

NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

PUBLISHED BY THE NORTH DAKOTA

GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

\$2.00 JUNE 2012





MATTERS OF OPINION



Terry Steinwand
Director

We're into the summer recreation season and while it seems like it's been here for months already, we're just getting started.

We've had some phenomenal fishing across the state thus far. Recently, some of my family members wanted to go fishing so we went to a small, local lake and decided to drown a few worms. Forgetting what a nice spring we've had, I wasn't overly confident since we'd never done all that well this early in the season, or at least what I thought was early in the season. After casting out the first line, I was halfway to the second rod to get it ready when my daughter proclaimed she had a "fish on."

I was a little skeptical when I heard it since it had scarcely been five seconds since I cast the line, but she was right. It was close to 30 minutes before I actually got to put a line in the water and get some fishing in myself.

During the course of this three-hour fishing trip and countless casts and retrieves, there was, at times, vegetation on the hook, line or bobber. One of the larger pieces of vegetation was a piece of curly leaf pondweed. While many consider it just another "weed," it's not native to North Dakota waters and, while we know it occurs in some fisheries, it's not a preferable piece of aquatic vegetation.

Curly leaf pondweed is an aquatic nuisance species, or ANS. The reason it's undesirable is that these newcomers tend to take over a lake, becoming the dominant species of rooted vegetation. The best lakes have a variety of vegetation where different

species of aquatic invertebrates occur, while also providing hiding places for young fish, and hideouts for predators to ambush prey.

Over the last 10-plus years, the Game and Fish Department has become serious about doing what we can to prevent aquatic nuisance species from entering North Dakota. Aquatic nuisance species can range from a small invertebrate that can attach itself to a fishing line, to plants like I just described, to exotic fish that can destroy a great recreational fishery. It takes just a little precaution to prevent this from unintentionally occurring, and it begins with knowing what to look for or what to do.

The Game and Fish Department's philosophy is to keep regulations to a minimum on whatever we do, but sometimes they're necessary. And when we do implement a new regulation, it's rare to see complete agreement. But the state's regulations regarding aquatic nuisance species are necessary to safeguard the great fishing resources we have in North Dakota.

I used our family fishing outing to educate those with me the importance of making sure your equipment is clean when leaving the lake, whether you're fishing from a boat or shore. Most illegal introductions into lakes are purely unintentional, but can do great harm to that lake. All it takes is a little time and knowing what to do to keep fishing great.

So, take a little time to go fishing this summer with family, friends, or simply by yourself. And enjoy the great North Dakota outdoors.

Terry Steinwand

NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

PUBLISHED BY THE NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

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

Editor: Ron Wilson

Graphic Designer: Connie Schiff

Circulation Manager: Dawn Jochim

JUNE 2012 • NUMBER 10 • VOLUME LXXIV

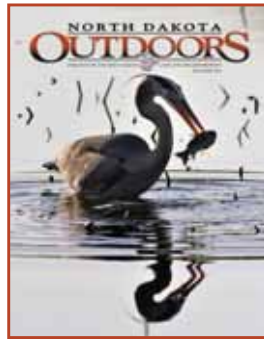
TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURES

Aquatic Nuisance Species a Continuing Threat.....	2
A Decade of Funding	6
Weasels by the Woodshed	10
Getting Fit for Fall Today	14

DEPARTMENTS

Buffaloberry Patch.....	18
Back Cast	25



Front Cover

A great blue heron catches a young carp.
Photo by Mike LaLonde, Bismarck



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

Website: gf.nd.gov • email: ndgfd@nd.gov

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Report All Poachers (RAP) 800-472-2121

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

DEPARTMENT DIRECTORY

Governor Jack Dalrymple

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION

Game and Fish Director: Terry Steinwand

Deputy Director: Roger Rostvet

Chief, Administrative Services: Kim Molesworth

Business Manager: Corey Wentland

Administrative Assistant: GERALYN M. EVANS

Administrative Officer/Building Maint. Supvr: George Lee

Building Maint. Tech: Dustin Repnow

Chief Accountant: Angie Krueger

Accountants: Kelly Wike, Melissa Long, Ashley Baker

IT Section Supervisor/GIS Specialist: Brian Hosek

IT Coordinators: Sally Sorenson, Alan Reile

Licensing Manager: Randy Meissner

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

Administrative Assistant – Dickinson: Janel Kolar, Stephanie Richardson

Administrative Assistant – Devils Lake: Lisa Toft

Administrative Assistant – Jamestown: Tonya Kukowski

Administrative Assistant – Riverdale: Clare Renner

CONSERVATION AND COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION

Division Chief: Greg Link, Bismarck

Administrative and Water Safety Coordinator: Nancy Boldt, Bismarck

Communications Supervisor: Craig Bihle, Bismarck

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

Website Editor: Pat Headrick, Bismarck

News Editor: Greg Freeman, Bismarck

Video News Director: Tom Jensen, Bismarck

Videographer: Mike Anderson, Bismarck

Information Specialist: Dawn Jochim, Bismarck

Graphic Artist: Connie Schiff, Bismarck

Outreach Supervisor: Chris D. Grondahl, Bismarck

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

Egeland, Grand Forks; Pat Lothspeich, Bismarck

Education Coordinator: Jeff Long, Bismarck

Hunter Education Coordinator: Vacant

Conservation Supervisor: Steve Dyke, Bismarck

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

Conservation Biologists: Sandra Johnson, Patrick Isakson, Bismarck

ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

Division Chief: Robert Timian, Bismarck

Investigations Supvr: Bruce Burkett, Bismarck

Investigator: Scott Winkelman, Bismarck

Region No. 1 Warden Supvr: Corey Erck, Jamestown

District Wardens: Jackie Lundstrom, Bismarck; Amy Jo Winkelman, Bismarck;

Jerad Bluem, Steele; Mark Pollert, Jamestown; Michael Seclacek, Fargo; Tim Phalen,

Wyndmere; Andrew Dahlgren, Edgeley; Erik Schmidt, Linton

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

District Wardens: Jonathan Tofteland, Bottineau; Randy Knain, Rugby; Kurt Auf-

forth, Cando; Greg Hastings, Cavalier; Gary Rankin, Larimore; Josh Frey, Devils

Lake; James Myhre, New Rockford

Region No. 3 Warden Supvr: Doug Olson, Riverdale

District Wardens: Jim Burud, Kenmare; Al Howard, Minot; Tim Larson, Turtle

Lake; Ken Skuza, Riverdale; Michael Raasakka, Stanley; Brent Schwan, Watford City

Region No. 4 Warden Supvr: Dan Hoenke, Dickinson

District Wardens: Ryan Tunge, Hazen; Bill Schaller, Killdeer; Art Cox, Bowman;

Courtney Sprenger, Elgin; Jeff Violett, Mandan

Administrative Assistant: Lori Kensington, Bismarck

WILDLIFE DIVISION

Division Chief: Randy Kreil, Bismarck

Assistant Division Chief: Jeb Williams, Bismarck

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

Procurement Officer: Ray Parsons, Bismarck

Pilot: Jeff Faught, Bismarck

Upland Game Mgt. Supvr: Stan Kohn, Bismarck

Upland Game Mgt. Biologist: Aaron Robinson, Dickinson

Migratory Game Bird Biologist: Mike Szymanski, Bismarck

Big Game Mgt. Supvr: Bruce Stillings, Dickinson

Big Game Mgt. Biologists: Bill Jensen, Bismarck; Brett Wiedmann, Dickinson,

Jason Smith, Jamestown

Survey Coordinator: Jerry Gulke

Wildlife Veterinarian: Dr. Daniel Grove, Bismarck

Furbearer Biologist: Stephanie Tucker, Bismarck

Game Management Technician: Rodney Gross, Devils Lake

Wildlife Resource Management Section Leader: Scott Peterson, Lonetree

Wildlife Resource Mgt. Supvrs: Bill Haase, Bismarck; Brian Prince, Devils Lake; Kent

Luttschwager, Williston; Brian Kietzman, Jamestown; Dan Halstead, Riverdale

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

Lonetree; Rodd Compson, Jamestown; Judd Jasmer, Dickinson

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

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

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

Private Land Section Leader: Kevin Kading, Bismarck

Asst. Private Land Coordinator: Doug Howie, Bismarck

Private Land Field Operation Coordinator: Casey Anderson, Bismarck

Private Land Biologists: Jon Roldson, Colin Penner, Terry Oswald, Jr., Levi Jacobson,

Bismarck; Ty Dressler, Dickinson; Ryan Huber, Riverdale; Nathan Harling, Devils

Lake; Renae Heinle, Jamestown; Todd Buckley, Williston

Administrative Assistant: Dale Repnow, Bismarck

Lonetree Administrative Assistant: Diana Raugust, Harvey

FISHERIES DIVISION

Division Chief: Greg Power, Bismarck

Fisheries Mgt. Section Leader: Scott Gangl, Bismarck

Fisheries Supvrs: Fred Ryckman, Riverdale; Jeff Hendrickson, Dickinson; Jason Lee,

Riverdale; Paul Bailey, Bismarck; Randy Hiltner, Devils Lake; Gene Van Eckhout,

Jamestown; Dave Fryda, Riverdale

Fisheries Biologists: Brandon Kratz, Jamestown; Russ Kinzler, Riverdale

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

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

Dickinson

Production/Development Section Supvr: Jerry Weigel, Bismarck

Aquatic Habitat Supvr: Scott Elstad, Bismarck

Fisheries Development Supvr: Bob Frohlich, Bismarck

Fisheries Dev. Proj. Mgr: Wesley Erdle, Bismarck

Fisheries Development Technician: Vacant

ANS Coordinator: Fred Ryckman, Riverdale

Administrative Assistant: Janice Vetter, Bismarck

ADVISORY BOARD

District 1 Jason Leiseth, Arnegard

District 2 Robert Gjellstad, Voltaire

District 3 Tracy Gardner, Devils Lake

District 4 Ronald Houdek, Tolna

District 5 Loran Palmer, West Fargo

District 6 Joel Christoferson, Litchville

District 7 Frank Karch, Bismarck

District 8 Wayne Gerbig, Amidon

AQUATIC NUISANCE SPECIES

By Ron Wilson

It's no secret that laws are in effect to prevent the introduction and spread of aquatic nuisance species in North Dakota.

DANGER
POSSIBLE DEEP
WATER WITH
DROP-OFFS AND
STRONG CURRENTS

SWIM AT YOUR
OWN RISK

**AQUATIC NUISANCE
SPECIES
LAWS IN EFFECT**
INSPECT
REMOVE
DRAIN

MIKE ANDERSON

North Dakota isn't free of aquatic nuisance species, yet the state, which boasts 360-plus fishing waters, is fortunate that new or expanded exotic populations aren't big management problems.

Here's a rundown. Curly leaf pondweed is found in 10 North Dakota waters, while Eurasian water milfoil is rooted in just two. Zebra mussels were discovered near the Red River a few years ago, while an angler caught the first silver carp, an exotic fish of Internet fame that jumps from the water when alarmed by passing boats, from the James River in 2011.

Record high flows last year allowed the silver carp's upstream movement from South Dakota. This fish species has proven to be a detrimental invasive in a number of waters in which it has become established, particularly in the middle and lower Mississippi River basin, but potential impacts in the James River are speculative at this time, said Fred Ryckman, North Dakota Game and Fish Department aquatic nuisance species coordinator.

"Silver carp are very prolific and do their best in larger river systems," Ryckman said. "When present in large numbers, silver carp have been documented to reduce the growth, condition and survival of many native species. Since most silver carp populations within the Mississippi River basin have only recently become established, the extent and quantification of their impacts are only beginning to be studied and documented."

Specific to the James River in North Dakota, Ryckman said if a population becomes established and numbers increase substantially, silver carp will compete with native fish for forage and habitat. The Game and Fish Department will continue to monitor the James River and tributary waters in 2012 in an effort to document whether this species is still present and has naturally reproduced.

"It would obviously be very concerning if we found large numbers of juvenile silver carp in the James this year," Ryckman said. "As with any invasive species, a big concern is that if silver carp do become established, then it simply becomes more likely that they could become introduced into other North Dakota waters. Depending on the results of our monitoring, other management actions may be required and implemented."

The presence of silver carp, which are also a danger to boaters when jumping, has changed how the Department manages the river. "Specifically, it is no

longer legal to harvest bait from the James River or its tributaries upstream to the first vehicular bridge crossing," Ryckman said.

If an angler catches a silver carp, they are instructed not to release it, and report the catch to the Game and Fish Department. "Since it's illegal to possess or transport any aquatic nuisance species, an angler would need to contact us immediately, so that we can take the fish from the angler on site," Ryckman said. "If that's not possible, then I'd encourage taking photographs of the fish before killing and disposing of it. This should be done by wrapping or sealing in a plastic bag and then placing in the closest garbage receptacle."

Plans have been in place for some time to safeguard North Dakota waters from other new infestations, or noticeable increases in aquatic nuisance species. One objective is to monitor for early detection of new or pioneering species. "Department fisheries staff monitors ANS as part of their routine activities, and intensified monitoring is also done on waters with known ANS infestations to document status or movement of these known populations," Ryckman said. "We also contract and cooperate with other agencies and entities that assist with monitoring efforts."

Game and Fish Department fisheries technician, Pat John (left), and district fisheries biologist, Brandon Kratz, with a silver carp from the James River, discovered in fall 2011.



GENE VAN ECKHOUT



MIKE ANDERSON

More warnings than citations for ANS violations were issued in the past, but now that so much aquatic nuisance species information has been spread through the media and elsewhere, things will change.

The Department has for years employed information and education efforts directed at anglers, boaters and other waters users concerning the introduction and spread of ANS in North Dakota. This information campaign also includes increasing public awareness of new ANS laws, the most notable of which calls for boat operators to drain livewells, even if they contain fish, when leaving a water body.

“Our plan to prevent serious problems from developing is to implement the strategies and objectives as described in the state’s aquatic nuisance species management plan,” Ryckman said. “Should new populations of ANS be found, we will use the rapid response plan to guide and coordinate efforts to isolate and eradicate, if possible, the new infestation.”

There’s some talk that North Dakota should do more about ANS and isn’t as aggressive as other states, but Ryckman argues that the state has done a great deal to prevent and reduce the risk of ANS.

“We’ve done far more than some states, but also less than some others,” he said. “ANS is but one of the many issues affecting aquatic resource and fisheries management in North Dakota. As such, we will do as much as possible to prevent ANS from becoming a more serious problem, but we will do so

within the framework of managing risks and working with practical and effective financial and employee constraints.”

For ANS prevention and control to be truly effective, the Department needs support and assistance from those who recreate on North Dakota’s aquatic resources. “Public acceptance of our ANS rules and regulations is imperative,” Ryckman said. “Information and education efforts are critically important to get this public support, and we have and will continue to do extensive information and education activities for this purpose.”

The biggest concerns for new ANS infestations in our waters, Ryckman said, originate from out-of-state sources. The fact that other states, especially those to North Dakota’s east, have installed new rules and are enforcing them, will undoubtedly help further protect the state’s natural resources.

Mandatory ANS inspections in North Dakota for both resident and nonresident water users have been held in the past, and there are plans for more in the future.

“Although still very expensive, they can be fairly effective at waters with single ingress/egress sites,” he said. “But for many of our larger waters with several

or dozens of access sites, the logistics are much more difficult. Mandatory inspections of all watercraft would also necessitate that during peak use periods individuals would be required to wait several hours for inspections to occur. We simply don't think mandatory inspections would be the best or most effective way to reduce the risk of introduction or spreading ANS."

Robert Timian, Game and Fish Department enforcement division chief, said most anglers understand what's at stake and what can be lost if exotics are introduced or spread in North Dakota's waters. They are willing to put up with small inconveniences, be it cleaning vegetation off of boat trailers to draining livewells before leaving a water body, to safeguard the state's outstanding fishery.

"Anytime you have new regulations, you have to inform the public and explain what the new regulations mean and when they go into effect ... and we've done that," Timian said. "Even so, the ultimate goal is compliance from those people who use our waters."

Timian said wardens are finding that avid anglers, those who travel and fish a number of waters, have an increased awareness of the evils of ANS. "It's the infrequent water recreationists we are not so sure about," he said. "Understanding that, we have to continue to get the message out to increase ANS awareness to all water recreationists."

Timian said more warnings than citations were issued in the past, but now that so much ANS information has been spread through the media and elsewhere, things will change. "Warnings are good during the information phase, but then you need to take direct action," he said. "Citations send the message that we are serious about the introduction and spread of aquatic nuisance species in North Dakota."

While game wardens have discretion depending on the situation, Timian said they will be especially cautious with boats being launched that have water in livewells. "The angler putting his boat in the water with water in his livewell will likely get a citation because we don't know where the

water they are carrying came from."

Again, Timian said, compliance is the goal.

"We need to protect our world-class fishing in North Dakota as long as we can," he said. "While we have some aquatic nuisance species in North Dakota already, we need to do our best to slow their advance."

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.



MIKE ANDERSON

Mandatory ANS inspections in North Dakota for both resident and nonresident water users have been held in the past, and there are plans for more in the future.



GREG GULLICKSON

One of the most notable ANS laws in North Dakota calls for boat operators to drain livewells, even if they contain fish, when leaving a water body.



Researchers wade through the Wild Rice River in eastern North Dakota stunning fish with backpack electroshockers and using small nets and large seines to collect fish to identify, measure and count.

A DECADE OF FUNDING

By Ron Wilson

Animals not hunted, fished or trapped in North Dakota traditionally received little management consideration at the state level, chiefly due to the lack of funding.

That changed in 2000 when Congress created the State Wildlife Grants program, which provides federal funding to state game and fish agencies to prevent wildlife from becoming threatened or endangered. In 2002, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department received its first SWG funding, marking 2012 as the 10-year anniversary of a program that directs attention at species that were once often ignored.

Allocated by Congress based on a formula on each state's size and population, North Dakota has received an average of \$625,000 per year in the last decade. Along with nonfederal matching grants from a number of partners outside the Department, nearly 50 projects totaling \$9.5 million have been funded in the state since 2002.

State Wildlife Grants projects range from research and surveys of specific species and their habitats, to protecting, enhancing and restoring habitat for non-game animals of concern and many other species.

To pick one project that best represents how the SWG program is designed to function is difficult,



MANDY THOMAS

said Steve Dyke, North Dakota Game and Fish Department conservation supervisor, because he believes the vast majority of the projects funded are reflective of how the program is meant to work.

Even so, he points to three as good examples:

- First is the Smith Grove Wildlife Management Area land acquisition project that preserved about 220 acres of highly valued and unique Missouri River riparian corridor in perpetuity for public use and enjoyment. “The habitat contained in this tract will benefit rare species such as least terns and piping plovers, as well as bald eagles, red-headed woodpeckers, white-tailed deer, sharp-tailed grouse, ring-necked pheasants, wild turkeys, the list goes on,” Dyke said.
- Second is the removal of sediment from seasonal and temporary wetlands in the drift prairie in northeastern North Dakota. “A high percentage of our smaller wetlands have filled with sediment and have become cattail-choked, thereby degrading the natural habitat typically found in these basins,” Dyke said. “By mechanically dredging this sediment from more than 50 wetlands, we restored the habitat to a more diverse setting that will favor dozens of rare species along with game species such as migratory waterfowl.” Secondary benefits include increased floodwater retention, groundwater recharge and nonpoint source pollution reduction.



MIKE ANDERSON

The Smith Grove Wildlife Management Area land acquisition project was one of the many highlights of the State Wildlife Grants program in North Dakota in the last decade.



SANDRA JOHNSON



GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT PHOTO

Revisiting and updating photo points allows wildlife management agencies to assess how much habitat has changed in the past 50 years. With the aid of these photos taken in the same spots years apart, scientists are able to better assess what wildlife species may be affected and determine what management actions are warranted.

In 2006, researchers from Frostburg State University, Maryland, and Penn State University, Pennsylvania, initiated a project to determine the status and distribution of fishers, American martens and river otters in North Dakota. In some instances, researchers used track plates to capture tracks left behind by rare carnivores on sticky, white paper.



FROSTBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

- While the aforementioned projects were directed at protecting and restoring fish and wildlife habitat, the third, a survey of meso-carnivores in eastern North Dakota drainages, had a different objective. “For quite some time we had anecdotal reports and sightings of river otters, fishers and martens, but no real idea of their numbers or range,” Dyke said. “This study provided the mechanism to give us some of those answers, to the point where we now have a limited fisher season.”
- Patrick T. Isakson, Department conservation biologist, added that a study on leopard frogs is also representative of how the SWG program is meant to work. “Leopard frogs were proposed to be listed as a threatened or endangered species, but a study with North Dakota State University is finding high genetic diversity in leopard frogs in North Dakota, meaning that we have a good healthy population of frogs,” he said. “Scientific research like this provides the data necessary to confirm leopard frogs are not at risk of extinction in North Dakota and should not be listed as threatened or endangered.”

The ability now, and for the last decade, to fund research and determine distribution and abundance, among other things, of species and their habitats, has also shed light on other wildlife mysteries in North Dakota. For example, a study on freshwater mussels has provided biologists with information that will likely allow them to remove some species from the Department’s Species of Conservation Priority list, which identifies animals in decline or whose population status is not well known.

“The mussel survey documented two new species records for the state, the deer toe and fragile paper-shell,” Isakson said. “We are also funding a survey of black-tailed prairie dog towns and associated fauna with Dickinson State University, where the professor and his students captured a Merriam’s shrew, which is only the second specimen of this species to be caught in North Dakota.”

Isakson said a bat project also detected the occurrence of two species, Western small-footed myotis and Townsend’s big-eared bat, outside their historical geographic distribution.

When talking about the SWG program, it’s easiest to focus on the animals because, like the seemingly always-at-play river otters, they are so cool. However, a lot of work has gone into protecting, enhancing and restoring habitat on North Dakota’s landscape.

“Habitat work is important because healthy, viable populations of fish and wildlife rely on good habitat for their existence,” Dyke said. “Every

critter needs an ample supply of food, water, cover and space. It's that simple."

But it's not just the nongame species that are benefiting from this work. "Remember that fish and wildlife resources are a public trust responsibility, and that includes nongame species as well as game species," Dyke said. "This is a huge responsibility that society has vested in us as an agency. As such, it's imperative that this resource not be squandered, and species not be allowed to go extinct, but managed for the ages and be available and appreciated by all."

Sandra Johnson, Department conservation biologist, added: "One thing we have always stressed when talking about SWG projects is that this program benefits not only nongame species, but game species as well. Protecting and enhancing quality habitat benefits all species."

Dyke said when it was first learned that the SWG program would get funding, some people worried that money spent on nongame species would be better spent on traditional programs where specific game species objectives are the driving force.

"What we stated from day one is that we can do good things for game species as we do good things for nongame species," he said. "You can look at all of our habitat improvement projects funded with SWG money and point to benefits to game species. Keeping and creating the habitat is key. Ducks, deer and grouse live in the same general habitat types as shorebirds, prairie dogs and grassland nesting passerines."

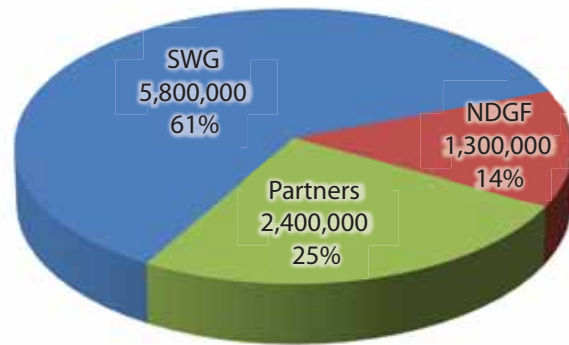
Isakson said a specific example is the matching of SWG and Department funds to secure habitat through the popular Private Land Open To Sportsmen program. "A survey of a few of these PLOTS detected game birds, pheasants, grouse and some waterfowl using the habitat as well as many Species of Conservation Priority," he said. "So these PLOTS are providing important breeding habitat for many wildlife species in spring and summer, and access to hunters in fall."

Initially, North Dakota's decade-old SWG program focused more on survey and research as there was such a void of information on the presence, absence, range and distribution of species on the Department's list. Over time, more and more habitat preservation, creation and maintenance related projects have been added, which accounts for a big portion of SWG funding today.

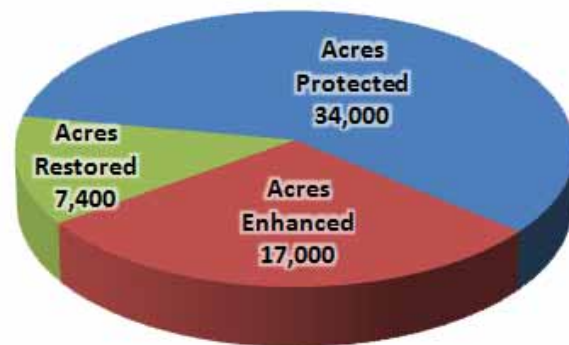
"There is still a lot to learn about nongame species in the state so research continues," Johnson said, "but we know enough about habitat protection and enhancement to use SWG dollars to benefit many species."

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.

\$9.5 million in SWG projects in North Dakota



58,400 Acres Protected, Enhanced or Restored



Percentage of Total Funding by Project Type







WEASELS BY THE WOODSHED

Story and Photos by Craig Bihrlle

After spending the first several weeks of their lives in underground burrows or hidden by tall grass and thick underbrush, the assortment of PVC pipe, wood and wheels near a storage shed in the Game and Fish Department's back parking lot must have looked like a weasel amusement park.

At least, a cluster of five or six young long-tailed weasels sure looked like they were having a good time one

day last June as they romped through, around and over an assortment of implements before they disappeared back into the tall grass and shade of a nearby shelterbelt, likely to endure a scolding from an irritated mother.

Most people who spend time outdoors have probably seen weasels a time or two, but more likely a white weasel in winter than a brown and tan weasel in summer. Seeing several adult-sized young ones together that



(also called ermines) and least weasels, but longtails are the largest, and are more common and more widely distributed.

They eat voles and mice and will even tackle rabbits and muskrats. They search for food in burrows and by zig-zagging through above-ground grass, like a pointing dog properly working a prairie landscape.

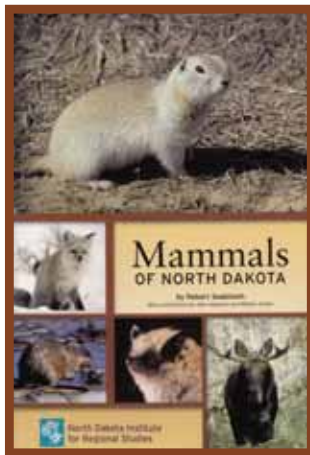
Weasels also find shelter in ground squirrel or pocket gopher burrows, and young are born underground and remain there for several weeks. They emerge in early summer to learn about catching their own food and avoiding other creatures, like foxes or hawks and owls, that are the next layer up on the food chain.

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

are more interested in exploring a newly-discovered playground than they are worried about small gatherings of human onlookers, is perhaps a once-in-a-lifetime rarity.

And so, we have pictures.

These are long-tailed weasels. According to the new book "Mammals of North Dakota," authored by retired University of North Dakota biology professor Robert Seabloom, North Dakota also has short-tailed weasels



Mammals of North Dakota

The first comprehensive book on the state's mammals since 1926, "Mammals of North Dakota" covers all 86 known species from mice to moose.

It was published by the North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, and authored by Robert Seabloom, biology professor emeritus at the University of North Dakota. Contributing writers were William Jensen, big game biologist with the State Game and Fish Department, and John Hoganson, state paleontologist with the North Dakota Geological Survey.

The book retails for \$36 and is available at select book outlets and online through the Institute for Regional Studies at www.ndsu.edu/ahss/ndirs.



Getting
Fit for **Fall**
Today

By Jeremy Koepplin

LAUREN WILSON

Summer is a great time to put on your hunting boots and strap on a backpack to get in shape for the fall hunting season.

It's the much-anticipated Friday that jump-starts opening weekend of North Dakota's deer gun season. Since Halloween, you've spent your free time carefully planning and packing the essentials to make your hunt a success.

After arriving at your favorite hunting spot, it's finally time for the first hike of the season. To your surprise, you don't make it back to the pickup in the same shape as when you stepped out. Whether you've had too many bags of potato chips throughout the year or pulled a muscle, this scenario can be prevented. And with 16 days left in the season, you might wish you spent as much time preparing physically as you prepared mentally.

At 24, I consider myself physically fit. Last November, I did my homework by scouting deer and sighting in my rifle, yet the thought of getting into proper physical shape for hunting never crossed my mind. On my first hike of the deer season, I pulled a hip flexor muscle on my left side while hiking up a hill in western North Dakota. In return, I had to modify my hunting strategy over the remaining two weeks to include less walking. It was during those two weeks I decided this would never happen again.

The injury further motivated me to help other hunters avoid similar setbacks. Fall in North Dakota is about enjoying the outdoors, no matter what species you're hunting. With just a little dedication and

direction in getting started, it's easy to get your body moving. Once you get started, you may not look back.

Increase Activity

Most preventable injuries in the field occur because of new stresses on your body. The added workload to the heart, lungs, joints and muscles can make your body fatigue quickly.

Although not all injuries are preventable (i.e. a pheasant clawing your hand), fortunately many can be avoided. Furthermore, building up endurance improves the efficiency of your heart and lungs, and the increased stamina will go a long way when you are in the field walking through what's left of North Dakota's Conservation Reserve Program acres.

I've found that the easiest way to increase physical activity is to find something you enjoy. What better time to begin than right now in the warmth of a beautiful North Dakota summer?

If you haven't done much physical activity recently, start slow. A few great outdoor activities include walking the dog daily, getting involved with your kid's sports, biking, or even just going for a nature stroll. Hiking in your hunting boots not only breaks them in, but allows your body to get used to the extra weight. In spring I enjoy hiking in the outdoors looking for deer sheds, and I wear my hunting boots to increase my workout.



Most preventable injuries in the field occur because of new stresses on your body, like hauling a load of waterfowl decoys over uneven ground to a favorite wetland in the dark. The added workload to the heart, lungs, joints and muscles can make your body fatigue quickly.

CRAIG BIRLE

When the weather gets cooler, getting your heart rate up can be more of a challenge. Getting a gym membership is a great way to stay in shape; however, working out indoors is not everyone's idea of a good time. An alternative to the gym could be walking around your local mall or recreational center while listening to favorite music. Walking up and down stairs or using a stair-step fitness machine can prepare you for walking through North Dakota's snow and over uneven terrain.

The key to staying fit is getting your heart rate elevated for a period of time. If you find an activity you enjoy, try to work at it for 30 minutes a day. The more time you find to exercise, the better. According to the American Heart Association, aerobic physical activity 3-5 days a week will increase your strength and endurance, boost your energy level, help to manage stress, and reduce the risk of heart disease and many chronic illnesses.

Flexibility

Stretching is another important dimension of wellness to consider when talking exercise and its relation to hunting. Stretching restores muscle tone and increases flexibility. Increasing flexibility helps improve performance in the field and decreases risk of injury.

Stretching is a great warm-up and cool-down activity, and it's best if you can incorporate 5-10 minutes of stretching at the front and back ends of your workout or hunt. Do some form of warm-up before stretching, to avoid straining cold muscles.

Make it your goal to stretch each of the major lower extremity muscle groups (calf muscles, hamstrings,

quadriceps) four times each, holding each stretch for 30 seconds. According to the Journal of Orthopedic and Sports Physical Therapy, stretching increases range-of-motion. The more you stretch the more flexibility you will gain. Keep in mind, stretching often needs to occur over the course of several weeks to be most beneficial. For a guide to 10 basic stretches, check out the Mayo Clinic website at <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/stretching/SM00043>.

Resistance Training

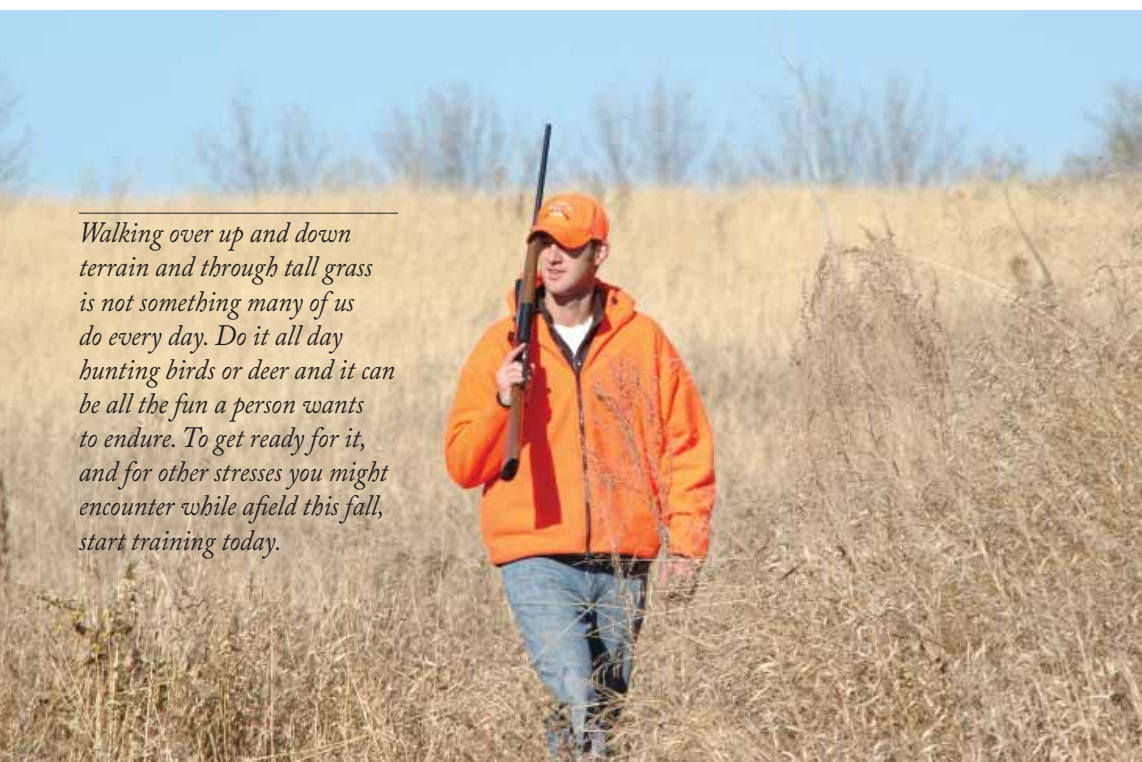
The idea behind resistance training is to counteract the effects of gravity. Let's face it, some activities become more difficult with age unless we begin to address it. Walking in boots, waders, or multiple layers of clothing is more of a challenge than walking in shorts on a walking track. Lifting a 150-pound deer onto the pickup tailgate feels a lot easier at age 21 than 60. When lifting something heavy, think about your technique. If you think it might be too much weight for one person, ask someone for assistance.

A few easy tips to remember when lifting:

- Avoid bending at the waist. Instead, bend at the knees and ankles to prevent strain on your back.
- Do not lift and twist at the same time. Most muscles are aligned to lift in one direction. If you have to lift something to the side, first lift and then turn once you are in a full stance position.
- Keep the object close to your body. The farther the object is from your center mass, the more difficult it is to lift.

Whether it's lifting a deer, getting into a tree stand or walking up a steep incline, increased core strength will help reduce strain on your back. Core strength improves with sit-ups, crunches or planks (bridging up allowing only your toes and forearms to touch the ground). Other important areas to consider are hips and knees. Standing wall squats and lunges are great exercises to build up endurance while combining multiple muscle groups.

If you plan on hunting with a backpack or using a bow, upper body exercises can make life a lot easier. Wear a backpack or weighted vest when walking or hiking, starting light and increasing resistance until achieving the weight you'll be using during hunting season. To help draw back your bow,



Walking over up and down terrain and through tall grass is not something many of us do every day. Do it all day hunting birds or deer and it can be all the fun a person wants to endure. To get ready for it, and for other stresses you might encounter while afield this fall, start training today.

RON WILSON

increase upper body flexibility and strength. Exercises should focus on the shoulder region. Rows and Thera-bands® reproducing the drawing motion are a great way to target involved muscle groups. Shooting your bow often is not only a great way to improve your accuracy, but will allow time for your muscles to adjust to the motion.

Weight training is most effective if done at least 2-3 days a week. As a general rule, try increasing the number of repetitions or number of days per week working out before increasing the amount of resistance. To give your muscles time to recover, leave at least one day between lifts that work the same muscle group. Muscle soreness should not last more than three days. If your muscles still ache after three days, you likely overdid it.

Finding a partner to join in your workouts or activities will make exercising fun and enjoyable. Making a weekly routine will help keep you focused and on task. Setting goals is a great way to stay actively involved, whether it is losing weight or gaining energy. If you are as persistent at exercising as you are at hunting, this fall will be successful whether you get the chance to pull the trigger or not.

Other Tips

- Stay Hydrated – Drink a lot of water. If you are thirsty then you are not drinking enough. Replace soda with water or sports drinks when hunting.
- Watch What You Eat – Your body needs good nutrition to stay healthy and provide energy. Replace some of your hunting junk food with a fruit or cereal bar.
- Get Adequate Sleep – Make sleep a priority. Getting adequate rest will give you more energy and decrease your appetite. If you have to be in the field before dawn, make sure you hit the hay a little earlier the night before.
- Don't Push Too Hard – Don't let the chase of the hunt push your body to its breaking point. If you start feeling uncomfortable, stop and rest. Taking time to recover is better than becoming ill.

In Case of Injury

Injuries happen, but getting hurt does

not have to ruin your hunting season. Many injuries can be treated and get better within just a few days. Remember to allow your body time to heal, and see your physician or physical therapist to receive proper evaluation and treatment.

You should have a first aid kit packed in your bag or hunting vehicle anytime you enter the field. Treat the injury as best you can. If it's severe, get checked out by your physician or nearby hospital.

If you have any questions about exercises, specific stretches, or lifting techniques, see a physical therapist or personal trainer.

With only a few months until the leaves fall and North Dakota's outdoors calls us back to the fields for another adventure, *now* is the time to start getting active.

JEREMY KOEPLIN of Valley City is a physical therapy student at the University of North Dakota.

References

American Heart Association – <http://www.heart.org>

Journal of Sport and Physical Therapy – <http://www.jospt.org>

Mayo Clinic – <http://www.mayoclinic.com>

Author Jeremy Koepplin of Valley City understands the importance of being in shape when fall arrives. Koepplin said he found that the easiest way to get into shape during the preseason was to find something he enjoys. For you, that might be cycling on local bike trails, lifting weights indoors or hiking on dirt paths in the country.



BUFFALOBERRY PATCH

By Greg Freeman, Department News Editor



Shad Hoped to Boost Oahe Forage Base

Game and Fish Department biologists stocked roughly 225 adult gizzard shad in Lake Oahe's Beaver Bay in May to help jumpstart a limited forage base.

Nearly all of Oahe's young-of-the-year rainbow smelt were flushed through the dam during flooding in 2011, drastically thinning what game fish have to eat. High flows and sediment-laden water also reduced production of other forage fish. "When we did our fall reproduction survey in 2011, we saw very few young-of-the-year fish in all of the forage species," said Scott Gangl, North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries management section leader. "We knew going into 2012 that there was going to be a forage problem, at least for the short-term."

Stocking prespaw adult shad was a collaborative effort with South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks fisheries biologists who stocked additional sites on Lake Oahe. "The plan is to give Oahe a little shot in the arm to help boost the forage base," Gangl said.

If the adults spawn successfully, young-of-the-year shad will be on the game fish menu by late June or early July.

Gangl said biologists on both sides of the border are trying to mimic the shad boom seen in the mid-2000s when smelt numbers were down. "We watched the shad slowly build over time and they eventually provided a good forage base for game fish," he said.

Gangl said Lake Oahe has a lot of hungry game fish, but the forage shortage is more pronounced on the North Dakota end of the reservoir. "The fish aren't starving to death, but they are hungry," he said.



MIKE ANDERSON

Paul Bailey, south central district fisheries supervisor with the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, with an adult gizzard shad.

Sage Grouse Numbers Improve Slightly

Though the number of strutting males observed during the 2012 spring sage grouse survey was up 15 percent from last year, the population still remains well below management objectives. Therefore, the sage grouse hunting season will remain closed in 2012.

Aaron Robinson, North Dakota Game and Fish Department upland game bird biologist, said biologists counted 72 males on 12 active strutting grounds. Last year, 63 males were counted on 12 active leks in the southwest.

"This is great news," Robinson said. "The population has shown it can possibly come back given the right conditions."

The number of males counted on leks each spring has gradually declined since 2000. In 2008, spring counts dropped dramatically throughout North Dakota's sage grouse range due to West Nile virus.

"Numerous conservation efforts have taken place in the past four years which will hopefully help the population recover," Robinson said.

Sage grouse are North Dakota's largest native upland game bird. They are found in extreme southwestern North Dakota, primarily in Bowman and Slope counties.



CRAIG BIRKLE

More sage grouse were counted this spring in southwestern North Dakota, but their numbers are still too low to warrant a limited hunting season.

Most Missouri River Boat Ramps Open

Missouri River water recreationists will find that most public boat ramps are usable.

Bob Frohlich, North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries development supervisor, said sites have been cleared of sand and debris after being closed and underwater all of last summer. However, additional large-scale cleanup and reconstruction projects are underway, or in the planning stages.

“This spring, an additional \$2.5 million spending authority was granted to the Department by the state’s emergency commission and the legislative budget section,” Frohlich said. “That, and the support of many local city and county partners, has been of great assistance in moving the much-needed work forward.”

One major construction project involves the MacLean Bottoms boat ramp south of Bismarck. “This site has been closed due to safety reasons because of extensive erosion and scouring along the shoreline,” Frohlich said. “We anticipate the work should be completed and the ramp opened by late June.”

After the project is finished at MacLean Bottoms, crews are hopeful to begin work a few miles upstream at Kimball Bottoms. Currently, one lane of the ramp is open, but Frohlich said additional work is required.

Cleanup of the park and camping area at Graner Bottoms south of Mandan is ongoing, Frohlich said, and a project to



Workers pound long, metal pilings into the ground at MacLean Bottoms boat ramp south of Bismarck to stabilize eroding shoreline.

MIKE ANDERSON

reconstruct the boat ramp is planned for later this fall, if water levels allow.

“While all public ramps along the Missouri River should be operational by fall, it will take years to fully restore these recreation areas to their pre-flood condition,” Frohlich said.

A complete status report of Missouri River boat ramps is on the Game and Fish website at gf.nd.gov.

No Safety Substitute for Life Jackets

The message remains the same, but for good reason.

“Facts prove there is no safety substitute for wearing a life jacket while recreating on public waters,” said Nancy Boldt, North Dakota Game and Fish Department boat and water safety coordinator.

Failure to wear a personal flotation device is the main reason people lose their lives in boating accidents. Boldt said each year, about 700 people nationwide die in boating-related accidents. Nearly 70 percent are caused by drowning, and eight of 10 victims were not wearing a life jacket.

North Dakota law requires Coast Guard approved PFDs in the following circumstances:

- On watercraft less than 16 feet in length, one wearable PFD must be on board for each person.
- Watercraft of 16 feet or longer must have one wearable PFD for each person on board, and one throwable flotation device.
- Anyone being towed on water-skis, surfboard, or a similar device must wear a PFD.
- No person may operate or permit the operation of a personal watercraft without each person on board wearing a PFD.



North Dakota Game and Fish Department warden, Amy Jo Winkelman, helps a youngster with his life jacket at an event earlier this spring promoting safety on the water.

MIKE ANDERSON

- On any vessel less than 27 feet in length, all persons 10 years of age or younger must wear a properly fastened, Coast Guard approved PFD.
- Boaters are reminded to test life jackets for serviceability and fit. All straps and buckles must be intact and there should be no rips or tears in the fabric.

Becoming an Outdoors-Woman Program Announces Schedule

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department's Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program still has openings for several events in 2012.

Hike the Maah Daah Hey Trail in mid-June, unfortunately, isn't one of them as this event filled quickly. Even so, BOW organizers said to look for its return next year.

The annual summer workshop is August 10-12 at Lake Metigoshe State Park, Bottineau. Participants may take several programs including archery, canoeing, introduction to firearms, fly-fishing, kayaking, navigating outdoors, global positioning system, plant identification, introduction to photography, and tracking and trapping. Workshop fees of \$135 cover instruction, program materials, use of equipment, all meals and lodging.

Turtle River State Park will host a workshop September 21-23. Classes include mountain biking, wild game cooking, stream fly-fishing, nature journaling and archery. Workshop fees of \$135 include instruction in all sessions, program materials, use of equipment, and all meals and lodging.

Waterfowl hunting is scheduled October 6-7 in Bismarck. Participants are instructed in firearm and waterfowl hunting safety, shotgun shooting, waterfowl identification, water/field decoys and gear, and techniques for decoying and calling waterfowl. This program features a mentored hunt on October 7. Participants must possess a hunter education certificate, current hunting licenses and provide their own hunting clothing, boots or waders.

Workshop fees of \$20 include instruction, program materials and use of equipment. No lodging is provided.

A bowhunting workshop for women with no field or minimal archery experience is October 24-28 at Lake Metigoshe State Park. Participants will achieve the necessary education, experience and confidence to archery hunt alone. Participants must have previously taken the beginning archery course or have demonstrated a minimum level of proficiency, and must provide their own archery equipment. More information on this event, including cost, will be available in midsummer.



CONNIE SCHIFF

Archery is one of the many activities available at Becoming an Outdoors-Woman workshops.

BOW workshops are designed primarily for women with an interest in learning skills associated with hunting, fishing and outdoor endeavors.

Women interested in attending a workshop can enroll online, or print an information brochure and enrollment form, at the Game and Fish website, gf.nd.gov. More information is available by contacting Nancy Boldt at (701) 328-6312, Brittany Fish at (701) 527-3075, or email ndgf@nd.gov.



Fall Turkey Deadline

Fall turkey applications are scheduled to be online at the Game and Fish website in mid-June. In addition, hunters can pick up a paper application at license vendors throughout the state. The deadline for applying is July 5.



CRAIG BURLE

Game and Fish Pays \$484,000 in Property Taxes

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department recently paid \$484,822 in taxes to counties in which the Department owns or leases land. The 2011 in-lieu-of-tax payments are the same as property taxes paid by private landowners.

The Game and Fish Department manages more than 200,000 acres for wildlife habitat and public hunting in 51 counties. The Department does not own or manage any land in Traill or Renville counties.

Following is a list of counties and the tax payments they received.

Mule Deer Decline Continues

Spring survey numbers indicate mule deer in North Dakota's badlands are down 23 percent from last year and 52 percent below 2007.

Overall, mule deer density in the badlands was 4.6 deer per square mile, down from 6 deer per square mile in 2011.

As a result, Game and Fish is not allocating any antlerless mule deer licenses for the 2012 season in units 3B1, 3B2, 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, 4E and 4F.

COUNTY	TAX DUE	COUNTY	TAX DUE	COUNTY	TAX DUE
Adams	141.18	Grand Forks	11,837.01	Pierce	2,157.23
Barnes	4,687.02	Grant	668.47	Ramsey	3,706.43
Benson	3,320.89	Griggs	388.62	Ransom	1,220.33
Billings	0.00	Hettinger	3,020.48	Richland	14,959.16
Bottineau	4,313.42	Kidder	9,671.99	Rolette	18,860.49
Bowman	1,470.22	LaMoure	6,881.08	Sargent	12,822.69
Burke	748.67	Logan	1,462.03	Sheridan	60,835.67
Burleigh	25,622.37	McHenry	1,551.15	Sioux	395.44
Cass	6,508.24	McIntosh	7,109.54	Slope	1,583.42
Cavalier	21,375.08	McKenzie	32,468.02	Stark	233.17
Dickey	16,428.27	McLean	50,570.15	Steele	8,588.51
Divide	1,407.01	Mercer	10,874.90	Stutsman	7,675.51
Dunn	6,673.06	Morton	16,583.30	Towner	2,049.83
Eddy	3,572.13	Mountrail	9,088.82	Walsh	8,652.13
Emmons	3,330.99	Nelson	4,766.52	Ward	91.63
Foster	2,983.80	Oliver	2,475.03	Wells	46,414.47
Golden Valley	185.20	Pembina	14,744.34	Williams	7,647.71



CRAIG BIHRE

Ash Borer Detection Trapping Continues

The 2012 emerald ash borer survey is underway, with more than 500 ash trees across the state containing traps designed to detect if this invasive insect species has made its way into North Dakota. The survey is part of nationwide effort involving 49 states.

In addition, ash trees in some state parks and in more than a dozen communities will feature ribbons along with informational flyers that will help visitors learn more about the ash borer threat.

“In just 10 years, emerald ash borer has spread across more than a dozen states, killing tens of millions of ash trees,” said North Dakota Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring. “Now that it has reached Minnesota, it is more important than ever for North Dakota to take action to prevent it from coming here.”

State Forester Larry Kotchman said it is up to citizens, as well as government agencies, to prevent emerald ash borer

from entering North Dakota. “EAB spreads slowly on its own, but it can be moved long distances in firewood and ash nursery stock,” Kotchman said. “Please buy your firewood from local sources, and if you are coming from out of the state, please don’t bring firewood with you.”

Ash borer traps are purple, two-foot-high and have three sides. The traps are monitored through July.

EAB attacks and kills all species of ash trees. Native to Asia, it was first detected in the U.S. in 2002 near Detroit. It is now found in 16 states and two Canadian provinces. The nearest known infestation to North Dakota is in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area.

EAB only attacks ash trees. The larvae feed under the bark, disrupting the movement of water and nutrients and killing the tree within several years.

North Dakota has approximately 78 million ash trees and ash is one of the primary trees species in many North Dakota communities, as well as in rural plantings and native forest areas.

Family Fishing Days at Bismarck OWLS

Family fishing days return this month to the North Dakota Game and Fish Department’s Outdoor Wildlife Learning Site.

The catch-and-release only fishery is stocked with trout, bluegill, largemouth bass, catfish and another fish species or two.

Family fishing days are Saturdays and Wednesdays through the end of August. Fishing equipment can be checked out at the OWLS Pond, located adjacent to the Department’s Bismarck office, on Wednesdays from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., and Saturdays from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Fishing rods and basic tackle are available for use free of charge.

Trained volunteers on Game and Fish staff will be in the area to answer questions and check out equipment, but there will be little or no direct supervision. Children who aren’t old enough to get to the pond on their own should not be left unattended.

The OWLS area is fairly primitive, but includes a picnic shelter and benches upon entering the site, and a portable restroom. The area has no running water. Users should bring water, sunscreen, folding chairs and appropriate clothing.



RON WILSON

The Game and Fish Department is seeking volunteer instructors to assist with the program. Individuals at least age 18 with an interest in teaching kids to fish should contact the Game and Fish Department at (701) 328-6300.

The OWLS pond is open to fishing year-round during daylight hours. There are no bait restrictions and anglers must practice catch-and-release only. The area is designed for wheel chair accessibility. Pets, glass bottles and alcohol are not permitted on the site.

Aquatic Nuisance Species UPDATE

DRAIN YOUR LIVEWELL



State law now requires boat operators to drain livewells, even if they contain fish, when leaving a water body. "Leaving a water body" means beyond the adjacent boat ramp parking area.

OTHER ANS PREVENTION MEASURES



Remove all aquatic plants from boats, trailers and equipment before leaving any water body.



Drain all water from boats and other watercraft when leaving a water body.



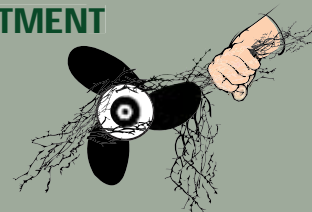
Do not release baitfish in any North Dakota water, and do not bring in live aquatic bait from another state.

KEEP ANS OUT OF OUR WATER



NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

100 North Bismarck Expressway
Bismarck, ND 58501-5095
701.328.6300
Email: ndgf@nd.gov
Web: gf.nd.gov





Website Gets Facelift

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department website has a new look.

Rich with graphics and added features, but retaining all the reliable functions that information seekers and license buyers have come to expect, the site still resides at gf.nd.gov.

“It’s been a few years since we last redesigned our site,” said Craig Bihrlle, Game and Fish Department communications supervisor. “The new version gives us more options for using images and video to promote our programs and events.”

While the Game and Fish home page looks different, Bihrlle said the online licensing process for buying or applying for licenses will look familiar. “Once you decide to buy a license online, you’re redirected to the same secure site as before.”

NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH ONLINE

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

PURCHASE and Print Licenses and Apply for Lottery Licenses

VIEW North Dakota OUTDOORS Magazines

EXPLORE North Dakota PLOTS Guide

WATCH Outdoors Online Weekly Webcasts and TV Features



MORE FEATURES

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



NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
 100 North Bismarck Expressway
 Bismarck, ND 58501-5095
 701.328.6300
 Email: ndgf@nd.gov

back cast

By Ron Wilson



Buried somewhere, maybe in that catchall plastic tub that holds a collection of outdoor odds and ends including archery finger tabs, spinning reels, old hand-loaded shotgun shells and still-in-the-package lantern mantels, is a slingshot I made as a kid.

It came in the mail more than a decade ago, the first part of its journey probably by air, flying high over part of the route I slowly drove years ago in a sluggish rental truck to get to North Dakota. The slingshot, found by someone who cared and thought I might, too, of its discovery, had been tucked away in a box for some time, long discarded and forgotten, pulled from the back pocket of cutoff blue jeans and tossed aside. Even so, it looked as good as the day I whittled it from a willow branch and attached surgical tubing from the local drug store to its limbs. The canvas pouch, faded but recognizable, was cut, as I remember it, from the tongue of a red Converse sneaker.

At the time when I made it, we lived near enough to the edge of town that you didn't have to walk far to scare up a jackrabbit to shoot at, and miss, but swear to your buddies that you made hair fly.

When in season, we'd pick still-hard gooseberries and rocket them toward the metal roof of a building shaped like a culvert cut in half. The bigger, stationary target was easier to hit than rabbits, and you'd

hear a satisfying ding-splat upon contact. Back in the day, it felt like it took a heck of a shot, with the rubber tubing pulled beyond your left ear, to get a berry to fly that far, but like a lot of things in life when looked back on over time, it wasn't that impressive, maybe just 50 yards.

Anyway, we'd rattle that place, splattering it with gooseberry juice until the owner put down his wrench or hammer to wander outside and holler at us, making our game a little scary and more fun.

On the days we planned to visit the creek, we'd ceasefire because the quickest route was to sneak through the front gate, past the half-culvert building and piles of metal and rusted car bodies, and then out the back.

The creek this close to town was slower moving, lined with cattails in spots and warm enough that it didn't take your breath away when we'd wade in it. We'd catch creek chubs, a big one was maybe 6 inches, on small hooks using little pieces of worm.

Farther up the canyon, the creek picked up speed, tumbled over and around rocks and undercut banks where we eventually learned the biggest fish hung out. At some point trout replaced chubs and we adjusted our fishing technique by simply using bigger chunks of worm.

While I do recall a lot about the creek, about how if you hiked

far enough you'd eventually come to a reservoir where people fished from lawn chairs on shore, and if you hung around long enough and asked nice, they'd give you a lift back to town to save you the long slog downstream. But I don't remember at what age our parents finally gave in and let us camp overnight at streamside a couple miles from home. We seemed young, probably too young compared to when we'd turn a kid loose to do the same today, which is a shame.

While this creek is 1,200 miles from here, I want to share it with my kids because they asked about it recently in a roundabout way. They've asked to take a trip to where I grew up and see where we buried family they've never met and look at the little house I grew up in that was our gateway to the creek. As they get older, this sort of stuff now means something to them.

Sadly, from what I've been told, and Google confirms it, much of what I remember about the area is gone, or at least changed to the point that I'd hardly recognize it. Its wildness has been chipped away in the name of progress, leaving little or no room for the jackrabbits, creek chubs and edible slingshot ammo.

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.

KELLY KRABENHOFF



Ruby-throated Hummingbird

While the ruby-throated hummingbird weighs less than a newly-minted nickel, the diminutive bird is certainly worth the price of admission.

Like other hummingbirds, the ruby-throated is the only bird able to fly backward. It can also hover and fly upside down when the mood strikes. On average, it beats its wings 50-plus times per second, and its maximum forward flight tops a residential zone speed limit.

The ruby-throated is the only species of hummingbird found in North Dakota – and is the smallest bird in the state – measuring about 3 ½ inches long, with a wing spread of 4 ½ inches. Adult males differ from females in dress, possessing throat feathers that appear black, but flash red or orange in the sunlight.

This bird, and for good reason, is seemingly forever on the move in search of something to eat. Ounce for ounce, biologists tell us, hummingbirds require more calories than any warm-blooded animal, except maybe shrews, to maintain their body temperature of 105 degrees Fahrenheit and to fuel their rapid movements.

Common visitors to backyard sugar water feeders and flower gardens, ruby-throated hummingbirds

feed by sight and are attracted to brightly-colored food sources. While nectar is a mainstay in the hummingbird's diet, it couldn't survive without the protein garnered from small insects, such as beetles, ants, mosquitoes and spiders.

Spiders, it turns out, serve not only as a food source, but their webs are also used by hummingbirds in the construction of nests no bigger than a walnut attached to a tree branch. Camouflaged on the outside by lichens, the diminutive nests hold two eggs the size of small beans.

Ruby-throated hummingbirds breed not long after arriving in North Dakota in about mid-May. It's a long journey to get here because hummingbirds winter south into Mexico and Central America, with some birds enduring nonstop, marathon flights across the Gulf of Mexico.

And, no, contrary to what you've heard, these teeny birds don't piggyback rides on migrating geese heading in the same direction. That's simply folklore, but the rest is true.

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.