

# NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

PUBLISHED BY THE NORTH DAKOTA



GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

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## MATTERS OF OPINION



**Terry Steinwand**  
*Director*

**W**e are, for a number of good reasons, proud of North Dakota's natural resources.

From the nongame bird species that migrate through the state and those that nest here, to coveted big game animals, furbearers, upland game birds, ducks, geese and a variety of fish species that swim in a record number of waters, there is much to celebrate.

As I've often said, no matter the season – winter, spring, summer or fall – it's difficult to find time to enjoy much of what North Dakota offers because the list is sometimes too long.

With that in mind, I offer that the state's outdoor enthusiasts try something new. Deviate from whatever their go-to activity, or species, is just to mix things up. To sample a slice of North Dakota that they've yet to taste.

My suggestion, simply because it's the open water fishing season and the circumstances surrounding the species, is bluegill fishing.

I understand that the walleye fishing can be pretty darn good this time of year, and North Dakota is blessed with some incredible walleye fishing opportunities on the bigger waters that everybody knows the names of, and some newer prairie lakes that are not yet as familiar.

Even so, as you'll read in this issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*, we are, in terms of quantity and quality, in the heart of some of the best bluegill fishing in the last 30-plus years in the state.

Even some of our most diehard walleye anglers can appreciate this, as I'm betting that many got their start in fishing by catching a mess of bluegills with an adult baiting their hook.

That's what is special about this species as they are so willing to bite any number of baits, especially this time of year as males are guarding nests from anything they suspect might try and steal eggs. Understanding this, bluegill are the perfect fish to help a youngster get hooked on such a wonderful outdoor pursuit.

I encourage you to take a kid bluegill fishing, or invite someone from the neighborhood, no matter their age, and try something a little different.

I've addressed the importance of wildlife habitat on this page many times over the years, and readers understand the significance of habitat in our mission to "protect, conserve and enhance wildlife populations" in the state.

Our mission applies to all creatures, big and small. In this issue, our editorial staff features a story on monarch butterflies and the importance of safeguarding the milkweed habitat that is critical to the survival of this species.

Considering that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has received petitions to list the monarch under the Endangered Species Act, it's important that our agency, partners and citizens of North Dakota do what's necessary to keep this species off the list.

As is stated in the Game and Fish Department's North Dakota Monarch and Native Pollinator Strategy, "the cost of protection or restoration of a listed species is often far greater than preventing or stemming the decline in the first place."

With summer in full swing, get out and enjoy what this great state has to offer. And, once again, try something different. Take a kid bluegill fishing.

*Terry Steinwand*

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# NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

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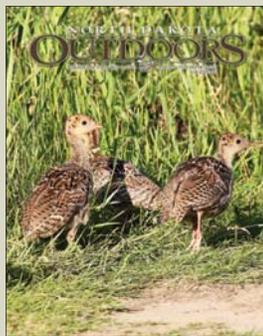
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### Front Cover

June is prime time for observing young-of-the-year birds and mammals like these wild turkeys that emerged from tall grass to search for insects along a sandy trail. (Photo by Craig Bihrl, Bismarck.)



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# FISHING FOR OPTIONS

On light fishing tackle, it's hard to argue the bluegill's ability to put up a good fight.



Game and Fish Department fisheries personnel, Jeff Hendrickson, left, and Scott Gangl netting bluegill at Sheep Creek Dam in April.

LARA ANDERSON

### By Ron Wilson

In a walleye-mad state, where this is the fish of choice for 80-plus percent of the anglers, maybe news of the best bluegill fishing in decades doesn't raise many eyebrows. Then again, perhaps it should.

"I think it's safe to say, in terms of quantity and quality, the bluegill fishing in parts of North Dakota hasn't been this good in the last 30-plus years," said Greg Power, North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries chief. "As fisheries managers, we always say there are other species out there. With the good bluegill fishing we have now, it's nice to let anglers know there are other options."

Back in the day, much of the best bluegill fishing was in newer reservoirs in southwestern North Dakota, including Sheep Creek Dam (Grant County), Indian Creek Dam (Hettinger County), Fish Creek Dam (Morton County), North Lemmon (Adams County) and Sweet Briar Lake (Morton County).

Some of that good bluegill fishing was negatively influenced by severe drought in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

"That's the way it is in North Dakota, no matter the species," Power said. "With low water levels and winterkill, the fish suffer."

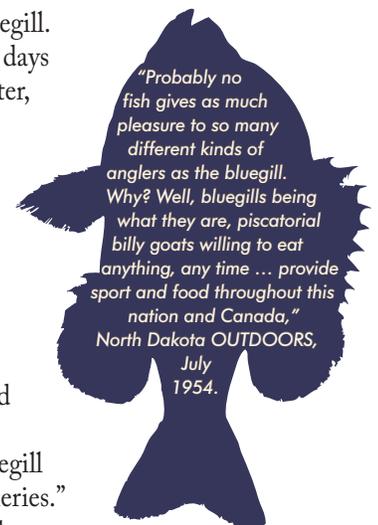
In the last 10 years, certainly, the bluegill fishing west of the Missouri River, in a few

lakes in the Turtle Mountains and select waters elsewhere, has rebounded.

Contributing to the bluegill rally west of the Missouri was the reduction of rough fish, mostly white sucker, and green sunfish. Both species, Power said, at one time tied up much of the biomass and were direct competitors of bluegill.

"If you go back to the days when we had limited water, one of the number one problems was white sucker biomass," Power said. "Then we started white sucker eradication and removal projects, and got rid of them as a legal baitfish statewide (except the Red River), and those waters rebounded as quality bluegill and largemouth bass fisheries."

Many of the waters where anglers find good bluegill fishing, they'll also discover good largemouth bass fishing. In the fisheries management world, these two species fit well together, as bass are good at keeping bluegill populations, to some degree, in check.





Bluegill taken from Sheep Creek in spring were transported and released in a handful of other North Dakota fisheries.

LARA ANDERSON



MIKE ANDERSON

Fisheries managers say bluegill are a gateway species for kids because they are often easy to catch and lead to an interest in fishing. Miles Hosek, Bismarck, caught this bluegill in May from the OWLS Pond in Bismarck while fishing with his brothers.

“Largemouth bass are the best predator for bluegill because both species occupy the same habitat,” said Scott Gangl, Game and Fish Department fisheries management section leader. “What we’re looking for is ample numbers and good size of each species, but sometimes that is hard to achieve.”

Department fisheries biologists often trap and transport bluegill from North Dakota waters because, despite the predator-prey balance, the population of the latter is too robust.

“Bluegill are notorious for stunting ... if we see too many smaller fish, that means there are too many in there,” Gangl said.

An added benefit of thinning out the population is that biologists can take those fish that were trapped, and transport them to other lakes where they are needed.

In April, fisheries biologists netted hundreds of pounds of bluegill from Sheep Creek Dam, and released them in three or four other fisheries.

When trapping bluegill, Gangl said fisheries biologists set the trap nets and let them fish for two to three nights. If the nets are producing, then they might be checked every day.

“The natural reproduction of bluegill in Sheep Creek has been consistently good,” Gangl said. “It’s not our only source of bluegills, but one of the more consistent ones.”

The beauty of bluegill, a fish that Power calls a gateway species to get kids interested in fishing, is that they are angler friendly.

Understanding this, many of the fish trapped by Department fisheries crews are transported to community fisheries in many parts of the state where young anglers have easy access.

“In a lake with bluegills, you pull up to the weeds, drop anchor, throw out bait and a bobber and start catching fish,” Gangl said. “You can also do this from shore or from one of our many fishing piers. Catching fish, and sometimes lots of fish, is where the appeal

starts. Not only are they fun to catch, they are darn good to eat.”

Bluegill start catching the attention of older anglers when they hit about 9 inches, or maybe longer.

“Bluegill are like perch. They make the bobber move and are great for kids,” Power said. “But when bigger bluegill are involved, adult anglers start taking notice.”

In 2016, the top Whopper Club entrants for bluegill came from Long Lake and Lake Metigoshe, both in the Turtle Mountains, and Froelich Dam in Sioux County.

“There are people who like to fish for big bluegill and they’ll travel a long way to catch some nice fish to take home,” Gangl said.

Arguably the best time to fish for bluegill is during spawning, and the peak of this annual event is typically mid-June to the end of the month in North Dakota.

At that time, males are guarding eggs in nests about the size and shape of a Frisbee. If you find one nest, there are likely others nearby.

Why the bluegill spawning season so suits anglers is because the nests are located in shallower water and likely within casting distance from those on shore. Also, any bait pitched, jigged or retrieved near a nest is likely to get eaten by male bluegill defending eggs from what they perceive as predators.

*RON WILSON is editor of North Dakota OUTDOORS.*



Jeff Hendrickson, (left) Game and Fish Department fisheries supervisor, Dickinson, releases bluegill into Raleigh Reservoir, completing the final step of the trap and transport process.

## Bluegill Waters

What follows are quality bluegill lakes recommended by North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries supervisors and biologists:

### Southwest Fisheries District

- North Lemmon Lake – Adams County
- Sheep Creek Dam – Grant County
- Mott Watershed Dam – Hettinger County
- Camels Hump Lake – Golden Valley County
- Davis Dam – Slope County
- Dickinson Reservoir – Stark County
- Odland Dam – Golden Valley County
- Indian Creek Dam – Hettinger County

### South Central Fisheries District

- Crown Butte Dam – Morton County
- McDowell Dam – Burleigh County
- Harmon Lake – Morton County
- Sweet Briar Lake – Morton County
- Frettim Lake – Kidder County

### Southeast Fisheries District

- Brewer Lake – Cass County
- Clausen Springs – Barnes County
- Dead Colt Creek – Ransom County
- Heinrich-Martin Dam – LaMoure County

### Northeast Fisheries District

- Lake Upsilon – Rolette County

### North Central Fisheries District

- Lake Metigoshe – Bottineau County
- Nelson Lake – Oliver County

### Northwest Fisheries District

- Leland Dam – McKenzie County
- Northgate Dam – Burke County



LARA ANDERSON

ASHLEY SALWEY

# MILKWEEDS & MONA



# RCHS



*Adult monarchs feed on nectar from a wide range of both backyard plants and wild flowers, but they only lay their eggs on milkweeds.*

*By Ron Wilson*

**T**he monarch is, without hesitation, the most recognized of all butterflies in North America.

With its distinct orange, black and white coloring, it's the American robin of the butterfly world, as neither species, both as familiar as family members to onlookers, requires thumbing through field guides for proper identification.

While the monarch may retain its butterfly-next-door identity for generations, there is real concern among scientists due to a drastic decline in the monarch population.

SANDRA JOHNSON

Greg Link, North Dakota Game and Fish Department conservation and communications chief, said the monarch butterfly population has fallen from an estimated high of almost 1 billion in 1996 to a low of 35 million in 2013. Wintering ground population estimates in Mexico in 2015-16 showed that the population rebounded some, but the concern remains.

Link said the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has received petitions to list the monarch, and several other pollinator species that may occur in North Dakota, under the Endangered Species Act.

The matter is currently under federal review to determine if listing the monarch is warranted. The final determination is scheduled for June 2019.

“A threatened and endangered species listing is essentially the emergency room code blue for critters and plants,” Link said. “Therefore, we want to avoid the need for a trip to the emergency room with wildlife species. We do this by taking proactive measures, monitoring life cycle vitals, and ensuring requirements are met so as to maintain a stable healthy status.”

Sandra Johnson, Game and Fish Department conservation biologist, said that while there are a number of potential reasons for the decline in monarch numbers, disease and predation to name a couple, loss of milkweed habitat on summer grounds figures near the top of the list.

Milkweed plants are fundamental in the survival of the species. “Without milkweed, there are no more monarchs,” Johnson said.

There are roughly 10 species of milkweed in North Dakota, all of which are native. The two that are most familiar are common milkweed and showy milkweed.

After mating, the female monarch lays eggs on milkweed plants, typically one egg per plant. Once hatched, monarch larvae feed exclusively on the plant.

“The young depend on the milkweed, primarily the leaves, as a food source,” Johnson said. “They eat constantly. They eat and grow, eat and grow ... just devouring the plant.”

Scientists tell us that a female monarch will lay several hundred eggs. Eggs hatch in about four days and the larvae go through five stages as they grow for 10-14 days. The larvae then transform into a chrysalis and the tissues reorganize into a butterfly. After



LARA ANDERSON

*There are a number of milkweed species native to North Dakota, but two of the more familiar are common milkweed (top) and showy milkweed (bottom).*



LARA ANDERSON



Oval-leaf milkweed is not as common in the state, but found in prairies, along riverbanks, in open woods and roadside ditches.

LARA ANDERSON

10-14 days, the adult monarch emerges.

“Unless you’ve witnessed the life cycle of a monarch butterfly firsthand, it’s really hard to appreciate all of what happens,” Johnson said.

Adult monarchs aren’t dependent on milkweed, but rather feed on a variety of nectar producing plants found in the wild and in backyard gardens.

Johnson said the milkweed likely gets a bad rap because of its name, and common milkweed can be aggressive and take over chunks of land.

Yet, more and more of these plants are lost with the disappearance of many acres of CRP and native prairie. Milkweed is also common in roadside ditches and on farm land, where chemical spraying is often initiated to kill the plants.

Link said state and federal agencies and conservation organizations are working together to determine the monarch’s specific habitat requirements – milkweed patch size, distribution, stem count and so on – and develop the conservation measures necessary to curb population declines, as well as assess and properly address threats.

“State and federal partners are banding together and pooling resources to develop and implement monitoring efforts to more accurately assess and determine how monarch population and distribution trends are doing,” Link said. “Hopefully, these efforts bear fruit in turning monarch population trends in an upward direction, and thereby prevent listing.”

North Dakota and other states are charged with development of monarch management plans and strategies to further conservation of monarch butterflies and other pollinators.

The North Dakota Monarch and Native Pollinator Strategy outlines actions to increase the monarch population in its summer range and further pollinator conservation in the state.

Johnson, who helped author much of North Dakota’s plan, said its intent is to preclude the need to list the monarch and other pollinators as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. The strategy will reveal conservation actions, activities or programs in development or currently in effect that will reduce threats, or otherwise improve the status of the monarch and other pollinators in North Dakota.

“While North Dakota may not be as important as summer habitat to monarch butterflies as some other states, we are a player in the

conservation effort,” Johnson said. “Much of the country, mostly Central Flyway and Corn Belt states, are working together, North Dakota included, to develop this long-term plan of adding and conserving habitat to keep monarchs off the list.”

Wildlife managers understand that listing a species as federally threatened or endangered may restrict certain actions on private and public lands. The cost of protection or restoration of a listed species is often far greater than preventing or stemming the decline in the first place.

“No one wants the monarch butterfly on the Endangered Species List because of the restrictions that comes with managing public and private land,” Johnson said. “And no one wants it going extinct in 20 years.”

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*RON WILSON is editor of North Dakota OUTDOORS.*



The monarch caterpillar is nearly as recognizable as the adult monarch. At the right time of year, if you were to search this milkweed patch, you'd likely find caterpillars feasting on the plants.

SANDRA JOHNSON



CRAIG BIRLE

## Updated Lists

What follows are current lists of North Dakota threatened and endangered species and recently petitioned species.

### Federally listed species:

- **Birds** – Whooping crane (endangered); least tern (endangered); piping plover (threatened); and rufa red knot (threatened).
- **Mammals** – Black-footed ferret

(endangered); Northern long-eared bat (threatened); and gray wolf (endangered).

- **Fish** – Pallid sturgeon (endangered).
- **Insects** – Dakota skipper (threatened); Poweshiek skipperling (endangered); and rusty patched bumble bee (endangered).
- **Plant** – Western prairie fringed orchid (threatened).

### Recently petitioned species:

- **Insects** – Monarch butterfly; regal fritillary; Western bumble bee; and yellow-banded bumble bee.
- **Mammals** – Prairie gray fox; plains spotted skunk; and moose.
- **Fish** – Sturgeon chub and sicklefin chub.

## Monarch Habitat Survey

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department would like to know what projects, big or small, individuals, groups or conservation organizations may be executing to assist in the long-term effort to provide milkweed habitat for the propagation of monarch butterflies. Please complete a brief survey at <https://gf.nd.gov/monarch/survey>.

Also, for additional information and videos of monarch metamorphosis, go to <https://gf.nd.gov/monarch>.

CRAIG BHRLE

A milkweed giving up its seeds in fall.



Both photographs show different sections of Davis Creek in western North Dakota. Despite the color, and lack of clarity of the water, some fish species live in this murky habitat.

# FORGOTTEN FISH OF WESTERN N



CRAIG BHRLE



Sand shiner

Creek chub



CASEY WILLIAMS



CASEY WILLIAMS

*By Dennis Scarnecchia and Brian Stephens*

North Dakota's western landscape is drained by a network of small streams inhabited by distinct, complex communities of fish and other aquatic life.

While most such streams, whether continuously flowing or intermittent, only contain fish too small to interest anglers, their value lies elsewhere.

Many of the species are uniquely adapted to withstand the naturally harsh conditions here, and they remain important remnants of the increasingly rare, undomesticated North Dakota.

The badlands, a symbol of western North Dakota, were carved between 600 and 700 thousand years ago when glaciers diverted the path of

# ORTH DAKOTA'S SMALL STREAMS



CRAIG BHRLE



TYLER BERGER

Flathead chub



CRAIG BHRLE

Male (top) and female fatheads



CASEY WILLIAMS

The Cannonball River (top), a rolling prairie stream. Bear Creek (center) in western North Dakota. A look at Bear Creek (far right) in western North Dakota.



the Little Missouri River. This diversion caused the river to occupy a shorter, steeper path, leading to the eroded landscape of the badlands today. At the end of the last ice age, between 12,500 and 10,000 years ago, rolling prairies replaced the forests that covered much of the region prior to glaciation as the climate became drier and more temperate. In the past 150 years, the area has changed from open, uninterrupted expanses of grasslands grazed only by bison and other native animals, into farms, ranches, towns, cities, railroads, scoria roads and highways.

Today, western North Dakota streams flow through either badlands or rolling prairies. Badland streams drain the Little Missouri River basin within the river's historic floodplain. The hillslopes have eroded over time and have little vegetation protecting them from further erosion. Many badlands streams have wide, shallow channels and many become dry, except for pools during low flow periods of late summer.

Rolling prairie streams are located

in more upland areas, farther from larger waters such as the Little Missouri River, and drain undulating plains and gentle slopes. They have more vegetation along their banks, such as grasses and woody shrubs, and more aquatic plants than the badland streams. Their channels are more stable and trench-like, carry less sediment than badland streams, and typically have stream bottoms of sand and silt. They are also less likely than badlands streams to dry up in late summer.

Fish surveys of both types of streams over the past few decades, sponsored by the U. S. Forest Service, have found differences in habitat between the two stream types that result in very different communities of fish species. In fact, the two stream types often have only 20 percent of their fish species in common.

Badlands streams often contain plains minnows and flathead chubs. The plains minnow is especially suited to use turbid, shallow, sand-filled channels. Plains minnows

require some strong current during some portions of their life cycle, and typical badland streams are subject to sudden, drastic spring run-off events that would favor this requirement.

The flathead chub, a North Dakota Game and Fish Department Species of Conservation Priority, also prefers turbid flowing waters, with moderate to strong currents. Both species have distinct physiological adaptations to turbid habitats, such as reduced emphasis on sight feeding and greater emphasis on sensing their food in other ways, such as smell and taste. Flathead chubs are equipped with abundant taste buds on the snout, pectoral fins and whiskers (barbels), which allow them to detect food nonvisually in the turbid fluctuating flows of badland streams.

Both species have the ability to occupy streams subject to rapidly changing habitat and water quality by moving around seasonally to make the most out of their unpredictable environment. As a result, sometimes the inhabitants of a stream are the



CASEY WILLIAMS



CASEY WILLIAMS

species best able to recolonize and re-establish populations following drought.

Rolling prairie streams are commonly inhabited by species such as brook sticklebacks, fathead minnows, white suckers and creek chubs. Although sometimes found in both stream types, the brook stickleback prefers cold, clear to slightly turbid still waters, with moderate to dense aquatic vegetation. Sticklebacks are weak swimmers. Flood events can wash them out of small streams that have little cover.

Fathead minnows are found in a wide range of habitats due to their high tolerance for extreme temperatures, turbidities and low dissolved oxygen, but they tend to prefer pools with silty, still water in both permanent and intermittent streams. Creek chubs are opportunistic feeders of many rolling prairie streams.

Some of the higher-quality habitat streams also contain the northern redbelly dace. This species, which is much more common in rolling prairie streams than in badland streams,

prefers quiet waters laden with woody debris, detritus or silt, and is often associated with beaver ponds. Their preference for cool, clear, standing water habitats off of main channels, usually containing cool springs, aquatic plants, and lacking large predator fishes, accounts for their overall scarcity in the region, and for their designation as a Species of Conservation Priority. Pristine habitats preferred by the northern redbelly dace are uncommon in western North Dakota.

In another study, researchers found that fish in the two stream types responded differently as stream flows decreased in late summer, and fish became more and more crowded in the remaining habitat. The more stable conditions in rolling prairie streams led to higher fish densities (up to 900 percent higher).

Many of the less stable badlands streams dwindled into a series of pools, some even dried up completely. The predictable result was less stable fish communities. In both streams types, though, fish densities tend to be

greater in larger, deeper pools.

Throughout the Northern Plains, pools provide critical habitat for many fish species during low flow periods. Maintaining water in badland and rolling prairie streams is critical for survival of many of western North Dakota's fish species. Even a stream reduced to a few intermittent pools can retain large numbers of small fish, as they wait for higher flows and opportunities to colonize new areas.

So the next time you are driving the backroads in the rolling prairies or badlands of western North Dakota and cross over a small, insignificant looking stream, or even an isolated pool in an otherwise dry creek bed, it may not be empty. Consider taking a closer look into the stream, as you may see some of the tough native fish species inhabiting it.

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**DENNIS SCARNECCHIA** is a professor of fisheries at the University of Idaho. **BRIAN STEPHENS** was a graduate student at the University of Idaho when research for this article was conducted.



DALANE W. KITZMAN

# The Tackle Box

*By Dalane W. Kitzman*

After my dad died when I was five, I was fortunate to have several good role models. Uncles, neighbors and friends introduced me to the outdoor pursuits of fishing and hunting. I especially remember Bud, a family friend who took me fishing for the first time.

Bud had no sons, and through this incidental pairing, I became the lucky recipient of numerous heartfelt gifts on every occasion, and sometimes on no occasion at all.

The most special of these gifts was a small, brown, metal tackle box I received on my sixth birthday. It was filled with hooks, sinkers, bobbers and several impressive wooden lures for the toothy northern pike that plied the nearby Missouri River.

Later Bud gave me a fishing rod with a Mitchell spin-cast reel. I cherished these treasures and practiced casting in the back yard for hours, dreaming of the day I

could put them to their intended use.

One glorious summer weekend, Bud provided that opportunity, thereby creating one of my most precious childhood memories. He “borrowed” me and took me on a weekend tent camping trip with his family. Sleeping outdoors, picnic lunches and a campfire were all great new experiences. But I was thrilled to finally cast my line into water where fish were waiting.

Our destination was Sweet Briar Lake west of Mandan, which, at the time, was newly constructed, dammed and stocked with rainbow trout. This is where, in a fit of wild, joyous abandon that I reeled in my first fish.

My prize was a nice 12-inch rainbow trout. I was enraptured with its sheer beauty and carried it and each of the four others I caught that day around to show everyone, including those at adjacent campsites. But no adult was so happy for

me as Bud, who beamed with pride and lavishly praised my accomplishments.

After my mother remarried, we moved to the other side of Bismarck and visits to Bud’s house became fewer. Yet, the gifts, each one specially chosen and presented with great anticipation and happiness, kept coming regularly. None, however, topped that tackle box, fishing rod and wondrous fishing trip.

The fishing reel no longer works, but the tackle box has accompanied me on many fishing trips, including to wilderness lakes in northern Canada and Alaska. Each time I open the tackle box, I relive the joy of my first day of fishing and the memory of the kind and generous man who made it possible.

---

*DALANE W. KITZMAN, MD, lives in North Carolina and grew up in North Dakota. His story is a prime example of what can happen when you “Take A Kid Fishing.”*

# ZEBRA MUSSELS

## LET'S STOP THE SPREAD

### **CURRENT ANS RULES**

Pull Drain Plugs and Leave Them Out  
When In Transit Statewide

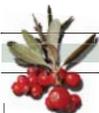
Drain All Red River Water from Minnow Buckets,  
Boats and Other Watercraft

### **INSPECT - CLEAN - DRAIN**

Every Time You Leave the Water

For Complete Regulations: [gf.nd.gov/ANS](http://gf.nd.gov/ANS)





# BUFFALOBERRY PATCH

By Greg Freeman, Department News Editor

## Trout Stocked in Community Fisheries

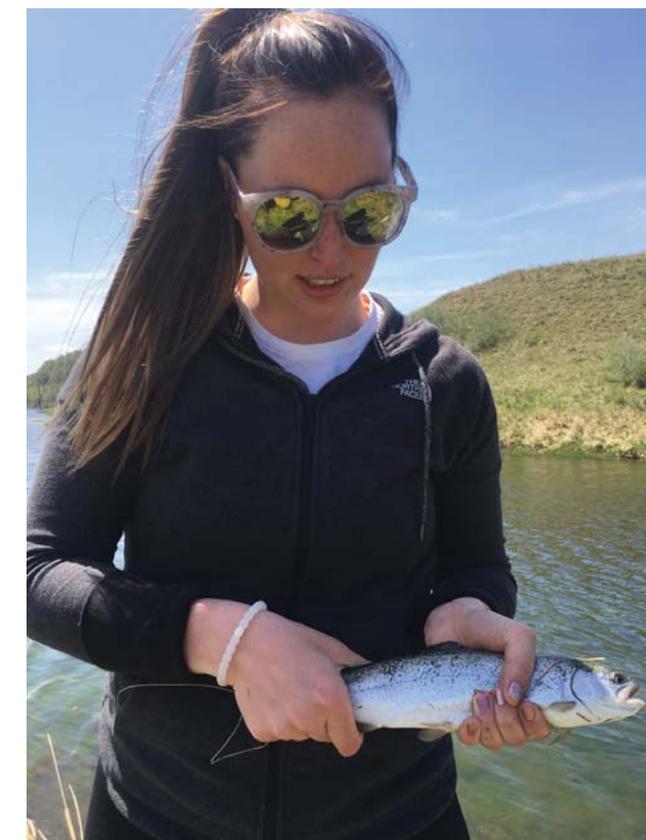
North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries personnel have stocked catchable trout in about 40 waters around the state.

**Jerry Weigel, Department fisheries production and development section leader, said while fisheries statewide are at historic highs, many are not as easily accessible to youngsters, older adults and disabled anglers.**

“These stockings put catchable fish in waters that are accessible,” Weigel said. “Many community fisheries have fishing piers, and provide a great opportunity for a first-time angler to catch fish.”

In addition, Weigel emphasized that trout are kid-friendly and they bite aggressively in spring and early summer before temperatures warm up. The trout are nice-sized too, he said, as more than 20,000 11-inch rainbow trout were stocked, along with 800 1- to 2-pound cutthroat trout. Following is a list of lakes, by county, that received trout in spring 2017:

- Barnes – Blumers Pond (rainbow), Hatchery Kids Pond (rainbow)
- Bottineau – Strawberry Lake (rainbow)
- Bowman – Lutz Dam (rainbow)
- Burleigh – McDowell Dam (rainbow), OWLS Pond (cutthroat, rainbow), Wilton Pond (cutthroat, rainbow)
- Cass – Brooks Harbor Pond (rainbow), Casselton Pond (rainbow), North Woodhaven Pond (rainbow)
- Cavalier – Langdon City Pond (rainbow)
- Golden Valley – Beach City Pond (rainbow)
- Grand Forks – Ryan Park Pond (rainbow), Turtle River (rainbow)
- Hettinger – Castle Rock Dam (rainbow), Mott Watershed Dam (rainbow)
- McKenzie – Watford City Park Pond (rainbow)
- McLean – Camp Loop Pond (rainbow), Custer Mine (rainbow), Lightning Lake (rainbow), Riverdale City Pond (rainbow)
- Mercer – Hazen Creek (rainbow)
- Morton – Gaebe Pond (rainbow), Krieg’s Pond (rainbow), Little Heart Pond (rainbow), Nygren Dam (rainbow), Porsborg Dam (cutthroat, rainbow)
- Mountrail – Stanley Pond (rainbow)
- Oliver – Oliver County Sportsmen’s Pond (rainbow)
- Ransom – Mooringstone Pond (rainbow)
- Renville – Glenburn Pond (rainbow)
- Rolette – Lake Udall (rainbow)
- Stark – Belfield Pond (rainbow), Dickinson Dike (rainbow, cutthroat)
- Stutsman – Streeter Lake (rainbow)
- Ward – State Fair Pond (rainbow), Velsa Sportsmen’s Pond (rainbow)
- Williams – West Spring Lake Pond (rainbow, cutthroat), Kettle Lake (rainbow).



JOHN PALARSKI

Anglers can refer to the fishing tab at the Game and Fish Department’s website, [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov), for a complete stocking report.



MIKE ANDERSON

## Courtesy at Boat Ramps

Boaters need to exercise patience and plan accordingly when heading to a lake or river this summer.

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department receives a number of complaints every year about overly aggressive behavior at boat ramps. A few simple reminders will help ensure a smooth transition when launching and loading a boat.

### Launching

- Don't pull onto the ramp until your boat is ready to launch.
- Prepare for launching in the

parking area. Remove covers, load equipment, remove tie downs, attach lines and put in drain plug, before backing onto the ramp.

- When ready, pull into line to launch. Wait your turn. Be courteous.
- It takes at least two people to efficiently and courteously launch a boat – one person to handle the boat and another to take care of the tow vehicle.

### Loading

- Don't block the loading area with

your boat until your tow vehicle is ready to load. Wait until you are clear of the launch area to unload gear.

- As soon as your trailer is in the water, load and secure your boat to the trailer.
- Remove boat and trailer from the water as quickly as possible.

Get clear of the ramp. Pull into the parking area to finish securing your boat, unloading gear, draining all water and inspecting for and removing any vegetation. Remember to leave plugs out when transporting your boat.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

## New Buffalo Record Set by Bow Fisherman

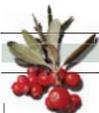
Twice this spring, North Dakota bow fishermen set state records.

**Derek Larson, Mandan, arrowed a new record buffalo on May 5 to follow up a new record common carp taken by Derek Barnick of Tappen on April 21.**

Larson's buffalo, pulled in from Heart Butte Reservoir, weighed a hefty 57 pounds, 8 ounces and

measured 45 inches. It broke the previous buffalo record of 54 pounds, taken in the Heart River in 2011 by Keith Huschka of Dickinson.

Buffalo are a native fish sometimes confused with the nonnative and invasive common carp. State Game and Fish Department records indicate that Larson's fish is the largest ever weighed in the state that was not a paddlefish or pallid sturgeon.



# ON THE ROAD OR THE WATER, YOU'RE HEADED NOWHERE FAST WHILE IMPAIRED.

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department will again participate in Operation Dry Water as part of a nationally coordinated effort to increase knowledge about the dangers of boating under the influence. The goal is to reduce the number of accidents and deaths associated with alcohol and drug use on our waterways.

**Operation Dry Water weekend, June 30-July 2, is the national weekend of heightened enforcement effort directed at boating under the influence laws and recreational boater outreach.**

While informing and educating

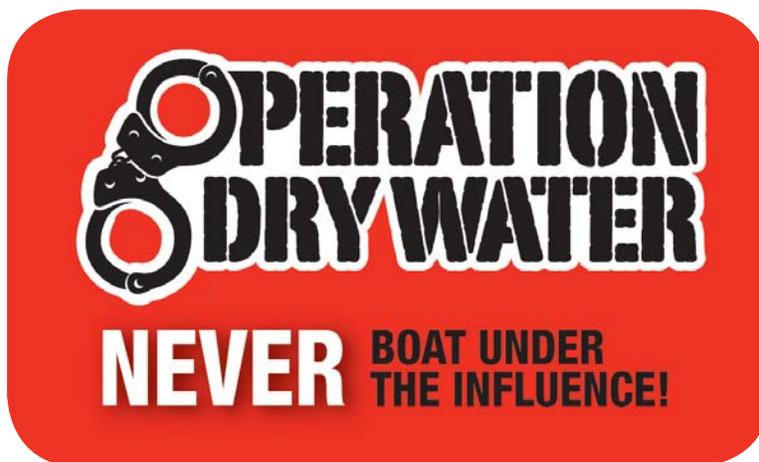
boaters about the hazards and negative outcomes associated with boating while under the influence of alcohol or drugs is a year-round effort. On ODW weekend the Game and Fish Department's game wardens will be focused

because of the added stressors of sun, heat, wind, noise and the vibrations of the boat," said Jackie Lundstrom, the Game and Fish Department's enforcement division operations supervisor.

"Everyone wants to have a great summer on the water, and to do that you've got to stay safe and stay sober while underway."

Tips to staying safe on the water:

- Boat sober. Alcohol use is the leading contributing factor in recreational boater deaths. Alcohol and drugs use impairs a boater's judgment, balance, vision and reaction time.
- Wear your life jacket. 85 percent of drowning victims nationwide were not wearing a life jacket.
- Take a boating safety education course. 71 percent of deaths nationwide occurred on boats where the operator had not received boating safety instruction.



on the water informing boaters about safe boating practices, and removing impaired operators from the water.

"Alcohol impairs judgment and reaction time on the water just as it does when driving a car, even more so



CRAIG BIRRE

## 2016 Early Canada Goose Harvest Results

For the sixth consecutive year, North Dakota early Canada goose season hunters bagged more than 36,000 birds, according to a recent harvest estimate released by the state Game and Fish Department.

This is the combined harvest from the August Canada goose management take, and the September Canada goose hunting season.

While the 2016 harvest is somewhat lower than the peak early season bag in recent years, Mike Szymanski, Game and Fish migratory game bird management supervisor, said it's still a highly successful season in the Department's effort to reign in the state's resident Canada goose population.

Szymanski estimates that approximately 3,600 residents and 1,000 nonresidents who actually hunted averaged about 8 birds apiece for the combined effort in August and September, which started August 15 with a "management take."

The regular early hunting season started September 1 and ran through September 7 in the Missouri River

zone, and through September 15 in the rest of the state. In total, that's about 18 percent fewer hunters than 2015, a fact that Szymanski attributes to extensive late summer movement of Canada geese, which made finding huntable numbers of birds difficult in many areas.

"This late summer waterfowl movement is something that seems to be more pronounced in recent years," Szymanski said. "Birds that were produced in North Dakota are showing up in Manitoba and Saskatchewan by early September. We don't know if it's related to avoiding hunting pressure or availability of food, as there's very little harvested small grain fields for feeding in some areas. It could even relate to the birds trying to find cooler temperatures during years when we seem to be warmer than normal in the state."

Barnes and Ramsey counties had the highest numbers of birds harvested by resident hunters, while McIntosh and LaMoure counties had the highest number of Canada geese harvested by nonresident hunters.

The top 10 counties for total harvest were Ramsey, McIntosh, Kidder, Benson, Stutsman, Barnes, LaMoure, McHenry, Nelson and Ward. Ramsey County had more than 3,000 birds harvested, while the estimate for Ward County in 10th place was 1,207.

"We're seeing a good harvest in the eastern half of the state where there seems to be the most conflicts between crop producers and geese during the summer," Szymanski said. "We need to keep the pressure on to keep our locally breeding Canada goose population from growing any larger."

It's important for landowners experiencing depredation issues to allow goose hunters on their property not only during the early season, Szymanski said, but also in October and November as birds that may have made late-summer movements come back through the state.

The 2017 early Canada goose season is tentatively slated to start on August 15 again, with a similar structure as in recent years.



CRAIG BIRRE

### **The North Dakota Game and Fish Department reminds citizens that possession or use of fireworks on state wildlife management areas is prohibited.**

The primary objective of a wildlife management area is to enhance wildlife production, provide hunting and fishing opportunities, and offer other outdoor recreational and educational uses. Only activities that would not disrupt the intentions of how these areas are managed are encouraged, and a fireworks display is not compatible.

Excessive noise and commotion that come with fireworks disturbs wildlife, and their explosive nature is a potential source of wildfires. Chances of a wildfire developing are greatly enhanced when explosives, such as fireworks, come in contact with tall grasses in rural areas.

A complete list of WMA regulations is available on the Game and Fish website, [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov).

### **Put Garbage Where it Belongs**

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department reminds outdoor recreationists to keep it clean this summer by packing out all trash.

All garbage, including used fireworks, should be placed in a proper trash receptacle. If trash cans aren't available, or are full, take the trash and dispose of it at home.

It is not uncommon to see garbage piling up around full trash containers. Styrofoam containers are not biodegradable, but yet are often found wedged in cattails, drifting or washed up on shore.

Tires, mattresses and kitchen appliances have found their way to public use areas. This illegal dumping is costly to clean up and takes a significant toll on the environment. Not only does it spoil the beauty of the land, it destroys habitat, has the potential to pollute North Dakota waters and can injure wildlife.

Littering violations should be reported by calling the Report All Poachers telephone number at 800-472-2121.

### **Watchable Wildlife Photo Contest**

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department's annual Watchable Wildlife Photo Contest is now open, and the deadline for submissions is September 29.

The contest has categories for nongame and game species, as well as plants/insects. An overall winning photograph will be chosen, with the number of place winners in each category determined by the number of qualified entries.

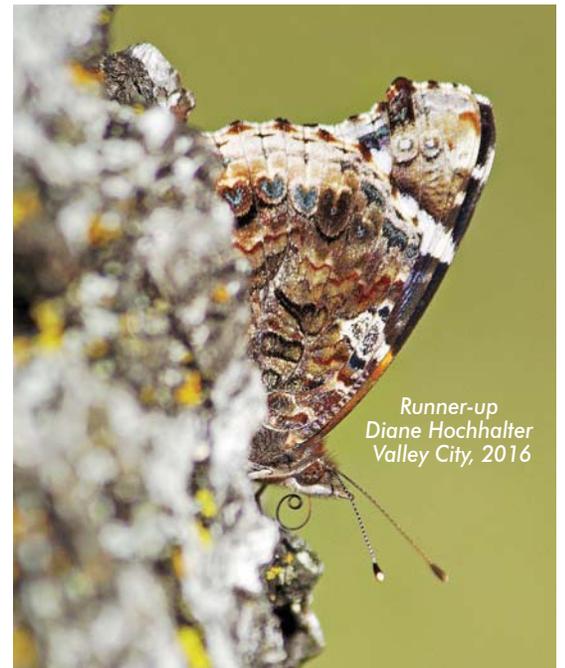
Contest entries are limited to digital files submitted on disk or via email. Contestants are limited to no more than five entries. Photos must have been taken in North Dakota.

By submitting an entry, photographers grant permission to Game and Fish to publish winning photographs in *North Dakota OUTDOORS* magazine, and on the Department's website, [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov).

Photo disks should be sent to Watchable Wildlife Photo Contest, C/O Patrick T. Isakson, North Dakota Game and Fish Department, 100 N. Bismarck Expressway, Bismarck, ND 58501-5095.

Send emailed digital photos to [photocontest@nd.gov](mailto:photocontest@nd.gov). Photographers will need to supply the original image if needed for publication.

Photo disks will not be returned. All entries must be accompanied by the photographer's name, address, phone number and email address if available. Other information such as photo site location and month taken are also useful.



Runner-up  
Diane Hochhalter  
Valley City, 2016



MIKE ANDERSON

## Traveling Boaters Should Check Border State and Provincial ANS Regulations

North Dakota boaters who are traveling to other states or Canadian provinces should check the aquatic nuisance species regulations of their destination to make sure they are in compliance.

While many of North Dakota's ANS prevention regulations are similar to surrounding states and provinces, state Game and Fish Department ANS coordinator Jessica Howell says there are some subtle differences that could lead to travel interruption or citations depending on the circumstances.

"Removal of all water and vegetation, as well as pulled plugs while traveling, are generally the rule in neighboring states and provinces," Howell said, "but there are some places where 'dry' is also a requirement, meaning no residual water anywhere in the boat."

Mandatory boat inspections may be required based on destination or route taken. For example, Howell said anyone pulling a boat into Canada will likely have it inspected at a border crossing, some states have inspection checkpoints along highways, and some lakes have inspectors at boat ramps. Any boats that are not in compliance will likely get delayed in their travels or be prevented from launching, Howell said.

In addition, Howell said boats on Canyon Ferry or Tiber reservoirs in Montana will need to be decontaminated when leaving. "There is a greater chance of being stopped for inspection in Montana because of zebra mussel findings," she said.

Boaters should be aware of regulations for not only their destination, but for any states they are traveling through. More information on bordering state and provincial ANS regulations is available at the following web addresses.

- South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks at [sdleastwanted.com](http://sdleastwanted.com)
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources at [dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/aquatic/index.html](http://dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/aquatic/index.html)
- Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks at [fwp.mt.gov/fishing/guide/ethics](http://fwp.mt.gov/fishing/guide/ethics)
- Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment <http://environment.gov.sk.ca/>
- Manitoba Department of Sustainable Development, <http://www.gov.mb.ca/sd/waterstewardship/stopais/index.html>

North Dakota ANS regulations are as follows:

- All aquatic vegetation must be removed from boats, personal watercraft, trailers and fishing equipment such as fishing poles, bait buckets, lures and waders before leaving a body of water. That means "vegetation free" when transporting watercraft and/or equipment away from a boat ramp, landing area or shoreline. Time out of the water needed to remove aquatic vegetation at the immediate water access area is allowed.
- All water must be drained from boats and other watercraft, including bilges, livewells, baitwells and

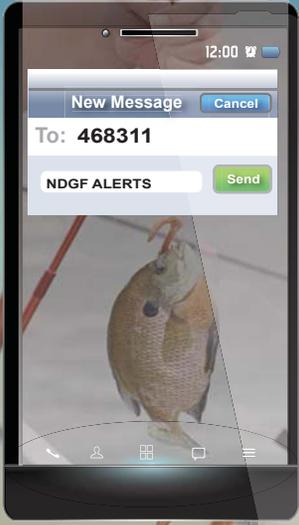
motors before leaving a water body.

- All drain plugs that may hold back water must be removed, and water draining devices must be open, on all watercraft and recreational, commercial and construction equipment bilges and confined spaces, during any out-of-water transport of same.
- Transportation of fish in or on ice is allowed.
- Live aquatic bait or aquatic vegetation may not be transported into North Dakota.
- All legal live aquatic organisms used by anglers, including legal baitfish (fathead minnows), amphibians (salamanders and frogs), invertebrates (crayfish and leeches) and insects must be purchased and/or trapped in North Dakota.
- Anglers may not transport live bait in water away from the Red River (Class I ANS infested waters). All water must be drained from bait buckets as anglers leave the shore, or remove their boat from the water. Anglers must properly dispose of unused bait away from the river, as dumping bait in the water or on shore is illegal.
- In all other waters not infested with Class I ANS species, anglers can transport live bait in water in containers of five gallons or less in volume.



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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).



## Summer Safety on the Water

Failure to wear a personal flotation device is the main reason people lose their lives in water recreation accidents.

North Dakota law requires all children ages 10 and younger to wear a personal flotation device while in boats of less than 27 feet in length. The law also requires all personal watercraft users to wear a life jacket, as well as anyone towed on skis, tubes, boards or other similar devices.

A new law passed in spring by state lawmakers allows an operator of a personal watercraft to tow an individual on water skis, a knee-board or an inflatable craft without an observer, if the watercraft is equipped with a mirror on each side. In addition, the bill allows an individual who is at least 16 years old to windsurf or boardsail without wearing a PFD, and prohibits water skiing and surfboarding from one hour after sunset to one hour before sunrise.

Water users should make sure to wear life jackets that are the appropriate size, and in good condition. It is also important that children wear a PFD while swimming.

Water skiers and tubers should wear a life jacket with four nylon straps rather than one with a zipper, because straps are stronger than zippers upon impact with water. Anglers or persons paddling a canoe should opt for a PFD that is comfortable enough to wear for an entire outing.

Swimmers should know the water's depth, as large objects hidden below the water's surface can lead to significant injury.

North Dakota boaters also are reminded that marine VHF radios are an important part of boat safety that should not be improperly used by operators. These radios are intended for boat operators who are in distress and facing an emergency situation.

Regulations to help ensure safe boating this summer are found in the 2016-18 North Dakota Fishing Guide. A more comprehensive listing is available in the North Dakota Boat and Water Safety Guide or the Boat North Dakota education book. These guides are available online at the Game and Fish website, [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov), by email at [ndgf@nd.gov](mailto:ndgf@nd.gov), or at a local Game and Fish Department office.

## NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

WEEKLY VIDEO NEWS BROADCAST

### WILLISTON

KJMV - Saturday - 6 pm  
KJMD - Sunday - 10 pm;  
Monday - Noon

### GRAND FORKS

WDAZ - Wednesday - 5 pm

### MINOT

KMOT - Saturday - 6 pm  
KXMC - Sunday - 10 pm

### DICKINSON

KQCD - Saturday - 6 pm (MT)  
KQMA - Sunday - 10 pm (MT)

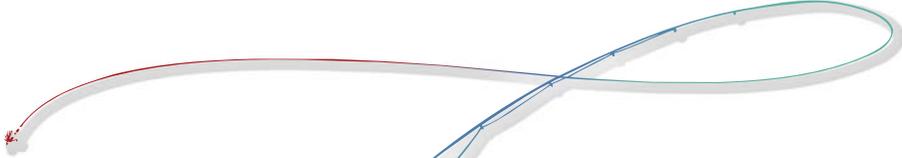
### BISMARCK

KFYR - Saturday - 6 pm  
KQMB - Sunday - 10 pm  
CATV - Saturday - 9:30 am

### FARGO

KVRR - Sunday - 9 pm

ON



# back cast



By Ron Wilson

They say you can hear a male ring-necked pheasant crow from a mile distant on a calm morning. They also tell you that roosters loudly advertise to hens their whereabouts once every two minutes.

On this day, as calm as a prairie morning as you are going to get in North Dakota, both measurements seem low.

We're somewhere in Oliver County in early May, a half-hour before sunrise, and the only thing relaxed is the wind, as the animals are seemingly rushing into the day.

Despite years of thumbing through field guides and listening to bird calls on the computer, I'm still simply a hopeful birder. Standing outside the vehicle, I separate the musical *o-ka-lee* of red-winged blackbirds and, as my field guide describes it, the "flute-like jumble of musical notes" of the Western meadowlark.

Pretty pedestrian stuff.

Yet, there is so much more going on that I can't define or put a name to. I close my eyes, focus and try to filter something familiar from the confusion of sounds that flood the countryside.

I hear the animated *who-who, who-who, who-who* and know immediately it's the winnowing flight display of the male Wilson's snipe. The sound I hear is air rushing past the snipe's parted tail feathers as it races toward the ground.

I know this, not from paying attention in my ornithology class in college, but because years ago I simply asked a conservation biologist at work to tell me what I was hearing, what I'd been hearing for many springs without knowing it.

While cool, the winnowing isn't what lured us out of bed at 4:30 a.m. and led us to the side of this gravel

road before first light. It's the ring-necked roosters that hunters, a group that I'm certainly a member of, get so excited about in fall, but maybe only acknowledge in the ditch in spring and summer on the way to fish somewhere.

Game and Fish Department biologists have been conducting pheasant crowing count surveys in spring for decades. When all the crowing count numbers are figured, then wildlife managers are able to arrive at an index to the male breeding population on the landscape.

*(Editor's note: While Game and Fish has been doing this for a long time, I'm tagging along this morning with my son who is counting crows for another outfit. I'm here because I like hanging with my kid and will take most any opportunity to open the morning on the prairie. I'm simply an observer who brought a thermos of coffee.)*

Years ago, someone once said that the crow of a ring-necked rooster sounds like the opening of a rusty gate that gets momentarily hung up a couple times in midswing.

I've stuck with that description because it's a good one and I can't think

of anything better. If I could come clean and apply attribution, I certainly would.

While the number of roosters we hear crowing in the ditch and in the distance is impressive, biologists will tell you that it's not necessarily an indication of what bird numbers will be like in fall.

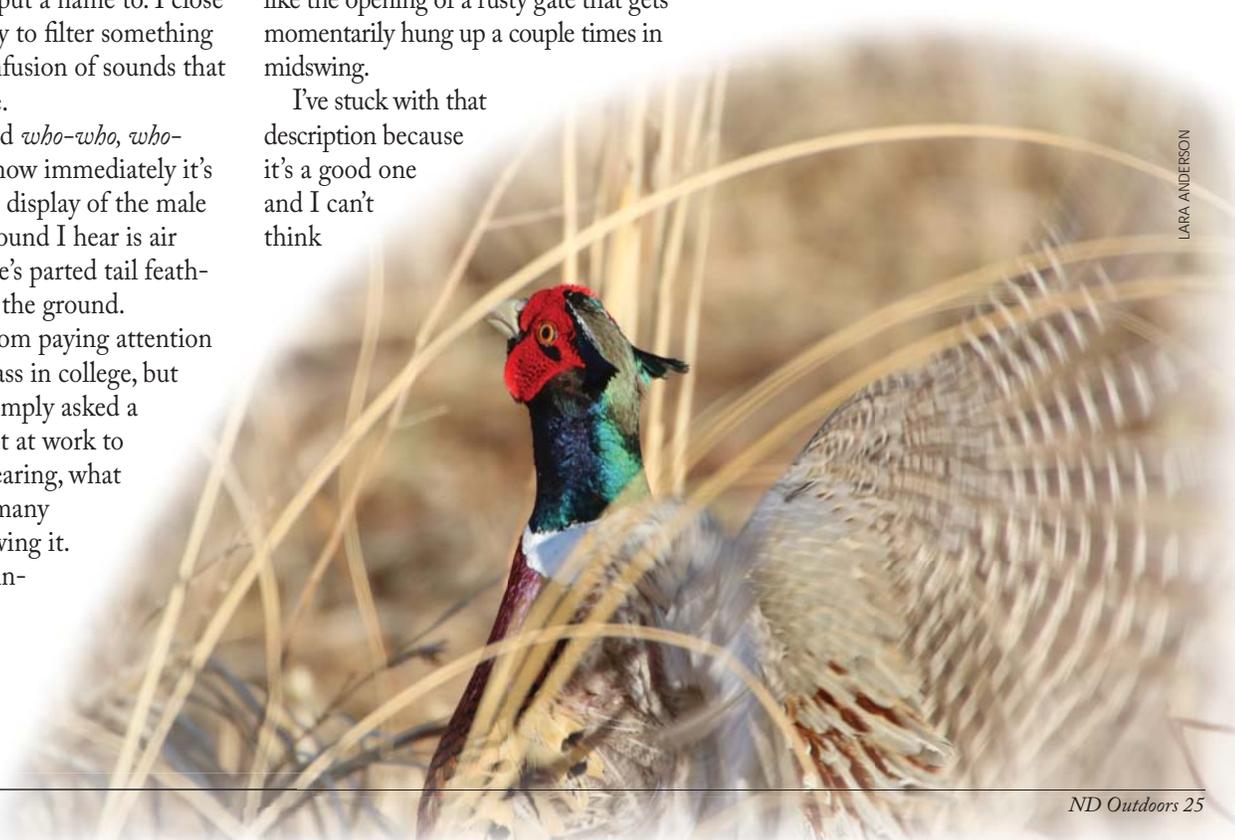
That comes later in summer when the number of chicks in broods are counted, to give wildlife managers an idea of the how many young will enter the fall population.

A lot can happen between now and then, as untimely, cruddy weather can kill chicks that don't have the ability to combat wet and cold.

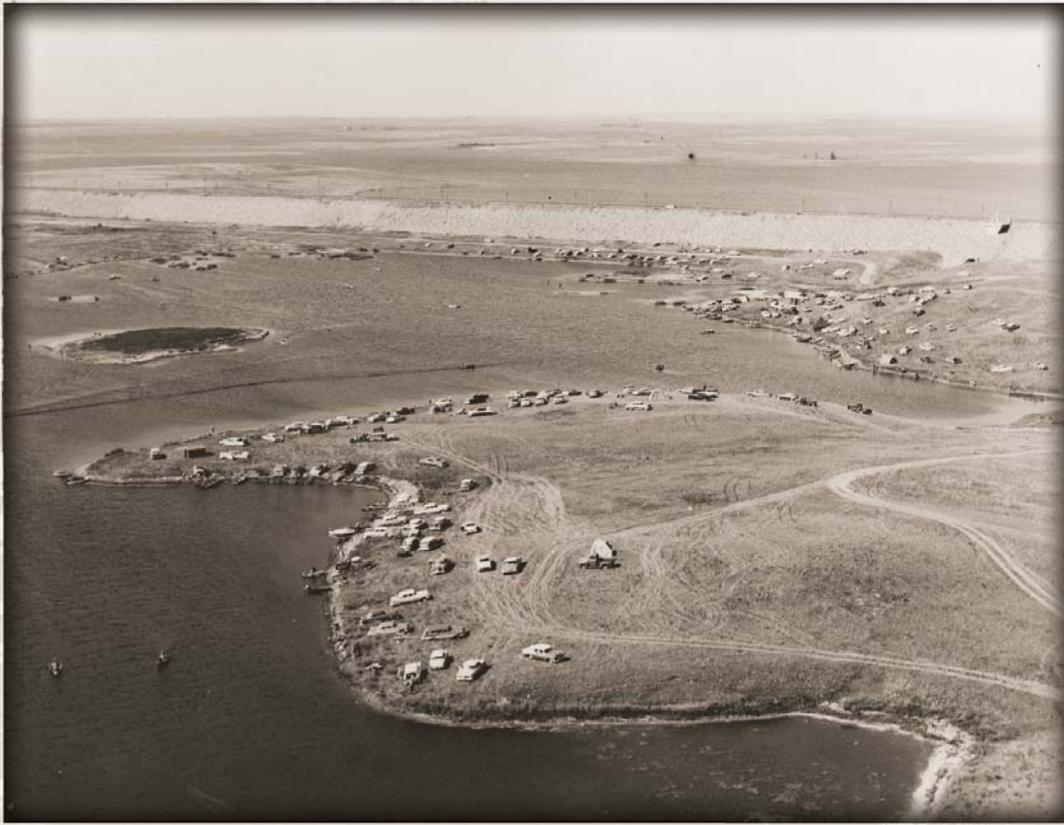
Yet, this morning, as nice of a morning as you could order, it's hard to run my mind down that road. It's just too nice of a day to be pessimistic.

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



LARA ANDERSON



NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT ARCHIVE PHOTO

# A LOOK BACK

By Ron Wilson

This was the scene more than a half-century ago of the first day of fishing on a lake that goes by a different name today.

"Interest was high when Lake Audubon opened to fishing July 18, 1959. The lake was called Snake Creek Reservoir at the time," read the photo caption in the April-May 1989 issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.

Lake Audubon, a major subimpoundment of Lake Sakakawea, was created by the completion of the Snake Creek embankment in 1953, dividing the lakes and providing a crossing for U.S. Highway 83.

That much, of course, is true, but in 1953 Audubon was, as we know, called Snake Creek and Sakakawea was known as Garrison Reservoir. It wasn't until the late 1960s that these popular

fisheries received their current designations.

When the embankment was completed in 1953, the only fish species in Lake Audubon were stickleback and fathead minnows. Largemouth bass and walleye were stocked that year, followed by northern pike and crappie.

"Lake Audubon remained closed to fishing until 1959 when a combination of declining water levels, rapidly expanding game fish populations and depleted forage supply necessitated the removal of predators through sport harvest," according to April-May 1989 *North Dakota OUTDOORS*. "In 1960, water releases from Lake Sakakawea raised Lake Audubon ... As a result, the species composition in Lake Audubon basically assumed that of Lake Sakakawea."

Prior to 1960, an investigation into the possibility of preventing fish from entering Lake Audubon from water releases from Sakakawea were abandoned.

Lake Sakakawea was created, of course, when Garrison Dam was completed in 1953, damming the Missouri River. It remains one of the largest manmade lakes in the country, snaking its way 178 miles northwest from the dam to Williston.

As this photograph shows, both lakes Audubon and Sakakawea were not yet "full grown." A great deal of the land on both sides of the embankment is now underwater.

Both lakes reached full pool sometime in the mid-1960s.

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