

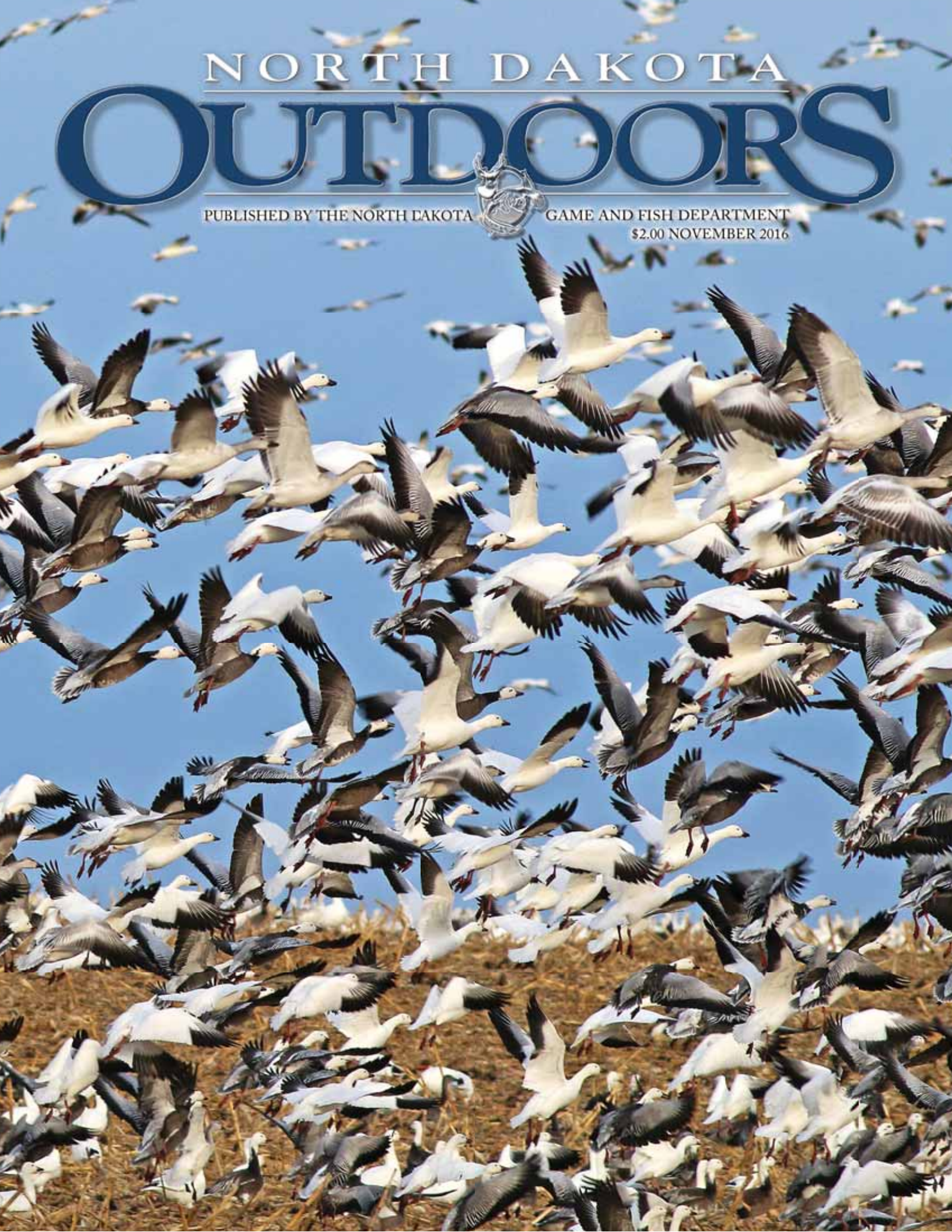
NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

PUBLISHED BY THE NORTH DAKOTA



GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

\$2.00 NOVEMBER 2016





MATTERS OF OPINION



Terry Steinwand
Director

We're about halfway through most of our hunting seasons, and another one that holds special meaning to many North Dakotans – deer gun hunting – is upon us.

I've often said that the deer opener might rank second only to Christmas in popularity in North Dakota. Back in my high school days there weren't many kids left in class on opening day of deer season, and the following Monday always seemed to bring out the stories, some exaggerated and some not.

No matter the era, or past memories we might have, deer gun hunting is a special time in our great state. I've hunted deer in North Dakota for about 50 years. Given the amount of time I've spent in the field, there are a number of special memories I have, with each year providing a new and greater memory. This is part of what hunting is all about. For me, today, the experience outweighs the harvest of an animal.

I'm guessing there are many of you readers who have hunted for decades and feel the same way. Then there are those who are just starting out and have their sights set on a big buck, which is all right, too. My prediction, given time, is that your feelings will evolve into the same as mine.

My first deer hunt was with my father in 1967, at Lostwood National Wildlife Refuge near Stanley. I remember being a little disappointed in going there, since he'd always gone to the Amidon area, where he had such good stories about hunting mule deer.

Remember, this was before the deer lottery was in place and you could buy a buck tag over the counter. They were the old "cream can" metal tags that clipped together at the ends. I had to borrow a .308-caliber rifle from a friend's father since we only

had one high-powered rifle in the house, a .32-caliber special that my father used since he was young.

We went to Lostwood with a high school friend and his father. The first day we hunted with our fathers, but I imagine that they probably didn't get to hunt like they wanted with some wet-behind-the-ears youngsters in tow, so they cut us loose to hunt by ourselves, which I certainly don't recommend anyone doing today.

I don't remember which day it was, but my friend and I came across a couple of young bucks and decided that these were probably the best we were going to get, given our luck to that point.

We proceeded to light up the sky, yet the deer kept running, but still within distance. I was down to my last round and figured I'd better bear down. And, to my amazement, the deer dropped after I pulled the trigger.

There are memories much more vivid than this one, including my sons harvesting their first deer; hunting in blizzard conditions with freezing wind chills; hunting in a T-shirt since it was way too warm; getting the best buck of my life, with what I consider the shot of my life; and the list goes on. The point is, the hunt itself is only part of the experience, but memories are always the best part.

As Game and Fish director, I wish that we could issue a deer gun license to every hunter who was interested. At the moment, we simply can't do that like we could 10 years ago and still responsibly manage the state's deer herd.

Even so, I hope that you're able to go out with family and friends, whether it be for deer or upland game, to make your own memories. There's no shortage of outdoor opportunities in North Dakota, no matter the season.

Terry Steinwand

DEPARTMENT DIRECTORY

Governor Jack Dalrymple

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION

Game and Fish Director: Terry Steinwand

Deputy Director: Scott Peterson

Chief, Administrative Services: Kim Kary

Business Manager: Corey Wentland

Administrative Staff Officer: Justin Mattson

Administrative Assistant: Lynn Timm

Administrative Officer/Building Maint. Supvr.: George Lee

Building Maint. Tech.: Charlie Matthews

Accounting Manager: Angie Krueger

Accountants: Kelly Wike, Melissa Long, Ashley Baker

IT Section Supervisor/GIS Specialist: Brian Hosek

IT Coordinators: Alan Reile, Larry Gross

Programmer Analyst: Tiffany Quast

Licensing Manager: Randy Meissner

Assistants: Gail Mosset, Katherine Mernitz, Amanda Anstrom, Tracy Price, Tana Bentz

Administrative Assistant – Dickinson: Janel Kolar, Stephanie Richardson

Administrative Assistant – Devils Lake: Lisa Tofte

Administrative Assistant – Jamestown: Tonya Kukowski

Administrative Assistant – Riverdale: Sally Sorensen

Administrative Assistant – Williston: Samantha Oster

CONSERVATION AND COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION

Division Chief: Greg Link, Bismarck

Communications Supervisor: Craig Bihrl, Bismarck

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

Website Editor: Lara Anderson, Bismarck

News Editor: Greg Freeman, Bismarck

Video News Director: Tom Jensen, Bismarck

Videographer: Mike Anderson, Bismarck

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

Egeland, Grand Forks; Pat Lothspeich, Bismarck

Information Specialist: Dawn Jochim, Bismarck

Graphic Artist: Connie Schiff, Bismarck

Education Supervisor: Chris D. Grondahl, Bismarck

Education Coordinators: Jeff Long, Brian Schaffer, Bismarck

Hunter Education Coordinator: John Mazur, Bismarck

Conservation Supervisor: Steve Dyke, Bismarck

Resource Biologists: John Schumacher, Bruce Kref, Bismarck

Conservation Biologists: Sandra Johnson, Patrick Isakson, Bismarck

Administrative Assistant: Brandon Diehl, Bismarck

ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

Division Chief: Robert Timian, Bismarck

Investigative Supervisor: Scott Winkelman, Bismarck

Operations Supervisor: Jackie Lundstrom, Bismarck

Region No. 1 Warden Supvr: Mark Pollert, Jamestown

District Wardens: Corey Erck, Bismarck; Jerad Bluem, Steele; Michael Sedlacek, Fargo; Tim Phalen, Wyndmere; Andrew Dahlgren, Edgeley; Erik Schmidt, Linton; Greg Hastings, Jamestown

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

District Wardens: Jonathan Tofteland, Bottineau; Jim Job, Devils Lake; James Myhre, New Rockford; Blake Riewer, Grand Forks; Alan Howard, Cando; Peter Miley, Cavalier; Jonathan Peterson, Rugby

Region No. 3 Warden Supvr: Doug Olson, Riverdale

District Wardens: Jim Burud, Kenmare; Tim Larson, Turtle Lake; Ken Skuza, Riverdale; Michael Raasakka, Stanley; Brian Updike, Minot; Shawn Sperling, Keenan Snyder, Williston

Region No. 4 Warden Supvr: Dan Hoenke, Dickinson

District Wardens: Kaylor Johnston, Hazen; Art Cox, Bowman; Courtney Sprenger, Elgin; Jeff Violet, Mandan; Zane Manhart, Gola

Administrative Assistant: Lori Kensington, Bismarck

WILDLIFE DIVISION

Division Chief: Jeb Williams, Bismarck

Assistant Division Chief: Casey Anderson, Bismarck

Game Mgt. Section Leader: Stephanie Tucker, Bismarck

Pilot: Jeff Fought, Bismarck

Upland Game Mgt. Supvr: Aaron Robinson, Dickinson

Upland Game Mgt. Biologist: Rodney Gross, Bismarck

Migratory Game Bird Mgt. Supervisor: Mike Szymanski, Bismarck

Migratory Game Bird Biologist: Andrew Dinges, Bismarck

Big Game Mgt. Supvr: Bruce Stillings, Dickinson

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

Wildlife Veterinarian: Dr. Daniel Grove, Bismarck

Game Management Technician: Vacant

Wildlife Resource Management Section Leader: Kent Luttschwager, Williston

Wildlife Resource Mgt. Supvrs: Bill Haase, Bismarck; Brian Prince, Devils Lake; Brian Kietzman, Jamestown; Dan Halstead, Riverdale; Blake Schaan, Lonetree

Wildlife Resource Mgt. Biologists: Arvid Anderson, Riverdale; Randy Littlefield, Lonetree; Rodd Compson, Jamestown; Judd Jasmer, Dickinson; Jacob Oster, Williston

Wildlife Techs: Tom Crutchfield, Jim Houston, Bismarck; Dan Morman, Robert Miller, Riverdale; Ernest Dawson, Jamestown; Cordell Schmitz, Joshua Odden, Lonetree; Scott Olson, Devils Lake; Nick Bundermann, Williston

Private Land Section Leader: Kevin Kading, Bismarck

Asst. Private Land Coordinator: Doug Howie, Bismarck

Private Land Field Operation Coordinator: Nathan Harling, Bismarck

Private Land Biologists: Colin Penner, Levi Jacobson, Bismarck; Curtis Francis, Jaden Honeyman, Dickinson; Ryan Huber, Riverdale; Renae Schultz, Jamestown; Terry Oswald, Jr., Lonetree; Todd Buckley, Williston; Andrew Ahrens, Devils Lake

Procurement Officer: Dale Repnow, Bismarck

Lonetree Administrative Assistant: Diana Raugust, Harvey

FISHERIES DIVISION

Division Chief: Greg Power, Bismarck

Fisheries Mgt. Section Leader: Scott Gangl, Bismarck

Fisheries Supvrs: Jeff Hendrickson, Dickinson; Jason Lee, Riverdale; Paul Bailey, Bismarck; Randy Hiltner, Devils Lake; Dave Fryda, Riverdale; Brandon Kratz, Jamestown

Fisheries Biologists: Russ Kinzler, Riverdale; Todd Caspers, Devils Lake; Aaron Slominski, Williston; Mike Johnson, Jamestown

Fisheries Techs: Phil Miller, Devils Lake; Pat John, Jamestown; Justen Barstad, Bismarck; Brian Frohlich, Riverdale; Jeff Merchant, Dickinson

Production/Development Section Supvr: Jerry Weigel, Bismarck

Aquatic Habitat Supvr: Scott Elstad, Bismarck

Aquatic Nuisance Species Coordinator: Jessica Howell, Jamestown

Fisheries Development Supvr: Bob Frohlich, Bismarck

Fisheries Dev. Proj. Mgr: Wesley Erdle, Bismarck

Fisheries Development Technician: Kyle Hoge, Bismarck

Administrative Assistant: Janice Vetter, Bismarck

ADVISORY BOARD

District 1 Jason Leiseth, Arnegard

District 2 Robert Gjellstad, Voltaire

District 3 Thomas Rost, Devils Lake

District 4 Joe Soleng, Grand Forks

District 5 Duane Hanson, West Fargo

District 6 Joel Christoferson, Litchville

District 7 David Nehring, Bismarck

District 8 Dwight Hecker, Fairfield

NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

PUBLISHED BY THE NORTH DAKOTA

GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

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

• Editor: Ron Wilson

• Graphic Designer: Connie Schiff

• Circulation Manager: Dawn Jochim

NOVEMBER 2016 • NUMBER 4 • VOLUME LXXIX

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURES

First Deer, Trophy Memories	2
Game and Fish Considering River Otter Season	8
Targeting Big Pike in Winter	10
A New Direction for Recruiting New Hunters	16

DEPARTMENTS

Buffaloberry Patch	20
Back Cast	25



Front Cover

Snow geese migration patterns have changed some in the last decade or more. They have staged longer in Canada, and haven't moved into North Dakota in large numbers until November. This photo was taken in mid-November 2015 near Cleveland, North Dakota, and birds were still hanging around the same location into the Thanksgiving weekend. *(Photo by Craig Bihrl, Bismarck.)*



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

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

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

• Outdoors Circulation 701-328-6363

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

• 24-Hour Licensing by Phone: 800-406-6409

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

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

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

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

Periodical Postage Paid at

Bismarck, ND 58501

and additional entry offices.

Printed in the United States

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:

North Dakota OUTDOORS

100 North Bismarck Expressway

Bismarck, ND 58501-5095

Report All Poachers (RAP) 800-472-2121

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





First Deer, Trophy Memories

By Ron Wilson

The state's first modern deer season was 1931. That was the first year a specific deer license was required to hunt.

If we start there, that means we've been hunting deer in North Dakota for 85 years. That's a long time.

Deer hunting, from the Red River Valley to the badlands, is a big deal here. For so many, no matter their ages, the November season is long anticipated and its arrival applauded.

We all have deer hunting stories. Tales of first deer, big deer, missed opportunities, hunting in snow up to here ... We trot them out at deer camp, around campfires, in grandma's kitchen, which still looks, feels and smells the same as when we were kids.

We're going to tell some of those stories here, in this magazine, which has chronicled deer, deer hunting, and many things wildlife for decades.

We asked Game and Fish Department staff to tell us a deer hunting story, and our guidance pretty much ended there. We wanted our storytellers to contemplate, query their memory banks for something conspicuous, or not, about their deer hunting pasts.

Like a lot of hunters in North Dakota, their stories don't end here. Even before this deer hunting season ends, they are already working their way to November next year.

*A nice mule
deer buck in
North Dakota's
badlands.*

LARA ANDERSON

RON WILSON is editor of North Dakota OUTDOORS.

BONEHILL CREEK

I remember my first deer hunt like it was yesterday.

I was invited to hunt on an aunt and uncle's farm near the small town of Dickey, which oddly enough is in LaMoure County, not Dickey County. Some sleepless nights followed that invitation, as the deer season slowly drew closer.

Their farm was located on Bonehill Creek, just a couple miles upstream of the creek's confluence with the James River, which was about a 30-minute drive from our farm in Barnes County. Because my parents grew up in the Dickey area, returning to Bonehill Creek seemed like a homecoming of sorts.

I don't remember much about the application process for a deer license, but the year was 1976. My brother, Marvin, and I applied, and I suspect that we both put in for doe licenses because odds were not good for drawing a buck tag in that area at that time. Shooting a buck was not a huge concern, though, as we just really wanted to go deer hunting.

Because I did not yet own a centerfire rifle, I borrowed an open-sight Remington .222 from another uncle. Marvin used Dad's Wards Westernfield .243. Dad also let us use one of the two-wheel drive farm pickups. Four-wheel drive pickups were not nearly as common in those days and we were somewhat careful in where we drove. We scrounged together enough blaze orange clothing to wear, and we were ready to fill our doe tags.

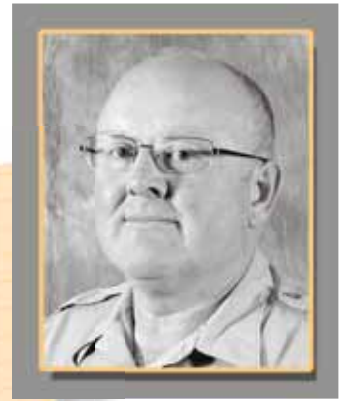
My cousin, Dennis, who was a couple years older, served as our primary host and hunting guide. Dennis lost a battle with cancer several years ago, but he was a very gracious host and one of the most avid deer hunters I've ever known. We also benefitted greatly from the fact that he knew all the locals and had many connections.

I simply could not tell my early deer hunting story without mentioning Dennis and I will forever be grateful to him and his family for showing us the ropes in those early years.

The land that my aunt and uncle owned was, and undoubtedly still is, a very nice place to spend time hunting deer. It is dotted with native prairie and hardwood draws, and it seemed like we saw deer over almost every hill. I can't speak to the status of the state's overall deer population in the fall of 1976, but the general population in the Dickey area was good enough to allow us to eventually fill our deer tags.

It was a commonly held belief at that time, before the Conservation Reserve Program hit the landscape, that most deer were concentrated along the major river and creek drainages throughout the state. I did not observe anything that fall that would have refuted that belief.

It has been 30-plus years since I've hunted deer in the wooded draws near Dickey, but I will forever cherish the memories of my first deer hunt along Bonehill Creek.



**SCOTT
PETERSON**
is the Game
and Fish
Department's
deputy
director.





AMANDA
ANSTROM
is a Game
and Fish
Department
Licensing
assistant.

FIRST BUCK

I've been hunting with Dad for more than 20 years. From day one, deer hunting was all about family time. It didn't matter if you shot one, or if you shot a big one, it was about spending time together.

The stories that followed a successful hunt were always more important than the size or sex of the animal. And Dad always said, "You can't eat the horns!"

For this reason, I never actually shot a buck until I was in my 20s. It just wasn't important to me, antlers or not, it didn't matter. I just wanted to be out hunting with Dad.

After eight years of hunting does, I finally decided to try for something with antlers. And I'll never forget my first buck.

Our favorite hunting spot was near a hunting shack on my uncle's land. The shack allowed us to hang out with our feet up, talk about "super important father/daughter stuff," and, of course, eat snacks. As any good hunter knows, the three things you must have for a successful hunt are oatmeal cream pies, Diet Coke and a camera. Guns and ammunition can be important, too.

Anyway, back to my first buck.

So, we're in the shack, my feet are up and Dad and I are in deep conversation. Finally, one of us notices a buck walking toward us. I think, "Here's my chance." The buck was pretty close, about 75 yards, so instead of using my rifle with a scope, I go for Dad's open-sight, lever-action .30-30.

I aim at his chest and squeeze the trigger ... bullseye. The buck falls on its back and it's over. After hugs and high-fives, it dawns on me that the buck isn't necessarily a trophy.

Dad can see the disappointment on my face and reminds me, "You can't eat the horns. It's a nice buck. Be proud. Nice shot!"

And he was right, I did shoot a nice buck, even though he didn't have the antlers that I dreamed about.

In today's world it's hard not to trophy hunt. Everyone wants a big deer to put on the wall. But in my world, it's a bit different. It's all about family time and the story that goes with shooting the animal. In the next 30 years I'll probably forget that my first buck was a big-bodied 3-by-3. But I'll never forget that I shot my first buck hunting with Dad.



MY DECISION

When I was asked to write a story about deer hunting, my mind instantly started to wander, thinking about all the experiences I've had in the field. Sometimes I get questioned on how I can remember every hunting story from years ago, but forget to pick up milk at the grocery store.

A trophy to me is different from what some people would consider a trophy. I've always been a meat hunter first, and the size of the animal I harvest is a distant second. I utilize everything from the deer possible, including eating what most wouldn't, as well as trying to use the hide for leather. I've even used the shoulder blade of some deer for artwork. I do this to pay respect to the animal.

I have harvested many deer in my life, but my first one 25 years ago set the tone for a lifetime of hunting.

I was 14 years old. My dad, brothers and I had hunted hard for one and a half days. When I say, "hard," I am not referring to the amount of time we spent sitting in a blind, I am talking about the miles of cattails, tree rows and CRP we walked.

That Saturday night when we were eating supper, a family friend stopped by to visit and told us that he spotted a small, wounded buck by our house that was heading toward the lake. He said it looked like it had been shot in its lower front leg.

Dad explained to me that it would be the right thing to do to try to harvest this deer in the morning to ease its suffering and use an animal that probably wouldn't make it through the winter. However, he said that it was my tag and my decision.

I knew the deer wasn't going to be easy to find because, according to where our friend said the buck headed, it would be another day of walking cattails and shrubs along the lake. My hip muscles were already sore from the previous day and a half, but with my dad's insight and my excitement to harvest a deer for the first time, I decided to go after it.

The next day we walked from the house toward the stand of cattails along the lake. We had no idea if this deer would be in there, but I figured we might get pretty close to it before it got up because of its injured leg. So, with my excitement and the possibility of the deer standing up in front of me, I almost forgot we were walking through eyeball-tall cattails.

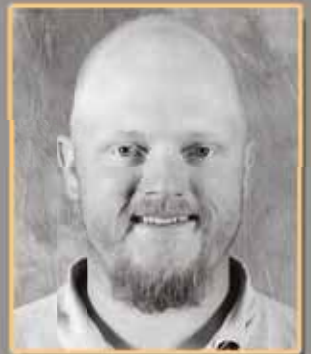
We got to the end of the cattails where the bank of the lake gets steep and turns to hawthorn apple and chokecherry shrubs. Dad told my younger brother and I to go to the top just outside the shrubs while he and my older brother continued the push.

The shoreline of shrubs runs almost one mile along the lake, and as we slogged along, I started to wonder if we were going to find the deer. Not to mention, our forced march through thick cover was starting to wear on me and I was no longer ready for the quick shot I'd been anticipating.

All of a sudden I heard Dad yell, "Here he comes!" The buck stepped out of the bushes about 50 yards from me. One quick shot and the search was over.

As I tagged my first deer I was thinking about the protein it was going to put on our table, as well as the new leather work gloves I would get if I took care of the hide.

Then it dawned on me that this was all my decision. And when I say "all," I mean from deciding to apply for the license to the sudden end of pulling the trigger. At that point I realized that as long as it was my decision, any animal I harvested would be a trophy.



CASEY
ANDERSON
is the Game
and Fish
Department's
assistant
wildlife
division
chief.



**SANDRA
JOHNSON**
is a Game
and Fish
Department
conservation
biologist.

VENISON HOT DISH

I remember as a little kid seemingly floating on top of the crusted snow beside Dad, the deer hunter, who kept breaking through up to his knees.

It was always fun tagging along, but then came the time when the deer from the hunt were hung up in the shop. This image was a bit spooky to a little kid, and unappetizing for a young palate, which is why Mom would tell me it was "just hamburger" in the hot dish.

Fast forward a few decades, past harvesting my first deer and other animals that followed, to a time when it's tougher to draw a license. Now I miss having a freezer bursting with packs of ground venison.

Deer hunting, tradition and family are synonymous in North Dakota and elsewhere. We all have deer season stories, some similar and some unrivaled, at least in our own minds. Like the time my husband and I were hunting mule deer in the badlands during a short-lived heat wave that felt so unusual for North Dakota in November. And two days later, as you might guess, we were packing out his buck in a winter storm, 2 miles from the pickup, uphill the entire way, or so it felt.

On the time my niece and I got our whitetail does on the same day at the farm, hers a jumbo and mine considerably more, um, petite.

Four years ago, the big one got away. A nice muley buck encircled by a mob of does that wouldn't allow me a clean shot. If only he had stood broadside instead of facing away for those fleeting 7 seconds when the does weren't surrounding him. If only the next day wasn't super foggy. If only we had just one more day to hunt.

The number of female deer hunters is still far fewer than males, but perhaps someday things will even out a bit. Maybe it's just my family, but it seems like a lot of the females hunt, at least deer anyway. Hopefully that's true for many others.

Dad passed away before he got to see his three daughters and granddaughters shoot deer. Mom is sure proud of us, though, especially now that we all eat our venison.

I did not draw a deer tag this year. The hot dishes will have to be made with hamburger. For those of us who hunt in the badlands, the temptation to head to western North Dakota is almost unbearable this time of year. I guess we can still make the trip and go spotting for mule deer just for fun. After all, it's really about tagging along with someone who we still have one more day with.

River otters, which have been protected in North Dakota for many years, are recolonizing rivers and streams in North Dakota, primarily the Red River and its tributaries.

TOM GIBSON

Game and Fish Considering **RIVER OTTER SEASON**

By Greg Freeman

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is considering a river otter season in 2017.

Stephanie Tucker, Department game management section leader and furbearer biologist, said the subject is up for discussion in late November and early December as a topic at fall district advisory board meetings, and again next spring when Department officials hold another round of

advisory board meetings across the state.

“Data we have collected and research findings indicate that river otters have recolonized most areas of the state where they occurred historically, and they have inhabited the Red River Valley and its tributaries for about 15 years,” Tucker said. “When you gather years of research and study all the information, we believe a season is merited.”

Opening a harvest season would also facilitate an increase in available data, which would allow Game and Fish to better monitor the population. As of now, indications are a regulated trapping season would have a limited harvest of 15 otters.

“Currently we document at least 15 river otters that are killed annually in North Dakota,” Tucker said. “The true number of river otter mortalities per year is likely greater than that, and we are confident that adding a harvest season to those already taken by incidental trapping, or collisions with automobiles, will not be a detriment to the population.”

The taking of river otters would only involve trapping, not hunting. Tucker said river otters are a furbearer that is traditionally only trapped.

Additionally, Tucker said allowing trappers to keep those river otters that are already caught incidentally – typically in beaver traps – is a benefit of opening a trapping season.

“It is desirable to allow people to keep the pelts of those that are killed each

year,” Tucker said. “By allowing people to hunt river otters, this benefit would be lost.”

The investigation into a possible river otter trapping season is similar to the process that Game and Fish officials followed to pursue a fisher trapping season.

In 2011, Tucker reported that research findings indicated that fishers had recolonized areas of the state where they historically occurred, and perhaps had even expanded.

Fishers were historically found in northeastern North Dakota, but considered extirpated from the state by the early 1900s. Tucker said verified reports of fishers began increasing in the late 1990s.

The first fisher trapping season was held in 2011. A limited, six-day season for these furbearers continues today for North Dakota residents east of U.S. Highway 281 and North Dakota Highway 4. The limit is one animal per trapper per season.

GREG FREEMAN is the Game and Fish Department's news editor.



RIVER OTTERS IN NORTH DAKOTA

River otters were never abundant in North Dakota, though historically they were found in major rivers and streams throughout the state, and were likely more common in the northeast.

Like beavers and other furbearers that were the target of trappers during the late 1700s and into the mid-1800s, otters were mostly gone from the state by the early 1900s.

The state first prohibited harvest of river otters in 1909. There was an open season again in 1919 and 1920, but they have been protected ever since.

River otters live in burrows near water. They are active in winter, using ice holes to surface and breathe. They hunt at night and feed on fish, amphibians, turtles and crayfish.

Surveys indicate that otters are recolonizing rivers and streams in North Dakota, with their primary distribution again along the Red River and its tributaries. This is not unexpected, as the closest established populations are found in northern Minnesota and southern Manitoba. Verified otter reports are predominantly from eastern North Dakota as well. From July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016, Game and Fish recorded 29 reports of river otters, and 22 of those were verified. Nine came from Grand Forks County, while Traill, Ransom, Pembina, Steele, Griggs, Stutsman, Walsh, Nelson and Wells also had at least one verified otter report.

Most of the verified reports came in from fur harvesters who had incidentally captured otters in traps set for other species, primarily beavers.

POTENTIAL OTTER SEASON INFORMATION

- Would open statewide November 27, 2017 and continue through March 15, 2018. Timing coincides with when pelts are at their prime.
- Season quota of 15. Once the quota is reached the season would close immediately.
- Limit of one river otter per season. Trappers would have to contact the local game warden or a Department field office within 12 hours of the

- harvest to have their otter tagged.
- Otters must be tagged. River otters are listed under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES). In order to sell/export a river otter out of state, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service requires that those pelts be “CITES tagged.” Additionally, mandatory tagging of river otter pelts is required to be consis-

tent with other states’ regulations, and facilitate collection of their carcasses, from which biological data is collected to monitor population trends.

- Only river otters taken by Game and Fish, U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services or private landowners in defense of livestock or personal property do not count toward the quota.



Targeting Big Pike *in Winter*

Big northern pike, like this 19-plus pound fish, like big baits.

***Fisheries Biologist
Shares Ice
Fishing Insights***

By Paul Bailey

If there is such a thing as an embarrassment of riches, North Dakota's anglers have experienced it in recent years.

Our "big three" walleye fisheries – Lake Sakakawea, Devils Lake and the Missouri River/Lake Oahe – continue to validate their nationally renowned reputations as destination fisheries. Other new lakes created from the abundant snowfall during the winters of 2008-09 to 2010-11 have now developed into outstanding fisheries.

We are in the middle of the best yellow perch boom since the early 2000s; the walleye fishing on our prairie lakes has never been better; and a generous mix of traditional and new northern pike fisheries are found in every corner of the state. At the same time, quality largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, and trout fisheries are not hard to find; opportunities for bluegill and crappie have likely never been better; and Lake Sakakawea arguably just produced its best salmon fishing season in decades. Wow.

Like a lot of anglers, I consider myself an opportunist and I am happy to pursue the best fishing available when and where it occurs, no matter the species.

Late ice walleye bite on a prairie lake? I'm there. Crappie are biting on Lake Oahe? I'm rigging up slip bobbers. Springtime walleye on the Missouri River? Count me in. Largemouth bass biting on a small southwest reservoir? I'll get my spinnerbaits. Early morning trout bite in the Garrison Dam Tailrace? Who needs sleep.

I've done my best to take advantage of the diversity of exceptional and abundant angling opportunities in recent years, but if anything has risen to the top and become a favorite – obsession, maybe? – it's ice fishing for whopper northern pike.

North Dakota has a long history of producing some truly world-class northern pike. Many anglers have encountered fish surpassing 20 pounds and more than a handful of 30-plus-pound

pike have been verified over the years.

Hooking into these apex predators has produced some of my most memorable fishing experiences and, through much trial and error, I have found some strategies that have helped me put more big pike on the ice ... and back in the water.

FISH WHERE BIG PIKE LIVE

Simple enough ... you can't catch what isn't there. Many excellent northern pike fisheries are scattered across North Dakota, but few consistently offer the potential for trophy fish. To grow large, northern pike typically need to live for 10 or more years in a water body with enough depth to offer a cool water refuge in the heat of summer, as well as suitable sizes of forage.

Pike in our productive, shallow prairie lakes tend to have a live-fast-and-die-young lifestyle, which isn't conducive to growing to trophy sizes. These lakes typically lack cool water habitat in summer and have simple forage communities. Warm water and a diet of fathead minnows can lead to some exceptional northern pike growth rates in their early years, but these conditions seldom push pike past 5 years or 10 pounds.

The discussion on where to target large pike in North Dakota really begins with the Missouri River System.

The Missouri River System (Sakakawea, Missouri River/Oahe) alone has accounted for approximately 80 percent of the 20-pound and larger northern pike submitted to the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's Whopper Club. This system offers both the cool water summer habitat and forage communities necessary to produce exceptional pike.

What's crucial is the ability of these fish to find suitable-sized forage as they increase in size. Fathead minnows and small perch are great forage for 20-inch pike, but the availability of larger forage such as shorthead redhorse, white

sucker, cisco, goldeye and many others found in the Missouri River System, ensures the availability of large forage as the pike grow.

While the Missouri River System is rightly the top destination for anglers seeking trophy northern pike, several other fisheries provide the necessary environmental and forage conditions to produce large pike, and have a history of doing so. Most notably, Devils Lake, Lake Audubon, Pipestem Reservoir, Jamestown Reservoir, Lake Ashtabula and Heart Butte Reservoir (Lake Tschida).

WHEN TO FISH IN WINTER


Of less importance than where to fish is when. If you are on the right body of water, any day that offers safe ice and tolerable weather may produce the fish of a lifetime. On the Missouri River System, reasonably safe ice may not exist until late December or early January, but it may also persist into April some years.

I generally target deeper depths, sometimes 20 feet or more, near the mouths of large bays early in the ice fishing season, and make my way into the bays and shallower water as the winter progresses. Water clarity often plays a role in site selection, since pike are sight-feeders.

BAITS AND LURES

Northern pike are not known as exceptionally picky eaters and plenty are caught on freezer-burned smelt, gobs of fathead minnows on a treble hook, or even hotdogs. However, when fishing dead baits, I prefer to use the largest vacuum-sealed rainbow smelt that I can find. I believe smelt in good condition lead to more bites than freezer-burned baits with missing fins and scales.

Bait and lure size does matter when targeting large pike. Numerous diet studies have found that northern pike select prey that is one-fourth to one-third their body length in size, so



An assortment of baits and tackle the author uses when fishing for big pike in winter.

10-inch rainbow smelt or large artificial lures are not out of the question when targeting pike of 40 inches or more.

I typically position my dead baits about 18 inches off the bottom. However, if water clarity is good, I will often position baits 3 feet or more off the bottom as pike are accustomed to attacking prey above them.

Traditional tip-ups are certainly tried and true, but I use commercially available variations of the tip-up concept that allow using a rod and reel instead.

Using a rod and reel, especially the drag feature of the reel, to fight large pike has helped me land many fish that I am convinced I would have lost hand-lining them in under a traditional tip-up.

North Dakota fishing regulations allow the use of a maximum of four fishing lines per angler when ice fishing. I deploy three rods with dead baits and actively jig with a fourth. Aggressively jiggling large, vibrating lures and bucktail jigs with plastic trailers are some of my go-to presentations.

There are several commercially available ice fishing rods that were designed for targeting lake trout that are well suited to trophy pike. I prefer bait casting styles, as they allow my catfishing reels to do double duty on the ice. The 40-pound-test braided superline on these reels is more than adequate, and I have taken the lead from our friends in the musky fishing community and





The author with a 24-pound, 8-ounce pike from the Missouri River System.

SCOTT GANGL

build my own leaders from 100-pound test fluorocarbon leader material.

CATCH-AND-RELEASE TIPS

Northern pike make excellent table fare and I harvest a few every winter. However, I prefer 24- to 30-inch pike for the table and release larger fish. (Visit the Game and Fish Department's website, gf.nd.gov, for tips on removing the Y-bones from pike.)

When practicing catch-and-release, keep the following in mind: 1) land fish as quickly as possible; 2) while the fish will be lifted vertically out of the ice hole, keep the time the fish is held vertically to a minimum to prevent damage to internal organs; 3) avoid contact with gills or eyes; 4) have pliers, jaw spreaders and camera ready so hooks can be removed and photographs taken without delay, and;

5) return fish to the water as quickly as possible.

A good rule of thumb is the fish should not be out of the water any longer than you can hold your breath. This is especially true in winter as a fish's eyes and gills are quickly damaged in freezing temperatures.

Whether targeting trophy fish or not, pike fishing opportunities have never been more abundant in North Dakota than they are now. Anglers pursuing our official state fish are sure to bank many more memories in the months ahead.

PAUL BAILEY is the Game and Fish Department's south central district fisheries supervisor in Bismarck.

SMALL INVESTMENT, ICE FISHING REWARDS

By Scott Gangl



North Dakota's weather is anything but predictable. From drought to flood, the state has seen its share of weather changes in the last decade.

Since about 2009, the trend has been for wetter conditions and rising lake levels, particularly in the central and eastern parts of the state. Known as the Prairie Pothole Region, many waterbodies in this region

typically don't flow out, but rather collect runoff, transforming former duck sloughs into deep prairie lakes capable of supporting fish.

Always looking to expand fishing opportunities for anglers, Game and Fish Department fisheries biologists immediately took advantage of these "new" lakes. Many were stocked with yellow perch at first, and then with walleye later on. Most of these stockings were successful for one species or the other, and often established fishable populations of both.

As a result, the number of North Dakota fishing waters (excluding the Missouri River System) increased from about 293 in 2009 to 425 in 2016. But

long-term weather patterns will dictate how long these "new" lakes will stay around. Many will begin to lose water and dry out when the next drought begins.

With little snow last winter and variable rainfall over summer, some lakes lost water this year and may be at risk of winterkill this winter. When lakes freeze, the water cannot absorb atmospheric oxygen, and when snow covers the ice, it blocks sunlight from reaching underwater plants where it's needed for photosynthesis to create oxygen. If these conditions occur, the oxygen in the water is depleted until there is not enough for fish to survive,

and a winterkill occurs.

Shallow lakes are naturally more susceptible to winterkill because they have less overall water volume, and their oxygen is depleted more rapidly.

Readers may wonder why the Game and Fish Department would stock fish into shallow lakes that might winterkill in the first place. These lakes contain productive habitat, and fish can grow much faster than fish in a more established lake.

Although some of these lakes may eventually winterkill, the only investment is the fish stocked. If the lake winterkills, the losses are relatively low. But if conditions allow fish to survive and grow to catchable sizes, this small investment can

NORTHEAST FISHERIES DISTRICT

Silver Lake WMA (Wells County) – 3 miles south of Chaseley. Harvestable size walleye population, ranging from 13-16 inches. Yellow perch also available in good numbers, with most in the 9- to 10-inch range.

Island Lake (Rolette County) – 3 miles west, 2 miles south of Mylo. Thriving northern pike population. Most pike around 24 inches, but range up to 28 inches.

Armourdale Dam (Towner County) – 9 miles east, 1.5 miles north of Rolla. Good numbers of northern pike and walleye. Pike primarily about 20-24 inches, but range up to 36 inches. Walleye available, with most 16-18 inches.

NORTH CENTRAL FISHERIES DISTRICT

Coal Lake (McLean County) – 3 miles south, 1.5 miles east, .75 miles north of Underwood. Walleye ranging from 8-15 inches, with many fish 13-14 inches.

SOUTHWEST FISHERIES DISTRICT

Davis Dam (Slope County) – 16 miles west, 4 miles north of Amidon. Bluegill up to three-quarters of a pound, largemouth bass up to 2 pounds and rainbow trout up to about 1 pound.

SOUTH CENTRAL FISHERIES DISTRICT

Geier Lake (Kidder County) – 12 miles east, 9.5 miles north of Robinson. Walleye abundant. Yellow perch present.

Trautmann Lake (Kidder County) – 1 mile west, 2 miles north, 1 mile west, 1 mile north of Robinson. Small yellow perch and walleye abundant.

Wentz WPA (Logan County) – 12 miles east of Napoleon. Walleye abundant.

Baumgartner Lake (Emmons County) – 6 miles south of Linton. Northern pike abundant.

Jake's Lake (Emmons County) – 13 miles south, 1 mile east of Strasburg. Northern pike abundant.

Leno Lake (Kidder County) – 1 mile east, 7 miles north of Tuttle. Northern pike abundant.

provide some great rewards in opportunity and fishing.

Game and Fish would much rather see fish caught and harvested by anglers than lost to winterkill. Fisheries biologists compiled the following list of lakes across the state that currently have strong fish populations and may be at risk of winterkill in the coming months. If conditions deteriorate, fish may become lethargic and inactive as oxygen levels drop, so anglers are advised to target these waters early in the season, once ice conditions are safe for fishing.

SCOTT GANGL is the Game and Fish Department's fisheries management section leader.

SOUTHEAST FISHERIES DISTRICT

Island Lake (Barnes County) – 3 miles south, .5 miles east of Urbana. Medium-sized walleye abundant and should cooperate better than ever.

Bisek Slough (Richland County) – 2 miles north, .5 miles west of Lidgerwood. Good numbers of yellow perch and northern pike.

Vislisl Lake (Richland County) – 1 mile north, 2 miles east, 1 mile north, 1 mile west of Lidgerwood. Good walleye numbers, with average size about 20 inches.

Meadow Lake (Barnes County) – 6 miles west, 6 miles north of Litchville. Not sampled in 2016, but data from previous years indicate good numbers of relatively large yellow perch and a growing walleye population.

Lindeman Lake (Cass County) – 2 miles north, 1 mile east, .5 miles north of Enderlin. Not sampled in 2016, but data from previous years indicate good yellow perch numbers and the remnants of three years of walleye stocking prior to a drain project.

Alfred Lake (LaMoure County) – 7 miles east, 1.5 miles south of Gackle. Decent northern pike numbers.

When practicing catch-and-release, return fish to the water as quickly as possible.



SCOTT GANGL

FREE ICE FISHING WEEKEND

North Dakota's free ice fishing weekend is December 31, 2016-January 1, 2017.

Resident anglers may fish that weekend without a license. All other ice fishing regulations apply.

Those interested in darkhouse spearfishing that weekend must register with the North Dakota Game and Fish Department prior to participating. Registration is available on the Department's website, gf.nd.gov, or through any Game and Fish office. Legal fish are northern pike and nongame species.

A New Direction



Before hunting, youth hunters participated in educational sessions, including finding wounded deer by following blood trails and deer biology and reading sign.

for Recruiting Young Hunters

*By Chris Grondahl
Photos By Brian Schaffer*

Hunter numbers are declining nationwide, and this is alarming to all who know what this means. Hunters are staunch advocates for wildlife, in addition to being major players in supporting habitat, wildlife management and conservation through purchases of licenses and equipment associated with hunting.

Considering the importance of their voice, and revenue hunters have generated for wildlife and conservation, it's necessary to promote hunting opportunities to future generations.

That was the purpose of a youth whitetail doe hunt organized earlier this fall by John Mazur, hunter education coordinator for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department.

While these types of hunts are taking place across the nation, this one was a bit different in that it was designed to provide an opportunity specifically for young people who otherwise might not get this sort of chance.

Hunting has become more difficult over the years, especially for those who may not be part of a hunting family.

Hunting has become more difficult over the years, especially for those who may not be part of a hunting family. This event was designed to address

that situation in one small area, but the larger goal was to develop relationships with other agencies and communities, and provide a model for hunter education instructors, parents and mentors who could replicate this event in their communities.

A big step in pulling together this type of hunt is identifying local youth who might have an interest, but didn't otherwise have an opportunity to hunt. Joe O'Meara, longtime hunter education volunteer and promoter of National Archery in the Schools Program in the Hankinson area, spearheaded this effort, which also involved a few other passionate hunter education volunteers willing to commit their time to find potential young hunters.

John Mazur (center), Game and Fish Department hunter education coordinator, discusses hunting options with youth deer hunt volunteers.



Rod Hubbard (left), Fargo area hunter education instructor, and landowner Kevin Bishop, pose with youth hunter, Cole Irwin. Bishop was interested in being part of the event and heard the shot from his ranch house. The adults watched and assisted as Cole followed the blood trail right to the doe.



We chose the area in and around Fort Ransom State Park as the venue because it has some good deer hunting habitat, and the park had space and facilities for camping and indoor gatherings.

Finding land on which to hunt was another key to making the youth hunt a success. The initial plan was for 10 youth hunters to participate, and knew we would need to make contact with several landowners.

Thanks to Dan Narum, LaMoure hunter education volunteer, and Kevin Bishop, hunter education instructor and local landowner, this task was settled. Narum helped with getting access on some area land, while Bishop said he would find places for the kids to hunt on his own land.

Because of Bishop's hospitality and personal insight, the logistics of finding and setting up good locations for hunting blinds for each hunter became significantly easier to manage.

Instructors and staff arrived on Friday afternoon to make arrangements. Youth hunters came in Saturday and set up their camps. Even though there wasn't a lot of time to enjoy camp life with the short

weekend schedule, we wanted to promote the camp atmosphere that brings with it stories, campfires and a break from the routine.

Hunters were divided into three groups and participated in round-robin educational sessions. Instructors taught marksmanship skills and made sure every student demonstrated proficient shooting. One group focused on finding wounded deer by following realistic blood trails, while the other group learned about deer biology and reading sign.

Late in the afternoon, parents, instructors and young hunters headed out for the evening sit in simple ground blinds next to field edges or near trails. It was an ideal environment in which to demonstrate ethical shots on standing deer, the effect of wind and observing natural deer movement.

The young hunters harvested four deer Saturday evening, and made many stories and memories in those quiet times waiting for deer and watching the sunset.

Those stories are the heart of this feature and it would not be the same without sharing some of them.

Wayne Hoff of LaMoure brought his two boys, Andrew and Lukas, who were partnered with Narum. Hoff grew up on a cattle ranch and didn't get the chance to hunt. He wanted to get his boys into an outdoor activity that could last them a lifetime, and keep them away from electronics. Hoff added, "They were in sports, but that only lasts so long in life".

Narum bumped into Hoff in a local hardware store, where he was buying earplugs, and asked him what they were for. Hoff said that he had just purchased two new rifles for his boys to start shooting, but had no experience hunting.

Narum recruited Hoff and his boys to join the youth hunt.

Andrew harvested a doe on Saturday. Narum brought out his drag harness so Andrew could experience pulling out a deer. This was not new to Andrew, who said his Dad made them pull a tire around the yard with a harness for football practice.

This was the Hoff boys' first hunt. In the end, Lukas did not harvest a deer, but his Dad said later that it's all his son talks about. "The boys are quiet by nature, but

after the weekend of training they want to go out again,” Hoff said.

Randy Kath grew up in Hankinson and took over his father’s heavy equipment company. His Dad did not hunt. He said that his boys, Ryan and Rustin, were in NASP for five years and had gotten most of their interest in hunting from local mentors who took kids to the next level following the archery program. Rustin harvested a doe while hunting with volunteer hunter education instructor Shannon Johnson.

“My son, Rustin, will remember where he shot his first deer for his whole life, a lifetime memory in just one short evening.” Kath said. “I had done some walking to flush deer, but this was the way to do it.”

Rustin borrowed a dehydrator and made a batch of jerky. The deer they deboned will be used to make more jerky and some steaks. Even though Ryan did not harvest a deer, he has a great interest in the outdoors and wants to work for the Game and Fish Department after helping a Department fisheries crew put in a boat ramp at Horseshoe Lake in Richland County.

Jeremy Haugen of Velva was a bird hunter, but had little experience hunting

big game. His son, Ethan, sat with Dad and I near the edge of a bean field. We did not harvest a deer, but I encouraged them to find a place to hunt near home. Jeremy made a connection for his son and he harvested a doe a week later.

“Sitting with Ethan and taking a good shot was more fun than anything I could have ever done, it changes the way I will hunt deer,” Haugen said.

*The Game and Fish
Department is always
looking for volunteers who
may have the interest and
time to take part in these
rewarding experiences.*

Ethan told his Dad that they had to wait 30 minutes before going to look for the deer like he had been taught by instructors at the weekend camp. Ethan said to his Dad when it was over that “we really didn’t get skunked that weekend did we?”

One more hunter harvested a deer Sunday morning. Cole Irwin was accompanied by Rod Hubbard, hunter education

volunteer from Fargo, and Brian Schaffer, Game and Fish education coordinator.

Even if none of the young hunters had taken a deer, the weekend still would have been a success. Those who did harvest one learned the valuable lesson that hunters can appreciate deer that don’t have antlers.

Youth hunters and parents also learned about deer biology, sign, how to choose a hunting area and how to play the wind. They learned how to track a wounded animal and an ethical way to hunt.

Instructors also gained confidence so they can set up similar hunts in their own communities.

And finally, the conservation community has new participants who understand and appreciate the opportunities and resources we have and will help ensure they continue in the future.

The Game and Fish Department is always looking for volunteers who may have the interest and time to take part in a rewarding experience like this. Contact the Department’s education section at 701-328-6615; or email ndgf@nd.gov, for more information.

CHRIS GRONDAHL is the Game and Fish Department’s education supervisor.

*Part of the youth deer
hunting experience was
camping out at Fort
Ransom State Park.*





BUFFALOBERRY PATCH

By Greg Freeman, Department News Editor



RON WILSON

Fall Fish Surveys Completed

North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries biologists completed fall reproduction surveys, which evaluates natural reproduction and stocking success across the state.

Scott Gangl, Department fisheries management section leader, said Lake Sakakawea produced the fourth highest young-of-the-year catch of sauger since 1970. In addition, walleye numbers were relatively good due to natural reproduction and stocking efforts.

"We are seeing a lot of young-of-the-year smelt in the stomachs of other fish, which is an indication of good smelt reproduction in Lake Sakakawea this year," Gangl said.

The Missouri River is still recovering from the flood of 2011, Gangl said. "But this year we did sample gizzard shad at all sites from the Garrison Dam down to

Lake Oahe," he said.

Gizzard shad in Lake Oahe saw the highest number since 2008. But overall, Gangl said forage is still lacking. "With good natural reproduction again in 2016, this is the third consecutive strong year-class of walleye," he added. "Which means the walleye catch will continue to be dominated by smaller fish."

The Devils Lake basin reported relatively good catches of young-of-the-year walleye, after Game and Fish stocked 1.7 million fingerlings in spring.

Statewide, smaller lakes showed various levels of success. "We saw good walleye survival on the newer lakes, with more variable success on the established lakes," Gangl said. "In addition, we saw good reproduction of bluegills in many of our lakes statewide."

DONATE DEER TO SPORTSMEN AGAINST HUNGER

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is reminding deer hunters to remember 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 and muzzle-loader license can help as well.

The list of participating processors is available on the North Dakota Community Action website, www.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.



LARA ANDERSON

Boats Need 2017-19 Registration

Boat owners are reminded that 2017 is the first year of a new three-year registration period.

The price to register motorboats under 16 feet in length, and all canoes, is \$18, motorboats from 16 feet to less than 20 feet in length is \$36, and motorboats at least 20 feet in length is \$45.

The new boat registration cycle begins January 1, 2017 and runs through Dec. 31, 2019.

Boat owners should receive their registration mailing by the end of December. In addition, boat registrations can be renewed online at the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's website, gf.nd.gov, by clicking the buy and apply link, and "watercraft registration and renewals" under the watercraft heading.

Renewal applications will not be accepted until after December 15.

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

Boat owners purchasing watercraft from private individuals this winter are reminded to register it in their name. Registering a used watercraft purchased from an individual must include proof of transfer of ownership, such

as a photocopy of the previous owner's registration card, a canceled check or a signed note from the previous owner stating transfer of ownership.

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

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

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



Winter Fishing Regulations

Anglers are encouraged to refer to the 2016-18 North Dakota Fishing Guide or the Game and Fish Department's website at gf.nd.gov for winter fishing regulations.

New regulations for 2016-18 include:

- Reduces statewide possession limit for bluegill, yellow perch and white bass from 80 to 40 each.
- Opened Sweet Briar Dam and Braun Lake to darkhouse spearfishing. Closed Larimore Dam and Wood Lake to darkhouse spearfishing.
- Markers must be in the possession of anglers and/or spearers as soon as a hole greater than 10 inches in diameter is made in the ice.
- Fishing poles must be easily visible and within a maximum distance of 150 feet of participating angler.

Other 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.



Advisory Board Meetings Announced

Outdoor enthusiasts are invited to attend a North Dakota Game and Fish Department fall 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 COUNTIES.

Date: Monday, Dec. 5 – 7 p.m.

Location: Rough Rider Center (Silver Room 2209 Wolves Den Pky.)

Host: Mule Deer Foundation

Contact: TBD

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

DISTRICT 2 – BOTTINEAU, BURKE, MCHENRY, MOUNTRAIL, PIERCE, RENVILLE AND WARD COUNTIES.

Date: Nov. 28 – 7 p.m.

Location: Berthold Sportsmen Club, 210 Main St., Berthold

Host: Berthold Sportsmen Club

Contact: Joe Lautenschlager, 721-1882

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

DISTRICT 3 – COUNTIES: BENSON, CAVALIER, EDDY, RAMSEY, ROLETTE AND TOWNER

Date: Dec. 6 – 7 p.m.

Host: Cando Gun Club

Location: Cando Armory, Cando



CRAIG BIRKLE

Game and Fish Department Director Terry Steinwand addresses those in attendance at an annual advisory board meeting.

Contact: Reed Weston

Advisory board member:

Tom Rost, Devils Lake, 662-8620

DISTRICT 4 – GRAND FORKS, NELSON, PEMBINA AND WALSH COUNTIES.

Date: Dec. 6 – 7 p.m.

Location: American Legion Club, 208 N. Main St., Fordville

Host: Dakota Prairie Wildlife Club

Contact: Lynn Baier, 331-1074

Advisory board member: Joe Solseng, 317-5009

DISTRICT 5 – CASS, RANSOM, RICHLAND, SARGENT, STEELE AND TRAILL COUNTIES.

Date: Nov. 28 – 7 p.m.

Location: American Legion, South of Lake Elsie, Hankinson

Host: Hankinson American Legion

Contact: Terry Puetz, 640-3294

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

DISTRICT 6 – BARNES, DICKEY, FOSTER, GRIGGS, LOGAN, LAMOURE, MCINTOSH, STUTSMAN AND WELLS COUNTIES.

Date: Nov. 29 – 7 p.m.

Location: The Bunker, 1520 3rd St. SE, Jamestown

Host: United Sportsmen

Contact: Larry Kukla, 320-4182

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

DISTRICT 7 – BURLEIGH, EMMONS, GRANT, KIDDER, MCLEAN, MERCER, MORTON, OLIVER, SHERIDAN AND SIOUX COUNTIES.

Date: Nov. 29 – 7 p.m.

Location: North Dakota Game and Fish Department, Bismarck

Host: North Dakota Natural Resources Trust

Contact: Keith Trego, 220-0978

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

DISTRICT 8 – ADAMS, BILLINGS, BOWMAN, DUNN, GOLDEN VALLEY, HETTINGER, SLOPE AND STARK COUNTIES.

Date: Dec. 5 – 7 p.m.

Location: La Quinta Inn & Suites, Dickinson

Host: Mule Deer Foundation

Contact: Arnold Karsky, 290-9754

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

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.

Darkhouse Spearfishing Registration

North Dakota's darkhouse spearfishing season opens on most state waters December 1. The season extends through March 15. Legal fish are northern pike and nongame species.

Darkhouse spearing is allowed for all residents with a valid fishing license and for residents under age 16. Nonresidents may darkhouse spearfish in North Dakota if they are from states that offer the same privilege for North Dakota residents.

All individuals who participate in darkhouse spearfishing must register with the North Dakota Game and Fish Department prior to participating. Registration is available at the Department's website, gf.nd.gov, or through any Game and Fish Department office.

All waters open to hook and line fishing are open to darkhouse spearing except: East Park Lake, West Park Lake, Lake Audubon, McLean County; Heckers Lake, Sheridan County; McClusky Canal; New Johns Lake, Burleigh County; Red Willow Lake, Griggs County; Larimore Dam, Grand Forks County; and Wood Lake, Benson County.

Anglers should refer to the 2016-18 North Dakota Fishing Guide for more information.

Some Refuges Open to Late-Season Upland Game

Hunters are reminded that several North Dakota national wildlife refuges open to late-season upland game bird hunting the day after the deer gun season closes.

Arrowwood, Audubon, Des Lacs, J. Clark Salyer, Lake Alice, Lake Zahl, Long Lake, Lostwood, Tewaukon (pheasants only), and Upper Souris NWRs open November 21.

However, portions of each refuge are closed to hunting. Hunters should contact refuge headquarters for information on closed areas and other restrictions: Arrowwood 701-285-3341; Audubon 701-442-5474; Des Lacs 701-385-4046; J. Clark Salyer 701-768-2548; Lake Alice 701-662-8611; Lake Zahl 701-965-6488; Long Lake 701-387-4397; Lostwood 701-848-2722; Tewaukon 701-724-3598; and Upper Souris 701-468-5467; or visit www.fws.gov for details on each individual refuge.

National wildlife refuges are managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Hunters are reminded that use of nontoxic shot is required on all USFWS lands. State regulations found in the North Dakota 2016-17 Small Game Guide apply. Seasons for pheasant, sharp-tailed grouse, Hungarian partridge and ruffed grouse close statewide on January 8, 2017.

Order your 2017 Outdoors Calendar



ORDER 2017 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 2017. 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 shipping and handling per calendar, 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.



Hunter Ed Classes

Most hunter education courses have wrapped up for 2016.

However, individuals or parents with children who will need to take a course in 2017 should monitor the Game and Fish website, 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.

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

In addition, SMS text notifications of new classes can be sent directly to a cell phone. Simply text "NDGF Hunter-Class" to 468311 to subscribe to this feature.

NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH ONLINE

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

PURCHASE

and Print Licenses
and Apply for
Lottery Licenses

VIEW

North Dakota
OUTDOORS Magazines

EXPLORE

North Dakota
PLOTS Guide

WATCH

Outdoors Online
Weekly Webcasts
and TV Features

MORE FEATURES

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

NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

100 North Bismarck Expressway
Bismarck, ND 58501-5095
701-328-6300
Email: ndgf@nd.gov





By Ron Wilson

I didn't shoot a deer last year. It wasn't for a lack of trying. I hunted several days, the last handful solo, sitting on hillsides before first light, knocking around in the brush at midday, sitting again as the last of the day's light faded in the west.

Never fired a shot.

If I remember correctly, thinking back over the years, that was a first. We love venison in our house and not having a mature doe, processed and wrapped in individual packages in the freezer, was disappointing. While we imagined eating venison chili, venison stroganoff, venison stew and venison meatballs and spaghetti last winter, I, as they say, ate the tag.

This season will be different.

I started deer hunting in North Dakota in the late 1980s. That's before kids. Before we moved to Bismarck. Long before I took this job. Before a lot of stuff when I think about it.

I spent the majority of those years in two deer camps, both located north of the Sheyenne River. What separated the two camps was about 30 miles of pavement, gravel and a county line. Beyond that, come November, there was little disconnection. No matter the camp, both housed good people, good food and good times.

My oldest boy shot his first deer, a small buck, out of Grandpa's camp in 2009. The deer was bedded in a tangle of

red willows growing so close together, I'm certain I wouldn't have hit the ground if I had tripped.

While I can remember his first deer, I can't recall the first I shot in North Dakota. Maybe that's the parent in me, or just an excuse for a memory that isn't as good as it once was.

I know for certain the rifle I was using is the same as I carry today. A left-handed bolt action that looks pretty good after 40-plus years of use. The sling broke sometime back, but I repaired it quickly between hunts with some camouflage Duct tape. The tape works better than my memory and is still holding.

The folding knife I used to field dress and skin that deer was one that I found in the snap pocket of an old, wool Pendleton hunting coat Dad once wore. I folded the coat, put it in a cardboard box and brought it with me to North Dakota years ago for sentimental reasons. Finding the folding knife in a coat that doesn't fit was a bonus.

This season it will just be my oldest and I hunting together opening weekend. My concern, as always, is for him to fill his tag first. Then I will work on making sure that I don't eat mine again.

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.





NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT ARCHIVE PHOTO

A Look Back

By Ron Wilson

Let's start in 1954.

While North Dakota held its first "official" deer season, where a specific license was needed to hunt, 20-plus years earlier, 1954 was the beginning of when things got rolling.

Prior to 1954, hunters could count on a season about every other year. Starting in 1954, the state's touted and celebrated season has run uninterrupted for more than 60 years.

1954 marked just the second year the Game and Fish Department made available more than 40,000 licenses to hunters. The first was 1952.

Yet, that 40,000 mark was difficult to reach for a time. From 1955 to 1964, it was met just twice in 1961-62.

Note: While the following is not "looking back" very far, it bears mentioning that for the last three deer seasons, 2014-16, the number of

deer licenses made available to hunters has not hit 50,000. The last time was 59,500 in 2013.)

The number of licenses aside, for many years the state's deer hunters were limited to some pretty short seasons. For a number of years, the season lasted less than a week.

Today's 16 ½-day season, the season length we're all so accustomed to, didn't get instituted on a statewide basis until 1983. The only changes were in 1986-87.

In 1986, the season started at 23 ½ days on a trial basis, and then was extended two weeks due to an opening weekend snowstorm in parts of the state that forced many hunters to stay home. In 1987, the season was again at 23 ½ days.

"This year, again, the spotlight has to be on deer numbers, primarily whitetails, over a large part of the

state. Rapidly increasing populations dictated the record number of 88,935 permits last year, which was an increase of 18,310 from 1985. In addition to the 23 ½-day season in 1986, a special 'reduction season' was proclaimed for the first part of December in an effort to bring herds under control in many central and eastern hunting units," from the 1987 September-October issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.

When you take A Look Back, a record number of nearly 89,000 deer licenses sounds like a bunch. Today, with a continued loss of wildlife habitat, mixed with other uncertainties of living on the Northern Plains, it's only a guess when we'll hit those numbers again.

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.