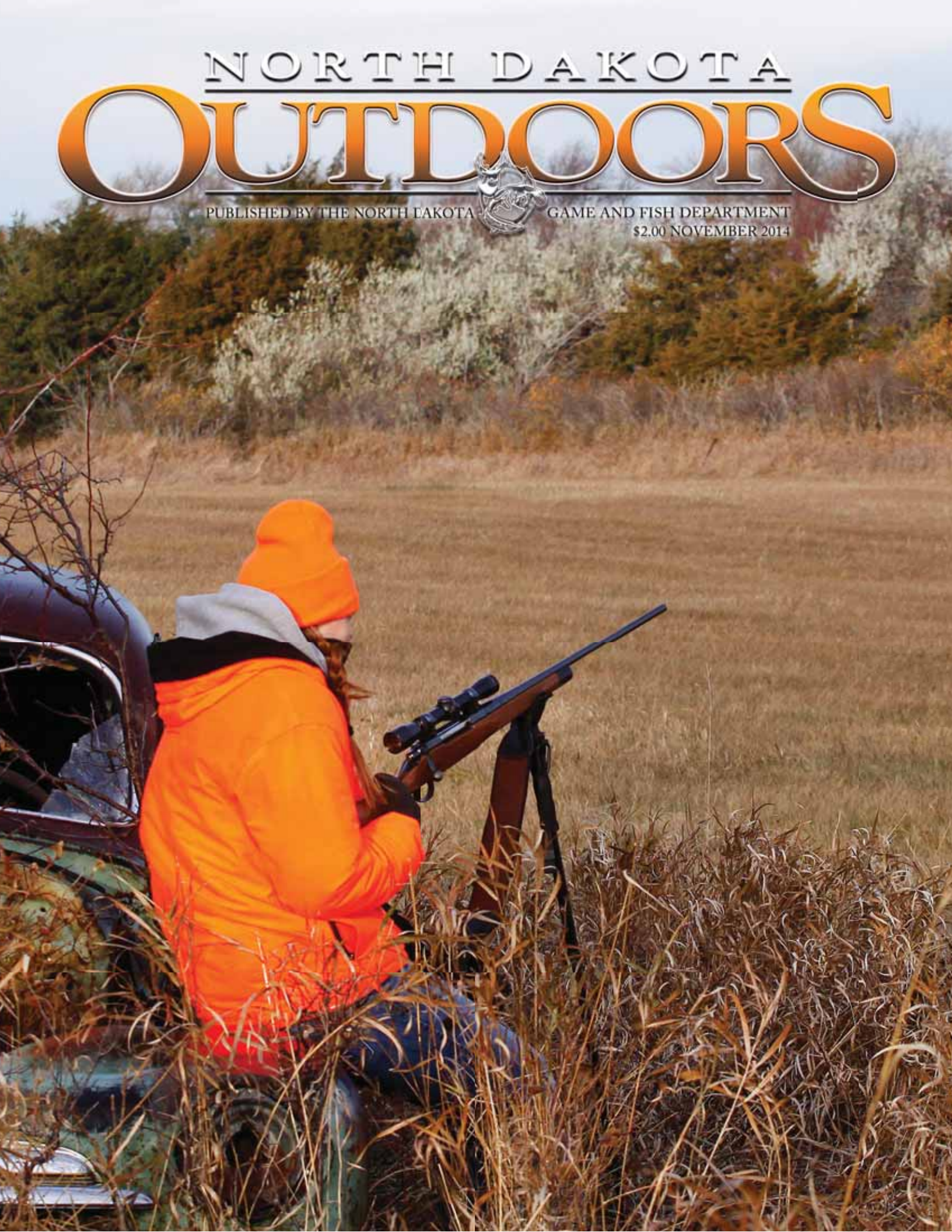


# NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

PUBLISHED BY THE NORTH DAKOTA

GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

\$2.00 NOVEMBER 2014







## MATTERS OF OPINION



**Terry Steinwand**  
*Director*

In November of 2006, North Dakota hunters were heading into one of the better deer gun seasons the state would ever have. With more than 143,000 licenses available, everyone in the state who wanted a deer gun license could get one if they were willing to perhaps travel a bit and hunt for a doe.

And yet, at that time the Game and Fish Department was still hearing from hunters who felt they had gone too long without getting a buck license. We discussed that issue in this magazine eight years ago.

Four years later, when the state's whitetail and mule deer populations were on their way down from historic highs in the mid-2000s, Game and Fish had about 117,000 licenses available. In the August-September 2010 issue of this magazine, we discussed again the growing concern among some deer hunters that buck licenses were harder to come by.

With almost 30,000 fewer licenses than in 2006, we were looking at ways that we might implement a system that would limit hunters to only one buck license a year, but still allow for multiple deer licenses.

Since then, because of a variety of factors, but most notably severe winters and landscape habitat changes, the state's deer population has continued to decline. With only 48,000 licenses issued for the 2014 season, we are well below the level where there's a deer gun license for anyone who has an interest.

The discussion now is not whether someone should be able to receive more than one buck license, but whether anyone should have more than one deer license, when almost 30,000 people in each of the last two years applied for a deer gun license and could not get one.

We had that discussion with deer hunters on a large scale last winter. We held eight special deer management meetings and also

encouraged public comments on several options we were considering that would eventually give more people a chance to hunt, given the current deer population.

After evaluating all the input we received, the Game and Fish Department is proposing to move forward with a preferred option for 2015 that will limit North Dakota deer hunters to one license per year. We know this is not a popular plan with some hunters, but we feel it is the best option available, and we have tried to accommodate many of the concerns we heard over the past several months.

Keep in mind, if deer populations rebound significantly in the future, the way deer licenses are allocated could return to the current system.

The one-deer plan allows everyone to apply in the deer gun license lottery, and those who are unsuccessful are still eligible for a statewide archery license. For people who like to hunt with a gun and a bow, a lottery gun season license allows a hunter to pursue that deer with a bow during the bow season, in the prescribed unit.

In addition, we are planning to do away with the provision that hunters will lose their bonus points if they do not apply for a certain license at least every other year. So, if you don't apply for a few years, your points will be there the next time you do apply.

There's a much more comprehensive article about the deer season changes we'll be pursuing for 2015 elsewhere in this magazine. We'll also be talking about it in all of our media projects, and at the fall round of advisory board meetings later this month.

Deer hunting is important to a lot of North Dakotans. This change will still not guarantee that everyone will get a gun season license, but it should give more people an opportunity to hunt each year while we work on rebuilding the deer population.

*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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### Front Cover

Using an old car body as a backrest, a hunter waits for a deer to step into the open. *Photo by Craig Bihrie, Bismarck.*



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# ONE DEER LICENSE IN 2015?



With just 48,000 licenses made available to hunters this fall, drawing a doe license, let alone a buck license, was difficult.

CRAIG BIRRE

By Ron Wilson

**W**ith deer populations in the state at levels not seen in decades, but the demand from hunters to draw a license still high, Game and Fish Department officials are considering changes to how licenses will be allocated in the future.

Starting in 2001, the Department made available more than 100,000 deer licenses through the 2011 season. In 2012, licenses were significantly reduced to 65,300, followed by 59,000 in 2013 and 48,000 this fall, the lowest total since 1980.

In February, hunters around the state provided input at a series of deer management meetings where agency officials presented possible license allocation options. Hunters also mailed in written comments and posted hundreds of others on the Department's website during that time.

"With declining deer numbers and a high interest in deer hunting, a lot of public discussion has taken place over the last several years, which included a possible change to the current deer license allocation system," said Jeb Williams, Game and Fish Department wildlife division chief. "Even when we were making more than 100,000 licenses available, there were concerns about how licenses were distributed because some hunters weren't getting a buck tag, while others were receiving multiple buck tags."

Williams said after considerable review, Department officials came up with three license allocation options that addressed concerns of hunters, giving preference to one.

Two of the options would change the current system to allow only one deer license per hunter per year for both residents and nonresidents. Williams said it's important to note that either of these options would be "interim," as the way in which licenses are allocated to hunters may return to the current system when deer populations rebound and the Department is able to reasonably meet hunter expectations.





**Mule deer in the badlands are showing signs of recovery. Even so, Game and Fish is again not allowing any antlerless mule deer hunting in eight hunting units in western North Dakota.**

“There are a lot of unknowns because it’s uncertain if deer populations will climb, decline, or stay about where they are at today,” Williams said. “We also have to consider North Dakota’s growing human population. With more people moving into the state, the demand for a limited number of deer licenses will likely increase. Until North Dakota’s deer population rebounds, starting with the 2015 season hunters will only be able to have one deer license of any type per year.”

In the preferred option that Game and Fish is considering, all hunters may apply in the deer gun lottery, and if they are unsuccessful they may still purchase a bow license. Resident archery season licenses will still be good statewide for any deer. If a hunter is successful in the gun lottery, he or she could use the license as a bow license during the full length of the archery season, but only for the deer and unit specified on the license.

If a hunter is successful in drawing a muzzleloader license, that person will have to fill that license with a muzzleloader license only and can only hunt during the muzzleloader season per state law.

Youth hunters under age 16 will be exempt, and could get a bow license and a deer gun or youth season license.

Gratis license holders may hunt in any

open season on their own land, but may only get one license per year.

Another part of the preferred option is that hunters would be able to apply simultaneously for the deer gun and muzzleloader lotteries. The application would allow choice of preference, so if the hunter’s name is drawn and both muzzleloader and deer gun licenses are available at that time, the computer would issue the hunter’s preferred license.

Williams said the interim option would not significantly reduce the competition for buck licenses by allowing bowhunters to apply in the deer gun lottery, as archers are still able to get an any-deer, anywhere license for the length of the bow season.

“However, this option will make additional gun licenses available, as many individuals will choose not to apply for antlerless licenses in the gun lottery,” he said. “That’s the compromise with this change, as individuals can no longer receive multiple licenses. But it eliminates the aspect of forcing people to make a choice up front, which was not popular with a significant percentage of the public during the meetings and post meeting comments.”

The second option calls for leaving the deer allocation system as is, regardless of the deer population or deer gun license numbers.

Agency officials didn't recommend this option for the following reasons:

- There are a high number of deer gun hunters going without the opportunity to hunt deer and they are not happy about it.
- An increasing number of bowhunters who also apply for deer gun licenses, resulting in more of a chance for some people to get two deer licenses per year, while many others go without the opportunity to hunt.
- Based on input received at and following the February deer management meetings, many deer hunters expect the Department to do something to

address the fairness issue. In current times of low deer numbers, many people do not feel it is right for some hunters to receive multiple licenses while others receive nothing at all.

If the Department is ever going to address this issue, then now is the time when we have the lowest number of deer gun licenses available in more than 30 years.

A third option also provides for only one deer license per hunter, but with no post-lottery bow option. Under this option, hunters would have to decide before the lottery if they wanted to try for a deer gun license, or apply for a guaranteed statewide bow license. Hunters who didn't draw a lottery gun

## COMMENTS FROM HUNTERS

Treat all deer tags the same. Whether it be landowner, bow, gun, muzzle-loader, etc. Doesn't seem right where one person doesn't get to hunt at all one year and someone else may be able to pursue deer in three different seasons.

I know this isn't what you want to hear, but maybe the deer season should be closed for one year and see how the numbers rebound. If the entire season is shut down then there wouldn't be the argument of who gets a license and who doesn't (archery and gun included). Then assess the numbers a year later and go from there.

Hunters should only receive one license each year, then the hunter can choose bow, gun or muzzleloader season until the deer numbers are up again.

One license per year. You either have a gun license, a bow license, or muzzleloader license, not all three. When numbers go up, if they ever do, you can only ever have one buck tag per year.

Do not change anything. There is a scientific system in place and it is weighted to give everyone a fair chance. I love to hunt; it is what I live for. Do not make me choose between bowhunting, rifle hunting and muzzleloader hunting. Some people say allowing only one tag would increase people's chance to hunt, but what it really does is take away those chances. If a one tag system was implemented, I would never get to do the other types of hunting again. What you are doing is taking chances away from people. Leave the system alone, you can't make everyone happy. Your system works, don't listen to the whiners.

I hope the Department seriously considers limiting deer licensing to one license for one person (including bow, muzzleloader, rifle) until the deer population rebounds and management objectives are met. Considering the number of applicants for deer gun season and the number of licenses issued, it seems to be a fairness issue to set a limit of the licenses one person can obtain.

I am against the one deer system. I gun hunt and bowhunt. I rarely take a deer with the bow, but my wife and I like to bowhunt in the badlands early in the fall and then hunt back home with my family during the gun season. I would rather get a gun tag every third year and be able to bowhunt every year than gun hunt every other year to give up my bowhunting. Bottom line is that I like the "no change" option.

With the deer numbers down, the lottery should be for all available tags. One tag choose your season. This is from a hunter who hunts all seasons, but let's be fair for all!

The system now is fine, it works. You are doing it right by decreasing tags to try and increase the population. People are going to complain no matter what. When the population increases, opportunities will increase and people will be happy. Reducing tags is a quick way to try and help the population, but the serious problem is habitat. Habitat needs to be addressed for the population now and the future. Two good winters will increase the population, which will lead to more opportunities.

Just leave as is and the public will have to accept what they are dealt. I had no problems with not receiving a rifle or muzzleloader tag last year and was just as content with a bow tag. That is what the rest of them need to understand and quit being so greedy.



A series of deer management meetings were held around the state (top photo) in February to discuss possible future license allocation options. The preferred option would affect all hunters, no matter if they hunt with a bow (bottom photo), rifle or muzzleloader.



CRAIG BHIRLE



LARA ANDERSON

license would not be able to get an archery license under this option.

Youth hunters under age 16 under this option would be exempt and may get a bow license and deer gun license if they are successful in the lottery. Gratis license holders would be able to hunt in any season on their own land, but would only get one license per year.

Also, successful lottery license holders could also use the license as a bow license, but only in the specified unit and for the type of deer specified. Hunters drawn in the deer gun lottery would be taken out of the muzzleloader lottery.

Agency officials do not prefer this option because:

- While this option does the most in terms of reducing competition for deer gun licenses, it goes against a primary and common concern voiced at the deer management meetings and in post meeting communications. That concern is that most hunters are uncomfortable with being forced to make a choice between gun and bow upfront, prior to the lottery, and having their range of options reduced in terms of hunting opportunities.

“Deer hunting is a major part of North Dakota’s hunting heritage and the alternative chosen asks all deer hunters to sacrifice to help provide additional opportunities so more people can participate in the fall deer season,” Williams said, “while still allowing an individual to deer hunt if they choose to participate in the archery season.”

*RON WILSON is editor of North Dakota OUTDOORS.*



# questions and answers

*How would this new plan change the application process?*

The application period and deadline would still be the same. The system will just be programmed so it will not issue more than one license to any individual.

*How will it work for hunters who still want to apply for both gun season and muzzleloader licenses?*

In the past there have been two separate applications and drawings. This year there will be one application and one drawing, and hunters who apply for both gun and muzzleloader will select a preference on the application. The way this will work is, when an applicant's name comes up in the lottery, and if both a first-choice gun and muzzleloader license are available, the computer will issue the preferred license, and the applicant's name will be removed.

Of course, if you apply for both and your preferred choice is not available when your name comes up, the computer will issue the other license.

*Will I lose accumulated bonus points if I apply for both deer gun and muzzleloader, and can only receive one or the*

*other, or if I just don't apply for one or the other?*

No. If you apply for both deer gun and muzzleloader and are drawn for one of them, you would not lose your points for the other one, but you will not gain a bonus point for that choice either. If you only apply for one type of license, you will not lose your points for the other type.

The bonus point system is not changing. Hunters will still get a bonus point if they do not draw their first choice of license in the lottery. But, starting in 2015, Game and Fish is going to allow bonus points to remain valid indefinitely. In the past, if hunters went more than one year in a row without applying, they would

lose all their accumulated bonus points.

*Is the application for a bow license now a part of the deer gun lottery?*

No. Bow licenses will be issued the same as in the past. If a hunter applies for a deer gun license and does not receive one, he or she will remain eligible to purchase an archery license, which is good for any legal deer statewide. Since all bow licenses are now only available through electronic purchase, the system will "flag" anyone who tries to buy a bow license who has already been issued a gun, muzzleloader or gratis license.

*If I draw a license in the deer gun lottery, can I use that license during the bow season as well, as long as I'm hunting with a bow?*

Yes. Hunters who draw a unit deer gun license can also pursue that deer during the entire length of the bow season as long as the tag is not filled. But, that license is only valid in the specific unit, and for the deer type listed on the license.

For instance, if you're deer gun lottery license is for any antlered deer in unit 2J1, you can bow-hunt only in unit 2J1, and you can only tag an antlered deer.

*If I get a muzzleloader license, is that also valid during the bow season?*

No. Muzzleloader licenses can only be used during the muzzleloader season and harvested with a muzzleloader.



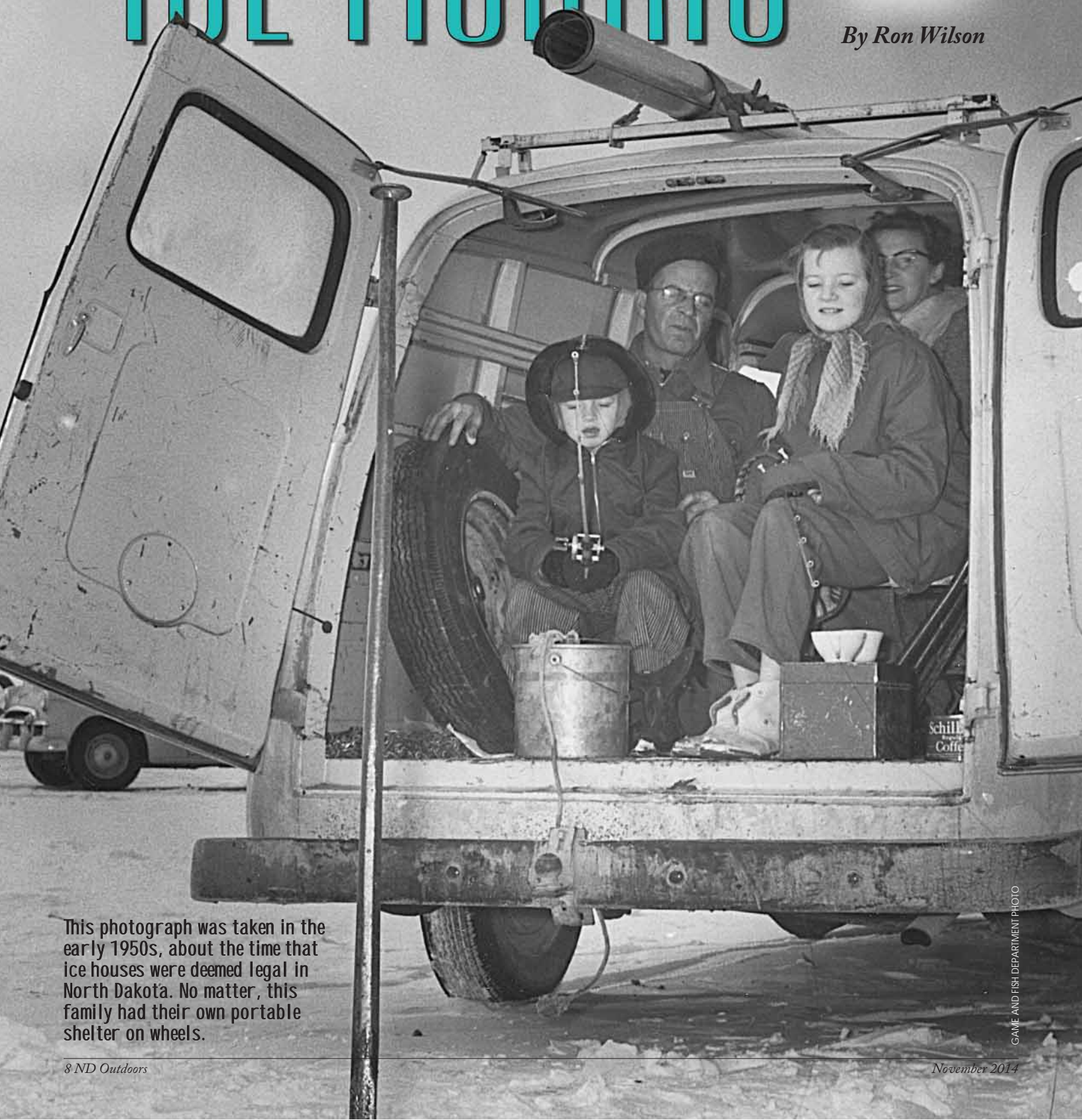
RON WILSON



# ICE FISHING

AT AN  
ALL-TIME  
HIGH

By Ron Wilson



This photograph was taken in the early 1950s, about the time that ice houses were deemed legal in North Dakota. No matter, this family had their own portable shelter on wheels.



People have been ice fishing in North Dakota for a long time, hacking crude holes into the ice back in the day with axes, saws and spuds, whatever worked. Evidence suggests that this lure to fish in winter in North Dakota reaches back at least 100 years.

In 1915, years before the Game and Fish Department became what we know it as today, it was stated

the weight of a car and a fish house, North Dakota's growing army of hardy fishermen take to the lakes and streams," wrote John Hewston in *North Dakota OUTDOORS* in 1959. "Although winter fishing has been an established sport of considerable magnitude for many years in neighboring states in the lakes region, it is still just catching on in this prairie state."

Hewston said there were several reasons for the late-blooming of ice fishing in North Dakota, the



Who knows if the fish were biting, but the angler in this ice house on the east end of Lake Sakakawea in 1954 didn't have to worry about other anglers crowding his or her spot.

GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT PHOTO

by a five-member board of control that ice (fish) houses weren't allowed, for whatever reason, on any waters in the state in winter.

To have such a regulation indicates that there was some ice fishing activity in the state, but you just couldn't do it in the comfort of an ice house.

Ice fishing in North Dakota didn't gain much speed until the late 1950s and early 1960s.

"When the water gets 'hard' enough to support

biggest being the establishment of places to fish in winter.

"In comparatively recent years, many huge reservoirs have been constructed throughout the state where no lakes existed previously," Hewston wrote. "Also, in the past six years, the Game and Fish Department has carried on a lake rehabilitation program that has brought many lakes back into production of sport fishing. The stocking of new and



GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT PHOTO

Ice fishing on Balta Dam in 1963. Later that decade, about 8,000 ice houses were licensed with the Game and Fish Department.

rehabilitated lakes has created excellent fishing where it was unknown a short time ago. All these facts have brought about an increased interest in this type of angling among folks who formerly fished only in summer, or not at all.”

Greg Power, North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries chief, said when reservoirs such as Froelich, Short Creek and Sweet Briar were constructed, fishing opportunities in late 1950s and early 1960s increased, no matter the time of year.

“Historically, we didn’t have a lot of natural lakes in North Dakota,” Power said. “With the construction of a number of reservoirs, people now had somewhere to fish.”

It wasn’t until 1951 that anglers were finally allowed by law to fish out



COLLECTION OF SKIP BALZER



of ice houses that were licensed with Game and Fish, making a day on the ice in just about any kind of weather comfortable.

In the early 1950s, fewer than 100 ice houses were licensed with the agency, but by the time Hewston penned his piece in 1959, the number had climbed to more than 1,000.

“In just six years the use of fish houses here has increased ten times,” Hewston wrote. “That’s mighty rapid growth. And it reflects the growth of winter fishing in general.”

What was considered high-use back then dwindles in comparison to the years that followed.

Power said ice fishing in the state really took off in, say, 1979 through 1984 thanks, in part, to a boom of big yellow perch at Devils Lake.

“Anglers were taking 2- to 3-pound perch through the ice and lots of them,” he said. “Just the general interest in ice fishing was starting to pick up at that time. Augers were around before that, but people started investing in them, which made a day on the ice less work. Portable ice houses became hugely popular. They could be set up and taken down in no time.”

The interest in ice fishing today in North Dakota is at an all-time high. In 2013, there were more than 120,000 active licensed ice anglers, nonresidents included, in the state.

“The interest is high because people are catching fish,” Power said. “With a record number of lakes on the landscape, there are lots of fishing opportunities. There are so many good waters out there.”

Power said the number of out-of-state license plates you see on lakes in winter is a good indication of how good the fishing is.

“The fact that you find so many Wisconsin and Minnesota anglers coming to North Dakota to fish in winter tells you something about



Some inventive angler came up with a design to fish protected from the bed of a pickup.

GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT PHOTO



Ice fishing interest, like the state’s northern pike fishing opportunities, is at an all-time high today.

CRAIG BIRBLE



Ice houses have come a long way over the years. Some have all the comforts of home, and even allow anglers to sleep overnight on the ice.



CRAIG BIHRLE

the fishing in our state,” he said. “Those states have long, storied ice fishing histories that date much farther back than North Dakota, but those people are coming here to fish.”

No matter where they are from, Power said ice anglers have it better today, which makes for a more enjoyable time during North Dakota’s leanest months.

“Today’s equipment is much more dependable,” he said. “There’s nothing worse than getting to the lake and the auger doesn’t work, or you only have two-wheel drive and you get stuck. In the end, it has a lot to do with societal affluence. People can afford the toys, the electronics and ice houses that have all the comforts of home.”

North Dakota has had more than 100,000 active anglers the past two winters. That number can fluctuate radically, however, depending on the weather. If snow comes early and keeps coming, access to favorite waters can be difficult, if not impossible.

“If we get a normal winter, then we’re OK because access is typically pretty good,” Power said. “It’s simply a guess from winter to winter how the weather and access will play out. What’s certain is that there are lots and lots of people who want to fish, and they certainly do just that if they are able to get on the ice.”

*RON WILSON is editor of North Dakota OUTDOORS.*



## Pack it in, Pack it out

Littering is a problem, no matter the season.

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department reminds winter anglers to clean up the ice after fishing. This not only applies to trash, but fish as well.

It's not only unsightly, but it is illegal to leave fish behind on the ice. According to the fish proclamation, when a fish is caught, anglers must either immediately release

the fish back into the water unharmed, or reduce them to their daily possession.

It's a common practice for some anglers to fillet fish on the ice, but if they don't clean up after themselves, it's a problem.

"When fish entrails and other parts are left on the ice, it's an absolute eyesore," said Greg Power, North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries chief. "Anglers need to take those fish parts with them when

they leave and dispose of them at home."

Power said the pack it in, pack it out mentality applies to all trash, including aluminum cans and Styrofoam containers.

"When you throw those kinds of things into a snow bank, they are out of sight and out of mind temporarily, but everything comes to life in spring and becomes highly visible when the snow melts," Power said. "It's any eyesore."



CRAIG BHIRLE

## Anglers Need to be Cautious of Early Ice

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

Some tips to be aware of are:

- Snow insulates ice, hampering solid ice formation, and makes it difficult to check thickness. Snow also hides the blemishes, such as cracked, weak and open water areas.
- Avoid cracks, pressure ridges, slushy or darker areas that signal thinner ice. The same goes for ice that forms around partially submerged trees, brush, embankments or other structures.
- Ice thickness is not consistent and can vary significantly even in a small area. Ice shouldn't be judged

by appearance alone. Anglers should drill test holes as they make their way out on the lake, and an ice chisel should be used to check ice thickness while moving around.

- Daily temperature changes cause ice to expand and contract, affecting its strength.
- The following minimums are recommended for travel on clear-blue lake ice formed under ideal conditions. However, early in the winter it's a good idea to double these figures to be safe: 4 inches for a group walking single file; 6 inches for a snowmobile or all-terrain vehicle; 8-12 inches for an automobile; and 12-15 inches for a pickup/truck.

These tips could help save a life:

- Wear a personal flotation device

and carry a cell phone.

- Carry ice picks or a set of screwdrivers to pull yourself back on the ice if you fall through.
- If someone breaks through the ice, call 911 immediately. Rescue attempts should employ a long pole, board, rope, blanket or snowmobile suit. If that's not possible, throw the victim a life jacket, empty water jug or other buoyant object. Go to the victim as a last resort, but do this by forming a human chain where rescuers lie on the ice with each person holding the feet of the person in front.
- To treat hypothermia, replace wet clothing with dry clothing and immediately transport victim to a hospital.





# DEER IN FALL

By Ron Wilson

**W**hile the urge to measure this fall's deer gun season with one 34 years ago rests in the numbers – the 48,000 licenses made available today is the lowest since 1980 – the comparison could end there.

For instance, the deer gun season in 1980 was a week shorter than today's 16 ½-day season. And most hunters 34 years ago were still wearing red caps and clothing as they were a year away from being required by law to don 400 square inches of fluorescent orange in the field.





KELLY KRABBENHOFT

It's tough to say which is more difficult. Drawing a mule deer buck license, or running into a nice buck like this after you've drawn a coveted license.



A big whitetail buck, bedded in tall sage, thinks he is hidden from passersby.

RON WILSON

# ILL



A mule deer buck inspects the remains of a small tree that has been worked over by bone-hard antlers.

MIKE LALONDE





A whitetail buck easily clears a barbed wire fence.

STEVE SJULSETH



CRAIG BIRKLE

A mature whitetail buck that would be a trophy for most hunters.

Mule deer in the badlands continue to show signs of recovery following the severe winters of 2008-11, when deer numbers had declined by nearly 50 percent since 2007.



MIKE LALONDE

What's remained the same over time, are the deer.

We associate white-tailed deer with the state's agricultural landscape – bedding in tree belts and tramping a maze of narrow trails in cattails – but they can be found anywhere in the state. In the badlands. In the Turtle Mountains. From border to border.

When we think of mule deer, we link them solely to western North Dakota. Sagebrush. Cedar-choked draws. Beautiful, up and down landscape eroded by weather and time. That's where mule deer are found in North Dakota, we tell those who ask. Yet, with little to keep animals from wandering where they may, mule deer are often found miles from the badlands in "whitetail habitat."



No matter where either species lives, this time of year they are on the minds of many. Deer season, when license numbers are up or down, remains the most anticipated time of year for many hunters.

Considering that we've nearly exhausted the portrayal of deer season as the vehicle that draws families and friends, fosters long-held hunting traditions and sprouts new ones, it's a wonder, really, that it still rings true, but it does. Dust will be swept from



More than 8,400 hunters applied for the 1,350 mule deer buck licenses made available in 2014.

MIKE LAJONDE



With far fewer deer gun licenses made available to hunters this fall as compared to past seasons, securing a whitetail doe license was considered a coup for some hunters.

CRAIG BIRRE

deer camps around the state this month that were shuttered, locked and unvisited since the close of last season. Yet, for many hunters rolling out sleeping bags and unloading groceries in a place they visit just once a year, the familiarity is so strong, it's as if they've never left.

While deer are North Dakota's most popular big game animal among hunters, they are also at the top of the list of many of the state's photographers. Here at *North Dakota OUTDOORS*, we take and receive dozens of deer photographs every

year. Too many, certainly, for every quality shot to find a home somewhere in the pages of nine issues, plus the calendar.

Understanding this, we decided to dedicate a handful of pages to photographs of deer that needed to be shared. To say that this was the only reason to run this photo spread isn't entirely accurate, considering this is the time of year mule deer and whitetails take center stage in a state that takes its deer hunting seriously.

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



# BUFFALOBERRY PATCH

By Greg Freeman, Department News Editor

## CWD Surveillance Continues

The state Game and Fish Department will continue its Hunter-Harvested Surveillance program during the 2014 hunting season, by sampling deer for chronic wasting disease and bovine tuberculosis from 10 units in North Dakota. In addition, all moose and elk harvested in the state are eligible for testing.

Samples from deer taken in the central portion of the state will be tested from units 2H, 2I, 2J1, 2J2, 2K1, 2K2, 3A4, 3B3 and 3C. In addition, deer will be tested from unit 3F2 in the southwest.

Every head sampled must have either the deer tag attached, or a new tag can be filled out with the license number, deer hunting unit and date harvested.

Hunters are encouraged to drop off deer heads at the following locations:

- Ashley – Ashley Super Valu Store
- Bismarck – Game and Fish Department headquarters, Call of the Wild Taxidermy, M&M Sausage and Meats, West Dakota Meats
- Bottineau – Mattern Family Meats
- Carrington – Barton Meats
- Devils Lake – Devils Lake Game and Fish district office, Goldade Processing
- Ellendale – Oxenrider Motel
- Granville – S&E Meats
- Harvey – Lonetree Game and Fish district office
- Heaton – Miller Game Processing
- Jamestown – Jamestown Game and Fish district office
- LaMoure – LaMoure Lockers
- Linton – Bosch's Meat Market, Schmaltz Meats
- Mandan – Butcher Block Meats
- McClusky – Bentz Supply Store
- Minot – Johnson Taxidermy



- Moffit – Long Lake National Wildlife Refuge office
- Parshall – Myers Custom Meats
- Riverdale – Riverdale Game and Fish district office
- Rolette – Meat Shack
- Rugby – Cenex C Store
- Sheyenne – Brenno Meats, Wild Things Taxidermy
- Streeter – Reister Meats
- Towner – B&L Electric
- Turtle Lake – Main Street Market
- Upham – J. Clark Salyer NWR office
- Washburn – Enerbase
- Wilton – Cenex
- Wing – Terry's Sales and Service
- Woodworth – Chase Lake National Wildlife Refuge office.

Drop off locations for deer taken from unit 3F2:

- Elgin – Gunny's Bait and Tackle, Melvin's Taxidermy
- Glen Ullin – Kuntz's Butcher Shop
- Hettinger – Dakota Packing
- New Leipzig – Hertz Hardware
- Moose and elk heads should be taken to a Game and Fish office.

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.

## FALL MULE DEER SURVEY COMPLETED

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department's fall mule deer survey indicated production in 2014 bodes well for the future.

**Biologists counted 1,969 (1,761 in 2013) mule deer in the aerial survey in October. The buck-to-doe ratio of 0.50 (0.46 in 2013) was slightly above the long-term average of 0.43 bucks per doe, while the fawn-to-doe ratio of 0.95 (0.74 in 2013) was the highest since 1999, and above the long-term average of 0.90 fawns per doe.**

"Overall, this year's fawn production is very encouraging, and with average-to-good survival should result in another increase in the spring," said Bruce Stillings, Department big game management supervisor, Dickinson.

The fall aerial survey, conducted specifically to study demographics, covers 24 study areas and 306 square miles in western North Dakota. Biologists survey the same study areas in the spring of each year to determine population abundance.



## BIGHORN SHEEP POPULATION DECLINES

Results from this summer's bighorn sheep survey indicate the population in western North Dakota is lower than last year.

State Game and Fish Department big game biologist Brett Wiedmann said the July-August survey showed a minimum of 287 bighorn sheep, down 4 percent from 2013. Results revealed 82 rams, 153 ewes and 52 lambs.

Due to an ongoing disease event in the northern badlands, Game and Fish biologists verified more than 20 bighorn sheep deaths over the summer. Wiedmann said the survey is a tale of two segments of the state's population. "The four herds in the northern badlands not affected by the die-off increased 28 percent from last year, with the lamb count increasing 46 percent," Wiedmann said. "However, the eight herds impacted by disease declined 25 percent, with the lamb count declining by 66 percent."

Although population levels were down markedly in portions of the northern badlands, biologists were pleased to see a slight increase in the southern badlands.

The department's survey does not include approximately 40 bighorn sheep that live in the North Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

Game and Fish wildlife veterinarian Dan Grove said only time will tell how severe the die-off will be. "Mortalities so far have been significant but not yet catastrophic," Grove said. "However, the outbreak is ongoing, and we have detected a virulent strain of bacteria from biological samples collected from dead bighorns. Consequently, impacts will be more apparent when females and lambs are recounted next March, but the full extent of the outbreak likely will not be realized until the 2015 survey is completed."

Each summer, Game and Fish Department biologists count and classify all bighorn sheep, a process that takes nearly six weeks to complete as biologists locate each bighorn herd in the badlands by tracking radio-marked animals from an airplane, and then hike into each group to record demographic data using a spotting scope and binoculars. Biologists then complete the annual survey by recounting lambs in March to determine lamb recruitment, or lambs that survive the first winter.

## Fisheries Biologists Wrap Up Fall Surveys

North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries biologists have assessed how the cooler-than-normal summer influenced fish spawning and stocking success across the state.

Scott Gangl, Department fisheries management section leader, said catches in fall surveys varied this year, depending on the lake or fish species.

"On a lot of our smaller lakes, we had extremely high catch rates of young-of-the-year fish in some, but disappointing catches in others," Gangl said. "Overall, though, I'd say we experienced average reproduction and stocking success."

With good water levels and abundant spawning habitat, Gangl said Lake Sakakawea produced good catches of virtually all young-of-year fish. Walleye were most abundant in the upper and middle sections of the reservoir, he said, with good numbers of perch and pike throughout.

"Forage fish are plentiful in Lake Sakakawea this year, and both sonar surveys and anecdotal observations suggest rainbow smelt production was really good in 2014," he said.

Devils Lake and Stump Lake reported fair to good numbers of young-of-the-year walleye, while yellow perch reproduction was much lower than the strong reproduction year of 2013.

"Although walleye natural reproduction was down in 2014, good reproduction in recent years has resulted in an abundance of young walleye in Devils Lake," Gangl said. "Strong numbers of yearling perch will provide a good source



of forage for walleye and other predators."

According to Gangl, Lake Oahe is starting to show signs of recovery from the flood of 2011.

"Although smelt numbers are still very low, reproduction of other forage fish, mostly white bass and crappie, was very good in 2014," he added. "Young-of-year walleye displayed their highest catch rate since the dominant year class in 2009."

However, Gangl said the Missouri River isn't showing such signs of recovery, as catch rates of forage fish and young-of-year game fish remain low upstream from Lake Oahe. Biologists attribute poor production on the river to the massive habitat changes during the 2011 flood.

"The flood scoured and changed the river channel so dramatically, it's going to take a much longer time to recover," Gangl said. "The productive capacity was taken away. It's like scraping the topsoil from a field."



## Donate Deer to Sportsmen Against Hunger

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department encourages deer hunters to consider the Sportsmen Against Hunger program this fall.

While this year's deer proclamation allows only one deer gun license per hunter, families with more than one license might want to consider donating a deer to this worthy cause. In addition, hunters with an archery or muzzleloader license can help as well.

The list of participating processors is available on the Game and Fish Department website at [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov), and at the North Dakota Community Action Partnership website, [capnd.org](http://capnd.org).

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 NDCAP, a nonprofit agency that serves low-income families across the state.

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



RON WILSON

### MOTORISTS WARNED TO WATCH FOR DEER

Motorists are reminded to watch for deer along roadways, especially this time of year.

November through early December is a peak period for deer-vehicle accidents. Motorists are advised to slow down and exercise caution after dark to reduce the likelihood of encounters with deer along roadways. Most deer-vehicle accidents occur primarily at dawn and dusk when deer are most often moving around.

Motorists should be aware of warning signs signaling deer are in the area. When you see one deer cross the road, look for a second or third deer to follow. Also, pay attention on roadways posted with Deer Crossing Area caution signs.

Deer-vehicle accidents are at times unavoidable. If an accident does happen, motorists are reminded that a law passed in 2013 eliminates the need for the driver involved in an accident to notify law

enforcement authorities, if only the vehicle is damaged. Deer-vehicle accidents that involve injury or other property damage still must be reported.

In addition, a permit is still required to take parts or the whole carcass of a road-killed deer. Permits are free and available from game wardens and local law enforcement offices.

A few precautions can minimize chances of injury or property damage in a deer-vehicle crash.

- Always wear your seat belt.
- Don't swerve or take the ditch to avoid hitting a deer. Try to brake as much as possible and stay on the roadway. Don't lose control of your vehicle or slam into something else to miss the deer. You risk less injury by hitting the deer.
- If you spot deer ahead, slow down immediately and honk your horn.

## 30-Day Notice for Fishing Tournaments

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

The 30-day advance notice allows for review by agency staff to ensure the

proposed tournament will not have negative consequences or conflicts with other proposed tournaments for the same location and/or time.

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

In addition, the number of open-water

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





CRAIG BIRHLE

## Advisory Board Meetings Announced

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

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

**The governor appoints eight Game and Fish Department advisors, each representing a multi-county section of the state, to serve as a liaison between the department and public.**

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

**District 1 – Counties: Divide, McKenzie and Williams**

**Date:** November 24 – 7 p.m.

**Location:** Civic Center, Watford City

**Host:** McKenzie County Pheasants Forever

**Contact:** Rick Pokrzywinski, 770-2736

**Advisory board member:** Jason Leiseth, Arnegard, 586-3714

**District 5 – Counties: Cass, Ransom, Richland, Sargent, Steele and Traill**

**Date:** November 24 – 7 p.m.

**Location:** Community Center, Cogswell

**Host:** Southeast Sportsmen's Club

**Contact:** Kevin Dockter, 680-8008

**Advisory board member:** Duane Hanson, West Fargo, 367-4249

**District 4 – Counties: Grand Forks, Nelson, Pembina and Walsh**

**Date:** November 25 – 7 p.m.

**Location:** American Legion Club, Fordville

**Host:** Dakota Prairie Wildlife Club

**Contact:** Lynn Baier, 229-3665

**Advisory board member:** Ronald Houdek, Tolna, 262-4724

**District 6 – Counties: Barnes, Dickey, Foster, Griggs, Logan, LaMoure, McIntosh, Stutsman and Wells**

**Date:** November 25 – 7 p.m.

**Location:** Gladstone Inn, Jamestown

**Host:** James Valley Pheasants Forever

**Contact:** Curt Francis, 799-0120

**Advisory board member:** Joel Christoferson, Litchville, 973-4981

**District 2 – Counties: Bottineau, Burke, McHenry, Mountrail, Pierce, Renville and Ward**

**Date:** December 1 – 7 p.m.

**Location:** City Hall, Bowbells

**Host:** Stony Run Sportsmen Club

**Contact:** Tami Chrest, 339-2117

**Advisory board member:** Robert Gjellstad, Voltaire, 338-2281

**District 3 – Counties: Benson, Cavalier, Eddy, Ramsey, Rolette and Towner**

**Date:** December 1 – 7 p.m.

**Location:** Research Center, Langdon

**Host:** Cavalier County Gun Club

**Contact:** Rodney Howatt, 370-9988

**Advisory board member:** Tom Rost, Devils Lake, 662-8620

**District 7 – Counties: Burleigh, Emmons, Grant, Kidder, McLean, Mercer, Morton, Oliver, Sheridan and Sioux**

**Date:** December 2 – 7 p.m.

**Location:** Game and Fish Department, Bismarck

**Host:** Dakota Chapter Pheasants Forever

**Contact:** Rob Stenehjelm, 400-8106

**Advisory board member:** Dave Nehring, Bismarck, 214-3184

**District 8 – Counties: Adams, Billings, Bowman, Dunn, Golden Valley, Hettinger, Slope and Stark**

**Date:** December 2 – 7 p.m.

**Location:** American Legion, Killdeer

**Host:** North Dakota Fur Takers

**Contact:** Gary Jepson, 863-6535

**Advisory board member:** Dwight Hecker, Fairfield, 575-4952



CHRIS GRONDAHL

## Winter Fishing Regulations

Anglers are encouraged to refer to the 2014-16 North Dakota Fishing Guide or the Game and Fish Department's website at [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov) for winter fishing regulations.

Some winter fishing regulations include:

- A maximum of four poles is legal for ice fishing. However, when fishing a water body where both open water and ice occur at the same time, an angler is allowed a maximum of four poles, of which no more than two poles can be used in open water.
- Tip-ups are legal, and each tip-up is considered a single pole.
- There is no restriction on the size of the hole in the ice while fishing. When a hole larger than 10 inches in diameter is left in the ice, the area in the immediate vicinity must be marked with a natural object.
- It is only legal to release fish back into the water immediately after they are caught. Once a fish is held in a bucket or on a stringer, they can no longer be legally released in any water.
- It is illegal to catch fish and transport them in water.
- It is illegal to leave fish, including bait, behind on the ice.
- Depositing or leaving any litter or other waste material on the ice or shore is illegal.
- Any dressed fish to be transported, if frozen, must be packaged individually. Anglers are not allowed to freeze fillets together in one large block. Two fillets count as one fish.
- The daily limit is a limit of fish taken from midnight to midnight, and no person may possess more than one day's limit of fish while actively engaged in fishing. The possession limit is the maximum number of fish that an angler may have in his or her possession during a fishing trip of more than one day.
- Anglers are reminded that three North Dakota lakes are closed to ice fishing. The State Fair Pond in Ward County, McDowell Dam in Burleigh County and Lightning Lake in McLean County are closed when the lakes ice over.

## ANS PREVENTION IN WINTER

North Dakota ice anglers are reminded that regulations designed to reduce the spread of aquatic nuisance species also apply in winter.

It's important to reiterate that only legal live bait can be transported in water in a container of up to five gallons. Fish cannot be transported in water, although a daily catch can be packed in snow.

Other simple methods to prevent winter ANS introductions are:

- Do not use illegally imported baits.
- Do not empty a bait bucket into any water body.
- Do not drop plant fragments into the water.
- Dispose of any unused bait into the trash.

## Hunter Ed Classes

Most hunter education courses have wrapped up for 2014.

**However, individuals or parents with children who will need to take a course in 2015 should monitor the Game and Fish website, [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov), as classes that begin in January will be added to the online services link as soon as times and locations are finalized.**

## PERMIT REQUIRED TO POSSESS DEAD DEER

**North Dakota Game and Fish Department enforcement personnel are issuing a reminder that a permit is required before taking possession, or any part, of a dead deer found near a**

**road or in a field, including the skull with antlers. Only shed antlers can be possessed without a permit.**

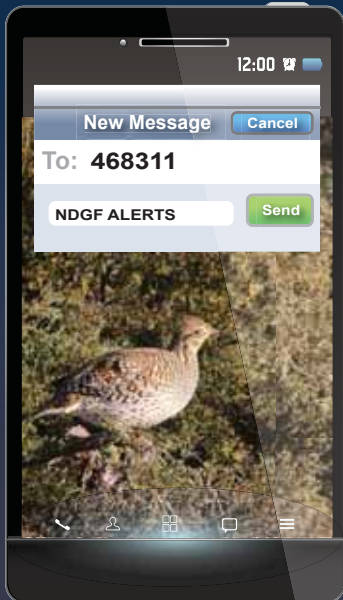
Permits to possess are free and available from game wardens and local law

enforcement offices.

In addition, hunters are reminded to properly dispose of dead deer. Harvested deer cannot be left on the side of a roadway or in a ditch, and deer parts cannot be discarded in commercial dumpsters.



# SUBSCRIBE TO GAME AND FISH TEXT ALERTS



JUST TEXT: **NDGF Alerts**  
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- Application Deadlines
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- Maximum Harvest Quotas
- Other Timely Updates

For more options to receive Game and Fish news and information, visit the Game and Fish website at [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov).



## Order 2015 *OUTDOORS* Calendars

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

## CONTEST TO DETERMINE PLOTS COVER

The deadline is months away, but now is the time to frame the perfect photograph for a contest that will determine the cover of the 2015 Private Land Open To Sportsmen guide.

From end-of-day hunting shots, to scenic action or landscape shots, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department wants to feature hunter photos on the 2015 PLOTS cover and elsewhere that showcase North Dakota's strong hunting heritage.

The Department's free PLOTS guide, which highlights walk-in hunting areas across the state, was first published in the late 1990s.

The only real contest guideline is that photos must include a PLOTS sign, front-facing or silhouette.

The contest deadline is April 30, 2015. Log on to the Game and Fish Department's website, [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov), to learn more about contest prizes, rules and entry information.





## Game Warden Exam in December

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department has scheduled an examination to select candidates for the position of district game warden. The test is at 10 a.m., December 29, at the Department's main office in Bismarck.

Applicants must register to take the exam by submitting an online application through the North Dakota State Job Openings website.

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

Game wardens enforce game and fish laws and related regulations in an assigned district and other locations as determined by the Department. Wardens normally work alone under varied conditions, at all hours of the day, night and weekends. In addition to law enforcement duties, wardens assist in the areas of public relations, education programs, and hunter and boat safety education.

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

The salary for beginning game wardens through training is \$3,500 per month. Upon successful completion of training, the salary is \$4,016 - \$6,693 per month. Wardens also receive the state benefits package, including travel allowance. Uniforms and other equipment are provided.



Ryan Krapp

## Krapp Honored for Volunteer Work

Ryan Krapp of Bismarck was named Field & Stream's 2014 Conservation Hero of the Year at the Heroes of Conservation Gala in Washington, DC. For the achievement, he was awarded a Toyota Tundra pickup.

Krapp, who previously worked for the Game and Fish Department's fisheries division, is the volunteer state chair of the North Dakota Mule Deer Foundation. He was recognized for raising funds to enroll landowners

in the Department's Private Land Open To Sportsmen program, spearheading a \$75,000 prescribed burn project and working with the energy industry to lobby for a more balanced approach to oil and gas development.

The Heroes of Conservation program honors volunteers involved in projects that protect and maintain fish and wildlife habitat across the country.

## STAFF NOTES



Lynn Timm

### TIMM NAMED ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Lynn Timm has been hired as the director's administrative assistant in the Game and Fish Department's Bismarck office. She fills the position vacated by the retirement of GERALYN EVANS.

## NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH ONLINE

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

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100 North Bismarck Expressway  
Bismarck, ND 58501-5095  
701.328.6300  
Email: [ndgf@nd.gov](mailto:ndgf@nd.gov)



# back cast



By Ron Wilson

After spending more than 20 years deer hunting on the eastern side of the state, it feels different to be sitting here, with binoculars hanging from my neck, waiting for sunrise.

Here is somewhere in Sheridan County, miles removed from my old hunting unit. It's three weeks before the deer gun opener and I'm scouting this large piece of public land where a friend shot a doe last year. It's as good a place as any to start, to put some marks on a slate that's nearly blank at this point.

The first time I tried to find this place, I got turned around. It's one of those destinations, like the old saying goes, that you can't get there from here. Gravel roads that appeared to be heading somewhere with purpose, disappeared into road-swallowing wetlands, forcing an about-face to search for a different route.

With the sun finally up enough to rouse the surroundings, I glass the mature tree belts that run north and south. To my right, cattails tall enough to conceal any number of deer ring the north end of a slough. To my left, the prairie rises and falls, creating folds in the landscape that would allow an animal a number of avenues to travel undetected.

After sitting here for nearly an hour, maybe that's exactly what the deer have done. I haven't seen a thing, but can't imagine this place doesn't hold deer. It's a good spot. I can see why my friend shot a deer here, and why he recommended it, thinking my son and I, once the season opens, might shoot a doe ourselves.

I stand, stuff the binoculars into my game vest and head toward the row of trees to look for any kind of sign that deer are



CRAIG BIRKLE

using the area. I've got a shotgun thrown over my shoulder because it's pheasant season, but shooting a rooster isn't a concern. My dogs are waiting in the vehicle and we'll go for a serious walk in a bit. The day is just getting started.

I take my time walking down one of the rows of trees, kicking the occasional pile of deer droppings with the toe of my boot. One small tree, no bigger around than my wrist, has been worked over by a small buck. Pieces of bark rubbed loose by bone-hard antlers hang like threads of string cheese.

All good signs.

Most years, we'd shoot that little buck if he wandered within gun range. But this year, like the one before that, isn't most years. With deer numbers down and hunter demand up, we drew two doe tags between us and feel lucky to have pulled that off.

This year, more than 30,000 people applied for a deer gun license and didn't draw. Granted, a bunch of those people applied for bucks, but I would imagine a large number would like to be in our boots with the chance just to hunt.

Like I said, we're fortunate.

It's only a guess how the season will play out, but we're banking on my kid shooting a doe opening weekend. He, for good reason, considers himself a poor college student, is living in his first apartment, and is banking on filling his small freezer with venison.

Like our hunt, there are a number of unknowns about deer hunting in North Dakota's future. Will deer populations rebound? Will the demand for licenses continue to hold steady? Will we get licenses next year?

We'll see.

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RON WILSON is editor of North Dakota OUTDOORS.



# A Look Back

By Ron Wilson

In 1956, when this black and white photograph was taken at Lake Ilo, fishing out of the comfort of an ice house was, for some, a unique experience.

For years, you couldn't fish out of an ice house in North Dakota. It wasn't until 1951 that this practice became legal. Houses had to be licensed with the Game and Fish Department, the cost was \$1. This license system stayed in place until 1998, when roughly 16,000 houses were licensed across the state.

In 1955, Dale Henegar, Department fisheries chief at the time, wrote a piece for *North Dakota OUTDOORS* promoting the value of fishing from an ice house. The story also featured floor plans to build a typical ice house that would meet Department regulations of no more than 14 feet long and no more than 10 feet wide.

"For some reason, comparatively few persons have discovered the extra sport that arises from the use

of fish houses in winter fishing. The construction and use of such a house adds immeasurably to the sport and ensures that fishing can be carried out during periods of inclement weather as well as extending fishing time after daylight hours," Henegar wrote.

When building an ice house, Henegar had a few suggestions about size and comfort: "Fish houses are constructed of many materials and in many ways. Some of them are so small that use by one man is crowded and some are the legal maximum size. Actual construction material of the house is not too important, but a few things to be taken into consideration are: it should be structurally strong enough to be pulled about on the ice in search of the best fishing areas, tight enough so it can be easily heated by a small stove and large enough to afford at least the minimum of comfort."

Legal ice house dimensions are a thing of the past. Today, many are more than roomy, provide places to sleep, cook, watch TV and other comforts of home. Watching fish swim underwater on a TV screen or a football game was unthinkable in the 1950s. Staying warm and comfortable was the top priority.

"The type of stove used is not too important, but it should be small as it is very easy to heat a fish house because of its size," Henegar wrote. "Many fishermen use small laundry stoves with coal as the fuel, while still others use small wood stoves, oil stoves, or in the case of a deluxe house, a small stove using bottled gas for fuel."

Times have certainly changed.

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