

NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS



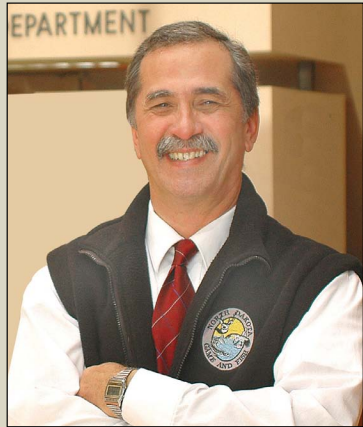
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MATTERS OF OPINION



Terry Steinwand
Director

There is something to do year-round in North Dakota's outdoors. Even in winter when the snow flies and temperatures fall, we have ice fishing for a record-high pike population, and other fish species.

But likely the most awaited time of year falls in November with the opening of the deer gun season. I've long said that the deer gun opener is probably the second most anticipated "holiday" of the year in North Dakota, second only to Christmas.

The Game and Fish Department made available fewer deer licenses to hunters this year compared to past seasons. That being said, not everyone received a deer gun license this year, which is unfortunate.

Deer season in North Dakota is not only about the hunt and harvest of the animal, it's about the experience. I've mentioned a number of times how important the experience has become, and I think it grows more important each year as my mortality becomes more evident.

While I consider myself in decent shape, my legs don't seem to want to walk as far as they did 20 years ago. And my ability to spot animals and the small movements they make, have diminished the last few years. Then again, my sons have strong legs and wonderful vision, so maybe it equals out.

Like my parents did with me, I wanted to give my sons the best possible experiences when they were younger. I placed them in spots where they'd have the best opportunities for success, in places where

wild game was certain to pass. Now it's their turn to cater to me by beating the brush and allowing me the best spot on the landscape to get a good shot. This is my plan at least, and we'll see how it works.

I've learned that deer hunting is a bonding experience for many, be it with family or friends. Every year I receive letters and get phone calls expressing disappointment that a family member didn't receive a deer license in the lottery, and now the entire gang doesn't get to hunt together. I guarantee these letters and conversations don't go unheard because I can easily relate.

I don't always get to hunt with my children because they can't get home or because they didn't get a license. I'd love to be able to go out with my father one more time, but that's no longer possible. My point is that we don't always get what we want, so we should always make the most out of what's available to us. What we need to do is make sure these hunting opportunities will be available in the future.

I hope everyone has great hunting and fishing this fall. While I don't know the outcome of my hunts in the future, I do know I'm salivating in anticipation of backstraps and homemade venison sausage. But whatever the outcome, I know I'm going to enjoy every minute of it with family and friends. Have a wonderful fall hunt in the great North Dakota outdoors.

Terry Steinwand

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NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

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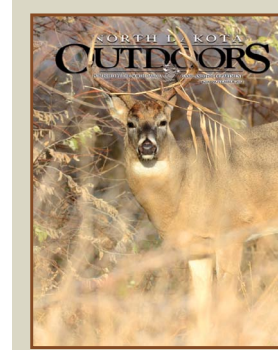
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Front Cover

Whitetail buck.

Photo by Craig Bihre, Bismarck



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ANTICIPATING

A SEASON ON ICE

By Ron Wilson

CRAIG BIRRE

It's easy to criticize North Dakota's winter months because of the snow and cold, but consider this: Once temperatures fall and stay there, fishing for record numbers of northern pike on more than 200 waters should heat up. Plus, a number of quality walleye lakes that are mostly overlooked during the open water season become increasingly easier to access at ice-up.

Scott Gangl, North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries management section leader, said when fisheries personnel stock a lake with walleye, they do so with the understanding that the fishery will be around for some time.

"On a lot of these waters we look at it as a long-term investment, so we are often looking at putting in a boat ramp," Gangl said. "But sometimes the fishery takes off before a ramp is in place. While some anglers have found ways to get boats on the water in summer, access should be easier in winter. Some of these lakes will provide some good walleye fishing this winter."

North Dakota has about 30 new walleye lakes on the landscape that weren't managed as walleye waters a half-dozen years ago. "Now, we have a bunch of young, generally small, up-and-coming walleye fisheries," Gangl said. "While many don't have boat ramps and likely won't get them, there is overland access because we would not have stocked without public access."

Gangl provides some examples:

- Lake Addie, Griggs County – "Addie has a good walleye population. The existing boat ramp was hard to access due to high water levels."
- Hurdsfield-Tuffy Lake, Wells County – "We introduced walleye just a few years ago, but we heard good reports from shore anglers last spring, and ice anglers last winter. This lake doesn't have a ramp, but is supposed to get one soon."
- Clear Lake, Pierce County – "Last winter anglers had phenomenal fishing. Fish are only a couple of years old, but are already in that 14-inch plus range. These fish are plump and plenty accessible. Anglers were putting in boats in summer where they could."
- Antelope Lake, Pierce County – "Antelope offers some good walleye fishing. We don't have a boat ramp, but people were getting boats on the water. They run the risk of getting stuck doing this, though."
- Lesmeister Lake, Pierce County – "This lake

has a really good population of up-and-coming walleye. Again, there is no ramp, but we are working on it. In the meantime, the fish are there."

- Round Lake, Kidder County – "Round Lake has always had a real nice walleye population, but no public boat ramp. Good ice access off of N.D. Highway 36 exists, however."

Fish growth is good in these opportunistic waters because they are so productive. "Many of these lakes probably didn't initially exist, or were maybe a slough, before several years of good precipitation," Gangl said. "Cattails, sweet-clover and grasses were flooded, then insects broke the vegetation down. These insects are food for fish, such as fathead minnows, which can explode under these conditions. Then the walleye comes along and has an instant food source."

Getting on the Ice

Getting on the ice for three straight winters was a major obstacle for anglers between 2009-11. Last winter, one mostly devoid of snow, changed the playing field, however, and anglers responded. Greg Power, Department fisheries division chief, said the state had about 48,000 resident ice anglers last winter and those people posted about 430,000 angler days.

"During a normal winter, about 20-25 percent of the annual fishing effort is ice fishing," Power said. "Access is the key. Last year, anglers had unlimited access because there wasn't any snow to speak of. But it was a late ice-up and the ice wasn't safe until the holidays. Fishing effort really heated up once the ice was safe enough to drive on."

The three tough winters prior to that, Power said North Dakota averaged about 33,000 resident ice anglers and about 240,000 angler days.



CRAIG BIRRE

Now is the time to take advantage of the state's northern pike population. North Dakota has a record number of pike waters and pike populations have never been higher.

“When fish populations are strong, like they are now, and there is access, ice anglers come out of the woodwork,” Power said. “We actually have a pretty fanatical resident ice fishing base, and an evolving, but serious nonresident component. We have definitely seen an increase in the nonresident ice fishing effort in the last 20 years.”

Last winter, nonresidents tallied about 70,000 angler days. While Devils Lake attracts much of the nonresident traffic, Power said these same anglers also key in on central North Dakota lakes.

Pike and Perch

During open water months, 17 of 20 anglers in North Dakota prefer walleye. This single-minded focus shifts some in winter, for a number of reasons, to pike and perch.

It’s been a decade or more since the winter yellow perch fishing was off the charts in North Dakota. Power said with some help from Mother Nature, a second boom, albeit not as big as the first, could be in the works.

“During that record-setting boom, the perch fishing at places like Dry Lake was likely world-class,” Power said. “It was one of those big water bodies that had only perch in it, growth was spectacular and there was nothing but humans to crop their numbers down.”

What followed was a string of dry years, water levels fell and lakes winterkilled. Water returned starting in 2009, and pike populations took off because of quality spawning habitat. “That leaves us today with

some tremendous pike populations and some quality perch fishing opportunities, but not like it was during the first boom.”

When water returned, Gangl said fisheries biologists started stocking yellow perch in 2009 around the state in select waters. “We tried to get fish in as many places as possible,” he said. “In some lakes the perch took, but in some waters they didn’t. We do have some up-and-coming perch lakes. The fish have four growing seasons under them, so anglers are going to see some 8- to 10-inch fish. It’s going to take a couple more seasons to get into that 12- to 14-inch jumbo range, depending on the lake, food source, productivity and so on.”

Power said the Game and Fish will, for good reason, continue to encourage pike fishing in the state. “We have a record number of pike fisheries on the landscape and record-setting pike populations,” Power said. “But we know that we are on the clock in North Dakota because we just never know what the weather will bring. What we do know is that we’d like anglers to have the opportunity to harvest pike before Mother Nature does.”

Speaking of record-setting northern numbers, Gangl said pike populations have never been higher in Lake Sakakawea. Pike populations today in the big lake are nearly double the previous high. “Many of the pike aren’t huge, there are a lot in the 5- to 8-pound range. Give them another four to five years and we’re going to have some good fishing for really big pike,” he said.



One of the nice things about fishing for northern pike in winter is that these fish typically provide a daytime bite. And finding a place to set up for a day of pike fishing shouldn’t be a problem as North Dakota features more than 200 pike waters.

CRAIG BIRRE

Pike fishing among anglers typically heats up during winter, Power said. “One of the selling points about pike in winter is that they provide a daytime bite, and if there are pike in the water you’re fishing, you can generally catch them,” he said. “And pike are good to eat coming out of that cold water.”

Spearing in the Dark

To further take advantage of record-setting northern pike populations, the Game and Fish Department opened the entire state to darkhouse spearfishing,

except the Red River and lakes with muskellunge.

The first winter darkhouse spearfishing was allowed in the state, just 28 waters were open to spearing. Last winter, the state’s 11th spearing season, 50 lakes were open and participants harvested nearly 10,000 fish.

“We know there might come a day when we have to be more conservative, but the opportunities for northern pike are now,” Power said.

RON WILSON is editor of North Dakota OUTDOORS.



PAUL BAILEY

There are a number of quality walleye waters in the state that are mostly overlooked during the open water season, but become easier to access at ice-up.



MIKE ANDERSON

If the yellow perch bite heats up on any given body of water, word will spread fast to ice anglers. It always does.

Darkhouse Spearfishing

Northern pike and nongame fish are the only legal species for darkhouse spearfishing. Daily limit for pike is five fish and possession limit is 10.

Darkhouse spearfishing is legal from December 1 through March 15. All waters open to hook and line fishing are open to darkhouse spearfishing except the following waters:

- Braun Lake, Logan County
- East Park Lake, McLean County
- Heckers Lake, Sheridan County
- Lake Audubon, McLean County
- McClusky Canal
- New Johns Lake, Burleigh County
- Red and Bois de Sioux rivers
- Red Willow Lake, Griggs County
- Sweet Briar Dam, Morton County
- West Park Lake, McLean County



GREG GULLICKSON

In addition to possessing a valid fishing license, all darkhouse spearfishing participants must first register on the North Dakota Game and Fish Department website, gf.nd.gov, or through any Game and Fish Department office.



Ice Fishing Opportunities

Game and Fish Department district fisheries supervisors provide the following reports for winter fishing opportunities.

Lake Sakakawea

Dave Fryda, Missouri River System supervisor, Riverdale

Pike abundance in Sakakawea has never been higher. The majority of the population is rather young, but anglers can expect to catch good numbers in the 5- to 8-pound range. The abundance of large pike is relatively low, but Sakakawea still provides the best odds of catching a whopper.

Walleye anglers will likely have a good ice fishing season. Fishing was good throughout most of 2012 and should continue into winter given the dip in forage abundance. Anglers can expect good numbers of 20- to 24-inch walleye, with a lot of 13- to 14-inch fish mixed in.

Northeast District

Randy Hiltner, district fisheries supervisor, Devils Lake

Devils Lake Basin (Devils Lake, Stump Lake, Morrison Lake and Lake Irvine) – Excellent fishing and darkhouse spearfishing prospects for northern pike. High numbers of pike are found basin-wide, with larger fish available.

High numbers of eating-sized walleye available in winter throughout the basin. Larger walleye present, but at lower densities.

Perch fishing on Devils Lake should be fair to good this winter. Thanks to some good up-and-coming year-classes in 2006-07, the lake holds decent numbers of 10-inch plus fish.

Some recommended northeast district lakes with high pike numbers: Island Lake, Carpenter Lake and Upsilon Lake, all Rolette County; Sand Lake, Pierce County; Fenster Lake, Ramsey County; and Lake Laretta and Tolna Dam, both Nelson County.

Some recommended walleye lakes: Hurdsfield-Tuffy Lake and Goose Lake, both Wells County; Lake Addie, Griggs County; Lake Coe, Eddy County; and Dion Lake, Rolette County.

South Central District

Paul Bailey, district fisheries supervisor, Bismarck

Some recommended pike lakes: Lake Harriet (Arena Lake), Burleigh County; Froelich Dam, Morton County; Rice Lake and Baumgartner Lake, both Emmons County; Helen Lake, Kidder County; and West Napoleon Lake, Logan County.

Some recommended walleye lakes: Rice Lake, Emmons County; Jasper Lake, Round Lake, and Sibley Lake, all Kidder County; Marvin Miller Lake and Mundt Lake, both Logan County; and Lehr WMA, McIntosh County.

A number of perch fisheries continue to develop in the south central district. The following lakes have healthy perch populations: Senger Lake, Emmons County; Bond Lake, Frettim Lake, North and South Koenig lakes, Kunkel

Lake, Lake Geneva, Pelican Lake, Swan Lake, Round Lake and Willow Lake, all Kidder County; Dewald Lake, Doyles Lake, Hauff Lake, Kautz Lake, Lepp Lake, North Napoleon Lake, Mundt Lake, Railroad Lake and Roesler Lake, all Logan County; Becker-Schlepp Lake, Dollinger-Schnabel Lake, Harr Lake, McIntosh WMA and Nagel Lake, all McIntosh County.

North Central District

Jason Lee, district fisheries supervisor, Riverdale

Some recommended pike lakes: Buffalo Lodge Lake, Cottonwood Lake and George Lake, all McHenry County; Long Lake, Lake Metigoshe, Brush Lake, Camp Lake and Strawberry Lake, all McLean County; Balta Dam and Davis Lake, both Pierce County; Coal Mine Lake and Wolf Lake, both Sheridan County; Rice Lake and North and South Carlson lakes, all Ward County. Many of these lakes have fairly young pike populations, with fish ranging from 14 to 34 inches. Lakes with larger pike include Lake Audubon, Metigoshe and Brush Lake.

Some recommended walleye lakes: Lake Brekken, Lake Holmes and Lake Audubon, all McLean County; Antelope Lake and Clear Lake, both Pierce County. Netting surveys in 2012 indicated Antelope Lake has a high abundance of 12- to 14-inch fish, as well as a good number of nice-sized perch. Brekken and Holmes have good numbers of 14- to 15-inch walleye, with some larger fish available. Audubon continues to support a good walleye population, with a wide range of sizes. Fall netting surveys showed a much lower catch of young cisco. With the decrease in forage, anglers could see some good catches of walleye this winter.

Southwest District

Jeff Hendrickson, district fisheries supervisor, Dickinson

Heart Butte Reservoir (Lake Tschida), Morton County, should be good for walleye, pike and perch. Dickinson Reservoir (Patterson Lake), Stark County,

should be good for perch and pike. Spring Lake, Bowman County, and Lake Ilo, are good bets for perch. Bowman-Haley Dam should be good for walleye and pike, while Raleigh Reservoir, Grant County, should produce some pike, and Sheep Creek Dam, also Grant County, should be good for bluegill. Indian Creek Dam, Hettinger County, should be good for perch and walleye.

Northwest District

Fred Ryckman, district fisheries supervisor, Riverdale

There are a number of options for northern pike, including Powers Lake and Smishek Lake, both Burke County; Skjermo Lake, Divide County; Stanley Reservoir, Mountrail County; Arnegard Dam, McKenzie County; and Blacktail Dam, Cottonwood Lake, Tioga Dam and Trenton Lake, all Williams County.

For walleye in the northwest, try Northgate Dam, Burke County; and McGregor Dam and McLeod (Ray) Reservoir, both Williams County.

Smishek, LeLand Dam, McKenzie County; Blacktail, Epping-Springbrook Dam and Kota-Ray Dam, all Williams County, have good bluegill populations.

Southeast District

Gene Van Eeckhout, district fisheries supervisor, Jamestown

Good pike populations in Alfred Lake, Boom Lake (Marion Lake), Flood Lake and Twin Lakes, all LaMoure County; Arnie's Lake, Logan County; Elm Lake and Gullys Slough, both Richland County; and Big Mallard Marsh, Stutsman County.

Good walleye populations at Fox and Islands lakes, both Barnes County; West Moran Lake, Richland County; Tosse Slough, Sargent County; and Big Mallard Marsh and Hehn-Schaffer Lake, both Stutsman County.

Fishing for yellow perch was good throughout summer on Lake Ashtabula, Barnes County, and is expected to continue in winter. Crappie fishing at Pipestem Reservoir, Stutsman County, was good in summer and is expected to continue in winter.



DEER CAMP TRADITION

*Story and Photos
by Ron Wilson*

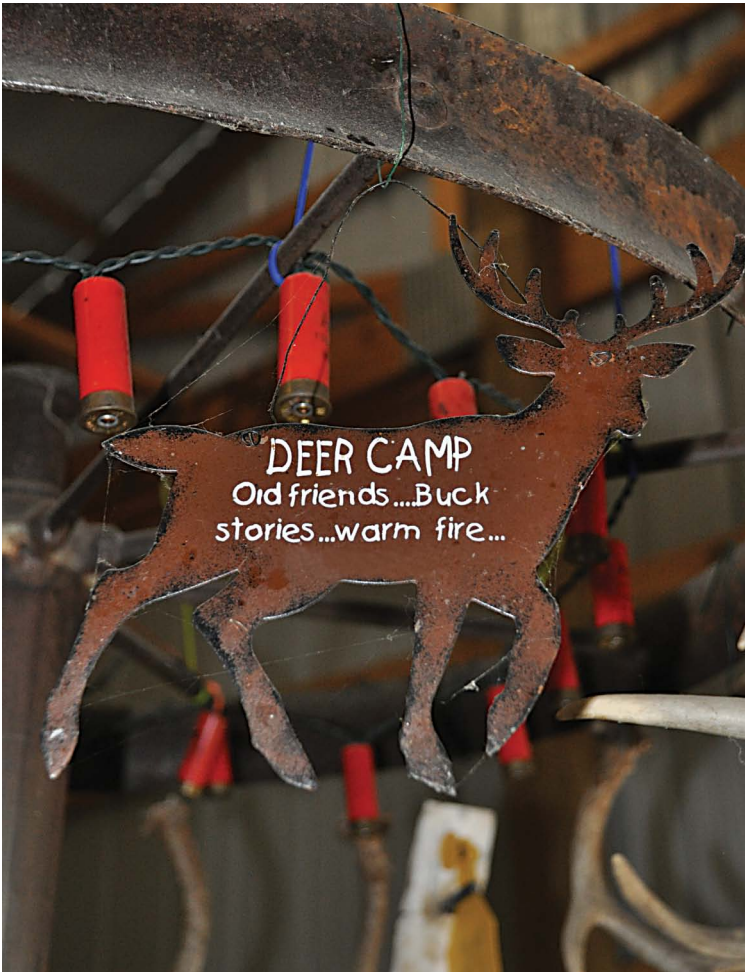
“We open deer camp on Thursday before the Friday noon opener, holding to the notion that with some last minute scouting we can learn a little something more about the deer in our area that we haven’t figured out already.”



The view from this elevated deer stand is great, and at times can be even better if deer pass within rifle range during the November deer season.

It’s not home, but it easily grows on you after a couple of days without a shower, eating off paper plates with plastic spoons and forks, and dressing in the chill and dark of November while your hunting partners protest the early hour with insults muffled by down-filled sleeping bags pulled over their heads.

For people who have never been to deer camp, they don’t understand the pull, the distant call that starts sometime in late October from a tent pitched on the same flat spot year after year, a cabin with no running water or lights, save for decades-old Coleman lanterns burning on white gas, or pull-behind campers parked near a shelterbelt at a relative’s farmhouse, a salt of the earth dwelling that smells inside of hard work, coffee and bacon and eggs.



Deer camp is about old friends, some you only see once a year when you gather for the state's highly anticipated deer gun opener.



Grandfather and grandson with a pair of whitetail bucks shot the same morning within earshot of one another.

North Dakota held its first modern deer rifle season in 1931, but it's hard to imagine much of a deer camp culture taking root initially, considering the season wasn't open with much consistency until the early to mid-1950s. Yet, sometime between then and now, hunters started gathering in areas they'd chosen to hunt, knowing with some certainty the state would hold a season the next year and the year after that. Traditions were built between family and friends, many of which would last for years, passed from generation to generation.

We open deer camp on Thursday before the Friday noon opener, holding to the notion that with some last minute scouting we can learn a little something more about the deer in our area that we haven't figured out already. Honestly, it's simply a good excuse to arrive a day early to milk the camp experience that doesn't come around often enough.

When I unlock my camper, parked on the south side of a metal-sided building, it smells of cold and scented dryer sheets scattered under beds and in cupboards to keep the mice out. It's a trick that has worked on the rodents so far, but after a few days of cooking, brewing coffee and hanging hunting clothes by suspenders and waistbands to air out, new aromas take over.

Everything has its place in the camper because it has to. Food, too much of it most years, is stacked in a small refrigerator and freezer, extra hunting clothes and boots go in a plastic tub in the bathroom that isn't hooked up to running water, a crock pot is stored in the kitchen sink to leave room

on the countertop for a small electric heater and coffee pot.

Depending on the number of hunters bunking indoors, the accommodations can get tight in a hurry. Some mornings it feels as if you are dressing in a poorly-lit phone booth, and you hope the socks you are wearing are your own.

Most years, the faces in camp are the same, some of which you haven't seen since saying goodbye a year ago. But it doesn't seem like that long as you quickly catch up on family, jobs, illnesses, deaths and other certainties of living in North Dakota or anywhere else.

I've hunted out of this camp, owned by my father-in-law, for more than a decade. The Sheyenne River is south of the farmyard and you'd think by looking that you could reach it in no time on foot, but it's farther than that.

There's a CRP field that rises and falls like a small boat on rough water, connecting to pasture on the camp's western boundary. A creek snakes through the bottom of the pasture, which is dotted with stands of buffaloberry big enough to hide several head

of cattle that have the run of the place until being herded out before deer season.

We've shot sharp-tailed grouse here in September and October, flushing birds off hilltops and out of the shade of buffaloberries as red as lipstick. We've had our opportunities at deer here over the years, too, thinking we had all escape routes covered, but not so. Once, a buck with an antler on only one side of its head waded through a culvert in the creek to elude another hunting party, before slipping through ours.

Like many deer camps around the state, I'd have to guess, these are some of the things we scratch our heads about once the sun sets and another day is behind us. Although, it's easier to talk about how we were fooled again, or joke about another missed shot, if there is a deer or two hanging upside down from the raised tractor bucket.

Inside the metal building where we gather at the end of each day, leaning on a chest-high, wooden electrical spool where we pick at smoked fish and pickled northern pike and onions, the camp's owner has hung the antlers from bucks shot over the years.

At one time I could put a hunter's name to each rack from memory, but I can't do it anymore. Even so, some I'm rock solid on, not because they're the biggest, but because there is a story.

Supper follows when someone finally mentions it, but it's far from an orchestrated deal. Two or three crock pots have been plugged in since midday, all holding dishes that taste even better than anticipated because you've spent the day in November air, starting before sunrise, hunkered somewhere under cover hoping to see deer move.

You couldn't get away with eating like this at home without feeling guilty, but you tell yourself you'll burn it off tomorrow walking through CRP and cattails that grab your legs and feet with each step.

We get together here, like thousands of other hunters in hunting camps around North Dakota, to shoot deer foremost. Yet, to say the gathering, the coming together year after year is simply auxiliary would be a lie. Not hunting out of this camp, complete with a flat-roofed outhouse with a deer stand built on top, just wouldn't feel right.

When we leave here, lock doors after spreading new scented dryer sheets and loading venison quarters in coolers into vehicles, we go our separate ways. Some head to Arizona to ride out North Dakota's leanest months, others head back home to running water, comfortable beds, family and good jobs.

There's little consolation in this, however, because it will be a year before we get to do it again.

RON WILSON is editor of North Dakota OUTDOORS.



While this decorative lighting wouldn't fly in many houses, it's the perfect fit for deer camp.



There is likely a story, big or small, behind each rack on the wall at deer camp. The difficulty, however, is remembering them all as the years pass.

GAME CHECK STATIONS Aren't a Secret

By Ron Wilson

It's a Monday morning, two days after North Dakota's ring-necked pheasant opener, and a group of men, enough to fill all the positions on a baseball diamond, gather in a small, two-picnic-shelter park about a half-mile west of LaMoure.

It seems an unlikely spot to kill a morning in southeastern North Dakota, until a group of nonresident waterfowl hunters, some still wearing chest waders, are directed to pull their mini-van towing a canoe into the gravel parking lot.

The hunters, who are short of a limit of ducks, but happy with their success, have entered a game check station coordinated by the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's enforcement division. Officers from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and North Dakota Highway Patrol are also part of the cooperative effort.

"Check stations are just one of the tools used by game wardens to make sure hunters and anglers are complying with state laws and regulations," said Corey Erck, Game and Fish Department warden supervisor, Jamestown, who spearheaded the checkpoint near LaMoure. "What we do isn't a secret. These checkpoints, which are done all over the state at different times, are highly visible."

During the two-day check station, 53 vehicles of hunters, the majority of whom were pheasant hunters, were politely ushered through a process in which they provided hunting licenses and opened coolers to reveal harvested game. Erck said 10 state citations were issued, most dealing with the failure to leave identification on transported game, one federal citation and two warnings.

"The great majority of hunters are decent, honest people who like to see us in the field and at check stations protecting the resource," Erck said. "Overall, the compliance is very good."



North Dakota Game and Fish Department warden, Levi Bischof, Williston, inspects a pheasant shot following the state's opening weekend of pheasant season.

RON WILSON



The game check station was held after North Dakota's pheasant opener. Even so, some hunters concentrated on ducks and brought in some migratory birds to be inspected.

RON WILSON

ALL VEHICLES
MUST STOP
GAME CHECK
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FISH DEPT



North Dakota Game and Fish Department game check stations are no secret and highly visible.



Corey Erck, Game and Fish Department warden supervisor, Jamestown, spearheaded the game check station near LaMoure in October.

To echo Erck's comment, a hunter from Minneapolis who had been hunting pheasants in the Linton area, said while loading his gear, readying to head out: "Thanks for what you do, guys."

While this particular check station's focus was the pheasant opener, wardens just never know what they'll run into. A hunter pulling through the gravel parking lot could have been sitting in a tree stand at daylight bowhunting for deer, or pulling a boat from a fishing trip at a nearby lake.

"We checked a guy on Sunday with four or five northern pike and a limit of pheasants," Erck said. "The guy had a good day."

For others, the outcome isn't always as pleasant.

"Last year at a check station we had a drug arrest," Erck said. "Once the guy was arrested for the drug violation, we continued searching for more drugs and found some wild game stashed and that lead to more violations."

It's these kinds of situations that warrant the presence of North Dakota Highway Patrol officers. "It's not uncommon to see alcohol related violations, intoxicated drivers, coming into the check stations," Erck said. "Alcohol violations are part of law enforcement, whether boating or hunting. It kind of boggles my mind that hunters would mix the two, but we do see it."

Whether it's an angler headed home from fishing or waterfowl hunters pulling a canoe, boats are inspected by wardens to make sure all watercraft and gear meet state aquatic nuisance species regulations. Some common problems found during ANS checks include weed fragments in boats, and hanging on motors and trailers, and water left in livewells.

"ANS is a priority nowadays and these checkpoints provide us an opportunity to inform the public on the threat exotics have when introduced into our waters," Erck said.

Because game check stations are highly visible, you can hardly miss the flashing lights from a warden's pickup on the highway or the assemblage of law enforcement vehicles, it's hoped they are sending a message.

"If game check stations serve as deterrents to some people, if they make some people think twice about committing violations, then it's a win for us and for those people who enjoy hunting and fishing in the state," Erck said. "Then again, it never surprises me when the next pickup pulls in hauling a gross over limit of game."

The "visibility" of check stations today is

different than years ago because of electronic communications devices.

"We held a check station last winter at Pipestem Reservoir because the ice fishing was really good and the lake was really attracting anglers," Erck said. "We checked a lot of fish and anglers, and just out of curiosity I started asking guys when they were coming off the lake if they already knew that we were here."

The answer was "yes" from some anglers who had received texts from angling buddies. Erck said texting and other forms of high-tech instant messaging are simply part of today's world.

"You have to question, as a game warden, how we adapt and change the way we do things to stay one step ahead," Erck said. "I wouldn't be surprised if this check station we are standing at right now isn't already posted on Facebook and people know we are here."

RON WILSON is editor of North Dakota OUTDOORS.



Corey Erck, Game and Fish Department warden supervisor, checks a successful hunter's weekend bounty of North Dakota pheasants.

R.A.P.

REPORT ALL POACHERS

1-800-472-2121

Poachers Steal Your Wildlife – Make the Call!



Reporting Violations

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department encourages hunters, anglers and landowners who have witnessed 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.

Robert Timian, chief of enforcement for the Game and Fish Department, said

even though some citizens are not interested in the reward, it is still important to play a role in landing potential violators.

Witnesses should report a violation by calling the RAP number at (800) 472-2121. If calling from outside North Dakota, the number is (701) 328-9921. 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.

Game and Fish Continues Intensive ANS Efforts

North Dakota Game and Fish Department biologists spent a record amount of time in 2012 looking for aquatic nuisance species in the state's waterways.

In the good news category, this considerable effort documented only one new infestation across the state – curly leaf pondweed in Lake Elsie in Richland County. In addition, surveyors noted that many existing infestations either did not expand or were actually reduced in size from previous years.

Fred Ryckman, Game and Fish ANS coordinator, said one of the biggest surprises in 2012 was that no zebra mussel larvae were discovered in the Otter Tail and Red rivers at Wahpeton, where young zebra mussels were found in both 2010 and 2011.

However, that news was tempered by a late-October announcement from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources that adult zebra mussels were documented in the Otter Tail River below Orwell Dam, about 25 miles upstream from Wahpeton.

"That zebra mussels have become established in the lower Otter Tail and continue to move downstream in this drainage is discouraging," Ryckman said. "Since there is no barrier to prevent continued downstream movement from the Otter Tail into the Red River, it is possible that zebra mussels will become established in the Red River

in the near future. "Thankfully, to date we haven't found any adult zebra mussels anywhere in North Dakota, but the news from Minnesota emphasizes the need for us to be vigilant in our monitoring efforts and to continue to stress public participation in following ANS regulations."

Statewide monitoring efforts also indicated known populations of other ANS in existing

North Dakota water bodies also did not appear to expand. A few adult silver carp were again observed in the James River below Jamestown Dam, after having moved upstream into the James during extremely high flows in 2011.

This year, Game and Fish continued its information and education campaign regarding ANS concerns and the need for the public compliance with existing rules and regulations.

In addition, game wardens continued to check angler and boater compliance, and chief warden Robert Timian said the Department's educational efforts are paying dividends. "Checkpoints were done throughout the year, and boater and angler compliance was good," Timian said. "However, there are still some individuals who are unaware, or don't care, how important this issue is. We will continue to have checkpoints and will issue citations to individuals who are in violation of the rules."

Aquatic Nuisance Species Work Activities in 2012

Highlights of work activities related to ANS in 2012 include:

- Revised and implemented the fishing tournament inspection form, and met with and discussed ANS issues and inspections with several tournament committees across the state.
- Fishing tournaments – all 128 approved fishing tournaments received ANS information and mandatory ANS inspection forms. Compliance continues to improve; now greater than 90 percent.
- Game and Fish launched a new website, with a revised ANS tab, and ANS message incorporated into new online licensing system.
- ANS poster and brochure were revised and distributed to licensing and bait vendors and other locations across the state.
- ANS metal signs are at every public access site to every water body in the state. With a record number of public waters with public access, this effort alone is very time consuming.
- The Department's form and protocol for inspecting commercial tug boats, barges and other equipment were revised and implemented. Select Department staff are being trained to do the required inspections, and inspections were completed on such equipment before its use on Devils Lake and Lake Sakakawea.
- ANS inspections continue for non-resident wholesale bait vendors who intend to import live aquatic bait into North Dakota.
- Biologists made contacts for background information regarding threats of potential new exotics, including various crayfish species.
- Coordinated with South Dakota State University regarding establishment of an eDNA lab. The initial focus of the lab is to work on silver carp, with future eDNA work likely on other ANS.

- A greatly expanded ANS display and presence was made at the North Dakota State Fair.
- Game and Fish provided funds to Valley City State University to collect water samples to check for the presence of zebra mussels in the Red, Bois de Sioux, Sheyenne and Wild Rice rivers; Lake Ashtabula and Devils Lake. As in past years, these samples were sent to Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks for analysis. No zebra mussel veligers (larvae) were detected in any of the samples, including from the Red River.
- The Game and Fish Department's ANS coordinator continues to participate as a member of an ad hoc committee established by the Minnesota DNR to assess the risk of live fish (focused particularly on Asian carp) importation and transport within Minnesota.
- Coordination and planning continues

- on Game and Fish's effort to isolate the Rock Lake drainage from the Devils Lake drainage, to prevent common carp from gaining access to Devils Lake via this infrequent connection.
- Southeast district fisheries staff intensively sampled the James River downstream of Jamestown Reservoir to determine the status of silver carp, after these invasive fish moved up the James into North Dakota in 2011. No silver carp were collected during any of these sampling efforts, although the presence of at least a few adult silver carp was visually confirmed in the Jamestown area. No young silver carp have yet to be documented.
- Game wardens continued their ongoing efforts to check boats, trailers and gear for ANS, and issued citations for violations.
- Monitoring of water bodies with



RON WILSON



MIKE ANDERSON

North Dakota Game and Fish Department wardens continued ANS inspections throughout the year, and it was reported that boater and angler compliance was mostly good.

known infestation of Eurasian water milfoil indicated either dramatically reduced presence, or total absence of this ANS. Monitoring will continue next year.

- In addition to erecting and maintaining signs at every public boating access site, district fisheries staff also inspected and monitored recreational fishing

waters for ANS across the entire state. After literally hundreds of inspections on hundreds of waters throughout North Dakota, the only new infestation detected was curlyleaf pondweed at Lake Elsie. All ANS inspections are entered into a data base. So far this year, Game and Fish biologists have inspected three times as many waters as last year.



Anglers aren't the only outdoor enthusiasts who must check for hitchhiking vegetation on boats and gear. The same responsibility falls on the shoulders of migratory waterfowl hunters as well.

MIKE ANDERSON

Summary of Major Aquatic Nuisance Species Activities

Some North Dakota waters have had common carp present for more than a century, and these invasive fish are still easily the number one aquatic nuisance species in the state. The Game and Fish Department has dedicated countless hours and angler dollars to address problems associated with common carp.

Simply put, common carp have created many problems. However, despite their presence in North Dakota waters, Department biologists have learned to work around them and still provide excellent fishing opportunities.

Much more recently, other threatening ANS have either entered North Dakota, or are ever closer. In an ongoing effort to deal with these threats, the North Dakota legislature formally established the aquatic nuisance species program in 2005, and in 2008 the first ANS regulations became effective. From the beginning, prevention has been the foundation of the Department's ANS program.

North Dakota's ANS management plan identifies approximately 80 strategies to address issues and concerns. Of these, the vast majority have been considered and are being addressed. Many are ongoing and require perpetual attention.

Game and Fish has addressed all of the above while at the same time continuing to manage expensive and ongoing projects dealing with specific carp populations and biological threats in areas such as Dickinson Reservoir eradication, Loma Berm, Rock Lake survey, Michigan Drain and others.

The Department has a long history of responding to new and real threats. The new rules and regulations addressing ANS transfer the past few years is a part of that philosophy. While these new rules are needed to reduce the likelihood of ANS transport, it's important to understand that Game and Fish has received more vocal opposition than individual support to our current ANS rules.

The Department's budget (angler and

hunter dollars) will undoubtedly need to grow to keep up with the threat, but that growth needs to be linked to strategies that lead to real resource protection.

Following is a timeline and benchmarks that have been addressed or achieved during the first eight years of the ANS program:

2005

- ANS program established by state legislature; ANS committee formed representing government agencies and private interests.

2006

- ANS management plan written and adopted. Department established a species list of ANS and a classification system.
- Developed different monitoring protocols and an infestation response plan. Also, reviewed the Department's internal protocols regarding sampling lakes, etc., to ensure that Game and Fish doesn't inadvertently move ANS during daily work activities.

2007

- Addressed various species risk assessments and developed first drafts of proposed ANS rules and regulations. Began concerted public information effort, including attempts to engage fishing clubs and bait vendors.

2008

- First ANS administrative rules became effective, with enforcement formally engaged.
- ANS information provided on the Department's online licensing system.
- Sought and gained additional funding through federal aid.
- Signing at all access sites at all water bodies. Continued expanding information and education efforts.
- Hired additional seasonal staff to assist with statewide monitoring efforts.
- New requirement that nonresident

Some North Dakota waters have had common carp, easily the number one aquatic nuisance species in the state, present for more than a century.



CRAIG BIRBLE



GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT PHOTO

Curly leaf pondweed is an aquatic nuisance species that has made its way into some North Dakota waters.

sources of aquatic bait (wholesalers) need to pass a Department onsite inspection before import permits are issued.

- Post-contest ANS inspection forms required by all tournament sponsors.

2009

- Significant time and effort in the late 2000s addressing permitting of bait vendors and private fish hatcheries to address this potential and serious ANS pathway led to the development and adoption of administrative rules to address ANS concerns associated with these operations.
- First ANS check station set up by game wardens.
- Developed internal process for inspecting barges, etc., entering the state and recommendations to fishing tournaments for their own boat inspections.
- First ANS citation written by enforcement.

2010

- Expanded information efforts.

Adopted additional ANS administrative rules to greatly restrict the transport of water in North Dakota; ANS beginning to have increased emphasis on incorporating rules and subsequent compliance (enforcement).

2011

- Mandatory boat inspections prior to any prefishing for all out-of-state sponsored tournaments. Increased inspections of incoming barges and other aquatic equipment coming into the state, most destined for Lake Sakakawea.

2012

- Revamped ANS posters and brochures and distributed across the state.
- Increased the number of water bodies monitored for ANS.
- Noted a number of existing ANS vegetative infestations appear to have been reduced or even eliminated.
- Enforcement of ANS rules increased with citations issued.



BUFFALOBERRY PATCH

By Greg Freeman, Department News Editor

Mule Deer Production Remains Low

Aerial observations during the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's fall mule deer survey indicated production in 2012 was about the same as last year's record low.

Biologists who accompanied pilots in fixed-wing planes counted 1,224 (1,055 in 2011) mule deer in the October survey. The buck-to-doe ratio of .37 (.47 in 2010) was similar to the long-term average of .43 bucks per doe, and the fawn-to-doe ratio of .59 equaled the lowest fawn-to-doe ratio since the demographic survey began in 1954. The long-term average is .92 fawns per doe.

Bruce Stillings, big game supervisor in Dickinson, said mule deer densities in the badlands haven't been this low since 1996. "The three consecutive severe winters from 2008-11 were devastating to our mule deer and pronghorn populations," Stillings said. "These winters not only greatly reduced overall mule deer abundance due to winter-related mortality, but led to poor fawn production. Three years of few young animals entering the population has resulted in an aged population with few prime-aged breeding females."

Winter 2011-12 was one of the mildest on record, but Stillings said it is likely the reproductive condition of the surviving females was still poor after being stressed for as many as three years.

"This summer was extremely dry, leading



CRAIG BIRNIE

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 in 2012, or allow bowhunters to shoot does in prime mule deer units.

to reduced vegetative growth needed for fawn concealment and health of the doe," Stillings added. "An aging population and poor fawning habitat conditions resulted in another year of poor fawn production."

According to Stillings, no doe harvest is the first step needed to encourage population growth, and another mild winter is needed to help this year's fawns survive until adulthood.

"A spring and summer with normal precipitation in 2013 would go a long way to promote habitat conditions more favorable for fawn survival leading to population growth," he added.

The fall aerial survey, conducted specifically to study demographics, covers 23 study areas and 293 square miles in western North Dakota. Biologists survey the same study areas in the spring of each year to determine a population index.

HUNTERS SHOULD STAY OFF EARLY ICE

State Game and Fish Department officials are cautioning deer and late-season pheasant hunters to be wary of where they hunt as weather conditions can quickly freeze North Dakota's small and mid-sized waters, giving the appearance of safe foot travel.

Nancy Boldt, Department boat and water safety coordinator, said hunters should be cautious of walking on frozen stock ponds, sloughs, creeks and rivers. "Ice can form overnight, causing unstable conditions for hunters," she said. "Even though deer might be able to make it across, it doesn't mean hunters can."

Ice thickness is not consistent, Boldt said, as it can vary significantly within a few inches. Hunters walking the edge of a cattail slough will not find the same ice thickness in the middle. "The edges firm up faster than the center," she said. "So, with your first step the ice might seem like it is strong enough, but it isn't anywhere near solid enough once you progress away from the shoreline."

And in the case of snowfall, Boldt cautions hunters to be aware of snow-covered ice. Snow insulates ice, inhibiting solid ice formation, and makes it difficult to check thickness. Snow also hides cracked, weak and open water areas.

"Basically, if there is ice formation during the deer season, stay away from it," Boldt said. "It will not be safe."



RON WILSON

Salmon Spawn Goal Exceeded

Fisheries crews completed their annual salmon spawning operation on Lake Sakakawea after collecting 1.5 million eggs, easily surpassing the 900,000 goal.

Dave Fryda, North Dakota Game and Fish Department Missouri River System supervisor, said the majority of eggs came from Lake Sakakawea and the remainder from the Missouri River below Garrison Dam. The average size of Sakakawea females was about 6.5 pounds, similar to 2011. The Missouri River females, which are typically larger than the lake fish, were smaller this year, reflecting the decline in forage abundance in Lake Oahe.

"The 2012 salmon spawning run was a success, with good numbers of fish available throughout the run," Fryda said.

"We were able to exceed our own egg collection goals early, which enabled us to provide assistance to South Dakota and possibly Montana in meeting their egg needs for 2013."

Plans for 2013 are to stock Lake Sakakawea with 200,000 salmon, with none scheduled for the river below Garrison Dam, Fryda said.

Chinook salmon begin their spawning run in October. Since salmon cannot naturally reproduce in North Dakota, Game and Fish Department and Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery personnel collect eggs and transport them to the hatchery. Once the eggs hatch, young salmon spend several months in the hatchery before being stocked.

CARCASS TRANSPORTATION REQUIREMENT IN DEER UNIT 3F2

Hunters harvesting a big game animal 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 State 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.

LAKES CLOSED TO FISHING

Anglers are reminded that three North Dakota lakes are closed to ice fishing.

The State Fair Pond, Ward County; McDowell Dam, Burleigh County; and Lightning Lake, McLean County, are closed when the lakes ice over.

Anglers should refer to the 2012-14 North Dakota Fishing Guide for open water and winter fishing regulations.

ROAD-KILLED DEER

While most motorists are especially attentive to deer movement this time of year, accidents happen, and the local law enforcement agency should be contacted.

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department often receives calls from motorists wondering if they can keep the carcass, or at least the antlers of deer they have hit. The answer is yes, but only after obtaining a permit to possess.

A permit is required if someone wants to take possession of parts, or all, of a road-killed animal. A permit is also required to possess skulls with antlers attached.

Permits to possess road-killed deer are free and available from game wardens and local law enforcement offices.

Donate Deer to Sportsmen Against Hunger

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 the Sportsmen Against Hunger program.

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/





WINTER FISHING REGULATIONS

North Dakota anglers are encouraged to refer to the 2012-14 North Dakota Fishing Guide or the State Game and Fish Department's website for winter fishing regulations.

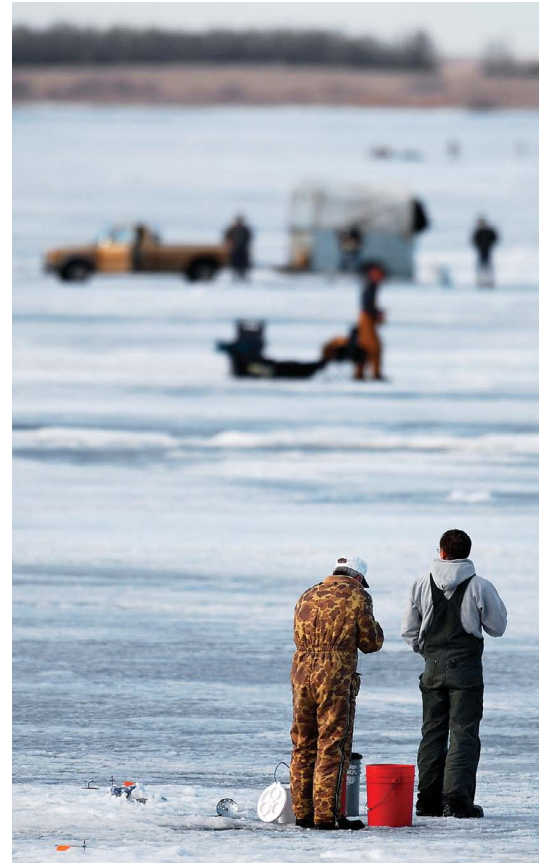
In addition, anglers can access the Game and Fish website, gf.nd.gov, for an extensive list of winter fishing questions and answers.

Some winter fishing regulations include:

- A maximum of four poles is legal for ice fishing. However, when fishing a water body where both open water and ice occur at the same time, an angler is allowed a maximum of four poles, of which no more than two poles can be used in open water.
- Tip-ups are legal, and each tip-up is considered a single pole.
- There is no restriction on the size of the hole in the ice while fishing. When a hole larger than 10 inches in diameter is left in the ice, the area in the immediate vicinity

must be marked with a natural object, such as a tree branch or tumbleweed, or a brightly painted or colored wooden lath. Markers must be visible from a minimum of 150 feet.

- It is only legal to release fish back into the water immediately after they are caught. Once a fish is held in a bucket or on a stringer, they can no longer be legally released in any water. In addition, it is illegal to catch fish and transport them to another water body.
- It is illegal to leave fish, including bait, behind on the ice.
- Depositing or leaving any litter or other waste material on the ice or shore is illegal.
- Any dressed fish to be transported, if frozen, must be packaged individually. Anglers are not allowed to freeze fillets together in one large block. Two fillets count as one fish.
- The daily limit is a limit of fish taken from midnight to midnight, and no person may possess more than one day's limit of fish while



RON WILSON

actively engaged in fishing. The possession limit is the maximum number of fish that an angler may have in his or her possession during a fishing trip of more than one day.

FISHING TOURNAMENTS REQUIRE 30-DAY NOTICE

Organizers planning fishing tournaments, including ice fishing contests this winter, are reminded to submit an application to the North Dakota Game and Fish Department at least 30 days prior to the start of the event.

The 30-day notice allows for agency review to ensure the proposed tournament will not have negative consequences or conflicts with other proposed tournaments for the same location and/or time.

Tournaments may not occur without first obtaining a valid permit from the Department.

In addition, the number of open-water tournaments on lakes Sakakawea and Oahe, Missouri River and Devils Lake are capped each year, depending on the time of the year and location. Tournament sponsors for these waters must submit their application to the Department prior to January 1 to ensure full consideration.

Winter anglers are encouraged to be mindful of early ice conditions before traveling onto and across North Dakota lakes.

Keep in mind:

- Snow insulates ice, hampering solid ice formation, and 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.
- Ice thickness is not consistent and can vary significantly even in a small area. Ice shouldn't be judged by appearance alone. Anglers should drill test holes as they make their way out on the lake, and an ice chisel should be used to check ice thickness while moving around.
- Daily temperature changes cause ice to expand and contract, affecting its strength.
- The following minimums are recommended for travel on clear-blue lake ice formed under ideal conditions. However, early in winter it's a good idea to double

these figures to be safe: 4 inches for a group walking single file; 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 victim to a hospital.



GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT PHOTO

Tuttle Wildlife Club members (from left) Randel Sand, Perry Larson and Sid Larson received their 2012 award from Paul Bailey, Game and Fish Department district fisheries supervisor.

FISHERIES DIVISION RECOGNIZES TUTTLE WILDLIFE CLUB

The State Game and Fish Department honored the Tuttle Wildlife Club for its ongoing efforts to develop and improve public use facilities at numerous lakes in northern Kidder County.

Each year the Department's fisheries division presents a "Certificate of Appreciation" to an organization that has signed on as a cooperating partner in local projects. Paul Bailey, Department district fisheries supervisor, said the Tuttle group is "an outstanding example of the difference a small club can make on their local fisheries."

Tuttle club members over the years have helped with construction and installation of boat ramps, courtesy docks, toilets, fishing piers, fishing access roads and parking areas at lakes Josephine, Cherry, Jasper, Frettim and Williams, among others.

In addition, Bailey said, the club also assumed primary responsibility for maintaining these facilities after construction. "Maintaining anything is as important as the initial construction," he said, "and the club does an outstanding job in performing this task."

WINTER BOW WORKSHOP

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department's Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program has scheduled one-day winter workshops February 22, 23 and 24 at Lake Metigoshe State Park, Bottineau.

Interested participants should watch the Game and Fish website at gf.nd.gov in the coming weeks for more information, including online registration and a list of classes.



ORDER 2013 OUTDOORS CALENDARS

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is taking orders for its North Dakota OUTDOORS calendar, the source for all hunting season and application dates for 2013.

Along with outstanding color photographs of North Dakota wildlife and scenery, it also includes sunrise-sunset times and moon phases.

To order, 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.

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



ADVISORY BOARD MEETINGS ANNOUNCED

Outdoor enthusiasts are invited to attend a North Dakota Game and Fish Department advisory board meeting in their area.

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

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.

Any person who requires an auxiliary aid or service must notify the contact person at least five days prior to the scheduled meeting date.

• **District 3** – Benson, Cavalier, Eddy, Ramsey, Rolette and Towner counties
Date: November 26 – 7 p.m.

Location: 110 Main St., Sheyenne

Host: Wild Things Taxidermy Shop

Contact: Greg Kolstad, (701) 996-2282

Advisory board member: Tom Rost, Devils Lake

• **District 7** – Burleigh, Emmons, Grant, Kidder, McLean, Mercer, Morton, Oliver, Sheridan and Sioux counties
Date: November 26 – 7 p.m.

Location: Game and Fish headquarters, Bismarck

Host: Lewis and Clark Sportsman Club

Contact: Mike McEnroe, (701) 224-8335

Advisory board member: Frank Kartch, Bismarck, (701) 751-3414

• **District 2** – Bottineau, Burke, McHenry, Mountrail, Pierce, Renville and Ward counties

Date: November 27 – 7 p.m.

Location: Mountrail County Fair Building, Stanley

Host: Rolling Plains Sportsmen's Club

Contact: Chris Pulver, (701) 628-4242

Advisory board member: Robert Gjellstad, Voltaire, (701) 338-2281

• **District 4** – Grand Forks, Nelson, Pembina and Walsh counties

Date: November 27 – 7 p.m.

Location: Canad Inn, Grand Forks

Host: Grand Forks County Wildlife Federation

Contact: John French, (218) 230-9101

Advisory board member: Ronald Houdek, Tolna, (701) 262-4724

• **District 5** – Cass, Ransom, Richland, Sargent, Steele and Traill counties

Date: November 28 – 7 p.m.

Location: Community Center, Hankinson

Host: Hankinson Wildlife Club

Contact: Dave Paulson, (701) 640-8391

Advisory board member: Loran Palmer, Wahpeton, (701) 274-8826

• **District 8** – Adams, Billings, Bowman, Dunn, Golden Valley, Hettinger, Slope and Stark counties

Date: November 28 – 7 p.m.

Location and Host: Whiting Petroleum Company, Dickinson

Contact and advisory board member: Dwight Hecker, Fairfield, (701) 575-4952

• **District 1** – Divide, McKenzie and Williams counties

Date: November 29 – 7 p.m.

Location: J.D. Electric, Crosby

Host: Crosby area sportsmen and landowners

Contact: J.D. Nygaard, (701) 965-6436

Advisory board member: Jason Leiseth, Arnegard, (701) 586-3714

• **District 6** – Barnes, Dickey, Foster, Griggs, Logan, LaMoure, McIntosh, Stutsman and Wells counties

Date: November 29 – 7 p.m.

Location: Gladstone Inn, Jamestown

Host: Stutsman County Wildlife Club

Contact: Dave Brandt, (701) 320-2055

Advisory board member: Joel Christoferson, Litchville, (701) 973-4981



MIKE ANDERSON

Future Hunter Ed Courses

Hunter education courses have wrapped up for 2012.

However, individuals or parents with children who will need to take a course in 2013 should monitor the Game and Fish website, gf.nd.gov, as classes that begin in January will be added to the online services link as soon as times and locations are finalized.



Zane Manhart



Levi Bischof

STAFF NOTES

MANHART, BISCHOF HIRED AS WARDENS

Zane Manhart, a native of Idaho, was hired as the district game warden in Beach. He has a bachelor's degree from Brigham Young University.

Levi Bischof accepted a district game warden position in Williston. A native of Lisbon, Bischof has a fisheries and wildlife science degree from Valley City State University.

back cast By Ron Wilson

From across the rural North Dakota café you might peg the four men as family; a father, sons and an uncle, maybe. But this is just because you're guessing ages, which can sometimes be as uncertain as shooting at a young rooster flushing in fading light.

Yet, they are not family, but friends with a compatible connection of hunting ring-necked pheasants behind dogs in North Dakota where, they all agree, the people have been more accommodating than the birds.

They've been doing this for years in the knee-high grasses and cattail sloughs outside of towns such as Rutland, Richardton, Linton, Dickinson and McClusky. They headquartered at times in a small popup camper that gasped and exhaled in strong winds like a canvas lung, but this trip they've rented two tidy motel rooms in which they quickly cluttered with shotguns, brush pants, jackets, bird dogs, coolers and a crock pot harboring comfort food.

All four hunters are from out-of-state. Dan Carlisle, John Nelson and Billy Spear live in Minnesota, and Dan Kuffler is from Arizona. Yet, their connection to North Dakota runs deeper than pheasants. Nelson, a military veteran who served in Vietnam, Korea and Libya, was at one time stationed at Grand Forks Air Force Base, while Kuffler and Carlisle attended the University of North Dakota. Carlisle's two children are currently students at UND.

This annual trip to North Dakota started more than a decade ago when Carlisle invited Nelson west in thanks for helping to train his English setters, Otto and Justice. It's uncertain when Spear and Kuffler threw in, but it doesn't matter. Together, the four are as comfortable with one another as an old pair of boots.

Because there is some history between these men, including saltwater fishing off the shores of Mexico where some of the fish are bigger than bird dogs, they retell many of the same stories in abbreviation, hustling to get to the good parts.

There was the time that Luke, a now departed bird dog, ate

a sleeve of elk sausage and a half-brick of cheese left sitting in the front seat of the vehicle. And the time Otto raced through a CRP field, with his nose pointed toward Canada and seemingly little intention of returning, flushing pheasants as he ran. The birds, tiny specks on the horizon, looked like sparrows, giving the hunters a good idea how far flung Otto actually was.

The genial digs and jabs aren't always directed solely at bird dogs here and gone. On this trip, the jokes and jabs between friends are many, and accurate, too, maybe more so than the shot flying from 12 and 20 gauge shotguns.

After a rooster was missed here and a rooster was missed there, you expected the gleam of the trip to fade some, matching the leaden skies that delivered an all-day soaking of the countryside. Instead, one of the hunters hinted that their performance was somewhat expected, and that just seeing a bird or two, and bagging a few, was more than reason enough to get out of bed.

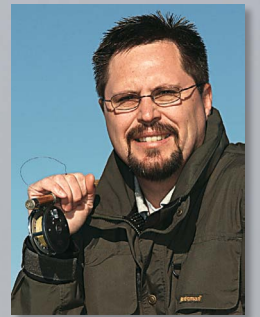
"The Game and Fish should make us pay only half for a license because we are certainly easy on the resource," Nelson joked.

There was a time, however, when this likely wasn't the case. Where you get this feeling is from Otto and Justice, two handsome, gentle bird dogs that want with every fiber to answer the bell and walk every walk, but are limited by age.

Hunting behind these dogs during their physical prime, when they most certainly raced through pheasant habitat like endurance athletes, would have been a treat. Trailing behind them today, you get a glimpse at what once was as Justice goes on point, holding to cover a nervous rooster and a pair of hens, while Otto, as stiff as a statue, save for the hair on his tail waving in the prairie wind, honors his running mate's work from a distance.

When the rooster flushes in a blur of copper and black feathers, shotguns bark and the bird never misses a beat. In no time, he's a speck in the distance, looking about the size of a sparrow.

RON WILSON is editor of North Dakota OUTDOORS.



RON WILSON

A CLOSER LOOK

By Craig Bihrlle

Houndstongue typically grows to about waist level, with stickers ready to latch onto clothing at the slightest touch.



PHOTOS BY CRAIG BIHRLE

Houndstongue "nutlets" seemingly burrow into some types of fabric.



Beggar's ticks often latch onto clothing in clusters, but they are not so difficult to remove.

Stuck on You

When the sun sets on a day of deer hunting, the last thing a hunter wants to do is remove stickers from hunting clothes. Yet, for most hunters who spend any time walking through cover, picking stickers is as much of an end-of-the-day routine as unloading a rifle.

Cocklebur, because they are the largest and most visible, are easily whisked away from gloves and exposed cuffs even during mid-hunt breaks, often only to make room for the next wave on the next walk.

While a cocklebur has many prongs that work together to latch onto passing clothing, the smaller beggar's tick seems fairly efficient at doing the same thing despite having only two slightly hooked barbs that resemble the mouthparts of a tick.

In small numbers or large, they are fairly easy to remove, even with gloved fingers in cold weather, because the barbs are only on one end. They don't just transfer from one piece of clothing to another, like latching to the glove on your hand when you remove them from your jacket sleeve.

Perhaps the most difficult sticker is the houndstongue, which likely has prompted more than one North Dakota hunter to simply throw away a cotton or knit-wool glove covered with these tenacious stickers, rather than go through the tedious process of removing them.

A plant that grows to 3 or 4 feet tall, the houndstongue fruit or seed hovers at just about the same level as human hands hanging to the side, or holding a firearm, hence some impressive clusters can accumulate on clothing around wrists and elbows.

The quarter-inch pods have numerous small spikes that almost seem alive in their quest to burrow into fabric, making removal an exercise that requires an effort, often leading to tender skin on thumb and index finger after picking a large cluster.

According to a North Dakota State University Extension Service bulletin, the pesky "nutlets" or stickers are not the source of the houndstongue's name. That comes from its leaves that resemble the feel of a dog's tongue.

This invasive plant is not native to North Dakota, and was first collected near Valley City about a century ago. Since then it has spread over much of the state, confounding deer and pheasant hunters who emerge from the brush at the end of the day with more chores ahead than just cleaning their game.

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