

NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

PUBLISHED BY THE NORTH DAKOTA
GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

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MATTERS OF OPINION



Terry Steinwand
Director

It's a new year and I'm optimistic about what the next 350-plus days will bring to North Dakota's outdoors.

Mother Nature wasn't the kindest to us heading into 2014. Temperatures slid dramatically below zero too often for our liking, reminding us that we do indeed live on the Northern Plains and weather extremes are many times the norm.

Yet, here we are in mid-January and we've already experienced a handful of glorious days above freezing, providing much needed relief for humans and animals alike.

Thankfully, deer depredation calls around the state have been pretty light so far. Actually, we've taken more depredation calls from landowners about wild turkeys than deer.

These reports make sense, considering our deer numbers across the state are low. And while we've had some stretches of cold weather, what snow there is around the state hasn't hindered deer to great extremes from accessing food.

Of course, now is about the time of year when depredation calls start to pick up, so we'll see what happens.

From what I'm hearing from anglers around the state, ice fishing has been good as most lakes are fairly open, providing pretty good access to anglers.

While some waters have attracted a lot of attention this winter, as most ice anglers tend to target those fisheries hosting the hot walleye or yellow perch bite, fishing opportunities in North Dakota remain bountiful with a record number of waters on the landscape.

Good reports also continue to surface from darkhouse spearfishing participants targeting northern pike. Considering all waters open to hook and line fishing (there are about 10 closed waters, which can be found on our website, gf.nd.gov) are open to darkhouse spearfishing, the opportunities to enjoy a day on the ice in search of the state fish are nearly endless.

While I haven't been able to get out as much as I would like to try to lure a coyote into rifle range, I have every intention after reading the furbearer piece in this issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.

As Stephanie Tucker, Game and Fish Department furbearer biologist, points out, fur prices have made some nice strides in the last few years and prices look optimistic this year.

That kind of outlook will certainly entice more people outdoors to pursue furbearers, be it with a rifle or traps. There are others, and I include myself in this group, who need little incentive to dress in white and hide in the snow in hopes of outwitting a smart critter that wins more often than it loses.

Like with anything else, be it ice fishing for pike or trying to mouse-in a coyote, I just need to step away from life's challenges and make spending more time in North Dakota's outdoors a priority. I hope you do the same this winter and throughout 2014, because it won't be too long and our waters will thaw and more fishing opportunities will abound.

Have a great year and please spend some of it in North Dakota's great 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.

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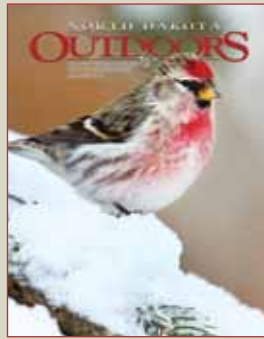
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Front Cover

A common redpoll in winter. *Photo by Kelly Krabbenhoft, West Fargo.*



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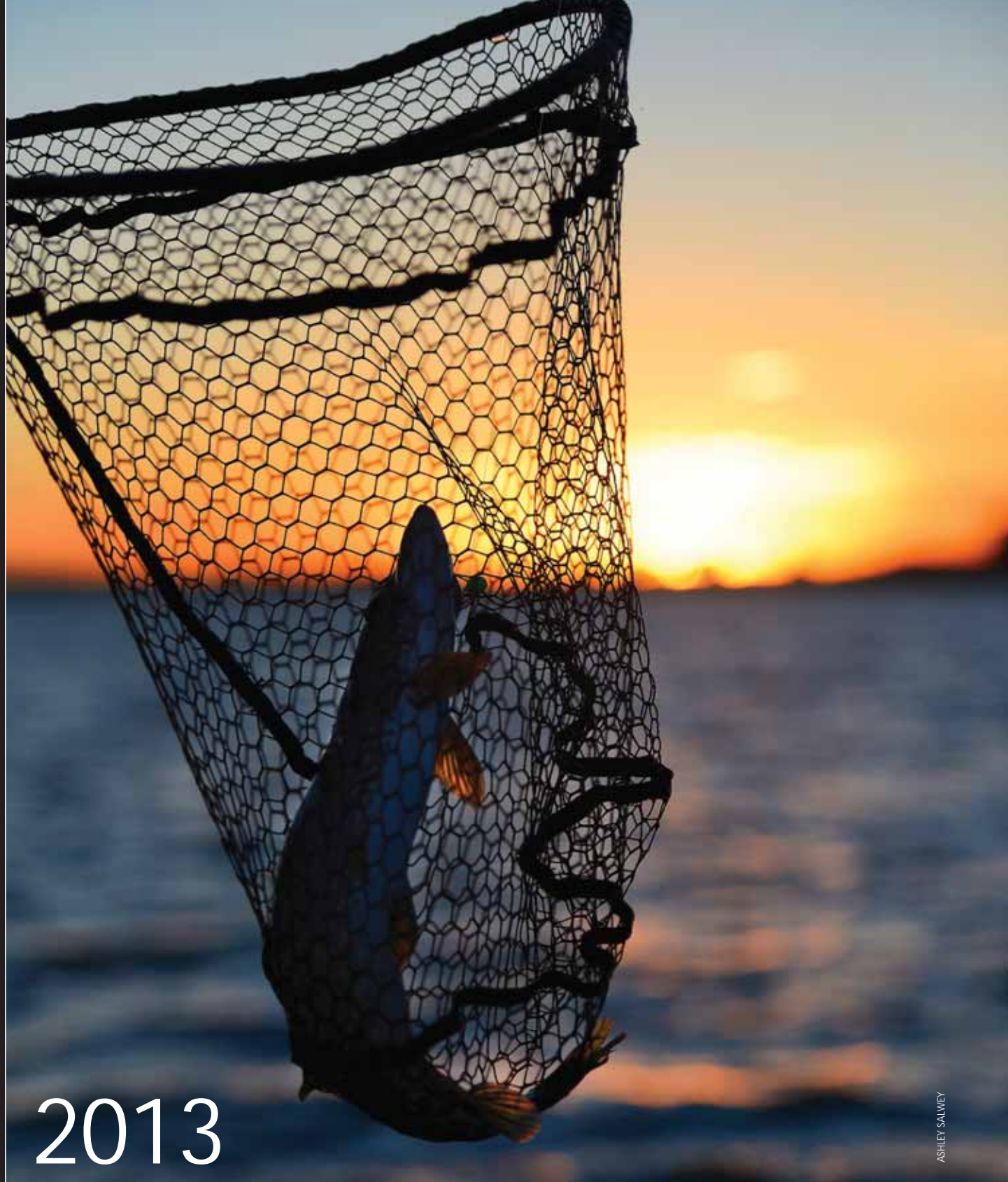
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2013

Year in Review

By Terry Steinwand, Game and Fish Director

ASHLEY SALWEY

No doubt about it, the highlight reel for 2013 revolves around fishing. North Dakota now has more managed lakes than at any time in the state's history.



And it's not just new water bodies with a few fish in them, but a collection of emerging, quality fisheries that have come on board because of a wet cycle that started 20 years ago, topped off by abundant precipitation over the past five years or so.

People are noticing, too. For the 2012 licensing year, North Dakota had a record number of anglers, both resident and nonresident, and it looks like 2013 could even top that.

While not every water has its best historical fish population at the moment, the statewide fishing scene looks great for the next few years at least.

The flip side, and there always is a flip side when it comes to weather on the Northern Plains, is that the precipitation over the last five years that has filled many water basins to historic highs, is partly responsible for much reduced pheasant and deer populations.

Record or near-record snowfall in parts of the state

caused higher-than-normal winter mortality. Rainy, cool springs are not good for upland bird nesting and 2013 fit that description.

At the same time, North Dakota has lost a fair amount of Conservation Reserve Program grasslands, shelterbelts, native prairies and wetlands over the past five years. By themselves, either the weather or habitat losses that occurred in recent years would have reduced pheasant and deer populations. Together, they have pushed deer and pheasant populations to levels that are much lower than they were in the past decade.

And when we look ahead to 2014, that's where we'll look. What can the Game and Fish Department, and the hunters and anglers of this state, do so that the long-term trend, regardless of the weather, gets headed in the right direction?

Following are some details on highlights and challenges from the past year.



ASHLEY SALWEY

There was good news on the fishing front in North Dakota in 2013. While the state boasted more managed lakes than at any time in its history, many waters experienced good natural reproduction, while others received a boost through stocking.



GREG GULLICKSON

Northern pike (top) and other native fish species weathered a late spring with good natural reproduction in many of the state's waters. Conservation Reserve Program grasslands (bottom), which have long been a boon to wildlife and a fixture in the Department's Private Land Open To Sportsmen program, continued to fade from North Dakota's landscape in 2013.

Waiting for Spring

Department biologists knew a delayed ice-off and a mid-April blizzard that dumped several inches of snow across much of the state would influence wildlife and fish production in North Dakota. To what degree, however, was only a guess.

After fall surveys were completed, fisheries managers said reproduction was better than expected, with good numbers of young-of-the-year yellow perch in lakes statewide.

Devils Lake and Stump Lake had excellent numbers of young-of-the-year yellow perch. The upper reaches of Lake Sakakawea had a good number of small walleye, and a fair to good perch count on the east end of the lake. Fisheries biologists also noted good survival of walleye stocked around the state in smaller waters.

For nesting upland game birds, however, news wasn't as good. The late-summer roadside pheasant survey indicated that total pheasants were down 30 percent from last year.

Upland game biologists said poor spring and summer production meant fewer young birds added to the population and a lower fall population in all areas of the state.

While a late spring and wet weather that followed influenced upland bird numbers, other factors contributed to lower counts in the prime pheasant range, including removal of Conservation

Reserve Program acres, grasslands converted to croplands and small grain fields converted to row crops.

ANS Efforts Continue

Statewide monitoring efforts for aquatic nuisance species in 2013 uncovered only one new infestation – curly leaf pondweed in Grass Lake in Richland County.

For the second consecutive year, no zebra mussels were detected in the Otter Tail and Red rivers at Wahpeton, where immature zebra mussels were found in both 2010 and 2011.

However, adult zebra mussels that exist in Minnesota's Otter Tail drainage continue to move closer to North Dakota. In addition, adult zebra mussels were documented this fall in Lake Winnipeg, which is of great concern to Manitoba officials.

Statewide monitoring efforts also indicated that known ANS populations in North Dakota water bodies are generally stable, and in some instances are even in decline.

A few adult silver carp were again observed in the James River below Jamestown Dam, after having moved upstream into North Dakota during extremely high flows in 2011.

Game and Fish will continue intensive monitoring for ANS in 2014. In addition, the Department will also continue its ANS information and education campaign and enforcement efforts, with the intent of full compliance with existing rules and regulations.

CRP Decline

North Dakota's landscape continues to change and the most significant alteration to the countryside is the loss of Conservation Reserve Program acres.



CRAIG BIRLE

Since 2007, North Dakota has lost about 1.9 million CRP acres, from a high of 3.4 million acres, down to about 1.5 million acres. Landowners, however, still have interest in enrolling land in CRP, but changes to the ranking system do not favor the Northern Plains. In the 2013 CRP signup, only 69 percent of the acres offered in North Dakota were accepted.

If all current CRP contracts in North Dakota are left to expire, and no new acres are enrolled in the next five years, the state will have fewer than 1 million acres in CRP on opening day of pheasant season in 2018.

The loss of wildlife habitat also translates into fewer places to hunt. This was evident in the Department's Private Land Open To Sportsmen program in 2013, when 760,000 PLOTS acres dotted the landscape, compared to a high of 1.1 million acres in 2008.

Of those 760,000 PLOTS acres, about 250,000 was CRP.

If no new acres are enrolled and current agreements are left to expire, the number of CRP acres enrolled in PLOTS could fall to around 200,000 by 2018.

License Fee Increases

State lawmakers voted in 2013 to increase North Dakota hunting, fishing and boat registration fees. Those fee increases take effect in 2014.

State legislators, hunters and anglers voiced overwhelming support during committee hearings, and Department personnel heard the same type of support at statewide advisory board meetings. This is the first time in many years that North Dakota has had such a wide range of license fee increases.

Some examples of the license fee increases effective April 1 include:

Resident small game hunting license will increase from \$6 to \$10, while the nonresident small game hunting license will increase from \$85 to \$100.

Resident big game hunting licenses increase from \$20 to \$30, and nonresident big game hunting licenses go from \$200 to \$250.

The resident individual fishing license goes from \$10 to \$16, and a nonresident individual fishing license increases from \$35 to \$45.

Outdoor Heritage Fund

North Dakota's Outdoor Heritage Fund, passed by lawmakers during the 2013 legislative session, is designed to enhance habitat, public access, hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation in the state.

The fund, which is supported from a percentage of the state's oil and gas production tax, can receive up to \$15 million annually, or \$30 million per biennium.

The Outdoor Heritage Fund is a significant state funding commitment for conservation and outdoor recreation, beyond what hunters and anglers have for years contributed through license fees and excise taxes.



Lawmakers in 2013 voted to increase hunting, fishing and boat registration fees in the state. Many of the fee increases go into effect April 1, 2014.

ASHLEY SALWEY

The State Industrial Commission, comprised of the governor, attorney general and agricultural commissioner, is the chief authority over the Outdoor Heritage Fund. Additionally, the governor has appointed a 12-member advisory board to evaluate project proposals and make recommendations to the commission.

The first application deadline for project proposals was December 2013, with three additional project application periods to follow in 2014.

State organizations and agencies submitted more than 70 project proposals prior to the first deadline. The advisory board will score them and make recommendations to the Industrial Commission, which will award the first round of grants in late January.

Deer Numbers, Licenses Fall

Beginning in 2004, the Game and Fish Department made available more than 145,000 deer licenses for a string of six hunting seasons.

A combination of factors, including three consecutive tough winters starting in 2008-09, loss of habitat across the landscape, and the aggressive harvest of antlerless deer for several years to meet landowner, motorist and hunter tolerance levels, sent deer numbers the other way.

In 2012, Game and Fish reduced the number of deer licenses 65,300, and then cut the number to just 59,000 licenses in 2013, the lowest number since 1983. And for the second time in as many years, hunters in 2013 could receive only one license for the gun season.

More than 40,000 applicants in the 2013 license lottery did not receive a deer gun license.

On another note, Game and Fish personnel closely monitored the deer population in southwestern North Dakota starting in late summer when the first reports of dead deer, attributed to epizootic hemorrhagic disease, came in from Bowman, Grant and Burleigh counties.

Isolated deer deaths continued into mid-September, prompting the Department to suspend the sale of about 1,000 antlerless deer licenses that were still available in units 3F1, 3F2 and 4F in the southwestern part of the state.

With thousands of hunters in the field during the opening week of pheasant season, Game and Fish received only a few additional reports from hunters who found dead deer in southwestern North Dakota.

WPA Closure, Reopening

Because of the federal government shutdown in early October, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service closed all the waterfowl production areas in North Dakota and other states to public access on October 1.

As these areas are important public lands for hunters, the Game and Fish Department, along with the governor's office and attorney general's office, worked hard to influence a Fish and Wildlife Service decision to open the WPAs the day before North Dakota's pheasant season began, and a full week before the federal shutdown ended.

The Game and Fish Department made available fewer than 60,000 licenses for the 2013 deer gun season. The last time license numbers reached this level was 30 years ago.



CRAG BIHRE



CRAIG BIRHLE

North Dakota's pronghorn population (left) showed signs of recovery in 2013, but not enough to grant a hunting season for these animals in the western part of the state. Mule deer does (below) were again off limits to hunters in eight badlands hunting units in 2013.

Pronghorn Population Increases

North Dakota's pronghorn population showed signs of recovery in 2013 after five years of steady decline. However, numbers were still below population objectives and not yet high enough to warrant a fall hunting season.

Survey results indicated the statewide population was about 5,400 pronghorn, 49 percent higher than 2012, but still 62 percent below 2008, the last year a hunting season was held.

A rise in the pronghorn population was expected, due to another year without a hunting season and a mild winter across much of the pronghorn range, which led to higher adult and fawn survival.

Another mild to average winter in 2013-14 should encourage future population growth, but challenges remain with pronghorns, including habitat fragmentation and disturbance, and loss of CRP acres in the secondary range.

Positive Signs in Mule Deer Population

For the second time in as many years, the Game and Fish Department did not issue any mule deer doe licenses in eight badlands hunting units.

In turn, Department wildlife biologists have noted some signs of mule deer population recovery.

Spring survey numbers revealed the mule deer population index in the badlands increased 15 percent from 2012, but was still 22 percent lower than the long-term average.

The Department's fall mule deer survey also indicated better production in 2013 than in 2012. Biologists counted 1,761 (1,224 in 2012) mule deer in the aerial survey in October. The buck-to-doe

ratio of 0.46 (0.37 in 2012) is similar to the long-term average of 0.43 bucks per doe, while the fawn-to-doe ratio of 0.74 (0.59 in 2012) was the highest since 2009, but still below the long-term average of 0.91 fawns per doe.

While wildlife managers say it is encouraging to see mule deer numbers increase for the short-term, challenges remain for continued population growth, including changes in habitat quality due to fragmentation and disturbance, predators and weather.



MIKE ANDERSON

2013 STATISTICS, SURVEYS AND HIGHLIGHTS

- The North Dakota Game and Fish Department's 2013 midwinter bald eagle survey along the Missouri River from Bismarck to Garrison Dam revealed 61 bald eagles, slightly above-average since the survey started in 1986.
- The Game and Fish Department's midwinter waterfowl survey indicated nearly 160,000 ducks and geese wintering in the state.
- Dave Faiman of Fairview, Montana, caught a record saug-eye from the Yellowstone River in January. The 12-pound fish broke the previous record by 4 ounces, which was set in 1984.
- North Dakota boasted more than 400 managed water bodies in 2013, the highest on record. That's more than double the number of managed waters North Dakota had in the late 1980s.
- Chris Rick's catch in January tied the state record for crappie that's been on the books for nearly 15 years. The Jamestown angler reeled in a 3-pound, 4-ounce crappie from Jamestown Reservoir.
- A multi-year walleye tagging study that will eventually include thousands of fish 12 inches and longer was initiated on the Missouri River in spring. The study is being conducted by biologists and researchers from the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, North Dakota Game and Fish Department, and South Dakota State University.
- More than 360 archers, up 9 percent from 2012, competed in the North Dakota National Archery in the Schools Program state tournament in Bismarck in April.
- The number of strutting males observed during the 2013 spring sage grouse survey was well below management objectives. Biologists counted a record low 50 males on 11 active strutting grounds. The sage grouse hunting season remained closed in 2013 for the sixth year in a row. During that time, the sage grouse population in southwestern North Dakota declined by 60 percent.
- For the fourth year in a row the Game and Fish Department closed the hunting season for pinnated grouse, or prairie chickens, in the northeastern and southeastern parts of the state because of a continued decline in male prairie chicken spring booming counts.
- North Dakota has had an early Canada goose season for more than a decade, but for the first time in 2013, hunters needed a special license to participate. State legislators created the early Canada goose license as part of HB 1264.
- The Game and Fish Department's annual spring breeding duck survey showed an index of 3.9 million birds, down 17 percent from 2012, but still 73 percent above the long-term (1948-2013) average. The mid-July waterfowl production survey indicated a duck brood index that was down 48 percent from 2012, but still 27 percent above the long-term average. Average brood size was 7.2 ducklings, up 0.3 from 2012. The long-term average is 7.1 ducklings per brood. The water index in mid-July was up 60 percent



CRAIG BIRNLE

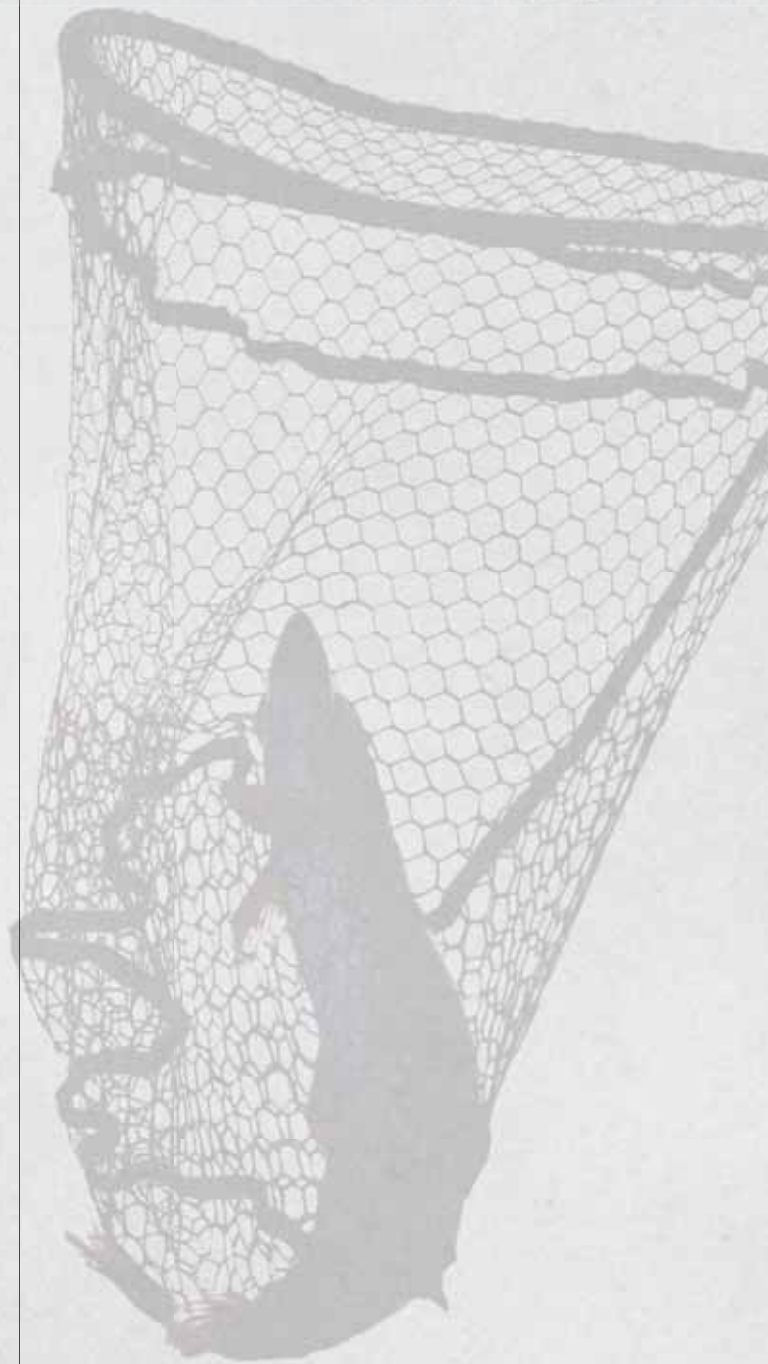
- from 2012 and 67 percent above the long-term average.
- Game and Fish Department wardens issued a record number of citations during the paddlefish snagging season. From opening day May 1 until the season closed May 19, wardens cited more than 170 individuals in Williams and McKenzie counties. The citation total was 82 in 2012 during a similar time frame.
- Excellent walleye fingerling production from federal fish hatcheries resulted in a record 11 million walleye fingerlings stocked into state waters in summer. Altogether, 110 lakes and rivers were stocked in North Dakota, including 4.3 million fingerlings in Lake Sakakawea, 863,000 in Stump Lake, 495,000 in Lake Darling, 329,000 in Lake Ashtabula, 321,000 in Heart Butte Reservoir, 218,000 in Patterson Lake, 205,000 in Bowman-Haley Reservoir and 200,000 in Lake Metigoshe.
- Even though results from a summer survey indicated the bighorn sheep population in western North Dakota remains steady, there is concern about a significant decline in the number of adult rams. A late summer survey showed a minimum of 299 bighorn sheep, unchanged from last year and only 17 percent below 2008's record survey. Although the female segment of the population remained stable, there is concern about another substantial decline in the number of rams, which was 11 percent below last year and 21 percent below the record observed in 2009.

2012 LICENSES AND PERMITS ISSUED

	Resident	Nonresident
Fishing	59,686	21,601
Husband/Wife Fishing	14,254	3,795
Senior Citizen Fishing	11,513	
Disabled Fishing	416	
Short-Term Fishing		
10-Day		5,549
3-Day		24,154
Paddlefish Tags	2,540	1,088
Commercial Tags	20	
Retail Bait Vendor	244	
Wholesale Bait Vendor	25	9
Fish Hatchery	3	
2012 Boat Registrations (Second year of 3-year decal)	9,752	
Boat Rentals	13	
General Hunting	42,895	47,433
Small Game Hunting	22,733	30,129
Combination License	59,379	
Waterfowl Hunting		23,766
Furbearer Hunting/Trapping	14,684	4,730
Fur Buyer	29	10
Deer Gun Hunting	53,534	667
Deer Gun Hunting (Gratis)	13,553	208
Deer Bowhunting	19,940	2,336
Moose Hunting	123	
Moose Hunting (Preferential Landowner)	15	
Elk Hunting	257	
Elk Hunting (Preferential Landowner)	54	
Bighorn Sheep	3	
Turkey Hunting (Spring)	5,600	
Turkey Hunting (Fall)	3,946	
Turkey Hunting (Gratis Spring)	272	
Turkey Hunting (Gratis Fall)	244	
Habitat Stamp	90,328	
Shooting Preserve	10	
Fishing/Hunting Guide	229	24
Taxidermist	232	
Falconry	2	
Scientific Collector	35	19
Swan	1,216	984
Sandhill Crane	2,637	5,908

2013 SPECIAL BIG GAME LICENSES

	Licenses Available	Applications Received
Moose	110	12,493
Elk	260	10,790
Bighorn	3	9,587



FINANCIAL STATEMENT
July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013

Income	\$31,406,273
Expenses	\$35,037,179

FUND BALANCES, FIXED ASSETS
AND LONG-TERM DEBT

Game and Fish General Fund	\$29,169,935
Habitat and Depredation Fund	\$490,361
Nongame Wildlife Fund	\$84,884
TOTAL ALL FUNDS	\$29,745,180
FIXED ASSETS	\$44,234,436
DEPARTMENT NET WORTH	\$73,979,616



Overall Winner
Dark-eyed junco
Melissa Erickson, McHenry
Sony DSC H2
Photo taken south of McHenry



2013

Watchable Wildlife Photo Contest

By Patrick T. Isakson

Twenty-four years of the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's Watchable Wildlife Photo Contest and the images continue to impress.

Photos for the 2013 contest came from all corners of the state and beyond, showing the diverse array of species that call North Dakota home.

Photographs were selected from three categories. In total, 15 images were selected – one overall winner, three first place winners and runners-up in all categories.

The 2013 contest overall winner is of a pair of dark-eyed juncos taken by Melissa Erickson of McHenry, North Dakota. The winning image was shot near Erickson's home as a flock of juncos huddled in a Rocky Mountain juniper to escape the blustery winter weather.

The dark-eyed junco is one of North Dakota's most common winter birds, but is said to be a rare nester in the state, as juncos prefer to nest in evergreen forests or mixed

stands of evergreens and deciduous trees.

North Dakota has two color variations of juncos. The slate-colored, as seen in the photo, is identified by its dark gray top, white belly and pink beak. The Oregon variety is recognized by its dark hood, pale sides and rusty brown back.

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



Game 1st Place

Hungarian partridge
Beth Willoughby, Fargo
Canon 450D
Photo taken near Fargo





Game Runner-up

Mule deer
Art Muse, Bismarck
Canon EOS REBEL T1i
Photo taken in Theodore
Roosevelt National Park



Game Runner-up

Sharp-tailed grouse
DeVane Webster, Beulah
Canon EOS 7D
Photo taken in Oliver County



Game Runner-up

Raccoon
Dale Neva, Bismarck
Sony NEX-5N
Photo taken near Steele



Game Runner-up

Elk
Charles Black, Medora
Nikon D3100
Photo taken near Medora



Nongame Runner-up
Cooper's hawk
Sharon Watson, Buxton
Canon EOS 7D
Photo taken in Buxton



Nongame Runner-up
Black-crowned night heron
Mike LaLonde, Bismarck
Nikon D7100
Photo take near Menoken



Nongame Runner-up
White-faced Ibis
Ross Warner, Bismarck
Nikon D300
Photo taken near Menoken



Nongame Runner-up
Ruby-throated hummingbird
Laurie Ries, Buffalo
Canon EOS Digital Rebel XTi
Photo taken near Buffalo



Plant and Insect 1st Place

Spiderwort

Nancy Secrest, Hettinger

Canon PowerShot SX260 HS

Photo taken near Hettinger

Plant and Insect Runner-up

Leafy spurge hawk moth caterpillar

Sharon Watson, Buxton

Canon EOS 7D

Photo taken near Buxton

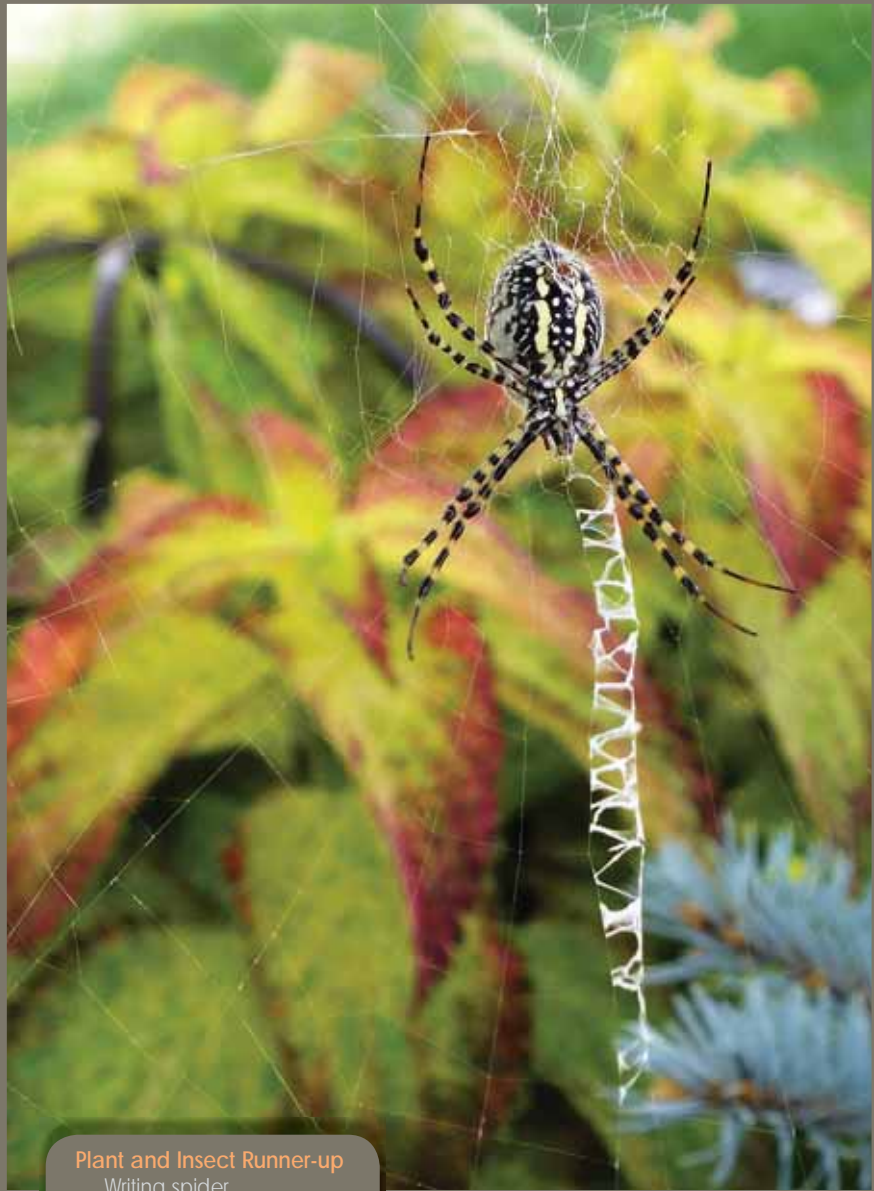
Plant and Insect Runner-up

Ball cactus

Becky Graner, Huff

Nikon D70

Photo taken near Huff



Plant and Insect Runner-up

Writing spider

Susan Hummel, Bismarck

Fuji FinePix HS20EXR

Photo taken near Bismarck



Plant and Insect Runner-up

Bee fly

Shelby Tagestad, Fargo

Nikon D3100

Photo taken near Hazen

THE CHALLENGE OF



NORTH DAKOTA'S

Of North Dakota's many furbearer species, the coyote is one of the most recognizable and sought after by predator callers and trappers.

CRAIG BIRBLE



LARRY KRUCKENBURG

FURBEARERS

By Ron Wilson

There's little that links coyotes and muskrats. One is a canine, prefers dry land and regularly roams a home range that can be as big as 25 square miles. While the other can remain under water for many minutes at a time and occupies a home range that doesn't often exceed 10 acres.

But there is this: In North Dakota, hunters and trappers take more coyotes and muskrats than any of the state's many other furbearers, such as beaver, red fox, badgers and raccoons.

While coyotes and muskrats garner the most interest most years, all of North Dakota's furbearers are receiving more attention of late from hunters and trappers. The reason for the increased interest is that fur prices for most furbearers have steadily improved the past four years, and last season's prices set some highs not seen in many decades, said Stephanie Tucker, North Dakota Game and Fish Department furbearer biologist.

"These prices have stirred the interest in many people, including newcomers and veterans who are dusting off their traps, hoping that the good prices will remain high or continue to go up," Tucker said. "Currently, the fur price forecast for this year is optimistic."

Prices paid for last season's muskrats (about \$7 on the carcass and \$14 for those skinned, fleshed, stretched and dried), for example, were the highest they'd been since 1963-64, while coyotes (about \$37 on the carcass and \$64 for those skinned, fleshed, stretched and dried) hadn't been that high since 1986-87.

"The extreme was bobcats, which sold higher than ever seen before in North Dakota at about \$662 on the carcass," Tucker said. "Even badgers and raccoons are worth going after these days, with fox and mink holding their own as well."

While the price of a bobcat is impressive, Tucker said only about 30 people are taking bobcats in North Dakota per year. "Most take just one," she said, "and the most bobcats any one person takes in a year is five or six."

The fur market, Tucker said, is driven by the garment industry and fur is back in demand in many European and Asian countries, with China leading the charge.

"China's economy is doing well and they want fur, particularly high volume items like muskrats," Tucker said. "Cold winter weather in the northern Asian countries, particularly Russia, aids in increasing prices because fur is still the warmest material available."

If you go by the number of phone calls to the Game and Fish Department this year and last, interest in trapping and hunting furbearers in North Dakota is climbing. Trying to distinguish this rise simply by license sales, however, is often more difficult.

"In 2012, for example, nearly 15,000 people bought the furbearer hunting/trapping license," Tucker said. "But that doesn't tell the entire story because that same year nearly 60,000 people bought a combination license, which allowed them to not only hunt or trap furbearers, but to shoot pheasants and catch fish."

For certain, a percentage of people who don't actively hunt or trap furbearers buy the combination license just in case they come across a coyote while deer hunting.

In an early 2013 fall preview, Tucker said coyote, raccoon and skunk populations increased statewide, and the numbers of all three species remain well above their long-term averages.



CRAIG BIRHLE

Muskrat numbers boomed in 2010-11, but have since fallen dramatically. While the red fox population is below the long-term average, there are more animals on the landscape than in recent years.



RENAE HEINLE

Fur Harvester Classes in North Dakota

The North Dakota Cooperative Fur Harvester Education Program sponsors fur harvester education classes periodically across the state.

The free 16-hour courses are generally held two nights per week, plus an eight-hour field day. Students will learn about traps, trapping and snaring techniques, furbearer biology and fur care. A field day allows students to make a variety of land, water and snare sets.

For more information about upcoming courses, visit the Game and Fish Department website at gf.nd.gov.

Upon completion, graduates are issued a certification card that is recognized by any state requiring trapper education prior to purchasing a license.



Yet, after experiencing the highest muskrat numbers in a decade during 2010-11, surveys show the population has fallen statewide and is 84 percent below the 20-year average.

The reason for the muskrat decline, Tucker said, isn't easy to pinpoint, but could be result of loss of habitat, wetland drainage, cattail burning, chemical runoff, or the combination of all of these factors and other unknowns.

"There is no easy answer as to why," Tucker said. "If you kept everything on the landscape the same every year, you'd still see some fluctuations in muskrat numbers."

While it's impossible to count every muskrat, badger and coyote on the landscape, Tucker said the Game and Fish Department does a number of annual surveys with trappers and hunters to help determine trends in furbearer populations.

Wildlife managers have also worked for years with rural mail carriers in North Dakota. "They've been helping us count animals on the landscape for decades," Tucker said. "They're covering 40,000 to 50,000 miles over a three-day period on more than 100 mail routes. They just love to help."

The rural mail carriers are on the lookout for 10 furbearer species, which include coyote, fox, muskrats, beavers, mink, fishers, badgers, skunks, raccoon and weasels. Research has shown, Tucker said, that the mail route surveys are very reliable in providing the rise or fall of the number of animals on the landscape from one year to the next, especially for fox and coyotes.

North Dakota has long been home to dedicated trappers and predator callers. While the ranks grow when fur prices rise, there are those who run trap lines year after year no matter what the market dictates.

"For me, and for other trappers, I would imagine, trapping is almost addictive," Tucker said. "There is a huge challenge in trapping to get an animal to step right there in that little spot, or to swim right here ... It takes a deep understanding of wild animals because they can walk anywhere out there, but as a trapper I need them to step right here. There is a rush walking over a hill to check your traps and wondering if you've caught something."

Tucker also calls predators and says the differences aren't huge. "While predator calling is different, you're still trying to outsmart the animals," she said. "You have to understand the animals and understand the calls that will get them to stop what they are doing and respond to what you're doing."

Nonresidents have for years been attracted to North Dakota's wide open spaces and furbearers. Tucker said the state started selling nonresident fox and coyote hunting licenses in 1989, and the number of licenses sold has been going up since.

North Dakota also sells trapping licenses to nonresidents from states that allow North Dakotans to trap within their borders. For a long time, Tucker said, the

number of reciprocal licenses sold to nonresidents was low and held steady.

“But in the last three years the number has gone up as fur prices have gone up,” Tucker said.

Fifty to 60 percent of the licensed nonresident trappers are from Wisconsin, Tucker said. North Dakota does not have a reciprocal trapping agreement with Minnesota.

While the biggest lure for nonresident trappers is the state’s abundance of furbearers, Tucker said North Dakota’s liberal trapping regulations also provide some pull.

“For example, we don’t require traps to be checked every 24-48 hours like a lot of other states,” Tucker said. “And you can use about any kind of trap you want in North Dakota.”

On the other hand, North Dakota is a stickler in its regulations for all trappers when it comes to getting permission to trap on private land, posted or not.

“Getting written permission from landowners can be a time consuming endeavor and is probably the biggest deterrent for nonresidents not wanting to come here,” Tucker said. “My husband and I will spend several days or make weekend trips to get written permission each fall. Yeah, it takes time, but it’s necessary.”

The arrival of nonresident trappers is overlooked by most, but some resident trappers take notice and have at times voiced their concerns.

“The top complaint is that people don’t like to share when there is money to be had ... That’s pretty much what it comes down to,” Tucker said. “Nonresident fur harvesters don’t really fall into the category of recreational trappers as they are trying to remove as many animals as they can in as short a period of time as they can. I’ve talked to many of these guys and a lot are not just trapping on public land, but going to the trouble of getting written permission on private lands. They’ve established good relationships over the years and come back year after year.”

While trapping doesn’t attract the number of participants of, say, upland game bird or deer hunting, its roots are still deep in North Dakota’s outdoor heritage. The Game and Fish Department and other groups have been working to pass on the tradition and sense of adventure that trapping affords.

“Because we don’t have the number of people who trap like they used to, it’s more and more difficult to get kids involved, to have some of this hard-earned knowledge passed along,” Tucker said. “We are trying to change that to some extent with our Fur Harvester Education program (see sidebar). It’s important that the knowledge and expertise of our instructors is passed along.”

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.

Coyote Catalog Available for Hunters, Landowners

The North Dakota Department of Agriculture and the North Dakota Game and Fish Department have reopened the Coyote Catalog to connect coyote hunters and trappers with landowners who want fewer coyotes in their areas.

The Coyote Catalog is an online database similar to the one the Game and Fish Department uses to connect deer hunters with farmers and ranchers.

“We’ve had a lot of success matching deer hunters with landowners,” said Game and Fish Department Director Terry Steinwand. “We hope the Coyote Catalog works out just as well.”

Department of Agriculture officials estimate livestock producers in North Dakota lost more than \$1 million last year to coyotes. At the same time, coyotes are a popular furbearer species for hunters and trappers.

“I encourage landowners, especially farmers and ranchers who have problems with coyote depredation, to sign up for the Coyote Catalog,” said Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring. “Hunting and trapping are valuable tools in managing these predators.”

Goehring and Steinwand said the U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services should be the first contact for landowners experiencing coyote depredation of livestock.

Landowners can sign up on the North Dakota Department of Agriculture website at nd.gov/ndda/coyote-catalog. Required information includes county and contact information.

Hunters and trappers can sign up at the NDGF website at gf.nd.gov.

Periodically throughout the winter, hunters or trappers will receive information on participating landowners, and they can then contact landowners to make arrangements.

Although the Coyote Catalog does not guarantee a good match for every participating landowner or hunter, Goehring and Steinwand said it has great potential to focus hunting or trapping pressure in areas where farmers and ranchers are experiencing coyote depredation problems.

Anyone who registered for the Coyote Catalog in the past must register again to activate their names on the database.

The Coyote Catalog will remain active through March 31, and then start up again next winter.



STEPHANIE TUCKER



BUFFALOBERRY PATCH

By Greg Freeman, Department News Editor



MIKE ANDERSON

Deer Test Positive for CWD

Two bucks taken from unit 3F2 during the 2013 deer gun season tested positive for chronic wasting disease.

Both adult bucks, a mule deer and whitetail, were shot in western Grant County. Their heads were submitted for testing as part of the hunter-harvested surveillance program. Testing was performed at Michigan State University.

In addition, results from the remaining 3F2 samples, as well as all samples from the eastern third of the state, should be known soon.

In total, five deer have tested positive for CWD since 2009, and all were from the same general area within unit 3F2 in southwestern North Dakota.

The hunter-harvested surveillance program annually collects samples taken from hunter-harvested deer in specific regions of the state. In addition to unit 3F2, samples during the 2013 deer gun season were collected from units in the eastern third of the state.

CWD affects the nervous system of members of the deer family and is always fatal. Scientists have found no evidence that CWD can be transmitted naturally to humans or livestock.

LOOK FOR NEW BOAT REGISTRATIONS

Boat owners are reminded that 2014 is the first year of a new three-year registration period, and with it comes an increase in license fees passed during the 2013 legislative session.

New this year, the price to register motorboats under 16 feet in length, and all canoes, increases from \$12 to \$18, motorboats from 16 feet to less than 20 feet in length from \$24 to \$36, and motorboats at least 20 feet in length from \$33 to \$45. As part of the legislation, many other hunting and fishing license fees will increase April 1.

The new boat registration cycle began January 1 and runs through December 31, 2016.

Boat registrations can be renewed online at the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's website, gf.nd.gov, by clicking the online services link, and "watercraft registration and renewals" under the watercraft heading.

Also, anyone buying a new or used watercraft can register online and generate a 10-day temporary permit that is valid until the registration is processed.

Regulations require the boat number to be in contrasting color to the hull in plain vertical block letters at least 3 inches in height, excluding any border, trim, outlining or shading, and must be maintained in a legible condition so the number is clearly visible in daylight hours. The number must read from left to right, and groups of numbers and letters must be separated by a space or hyphen equivalent in width to the letter "M."

In addition, a validation sticker issued by the Game and Fish Department must be displayed on the boat within 6 inches of the number toward the rear of the boat. No other numbers should be displayed in this area.

Boat owners who do not receive a renewal notice by February 1 should contact the Game and Fish Department at 701-328-6335, or email ndgf@nd.gov. Many renewals are likely to be returned because some owners who moved within the last three years did not notify the Department with their new address.

SALMON SPAWN GOAL REACHED

Fisheries crews completed their annual salmon spawning operation on Lake Sakakawea after collecting 1.9 million eggs, easily surpassing their goal of 900,000.

Russell Kinzler, North Dakota Game and Fish Department Missouri River System biologist, said two thirds of the eggs came from Lake Sakakawea and the remainder from the Missouri River below Garrison Dam. The average size of Lake Sakakawea females was about 5.7 pounds, about 1 pound smaller than 2012. The Missouri River females,

which are typically larger than the lake fish, averaged 7.5 pounds.

"The 2013 salmon spawning run was a success with good numbers of fish available throughout the run," Kinzler said. "We were able to exceed our own egg collection goals early, which enabled us to provide assistance to South Dakota and Montana in meeting their egg needs for 2013."

Plans for 2014 are to stock Lake Sakakawea with 200,000 salmon, with none scheduled for the river below Garrison Dam, Kinzler said.

New North Dakota Bowhunter Education Course

A new online bowhunter education course is designed to help North Dakota bowhunters improve their skills and stay safe in the woods.

Bowhunter ed, which is an official course of the National Bowhunter Education Foundation, teaches safe in-the-field practices, bow shooting basics, different methods of bowhunting, and shot placement and recovery techniques. By completing the bowhunter ed course, students will receive their archery field training voucher to gain entrance to the final in-person component of the North Dakota bowhunter education course.

“The bowhunter-ed.com course is North Dakota’s official online bowhunter education course. The training is a great opportunity for new and seasoned bowhunters to learn safe practices and study information that will truly help them in the field,” said John Mazur, North Dakota Game and Fish Department hunter education coordinator.

The bowhunter ed course is mobile friendly so students can take the course on a smartphone, tablet, laptop or other device. Bowhunter ed features easy-to-understand information, instructional videos, plus detailed illustrations and animations to help students be successful, better prepared bowhunters. To take the North Dakota-approved bowhunter education course, visit bowhunter-ed.com/northdakota/.

The course allows students to study for free, paying only when they pass the course. Upon payment, students will receive and can print out their archery field training voucher, which can be used to sign up for the in-person component. Only after the archery field training is completed will the student receive his or her archery certification card.

While bowhunter education isn’t mandatory in North Dakota, it may be required for special access hunting such as urban hunts or if hunters wish to go bowhunting in states or provinces where certification is mandatory:

- Alaska
- Connecticut
- Idaho
- Maine
- Montana
- Nebraska
- New Brunswick
- New Hampshire
- New Jersey
- New York
- Nova Scotia
- Quebec
- Rhode Island
- South Dakota
- Vermont



RON WILSON



CRAIG BIRBLE

Tentative 2014 Season Opening Dates

To help North Dakota hunters prepare for hunting seasons in 2014, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department annually provides its best estimate for opening dates for the coming year.

Dates become official when approved by governor's proclamation. Tentative opening dates for 2014 include:

Spring Crow	March 8	Youth Waterfowl	September 20
Spring Turkey	April 12	Early Resident Waterfowl	September 27
Fall Crow	August 9	Regular Waterfowl, Youth Pheasant	October 4
Deer Bow, Mountain Lion	August 29	Pheasant, Fall Turkey	October 11
Dove	September 1	Mink, Muskrat, Weasel Trapping	October 25
Sharptail, Hun, Ruffed Grouse, Squirrel	September 13	Deer Gun	November 7
Youth Deer	September 19	Deer Muzzleloader	November 28

HUNTER EDUCATION CLASSES IN 2014

Individuals interested in taking a hunter education class in 2014 should know that most courses are offered early in the calendar year.

To register for a hunter education course, students need to sign up online at the Game and Fish Department's website, gf.nd.gov. Many classes will be added over the next several weeks, and the rest will be added throughout the year as they are finalized.

To register, click on the online services tab, and "online course enrollment" under the hunter education heading. Classes are listed by city, and can also be sorted by start date. To register for a class, click on "enroll" next to the specific class, and follow the simple instructions. Personal information is required.

Those who do not have access to the Internet and want to sign up for a class can call the hunter education program in Bismarck at 701-328-6615.

Individuals interested in receiving a notice by email when each hunter education class is added can click on the "subscribe to news, email and text alerts" link found below the news section on the Department's home page. Check the box labeled "hunter education class notification" under the education program updates.

State law requires anyone born after December 31, 1961 to pass a certified hunter education course to hunt in the state. Hunter education is mandatory for youth who are turning 12 years old, and children can take the class at age 11.

Nonresident Any-Deer Bow Licenses

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department will have 172 any-deer bow licenses available to nonresidents in 2014.

The deadline for applying is March 1. A lottery will be held if more applications are received than licenses available. Any licenses remaining after March 1 will be issued on a first-come, first-served basis. Applicants can apply together as a party. A separate check is required for each application.

The nonresident any-deer bow application is available at the Game and Fish website, gf.nd.gov. The application must be printed and sent in to the Department.

The number of nonresident any-deer bow licenses available is 15 percent of the previous year's mule deer gun license allocation. The Game and Fish Department issued 1,150 antlered mule deer licenses in the 2013 deer gun lottery.



CALENDAR CORRECTION

Credit was not given to the correct photographer in the 2014 *North Dakota OUTDOORS* calendar. The November photograph of a mule deer buck was taken by Kelly Krabbenhoft of West Fargo.

STAFF NOTES/AWARDS

KREFT NAMED GAME AND FISH EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Bruce Kreft, conservation biologist for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department in Bismarck, received the agency's Director's award for professional excellence during the Department's annual winter meeting.

Terry Steinwand, Game and Fish director, said Kreft is the consummate professional and always represents the Department with honor and dignity. "Bruce doesn't require direction or fanfare, and brings a great attitude to work every day," he said.

Kreft was mentioned for his involvement with the Red River diversion project, Minot flood control, Missouri River dredging and stabilization, wetland drainage, wildlife crossings and water withdrawals from lakes and reservoirs. "Preserving or mitigating fish and wildlife habitat while working on these projects is daunting, but Bruce attacks them with passion," Steinwand said.



COURTNEY SPRENGER NAMED WILDLIFE OFFICER OF THE YEAR

Courtney Sprenger, North Dakota Game and Fish Department district game warden stationed in Elgin, is the state's 2013 Wildlife Officer of the Year.

Sprenger was honored in December by the Shikar-Safari Club International, a private conservation organization that annually recognizes outstanding wildlife officers in each state.

In a nomination letter sent to Shikar-Safari, chief warden Robert Timian said Sprenger's district contains a variety of wildlife and recreational areas, which presents many challenges.

"Warden Sprenger has taken a great interest in boating safety and the Missouri River Task Force, spending countless hours ensuring the safety of the boaters on the river and in her district," he said. "She has a great interest in hunter and trapper education, is well respected by the public she serves, and her dedication and professionalism ensures the Department's goal of protecting the future of the outdoor resources of North Dakota."

LONG-TERM EMPLOYEES

Long-term employees were recognized for their service to the state of North Dakota at the Department's annual staff meeting in December.

- **35 years** – Tim Larson, district warden, Turtle Lake; Fred Ryckman, fisheries supervisor, Riverdale.
- **30 years** – Randy Knain, district warden, Rugby; Greg Link, conservation and communications division chief, Bismarck; Scott Peterson, wildlife resource management section leader, Lonetree; Tim Phalen, district warden, Wyndmere.
- **25 years** – Randy Kreil, wildlife division chief, Bismarck; Katherine Mernitz, licensing assistant, Bismarck; Gail Mosset, licensing assistant, Bismarck.
- **20 years** – Dawn Jochim, information specialist, Bismarck; Phillip Miller, fisheries technician, Devils Lake; Diana Raugust, administrative assistant, Lonetree; Shane Shefstad, fisheries technician, Williston; Ken Skuza, district warden, Riverdale.



GAME AND FISH EMPLOYEES RECOGNIZED

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



Gene Van Eeckhout



Brian Prince



Melissa Long



Nancy Boldt

- Gene Van Eeckhout, Jamestown, and Brian Prince, Devils Lake, received the Special Projects award, given to individuals who implemented a successful new project. Van Eeckhout, fisheries supervisor, was recognized for his 38-year effort at Spiritwood Lake, including assessing grass carp and zander introductions, keeping common carp out, and water quality projects. "There isn't just one project on Spiritwood Lake that has received Gene's attention, but rather he's spent a career working on a multitude of fish management issues," Steinwand said. Prince, wildlife resource management supervisor, was recognized for his work in enhancing public land opportunities in the northeast. "In the last 10 years, this district has added 16 new wildlife management areas and expanded eight existing WMAs," Steinwand said. "The amount of additions has been above expectations, and this is a direct result of Brian's efforts."
- Melissa Long, accountant in Bismarck, received the Solid Foundation award, presented to an employee who demonstrates exemplary work in their field. Long was recognized for her dedication to her job. "Melissa is dependable, a quick learner and dedicated to getting the job done," Steinwand said. "Whenever something is asked of her, we can count on it being right."
- Nancy Boldt, boat and water safety coordinator, Bismarck, received the Public Outreach award, presented to an employee for showing significant effort, ability or accomplishment in interacting with the public while promoting the Department's programs. Boldt was recognized for her efforts in developing and coordinating the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program. "This program wouldn't be possible without the work and guidance of Nancy," Steinwand said. "She's reached thousands of women in North Dakota, and they've been able to experience outdoor and hunting or fishing activities in an environment where instructors provide skills to women who may have otherwise not been afforded this opportunity."



Aaron Slominski

SLOMINSKI NEW FISHERIES BIOLOGIST

Aaron Slominski has filled the fisheries biologist position in Williston. He has been a Game and Fish employee at the Riverdale district office since 2007. Slominski has a bachelor's of science degree from the University of North Dakota.



Merrill Binnall

BINNALL NEW WILLISTON WARDEN

Hatton native Merrill Binnall has been named a district warden in Glen Ullin. Binnall has an undergraduate degree in criminal justice from North Dakota State University.



Keenan Snyder

SNYDER FILLS WARDEN POST

Keenan Snyder has been hired as a district game warden in Watford City. Snyder, a Colorado native, has a wildlife biology degree from Colorado State University.



Aaron Robinson

ROBINSON EARNS SCHOLARSHIP

Aaron Robinson was awarded the Donald H. Rusch Memorial Game Bird Research Scholarship from The Wildlife Society during its annual conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Robinson, Game and Fish Department upland game biologist in Dickinson, has a bachelor's of science degree in biology and a master's in wildlife conservation from Brigham Young University, and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in wildlife conservation. He began his career working with greater sage grouse and chukar partridge and is currently studying the effects of disturbance and fragmentation associated with energy development on sharp-tailed grouse ecology in North Dakota.

back cast

By Ron Wilson



RON WILSON

2013 marked my 10th year with the North Dakota Game and Fish Department.

The certificate of appreciation I received as proof is stored in my office desk, where you'll also find a 1971 Rand McNally Road Atlas, nail clipper, three keys, five screw drivers, spare change, 7-inch plastic ruler, a bottle cap for a free Dr. Pepper and a student of the month button from a middle school my kids didn't attend.

Where much of this decade's worth of flotsam washed in from is as puzzling as where the last 10 years hurried off to. While I clearly remember writing my first column for this back page, I have a tough time wrapping my head around the reality that I've done it nearly 100 times since early 2003.

Time flies – be it the last decade or simply 2013 – as they say.

Like many others, I suspect, this is not how I wanted it to end. The 2013 hunting season officially closed over the weekend (January 5), but it might as well have come days earlier as unforgiving winter weather settled over the state, keeping the most rational hunters, a category in which I typically land, indoors.

Going into the final weekend, the

National Weather Service was calling for a wild weather parade of rain, high winds, blowing snow, bitter temperatures and grave wind chills.

Alas, they nailed it. Life-threatening wind chills extended into the first day of the work week, closing many schools until things warmed up.

There is no fun in hanging it up at the end of the hunting season, prematurely or not. Storing gear, stacking travel kennels in the corner of the garage, oiling shotguns, sorting ammunition ... there is finality to it all and you realize it will be months until you get to do it again.

We did our share in 2013, hunting 20-plus days, starting in early September and ending before Christmas. This sounded like a lot to me, and maybe felt like plenty to my short-legged hunting partner, but I know our commitment was unremarkable in comparison. (I talked to one guy who hunted 15 days alone during the 16 ½-day deer gun season. He shot a nice buck, too.)

We started the season in early September in shirtsleeves, sitting on folding hunting stools, spitting store-bought sunflower seeds into the grass between our boots. Despite the number of spent, yellow shotgun shells tossed into a plas-

tic garbage bag outnumbering our take of a half-dozen or so mourning doves, we had our first birds of the season.

Sharp-tailed grouse, fox squirrels, ring-necked pheasants and one ruffed grouse from Minnesota followed, slowly filling a cardboard box in the basement freezer.

When our northern seasons ends, it's easy to reflect on birds flushed, triggers pulled and sandwiches eaten from the tailgate. What's difficult to consider is the future as increasingly more wildlife habitat fades from the landscape, taking with it animals that depend on it for survival.

In 2013, my oldest son and I drew doe tags in a hunting unit 190 miles from home, and felt fortunate to do so. We've been hunting without interruption in the same unit for years and fall wouldn't be anywhere near the same if we had to stay home. Yet, understanding that more than 40,000 hunters were denied deer gun licenses in North Dakota in 2013, we figure our turn is coming.

We'll see what 2014 brings. But first, we need to get through winter.

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.



GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT PHOTO

A Look Back

By Ron Wilson

When the conditions call for it, no snow and solid ice, donning ice skates for a day of ice fishing makes a certain amount of sense. Even so, it's still not something you see every day.

These unidentified anglers, who also employed long, open-water fishing rods, which is another thing you don't see routinely during the ice fishing season in North Dakota, were photographed on January 14, 1968.

The date is important because it marks just the second year this popular fishery, Sweet Briar Dam, was open to fishing.

Originally dubbed Sweet Briar Lake, this fishery was created with the construction of Interstate 94 west of Mandan. Engineers at the time determined the location of the highway crossing of Sweet Briar Creek appeared to be a good

site for the dam.

While the road and dam were completed in 1964, anglers weren't able to fish Sweet Briar's waters until 1966. Rainbow trout were stocked, along with walleye fingerlings and adult bluegill.

"Opening day of the 1966 fishing season at Sweet Briar was a gratifying one to both fishermen and fishery managers. Thousands of fishermen caught 10- to 14-inch rainbow trout and limits were the rule. The high rate of catch extended into the summer, slackened during early July and August and resumed during late summer and fall. While creel census data is lacking for the reservoir, it undoubtedly produced as many fish per acre as any comparable area in North Dakota. Maintenance of this high catch rate is not feasible, but angling should produce good results

for a number of years," wrote Dale Henegar, Game and Fish Department fisheries chief, in the October 1966 issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.

North Dakota Governor William L. Guy added in the same issue: "Sweet Briar Lake is a dramatic example of how to fill the gap that exists in North Dakota between the demand for recreation and the facilities that are available. I doubt that anyone who planned this wonderful water impoundment project ever dreamed of the instant popularity that the lake would have on opening day. It is not only a favorite fishing spot close to an urban area, but it is a beautiful change in the prairie scenery for those traveling on Interstate 94."

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