

NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

PUBLISHED BY THE NORTH DAKOTA

GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
\$2.00 OCTOBER 2019



NORTH
Dakota
Be Legendary.™

Game and Fish



MATTERS OF OPINION



Terry Steinwand
Director

For the first time in almost a decade, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department will allow hunters to purchase concurrent season licenses valid during any open deer season this fall.

Nearly 2,000 first-come, first-serve doe licenses remained in five hunting units, prompting the move to allow additional hunting opportunities for some.

I bring this up to highlight the fact that fall in North Dakota is certainly the season of opportunity for those people who pursue wild game across our vast rural landscape. Providing hunters the chance to purchase additional deer licenses for the first time since 2011 is yet another hunting opportunity afforded them.

Most years at this time I often address, and for good reason, the hunting – and certainly don't forget fishing – opportunities found across the state as the leaves turn, and we begin the inevitable slide into winter.

The list of reasons why many of us have decided without uncertainty to call North Dakota home is likely long, but I'm willing to bet our outdoor opportunities, many of which are available in fall, is at or near the top for a host of residents.

I often hear from nonresidents, some of whom once lived in North Dakota but have moved elsewhere, about how good we have it here, how lucky we are to be presented each fall with so many outdoor pursuits at our fingertips.

I, without question, agree wholeheartedly with their assessments. We are fortunate and we should pause during these fine days in the field before the snow flies to appreciate where we live and who we share it with.

While my written message appears on this page of *North Dakota OUTDOORS* nine times a year, the audible voices and video of many Game and Fish Department staff appear weekly on the North Dakota Outdoors broadcast news feature.

2019 marks the 25th year that North Dakota Outdoors has appeared on television stations across the state. From KXMD in Williston to KVRN in Fargo, this weekly two-minute segment has long provided a behind-the-scenes look at what Game and Fish staff does on a daily basis.

The message and work aired year-round reinforces the Department's mission statement, which is "to protect, conserve and enhance fish and wildlife populations and their habitats for sustained public consumptive and nonconsumptive use."

This message is important, and we thank the television stations for running the program for a quarter-century.

With many hunting and fishing opportunities at hand this time of year, I encourage everyone to find the time to enjoy North Dakota's great outdoors.

Terry Steinwand

DEPARTMENT DIRECTORY

Governor Doug Burgum

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

Accounting Manager: Angie Morrison

Accountants: Kelly Wike, Melissa Long, Ashley Baker

IT Section Supervisor/GIS Specialist: Brian Hoesek

IT Coordinators: Alan Reile, Larry Gross

Licensing Manager: Randy Meissner

Assistants: Gail Mosset, Amanda Anstrom, Tracy Price,

Tana Bentz, Tanya Mikkelsen

Administrative Assistant – Dickinson: Janel Kolar, Stephanie Richardson

Administrative Assistant – Devils Lake: Lisa Tofte

Administrative Assistant – Jamestown: Tonya Kukowski

Administrative Assistant – Riverdale: Vacant

Administrative Assistant – Williston: Nikki Wright

CONSERVATION AND COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION

Division Chief: Greg Link, Bismarck

Communications Supervisor: Craig Bihrie, Bismarck

Editor, North Dakota OUTDOORS: Ron Wilson, Bismarck

Digital Media Editor: Lara Anderson, Bismarck

News Editor: Greg Freeman, Bismarck

Video Project Supervisor: Mike Anderson, Bismarck

Photographer/Asst. Videographer: Ashley Salwey

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

Pat Lothspeich, Bismarck; Jim Job, Grand Forks

Information Specialist: Dawn Jochim, Bismarck

Graphic Artist: Connie Schiff, Bismarck

Education Supervisor: Marty Egeland, Bismarck

Education Coordinators: Jeff Long, Brian Schaffer, Bismarck

Hunter Education Coordinator: John Mazur, Bismarck

Conservation Supervisor: Steve Dyke, Bismarck

Resource Biologists: John Schumacher, Bruce Kreft, Bismarck

Conservation Biologists: Sandra Johnson, Patrick Isakson, Elisha Mueller, Bismarck

Administrative Assistant: Brandon Diehl, Bismarck

ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

Division Chief: Robert Timian, Bismarck

Investigative Supervisor: Scott Winkelman, Bismarck

Operations Supervisor: Jackie Lundstrom, Bismarck

Warden Pilot: Jeff Sieger, 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 Tofeland, Bottineau; Jonathan Peterson, Devils Lake; James

Myhre, New Rockford; Blake Riewer, Grand Forks; Alan Howard, Cando; Peter Milley, Cavalier;

Drew Johnson, Finley; Sam Feldman, 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; Joe Lucas, Watford City; Shawn

Sperling, Keenan Snyder, Williston

Region No. 4 Warden Supvr: Dan Hoenke, Dickinson

District Wardens: Kylor Johnston, Hazen; Art Cox, Bowman; Courtney Sprenger, Elgin; Zane

Manhart, Gola; Jake Miller, Killdeer; Jeff Violett, Mandan; Zachary Schuchard, Richardson

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 Faught, Bismarck

Upland Game Mgt. Supervisor: Jesse Kolar, 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

Survey Coordinator: Chad Parent, Bismarck

Wildlife Veterinarian: Dr. Charlie Bahnson, Bismarck

Game Management Technician: Ryan Herigstad, Bismarck

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; Todd Buckley, Williston

Wildlife Techs: Tom Crutchfield, Jim Houston, Bismarck; Dan Morman, Robert Miller, Riverdale;

Ernest Dawson, Jamestown; Cordell Schmitz, Brandon Ramsey, Lonetree; Scott Olson, Devils

Lake; Zach Kjos, Williston

Private Land Section Leader: Kevin Kading, Bismarck

Private Land Field Operation Coordinators: Nathan Harling, Curtis Francis, Bismarck

Private Land Biologists: Colin Penner, Levi Jacobson, Bismarck; Jaden Honeyman, Dickinson;

Ryan Huber, Riverdale; Renae Schultz, Jamestown; Terry Oswald, Jr., Lonetree; Andrew Ahrens,

Devils Lake

Procurement Officer: Dale Repnow, Bismarck

Administrative Assistant: Alegra Powers, 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 Stominski,

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 1Beau Wisness, Keene

District 2Travis Leier, Velva

District 3Thomas Rost, Devils Lake

District 4Bruce Ellertson, Lakota

District 5Duane Hanson, West Fargo

District 6Cody Sand, Forbes

District 7David Nehring, Bismarck

District 8Dwight 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

OCTOBER 2019 • NUMBER 3 • VOLUME LXXXII

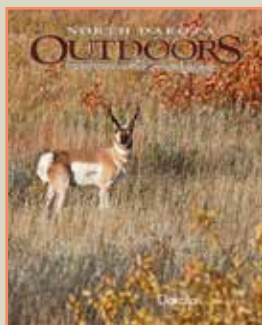
TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURES

Investigating Wildlife in the Badlands	2
Outdoors On-air Milestone	8
Curbing Vandalism to Signs.....	12

DEPARTMENTS

Buffaloberry Patch.....	16
Back Cast	25



Front Cover

A pronghorn buck in North Dakota's badlands.

Photo by Craig Bihrie.



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: ndgf@nd.gov

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

• Outdoors Subscriptions 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) 701-328-9921

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

INVESTIGATING WILDLIFE IN THE

Badlands

By Ron Wilson



T

he badlands in western North Dakota, shaped by time, weather and other forces, is best known for a rugged beauty not found anywhere else in the state.

Yet, scattered across this steep, mostly up-and-down country that is so dissimilar to the rolling and flat lands farther east of there, are animals, hardy critters uniquely adapted to terrain that is certainly forbidding in places, but easy to look at.

Elk, mule deer, white-tailed deer, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, mountain lions, sharp-tailed grouse, sage grouse and dozens of other bird

species occupy habitat that meets their needs. These animals are as much a part of the badlands as the sagebrush flats, painted hillsides and cedar-choked draws.

"It's just a remarkable place for both critters and people," said Jeb Williams, North Dakota Game and Fish Department wildlife division chief.

It's the critters, from bighorn sheep that were reintroduced to the badlands in the late 1950s, to the slow-to-rebound sage grouse population that once featured respectable numbers, that have been the focus of Game and

Fish Department biologists and researchers for years.

"We've been really fortunate over the years to have a good funding source that comes from people buying hunting and fishing licenses and hunting and fishing equipment, that gets distributed back to the states for research projects like the ones we've done and continue to do in the badlands and elsewhere," Williams said.

"The research projects provide the Game and Fish Department with additional information about the animals being studied, which is a benefit to managing those species



The badlands, and for good reason, is known for its beauty. Jeb Williams, North Dakota Game and Fish Department wildlife division chief (inset), scans the badlands in western North Dakota through binoculars.

ASHLEY SALWEY

ASHLEY SALWEY

in the best interests of the people of our state.”

The practice of investigating wildlife, in the badlands or other parts of North Dakota, dates back many years, and the need to establish a scientific foundation to provide responsible hunting and fishing opportunities remains.

The need to study wildlife today is arguably more pronounced as the landscape is under more adjustment with expanding urban populations, changing agricultural focus and the influences of energy exploration in western North Dakota.

“Being curious and learning is a great thing, but we need to be able to apply what we’ve learned to the management of those species,” Williams said.

To review, or update, what follows are some ongoing and completed research projects in western North Dakota.

Elk on the Move

Last winter, the Game and Fish Department, in cooperation with the University of Montana, captured

and fit 90 elk – 70 cows and 20 bulls – with GPS collars in an effort to better understand elk distribution and movements in the badlands.

Bruce Stillings, Department big game management supervisor in Dickinson, said the elk dynamics changed considerably after nearly 900 animals were removed from the South Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park about a decade ago.



An aerial view of last winter's effort to capture and collar 90 elk in the badlands. A big bull elk (inset) in the badlands.

CRAIG BIRHLE



SUBMITTED PHOTO

"We've seen multiple herds establishing outside the park, both to the north and to the south," Stillings said. "In addition, we've seen changes in elk distribution in our E2 elk hunting unit in the Killdeer area. So, right now there is a real need to have better information on elk movements and distribution."

Ideally, Stillings added, Department biologists would also like to take the GPS location data and develop a population monitoring technique.

The life of the GPS collars used in the study to record location points is three years. The collars are also set to record location points every two hours and this information is then fed into Game and Fish Department computers.

"This research project will help us manage elk by better understanding their home range and survival rates," Williams said. "It will also help us put together better survey protocols to better understand the number of elk that are out there, so we are able to provide as many hunting opportunities as possible for these prized once-in-a-lifetime animals."

Mule Deer and Energy

While mule deer can be found scattered in other parts of the state, most people think of the badlands when they think of mule deer.

Certainly, the bulk of North Dakota's mule deer population is found in the badlands where, in the last several years especially, energy development has altered the landscape.

In about 2013, the Game and Fish Department teamed with the State Industrial Commission and other groups on a study to determine the effects of oil and gas development on mule deer in the badlands.

"There has long been some oil and gas development in the badlands going back many years, but



Energy development in the badlands has altered the landscape inhabited by mule deer and other animals.

CRAIG BIRHLE



CRAIG BIRHLE

A study initiated six years ago when researchers captured and radio-collared dozens of adult mule deer does and fawns allowed researchers to track the animals and see how the animals reacted to a landscaped changed by energy development.

there is no doubt that development has picked up considerably in the last 10 to 15 years," Williams said. "Understanding this, there were a lot of questions concerning the kinds of impacts oil and gas development was having on animals, especially mule deer."

The study included fitting 90 mule deer – 60 adult does and 30 fawns – with radio collars. The collars allowed researchers to track the animals and see how they reacted to a changing landscape and to see if the landscape disturbance influenced mule deer reproduction.

"There are times during the year when mule deer are pretty sensitive, such as during the fawning season and during the winter months," Williams said. "Some of the research showed that if there can be some coordination between conservation groups, the Game and Fish Department and the oil and gas industry, in terms of planning and timing of some of the developments, that there are some benefits to mule deer."

Williams said that by combining oil pads, for example, and limiting disturbance during certain times, wildlife officials hope to see some benefits to mule deer over the long-term.

Pronghorn Movements

In the early 2000s, a five-year pronghorn study was launched in western North Dakota with the hope that findings would strengthen the Game and

Fish Department's knowledge of this big game animal.

In the February 2005 issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS* we wrote that the study was designed to identify seasonal home ranges and distribution of adult pronghorn; determine habitat use and preference; and verify survival rates and how animals die.

"We are expected to be the source of information in the state regarding big game species," Stillings said at the time. "To do that, we need defendable data regarding pronghorn ecology in North Dakota."

More than 120 pronghorns were captured and radio-collared during the study. The idea, knowing that animals

would be lost to hunter harvest, Mother Nature and natural causes, was to keep 40 does and 20 bucks in collars during the study period.

Stillings said wildlife biologists went into the study with a number of assumptions because they had no real proof of pronghorn movements. But now, with data in hand detailing some noteworthy pronghorn migrations from summer to winter range and back, they are better armed to confidently manage a unique population of migrating mammals.

The five-year study, he said, solidified an understanding that the majority of pronghorn observed during summer surveys remained in the hunting units in which they were counted come fall.



A helicopter assists in the capturing and collaring of pronghorn in western North Dakota more than a decade ago.

CRAIG BIRHLE



CRAIG BIRHLE

(Top) North Dakota is the eastern edge of the pronghorn's range. Historical records show that the animals were abundant in the 1800s, ranging statewide. Following the arrival of settlers and land-use changes, their numbers declined significantly.



CRAIG BIRHLE

Bighorn sheep being moved by helicopter in the badlands in winter.

Stillings said at the study's end that the findings supported Department methodology for allocating pronghorn license numbers in hunting units.

"It confirmed that our system of surveying animals in July and allocating licenses for when hunters hit the field in October meshes nicely," Stillings added.

Bighorns Fill Rugged Niche

Bighorn sheep don't have a big footprint in western North Dakota because the especially steep, rugged habitat the animals rely on is limited.

Even so: "These animals having a presence in North Dakota is important to a lot of people," Williams said. "It's probably one of the species we get the most comments on, the most photos of from people who are out hunting or simply recreating in the badlands. This is an animal that people really admire and really like to see in the wild."

Williams said the Game and Fish Department has a unique and beneficial relationship with the Midwest Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation, as one license, as authorized under North Dakota Century Code, is auctioned in spring by the chapter, from which all proceeds are used to enhance bighorn sheep management in North Dakota.

"There are obviously some people out there who want to come to North Dakota and hunt sheep," Williams said. "In return, we're able to take those dollars and benefit wild sheep in North Dakota. It's been a great relationship as far as funding because, while bighorn sheep are a small amount of what we do at the Department, they are a very important part of what we do."

Much of what has been

written about bighorn sheep in the badlands of late has followed a bacterial pneumonia outbreak detected in 2014.

"A lot of research has shown anytime you have a pneumonia outbreak, that there is anywhere from 30 to 90% mortality in the population," Williams said. "We are closer to 30%, which is good news. We feel better today about where our bighorn sheep population is compared to 2014."

Managing Mountain Lions

Information gathered about mountain lions since the state's first hunting season nearly 15 years ago is significant, providing wildlife managers with a better understanding about managing these elusive predators.

"We started to get some information prior to 2005 about a breeding population in the badlands, but up until that point it wasn't documented," Williams said. "We had the first lion season in 2005. Having an experimental season with a very limited take was a form of research."

The Game and Fish Department, in conjunction with researchers from South Dakota State University, launched the first part of a two-phase research project in 2011.

Researchers trapped mountain lions, mostly in the northern badlands, in foot-hold traps and foot snares, marking a total of 22 with ear tags. Fourteen of those animals were also fitted with radio-collars.

More than 500 kill sites (prey killed by mountain lions) were also investigated, showing that of the 12 species eaten by mountain lions, 77% were deer.

"Like a lot of our mark and recapture studies, the collared lions gave us a lot

of good information about home range, survivability, reproduction ... things that we can really look at as an agency to help us manage mountain lions in the future," Williams said.

The study indicated that, based on carcasses and mortality of radio-collared lions, that mountain lions in the badlands have a 42-48% survival rate.

"That's about 30% lower than needed to sustain the current population of this size," said Stephanie Tucker, Department game management section leader, in the February 2016 issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.

Williams said the study taught agency wildlife managers that hunter harvest can have a big influence on lion numbers.

And without the study, Williams said,

there would be so much biologists still wouldn't know.

"It's not like you can get some airplanes in the air and get a handle on where the lions are at, what's their abundance, those types of things," he said. "Because lions are very, very secretive, about the only way you're going to learn some things is through a collar study where you get real-time information that is collected over a number of years. Information such as home ranges, reproductive status ... This study was important to us as a Department, which put us in a better situation, a better position to responsibly manage these animals."

Sage Grouse on the Edge

While sage grouse in southwestern North Dakota are on the eastern edge of their range where limited habitat

and weather make it difficult to thrive, their numbers were never considerable compared to states farther west.

Even so, while suffering setbacks from the West Nile virus and other negative influences in the last decade or more, agency biologists and researchers have been working to bolster the population in southwestern North Dakota that hasn't seen a hunting season since 2008.

Starting in 2017, while working in conjunction with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Utah State University, U.S. Geological Survey and landowners, biologists and researchers have translocated a number of adult sage grouse and young fitted with tracking devices from Wyoming to southwestern North Dakota.

"We understand that anytime you do any type of translocation project, the odds of success are definitely not 100%," Williams said. "Yet, we understand our responsibility as the state's wildlife agency that it's important to try to do our best to make sure these birds aren't extirpated from the state. We're hoping to see some success with this effort in southwestern North Dakota."

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.



Biologists and researchers are going to great lengths to bolster a declining sage grouse population in southwestern North Dakota. A sage grouse (inset) captured in Wyoming exits a release box on a lek in North Dakota.

CRAIG BIRHLE



Stephanie Tucker, Game and Fish Department game management section leader, with a mountain lion kitten in the badlands.

MIKE ANDERSON

OUTDOORS

ON-AIR MILESTONE

By Ron Wilson



Mike Anderson
(left), Department
video project
supervisor, interviews
Jeb Williams,
Department wildlife
division chief, in the
badlands in August.

North Dakota Outdoors, the Game and Fish Department's weekly broadcast news feature, celebrates a quarter-century on the air this year.

By early November of 2019, if you're counting, nearly 1,300 two-minute segments have aired on television stations across North Dakota. In total, that's roughly 43 hours of airtime.

Mike Anderson, Department video project supervisor, has been with the program the longest. He started as an assistant videographer with Game and Fish in 1995, working with Lex Hames, who was the program's first director.

Tom Jensen took over in 2001, and directed the program for more than 16 years. Anderson became only the program's third director after Jensen retired in 2017.

"I'm starting my 25th year, and you'd think we would have covered everything, but with this type of work, there is always something new, something different," Anderson said. "Our biologists are always studying things that haven't been studied before or they're taking another look at animals that need to be studied again. Our biologists are top notch and they continue to find new ways and new technology to get the best information they can."





ASHLEY SALWEY

Mike Anderson (left), Department video project supervisor, interviews Rodney Gross, upland game management biologist, for *Outdoors Online*, a weekly online video news program that started in 2007.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Game and Fish Department has had an off-and-on television presence since the early 1950s. The North Dakota *Outdoors* weekly broadcast news feature, on the other hand, has run uninterrupted for 25 years.

While North Dakota *Outdoors* offers viewers a variety of things, its uniqueness, Jensen said, lies in providing a look behind the scenes.

"The show gives people a look behind the curtain because people really don't understand fully what game wardens, biologists, and others do at the Game and Fish," Jensen said. "We provide viewers a peek into a world that is

not that familiar to them."

Within the last year, for instance, a variety of two-minute segments have featured the Department's effort to capture and fit 90 elk in the badlands with GPS collars to, among other things, study elk movements in the badlands; tag hundreds of paddlefish in the Garrison Reach of the Missouri River to learn more about a mostly unnoticed and unique population of fish; and a bank stabilization project along the James River that will enhance bird nesting and hunting opportunities.

"While the program is an entertaining and informative way to show the public the work the Game and Fish Department does," said Scott Peterson, Department deputy director, "the program just isn't about the Game and Fish, but about what's happening in North Dakota's outdoors, which belongs to all viewers."

In August 2019, for instance, North Dakota *Outdoors* featured a piece on the ten-petal blazingstar, which had nothing to do with hooks, bullets, or collaring big game.

The ten-petal blazingstar, a distinctive wildflower that grows primarily in the drier soils of western North Dakota, blooms beginning at dusk, closes during the night and opens again at dawn.

"The ten-petal blazingstar was a popular show that reached a completely different audience and sparked interest in people who maybe don't always watch the program," Anderson said. "Every time you do a story you wonder, well, who is going to watch it? What's the interest behind the story? Some stories we must do, to keep people aware of what the Game and Fish Department is doing. And some stories are like, wow, this is neat stuff and how many people get to see this? Well, now anyone can if they watch the program."

Game and Fish produces the program all in-house, on deadline every week, so the television stations that broadcast North Dakota *Outdoors* can confidently schedule it into their evening or nightly news programs.

"That's one of the reasons that stations continue to carry our program," said Craig Bihle, Game and Fish communications supervisor. "We're also careful to offer stories that typically appeal to a broader audience than just hunters and anglers. A lot of hunters and anglers are among the audience of nightly broadcast news, but so are those who don't participate. It's important that we provide stories that can appeal to diverse audiences."

While it may sound cliché, Anderson certainly doesn't mean it to when he touts the assistance of Game and Fish staff when it comes to putting 52 shows together a year. And that's in addition to Game and Fish's weekly website-based news program, *Outdoors Online*, which Anderson also hosts and directs.

"Our staff, in my opinion, is

the best you could ask for when you're producing these types of programs," he said. "Every department from fisheries, wildlife, conservation, education, enforcement and administration does whatever's necessary to make sure the program is a success."

Jensen agreed: "Coming up with stories ideas can be difficult and is difficult, unless you have good cooperation with staff like we did. I would often get calls or emails from staff saying they had a good story idea and they were often correct."

Anderson said a two-minute segment on soft-shell turtles that ran in September is a good example of the collaboration he often experiences.

"Paul Bailey, one of our fisheries supervisors, came across a couple of soft-shell turtles on the Missouri River and took the time to get some video and the video is pretty spectacular," Anderson said. "People have heard of and seen painted turtles and snapping turtles in North Dakota, but how many people know about soft-shell turtles? Not many, I'm guessing. This will be a cool show because of help from staff."

Much has changed in the video news industry since the program's inception, including the jump to broadcasting in high definition in 2011.

Also, the cameras Anderson hauls around in Department fisheries boats and in the badlands today are much smaller and lighter, yet produce higher quality images than the equipment of old.

"I noticed as I got older the heavier the camera equipment was getting ... When I look back at, say, hiking in the badlands, I wonder how in the heck I ever did it," Anderson said. "With the new cameras, which are about a quarter or half the size of the old cameras, getting places is easier and in many regards, makes it easier to film."

Anderson said he's not thinking about the program's next milestone, just putting together a program for next week.

"The TV stations, which have aired North Dakota Outdoors for years, have been amazing to us," Anderson said. "It's a collaboration, a partnership between Game and Fish and the TV stations to provide quality video and content. Many of these stations have been running the show every week for 25 years."

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.



CRAIG BIRLIE

Mike Anderson behind the camera sometime in the late 1990s.

25 Years and Counting

- The North Dakota Game and Fish Department has had a presence on television since the early 1950s when broadcast TV arrived in the state.
- In the early years, viewers saw Department personnel in-studio at a television station discussing wildlife issues and management.
- Game and Fish also had a video news presence in the late 1970s and early 1980s.
- It wasn't until 1994, with the arrival of the Department-produced North Dakota Outdoors, that this presence became uninterrupted.
- The program's first show, "Young Hunter," aired in November 1994.
- The program today airs on 11 television stations in North Dakota and on the Department's website (gf.nd.gov) and Facebook page, which has roughly 18,000 followers.



NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

PRODUCED BY THE NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

WILLISTON KUMV - Saturday - 6 pm KXMD - Sunday - 10 pm; Monday - Noon	MINOT KMOT - Saturday - 6 pm KXMC - Sunday - 10 pm	GRAND FORKS KVRN - Saturday - 9 pm
DICKINSON KQCD - Saturday - 5 pm (MT) KXMA - Sunday - 9 pm (MT)	BISMARCK KFVR - Saturday - 6 pm KXMB - Sunday - 10 pm CATV - Saturday - 9:30 am KNDX - Fox - Friday - 9 pm	FARGO KVRN - Saturday - 9 pm

ON

WEEKLY VIDEO NEWS BROADCAST

CURBING VANDALISM TO SIGNS

By Ron Wilson

While it's difficult to fathom why some people vandalize signs, it's not hard to understand, certainly from a safety standpoint, the want to curb the wanton destruction.





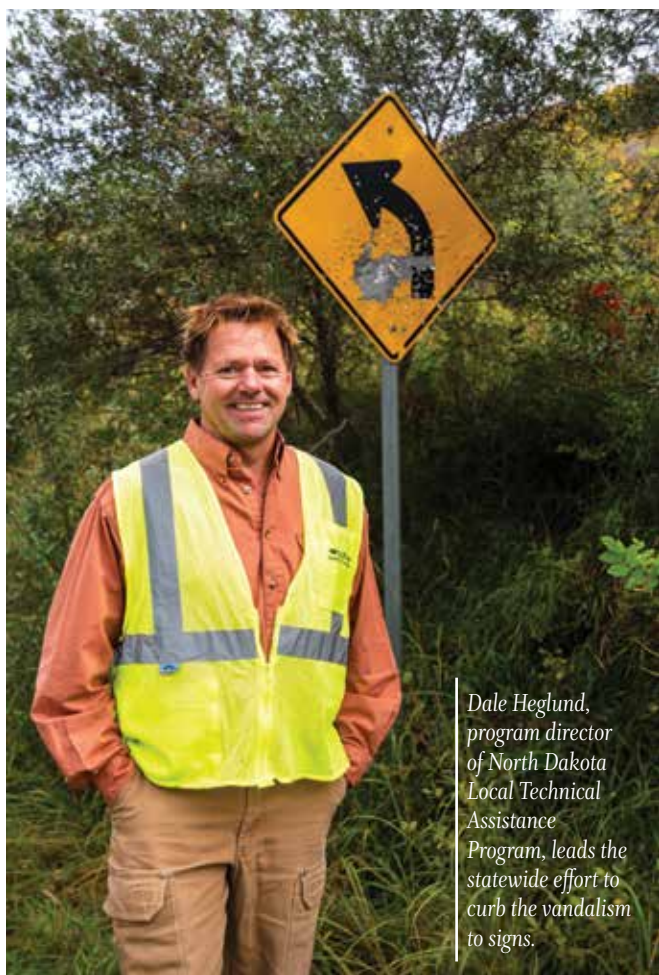
A number of signs common to North Dakota's landscape vandalized by paint and firearms.

ASHLEY SALWEY



A vandalized sign on U.S. Highway 83 that directs water recreationists to Coal Lake.

CRAIG BHRLE



Dale Heglund, program director of North Dakota Local Technical Assistance Program, leads the statewide effort to curb the vandalism to signs.

ASHLEY SALWEY

Dale Heglund, program director of North Dakota Local Technical Assistance Program, is leading a statewide effort called the Sign Warrior program, that encourages kids to convince adults that they shouldn't vandalize signs.

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department, through its hunter education program, has joined the effort in educating young hunters of the dangers of shooting at road and other signs, such as those that promote the Department's Private Land Open To Sportsmen program.

"The Sign Warrior program started conceptually in 2014-15 when Rhonda Woodhams, with the Williams County road department, showed us a sign that had about 400 rounds that had been shot at it ... totally demolished," Heglund said.

Another McKenzie County official reported to Heglund about people running over, shooting and defacing signs with paint. There was one section of roadway where motorists would run over signs as fast as workers could put them up, prompting the McKenzie County official to dub the vandals "serial sign killers."

"So, that got us to thinking about how we could help," Heglund said. "How could we protect the public and create a program that saves signs to save lives."

Heglund said there were a number of things, including county sheriff department personnel going into classrooms to discuss the risks of damaged signs to motorists, that were the building blocks to the Sign Warrior program.

"Last year we kicked off with a calendar for fourth-graders," he said. "We had a poster contest in all fourth-grade classes across the state and we had students draw an imaginary

character that would be a Sign Warrior savior that's out to protect us, to protect the signs so we can drive safely."

Heglund said 50% of the signs in some North Dakota counties are replaced annually. Considering the costs of replacing the signs, doing so on a regular basis can be a financial burden to some counties.

"There are areas in some counties where there is absolutely no damage to signs, but there are areas in some counties where it's horrible," Heglund said. "This points back to one of our core focuses that we have for the Sign Warrior program, which is that vandalism is local ... it's somebody right in that area the program needs to reach and educate."

Heglund said it's unlikely that the vandals who shoot and damage signs think about those they are putting at risk.

"They don't realize that when a sign is shot, motorists don't get that bounce-back of light needed at night to read a sign correctly and get the message it's trying to deliver," Heglund said. "And when that's the case, bad things can happen."

Heglund said this bounce-back of light from road signs becomes even more critical as we age.

"At my age, nearing 60, I need about eight times the amount of light to see the same sign that a 20-year-old needs," he said. "The point is that as we age, we need the message from signs to come back clearly so we can navigate the roadway safely."

John Mazur, Game and Fish Department hunter education coordinator, said when Heglund approached him about the sign initiative, he thought it was the perfect opportunity to reinforce something hunter education volunteers have been teaching students.

"As far as Game and Fish is concerned and hunting is concerned, we have both a direct and an indirect impact from people shooting signs," Mazur said. "Of course, we have our own signage, like PLOTS and WMA signs, and when those get shot up, we have to replace them.

"But there's also that indirect impact



because of what's associated with it when a sign gets shot, especially out in the country," he added. "People say that a hunter did it. Well, we don't want that message to be out there because it's not a hunter at that point when they're shooting signs. They are vandals."

Plus, those people pulling the trigger are breaking the law.



John Mazur, Game and Fish Department hunter education coordinator, said when Dale Heglund approached him about the sign initiative, he thought it was the perfect opportunity to reinforce something hunter education volunteers have been teaching students.

"When we hold up a shot-up sign in class and we ask the kids who did this, the first thing they say is that it was shot by a hunter," Mazur said. "No. No. No. That's our answer. We need to separate

from that, and this sign initiative goes great with the message we want to send forward because our image to the public, especially the nonhunting public, is very important."

Mazur said hunter education students are now provided handouts in class about vandalism and the negative impact of shooting signs. Students are also shown signs that have been vandalized.

"When we show the signs in class, we have an open dialogue, which is the best way to deal with the issue," Mazur said. "We talk about the dangers of shooting signs because they are elevated and not knowing what's beyond the target and where the bullet will end up."

Heglund said sign vandalism isn't something that has reared its ugly head just of late. People were damaging signs nearly 100 years ago when a roadway network was being developed across the country.

"Our effort now is to really drive home the point that it's somebody in our neighborhood that is doing the damage," Heglund said. "Let's put an end to this because if we don't see a sign and we miss the message, we run the risk of not making it home safe that night."

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.



By Greg Freeman, Department News Editor

Native sharp-tailed grouse.



CRAIG BHRLE

Pheasant, Sharptail, Partridge Numbers Up

North Dakota's late-summer road-side surveys indicated total pheasant, sharp-tailed grouse and Hungarian partridge numbers are up this fall from last year.

R.J. Gross, Game and Fish Department upland game biologist, said the survey showed total pheasants observed per 100 miles were up 10% from last year. In addition, broods per 100 miles were up 17%, while the average brood size was down 5%. The final summary was based on 275 survey runs made along 101 brood routes across North Dakota.

"This was the first year in a while that we've had good residual cover to start the year, and good weather for nesting and brood-rearing," Gross said.

Statistics from the northwest indicated pheasants were up 49% from last year, with broods up 75%. Observers recorded five broods and 39 pheasants per 100 miles. Average brood size was six.

Results from the southeast showed birds were up 32% from last year, and the number of broods up 27%. Observers counted six broods and 51 birds per 100 miles. The average brood size was six.

Statistics from southwestern North Dakota indicated total pheasants were down 7% and broods observed up 2% from 2018. For every 100 survey miles, observers counted an average of six broods and 41 pheasants. The average brood size was five chicks.

The northeast district, generally containing secondary pheasant habitat with lower pheasant numbers compared to the rest of the state, showed two broods and 15 pheasants per 100 miles. Average brood size was four.

Sharptails observed per 100 miles were up 113% statewide from 2018, and partridge were up 58%.

Jesse Kolar, Department upland game management supervisor, said

sharptail numbers are still roughly 50% below 2012-15.

"However, we observed slight increases in all metrics this year during our surveys, especially in counties east of the Missouri River where we observed the highest numbers of grouse per 100 miles since 2013," he said.

Brood survey results showed statewide increases in number of grouse and broods observed per 100 miles, and in average brood size. Observers recorded 1.7 sharptail broods and 13.6 sharptails per 100 miles. Average brood size was five.

Although partridge numbers have shown a slight increase, Gross said most of the partridge harvest is incidental while hunters pursue grouse or pheasants. Partridge densities in general, he said, were too low to target. Observers recorded 0.5 partridge broods and 6.8 partridge per 100 miles. Average brood size was 10.

General Game and Habitat License Required

Deer hunters are reminded of a state law that requires hunters to purchase a general game and habitat license before receiving a deer license.

North Dakota Century Code 20.1-03-02 reads, "a person may not acquire any resident or nonresident license to hunt, catch, take or kill any small game or big game animal unless that person first obtains an annual general game license."

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department will only mail deer licenses after the general game and habitat license is purchased.

The general game and habitat license can be purchased online by visiting My Account at the Game and Fish website, gf.nd.gov.

Also, it's important to locate your deer license and check it for accuracy, making sure the unit and species is what is intended.

Deer hunters who can't find their deer license and who have already purchased their general game and habitat license, can get a replacement license by printing out a duplicate (replacement) license application from the Game and Fish website, or can request an application by calling 701-328-6300.

The form must be completed and notarized, and sent back to the Department with the appropriate fee.

Game and Fish Allocates Five Bighorn Sheep Licenses

The Game and Fish Department allocated five bighorn sheep licenses for the 2019 hunting season, two more than last year.

Three licenses were issued in unit B1 and a portion of B3, and one license is valid for units B3 and B4. Also, one license, as authorized under North Dakota Century Code, was auctioned in March by the Midwest Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation, from which all proceeds are used to enhance bighorn sheep management in North Dakota.

The number of once-in-a-life-time licenses allotted to hunters is based on data collected from the Game and Fish Department's summer population survey. Brett Wiedmann, Department big game management biologist, said results showed a 10% decline in ram numbers from 2018, with the population dominated by young rams.

"Our objective this hunting season is to reduce the number of rams in the southern badlands, to lessen the risk of transmitting disease to the northern population," Wiedmann said, while mentioning the concern is the ongoing effects of the bacterial pneumonia outbreak that was first detected in 2014, which resulted in a loss of 15-20% of the adult population. "Moving forward, our intention is to have the southern badlands wild sheep herd as a discussion item during our fall district advisory board meetings."

Wiedmann noted there are more than 300 bighorn sheep north of Interstate 94, but only 20 south of the interstate.

A record 15,518 people applied for a bighorn sheep license in 2019.



BRIAN SCHAEFER

WILLISTON AREA BOWHUNTERS ASKED TO HELP WITH CWD

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is asking bowhunters who harvest a deer in gun hunting units 3A1 and 3B1 to help the Department's chronic wasting disease surveillance efforts by submitting the head of their animal for testing.

Heads may be dropped off in freezers at the Game and Fish district office in Williston, and at the Divide County sheriff's office in Crosby (north side of building). Hunters wishing to keep the head may have it sampled at the Williston office during business hours. Taxidermists in Williston are also assisting in the effort by saving heads throughout the season.

Instructions and information are posted at the drop-off sites. Test results will be provided to hunters within 2-3 weeks. Additional drop-off sites will be available throughout the region during the deer gun season in November.

CWD is a fatal disease of deer, moose and elk that can cause long-term population declines if left unchecked. Annual surveillance for CWD is critical for determining the spread of the disease and if management actions have been effective.

More information on CWD, including information about testing, is available at the Game and Fish website, gf.nd.gov.



GREG GULLICKSON



TY STOCKTON

Prepping for the Deer Gun Season

With North Dakota's deer gun season opening in early November, many hunters will be looking for a place to sight in their firearms to get ready for the season.

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department manages five gun ranges on wildlife management areas in the state, and also partners with many local clubs around North Dakota to offer many other public shooting facilities.

"We have these ranges for a variety of reasons. One is just to give people a place to shoot," said Marty Egeland, Department education supervisor. "In addition to that, it also allows them to hone their skills and to sight in firearms prior to deer gun season."

The five gun ranges managed by the Game and Fish Department include:

- Lewis and Clark WMA, located 6 miles southwest of Williston.
- Little Heart (Schmidt) Bottoms, located 12 miles south of Mandan off ND Highway 1806.
- MacLean Bottoms, located 2 miles south of ND Highway 1804, about 15 miles southeast of Bismarck.
- Riverdale WMA, located 2 miles southwest of Riverdale.
- Wilton Mine WMA, located 2 miles east of Wilton.

The Department may periodically close these ranges for routine maintenance and improvements. The current status of each range can be found on the Department's website at gf.nd.gov.

The website also provides a detailed listing of other shooting facilities in North Dakota.

Help Needed in Hunt for ANS

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is asking water recreationists and property owners to check for zebra mussels and other aquatic nuisance species when removing boat lifts, docks and other equipment from area lakes.

Jessica Howell, Department ANS coordinator, said zebra mussels attach to hard surfaces left in the water for long periods of time, first settling in tight spaces and areas that are protected from sunlight. She said this can make searching for them in the lake difficult when there are few mussels present.

"It makes it easier to do a thorough search on equipment when it's taken

out of the water in the fall," Howell said. "Pay special attention to wheel wells, right angles on frames, and areas that are otherwise protected from sunlight. Feel for attached organisms that have small hair-like structures holding them in place. Small mussels can feel like rough sandpaper, and adults can be as large as 2 inches long."

Howell said if you think you've found a zebra mussel, take photos, write down any relevant information such as how many were found and where, and report it online at the Game and Fish website gf.nd.gov/ans, or email Howell at jmhowell@nd.gov.

Zebra mussels are native to the

Black and Caspian seas and were introduced to the United States in the mid-1980s. Since then, they have caused massive damage to infrastructure, increased costs to electric and water users, and altered the ecosystems into which they were introduced. They were first discovered in North Dakota in the Red River in 2015 as a result of downstream drift from infested Minnesota lakes. Most recently, zebra mussels were discovered earlier this year in Lake Ashtabula.

"Help stop the spread by reporting anything that seems out of place, and remember to clean, drain and dry equipment before moving between waters," Howell said.



ASHLEY SALWEY

In June, an angler discovered a zebra mussel in Lake Ashtabula, an impoundment on the Sheyenne River in Barnes and Griggs counties in east central North Dakota. Following inspections of Lake Ashtabula revealed well-established populations of zebra mussels of various ages throughout the lake. At 5,200 acres, Lake Ashtabula is operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The provided photograph, taken in September, shows a corps boat dock pulled from the water covered in zebra mussels. Also in September, and not surprisingly, state officials confirmed the presence of the invasive mussels in the Sheyenne River. The mussels were discovered on a low-head dam on the Sheyenne River near Valley City. Jessica Howell, North Dakota Game and Fish Department aquatic nuisance species coordinator in Jamestown, said since the invasive mussels were discovered in Ashtabula months before, it was just a matter of time before the mussels would show up in the Sheyenne River.

This photo (right) shows zebra mussels of varying sizes from Lake Ashtabula. While the biggest mussel in this photo is much smaller than a penny, there are others that are even smaller than that.



ASHLEY SALWEY

Hunting from Duck Boats Safely

Waterfowlers hunting from boats are encouraged to wear properly-fitted life jackets while on the water.

Hunting jackets with built-in life jackets are light and comfortable to wear. In addition, wearing a life jacket will not

only keep the overboard hunter afloat, but also slows the loss of critical body heat caused by exposure to cold water.

Capsizing and falling overboard from small boats are the most common types of fatal boating accidents for hunters.



ASHLEY SALWEY

Hunters may see some new signs at assorted PLOTS tracts around the state this fall. North Dakota Game and Fish Department private land personnel installed the signs, such as the one pictured that reads, "Your Hunter Dollars at Work," to remind hunters about the important role their license dollars play in development of the Department's walk-in access hunting program. Some other signs that hunters may see on PLOTS tracts read: "Respect the Land. Respect the Landowner," Hunt Ethically. Hunt Safe," and "Leave Gates as You Found Them." In the photo provided, Levi Jacobson, Department private land biologist, installs a sign at a PLOTS tract east of Bismarck.



Whooping Crane Migration

Whooping cranes are in the midst of their fall migration and sightings will increase as they make their way into and through North Dakota over the next several weeks. Anyone seeing these endangered birds as they move through the state is asked to report sightings so the birds can be tracked.

The whooping cranes that do make their way through North Dakota each fall are part of a population of about 500 birds that are on their way from nesting grounds at Wood Buffalo National Park in Canada to wintering grounds at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas, a distance of about 2,500 miles.

Whoopers stand about five feet tall and have a wingspan of about seven

feet from tip to tip. They are bright white with black wing tips, which are visible only when the wings are outspread. In flight they extend their long necks straight forward, while their long, slender legs extend out behind the tail. Whooping cranes typically migrate singly, or in groups of 2-3 birds, and may be associated with sandhill cranes.

Other white birds such as snow geese, swans and egrets are often mistaken for whooping cranes. The most common misidentification is pelicans, because their wingspan is similar, and they tuck their pouch in flight, leaving a silhouette like a crane when viewed from below.

Anyone sighting whoopers should not disturb them, but record the date,

time, location and the birds' activity. Observers should also look closely for and report colored bands which may occur on one or both legs. Whooping cranes have been marked with colored leg bands to help determine their identity.

Whooping crane sightings should be reported to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service national wildlife refuge offices at Lostwood, 701-848-2466, or Long Lake, 701-387-4397; the North Dakota Game and Fish Department in Bismarck, 701-328-6300; or to local game wardens across the state. Reports help biologists locate important whooping crane habitat areas, monitor marked birds, determine survival and population numbers, and identify times and migration routes.



Motorists Warned to Watch for Deer

Motorists are reminded to watch for deer along roadways this time of year because juvenile animals are dispersing from their home ranges.

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

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

Deer-vehicle accidents are at times unavoidable. If an accident does happen, law enforcement authorities do not have to be notified if only the vehicle is damaged. However, if the accident involves personal injury or other property damage, then it must be reported.

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

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

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

TEXT ALERTS



WEBSITE visit gf.nd.gov

JUST TEXT: **NDGF Alerts**
TO: **468311**

NORTH
Dakota | Game and Fish
Be Legendary.™



Waterfowl Hunters Reminded of ANS Regulations

Waterfowl hunters need to do their part in preventing the spread of aquatic nuisance species into or within North Dakota.

Waterfowl hunters must remove plants and plant fragments from decoys, strings and anchors; remove plant seeds and plant fragments from waders and other equipment before leaving hunting areas; remove all water from decoys, boats, motors, trailers and other watercraft; and remove all aquatic plants from boats and trailers before leaving a marsh or lake. In addition, hunters are encouraged to brush their hunting dogs free of mud and seeds.

Cattails and bulrushes may be transported as camouflage on boats. All other aquatic vegetation must be cleaned from boats prior to transportation into or within North Dakota.

In addition, drain plugs on boats must remain pulled when a boat is in transit away from a water body.

More ANS information, including regulations, is available on the North Dakota Game and Fish Department website, gf.nd.gov.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Youth Waterfowl Hunting Trailer Available

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

Purchased by the Game and Fish Department's Encouraging Tomorrow's Hunters grant program, the trailer is designed for families who don't have the appropriate gear for their young hunters to hunt waterfowl. The equipment is donated by Avery Outdoors.

Use of the trailer is free, and it is equipped with goose and duck decoys for field hunting, and two bags of floating duck decoys and marsh seats for hunting a wetland.

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



Order 2020 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 2020. Along with outstanding color photographs of North Dakota wildlife and scenery, it also includes sunrise-sunset times and moon phases.

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

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

WATERFOWL HUNTERS

Aquatic Nuisance Species can severely degrade
waterfowl habitat and reduce
hunting opportunities.

Follow North Dakota regulations to protect waterfowl hunting for the future.

CLEAN – DRAIN – DRY

**DRAIN ALL WATER
REMOVE VEGETATION
PULL DRAIN PLUGS**

ALL EQUIPMENT. EVERY TIME.



**STOP AQUATIC
HITCHHIKERS!**
Be A Good Steward. Clean. Drain. Dry.

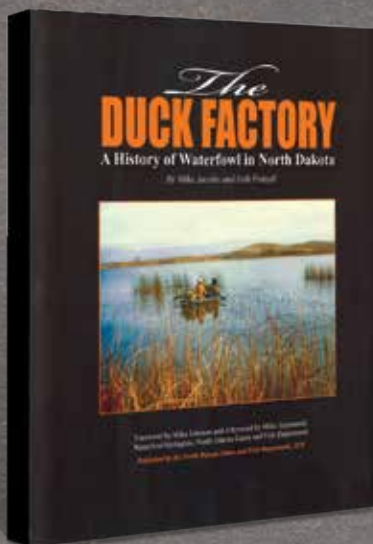
For complete regulations visit gf.nd.gov

NORTH
Dakota | Game and Fish
Be Legendary.™





A MUST for every waterfowl hunter



THE DUCK FACTORY:

A History of Waterfowl in North Dakota

The Duck Factory tells the fascinating story of encounters between ducks and people in the heart of the Prairie Pothole Region. The book describes the colorful and contentious history of waterfowl and waterfowl management in North Dakota, complete with stories of the people who hunt them, protect them, study them, enjoy them and work to guarantee their continued importance in North Dakota.



NOW AVAILABLE

Online Orders only!

\$24.99 (includes shipping)

gf.nd.gov/shop

NORTH
Dakota | Game and Fish
Be Legendary.™



100 North Bismarck Expressway
Bismarck, ND 58501-5095
701.328.6351 Email: ndgf@nd.gov
Web: gf.nd.gov

BACKCAST



By Ron Wilson

We're more than a mile south of what passes for the main dirt road in this neck of the Little Missouri National Grassland.

We've jumped across one creek – a miniscule, wandering line on the \$14 grassland map stuffed in the side pocket of my backpack – crossed two fences and hiked around any rocky habitat in the shade that a rattlesnake might prefer on a day like today.

It's in the mid-70s, but it feels warmer. Jack and I are sitting on a sidehill, drinking from water bottles and considering the view. The trees in the draws and along the creek are a step ahead of home, already going from green to yellow as we near the official first day of fall.

It's big, handsome country. We can see a bunch of it from here, half-way up a butte that will take some doing to get to the top. Yet, at more than 1 million acres of public land, we only get a hint of what's out here. We know without saying it that we'll never see it all.

Where here, on this hillside for a couple of reasons, and we haven't decided if one, on this particular day, takes precedence over the other.

The sharp-tailed grouse season opened today at a half-hour before sunrise, which is why we're carrying shotguns and extra shells in the backpack. Also, Jack drew a cow elk license for this area, which is why we're carrying binoculars around our necks, hoping to spot some animals and get an early handle on the season that opens in early October.

So far, after kicking around this area for a couple of hours, we haven't seen sign of either. In this heat it's understandable, so we relax and glass some more before hiking back to the pickup.

At 16, I don't think Jack understands the gravity of owning a once-in-a-lifetime elk license in North Dakota. The license carries some significant weight because, well, you only get one chance, a once-in-a-lifetime shot to notch out the license's month and date.

For someone who can't even remember age 16 and with way more mileage on my hunting boots, none of it is lost on me. I silently worry

if we're scouting in the right places, have talked to the right people, have prepared like we should.

Like with any other hunt, we're going in with the stance that Jack will, sometime over the course of the three-month season, harvest a cow elk. Maybe it will happen in the area we are glassing today, country that is as rugged as it is good-looking. Maybe it won't.

If you shoot one here, in any of these wooded draws, I ask him, how many trips do you think it will take us to get it back to the pickup?

As many as it takes, he says.

He's yet to pull the trigger, but I'm already jealous of his young legs and strong back.

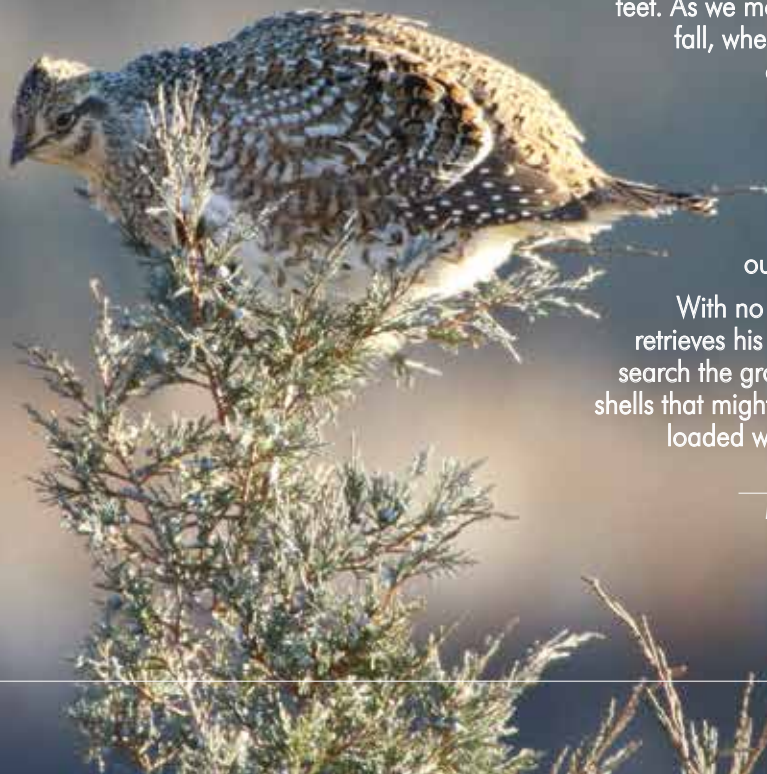
We drop off the sidehill and aim in the direction of the creek bottom, then cut north toward the pickup, a small, white speck parked in the distance.

We zigzag from buffaloberry patch to buffaloberry patch in hopes of bumping grouse hanging in the shade. We've lugged shotguns this far and want to shoulder them with meaning and pull triggers.

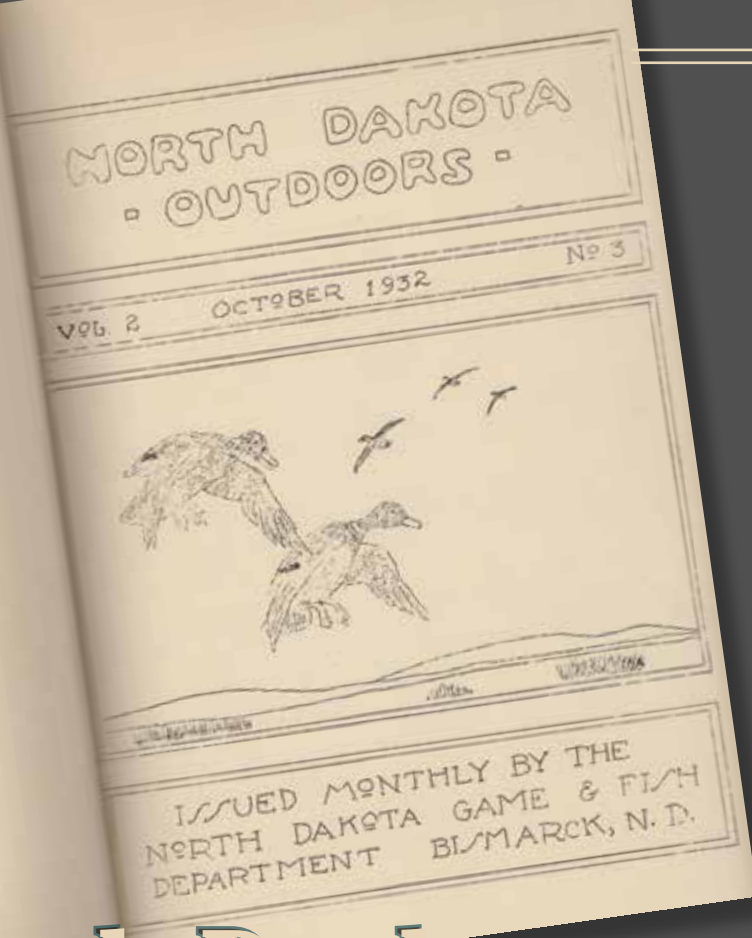
Finally, this strategy, as pedestrian as it is, works. A number of grouse, a dozen maybe, flush from a buffaloberry patch as big as our living room.

Like a lot of grouse in early season, they take to the air in mannerly fashion – two here, one there, three at our feet. As we move deeper into fall, when the sharptails so often exit collectively before you can even shut your vehicle door, we'll pine for these courteous flushes.

With no dog along, Jack retrieves his two birds, while I search the ground for my spent shells that might as well have been loaded with air, not lead.



RON WILSON
is editor of
North Dakota
OUTDOORS.



A Look Back

By Ron Wilson

This time we take a look way back, to 1932 when editors of *North Dakota OUTDOORS* referred to the publication as a bulletin.

Times, as you will see, have changed.

- "Under executive order of the governor ... the season on deer has been closed in North Dakota for the year 1932."
- "There is an impression, more or less throughout the state, that the fee for a resident hunting license has been increased ... Final action has not been taken upon this matter and therefore the fee for a license in North Dakota remains at a dollar and a half."
- "Through the efforts of Burnie W. Maurek, Game and Fish Commissioner, a (railroad) car of fish was obtained from the United States Bureau of Fisheries ... The shipment consisted of 240 cans of miscellaneous species of fish."
- "Arrangements have been made

for the purchase of 1,500 pairs of Hungarian partridges for release in North Dakota late in the fall of 1932. These birds will be shipped from Czechoslovakia and the price paid for them will be much less than it has been possible in past years."

- "I do not think you have to go back that far as 1892 as I remember to the fall of 1904. I was then between the White Tail and Magpie creeks in the badlands. It would be hard for some to believe the actual truth of the amount of prairie chickens at that time. I have no record of any big killing because we only shot a few when we wanted to eat them. We did not hunt them, they were thick enough so you only had to shoot them. They were in bunches from twenty-five up and some bunches I think had a hundred and there were bunches most everywhere. They were not wild. We never used a dog, never had one.

We had a house built into the side of a hill and I have stood on top of that house before breakfast with a shotgun and shot all we wanted to use as they flew over."

- "The Niagara Gun Club sponsored a crow killing contest ... The Berkheimer team won by 325 points, Mr. Berkheimer having a high score of 71 crows."
- "The low stages of water prevailing in Powers Lake in Mountrail County and Bear Creek in eastern LaMoure and Dickey counties have led to the opening of these waters to all kinds of fishing ... Fish may be taken therefrom by any means except the use of explosives. Doubtless many of the people residing in these counties will avail themselves of the opportunity to procure a winter's supply of fish."

Yeah, times have changed.

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.