

NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

PUBLISHED BY THE NORTH DAKOTA



GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

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MATTERS OF OPINION



Terry Steinwand
Director

What a difference a year makes. At this time in 2011 almost every part of the state was experiencing some sort of flooding, and recreational fishing was certainly not the focus for most people.

Fast forward to the present and we're enjoying great spring fishing and it appears the remainder of the year will continue to provide some wonderful opportunities.

I've said many times that the process and experience is many times the most enjoyable aspect of a hunting or fishing trip. As I've gotten older, I tend to spend more time thinking about those times spent with my kids in their earlier years.

One of the more memorable experiences was of one of my kids catching a fish while shore-fishing on Lake Sakakawea and then proceeding to let go of the rod. We watched the rod and line slowly disappear into the depths with the thought that it would never be retrieved. He was heartbroken and felt bad about it.

As luck would have it, Grandpa's rod tip started quivering about 30 seconds later and he reeled it in with the expectation of a pike on the other end. Instead, he reeled in his grandson's rod and reel that was still attached to a fish. While it wasn't an 8-pound walleye, or even a 4-pound pike, it was a carp, which we celebrated, along with the returned equipment.

I really don't remember what else we caught that day, but will always have this as one of many memories of time spent fishing with my kids.

There are multitudes of fishing opportunities across North Dakota today. We've had a "wet spell" essentially since 1993, and many lakes that weren't in existence 20 years ago have been developed into some very good fisheries. Based on what I've heard and seen, many people are taking advantage of these fishing opportunities.

We can't take these fishing opportunities for granted, however, as some will disappear as the landscape dries, many waters will still exist, but will have "matured," and fishing will change since the habitat for a particular species may not be as abundant as before. Even so, they'll all have their own unique assemblage of species and all can be enjoyed, whether it's pike, perch, walleye, crappie, bluegill or others.

We're charged at the Game and Fish Department with managing the state's fishery resource, but we can't do it without anglers who fish our waters. The funds from license sales and excise taxes from sales of fishing and boating equipment have helped manage this special resource for 75 years.

To come full circle, I urge you to get out and create your own memories with family and friends. While it's always nice to catch fish and have a good meal as a result of your efforts, that's just a small part of the process. A fishing trip or meal of fish lasts as long as it takes to pursue it, but the memories last a lifetime. Take some time to enjoy what we have available in the great North Dakota outdoors.

Terry Steinwand

NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

PUBLISHED BY THE NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

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

Editor: Ron Wilson

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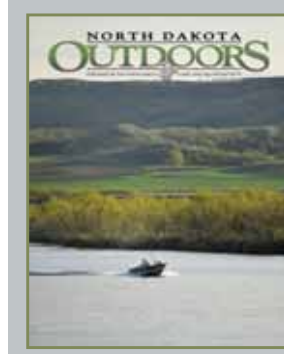
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Front Cover

The promise of summer is captured in leaves freshly budding on trees and a boat on the water.

Photo by Allison Hesford, Bismarck



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New Era



There are a number of ingredients to growing big fish in North Dakota. Most importantly, for northern pike (pictured above) and walleye, held here by Greg Gullickson, Game and Fish Department outreach biologist, Minot, is a steady supply of forage to meet the consumptive needs of predators of all sizes.

MIKE ANDERSON



MIKE ANDERSON

How anglers measure success varies within the ranks.

Watching a bobber do a subtle dance before disappearing underwater might do it for some, while bringing home a stringer heavy with a limit of fish to fry does it for others.

Regardless of what it takes to keep anglers happy, in the back of most of our minds is the thought, and hope, that perhaps the next fish to sink the bobber is going to be a monster, a true whopper.

Trophy fish come in all sizes, but the gold standard in North Dakota has been meeting or exceeding the minimum Whopper Club weight for a particular species. The minimum standard for walleye, for example, is 8 pounds.

With such a boom in fishing opportunities across the state and so many new, productive waters peppering the landscape – the Game and Fish Department manages about 140 more fishable waters today than a decade ago – talk about a new era of big fish is likely.

While it's true that new whoppers, and perhaps a state record for species such as yellow perch and bass, are real possibilities from one of our smaller water bodies in the next few years, the likelihood is much less for large predators like northern pike and walleye. Whether it's one of the many new hotspot lakes created in the past decade, or one of many traditional smaller lakes and reservoirs, there is a ceiling as to how big walleye and pike may get in these types of waters.

of Big Fish?

Why the difference in maximum size of pike and walleye between large and small waters? Typically, larger water bodies have more essentials needed to produce large pike and walleye. Diverse habitat, such as deeper water, varied contours, flooded terrestrial vegetation and inundated trees, is essential. Another important variable is optimum water temperature for growth. In larger water bodies at certain times of the year, fish can and do seek areas of optimum temperature to capture and digest forage.

Most important to “growing” big fish is a steady supply of forage to meet the consumptive needs for all sizes of predators. Although pike and walleye grow as fast, if not faster, during their first couple of years in smaller lakes, eventually the energy spent to eat what's available dampens continued growth.

When a northern pike gets to 5-10 pounds or a walleye reaches 3-5 pounds in our smaller waters where fathead minnows are the bread and butter food source, growth decreases significantly due to lack of larger forage.

Alecia Berg, Minot, caught this 15-pound, 4-ounce walleye in 2011 in the Garrison Dam Tailrace. It's the largest walleye reported in North Dakota in more than a half-century.



In contrast, North Dakota's big waters are truly home for big fish. When reviewing past Whopper Club records, this fact becomes unmistakably clear. Pike whoppers (20 pounds or more) number over 100 in the past five years, and more than 90 percent of them came from 12 large water bodies. In fact, Lake Sakakawea, Missouri River, Lake Audubon, Devils Lake and Pipestem Reservoir account for more than three-fourths of these whoppers.

A similar trend also exists for walleye. More than 95 percent of the 490 whoppers in the past five years came from the big waters. Of the approximate 200 "smaller" water bodies statewide, only 10 have recorded a whopper walleye, and only Spiritwood and Strawberry lakes have more than one whopper during this time.

So what is the important intermediate and large forage found in the state's larger waters? In reality it can be one of many species, including game fish. In the Missouri River System, rainbow smelt are major players in the condition and growth of predator species. Another coldwater species, cisco, or lake herring, has contributed significantly to large walleye and pike in Lake Audubon. Yellow perch and white bass are likely candidates for growing the occasional large walleye or pike in Devils Lake, while crappie, perch and many rough fish are the forage backbone in most of the state's midsized reservoirs and river systems.

It's not only the presence of these species, but also their ability to grow much larger than fathead minnows. Although abundant in our smaller lakes, fatheads grow to only 4-5 inches. In comparison, in North Dakota's "big" waters 6- to 8-inch smelt are commonly observed in larger walleye stomachs on the Missouri River System. Similarly, 1-pound fish of various species are not uncommon in 10-pound pike stomachs, and 2-pound fish are routinely noted in 15- to 20-plus-pound pike. Last year, Game and Fish personnel observed a 3-pound pike that was consumed by a 12-pound northern.

With the new statewide regulation change allowing for a five pike daily limit (other than the Red River where the pike limit remains at three), it's important for anglers to understand a couple of key points. One, due to the record number of North Dakota pike lakes, and record populations in many of those waters, the overall pike population will not be overharvested, even with a limit increase.

And two, given the inability of most of our smaller lakes to grow large pike, some "thinning" of existing populations will likely enhance conditions for remaining pike to grow to a larger, though not trophy, size.

GREG POWER is the Game and Fish Department's fisheries chief.

Panfish Potential

Lakes Upsilon, Metigoshe and Mud/Pearl were home to the largest crappie, bluegill and yellow perch registered with the Whopper Club this past year/winter.

These lakes are far smaller than those bodies of water where the largest predator fish, such as walleye and northern pike, are routinely taken.

Why the difference? Simply put, life histories and prerequisites to grow large panfish are considerably different than for predators.

Take yellow perch for example. Although North Dakota is blessed with a couple of large waters – Devils Lake and Lake Darling – that perennially produce big perch, the smaller lakes can be king when it comes to potentially landing a big one.

When reviewing the statewide perch Whopper Club list for the past five years, six of the top 10 lakes are less than 1,000 acres. In fact, 13 of the top 27 lakes did not exist a decade or so ago.

So what makes a “big” perch lake? First, the lack of predators,

especially pike, gives perch a fighting chance to survive and grow. Second, waters with maximum depths of 15–20 (or more) feet greatly decrease the likelihood of a winterkill, which allows perch additional years to grow with an extended life expectancy. Third, the new lake phenomena caused by unprecedented wet conditions in North Dakota the past 20 years, is a direct cause for the “big” perch. Fish growth can be exceptional in these waters as zooplankton and aquatic invertebrates, primary perch forage, are abundant in the immediate years following permanent flooding.

More whopper perch were recorded in the last three years compared to the previous six years combined. And big perch opportunities should only get better in the next few winters due to all the new waters in North Dakota.

A new state record perch is a real possibility sometime soon. Last winter, three whopper perch were within 5 ounces of the 2-pound, 15-ounce state record, including one fish that was within an ounce. Again, with all the new water in the state, many with strong perch populations, the potential is there for a perch to reach or exceed 3 pounds.



Some of North Dakota's smaller waters, especially those with fewer predators, can grow big yellow perch.

GREG GULLICKSON



MIKE ANDERSON

2011 Enforcement Division Review

Game and Fish Department warden Erik Schmidt, Linton, checks a hunter's bounty at a game check station along Interstate 94 in 2011.

2011 will, for a lot of North Dakotans, be the Year of the Flood. Bismarck, Mandan and Minot headlined the news most often, but high water was a concern in many communities across the state.

North Dakota Game and Fish Department's enforcement division was heavily involved in the flood fight, as one of the agencies included in the state's Emergency Management Plan. On the Missouri River, especially in the Bismarck-Mandan area, game wardens were part of a combined law enforcement team that provided 24-hour response. A downstream safety response site was established at Fort Lincoln State Park by Game

and Fish and staffed by wardens with boats. Two-person warden teams also worked upstream in the Bismarck-Mandan area, providing quick response and enforcement patrol of flooded areas. Additionally, wardens and fisheries staffs with flat bottom boats were assigned to the Minot area as part of the multi-agency emergency response effort.

Due to the severity and duration of the flooding, virtually every game warden saw duty in these areas. Day-to-day missions included search and rescue, hauling supplies to flooded areas, and guiding local political leaders and personnel from other agencies on the water to view, monitor and assess flooding.

I am proud of the way wardens and all Game and Fish Department staff responded to emergency requests for assistance. I was involved in the flood as part of the government response and as an affected citizen. While not everything worked perfectly, and nothing ever does, I witnessed a level of cooperation between government agencies and private citizens as they rose to meet a challenge that no one could have adequately met alone.

As flood waters started receding, wardens returned to regular operations. We anticipated the lingering effects of flooding would reduce overall summer boating activity, especially along a popular stretch of the Missouri. Such was not the case as boaters shifted to other area waters.

The spread and introduction of aquatic nuisance species continue to be a growing concern in North Dakota. Game wardens continued to inspect for ANS and inform the public as part of their regular duties when checking boaters, anglers and waterfowl hunters.

As the enforcement division continues to ramp up its ANS effort, we are working closely with the fisheries division to identify potential ANS risks to better prioritize and allocate time and resources. One of the results of this effort in the last couple of years is check stations specifically for ANS. New ANS regulations are in place, but like with most new rules, we have been going through a public learning period with the emphasis on education and warnings. We are seeing the level of compliance increasing as the public becomes more

aware of the ANS rules and the threat exotics have if introduced to our waters. While we continue to inform outdoor enthusiasts about ANS, we are shifting from warnings to citations.

Openings in the game warden force have occurred due to retirements, career changes and transfers, and we will have additional retirements in the next year or two. The result is that we hired two new wardens in 2011, and will be hiring again in 2012, with annual hiring continuing into the foreseeable future.

The challenge at this point is not recruiting new wardens to meet a changing and increasing work load, but rather finding affordable places for them to live, especially in western North Dakota where finding housing is difficult. Game and Fish Department leaders are working to address this issue and plans should be in place soon.

As we move forward into 2012, with the continuing population growth and associated increase in work load, I am confident of two things. One is that the state, Game and Fish Department and its enforcement division will face challenges, some already known and some yet to appear. And two, based on my experience with both the government and citizens of North Dakota, these challenges can be met through realistic assessment and cooperation between the public and private sectors.

ROBERT TIMIAN is the Game and Fish Department's enforcement division chief.

By Robert Timian

The introduction and spread of aquatic nuisance species in North Dakota waters is a concern. With education and enforcement, Game and Fish Department officials hope to prevent the spread of unwanted exotic hitchhikers in the state.



Wildlife Officers at Work

Each year the North Dakota Chapter of the Wildlife Society, an organization of professionals in the wildlife field, gives an award for the top enforcement case of the year. The award honors Chuck Pulver, a chapter member and North Dakota Game and Fish Department warden who died of a heart attack while on duty in 1995.

The following is the top case of the year. Winners of the award include Game and Fish Department wardens James Myhre and Erik Schmidt, Ed Meendering, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Kidder County sheriff's deputy John Lemeiux.

Eligible submissions were those cases finalized between December 1, 2010 and November 30, 2011. The top case was generated from a call from a private citizen.

Chuck Pulver Memorial Case of the Year

On November 4, 2010 Game and Fish Department warden James Myhre received a phone call concerning hunters on Lake George National Wildlife Refuge in Kidder County.

The witness saw one hunter in blaze orange on a stack of hay bales located on the refuge. It was also indicated that one of the hunters had shot a large whitetail buck within the refuge boundary.

Myhre contacted John Lemeiux, Kid-

der County sheriff's deputy, who met the hunting party as they were pulling into their farm yard. Lemeiux relayed to Myhre that the group did have a large whitetail buck with them. Minutes later, Myhre met the hunters, a father and son, at their farm.

The whitetail buck inspected by Myhre had the son's tag on it. Myhre began asking questions about the group hunting on the refuge, and the father said he'd hunted the area for years and knew where the refuge was, insisting they were not on the refuge. The father did admit he was the one standing on the hay bales, but claimed they were not on the refuge.

The son, when questioned about the deer, said he saw it bed down in the morning and around 11 a.m. started to sneak up on it. His father stayed at the hay bales for better visibility and to be able to shoot if necessary. He could see the rack moving in the grass and part of the deer's body. The deer was shot where it lay.

After the initial interview, Myhre and Lemeiux returned to the scene at the refuge where they followed vehicle tracks into the refuge about a quarter-mile, passing the hay bales indicated by the witness.

While walking the shoreline, Myhre located the buck's bedding site. The bed was photographed and its location marked with a Global Positioning System. Fresh blood, hair and tissue were also collected.

Myhre also noticed the trail of a bullet entering the ground.

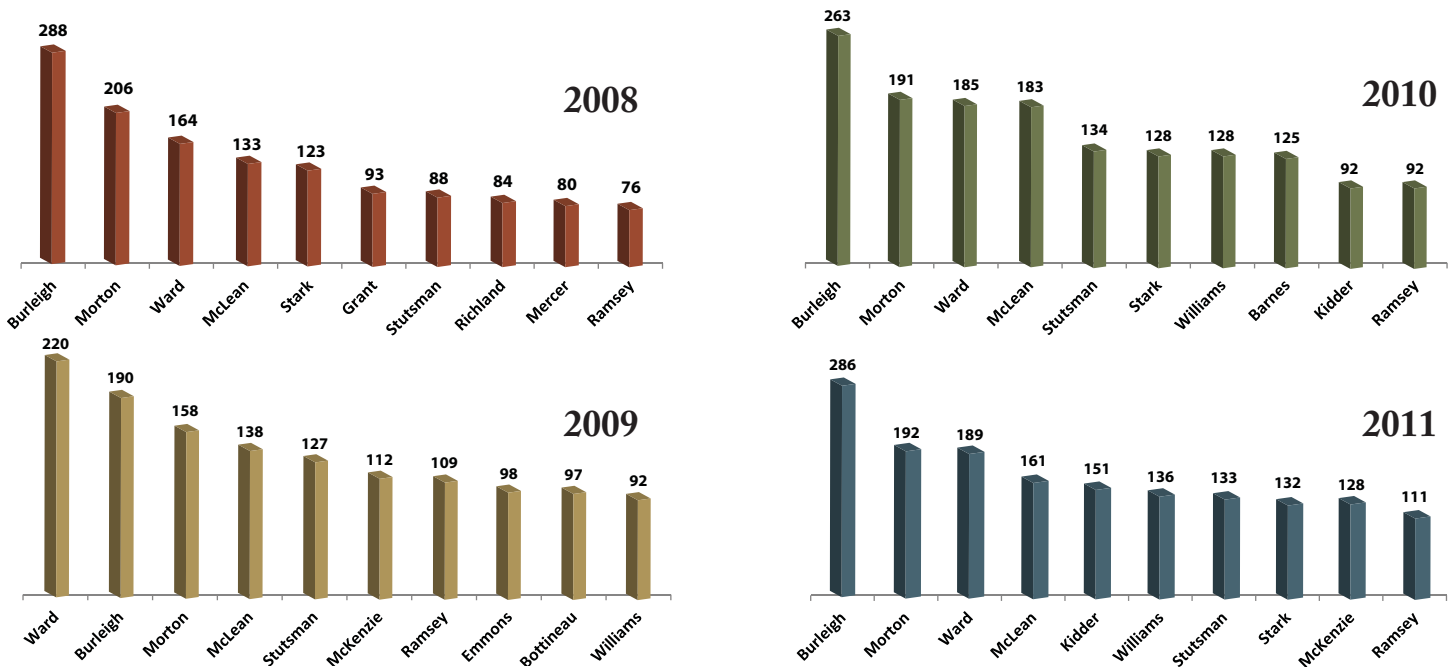
With the evidence found, Myhre was able to prove that the deer was clearly killed within the refuge. Game wardens Myhre and Schmidt, and refuge officer Meendering executed a search warrant, during which time Schmidt obtained information that the deer was shot with two different rifles.

The deer was hanging in a farm building and was skinned prior to being seized. There the officers confirmed two bullet holes in the deer. The father said that his son used a .308-caliber rifle that malfunctioned, and then used his .30-06-caliber rifle to finish the deer off. With the assistance of Meendering, Myhre returned to the refuge and recovered a .30-caliber bullet.

Together, the father and son admitted to hunting on the national wildlife refuge and both were charged for the fact. The son was also charged with illegal take of big game.

The father was ordered to pay \$350 fine, \$225 in court costs, and his hunting privileges were suspended for one year. The son was ordered to pay a \$500 fine, \$300 in court costs, and his hunting privileges were also suspended for one year.

Percentage of Incident Reports by Top 10 Counties



2011 Summary of Violations

Big Game

Failure to accompany/transport other's game.....	4
Failure to wear florescent orange	6
Tagging violations	15
Exceeding limit.....	1
Killing wrong species or sex.....	13
Killing deer without a license	1
Other big game violations	3
Total	43

Small Game

Using gun able to hold more than 3 shells.....	74
Hunting in closed season.....	11
Illegal possession/taking	5
Exceeding limit.....	93
Unlawful transportation of game.....	1
Failure to leave identification of sex of game	61
Killing wrong sex or species.....	12
Failure to accompany/transport other's game.....	2
Wanton waste	8
Hunting in unharvested field.....	3
Nontoxic shot violation	8
Failure to HIP register	6
Hunting without federal waterfowl stamp	14
Failure to carry federal waterfowl stamp	5
Other small game violations	22
Total	325

Boating

Use of unlicensed or unnumbered boat.....	175
Failure to display boat registration.....	49
Operating without lights at night	19
Inadequate number of PFDs	165
Water skiing violations	69
Reckless or negligent operation	10
Operating vessel under influence/intoxicated	10
Other boating violations	85
Total	582

Fishing

Fishing with excessive lines	13
Exceeding limit	62
Fishing in closed/restricted area	3
Failure to attend lines	4
No identification on fish house.....	4
Failure to remove fish house	1
ANS violation.....	5
Paddlefish violations	3
Other fishing violations	30
Total	125

Furbearer

Shining (using artificial light).....	3
Untagged snares	1
Illegal possession/taking	1
Use of motor vehicle off established trail.....	9
Harassing furbearers with motor vehicle.....	5
Other furbearer violations	6
Total	25

General

Use of motor vehicle off established trail.....	10
Use of motor vehicle in restricted area.....	25
Noncriminal transportation	2
Harassing wildlife with motor vehicle.....	2
Hunting on posted land without permission	45
Hunting before/after legal hours.....	17
Wanton waste	5
Aid in concealment of unlawful game	3
Hunting in wrong unit/closed area	11
Loaded firearm in motor vehicle	92
Discharge of firearm within/on motor vehicle.....	3
440 yard violation	11
Littering	55
Other general violations	6
Total	287

Licensing

Failure to sign/affix stamp	31
Hunting/fishing/trapping without proper license	151
Failure to carry license on person	219
Guide/outfitter without license	4
Gratis hunter off described land	4
Misrepresentation on license or application	77
Other licensing violations.....	15
Total	501

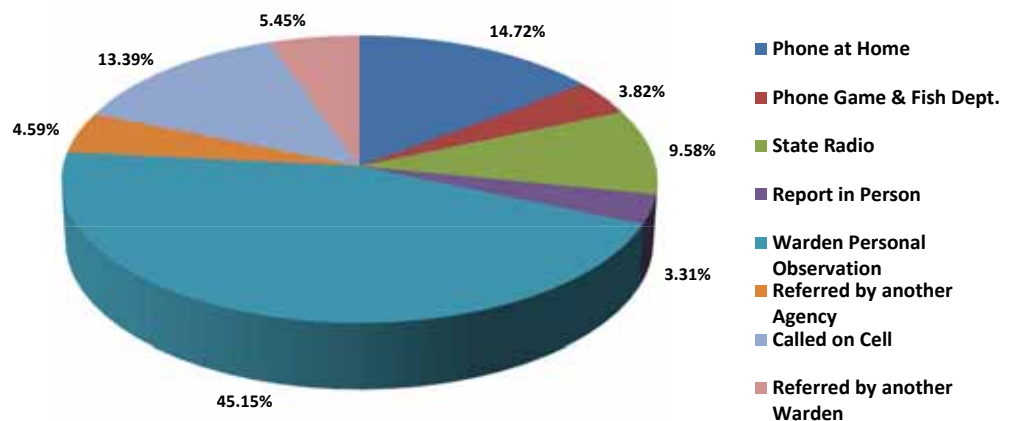
Wildlife Management Areas/Refuge

Failure to obey posted regulations	30
Prohibited use of motor vehicle	10
Removal/destruction of property.....	4
Camping.....	3
Tree stand violations.....	2
Possession of glass beverage containers	2
Baiting on WMA	1
Possession/discharge of fireworks	1
Other WMA/refuge violations.....	4
Total	59

Miscellaneous

Possession of controlled substance.....	2
Possession of drug paraphernalia	5
Open container.....	50
Minor in possession.....	53
Criminal trespass	13
Other miscellaneous	17
Total	140

Percentage of Incident Reports by Source



PAYING FOR WILDLIFE SCIENCE

By Ron Wilson



PHOTO PROVIDED BY BRIAN SCHAFER

Brian Schaffer, South Dakota State University graduate student, with a radio-collared white-tailed fawn. Both young and mature deer were fitted with radio-collars in the Wing area in an effort to study deer movements.

Editor's Note: 2012 marks the 75th anniversary of the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program, one of the most significant and successful partnership approaches to fish and wildlife conservation in U.S. history. Through the WFSR program, many pioneering and foundational fish and wildlife conservation programs are administered. The first was created in 1937 when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (commonly known as the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Act), which raises funds through a dedicated excise tax on sporting guns and ammunition. In 1950, the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act (referred to by many as the Dingell-Johnson Act) was enacted and added to the WFSR program. Through this law, funds are provided for fish conservation and boating and fishing recreational programs in each state through an excise tax on certain fishing and boating equipment and fuels.



It wasn't until roughly six decades ago that wildlife managers in North Dakota figured out how to count ducks and eventually get a handle on waterfowl populations across the continent.

"Prior to that, duck hunting regulations were set by guess and by golly," said Mike Johnson, longtime waterfowl biologist and North Dakota Game and Fish Department game management section leader.

What changed that, even though it took some time, was passage of the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, which spawned scientific management of wildlife in North Dakota and elsewhere.

"It wasn't until the federal aid program came along that agencies were able to hire university-trained biologists for jobs that demanded these kinds of people," Johnson said. "They were faced with many questions about wildlife, questions we weren't able to answer because we didn't have a scientific way of measuring distribution and abundance of animals, including how many ducks and how many wetlands we have. That was their task and they came up with a scientific way to figure it out."

In 1948, the Game and Fish Department initiated the first spring migratory waterfowl survey consisting of two parts: (1) a statewide inventory of

breeding ducks; (2) and a survey of water areas with emphasis on classification and number of all water areas. This survey is still in use.

"A lot of what we knew about animals in North Dakota prior to the federal aid program was based on anecdotal evidence, which was pretty good information, but not systematic," Johnson said. "The university-trained biologists brought with them knowledge and techniques from their training that was readily put to use in the field. It wasn't long and we were learning things about animal home ranges, territoriality, what they ate, where they nested ..."

Some of the surveys haven't changed much over many years because they were, as Johnson put it, developed correctly to begin with. While others, including the way wildlife biologists survey deer in North Dakota today, have been greatly improved.

"The surveys are science based, meaning you just can't go out to the best spots and count birds and multiply by 10 to get an idea of the population across the state," Johnson said. "What we are doing is putting the best available tools to use on the landscape to manage the animals, their habitat and their harvest."

Knowing, for example, about how many deer are on the landscape and how many hunters take per



Steve Allen, former Game and Fish Department furbearer biologist, digs up a fox den as part of a study on the state's red fox population.



A bighorn sheep receives a lift via helicopter during a trap and transport operation in the badlands in western North Dakota.

CRAIG BIRHLE

season allows wildlife managers to set regulations that are appropriate for the long-term viability of the population.

“If we harvest too many of whatever we are hunting, populations decline and we lose hunters, and if we don’t harvest enough and don’t provide enough opportunities, we lose hunters,” Johnson said. “The key is to provide the best hunting opportunities that you can biologically provide.”

The first Pittman-Robertson project in North Dakota under the investigations and surveys realm was a pheasant and sharp-tailed grouse nesting mortality study in 1940, which revealed that nest abandonment, predators and tillage were the main causes of nest failure.

The first statewide upland game survey was also initiated in 1940. The method most used was roadside counts, which estimated that about 4 million Hungarian partridge, 2 million ring-necked pheasants, and 1.3 million sharp-tailed grouse were found in North Dakota at the time.

Roadside counts are used today, along with a hunter harvest surveys conducted through the mail. Big game, such as deer and moose, are surveyed from the air, while male sharp-tailed grouse are counted on spring dancing grounds.

The periodic species surveys mentioned – and there are several others – have become more sophisticated over time, delving into the makeup of wildlife populations as related to male-female ratios, number of young produced each year, survival rates, population growth or decline, and so on. While this information aids in setting season dates and bag limits, it also assists in identifying issues that need be investigating.

Despite years of investigating the lives of animals that inhabit North Dakota, many questions are still unanswered. Couple that with a landscape that is continually adjusted by humans stretching out from

A five-year study was initiated in 2004 to learn, among other things, the migration tendencies of pronghorns in western North Dakota throughout the seasons.



CRAIG BIRHLE



PHOTO PROVIDED BY BRIAN SCHAFER

During a deer movement study in the Wing area, white-tailed deer were trapped and then fitted with radio-collars. Some deer were also captured with the help of a helicopter.

urban populations, a changing agricultural climate that favors cash crops over idle grasses, and the gigantic undertaking to secure fossil fuels far below the topsoil, more and more questions arise as biologists explore the best ways to manage the state's wildlife.

There have been a number of research projects in North Dakota of late, including a white-tailed deer movement study by Brian Schaffer, a South Dakota State University graduate student. The study involved trapping and fitting dozens of deer with radio-collars to allow researchers to track the animals' movements from summer to winter habitats. The research, on arguably the most popular animal among hunters in North Dakota, will also reveal survival rates and fall recruitment of fawns into the winter population.

"We can speculate what happens to animals during winter months, but the only way to know for sure is to put radio-collars on deer, follow them and determine the results," said Bill Jensen, Game and Fish Department big game management biologist, who is overseeing the project.

Starting in 2010, Aaron Robinson, Department upland game management biologist, trapped and fitted more than 200 sharp-tailed grouse and their chicks with tracking devices in an effort to get a baseline idea of how grouse move and survive in relation to landscape changes. The birds were trapped during spring courtship displays and while nesting in Burke and Mountrail counties. Robinson said the study will reveal where females nest and where they raise their broods.

"The data will provide biologists with a better idea of how the population is doing, nest success and how

many chicks are being recruited into the fall population for the hunting season," Robinson said. He added that the study is doubly important because not only is the sharp-tailed grouse a native species, but also an indicator species of the health of its prairie environment.

"Scientific research on our game species is critical to providing the tremendous hunting opportunities we all enjoy in North Dakota," Johnson said.

Without the financial cushion provided by the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program, Johnson said the Game and Fish Department, and the animals inhabiting the landscape between borders, wouldn't exist anywhere near the levels seen today.

"Again, what it has allowed us to do is provide for science based management of the system," Johnson said. "Monitoring wildlife populations, understanding the ecology of animals, ecology of habitats and monitoring hunters and their activities are all done through surveys and research projects that have been funded by federal aid and license dollars from hunters and anglers."

Johnson said Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson funds are not likely to dry up unless hunting and fishing opportunities drastically decline. "The system also provides benefits to nonhunters, those people who view and photograph wildlife and shoot at targets at the rifle and pistol ranges, not to mention the boost local economies feel when hunters and anglers eat at their restaurants and buy gas. It's a very unique system that is envied throughout the world."

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



The Early Years

A Glimpse at the Development of Game Management in North Dakota

1941 – A statewide beaver study was initiated to determine numbers, habits and distribution in North Dakota. This was the first research on this species.

1941 – Sale of small game licenses surpassed 50,000 for the first time.

1946 – A study on the food habits of fox, coyote, mink, badger and weasel in North Dakota. The purpose was to evaluate the importance of predators as a cause in the population decline of pheasants, grouse and partridge.

1949 – Crowing counts were used for the first time statewide as a means of determining a spring pheasant breeding population.

1951 – First pronghorn season in more than 50 years held.

1952 – Beaver season opened for the first time since 1931.

1951 – First major attempt made to locate as many sage grouse leks in southwestern North Dakota as possible. Eleven leks were found and 513 sage grouse observed.

1951 – A roadside spring drumming count for ruffed grouse established in the Turtle Mountains and Pembina Hills.

1954 – First statewide deer archery season held.

1956 – The Game and Fish Department experienced its most successful duck banding season. More than 5,000 ducks, over half of which were blue-winged teal, were banded.

1957 – First tree squirrel season held.

1958 – North Dakota held its first wild turkey season.

1958 – North Dakota held its first pronghorn archery season.

1959 – An investigation was initiated to determine the chronology of the fall waterfowl migration, by species, through North Dakota.

1963 – North Dakota held its first mourning dove season in 41 years.

1964 – The 67,847 ducks counted during the January waterfowl survey represented the largest number of wintering waterfowl in the state's history.

1964 – North Dakota held its first sage grouse season in 42 years.

1968 – For the first time in more than 50 years, North Dakota held a limited sandhill crane hunting season.

1969 – The Game and Fish Department began a mourning dove survey to determine a population index and the chronology of the fall dove migration.

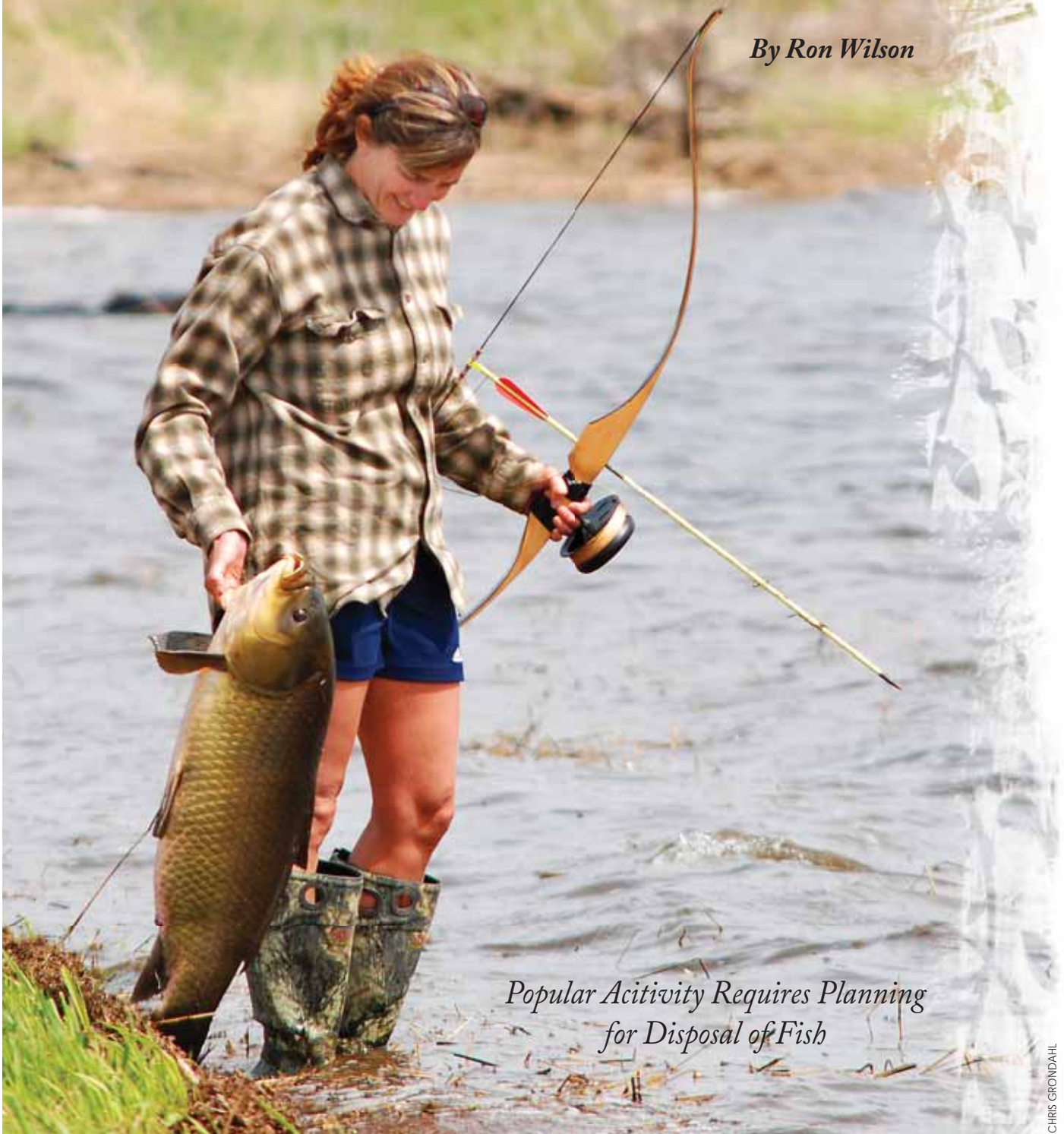
1969 – The first major research on red fox in nearly 20 years gets underway to determine, among other things, red fox population dynamics and movement characteristics.

1970 – The first phase of a major deer movement study on Dawson Wildlife Management Area gets underway.

1971 – Sale of deer gun licenses surpass 50,000 for the first time.

Fishing With a Bow

By Ron Wilson



*Popular Activity Requires Planning
for Disposal of Fish*

Bowfishing for carp and buffalo in North Dakota has been legal for many years, but the activity really hit its stride in recent years. With increased interest in shooting nongame fish, Game and Fish Department officials urge participants to have a plan for those fish they shoot.

*W*hile North Dakota held its first bowfishing season more than 60 years ago, the activity likely struck its zenith in 2011 when flooding statewide, most notably along the Missouri River, created acres and acres of shallow backwater habitat favored by carp and easily accessed by archers.



CHRIS GRONDAHL

Flooded backwaters along the Missouri River in 2011 provided plenty of carp and buffalo habitat for archers of all ages.



BRUCE KREFF

Staying still and being patient, skills that big game bowhunters display in their tree stands in fall, works for bowfishing for cruising fish.

“There have always been people who’ve have done it and enjoyed it, but it wasn’t until the last three or four years, and especially 2011, that we’ve watched bowfishing grow and grow in North Dakota,” said Greg Power, North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries chief.

Scott Gangl, Department fisheries management section leader, shot his first carp with a bow sometime in the 1980s, and in one day last summer he arrowed 38 carp from a flooded Missouri River backwater. “Bowfishing is something you can do in the heat of summer when it’s so bloody hot and the fish aren’t biting,” he said. “You don’t have a lot of competition, fish are abundant and you don’t often get skunked bowfishing.”

It’s illegal to shoot game fish in North Dakota, which leaves carp and buffalo as the main targets for archers. It’s also illegal to leave fish that have been shot on shore or in the water. Disregard of this latter rule is the top complaint by far that Department fisheries staff fielded from the public in 2011.

“From Williston to Wahpeton we heard complaints, primarily from landowners and homeowners, about trespassing and people killings tons of carp and buffalo and leaving them to rot on their shores,” Power said. “There was a time last summer when people were anxious about the flooding and very concerned about what was going to hap-

pen to their homes, and then they'd find people bowfishing in their back yards."

Gangl said he hopes much of what happened last summer was a one-time thing. "People who were trying to keep water out of their homes didn't want to have to deal with stinky, rotten fish, too," he said. "No matter if you are bowfishing or fishing with hook and line, it's illegal to throw your catch on shore and walk away."

Having a game plan to properly dispose of fish before going bowfishing is important. Some people smoke the fish they shoot, and Power suggests doing so with buffalo ribs, which are considered very palatable in some circles. "I also freeze quite a few and give them to my folks who cut them up and feed to their cats, or use as bait for trapping," Gangl added.

The reality is that some people can shoot hundreds of pounds of carp and buffalo during an outing, making it a challenge to get rid of that many fish.

"That day that I shot 38, I took them home. Fortunately, we have a farm and I put them in the compost and manure pile," he said. "I used to bury them in my yard, but my dog would just dig them up. Where they did stay buried, the grass was always greener."

To dispose of fish properly, Gangl suggested contacting landowners who may consider using dead carp and buffalo as fertilizer in farm fields that have not been planted.

North Dakota's bowfishing season runs May 1 through September 30. There is some talk within the ranks of archers who would like to see a longer season, likely one that starts earlier than May 1. Yet, fisheries officials had concerns about making any adjustments to

"The reality is that some people can shoot hundreds of pounds of carp and buffalo during an outing, making it a challenge to get rid of that many fish."

the season at this time.

"We considered opening it earlier, but because of the negative feedback about the illegal deposition of fish and waste of the resource along the Mis-

souri River and other waters in the state, we decided now wasn't the time," Power said. "We are going to put it on the table eventually and discuss having a longer season, but we first need for the complaints to go way down. There has to be some policing within the bowfishing ranks before anything will happen."

Department game wardens and other law enforcement officers have the authority to cite those who leave arrowed carp in the water or on shore. Minimum penalty is \$100 littering violation; maximum is a Class B misdemeanor, which can be up to a \$1,000 fine and possible loss of fishing, hunting privileges.

Gangl said another concern about having an earlier opener is the accidental shooting of northern pike and other game fish that move into the shallows to spawn in spring. "You have to worry a bit about some people having difficulty properly identifying the species of fish they are shooting at," he said. "There isn't such a thing as shoot-and-release bowfishing."

During the 1980s and earlier, Power said there were many instances of people illegally shooting pike with bows and arrows, but claiming they were after carp.

Carp move into shallow backwaters in spring to spawn when water temperatures warm, but finding them there in any great numbers in April isn't likely. "This spring was an exception, but there were a lot of exceptions about this spring," Power said.

RON WILSON is editor of North Dakota OUTDOORS.

Bowfishing Basics

By Chris Grondahl

Like simple hook-and-bobber fishing, bowfishing doesn't require a lot of sophisticated equipment.

The basic needs are a bow and an arrow specifically designed for shooting into the water. The arrow retrieval system is a reel filled with string, or a spool wrapped with heavy string, that is attached to the bow, and the arrow. One does not need to get fancy. Old recurve bows brought out of storage can fulfill the need. Often these simple bows are actually desired by archers wading through backwaters or shooting from a boat. Reels and arrows are available at almost any sporting goods store.

Rough fish such as carp spawn in shallow waters as they warm in spring. Wading to about calf to knee deep is preferred. Sometimes, just standing on a shoreline is adequate. Calm days are best as a ripple on the water makes seeing fish difficult. Staying still is essential.

Practice will make perfect, but shooting a fish in water will require shooting below it (the bending of light rays through the water, called refraction, makes the fish appear higher than it actually is). Once the fish is arrowed, it is pulled in by the string, and removed from the arrow and disposed of properly.

CHRIS GRONDAHL is the Game and Fish Department's outreach supervisor.

“Many capable archers found that they were up against an entirely different situation when they first tried bowfishing. One important factor that threw many of them off is the tendency of water to bend, or rather deflect light waves ... this phenomenon causes an object in water to appear higher than it really is. This confuses the archer and he usually shoots over the fish,” from the June 1956 issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS* when bowfishing opened for the first time in the state.

A Look Back

- **1991** – With a few exceptions, most of the state was opened to bowfishing. Prior to 1991, only the Missouri River System and its tributaries were open to bowfishing or spearing.
- **1993** – End of bowfishing season extended from early November to December 31.
- **2002** – The end of the bowfishing season was changed from December 31 to November 30. This was done in response to the new darkhouse spearfishing season, which opens December 1 annually. This move took away any potential seasonal conflict between the two.
- **2010** – The end of the bowfishing season was changed to September 30. This was done in response to a regulation change that now allows for the use of artificial lights at night in assisting archers. There was some concern within the Game and Fish Department that this would help validate excuses for poachers in river bottoms to be using lights at night.
- **2012** – Considered recommendations to extend the season, but maintained May 1-September 30 timeframe.

Bowfishing Regulations

Refer to the 2012-14 North Dakota Fishing Guide for information on where bowfishing is allowed in North Dakota because there are some exceptions. Participants must possess a current fishing license to arrow nongame fish.

Legal archery equipment is any bow to which an arrow is attached by a line and equipped with a harpoon style point or wire-barbed point. The use of night vision equipment, electronically enhanced light-gathering optics, flashlights and lanterns used for locating carp and suckers is legal. Crossbows are prohibited except with a special director's permit that may be issued if an individual is permanently disabled.

BUFFALOBERRY PATCH



By Greg Freeman, Department News Editor

Bighorn Sheep License Auctioned

North Dakota's 2012 bighorn sheep auction license sold for \$42,000 at the Midwest Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation annual meeting in Minnesota.

The auction license allows the winning bidder the rare privilege of pursuing a North Dakota bighorn on a self-guided hunt.

All auction license proceeds, plus an additional \$10,000 donated by MCWSF, are used to enhance bighorn sheep management in North Dakota. In addition, a 5 percent conservation fee for all auction licenses generated an additional \$2,100 for wild sheep conservation.

Bighorn Population Holding Steady

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department's annual bighorn sheep survey revealed a minimum of 283 sheep in western North Dakota, unchanged from last year and only 3 percent below the five-year average.

In total, biologists counted 86 rams, 158 ewes and 39 lambs. Not included are approximately 30 bighorn sheep in the North Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

Brett Wiedmann, Department big game biologist, said the northern badlands population remained stable and southern badlands herds stabilized following several years of declining numbers.

"Despite ewes enduring a brutal winter in 2010-11, lamb recruitment increased to 28 percent, which is about average in North Dakota," Wiedmann said. "Also, 83 percent of the lambs counted last summer survived winter."

Game and Fish Department biologists count and classify all bighorns in late summer and then recount lambs in March to determine recruitment.

After three consecutive severe winters, mild conditions experienced this winter were needed, Wiedmann said. "We monitored 71 radio-marked bighorns last winter and didn't have a single mortality," he said. "Although spring lamb production was low in 2011 due to the severity of last year's winter, lamb survival through this past winter was exceptional. Adult ewes couldn't be in better condition right now so we expect a bumper crop of healthy lambs to hit the ground."

Although most news was encouraging, Wiedmann was concerned with a 10 percent decline in the ram count from 2010, and continued low population levels coupled with poor lamb recruitment in the southern badlands, where only two were observed. The ram-to-ewe ratio declined to 54 rams per 100 ewes.

"Overall, we're quite pleased with the results of this year's survey," Wiedmann said. "Following three epic winters our bighorn sheep population is only 10 percent below our record count in 2008. Comparatively speaking, it appears our bighorns handled the recent harsh winters much better than our mule deer and pronghorn populations."

Four bighorn sheep licenses were issued in 2012, two fewer than 2011.



A radio-collared bighorn sheep in western North Dakota.

CRAIG BIRBLE



GREG GULLICKSON

Walleye Restrictions in Some Southeast Lakes

Anglers fishing in southeastern North Dakota are reminded of a new length requirement when fishing for walleye.

The 2012-14 fishing proclamation includes a 14-inch minimum walleye length restriction on six lakes – Alkali Lake, Buffalo Lake and Tosse Slough in Sargent County; and Lake Elsie, Lueck Lake and West Moran Lake in Richland County.

Game and Fish Using Airplane for Seeding WMAs

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department used an airplane earlier this spring to seed portions of flood-damaged wildlife management areas south of Bismarck-Mandan and near Lake Sakakawea.

Bill Haase, Department wildlife resource management supervisor, said aerial seeding was needed because certain areas are inaccessible by ground equipment.

Grass and some forbs species were seeded on 1,100 acres of the Oahe bottoms and another 500 acres on Douglas Creek, Detrobriand and Beaver Creek, Haase said, with the intent to have more desirable species out-compete undesirable species for wildlife habitat.

State Fair Pond Undergoing Improvements

The State Fair Pond in Minot is closed due to construction projects prompted by last year's Souris River flood. Located on the north end of the fairgrounds in the State Game and Fish Department's Conservation and Outdoors Skills Park, the pond will reopen July 20 on opening day of the North Dakota State Fair.

Greg Gullickson, Department outreach biologist in Minot, said the dock is undergoing repairs and improvements, making the shoreline the only fishable area. "The shore slope of the pond is steep and not the best place to fish," he said. "We will be reseeding all of the grass in the area, dredging the pond, moving buildings and dirt and repaving walkways."

Anglers looking for alternate urban fisheries in Minot should try the Souris River, Gullickson said, with several areas available to fish from shore.

Red and Bois de Sioux River Anglers Note Change

Anglers fishing from shore on the North Dakota side of the Red and Bois de Sioux rivers must have a valid North Dakota fishing license. Last year, either a North Dakota or Minnesota license was allowed.

All other regulations regarding fishing these rivers remain the same. Anglers fishing from a boat or through the ice can possess either a valid North Dakota or Minnesota fishing license. In addition, the daily limit for northern pike caught from the Red or Bois de Sioux remains at three, while the pike limit in the rest of the state is now five.

Anglers should refer to the 2012-14 North Dakota Fishing Guide for additional information.

James River Bait Restrictions

Anglers and bait vendors should be aware of a regulation that prohibits taking of minnows or other aquatic bait from portions of Pipestem Creek and the James River.

Fred Ryckman, North Dakota Game and Fish Department aquatic nuisance species coordinator, said record high flows in the James River last year aided in the movement of silver carp upstream into North Dakota. "With this discovery, it is illegal to take live bait from all of Pipestem Creek below Pipestem Dam, and from the James River between the Jamestown Dam and the South Dakota border, including any tributaries up to the first vehicular bridge or crossing," he said.

The 2012-14 fishing proclamation states "no live bait may be taken from any water body in North Dakota that is infested with aquatic nuisance species." Silver carp is an ANS that can out-compete native and other game fish in large river systems.

"Bait transfer is one of the many pathways where ANS can be moved from water body to water body," Ryckman said. "Elimination of this potential

movement of ANS will provide protection of the state's fisheries and other aquatic resources."

Game Warden Exam in May

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department's examination to select district game warden candidates is May 18 at 10 a.m. at the Department's main office in Bismarck.

Applicants must register to take the exam by submitting a letter of intent to chief game warden Robert Timian, North Dakota Game and Fish Department, 100 N. Bismarck Expressway, Bismarck, ND 585015095. Letters of intent must be submitted before 5 p.m., May 17.

Applicants must be at least 21 years of age and have a bachelor's degree. Other requirements are a current North Dakota peace officer license, or eligibility for a license, and a valid driver's license. Candidates must have excellent interpersonal skills in communications and writing, and must not have a record of any felony convictions.

Game wardens enforce game and fish laws and related regulations in an assigned

district and other locations as determined by the Department. Wardens typically work alone under varied conditions, at all hours of the day, night and weekends. In addition to law enforcement duties, wardens assist in the areas of public relations, education programs, and hunter and boat safety education.

Game warden duties also require the ability to perform physically demanding tasks involving lifting and carrying large, heavy objects, walking and running over uneven terrain and tolerating adverse weather and other environmental conditions.

Selection procedures following the test may include an evaluation of the application, a structured oral interview, background and reference checks, and psychological and medical examinations.

The salary for beginning game wardens through training is \$3,000 per month. Upon successful completion of training, the salary is \$3,550. Wardens also receive the state benefits package, including travel allowance. Uniforms and other equipment are provided.

Game and Fish Sponsors Earth Day Project

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department celebrated Earth Day by sponsoring youth clean-up days on public-owned or managed lands in April or May.

Each member of a school, Girl Scout, Boy Scout, 4-H club or youth organization who participates in cleaning up public lands receives a specifically designed conservation patch.

Last winter the Game and Fish Department sponsored a contest for students ages 6-18 to design a North Dakota Earth Day Patch. Winners who received a pair of Nikon 8x40 binoculars in the three age categories were Maddie Hosek, Bismarck (6-9), Enya Agard, Selfridge (10-13), and Sarah Morris, Regan (14-18). Hosek's design was the contest winner, and was used on this year's Earth Day patch.

Groups that participate in the Earth Day project in May are encouraged to keep young people away from highways, lakes and rivers, and only allow older participants to pick up broken glass.

Interested participants are asked to contact Pat Lothspeich at (701) 328-6332 to receive a reporting form for their project.



2012 Winner
Maddie Hosek, Bismarck
Age 6-9



Runner-up
Enya Agard, Selfridge
Age 10-13



Runner-up
Sarah Morris, Regan
Age 14-18



CRAIG BIRRE

Participants from around the state participated in the North Dakota National Archery in the Schools Program state tournament in Bismarck in April.

NASP State Tournament Results

More than 330 archers competed in the North Dakota National Archery in the Schools Program state tournament in April in Bismarck.

Jeff Long, North Dakota Game and Fish Department NASP coordinator, said the number of participants was up 14 percent from last year. "NASP continues to grow in numbers each year, and we had participants from every corner of the state," he said. "This year 47 percent of our participants were female, and elementary students made up the majority of the participants."

Long said it was a competitive tournament, with just 12 points separating first and second place in the middle school division, and a 16-point differential in the high school division.

The tournament included a fun shoot at three-dimensional targets, Long said, which allowed all participants an opportunity to try something different. "This actually worked quite well," he added. "A lot of participants used this as an opportunity to warm up and calm the nerves."

The high school (grades 9-12) state championship team was from Dunseith,

and the middle school (grades 7-8) champs were from Medina. The top team in the elementary school (grades 4-6) division was from Hankinson. Each winning team received a trophy and five dozen arrows, and has the option of having an in-school awards ceremony. In addition, each first place team received a \$2,500 travel grant for committing to represent North Dakota at the national tournament in Louisville, Kentucky.

Overall male and female winners were Lucas Nadeau of Dunseith and Lisa Buckhaus of Hankinson. They received a plaque and limited edition NASP bow, and a \$750 travel grant if they attend the national tournament.

The top five placewinners receiving commemorative coins in each division were:

High school boys – Nadeau and Mason Blacksmith, Dunseith; Cody Beach, Barnes County North; Michael Maertens, Griggs County North; and Josh Gapp, Mayville-Portland-Clifford-Galesburg.



CRAIG BIRRE

High school girls – Amanda Young, Jaelyn May and Theresa St. Claire, Dunseith; and Shayla Zaun and Kayla Feiring, Griggs County Central.

Middle school boys – Spencer Brockman, North Sargent; Evan Trostad, Jacob Heinz, Logan Kensok and Jayden Grover, Griggs County Central.

Middle school girls – Buckhaus and Mariah Weidner, Hankinson; Shae Tofte, Devils Lake; Maddy Vincent, Griggs County Central; and Hannah Willson, Barnes County North.

Elementary boys – Michael McKenna and Dawson McKeever, North Sargent; Tyler Johnson, Griggs County Central; Cole Nelson, Burke Central; and Race Kath, Hankinson.

Elementary girls – Kate Loewen, Hankinson; Hope Willson, Barnes County North; Lauren Moser, Medina; Sarah Azure, St. John's; and Emma Mitchell, Rolla.

Workshops for Educators

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department has scheduled wildlife conservation and resource management workshops this summer for teachers, environmental educators and anyone else who works with youth.

More information on each workshop is available by contacting Sherry Niesar at (701) 527-3714.

Birds of North Dakota

May 30-31 – Game and Fish main office in Bismarck.

Registration fee: \$30. Contact: Bismarck Art and Galleries Association at (701) 223-5986 or email baga@midconetwork.com.

Teachers completing this course will have a basis for teaching bird study by integrating life science techniques and

visual arts. Links will be made between the description of the bird, habits, morphology adaptations and habitats.

Life Science Resources for Elementary Educators

June 4-5 – Lake Region State College, Devils Lake.

June 20-21 – Dickinson State University.

Registration fee: \$5. Contact: Jennifer Carlson, Devils Lake, (701) 662-7650 or email Jennifer.carlson.1@sendit.nodak.edu; John Hurlimann, Dickinson, (701) 483-2166 or email johnhurlimann@dickinsonstate.edu

This workshop provides an overview of the North Dakota Game and Fish Department resources available to educators. Students will have the opportunity

to participate in curriculums from The Whale, Wildlife of North Dakota Trunk, Elementary Aquatic Education Trunk, Habitats of North Dakota and other resources.

Mammals of North Dakota

June 27-28 - Game and Fish Department, Bismarck.

Registration fee: \$30. Contact: Bismarck Art and Galleries Association, (701) 223-5986 or email baga@midconetwork.com

Teachers completing this course will have a basis for teaching mammal study by integrating life science techniques and visual arts. Links will be made between the description of mammals, habits, morphology adaptations and habitats.

Camping Restrictions Placed on Some WMAs in Western North Dakota

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is implementing camping restrictions effective immediately on some wildlife management areas in western North Dakota and along Lake Sakakawea.

Overnight camping is now prohibited on the following WMAs: Antelope Creek, Big Oxbow, Lewis and Clark, Neu's Point, Ochs Point, Overlook, Sullivan and Tobacco Garden in McKenzie County; Van Hook in Mountrail County; and Hofflund and Trenton in Williams County.

The following WMAs are closed to camping on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, but open to camping Thursday-Monday: Audubon, Custer Mine, Deepwater Creek, deTrobriand, Douglas Creek and Wolf Creek in McLean County; and Beaver Creek and Hille in Mercer County.

Game and Fish does not operate any

official campgrounds, but most WMAs are open to primitive camping for 10 consecutive days. However, the agency does not have any staff manning the areas where people like to camp, and there is no registration system to keep track of when people come and go.

"In the past we have always had people who would try to work around the 10-day limit," said Jeb Williams, Department assistant wildlife division chief, "but in recent years we have seen a significant increase in the number of people who are residing on our WMAs for extended periods of time."

Because of the volume of campers, Williams said it's difficult for Game and Fish to keep track of who is abiding by the 10-day limit and who is not. "The new rules are enforceable and are intended to ensure these areas are available for hunters and anglers," Williams said. "In some cases we determined it

was best to not allow any camping, and in other areas the two-day per week restriction allows people to stay in areas where elimination of camping is not yet necessary."

On those WMAs where camping is allowed Thursday through Monday, all equipment must be removed on Tuesday and Wednesdays when camping is not allowed.

"This may be an inconvenience for some, but the vast majority of camping on WMAs is on weekends and we want to make sure they are available for recreationists," Williams said. "There are a number of managed campgrounds along Lake Sakakawea that are available for people to use any day of the week and for extended periods of time."

Camping restrictions at all WMAs are posted at entry points. Other WMA use regulations are available on the Game and Fish website at gf.nd.gov.

STAFF | Notes



Terry Kreiter



Angie Krueger

Krueger Fills Accounting Position, Kreiter Retires

Angie Krueger has been hired as the Game and Fish Department's chief of accounting. She fills the position vacated by Terry Kreiter, who retired in April after more than 40 years.

Krueger was previously employed by the State Treasurer's Office and has several years of accounting and state government experience. She has a bachelor's of science degree in accounting and business administration and a management information systems minor from the University of Mary in Bismarck.

Agencies Name Farm Bill Biologists

Jaden Honeyman, Andrew Ahrens and Mathew Flintrop were hired as farm bill biologists in February.

Honeyman's district, stationed in Hettinger, covers Adams, Bowman and Slope counties.

Ahrens district, Devils Lake, comprises Ramsey, Nelson and Benson counties. Flintrop's district, Dickinson, contains Stark, Billings and Hettinger counties.

Existing farm bill biologists are Mathew Olson and Rachel Bush. Olson's district, Forman, is Ransom, Richland, Sargent and Dickey counties. Bush's district, Jamestown, covers Stutsman, Lamoure and Barnes counties.

Farm bill biologists work out of Natural Resources Conservation Service offices, and are funded by NRCS, North Dakota Game and Fish Department, Ducks Unlimited and Pheasants Forever.

Barnes County Wildlife Club Honored

The state Game and Fish Department recognized the Barnes County Wildlife Club for outstanding partnership contributions in developing and enhancing public boating and fishing related facilities in North Dakota.

"Barnes County Wildlife Club is worthy of recognition for their involvement in public use areas and facilities dating back more than two decades," said Gene Van Eeckhout, Department southeast district fisheries supervisor.

Van Eeckhout said the organization has been sponsoring the Take a Kid Fishing Day event on Lake Ashtabula since 1990, while taking an active role in developing public facilities around Lake Ashtabula. In addition, BCWC has been active in pursuing cost share agreements with Game and Fish for the construction of a variety of public use facilities on area lakes and rivers.



Perry Kapaun (left), with the Barnes County Wildlife Club, receives an award presented by Gene Van Eeckhout, Game and Fish Department southeast district fisheries supervisor.

back cast

By Ron Wilson



Frog pants.
Never thought I'd string those two words together in this back page space, but that's what came to mind when I looked at what nature discarded at a small reservoir in eastern North Dakota earlier this spring.
Scattered on shore and in the shallows were the waist-down remains of a dozen or more leopard frogs. Faded nearly ghostly white, the Y-shaped corpses looked for the world like, well, frog pants. Something the frogs simply and casually stepped out of a leg at a time before moving on to catch bugs or something.

While leopard frogs are capable swimmers and can leap 5-6 feet when pursued by predators, some competent carnivore had its ways with this army of frogs, severing the tops from the bottoms, with only the latter left behind as evidence.

But what predator eats just the upper half of what you'd assume to be a pretty good meal, and abandons the rest?

Likely the state's most valuable furbearer of more than a half-century ago when sales of their fur by North Dakota trappers averaged more than \$220,000 per year.

"That strikes me as a behavior of a mink," said Bill Jensen, Game and Fish Department biologist. Bushy-tailed, semi-aquatic and weighing up to 4 pounds, mink are strictly carnivorous and prey includes, among other things, frogs.

Turns out, mink have sort of an affinity for brains. "If you catch a muskrat in a trap and a mink gets there before you, it

will eat the head off to get at the brain," Jensen said.

Spend enough time outdoors and you'll stumble across things that surprise and amaze, or simply make you scratch your head. On the same trip earlier this spring when I found the half-eaten frogs, I stood outside the camper not long after sunrise, simply listening, picking apart the sounds made by a riotous crowd of birds in the lowland marsh to the south and prairie to the north.

What I strained to hear were the mechanical sounds and resonant notes of sharp-tailed grouse on their dancing grounds. While I envisioned the males on a prairie flat spot, twisting and turning with their tails erect, necks outstretched and wings lowered, I couldn't hear them over the manic "calling" of something, one especially noisy critter that I couldn't identify.

The call was a pulsating *who-who, who-who, who-who* that grew in passion before ending abruptly, but only to be taken up by another bird with equal fervor.

Being a pedestrian birder at best, I searched the wetland with binoculars for a clue of the noisemaker wading in the shallows.

Turns out, I didn't have a clue.

Instead of looking down, I should have been looking up for the winnowing flight display of the male common snipe (also known as the Wilson's snipe). The birds, a biologist told me, circle high in the air, before diving at high speeds. The sound I heard was the rush of air past the birds' parted tail feathers as it raced headlong toward the ground.

Who-who knew?

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



RON WILSON

A CLOSER LOOK

By Ron Wilson



Carp

While buffalo and carp are similar in coloration and seemingly seen as one by some anglers, carp are easily distinguished from buffalo because of the two fleshy spines on each side of the mouth.

Buffalo and carp share some of the same waters in North Dakota, but not a lot else. Yet because they are rather similar in appearance, and not held in high regard by anglers, they are lumped together as if one is no different than the other.

Bigmouth and smallmouth buffalo are native to North Dakota. Common carp are not. Bigmouth buffalo are the largest member of the sucker family, while common carp are one of the biggest pains in the neck in terms of fisheries management.

Fisheries managers grit their teeth when it comes to exotic carp because this member of the minnow family is destructive and competitive. Introduced into North Dakota in the late 1800s, carp eat plants and animals that would otherwise feed young game fish. Being bottom feeders for the most part, carp uproot plants and stir sediments that cloud the water and block sunlight needed for beneficial aquatic plants to grow. And game fish often struggle in these dirty waters to see their prey.

Carp are also very productive and within a short time multiply to a point where they hog space once occupied by game fish. In small lakes, carp can almost eliminate a sport fishery, while in big waters they significantly reduce pike and walleye populations.

“Common carp are the top villain in fish management in North Dakota and other states,” said Greg Power, Game and Fish Department fisheries chief. “Bigmouth buffalo look somewhat like carp and are guilty by association.”

While both species grow fairly

large, with deep bodies, and are similar in coloration, carp are easily distinguished from buffalo because of the two fleshy barbels on each side of the mouth.

“While carp have spines, bigmouth buffalo have much larger scales,” Power said.

Unfortunately, common carp are found in every county in the state. Not so with bigmouth buffalo, which are native to large river systems like the Missouri, and are found in bigger still waters like Heart Butte and Bowman-Haley dams and Jamestown Reservoir.

The state record common carp is 31 pounds and was taken from the Sheyenne River in 2003. The state record bigmouth buffalo is 54 pounds and was taken from the Heart Butte Tailrace in 2011.

Both are big fish for sure, but only one gives fisheries managers whopper headaches.

RON WILSON is editor of North Dakota OUTDOORS.



Buffalo

CRAIG BIRLIE

MIKE ANDERSON