

Wildlife Identification

Why do we need to be able to identify wildlife? Developing wildlife ID skills is a basic requirement for hunters.

It's the law (ND hunting guides). Important to read through them to know what is legal and what is not. **(Hand out in class)**

Mistakes in identification can lead to illegal harvest of game or nongame animals.

When do we need to know how to identify wildlife?

Need to know what species are legally huntable.

Example: species of grouse (sage, sharp-tailed, ruffed, pinnated (prairie chicken)

Migratory birds: ducks, geese, swans, mergansers, coots, cranes, snipe, dove and woodcock

Unprotected species: house sparrows, rock doves (pigeons), starlings (know the legal requirements for firearms in cities, etc)

No license needed for residents for prairie dogs, rabbits, skunks, ground squirrels (non-game)

What are some animals that may be found in the state but are not considered "game" animals? (bear, lynx)

Need to know what gender (sex) are legally huntable in ND.

Example: pheasants (Only roosters are legal in ND)

Some sexes are huntable only at certain times of the year

Example: turkeys (spring and fall)

Some sexes are huntable only in certain parts of the state

Example: deer (does/bucks)

Legal requirements for identifying upland game:

Fully feathered wing or head or one leg and foot must remain attached during transportation. Waterfowl requires a fully feathered head or one fully feathered wing attached.

Categorize wild animals:

Large mammals: deer, moose, big horn sheep, antelope (pronghorn), elk

Small mammals: squirrels, mink, beaver, rabbits (can include furbearer species

such as: badger, coyote, fox, beaver, raccoon, bobcat, fisher, mink, muskrat, weasels)

Upland birds (what do we mean by upland?): Turkeys, grouse, pheasants, partridge

Waterfowl and wetland birds: Waterfowl includes ducks, geese, swans, mergansers and coots

(Discuss characteristics of what makes an animal a mammal, bird, fish, etc.)

Difference between small mammals and small game for hunting purposes

Example: Small game includes all game birds (including waterfowl and crows) and tree squirrels

Discuss threatened and endangered species

Example: sandhill crane vs. whooping crane; wolves and coyotes

Discuss how some previously huntable species got to be on the list

Important to know the habits of these species so you know where to hunt and how to hunt them.

Some require special gear and clothing; hilly vs. flat land or prairie, wetlands; firearms; game calls

Tools for identifying wildlife:

Hunter education tools

Books, magazines, Game and Fish brochures, website resources

ID classes/workshops offered by Game and Fish, Ducks Unlimited

Wildlife of ND trunk

Websites on the internet

Hunting shows (although some practices used may be unethical)

Get out and look at the animals in the wild

Waterfowl is especially difficult and important

I usually have the class go through the animal ID pages and check those that are not huntable/trappable species in the state, or considered game species, and why not.

Important: if you are showing species, make sure you know what they are.