state forest service lands.**

In addition, hunters harvesting a big game animal this fall in North Dakota deer unit 3F2 cannot transport a carcass containing the head and spinal column outside of the unit unless it's taken directly to a meat processor. The head can be removed from the carcass and transported outside of the unit if it is to be submitted to a Game and Fish Department district office, CWD surveillance drop-off location or a licensed taxidermist.

If the deer is processed in the field to boned meat, and the hunter wants to leave the head in the field, the head must be legally tagged and the hunter must be able to return to or give the exact location of the head if requested for verification.



*Shaded area indicates units where hunting big game over bait is not allowed during deer bow, gun or muzzleloader season.*

## WHOOPING CRANE MIGRATION



Whooping cranes are in the midst of their fall migration and sightings will increase as they make their way through North Dakota this fall. Anyone seeing these birds as they move through the state is asked to report sightings so the birds can be tracked.

Whoopers stand about five feet tall and have a wingspan of about seven feet from tip to tip. They are bright white with black wing tips, which are visible only when the wings are outspread. In flight they extend their long necks straight forward, while their long, slender legs extend out behind the tail. Young-of-the-year are white with scattered brown feathers. Whooping cranes typically migrate singly, or in groups of 2-3 birds, and may be associated with sandhill cranes.

Other white birds such as snow geese, swans and egrets are often mistaken for whooping cranes. The most common mistake is pelicans because their wingspan is similar and they tuck their pouch in flight, leaving a silhouette similar to a crane when viewed from below.

Anyone sighting whoopers should not disturb them, but record the date, time, location and activity. Observers should also look closely for and report colored bands which may occur on one or both legs.

**Sightings should be reported to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service office at (701) 387-4397, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's main office in Bismarck at (701) 328-6610, or to local game wardens around the state.**

Reports help biologists locate important whooping crane habitat areas, monitor marked birds, determine survival and population numbers, and identify times and migration routes.





CRAIG BIRRE

## HUNT SAFELY FROM DUCK BOATS

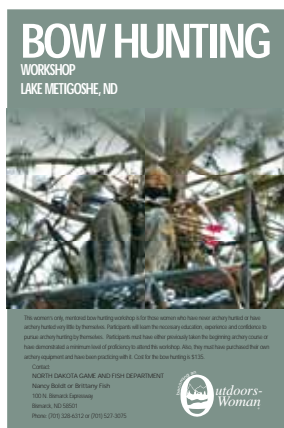
### Waterfowlers hunting from boats should wear properly-fitted life jackets while on the water.

Nancy Boldt, North Dakota Game and Fish Department boat and water safety coordinator, said there are comfortable hunting coats available with life jackets already built in.

Eight people have drowned in state waters since 1998 while hunting from a boat, and none were wearing life jackets. Boldt wants to make sure a duck hunter doesn't become another statistic.

"Capsizing and falling overboard from a small boat is the most common type of fatal boating accident for hunters," Boldt said. "With all the gear in the boat, including dogs, it can quickly become unbalanced."

In addition, wearing a life jacket will not only keep the overboard hunter afloat, but also help slow the loss of critical body heat caused by exposure to cold water.



## BOWHUNTING FOR WOMEN

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is still accepting registrations for the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman bowhunting workshop October 24-28 at Lake Metigoshe State Park.

The workshop is for women with no or minimal archery experience. Participants will achieve the necessary education, experience and confidence to archery hunt alone. Participants must have previously taken the beginning archery course or have demonstrated a minimum level

of proficiency, and must provide their own archery equipment. Workshop fees of \$135 include lodging and instruction.

BOW workshops are designed primarily for women with an interest in learning skills associated with hunting, fishing and outdoor endeavors. Although open to anyone age 18 or older, the workshops are tailored primarily to women who have never tried these activities or who are beginners hoping to improve their skills.

Women can enroll online, or print an information brochure and enrollment form, at the Game and Fish website, [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov). More information is available by contacting Nancy Boldt at (701) 328-6312, Brittany Fish at (701) 527-3075, or email [ndgf@nd.gov](mailto:ndgf@nd.gov).

## ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY GRANT FUNDS AVAILABLE



The Coalition for Conservation and Environmental Education (C2E2), a natural resource nonprofit organization, has received \$15,000 in grant funds for North Dakota from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Any local or tribal education agency, college, university, state education or environmental agency, or nonprofit organization may submit a grant proposal. C2E2 will award two \$2,500 grants for new or start-up initiatives, and 10 \$1,000 grants that strengthen PreK-12 environmental education efforts.

In order to conserve, improve or utilize the state's environment for the benefit of all citizens, C2E2 will target the EPA grant funds to help promote awareness and knowledge regarding conservation and wise use of North Dakota's natural resources.

The deadline to apply for North Dakota grant funds is October 29. A 25 percent match of cash or in-kind service is required. A teacher's school district, an educator's nonprofit, or a faculty member's college or university may apply, but an individual teacher or faculty member may not apply.

Grant applications are available on the C2E2 website at <http://c2e2.gscience.org>. For more information, contact C2E2 president Glenda Fauske at (701) 228-5446.



## LANDOWNER-SPORTSMAN COUNCIL SIGNS AVAILABLE

Ask Before You Enter and Walking Hunters Welcome signs are available to North Dakota landowners who encourage hunting on their land during fall hunting seasons.

The signs are free and sponsored by the North Dakota Landowner-Sportsman Council. Landowners can order quantities of four, eight or 12. To order, contact the North Dakota Game and Fish Department at (701) 328-6300, or email [ndgf@nd.gov](mailto:ndgf@nd.gov).

## North Dakota's Private Land Open To Sportsmen hunters are reminded of regulations.



Activities besides hunting, and public access when a hunting season is not open, are not covered in the Game and Fish Department's agreement with the landowner; thus, they require written permission from the landowner.

Activities such as riding horses for hunting purposes or for pleasure on PLOTS require written permission from the landowner. Permission from the landowner is always required for motorized vehicle access such as for setting decoys in a field, unless specially designated on the PLOTS sign.

In addition, leaving equipment or other provisions in a PLOTS area overnight, for example tree stands or blinds, decoys, firearms and archery equipment, trail cameras, or any type of bait used to attract big game animals, is not allowed without written permission from the landowner.

### DONATE DEER TO SAH



The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is reminding deer hunters to keep in mind the Sportsmen Against Hunger program this fall.

While this year's deer proclamation allows only one deer gun license per hunter, families with more than one license might want to consider donating a deer to this worthy cause. In addition, hunters with an archery and muzzleloader license can help as well.

SAH is a charitable program that raises money for processing of donated deer, and coordinates distribution of ground venison to food pantries in North Dakota. It is administered by the North Dakota Community Action Partnership, a nonprofit agency that serves low-income families across the state.

A current statewide list of participating SAH venison donation processing sites is available by accessing the NDCAP website, [capnd.org/sahprogram/](http://capnd.org/sahprogram/).

### FIND YOUR DEER LICENSE

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department urges deer hunters to find their licenses and check for accuracy.

Every year Department staff receive calls from hunters at the last minute, including the morning of opening day, who can't find their license. If it happens at that point, it's difficult to try to get a replacement quickly.

Another reason to find your license now is to check it for accuracy. Double-check the license to make sure the unit, species and deer sex is what you thought it should be.

Deer hunters in need of a replacement license can print out a duplicate (replacement) license application from the Game and Fish website, [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov), or can call (701) 328-6300 to have an application mailed or faxed.

The form must be completely filled out and notarized, and sent back to the Department with a fee. The application will be processed the day it is received at the office, and the license will be mailed out the next day.



### WATCH FOR DEER ON ROADS

Motorists are reminded to watch for deer along roadways, especially this time of year, as juvenile animals are dispersing from their home ranges.

Deer are most active in late October through early December.

Motorists are advised to slow down and exercise caution after dark to reduce the likelihood of encounters with deer along roadways. Most deer-vehicle accidents occur at dawn and dusk when deer are most often moving around.

Deer-vehicle accidents are at times unavoidable. However, motorists should be aware of warning signs signaling deer are in the area. When you see one deer cross the road, look for a second or third to follow. Also, pay attention on roadways posted with Deer Crossing Area caution signs.

If an accident happens, contact a local law enforcement agency. Also, a permit is required to take parts or the whole carcass of a road-killed deer. Permits are free and available from game wardens and local law enforcement offices.

A few precautions to minimize injury or property damage in a deer-vehicle crash:

- Always wear your seat belt.
- Don't swerve or take the ditch to avoid hitting a deer. Try to brake as much as possible and stay on the roadway. Don't lose control of your vehicle or slam into something else to miss the deer. You risk less injury by hitting the deer.
- If you spot deer ahead, slow down immediately and honk your horn.
- No published research supports the effectiveness of deer whistles on vehicles.







## CHECK FOR ANS WHEN REMOVING STRUCTURES

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department requests local entities and water recreationists to monitor for new aquatic nuisance species infestations when pulling and storing fishing piers, boat docks and lifts prior to ice up.

**Fred Ryckman, Department ANS coordinator, said it is especially important to look for zebra mussels. “Zebra mussels will attach to hard surfaces,” he said. “Inspecting these types of structures provides a good opportunity to determine if mussels may be present in the respective water body.”**

To date, adult zebra mussels have not been found in any North Dakota waters.

If mussels are found, citizens are requested to leave the suspicious mussel attached, take a digital picture, and report findings immediately to a local Game and Fish Department district office.

Pictures of zebra mussels are available at [100thmeridian.org/](http://100thmeridian.org/).



MINISEA GRANT



GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT PHOTO

## RECORD FISH REQUIREMENTS

Anglers should note that the Game and Fish Department has recently changed some of its state record fishing requirements:

- All recognized fish must be harvested by legal methods for recreational fishing and come from North Dakota waters open to public fishing.
- All new state record fish must be weighed on a commercially used scale certified by the North Dakota Public Service Commission or an equivalent agency in other states or Canadian provinces.
- All weights must be rounded to the nearest ounce.
- Fish must be visually verified within 90 days by Game and Fish Department personnel.
- Anglers must complete and submit to the Department a Whopper application or a handwritten or typed note with all similar information.
- A recognizable photo of the fish must be provided to the Department.
- A fin sample may be required for some species for genetic analysis.

## PUBLIC ASKED TO REPORT VIOLATIONS

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department encourages hunters, anglers and landowners who witness a fish or wildlife violation to file a report with the Report All Poachers program.

RAP is a cooperative project between the Game and Fish Department, State Radio Communications and the North Dakota Wildlife Federation. The RAP line offers rewards – from \$100 to \$1,000 depending on the nature and seriousness of the crime – for information that leads to conviction of fish and wildlife law violators. Reports can also go directly to game wardens or other law enforcement agencies. Callers can remain anonymous.

Witnesses should note vehicle description, including make, color, license plate number and state issued. Description of the violator should also be considered.

Witnesses should report a violation by calling the RAP telephone number at (800) 472-2121. RAP will then contact the local game warden immediately. If the witness gives the RAP operator a phone number, the witness will be contacted right away.



## TWO NAMED TO GAME AND FISH ADVISORY BOARD

Governor Jack Dalrymple has appointed Tom Rost of Devils Lake and Dwight Hecker of Fairfield to the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's advisory board.

The governor appoints eight Game and Fish Department advisors, each representing a multi-county section of the state, to serve as a liaison between the Department and public.

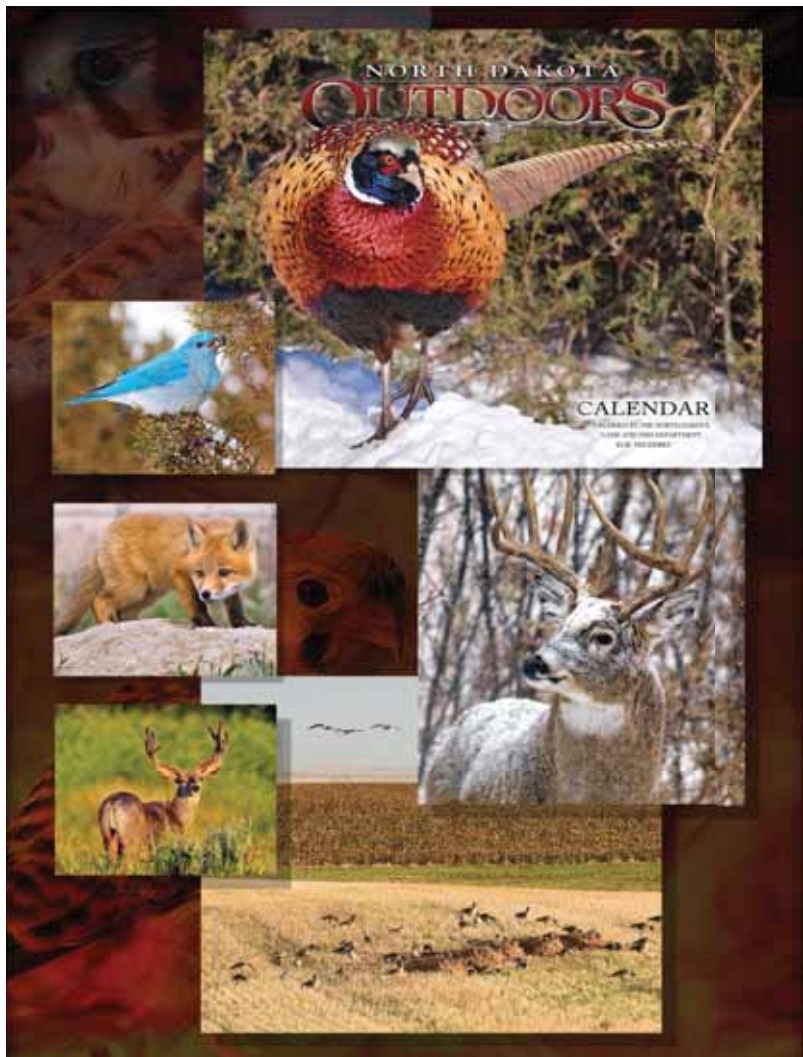
Rost, an avid hunter and angler, replaces Tracy Gardner, Devils Lake, in District 3.

Hecker, a farmer-rancher, replaces Wayne Gerbig, Amidon, in District 8. Gerbig and Gardner's terms expired June 30.

**“Public input is critical to the effective management of our fish and wildlife resources and this advisory board plays an important role in our on-going commitment to involving landowners, hunters, anglers and other stakeholders in the management process,” Governor Dalrymple said.** “We appreciate the service of Tracy Gardner and Wayne Gerbig and we welcome Tom Rost and Dwight Hecker as new members to the advisory board.”

Four members of the advisory board must be farmers or ranchers and four must be hunters/anglers. Appointments are for a term of four years. No member can serve longer than two terms.

Advisory board members host two public meetings, held each spring and fall, to provide citizens with an opportunity to discuss fish and wildlife issues and ask questions of their district advisors and agency personnel.



## 2013 CALENDAR ORDERS

The 2013 North Dakota OUTDOORS calendar, the official source for all the season and application dates you need to know for next year, will be available in late November. Along with outstanding color photographs of North Dakota wildlife and scenery, it also includes sunrise-sunset times and moon phases.

The calendar is the OUTDOORS magazine's December issue, so current subscribers will automatically receive it in the mail.

To order additional copies, send \$3 for each, plus \$1 postage, to: Calendar, North Dakota Game and Fish Department, 100 N. Bismarck Expressway, Bismarck, ND 58501-5095. Be sure to include a three-line return address with your order, or the post office may not deliver our return mailing.

## STAFF NOTES

James Job, a native of Jamestown, was hired as the district game warden in Devils Lake. He has a fisheries and wildlife management degree from Valley City State University.

Blake Reiwer accepted the district game warden position in Williston. A native of Perham, Minnesota, Reiwer has a criminal justice degree from the University of North Dakota.



James Job





# WATERFOWL HUNTERS:

Help prevent  
**A**quatic  
**N**uisance  
**S**pecies

IN NORTH DAKOTA



## LAWS NOW IN PLACE

- Remove plants and plant fragments from decoys, strings and anchors.
- Remove plant seeds and plant fragments from waders, other equipment and dogs before leaving hunting areas.
- Remove all aquatic plants from boats and trailers before leaving a marsh or lake. (Does not include cattails or bulrushes used for camouflaging boats.)
- Remove all water from decoys, boats, motors, trailers and other watercraft.

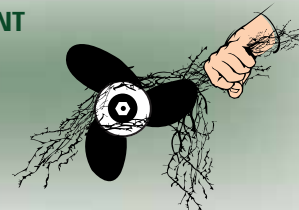


### PLANTS CAN SEVERELY DEGRADE WATERFOWL HABITAT AND FISHING WATERS



#### NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

100 North Bismarck Expressway  
Bismarck, ND 58501-5095  
701.328.6300  
Email: [ndgf@nd.gov](mailto:ndgf@nd.gov)  
Web: [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov)



I went to the am when we got there we shot



my 2:20 we went

# back cast

By Ron Wilson

we got none, we askt my grandpa to come hunting with us

Scientists tell us that some petroglyphs, rock engravings of cultural significance often connected with prehistoric peoples, are thousands of years old. The ones I recently discovered, hidden in the bottomless cavern that is my third-grader's backpack, resting next to packaged string cheese and an empty water bottle, are just a few weeks old.

But first, let me back up. My youngest, like my oldest, likes to hunt. Like I did with my oldest most autumns, I've signed my youngest out of school early, swapping No. 2 pencils for shotguns, gym shoes for leather boots, recess for CRP.

In exchange for early dismissal, there is often some extra homework involved, which is a fair trade, especially since I don't have to do any of it.

While I don't know all the particulars, Jack, my third-grader, had to write a story about his early fall outing to shoot mourning doves and sharp-tailed grouse on Grandpa's farm in Griggs County along the Sheyenne River.

The two-plus-page assignment is written in pencil on every other line on ruled paper and neatly taped together so that it opens and reads like a short book. There are some misspellings, such as "grose" instead of "grouse," but these small mistakes don't take away from the story, which I think is pretty accurate, or at least how I remember it.

Jack's paper, unlike the majority of his school work that gets reviewed at home and then discarded, is folded and stuffed between pages of an old leather-covered journal where I've recorded everything from the plumber's phone number, directions to a hard-to-find U.S. Forest Service road in Sweet Grass County Montana, a stroganoff recipe I want to try that uses Ramen instead of egg

noodles, titles of novels I want to get to someday, and numerous personally penned ramblings that mean nothing to no one, but something to me.

I folded and tucked the story away initially because I thought it was cute and was worth saving. Maybe Jack will look back on it someday and remember, even though it doesn't say specifically, that the story was about purchasing his first hunting license and shooting his first birds, the last flying south to north on a PLOTS tract where out-of-season blue-winged teal and sandhill cranes entertained us between passing doves.

What all of this has to do with petroglyphs, I understand now, is a bit of a stretch. Yet, when I found pencil-drawn pictures in the bottom of Jack's backpack meant to accompany his homework, I immediately thought "rock art." It didn't matter that the artist's canvas was wide ruled paper and not a rock face, that's what it reminded me of.

From beginning to end, all seven rudimentary drawings of stick hunters with stick shotguns, bird dogs with too few legs, and flying game being peppered with shot told a story of a successful outing for two hunters, one taller than the other, that even the most amateur of anthropologists could decipher.

Scientists speculate on the meaning of many authentic petroglyphs engraved in stone, imagining that the images have, among other things, meaningful cultural and spiritual significance for the people who created them.

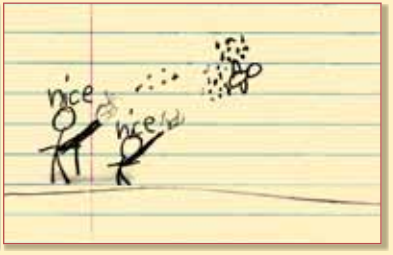
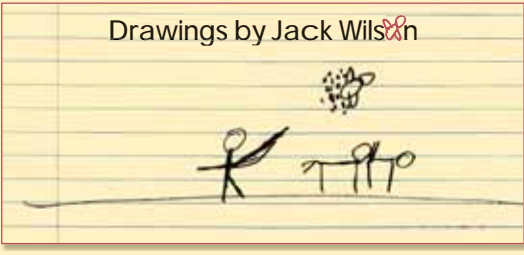
This notion is likely a little deep for what Jack had in mind when he put pencil to paper. He simply likes to hunt, and if he's assigned extra homework, then it's a fair trade.

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

we went

looking for doves

and grose. Day 1.







KELLY KRABENHOFT

## Black Tree Squirrels

Urban dwelling tree squirrels, even those seen swinging upside down from bird feeders or racing across power lines like one of the Flying Wallendas, don't often earn a second look by passersby.

If you live in a community with mature trees and a supply of winter-storable foods, gray and fox squirrels, North Dakota's two most prominent squirrel species, are as common as a dog playing in the neighbor's back yard.

But a black squirrel, an animal that looks as if it rolled in coal dust, but is really the casualty of a genetic mutation that causes excessive pigmentation or melanism, likely will stop you in your tracks.

If you were to research melanism in squirrels in North America, some of what you'll unearth is references to this "color phase" occurring in gray squirrels only. Yet, that's not to say there couldn't be any black fox squirrels out there running around, because there are.

"Melanism knows no genus boundary," said Bill Jensen, North Dakota Game and Fish Department big game management biologist.

Jensen once saw a red fox nearly as black as night. And he's heard reports and seen photographs of melanistic white-tailed deer.

"If you see it in fox and deer, why not in other species of squirrels other than just gray squirrels?" he said.

Greg Gullickson, Department outreach biologist in Minot, grew up two blocks from Oak Park in Minot, which is home to a population of black squirrels.

"I remember them from when I was a kid and they would filter out into the neighborhoods," he said. "There are still black squirrels in the park, and if I had to guess, I would say they make up about 15 percent of the squirrel population."

The photo for this feature was taken by Kelly Krabbenhoft of West Fargo along the Sheyenne River in Cass County. "I did see a pair of them and hopefully I will see more of them in coming outings," he said.

Stan Kohn, Department upland game management supervisor, said hunters shoot only 2,000 or so tree squirrels, the majority fox squirrels, in the state annually. In all his years, he's never had a hunter report shooting a black squirrel.

Which maybe isn't surprising. When asked if Gullickson, an avid hunter, had ever seen a black squirrel in the wilds, away from Oak Park, his old neighborhood, concrete, bike paths and passing cars, he paused for a time and said: "Not that I can remember."

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