

NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

PUBLISHED BY THE NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

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MATTERS OF OPINION



Terry Steinwand
Director

Some of the first public visitors to Coal Lake WMA took an evening canoe ride in late September.

The front cover of this magazine gives readers a colorful glimpse of just a slice of the Game and Fish Department's newest wildlife management area, which is now open to public hunting, and which we hope will develop into a new walleye fishery a couple of years down the road.

Called Coal Lake WMA, this new public area was dedicated September 18, and I was fortunate to participate in this event along with many other important partners.

On page 20 you'll find another story with more details about how this new 729-acre tract of lakes, wooded shorelines, native prairie and reclaimed mining land became part of our WMA system.

In this space, I want to highlight the great collaboration that took place between many companies, organizations, agencies and individuals over several years to reach this point. The listing on the dedication program takes up almost a full page. They include:

- The Falkirk Mining Company
- Great River Energy
- The North American Coal Corporation
- North Dakota Public Service Commission
- North Dakota Game and Fish Department
- Federal Highway Administration
- North Dakota Department of Transportation
- McLean County Commission
- McLean County Planning and Zoning
- State Historical Society of North Dakota
- McLean County State's Attorney
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

I also want to thank North Dakota Lieutenant Governor Drew Wrigley for attending and participating in the dedication.

This truly is a project that has a broad base of support, and it's the type of collaboration that the Game and Fish Department strives for on a daily basis, whether it's working with industry or private landowners. While it's certainly true that we do not always agree on some issues, it's also true that working together we can accomplish some great things for our state.

And working together on one project can lead to other opportunities as well. For a long time we've had a great working relationship with The Falkirk Mining Company, which donated the land for Coal Lake WMA. In addition to that, Falkirk Mining is enrolling 320 additional acres it owns into our Private Land Open To Sportsmen program, and Falkirk is foregoing the rental payment that we otherwise provide to landowners who enroll land in PLOTS.

That's 320 acres worth of public access and good wildlife habitat that we didn't have before, at no cost to our agency.

The Coal Lake WMA has deer, pheasants, sharptails and waterfowl right off the bat, and Game and Fish stocked 45,000 walleye fingerlings in the lake earlier this year. We're hoping they will survive.

Overall, this area is going to provide a tremendous amount of opportunity.

It's also important to mention that Game and Fish pays full property taxes on all the properties the agency owns or manages across the state. So Coal Lake as a WMA takes nothing away from McLean County or the state of North Dakota.

We look forward to managing this scenic and productive WMA in the best way possible. It's a great addition for people to use and enjoy as fall gets into full swing.

Terry Steinwand

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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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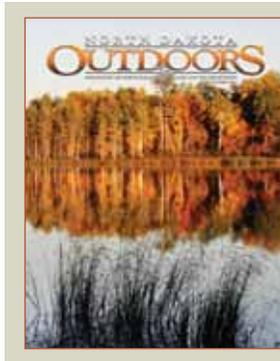
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Front Cover

Fall colors at Coal Lake in McLean County. See story on page 20 for more details on North Dakota's newest wildlife management area, which includes this scenic Coal Lake shoreline, and provides new public hunting and fishing access. *Photo by Craig Bibrle, Bismarck.*



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celebrating
725
years
.....
OUTDOORS

Photos Courtesy of North Dakota Game and Fish Department Archives



By Ron Wilson



This photo showing the conclusion of a sharp-tailed grouse hunt in the Baldwin area was taken around 1920. According to Game and Fish Department records, lawmakers in 1917 further reduced the daily bag limit on upland game birds, including sharptails, prairie chickens, doves and plovers, to five.

North Dakota turns 125 on November 2. Five days later, the state's deer season opens at noon. Both will be celebrated, as neither is simply a date on the calendar.

Turning 125 is significant. Negotiating through ankle-grabbing cattails on the season's opener or sitting on a prairie hillside in florescent orange waiting for deer to move is time-honored.

North Dakota's hunting and fishing roots run deep, extending beyond 1889 when fish and game

were, for some, necessary ingredients for survival.

While the majority of people today chase pheasants and fish for enjoyment, not necessity, their commitment to early mornings and sometimes uninviting weather is also strong.

Much has changed in the outdoors in 125 years. The Game and Fish Department as we know it today was created 84 years ago following two decades of leadership by a five-member board of control that was viewed primarily as the arm of game law enforcement.

Hunting birds and big game have long been a part of North Dakota's storied past.



Visionaries at the time understood that while law enforcement in the outdoors was important, more needed to be done. Creating a Game and Fish Department, it was believed, would help safeguard what remained of North Dakota's natural resources, including native birds and other animals negatively influenced by rapid settlement and widespread cultivating of native habitat.

It's easy to assume that the best days, the good old days, of hunting and fishing in North Dakota were some time ago when people were fewer, animals more numerous, the wide-open spaces even more

wide open. In some instances that thinking is true. In other instances it's not.

Some examples.

Deer

The first official deer gun season was held in North Dakota in 1931. In the first 20-plus years, however, there were several interruptions as the state allowed just 13 seasons. During that same stretch, the highest number of licenses the Game and Fish Department made available to hunters was about 41,000 in 1952. The season was closed in 1953.

125

- One – \$1 for a resident fishing license in 1931.
- Twenty – 20-pound pike caught from Lake Sakakawea in 1959. Many would follow, but this was the first reported.
- Five – \$5 for a resident fishing license in 1978-79.

Back up to 1915, however, and it's a wonder the white-tailed deer population grew to a point to even hold a season. Because there were so few deer at the time, wildlife officials feared what would be unthinkable today – that North Dakota's deer were nearing extinction.

Fast forward nearly 90 years and things had drastically changed.

Starting in 2001, the Department made available more than 100,000 deer licenses – more than double the estimated statewide deer population in 1952 – every year until 2012.

Agency officials repeatedly announced that these were certainly the good old days of deer hunting

Science and Wildlife

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department as we see it in modern times was established in 1930. Over the course of the next two decades, with the implementation of the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Act and the Dingell-Johnson Act, things dramatically changed as these two significant partnership approaches to fish and wildlife conservation, spawned scientific management of wildlife in North Dakota.

The Pittman-Robertson Act raises funds through a dedicated excise tax on sporting guns and ammunition. Through the Dingell-Johnson Act, funds are provided for fish conserva-

tion and boating and fishing recreational programs in each state through an excise tax on certain fishing and boating equipment and fuels.

In the last many years, these two acts have spurred a broadening emphasis and more commitment to using science as a basis for wildlife management decisions.

Department wildlife managers echo the thinking that the expansion of biological surveys, management-based research and technical innovations has changed our understanding of fisheries and wildlife ecology and how to manage these resources.



This North Dakota archer took this buck on October 30, 1955 in the Foxholm area. The first statewide archery season for deer in the state was held in 1954.

Q U O T E D

"Our law makes no mention of elk or moose, presumably for the reason that normally we have none of these animals in the state ..." reported in the Game and Fish Department's 1909-10 biennial report.

"We had thousands of (sharp-tailed) grouse in the early days (1908-23) in the Little Missouri bottoms. When you'd shoot a bird out of the bottoms, there would be so many grouse getting up, the air was filled with the roar of wings," reported a Medora hunter.

"My brother Bill and I drove around one section of land ... and in about five hours shot over 75 prairie chickens. We had the backseat of our 1918 Dodge automobile filled up. We felt pretty good about it until our dad took one look at the birds and gave us the devil! He could see no sense in killing so many at one time," reported a Venturia hunter on a hunt in September 1922.



Two hunters drag a pronghorn buck shot in 1952 near Bowman back to their vehicle. Hunters were likely excited to be in the field at that time in pursuit of these speedy animals as the pronghorn season was opened just the year before, after being closed for more than a half-century.

in North Dakota, but they also tempered the pronouncement with a warning that it wouldn't last. Today, just 48,000 deer gun licenses were offered to hunters, the lowest total since the early 1980s.

Roosters

Introduced into North Dakota in 1910, the ring-necked pheasant has been the upland game bird favorite for years.

In recent years, harvest in the state has been 600,000 to 650,000 roosters, which equals pretty good hunting in the eyes of biologists and most hunters.

The hey-day of pheasant hunting in the state, however, was in the early 1940s, when weather and an

abundance of habitat created ideal conditions for nonnative ringnecks.

From 1940-46, harvest was estimated in the millions. Amazingly, hunters shot nearly 2.5 million birds in both 1944 and 1945. Department records indicate that the average hunter shot more than 34 pheasants per season from 1942-45.

Fish

The history of fishing in North Dakota is storied, from the first documented fish stocking of black bass in Lake Metigoshe in 1893, to the construction of the state's first fish hatchery in 1909, to the authorization of the state's first fishing license (274 sold) in 1924,



to the first fisheries biologist being hired in 1949, to the management of just 137 fishing waters in 1970, to the Missouri River System opening to fishing year-round in 1975 ...

Yet, no matter how far you wander back in time, the number of quality fishing opportunities has never been better than the present.

Nearly 20 years ago, Game and Fish managed 275 fishing waters and it was said that fishing expectations were exceeded. In 2010, Greg Power, Department fisheries chief, said with 325 fishing waters, the good old days of fishing were here.

But it keeps getting better.

In 2014, Power estimated that Game and Fish was

managing about 420 waters, many of which were newish prairie walleye lakes. In summer, fisheries biologists stocked walleye in a record 133 lakes across the state.

The wealth of fishing opportunities hasn't gone unnoticed. The number of anglers buying fishing licenses (219,000) in North Dakota continues to increase, as 2013-14 is the second consecutive year a new record for license sales was established.

Waterfowl

Location. Location. Location.

Because North Dakota is located in North America's Prairie Pothole Region, often called the nation's duck factory, the state has long been a major player in

Mixed Bag

- 1897 – First time licenses required to hunt game in North Dakota. The cost was 75 cents for residents.
- 1897 – Two grizzly bears killed near Killdeer.
- 1921 – Deer season opened after being closed since 1915. The season was “bucks only,” the first of its kind in North Dakota.
- 1931 – Published the first issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.
- 1931 – First ring-necked pheasant season in North Dakota.
- 1934 – Hunting proclamation prohibited the shooting of pheasants and all waterfowl on Mondays and Tuesdays, also known as “rest days.”
- 1943 – Casts of mountain lion tracks were made by a farmer near Stanley. First authenticated report in the state in nearly 30 years.
- 1945 – Pheasant daily bag limit was seven birds, two of which could be hens. This was the last year hens were allowed in the bag.
- 1954 – First statewide deer archery season. Hunter success was less than 10 percent.
- 1958 – First pronghorn archery season held, and 246 licenses issued.
- 1958 – First wild turkey season held. An estimated 97 birds were harvested.
- 1963 – First mourning dove season in 41 years.
- 1964 – First sage grouse season in 42 years.
- 1970 – North Dakota experienced its first major oil spill along a tributary of the Knife River.

Fishing Over Time

- 1881 – North Dakota fish commissioner position established. This position was terminated and reinstated several times before becoming permanent in 1929.
- 1924 – First fishing license sold for \$1.50. The price dropped to .50 cents in following years, before increasing thereafter.
- 1940 – First salmon stocked in the state at Strawberry Lake, McLean County.
- 1949 – First Game and Fish Department fisheries biologist hired.
- 1951 – First successful pike spawning egg take in North Dakota.
- 1956 – Devils Lake first stocked with northern pike.
- 1960 – First year of Game and Fish Department's Whopper Club.
- 1965 – First time license sales reached 100,000.
- 1971 – Rainbow smelt stocked in Lake Sakakawea.
- 1976 – Chinook salmon stocked in Lake Sakakawea.
- 1987 – First fish cleaning station built.
- 1993 – Year-round fishing season established.
- 1996 – Fishing license increased to \$10.
- 2005 – Lake Sakakawea hits all-time low water level.



North Dakota Game and Fish Department warden, Frank Freezon of the New Salem area, checks the licenses of deer hunters. Freezon was a warden with the Department in the 1950s and 1960s.

the waterfowl world.

Nearly half of North America's ducks are produced in the Prairie Pothole Region, and biologists have long understood that what drives duck hunting and duck populations is what happens on these prairie breeding grounds.

In the last 20 years or so, a lot has been happening. Duck numbers in North Dakota have remained high since 1994 because of outstanding water conditions and abundant nesting cover provided by CRP. In 2014, both the water index and breeding duck index were the second highest

since the late 1940s.

Also prominent on today's prairie landscape are resident Canada geese. While breeding pairs of these big birds can be found in every county in the state today, in the 1920s, giant Canada geese were gone from North Dakota.

Efforts to reestablish these birds began in 1938 when a flock was established on Lower Souris National Wildlife Refuge (now J. Clark Salyer NWR). Large-scale releases of hand-reared Canada geese began in 1972. Over the years, the geese flourished.

Along with a regular hunting season, North Dakota has held an early Canada goose season for more than a decade to help reduce the resident population. The season opened this year on August 15, with a daily limit of 15 birds.

Pronghorns

A limited pronghorn season was held this year for the first time since 2009. For an animal that is on the eastern edge of its range in North Dakota, where weather and habitat conditions are often inhospitable, going years without a hunting season isn't unusual.

Less than a decade after announcement of statehood, it was believed that what remained of the pronghorn population needed to be protected. In a report in 1925, it was said that the state held just 225 animals, and their "future appears to be extremely doubtful." By 1940, it was estimated that the population had dwindled to about 40 pronghorns.

In 1951, the first pronghorn season in more than a half century was held in North Dakota.

Biologists understand that pronghorn are the most susceptible of North Dakota's big game species to the influences of tough winters because of the habitat they use, food sources they rely on and their inability to migrate south because of interstate highways and other impediments.

In the years that followed the tough winter of 1996-97, deer, pronghorn and other animals rebounded. With the influence of a string of mild winters, the pronghorn population climbed to more than 15,000 animals in 2007, and for the second time in three years, the Department issued a record number of hunting licenses.

The roller coaster population fluctuation of these animals and many others is life on the Northern Plains. While the ups and downs are often unpredictable, wildlife biologists predict that with more and more habitat disappearing from the landscape, it will be more difficult for those animals that are such a huge part of North Dakota's heritage to rebound.

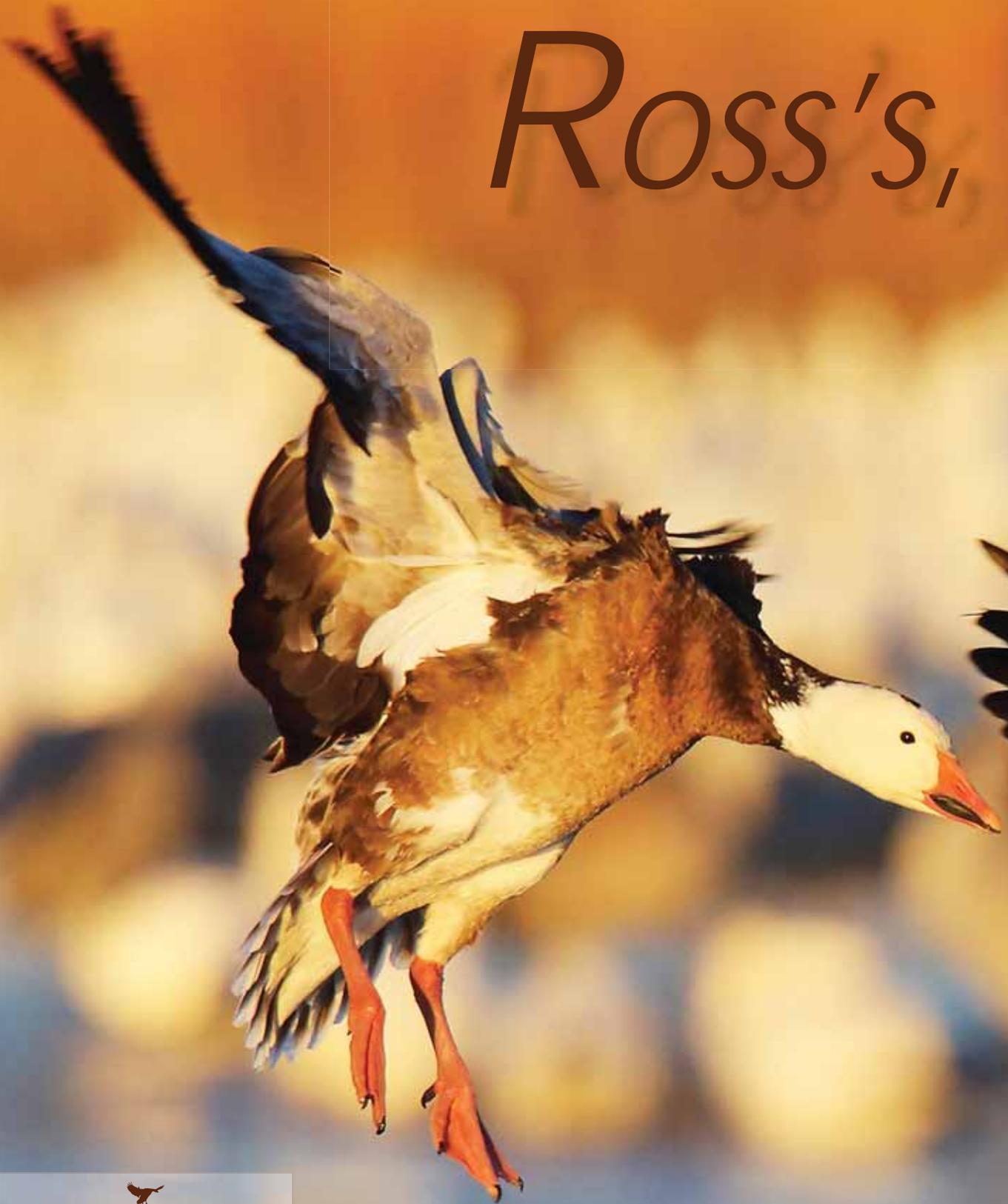
What will be written about deer, ducks and pheasants 125 years from now is only a guess.

RON WILSON is editor of North Dakota OUTDOORS.

Be it fishing atop the ice or in open water, fishing has been a popular activity in North Dakota for years and years. This crowded scene was taken at Mosbrucker Dam in Oliver County sometime in the early 1960s. Mosbrucker is no longer a fishery managed by Game and Fish and hasn't been for years.



Ross's, S



Two blue-phase snow geese set their wings for landing. This pair of geese is a good example that no two blue-phase geese look the same.

nows AND *Blues*

By Ron Wilson

Photos by Kelly Krabbenhoft







The sound of migrating geese, from the rich musical honking of Canada geese, to the high-pitched barking of snow geese, is familiar. We've heard this goose music often enough that it's possible to not look skyward to know, to understand what's going on above us.

But who does that?

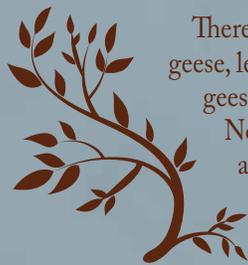
Twice a year, in spring and fall, an untold number of geese color North Dakota's airspace and landscape like bread crumbs on a tablecloth. Located in the Central Flyway, we're ideally situated to encounter waterfowl and many other migrants heading to wintering and breeding grounds.



The bird sitting on the water is a Ross's goose. Note the stubbier bill in comparison to that of lesser snow geese, and the grayish wartlike protuberances, or caruncles, on the back of the bill. The flying birds pictured on the tops of both pages are adult snow geese. The two birds on the far right include an immature snow goose (top) and a mature snow goose. Note that all of the snow geese, no matter their age, sport a dark line along the bill that is often called a "grinning patch."



An adult snow goose sets its wings to land on a North Dakota wetland.



There are two species of light geese, lesser snow geese and Ross's geese, which migrate through North Dakota. While there is an abundance of both species of geese today, there was a time when light goose numbers were significantly lower.

In the early 1900s, Ross's geese were considered rare. From 1932-47 and 1955-62, the season on these birds was closed. From 1963-78, the bag limit was one per day, with one in possession. Today, just like with lesser snow geese, the daily bag limit on these light geese is 50.

"Ross's geese were generally considered a bird of western North America," said Mike Johnson, North Dakota Game and Fish Department game management section leader. "But they've been expanding and now they migrate through North Dakota extensively. They're mixed with the lesser snow geese as both species are migrating at

the same time."

Similarly, snow goose populations in the United States were low at one time. In the 1940s, snow geese numbered less than one-third of today's population, and hunters were allowed to bag just two geese of any species. Now, snow goose numbers are staggering, to the point that some areas of their tundra nesting habitat are suffering.

While at a glance the two species of geese, which both sport mostly white plumage and black wing tips, appear to be one in the same, there are differences. When together, Johnson said, Ross's geese are smaller, have a shorter neck and a rounded head.

"But the real difference is in the bill," Johnson said. "On the Ross's goose, the back of the bill is straight and on the lesser snow, it is curved. The lesser snow's bill, unlike the Ross's, has a dark line along it that is often called a 'grinning patch.'"

The bill on the Ross's goose is also stubbier by comparison. And at the base of



its smaller bill, the Ross's goose has grayish, wartlike protuberances, or caruncles, which become more prevalent with age.

Of the light geese migrating through North Dakota, the most conspicuous are blue geese. While snows are noted for the white plumage, blue geese have bluish-gray wings, dark bodies and a white head and neck.

Once considered an entirely separate species, the uniquely colored goose is simply a blue-phase snow goose.

This bit of scientific news wasn't substantiated until 1961 when Dr. Graham Cooch, longtime Canadian Wildlife Service biologist, provided definitive evidence disputing the separate species theory.

"It's like Labrador retrievers," Johnson said. "You have yellow, chocolate and black Labs, but they are all Labs, just different colors."

Johnson said the farther east you travel, the more blue-phase geese you will encounter. He also noted that just because biologists refer to it as "blue-phase," this coloration is not something the birds eventually overcome.

"Once a blue, always a blue ..." he said.

RON WILSON is editor of North Dakota OUTDOORS. KELLY KRABBENHOFT is a freelance photographer based in West Fargo, who captured these images mostly in Sargent and Kidder counties, North Dakota.



The two birds on the water were once believed to be separate species. Scientific evidence, however, tells us otherwise. The bird standing alone is a wonderful example of a blue goose.





PHOTO COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA

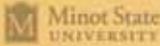


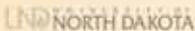
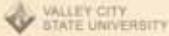
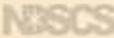
PHOTO COURTESY OF VALLEY CITY STATE UNIVERSITY

Many of the state's wildlife students get hands-on experience in the field. Drew MacDonald (upper left), with the University of North Dakota, weighs a yellow perch. In the other photographs, Valley City State University students band waterfowl and use electrofishing equipment in a summer undergraduate research project.



PHOTO COURTESY OF VALLEY CITY STATE UNIVERSITY

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Educating Wildlife Professionals at Home

By Luann Dart

As the next generation prepares to protect, conserve and enhance fish and wildlife populations and their habitat through the North Dakota Game and Fish Department and other agencies, they are already casting nets to gauge the age of bluegills, walking prairies to estimate grouse populations or peering into microscopes to study water samples.

It's all part of the education on campuses throughout North Dakota preparing students for careers in fisheries and wildlife management. And those diverse campus experiences will help them in their careers, said Scott Peterson, deputy director at the North Dakota Game and Fish Department.

"The more diversity they have in that background, the better they look to us," he said. "The more things they can put on their resume in terms of experience is good for them and for us."

The Game and Fish Department offers a cornucopia of careers, including private land biologists who enroll landowners in programs for public access to wildlife habitat; outreach biologists; wildlife and fisheries biologists; technicians who do field work; and district game wardens who enforce hunting and fishing regulations.

"For all those positions, we're looking at people who are self-starters and reliable," Peterson said. "A lot of times, even our seasonal aides are not always working under direct supervision, so we need trustworthy, dependable, reliable people to come to work for us."

"If you have a four-year fish or wildlife degree or a related degree in natural resources, you're going to be qualified to fill most of our wildlife and fisheries biologist positions," he added. "There are so many different things you can do with that degree ... That's probably one of the most desirable traits about that position is that you don't do the same thing every day. Your job has enough diversity that it keeps it interesting."

With that degree, Peterson recommends summer employment or experiences that build a resume.

"If you're serious about landing a full-time job someday, most employers are going to want to see some type of experience. I would encourage everyone to get some experience during those summer months while you're going to college to get a natural resource degree," he said. "It's going to be very difficult to get a full-time job

with a natural resources agency if you don't have some type of experience or background in that field."

The Department hires summer aides each year, with employment deadlines typically in January or February, to offer on-the-job training opportunities.

Careers in fisheries and wildlife management are cyclical, but Peterson expects more openings as more employees become eligible for retirement.

"We're going to have a pretty good turnover in the next five to 10 years," he said.

"It's a very competitive career because everyone wants to be outdoors doing all these fun things," said Kenneth Cabarle, wildlife and fisheries assistant professor at Dakota College at Bottineau. "Economics have had a real effect on jobs and careers in fish and wildlife management."

Casey Williams, assistant professor at Valley City State University, reminds students to pursue their passion.

"I got into this field because it's something I love to do. Fisheries is my passion," he said. "Students grew up hunting and fishing and that gets them into it, but there's a lot more to it than the hunting and fishing aspect."

Here is a synopsis of programs offered at some North Dakota colleges and universities:

University of North Dakota

The University of North Dakota in Grand Forks offers a fisheries and wildlife biology degree, along with a general biology major. A master's and doctorate in fish and wildlife management are also available.

"All of our students have core biological courses, so we first want them to be biologists," said Dr. Susan Ellis-Felege, assistant professor of wildlife ecology and management.

Core courses include introductory biology courses, along with genetics and ecology. The fisheries and wildlife biology degree then requires management-oriented classes, along with a series of electives ranging from ichthyology to soil ecology.

"We offer an explicit fisheries and wildlife major embedded in the biology department, so we really want our students to be good solid biologists," she said. "We do a lot of hands-on and a lot of student-centered

problem-solving activities.”

Students are engaged by working in teams to work through a problem to learn concepts.

“That’s something that is pretty novel and all of our core courses are taught in that format,” Ellis-Felege said. “So the students are getting a lot of hands-on experiences and using a problem-based approach, which is a lot of what the profession needs. In managing fish and wildlife, you have to be a very good problem-solver.”

UND also has an active UND student chapter of The Wildlife Society.

“That gives students a chance to do a lot of important networking,” she said. “We believe there’s an important element of who they know, but also who knows them and who knows them for what they’ve done.”

Students are also required to complete an internship to obtain field experience.

Additional Programs

Other colleges and universities in the North Dakota University System offering biology programs include:

- Bismarck State College
- Dickinson State University
- Mayville State University

North Dakota State University

North Dakota State University offers a four-year zoology degree, with a concentration in fisheries and wildlife management.

Classes include the full suite of “ologies,” as well as ecology, conservation and management, said Wendy Reed, an associate professor and head of the department of biological sciences.

“Our courses, and our science, focus on understanding the mechanisms of how animals and plants function, and how the processes at the organism level scale up to conservation, management and ecosystem level function,” she said. “So students can get an excellent background of the regional organisms, as well as understanding their role in ecosystem function and strategies for conservation and management.”

NDSU will be moving some courses to an online format for students interested in distance learning. Currently, classes in ichthyology and ornithology are available online. Additional classes will allow for completion of a certificate program in wildlife biology.

NDSU provides students opportunities to get research experience with wildlife populations, including fish, birds and small mammals, Reed said.

“NDSU is a student-focused, land-grant, research institution that engages students in the research culture,” she said.

Valley City State University

Valley City State University offers a four-year bachelor’s of science degree through which students can choose from three concentrations: fisheries, wildlife or conservation law enforcement.

“We treat our undergraduates almost like graduate students so they have multiple opportunities to attend professional meetings, and work in undergraduate research,” said Dr. Bob Anderson, associate professor in fisheries and wildlife science. “Students have the opportunity to attend professional meetings, such as the American Fisheries Society and North Dakota Chapter of The Wildlife Society meetings, and participate in multiple hands-on learning activities.

“That’s one of the ways we’ve tried to set ourselves apart is by doing a lot of hands-on activities and field trips,” he added. “Students participate in field trips such as duck banding, field necropsies, wildlife telemetry, fish seining and electrofishing.”

“It’s extremely important,” Williams said about the hands-on experiences. “You can talk about it in the classroom in a lecture setting, but until you actually go out there and get dirty and wet, you don’t actually understand. I think that helps them tremendously when they do go out and become professionals.”

VCSU students are also in a new science building with dedicated lab and classroom space for fish and



PHOTO COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA

University of North Dakota fisheries and wildlife biology student Leila Mohsenian puts a leg band on a duck.

wildlife studies, which includes the only necropsy room dedicated for fish and wildlife among the state's campuses.

"We were able to design it around the fisheries and wildlife program," Anderson said.

Dakota College at Bottineau

Dakota College offers an associate of science degree, with a focus on fisheries and wildlife management, and an associate of applied science degree in fish and wildlife management through the career and technical education programs.

The college also has a cooperative agreement through which students can remain on the Dakota College campus for their third year and take classes at Valley City State University, then transfer to VCSU for their fourth year to complete a degree in fish and wildlife management.

"We're just trying to keep our traditional connections and build these programs so people have opportunities coming into a junior college and transferring out to another school and starting their career path," Cabarle said.

Students also have the option to transfer into a four-year college to obtain a criminal justice degree to become game wardens.

"This program has had a long tradition of educating people starting their careers in natural resource and wildlife management," Cabarle said. "Kids come in and think all they're going to be doing is fishing and hunting, but that's not the career.

"It's a lot more than that as a natural resource manager," he added. "It teaches them the difference between the hunting and fishing end of it, and actually having to do the work, which is a lot of hard work."

Dakota College emphasizes hands-on experiences, such as banding ducks with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or touring the Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery.

This fall, students studied bluegill growth in Lake Metigoshe by studying bone structure at a lab at Valley City State University. They also spent a full day at the Game and Fish Department's necropsy lab with Dr. Dan Grove, Department wildlife veterinarian, studying necropsies on large mammals.

"All these things help them build a resume," Cabarle said.

University of Mary

The University of Mary in Bismarck offers a four-year bachelor's of science biology degree, with a concentration in wildlife and conservation.

"What makes it unique for us is our location in Bismarck," said Dr. Jim Maskey, assistant professor of biology. The university takes advantage of its proximity to the Bismarck-based Game and Fish Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ducks Unlimited, Delta Waterfowl and others, bringing professionals into the classroom and offering connections for students looking for summer jobs.

Students visit labs and conservation areas and assist with



MIKE ANDERSON

Patrick Isakson (middle), North Dakota Game and Fish Department conservation biologist, works with North Dakota State University researchers Brady Holte (left) and Matthew Smith (right) on a reptile and amphibian survey in southeastern North Dakota.

chronic wasting disease sampling. Maskey is collaborating with Jason Smith, Department big game management biologist, on an ongoing moose research project, and Maskey's students will have an opportunity to participate in that research also.

Minot State University

Minot State University offers a bachelor of arts degree in biology, with a pre-professional track in pre-wildlife studies.

The course is designed to satisfy basic requirements for colleges and universities offering degree programs, said Dr. Heidi Super, department chair. The course fulfills the first two years of biology, allowing for transfer into a specialized program in fish and wildlife studies.

Sitting Bull College

Sitting Bull College in Fort Yates offers a bachelor's of science degree in environmental science, which may include electives in wildlife conservation. Students also participate in hands-on activities such as duck banding, said Renae Schmitt, an environmental sciences instructor.

Students are also required to complete two individual research projects prior to graduation.

North Dakota State College of Science

The North Dakota State College of Science in Wahpeton offers an associate of science degree in wildlife management, which allows for transfer to a four-year college to obtain a bachelor's degree.

LUANN DART is a freelance writer from Elgin, North Dakota.

NEW WMA DEDICATED

Coal Lake Project Involved Many Partners

The short version is this: the State Game and Fish Department recently assumed management of, and opened to the public, 729 acres of wooded hillsides, native prairie and reclaimed grassland, all surrounding a newly stocked fishing water in eastern McLean County.

The long story about Coal Lake Wildlife Management Area, as is usually the case, goes back much further and involves many partners, most of whom were represented at a windswept dedication ceremony September 18.

That long story began in the mid-1970s when parts of U.S. Highway 2, which runs east to west across the northern third of North Dakota, and U.S. Highway 83, which runs north to south through the central part of the state, were improved and widened. As mitigation for wetlands that were destroyed as part of the highway improvement project, the North Dakota Department of Transportation agreed to manage more than 8,000 acres of highway rights-of-way, mostly along U.S. 2 and 83, as wildlife habitat.

Management for wildlife meant not allowing mowing of the rights-of-way or ditches for hay, as is common practice along other highways in the state. And in many years, dry conditions allowed opening the roadside grass to emergency haying.

Over time the NDDOT was almost annually involved in discussions between adjacent landowners who wanted to hay the roadsides, and wildlife agencies and conservation organizations that wanted to preserve the benefits that came with undisturbed roadsides.

In 2001 the North Dakota legislature directed the NDDOT to come up with a plan to eliminate the no-mow areas. In 2003 the legislature approved that plan, which authorized NDDOT to acquire about 4,800 acres of land from the State Department of Trust Lands. In turn, the Game and Fish Department would manage those lands as part of its wildlife management area system.

By 2006 more than 3,400 acres had been acquired, and not long after that Coal Lake came into the picture.

The land around Coal Lake, which sits only a couple of miles east of U.S. Highway 83 near Underwood, was owned by The Falkirk Mining Company, a subsidiary of The North American Coal Corporation, and Great River Energy, which operates the Coal Creek Station power plant. From the early 1990s to 2003, about 200 acres of that land area around the lake was mined for coal.

Since mining was completed, The Falkirk Mining Company and Great River Energy reclaimed the area close to its

By Craig Bibrle

Some of the land surrounding Coal Lake was mined and reclaimed to its original condition, making for a unique management area with varied habitat and a potential fishing lake as well.



CRAIG BIHRLE

Representatives of many organizations were recognized at the Coal Lake project dedication. They included, from left: Jay Kost, The Falkirk Mining Company; Dan Halstead, Game and Fish Department district wildlife resource supervisor; Randy Crooke, The Falkirk Mining Company; Ladd Erickson, McLean County state's attorney; Jim Melchior, The Coyote Creek Mining Company; Troy Leingang, The Coteau Properties Company; Carroll Dewing, The Coteau Properties Company; Bob Benson, CEO, The North American Coal Corporation; Brian Bjella, Crowley-Fleck Law Firm; Terry Steinwand, Game and Fish director; Drew Wrigley, North Dakota Lieutenant Governor; Randy Christmann, North Dakota Public Service Commissioner; Brian Kalk, North Dakota Public Service Commissioner; Grant Levi, North Dakota Department of Transportation director; John Weeda, Great River Energy.

original condition,
as required by state law.

Early on in that process, they proposed to donate 729 acres, including the lake, to the NDDOT.

But before that could happen, the North Dakota Public Service Commission had to approve a land use change to recreational lands, and the reclamation had to be completed.

For its part of the agreement, Game and Fish will manage the area for wildlife, public access including hunting and fishing, and will also make annual "in-lieu-of-tax" payments to McLean County.

The North Dakota Historical Society also has land included in the WMA.

As Game and Fish Director Terry Steinwand said at the dedication ceremony: "It's going to provide a tremendous amount of opportunity."

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

LARA ANDERSON



BUFFALOBERRY PATCH

By Greg Freeman, Department News Editor



CRANG BIRKLE

Pheasant Brood Data Summary

North Dakota's late summer roadside pheasant survey indicated total birds and number of broods are up statewide from 2013.

Stan Kohn, North Dakota Game and Fish Department upland game management supervisor, said the survey shows total pheasants are up 30 percent from last year. In addition, brood observations were up 37 percent, while the average brood size was down 4 percent. The final summary was based on 253 survey runs made along 106 brood routes across North Dakota.

"With the good spring weather for most of the nesting and early brooding period, I suspected a better production year and it looks like it did occur," Kohn said.

Even though average brood size is down slightly in all districts, Kohn said the number of broods observed will in most cases offset the small decline.

"Roadside counts indicate pheasant hunters are going to find more pheasants in most parts of the state, with more young roosters showing up in the fall population," Kohn said.

SPORTSMEN AGAINST HUNGER ACCEPTING GOOSE MEAT

North Dakota's Sportsmen Against Hunger program can now accept donations of Canada geese taken during the regular waterfowl hunting season.

Previously, the program could accept snow, blue and Ross's geese during the regular season, but Canada goose donations were only allowed during the early Canada goose season.

This new opportunity for hunters to donate goose meat is part of a two-year pilot program between the North Dakota Game and Fish Department and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"In the past couple of years we have heard from many hunters who would like to donate geese taken during the regular season," said Game and Fish Director Terry Steinwand. "We appreciate the Fish and Wildlife Service setting up this pilot program so we can see how well it works."

North Dakota Community Action Sportsmen Against Hunger program coordinator Sarah Hasbargen said the additional donations accepted during this pilot project will be a much-needed increase to food pantries across the state.

"We will accept as much as hunters are able to donate," Hasbargen said, while mentioning donated goose meat must be received no later than the day after the close of the season.

Provisions for donating goose meat during the regular season are basically the same as for the early Canada goose season. In addition, hunters can also donate meat from geese that were taken during the early season.

Hunters can bring their geese home and clean them prior to delivering meat to a processor, but breast meat brought from home without a wing or head attached to the meat, must be accompanied by written information that includes the hunter's name, address, signature, hunting license number, date taken and species and number taken.

Hunters may also deliver geese directly from the field to a processor, but identification must remain attached to the bird until in possession of the processor. Since no goose carcasses or feathers are allowed inside processing plants, hunters must be able to ensure proper disposal and clean-up of carcasses.

The list of participating processors is available on the Game and Fish Department website at gf.nd.gov, and at the NDCAP website, www.capnd.org.

Hunters interested in donating are encouraged to call the processor before dropping off geese, to have a clear understanding of how processors will accept goose breasts, and their hours of operation.

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

For more information, visit the NDCAP website, or contact Sarah Hasbargen at 701-232-2452.

2013 Pheasant Season Recap

The number of pheasant hunters and total birds taken were lower in 2013 than in 2012, according to North Dakota Game and Fish Department statistics.

Last year, more than 76,000 hunters (down 11 percent) harvested 447,000 roosters (down 27 percent). In 2012, nearly 86,000 hunters took 616,000 birds.

Birds bagged per hunter decreased from 7.2 to 5.8, and each hunter spent an average of 4.8 days afield.

Counties with the highest percentage of pheasants taken by resident hunters in 2013 were Hettinger, 9.6; Burleigh, 7.9; McLean, 7.9; Morton, 6.8; and Stark, 5.5.

Top counties for nonresident hunters were Hettinger, 24.8 percent; Bowman, 12.2; Divide, 5.7; Emmons, 4.8; and Adams, 4.

Annual pheasant season statistics are determined by a mail survey of resident and nonresident hunters.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

RECORD GOLDEYE IS 4 POUNDS, 3 OUNCES

A goldeye taken from Lake Audubon in July still remains a state record, even though the official weight is about a half pound less than originally reported.

Initially, the weight for the big goldeye, caught by Velva angler Brayden Selzler, was determined as 4 pounds, 12 ounces. After a follow-up investigation, North Dakota Game and Fish Department biologists concluded that the fish officially weighed 4 pounds, 3 ounces.

Selzler's goldeye still broke the previous state record by 6 ounces.

Order 2015 Outdoors Calendars

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is taking orders for its *North Dakota OUTDOORS* calendar, the source for hunting season and application dates for 2015. Along with outstanding color photographs of North Dakota wildlife and scenery, it also includes sunrise-sunset times and moon phases.

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

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



YOUNG ZEBRA MUSSELS AGAIN FOUND IN RED RIVER

Aquatic nuisance species surveillance efforts along the Red River in eastern North Dakota have again detected the presence of zebra mussel young at Wahpeton.

North Dakota Game and Fish Department ANS coordinator Fred Ryckman said zebra mussel larvae were also present in the same area in both 2010 and 2011, but were not found in the past two years.

"Since we have found zebra mussel young in this area before, and because there are established adult populations upstream in the Otter Tail River in Minnesota, finding

a few young this year really didn't come as a surprise," Ryckman said.

Despite recent reports of new and expanding zebra mussel infestations in Minnesota, to date adult zebra mussels have not been found in any North Dakota waters. Young zebra mussels have only been found in North Dakota at this single site on the Red River.

Local entities and water recreationists are urged to check for ANS infestations when pulling and storing fishing piers, boat docks and lifts prior to ice up. "It is especially important to look for zebra mussels during

this winter prep work to determine if mussels are present," Ryckman said. "They attach to these types of hard surfaces."

If mussels are found, citizens are requested to leave the suspicious mussel attached, take a digital picture, and report findings immediately to a local Game and Fish Department district office. Pictures of zebra mussels are available on the 100th Meridian Initiative website at 100thmeridian.org/.

ANS surveillance along the Red River was conducted by Valley City State University and funded by Game and Fish.



Waterfowl Trailer for Young Hunters

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department and Ducks Unlimited co-sponsor a trailer full of waterfowl hunting gear that is available to families with young hunters.

Purchased by the Game and Fish Department's Encouraging Tomorrow's

Hunters grant program, the trailer is designed for families who don't have the appropriate gear for their young hunters to hunt waterfowl. The equipment is donated by Avery Outdoors.

Use of the trailer is free, and it is equipped with goose and duck decoys

for field hunting, and two bags of floating duck decoys and marsh seats for hunting a wetland.

For more information, or to reserve equipment, contact the Ducks Unlimited office in Bismarck at 701-355-3500.

STAFF NOTES



Randy Kreil



Jeb Williams

Kreil Retires, Williams Named Chief

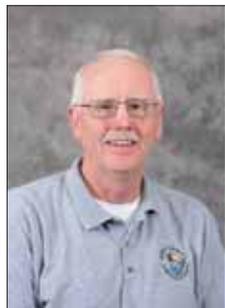
Randy Kreil, the Game and Fish Department's wildlife division chief since 1994, retired at the end of August. He was employed with the Department for 29 years.

Director Terry Steinwand has appointed 15-year Department employee Jeb Williams to succeed Kreil.

"Jeb has a proven track record in all of his capacities with the Department," Steinwand said. "This, along with his communication skills, was a large part in his selection."

Williams has been the assistant wildlife chief since 2011. He has also held biologist and wildlife resource management supervisor positions.

A native of Beach in Golden Valley County, Williams has a bachelor's degree in biology and resource management from Dickinson State University.



Gene Van Eeckhout

Van Eeckhout Announces Retirement

Gene Van Eeckhout, longtime Game and Fish Department fisheries biologist, announced his retirement in late September.

The 38-year veteran of the Department spent most of his tenure in Jamestown as the south central district fisheries supervisor.



Randy Knain

Knain Retires From Warden Post

Randy Knain, district game warden at Rugby, retired in September after 32 years with the Game and Fish Department.

Knain started his career as a game warden in Bismarck in 1983, then moved to take over the Rugby district in 1991.



Geralyn Evans

Evans Retires

Longtime Game and Fish Department employee GERALYN EVANS retired in September after 28 years with the agency.

Evans was the Game and Fish director's administrative assistant in Bismarck since 1986.

back cast



By Ron Wilson



NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT ARCHIVE PHOTO

Our shot at jumping into the parade that is the celebration of North Dakota's 125 years of statehood is an eight-page piece, a snapshot, really, about more than century's worth of hunting, fishing and, in later years, conservation.

In researching the article, I looked at dozens and dozens of decades-old, black and white photographs, and reviewed many articles and documents from over time that, when pieced together, told an intelligible account of where we started and how we got here.

While you can walk away from this kind of exercise with any number of opinions and insights, what struck me was pretty fundamental: Because of unpredictable weather, seemingly never-ending alterations to the landscape, the absence of game laws for years, North Dakota's wildlife has been on a long, roller coaster ride.

This up and down ride, which should sound familiar for some of the same reasons, continues today.

For a number of years, North Dakota has been losing wildlife habitat. Conservation Reserve Program acres have declined by nearly 2 million acres, more native prairie is being converted to cropland, tree belts removed, it goes on.

With less habitat, the weather – be it drought, bitter cold, snow, wet, cool springs – plays an even harsher hand.

This year, for the first time in many, I, like a lot of hunters, considered our odds of drawing a doe tag to be somewhere in the neighborhood of slim. Hunters who have been around long enough haven't seen license numbers – 48,000 – this low since 1980.

On the other hand, and there is always another hand, the fishing in North Dakota on a record number of waters this summer was, in many instances, great; after an extended absence, a limited pronghorn season is being held in southwestern North Dakota; waterfowl numbers are up and a fall flight similar to those in 2007-11 is anticipated; and pheasant numbers are up from last year when hunters shot nearly 450,000 birds.

So far this fall, we've shot a handful of sharp-tailed grouse, enough to keep us and the dogs interested. We've also taken some fox squirrels from the Missouri River bottoms, which interests few, but pleases some. We're off to an OK start, and that's all we can ask.

Our act, like a lot of hunters in North Dakota, is basically the same every fall. We just want the opportunity to participate, a place to hunt and a reasonable chance to pull the trigger.

Thinking this way didn't come easy. Having been around and hunted the last two decades or so in North Dakota, our expectations had gotten out of whack. Wasn't that long ago hunters carried multiple deer tags and harvested more than 900,000 pheasants.

Things changed. And if history is our guidebook, they'll change again. What's in doubt, however, is in which direction the roller coaster will take us.

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.



NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT ARCHIVE PHOTO

A Look Back

By Ron Wilson

By the time North Dakota was granted statehood in 1889, the vast herds of big game animals were mostly a thing of the past.

"Pioneers came to this country with dreams of transforming the wilderness; they reaped from the wild prairie with little thought of replenishing its bounty and with little regard for its integrity," according to *North Dakota OUTDOORS* in 1989 in an article recognizing the state's 100th anniversary.

These were the original good old days, the article continued; a time when it seemed one could have it all. But there was a price to pay. Some species of wildlife declined; some disappeared completely. Because there was such variety, declines did not draw much notice, or if noticed, were not considered of much import, except by a few who considered the inevitable unacceptable.

By 1883, six years before state-

hood, it was reported that the state's elk herd, animals heavily pursued by early pioneers and market hunters, were gone. Elk once roamed over the entire state, but six animals killed in 1883 near Cavalier were the last reported for some time.

The above photo was taken in 1894. The photo shows two hunters with a bounty of mule deer and what were once referred to as Audubon bighorn sheep. At the time, there were few, and often ignored, restrictions on hunters.

That same year, the first biennial report of the State Game and Fish commissioner was submitted and he stressed the need to safeguard for a series of years what remained of North Dakota's big game.

"On assuming the duties of this office I made these discoveries: An almost universal belief amongst the people that ... anyone was at liberty to remove fish from our waters

in any manner that might suit his convenience, and to kill game birds and animals at any season of the year, and to ship them to any point within and without the state, at any time and in any quantity as might be convenient or desirable," the commissioner wrote.

Following the commissioner's report, changes were in the works.

In 1897, licenses for the first time were required by law to hunt game in North Dakota. A number of stringent laws were passed thereafter, restricting the harvest on most game species.

Even so, the recovery of many of North Dakota's animals was slow, and for some species it would take years.

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.