

NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

PUBLISHED BY THE NORTH DAKOTA



GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

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NORTH
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Game and Fish

Be Legendary.™



MATTERS OF OPINION



Terry Steinwand
Director

The weather, a constant force on the Northern Plains no matter the season, and a daily conversation starter for those who live here, is a topic scattered throughout this issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.

In the ice fishing feature, Greg Power, Game and Fish Department fisheries chief, talks about how many of our newer fishing waters that dot the rural landscape were down 6-8 feet from their highs after losing water the last three or four years.

This led to winterkill on about 20 marginal waters last winter, a number that possibly could have been much worse in 2020 if things didn't change.

And they did ... in a big way.

It started with winter snows, followed by decent runoff, an especially wet summer and, for much of North Dakota, a record-wet September and possibly the wettest fall on record before all is said and done.

This is good news for our fisheries, migrating birds and other critters, but that's not my entire concern.

With the arrival of deer season – that celebrated time of year for many, no matter their age – thousands of orange-clad hunters will cover much of North Dakota's rural landscape looking to put venison into freezers.

While I understand the enormity of the deer season in North Dakota,

I encourage all hunters to take a step back and consider the saturated landscape and those people, farmers and ranchers, who are under considerable stress while having to deal with the adverse conditions on a daily basis.

Bob Timian, Game and Fish enforcement division chief, also addresses this topic in this issue of NDO. He makes a good point in the fact that there remains a lot of standing crops on the landscape and farmers could be moving harvesting equipment to finally get their crops off. Hunters need to be mindful of this and give producers all the room they need on rural backroads.

While conditions may improve from the time of this writing to the first week of the deer season, I suspect that section line trails and unimproved roads could still be wet, if not frozen, and hunters need to be aware of this.

Please respect North Dakota's rural landscape. If travel looks difficult and the end result is tearing things up or getting stuck, we encourage hunters to turn around and go elsewhere.

North Dakota has a strong hunting heritage and we want that respected feeling to continue. Of greatest importance this deer gun season, be safe, know your target and enjoy what is one of the best times of year in North Dakota's great outdoors.

Terry Steinwand

NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

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

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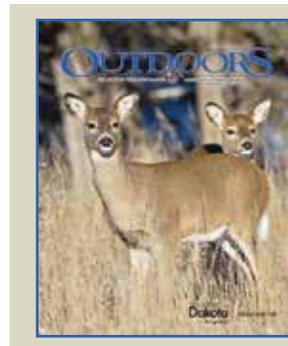
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Front Cover

Whitetail doe licenses were increased by 1,250 for this fall's deer gun season compared to 2018. *Photo by Craig Bihrl.*



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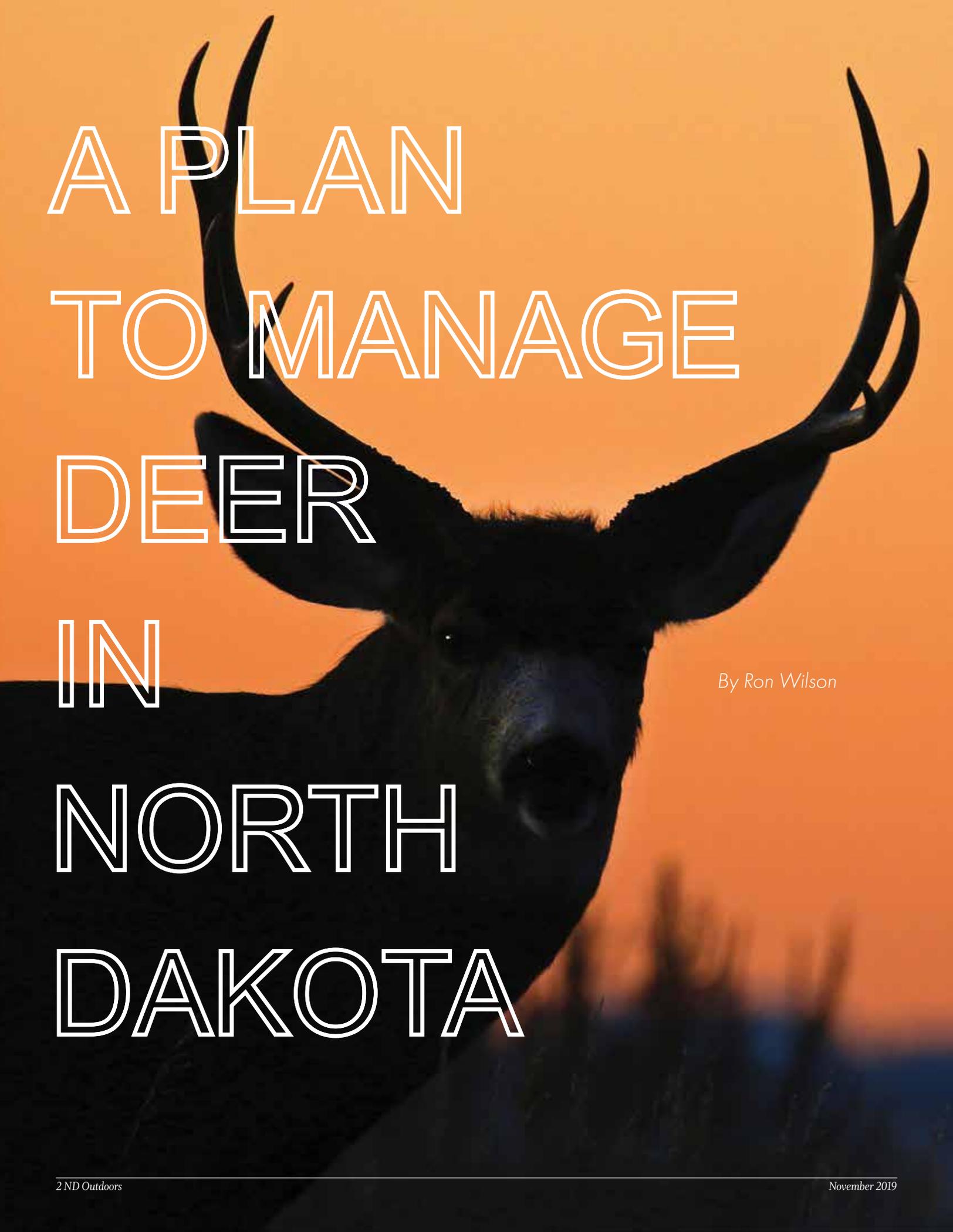
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A PLAN
TO MANAGE
DEER
IN
NORTH
DAKOTA

By Ron Wilson

Considering the whims of Mother Nature, changes in the landscape, rising and falling deer populations, deer hunter expectations and differing landowner tolerance levels, managing deer in North Dakota isn't easy.

North Dakota Game and Fish Department wildlife managers certainly understand this. They also recognize the enormity of the task because many North Dakotans have a vested interest in a celebrated outdoor activity that seemingly takes so long to get here, but is over before you know it.

With the 2019 deer gun season finally here, *North Dakota OUTDOORS* staff visited with Casey Anderson, Department assistant wildlife division chief, about managing deer in North Dakota.

Q: The Game and Fish Department initiated its five-year deer management plan in 2005 and every five years Department officials develop deer population goals for each of the state's 38 hunting units. What tools are used in this plan process to set those goals?

A: Historically, we have reviewed a variety of datasets collected annually on deer population trends. These include: (1) winter white-tailed deer aerial surveys, (2) spring and fall mule deer aerial surveys, (3) regular deer gun hunter harvest results, and (4) hunter observation surveys. These datasets are evaluated for trends both within the hunting unit and compared to trend data for surrounding units. In addition, we take into consideration cultural and biological concerns such as landowner tolerance, disease concerns and changes in habitat. We are currently developing several new population models in hopes of applying these new tools in making management decisions.

Q: Why is it important to have a deer management plan and revisit it every five years?

A: Cultural and biological concerns are always occurring and need to be taken into consideration when setting management goals. For example, loss of habitat (CRP, tree rows and wetlands) significantly influence white-tailed deer recruitment and survival rates; this is particularly true for the eastern third of the state. The spread of chronic wasting disease also influences deer management decisions. As the agency responsible for managing deer populations, we need to be constantly evaluating and adapting to change; we cannot just run these programs on autopilot.

Q: In 2015, for the first time since the plan was introduced, the aim was to increase the statewide deer population, not reduce it. At the time, Game and Fish officials proposed a plan that would support issuing 75,000 deer licenses annually. Has that thinking changed any?

A: For now, that is still the goal the Department continues to shoot for. Reduced habitat and Mother Nature have definitely made it more challenging, but that seems to be a number that is acceptable to the majority for hunting opportunities and for those going about their everyday lives in rural North Dakota.

Q: Since 2015, when the Department made available just 43,275 deer licenses, the lowest total since 1978, license numbers have increased every year to this fall's total of 65,500 licenses. What can be attributed to the slow, but uninterrupted increase in license numbers?

A: Some has to do with the Department being conservative in the number

of licenses allocated. But the not-so-terrible winters the last few years have also helped. However, the rebound is slow because of the lack of habitat on the landscape compared to the quick rebounds in the early 2000s.

Q: All deer hunting units across the state are not created equal. Understanding this, where in the state have deer numbers been slower to rebound and why?

A: Some of our more easterly units have a harder time rebounding because they don't have the habitat base already established. Also, many times winters are more severe in eastern North Dakota, especially snow depths, than the western portions of the state.

Q: The Game and Fish Department made available more than 100,000 licenses to hunters from 2001 through 2011. We understand that this was the exception and not the rule in North Dakota's long deer hunting history. Even so, what needs to happen to meet the license number objectives in the Department's five-year management plan?

A: With the habitat base we have now it would take multiple easy winters in a row. If we could increase the habitat it could be faster and it wouldn't be as critical to have easy winters.

Q: For the first time in nearly a decade, the Game and Fish Department allowed hunters to purchase concurrent season licenses valid during any open deer season this fall. What's the reasoning behind this move that will, for some, provide additional deer hunting opportunities?

A: Some of the units that had leftover tags have a good population of deer, and if that population isn't kept in check, deer could start to cause many problems for landowners in those areas.

North Dakota's hunting heritage is strong and how deer are managed in the state is important to hunters.



Also, some of the units are where the Department has found chronic wasting disease. In CWD positive units, one of the management objectives is to reduce deer density, or maintain a low density, but have a healthy reproducing deer population, to reduce the risk of the disease spreading within the unit, and also reduce the chance of deer dispersing to new areas because of a high deer density.

Q: From a management standpoint, what is Game and Fish doing in those deer hunting units where chronic wasting disease has been verified?

A: Our objective is to try to reduce the likelihood of CWD spreading to other units, and to try to keep infection rates

low in areas where we already have it. We do this through regulatory tools like baiting and carcass transportation restrictions. But hunters are really our biggest and best tool in these areas. Hunters help us maintain healthy deer densities in these areas and also provide samples so we can track where the disease is and whether it is spreading.

Q: We often say that deer gun season in North Dakota, especially opening weekend, has a holiday-like feel to it. It's that time of year – and maybe the only time during the year for some – that friends and family gather to reconnect and, as a bonus, put venison in the freezer. Do you think this portrayal of the season still rings true today?

A: In North Dakota, where the hunting heritage is strong and is one of the many reasons we live here, I think that portrayal, at least in the crew that I hunt with, certainly rings true. The only difference is not everybody is lucky enough to draw a license every fall, so it's easier to find help dragging out my deer.

Q: What are some of the concerns and comments the wildlife division hears from hunters regarding all things deer and deer hunting in North Dakota?

A: CWD regulations is a big one. CWD is hard to comprehend and the regulations put in place to reduce the risk of spread are sometimes a big change for hunters. As hunters, we need to do what we can to protect the herd for the

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department continues to support a deer management plan that supports issuing 75,000 deer licenses annually.



CRAIG BIRBLE

next hunter that takes the field. We also hear that our deer lottery system is not working. That one typically comes from those folks who don't get drawn for a license. But all hunters are concerned with deer numbers and would like to see them a little higher to increase opportunities. Hunters could help this situation by being advocates for programs that help landowners establish or maintain habitat on the landscape.

Enforcement Questions, Concerns

Fall is a busy time of year for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's enforcement division. The demand on game wardens certainly increases during the state's deer gun season when thousands of hunters take to the field. Bob Timian, Game and Fish Department enforcement division chief, said when it comes to questions and concerns from hunters at this time of year, the Department's enforcement staff will likely

hear it all. *North Dakota OUTDOORS* staff talked with Timian prior to the season to help clear up some of the common concerns heard from hunters no matter the year. For more frequently asked questions that come up during the deer gun season, visit the Department's website (gf.nd.gov).

Q: One of the more common violations during the deer season has to do with tagging. What message do you want to send hunters when it comes to tagging their harvested animals?

A: The tagging rule is pretty straightforward. You shoot your deer and then once you get up to the deer, you need to put a tag on it. Once that's done, then you don't have to worry about it. There are people who intentionally don't tag their deer. And then there are people who, because they don't tag the deer right away, get busy field dressing the animal, load it into a vehicle and then all of a sudden, they are driving down the road and the tag is still in their pocket. Now, when the warden stops you, he doesn't know if you



ASHLEY SALWEY

Deer season is a busy time of year for (right) Corey Erck, Game and Fish Department warden stationed in Bismarck, and other enforcement staff.

intentionally didn't tag the deer or just made a mistake. While we suggest that you tag the deer before you take a minute to take photos, we certainly insist that you tag the deer before moving it.

Q: If someone, for whatever reason, is going to transport another hunter's deer, what do they need to do this legally?

A: You need a transport permit from a local warden or another law enforcement officer. During deer season wardens are busy. If you know that you are going to need a transport permit, call ahead, get in touch with a warden and he can make arrangements to get you a transport permit. Don't wait 15 minutes before you are ready to leave because I can almost guarantee you that the warden is not going to be there in 15 minutes. So, a little preplanning is good on your part.

Q: If a hunter harvests a deer in one of the state's units where chronic wasting disease has been identified, what does the hunter need to do?

A: First of all, if you are hunting in one of these units, I would first go to the Game and Fish website (gf.nd.gov) and

read what the regulations are. And if you have any questions, call the Department (701-328-6300) and we'll walk you through it. In the simplest terms, if you harvest a deer in one of the CWD units, you cannot take the head or the spine out of the unit. Now, depending on how you dress the animal, quarter or bone it out, the carcass tag must stay with the meat. If you shoot a buck and want to get it mounted, you can remove the skullcap, but then you have to clean all of the tissue and matter off of the skullcap. So that, in simple terms, is what you need to do. We would also highly encourage people in those units to take the deer head and drop it off at one of our collection sites to test for CWD. By doing so, the hunter has the assurance that their deer will be tested. And in the relatively rare occasion that the animal does test positive, we would notify the hunter as soon as possible so the hunter can decide what to do with the deer. It's both to the hunter's benefit and the Department's benefit that those heads get dropped off at the collection sites.

Q: Can a hunter retrieve a wounded or

dead deer from posted land?

A: Essentially the law says a hunter who shoots or wounds an animal in an area where they legally have the right to hunt and it crosses over onto someone else's property, the hunter has the right to retrieve it. Now, the key here is it's a "retrieval." You can't continue to hunt so the firearms can't go with you. You can't take a firearm with you because then, by definition, you're still hunting. Since you're simply retrieving the animal, that doesn't mean you can walk around all over the property. Also, in an effort to maintain hunter/landowner relationships and avoid conflicts over a situation like this, we tell hunters, especially if the land is posted, that it's a good idea to contact the landowner and let him know that you were hunting elsewhere, but you have a deer down and it's on his property and you want to retrieve it. If the landowner is adamant that you don't go in there, even though you have a legal right to do so, we suggest contacting a local warden to facilitate the retrieval of the deer.

Q: Department wardens get calls during the deer season on off-trail violations. What are off-trail violations?

A: During the big game season, you cannot drive off-trail to hunt deer ... you have to stay on the trails. Yet, this brings up a really good subject, especially this fall, given how wet the countryside is at this time. Some good gravel roads are starting to get soft, trails are soft, fields are wet and very soft, so travel and access by vehicle right now is difficult, other than on very good roads. And so, hunters need to be aware of that and avoid places where they're going to tear up roads or fields. Now, by the time the deer season rolls around, the situation may have improved, maybe a little drier, potentially everything could be frozen so the ground and the roads are hard, and if that's the case, then access will be a little easier. But at the same time, we need to remember that there is an awful lot of standing crop out there this year. So, if conditions improve, that also potentially could mean that there will be a lot of farmers moving harvesting equipment around trying to get those crops finally off. Hunters need to be aware of this and

to give farmers the room they need to get their crops off.

Q: What the most important thing hunters should remember this and every deer gun season?

A: As always, the big thing is for hunters to practice safety. Be safe. Know where you're shooting, when you are traveling, be aware of traffic. Don't stop in the middle of the road to look at deer, or whatever. Just commonsense safety so that everybody goes home and has a good hunt.

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



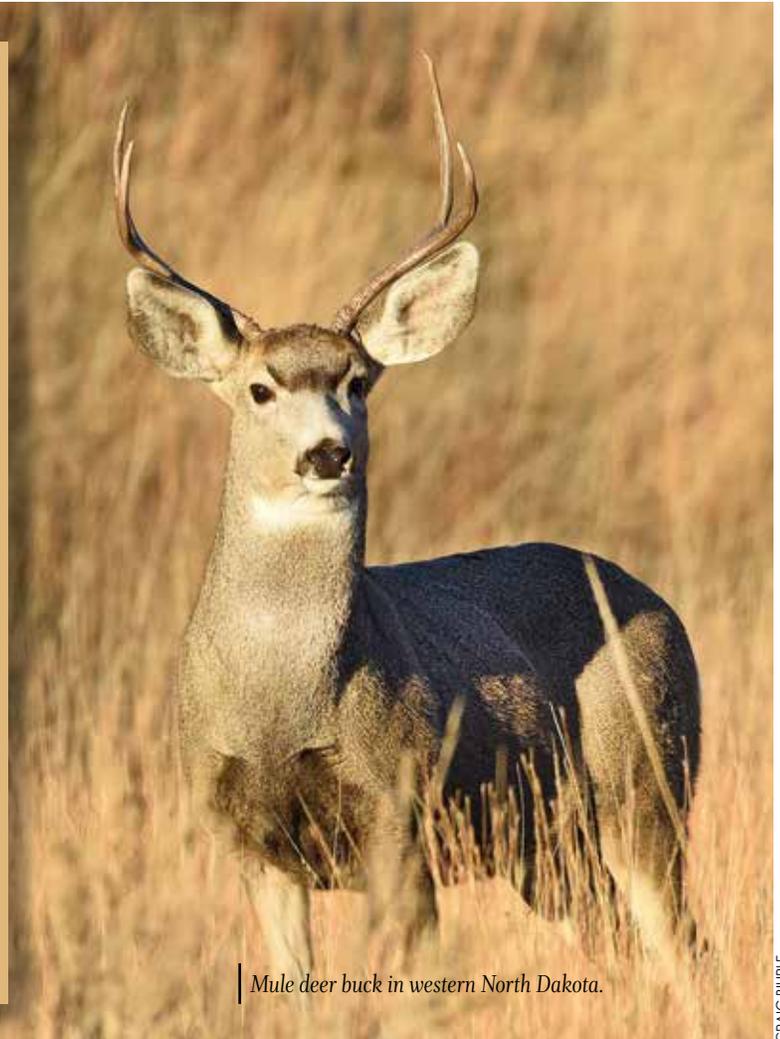
CRAIG BIRKLE

White-tailed deer in summer.

Snapshot of Deer License Numbers

A look at deer gun licenses numbers over time. The state's first deer season was held in 1931, the first year a specific deer license was required.

- 1971 – The first year more than 50,000 deer licenses were made available to hunters. More than 33,000 deer were harvested that season.
- 1974 – The first year more than 60,000 deer licenses were made available to hunters. Yet, from 1975-81, deer license totals were below 50,000.
- 1986-87 – More than 80,000 deer licenses were made available to hunters those two seasons. Yet, in 1988, the total fell to about 64,000.
- 2001-11 – More than 100,000 deer licenses were made available to hunters during those 11 seasons. The high was 149,400 in 2008.
- 2012 – Nearly 45,000 fewer deer licenses were made available compared to 2011.
- 2015 – The lowest number of licenses (43,275) made available to hunters in 35 years.
- 2016-19 – Deer licenses made available to hunters have increased (from 49,000 in 2016 to 65,000 in 2019) in each of those four hunting seasons.



CRAIG BIRKLE

Mule deer buck in western North Dakota.

lake levels, **ICE FISHING** **OPPORTUNITIES** *on the rise*

By Ron Wilson



Aerial view of anglers getting ready for a day of ice fishing for northern pike in Burleigh County.

MIKE ANDERSON

There's little certainty, save for the inevitable ice-up of your favorite lake, when it comes to ice fishing in North Dakota.

Last winter's ice fishing season is a good example. Greg Power, Game and Fish Department fisheries chief, called it a tale of two seasons.

"It started well as we had pretty decent drive-on ice at the holidays, which is a big deal because it gets people out and about," he said. "But that early participation ended pretty much statewide around January 10. Access went from good to lousy. And even if you could make it on your favorite lake, you needed an ice house to stay out of the weather."

While it's impossible to predict the influence weather will have on the upcoming ice fishing season, Game and Fish Department district fisheries supervisors have provided a list – an abbreviated list, considering there are more than 400 managed fishing waters on the landscape – of lakes expected to offer good fishing opportunities in the coming months if Mother Nature cooperates.

Power said ice anglers shouldn't expect the perch fishing to be like it was, say, a decade ago. Yet, with a little investigating, there remains some solid northern pike fishing across the landscape.

"There is always Oahe, Devils Lake and Sakakawea, but the new kids on the block are nearly 60 newer walleye lakes that provide fishing opportunities on approximately 63,000 acres of newer water," he said. "A lot of those lakes are primarily in the central part of North Dakota, and many have very healthy walleye populations."

Last winter, tough conditions and declining lake levels, led to winterkill on 20 or so marginal waters. If that declining lake level trend would have continued, Power said 30 or more lakes would have experienced similar fallouts by next spring.

"If you compare today to last year at this time, the difference is night and day," Power said. "In many of our newer lakes we lost 1-3 feet of water per year for the past three or four years. So, some of the lakes were down 6-8 feet from their highs."

But things started to change starting

in January 2019 when the snows came, providing decent runoff in spring.

"A lot of those lakes got a decent drink, then we had an exceptionally wet summer, a record-wet September in many of the counties, and maybe the wettest fall on record before it's all said and done. That translates to most our lakes being at, or very near, their all-time highs, which is incredible compared to a year ago."

The short-term outlook, thanks to an abundance of precipitation, is that far fewer waters will likely be lost to winterkill this winter compared to last.

Rising lake levels will also increase productivity and provide spawning habitat in recently flooded vegetation. These benefits aren't short-lived and will benefit waters years down the road.

"Fish need water, so all species will benefit, but the fish that will certainly profit from this flooded vegetation are pike and perch," Power said. "Looking in my crystal ball, I'm guessing we won't need to stock a whole lot of pike next year. The next couple of years, we should have a lot fish, and given the growth rates we're seeing in these prairie lakes, that means even more fishing opportunities in just a couple years down the road."

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.

Free Ice Fishing

North Dakota's free ice fishing weekend is December 28-29.

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

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

Recounting the Darkhouse Spearfishing Season

Of the roughly 4,300 people who registered with the North Dakota Game and Fish Department to darkhouse spearfish last winter, more than 3,100 participated in what amounted to an abbreviated season, harvesting nearly 18,000 pike.

Greg Power, Department fisheries chief, said weather and access for the first half of the 2018-19 darkhouse season were favorable for spearing, but by mid-January extreme cold and above normal snowfall greatly reduced participation and effort.

The first darkhouse spearfishing season in North Dakota was held the winter 2001-02. Participation (3,717 participants) and number of pike harvested (28,138 pike) were highest in winter 2017-18.

According to a Game and Fish Department survey, respondents indicated spearing on 81 waters in the state last winter, down from 104 waters in 2017-18. Power said for the third year in a row, Devils Lake was the top water in terms of pike harvested in 2018-19.

In 2012-13, most waters in the state for the first time were opened to darkhouse spearfishing. North Dakota's darkhouse season opens whenever ice-up occurs and all individuals who participate must register with the North Dakota Game and Fish Department prior to participating.



An angler, with the help of his watchful bird dog, drills a hole in one of the hundreds of lakes scattered across North Dakota's landscape.

CRAIG BHRLE

SOUTHWEST FISHERIES DISTRICT

Jeff Hendrickson, district fisheries supervisor, Dickinson

Dickinson Reservoir (Stark County) –

Good number of walleye up to 4 pounds, good number of bluegill up to 1 pound, good number of perch up to 1 pound, some crappie up to a half-pound and catfish up to 24 pounds.

Heart Butte Reservoir (Grant County)

– An abundance of

mostly small walleye, with some fish up to 6 pounds, catfish up to 10 pounds, pike up to 17 pounds, white bass up to 2 pounds, crappie up to 1 pound and smallmouth bass up to 3 pounds. Good number of perch up to 1 pound and some bluegill up to a half-pound.

Indian Creek Dam (Hettinger County) – Good number of walleye up to 8 pounds, abundant small perch, with some up to a half-pound, fair number of bluegill up to 1 pound, some smallmouth bass up to 2 pounds and largemouth bass up to 1 pound.

Larson Lake (Hettinger County) – Adult perch stocked in spring 2019. Good number of perch up to three-quarters of a pound.

Odland Dam (Golden Valley County) – Abundant perch up to three-quarters of a pound, some bluegill up to three-quarters of a pound and walleye up to 2 pounds.

North Lemmon Lake (Adams County) – Rainbow trout stocked annually. Some brown trout up to 2 pounds, abundant small perch, fair number of bluegill, with some up to three-quarters of a pound, fair number of largemouth bass, mostly 1-4 pounds, and a good number of walleye, mostly 3-10 pounds.

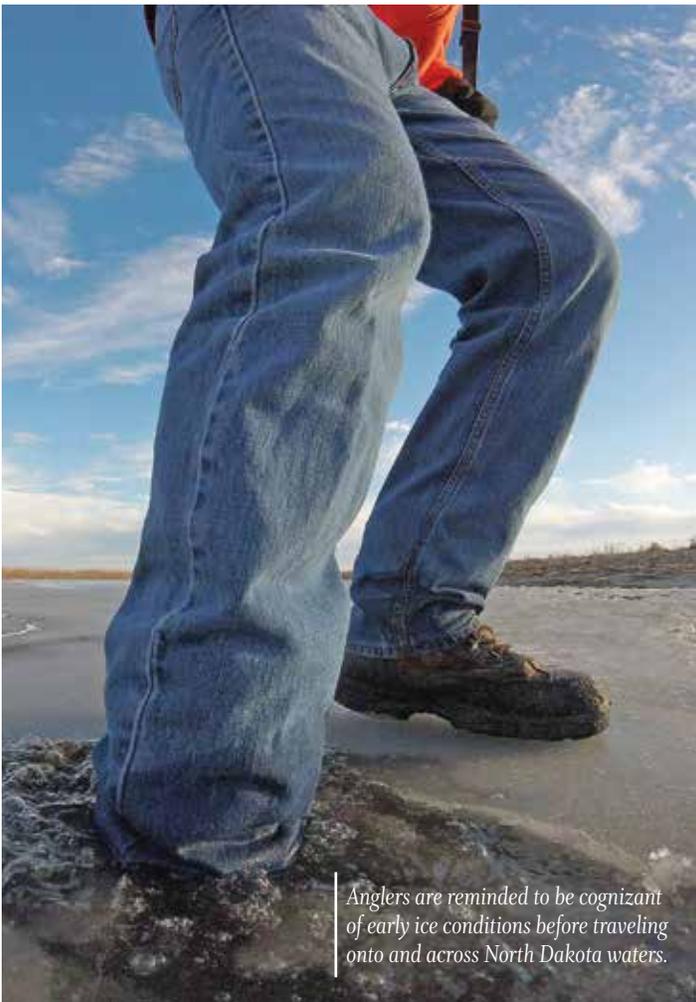
NORTHWEST FISHERIES DISTRICT

Aaron Slominski, fisheries biologist, Williston

Blacktail Dam (Williams County) – Good numbers of walleye and pike, with some bigger fish. Abundant small perch and bluegill, with some bigger bluegill in low numbers, and a low number of smallmouth bass.

Northgate Dam (Adams County) – Good populations of walleye, bluegill and crappie. Stocked annually with rainbow trout, with some nice-sized, carry-over trout. Decent largemouth bass population.

Trenton Lake (Williams County) – Good crappie population. Decent number of walleye, pike and catfish.



Anglers are reminded to be cognizant of early ice conditions before traveling onto and across North Dakota waters.

CRAIG BHRLE

NORTH CENTRAL FISHERIES DISTRICT

Jason Lee, district fisheries supervisor, Riverdale

Antelope Lake (Pierce County) – Nice-sized perch abundant. Good number of walleye ranging from 16-26 inches.

Clear Lake (Pierce County) – Good number of walleye from 14-27 inches.

Cottonwood Lake (McHenry County) – Decent number of pike and a good number of 14- to 26-inch walleye.

Hinsz Lake (Sheridan County) – Good number of 14- to 21-inch walleye.

Lake Gertie (McLean County) – Good number of 22- to 29-inch pike.

Lake Richard (Sheridan County) – Good number of 14- to 27-inch walleye.

Long Lake (McLean County) – Good number of 19- to 32-inch pike.

Makoti Lake (Ward County) – Abundant 24- to 34-inch pike.

Rice Lake (Ward County) – Abundant pike, ranging from 18-37 inches.

Scooby Lake (McLean County) – Newer fishery, with a good number of 14- to 18-inch walleye and some good-sized perch.

SOUTH CENTRAL FISHERIES DISTRICT

Paul Bailey, district fisheries supervisor, Bismarck.

Alkaline Lake (Kidder County) – Walleye abundant. Fair pike numbers, with fish occasionally over 10 pounds. Large perch in low numbers.

Braun Lake (Logan County) – Abundant walleye and small perch.

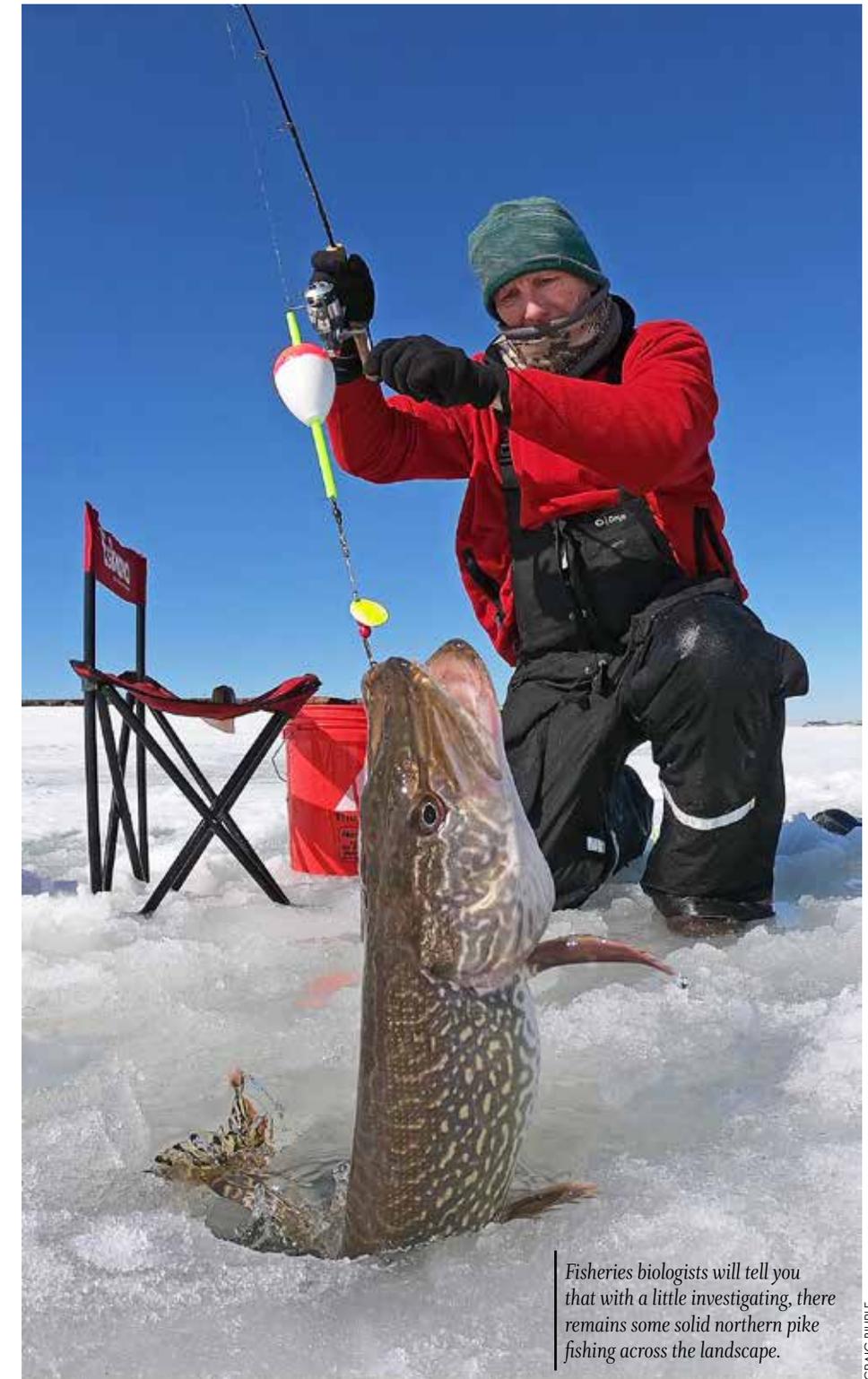
Crimmins WPA (Burleigh County) – Walleye abundant and a low number of perch.

Dollinger-Schnabel Lake (McIntosh County) – Fair number of perch up to 12 inches and small walleye abundant.

Dry Lake (McIntosh County) – Excellent walleye and pike fishery, with a low number of large perch.

Fish Creek Dam (Morton County) – Largemouth bass and rainbow trout abundant. Smallmouth bass, brown trout and crappie in lower numbers.

Froelich Dam (Sioux County) – Walleye



Fisheries biologists will tell you that with a little investigating, there remains some solid northern pike fishing across the landscape.

CRAIG BIRBLE

and northern pike abundant. Yellow perch, crappie, bluegill and largemouth bass present.

Geier Lake (Kidder County) – Walleye abundant and a fair number of perch.

Green Lake (McIntosh County) – Quality walleye and perch fishery, with a low number of pike.

Harmon Lake (Morton County) – Large-mouth bass, bluegill and crappie abundant. Rainbow trout and northern pike in lower numbers.

Harr Lake (McIntosh County) – Abundant walleye and a low number of large yellow perch.

Helen Lake (Kidder County) – Excellent



Waiting for a tip-up flag to fly, indicating a fish is on.

CRAIG BIRHLE

northern pike fishery, with fish occasionally over 8 pounds. Perch present.

Jasper Lake (Kidder County) – Walleye abundant and fish occasionally over 25 inches. Perch present.

Kislingbury Lake (McIntosh County) – Walleye abundant and perch in low numbers.

Lake Geneva (Kidder County) – Quality walleye and perch fishery.

Lake Josephine (Kidder County) – Walleye abundant, with fish occasionally over 25 inches. Fair number of perch and a low number of northern pike.

Logan Lake (Logan County) – Walleye abundant. Fair number of small perch.

Long Alkaline Lake (Kidder County) – Abundant northern pike up to 4 pounds.

Marvin Miller Lake (Logan County) – Excellent walleye fishery, with fish occasionally over 25 inches. Fair number of perch and a low number of northern pike.

North Koenig Lake (Kidder County) – Small walleye abundant and perch present.

Nygren Dam (Morton County) – Catchable-sized trout stocked in spring, small bluegill and 10- to 14-inch largemouth bass abundant.

Rice Lake (Emmons County) – Walleye abundant and occasionally over 25 inches. Northern pike and perch in low numbers.

Sibley Lake (Kidder County) – Small walleye abundant, but some fish over 20 inches. Multiple perch year-classes in good numbers.

Wetzel Lake (Logan County) – Small northern pike abundant.

Woodhouse Lake (Kidder County) –

Walleye up to 28 inches abundant. Fair number of small perch.

NORTHEAST FISHERIES DISTRICT

Randy Hiltner, district fisheries supervisor, and Todd Caspers, fisheries biologist, both Devils Lake

Carpenter Lake (Rolette County) – Consistent pike producer, with lots of fish over 25 inches. Recent walleye stockings have been successful, with fish now up to 15 inches.

Goose Lake (Wells County) – Good number of keeper-sized walleye, with some larger fish. Lower density pike population, with some larger fish.

Homme Dam (Walsh County) – Perch

and crappie common and should provide some action for winter anglers.

Hurdsfield-Tuffy Lake (Wells County) – Walleye abundant, with a good number ranging from 15-20 inches.

Island Lake (Rolette County) – Pike over 24 inches are abundant.

Lake Coe (Eddy County) – Good number of walleye. Fish of all sizes available.

Lake Laretta (Nelson County) – Good walleye population, with a decent number over 20 inches. Fair number of pike.

North Lake Washington (Eddy County) – Good number of walleye, with fish up to 21 inches.

Red Willow Lake (Griggs County) – Nice walleye population, with quite a few around 20 inches. Some bluegill up to 10 inches, but most smaller.

Sibley Lake (Griggs County) – Supports a decent number of pike over 30 inches.

Silver Lake WMA (Wells County) – Good number of 15- to 20-inch walleye. Decent number of keeper-sized perch.

Wood Lake (Benson County) – Lots of bluegill, with the average length about 7 inches. Decent walleye and pike populations.

Devils Lake

Walleye – Walleye fishing this winter will likely be a mixed bag, as many of the fish will likely be 15 inches or less. The number



Accessing a favorite lake in winter is often the biggest test for ice anglers in North Dakota.

CRAIG BIRHLE

of walleyes from 15 to 20 inches is below average due to lower reproductive success from 2013 to 2015, so anglers will have to put in more time to catch fish in that size range. The number of walleyes over 20 inches should be about average.

Northern pike – Pike should provide ample opportunities for anglers. Pike are still relatively abundant and tend to be good-sized, with most between about 24-32 inches. Pike are underutilized at Devils Lake, so anglers should not be shy about keeping a limit.

Yellow perch – Perch fishing will likely be slower than typical again this winter. The number of catchable-sized perch is still below average. Many perch are about 9 inches or so, but there are larger fish.

White bass – White bass are not a traditional target of ice anglers, as they tend to not bite especially well during winter. Even so, there are currently record high numbers of bass that are about 14 inches long in the lake.

Lake Irvine

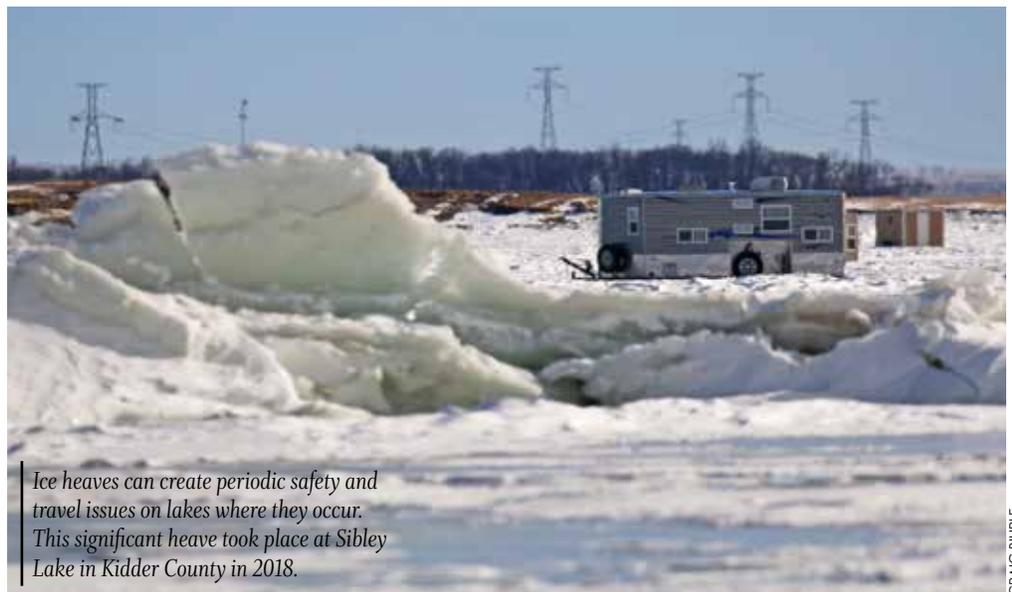
Walleye – Fishing may be a little slower than usual as walleye abundance seems a bit below average. However, fishing should still be good and most of the walleye will be between 14-20 inches.

Northern pike – Pike are abundant, so ice fishing should be good. Most pike are medium-sized, but there are some larger fish as well. Pike in Lake Irvine are underutilized, so anglers should not be shy about keeping a limit. In fact, the pike seem to be too abundant, as their body condition, or plumpness, is relatively low. Keeping pike would be beneficial to the population as it may help reduce competition for food.

Yellow perch – Perch numbers are typically low, but the few caught tend to be big.

Stump Lake

Walleye – Winter anglers should have good luck with walleye, as their numbers are a bit above average and there are a variety of sizes available.



Ice heaves can create periodic safety and travel issues on lakes where they occur. This significant heave took place at Sibley Lake in Kidder County in 2018.

CRAIG BIHRLE

Northern pike – Pike fishing should be decent. Pike numbers in Stump Lake are not as good as other lakes in the Devils Lake system, but they tend to be larger fish.

Yellow perch – Perch fishing might be slower than typical, as their numbers appear to be lower than usual. Most perch are about 8 inches long, but there are larger fish present.

SOUTHEAST FISHERIES DISTRICT

Brandon Kratz, district fisheries supervisor, Jamestown

Barnes Lake (Stutsman County) – Good walleye and pike populations. Fishing is typically the best in the morning at first light as the lake is typically clear.

Elm Lake (Richland County) – Walleye population continues to expand, with many sizes available. Sampling efforts in 2019 yielded the highest walleye catch-rate in the lake's history, with walleye averaging 17 inches. Pike and crappie also present.

Fox Lake (Barnes County) – Each year anglers experience good walleye and perch fishing, particularly at first- and last-ice.

Island Lake (Barnes County) – High density walleye population, with fish over 25 inches quite common. Over the last several years, the perch population has increased, providing additional angling opportunities.

Kee Lake (Barnes County) – Great opportunity for anglers who like a diversity of

fish species. Contains a healthy population of walleye, pike and perch. While pike tend to run less than 28 inches, the average length of walleye sampled in 2019 was 20 inches, with some decent perch available.

Kraft Slough (Sargent County) – Abundant walleye, with fish averaging 20 inches. Opportunity for good perch fishing also exists.

Moon Lake (Barnes County) – High density perch population, though sizes tend to be small, anglers can expect lots of action. Large walleye and smallmouth bass also found in fair numbers, along with the occasional brown trout.

North Eckelson (Barnes County) – High density perch population. Though the average size tends to be about 7 inches, larger fish present.

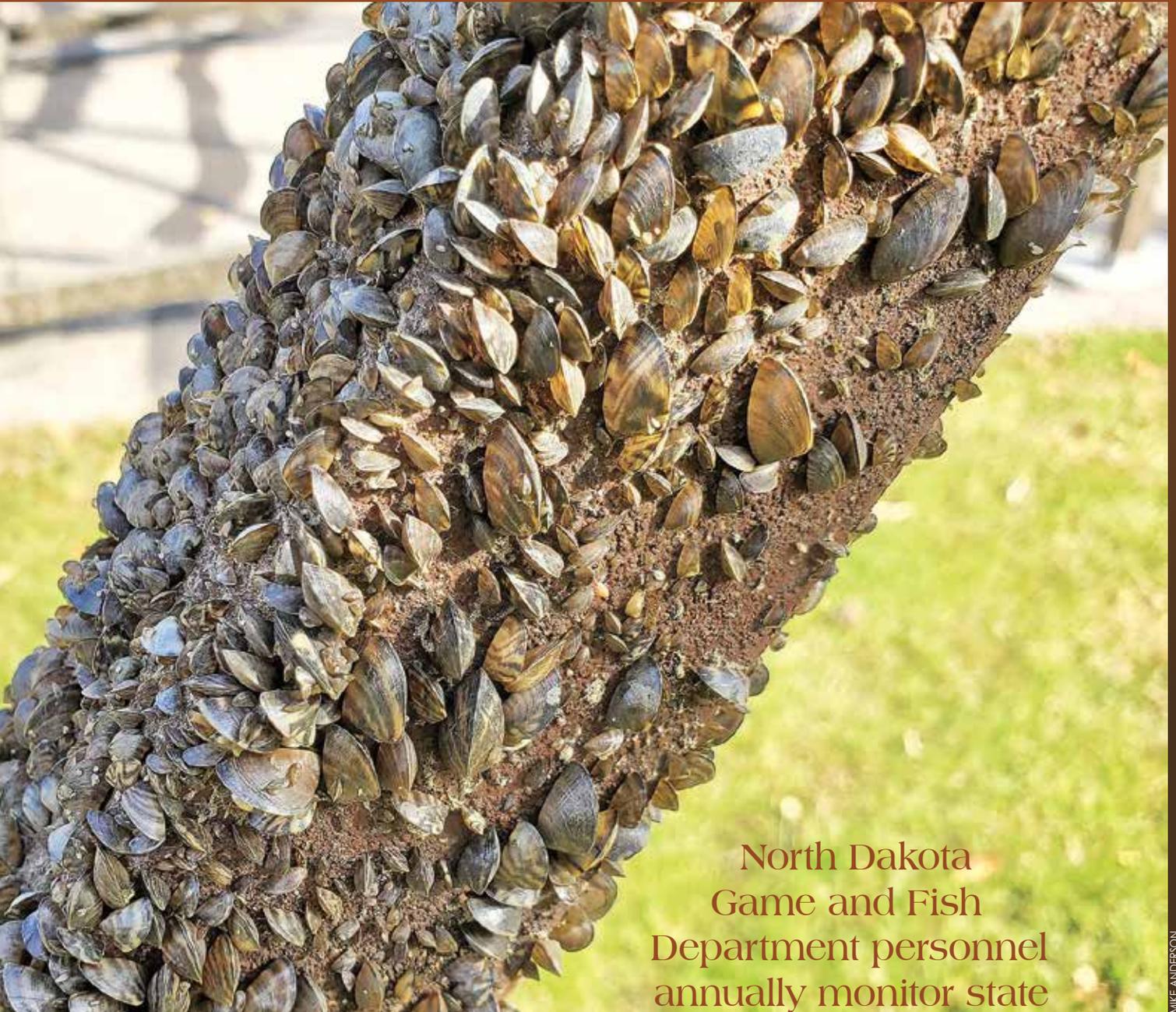
Ole Breum Lake (Sargent County) – Crappie, perch, walleye and pike exist in this lake and provide the potential to produce some good ice fishing action. The north and south basin have reconnected due to above average precipitation in 2019.

Trautman Slough (Stutsman County) – Robust walleye population, with big numbers of eater-sized fish. Sampling efforts in 2019 suggests the perch population is expanding.

Twin Lake (LaMoure County) – Excellent walleye population, with fish of all sizes including some trophies. Good pike numbers, with fish over 10 pounds.

ANS Monitoring Efforts Increased

By Ron Wilson



A boat lift covered in zebra mussels that was pulled this fall from Lake Ashtabula.

North Dakota Game and Fish Department personnel annually monitor state waters for the presence of new or expanded populations of aquatic nuisance species.

MIKE ANDERSON

While coming up empty-handed in these monitoring efforts is certainly the preferred outcome, Department biologists understand the possibility of finding a nonnative plant or animal that could negatively influence state waters is real.

"This year we found bighead carp for the first time in North Dakota," said Jessica Howell, Department aquatic nuisance species coordinator, on the invasive fish species that moved up the James River from South Dakota during times of high water. "They moved up with some additional silver carp, so now we have populations of both."

As it's been widely reported, zebra mussels were also discovered in June in Lake Ashtabula, a 5,200-acre impoundment operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and in September in the Sheyenne River near Valley City.

Howell said it's only a guess how the invasive mussels got into Ashtabula. Maybe they were transported in water as microscopic larvae, or moved to the lake as adults attached to equipment, such as a boat dock or boat lift.

"If people follow the clean, drain and dry regulations and recommendations, they shouldn't be spreading any aquatic nuisance species around the state," Howell said. "However, we do ask that people be more vigilant, knowing that there is potential to spread zebra mussels not only from Ashtabula, but from the Red River and the Sheyenne River as well."

Because zebra mussels in the larval stage can easily go unnoticed by water users, Howell said it's important that boaters, anglers and others treat every water as if it's infested.

"We have good regulations in place and if all people follow our laws, it should really minimize the risk of spreading aquatic nuisance species," Howell said. "Those

laws include removing vegetation, draining all water and removing drain plugs and leaving them open during transport. That doesn't just apply to recreational equipment, it also applies to commercial and industrial equipment as well."

Game and Fish this year stepped up water sampling efforts that detect larval-stage zebra mussels. Howell said Department personnel sampled more than 100 water bodies twice each in 2019. Before, that number was closer to 30 waters sampled just once a year.

"We also added some adult (zebra mussel) searching, particularly upstream of Lake Ashtabula, as well as a few other high-risk areas," she said. "Thankfully, we have not found any zebra mussels in any of those samples. We wanted to make sure that any potential activities that we have done have not spread any zebra mussels, and that recreational boating and angling has not caused any spread as well."

ANS Funding Effort

Lawmakers during the 2019 legislative session created an aquatic nuisance species fund to assist in the ongoing outreach and monitoring efforts of aquatic nuisance species around the state.

The new legislation established an ANS fee of \$15 for motorized watercraft registered in North Dakota to run concurrent with the three-year motorized watercraft registration period. The fee starts with the 2020-22 registration period.

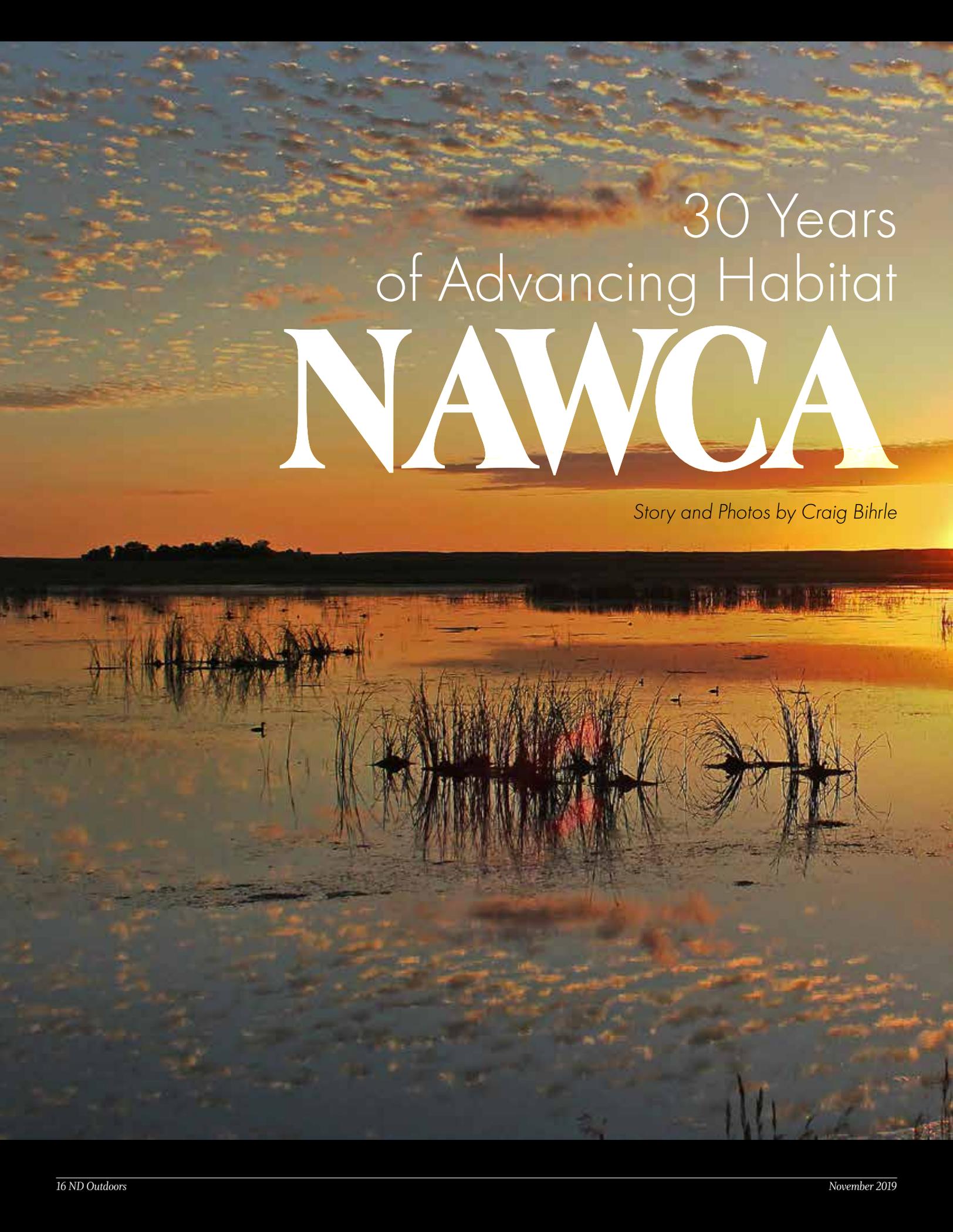
This fee is prorated, meaning those motorized watercraft owners who have one year left in the three-year cycle will be charged just \$5.

Also, all motorized watercraft not licensed in this state and operated on North Dakota waters must obtain a valid, nonrefundable aquatic nuisance species sticker. The cost is \$15 per calendar year and must be purchased online on the Department's website at gf.nd.gov.



Jessica Howell, Game and Fish Department ANS coordinator, tests for microscopic zebra mussels in fall at Lake Ashtabula.

MIKE ANDERSON



30 Years
of Advancing Habitat
NAWCA

Story and Photos by Craig Bihrlé



In the last 30 years, North American waterfowl populations have increased substantially.

No doubt one of the contributing factors is NAWCA – the North American Wetlands Conservation Act – passed by Congress and signed by President George H. W. Bush on December 9, 1989.

The NAWCA gave a major lift to the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, established in 1986 between the governments of the United States and Canada (Mexico joined the effort in 1994) to address a long-term continental waterfowl decline. It provided a source of federal matching dollars for worthy projects designed to improve wetland habitats on a large enough scale to make a difference.

And the difference, according to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates, is a jump of about 50 percent in the number of ducks and geese migrating up and down the continent since 1989.

That's in direct contrast to a recent "State of the Birds" report from the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, which shows that many other continental bird species are in decline. "Given that State of the Birds report," said North Dakota Game and Fish Department Director Terry Steinwand, "I would have to guess that waterfowl would be on the same trajectory without NAWCA."

Steinwand holds a unique perspective when it comes to NAWCA. For 12 years – the last seven as chairman – Steinwand has served as the Central Flyway representative on a national board called the North American Wetlands Conservation Council. This council also includes state conservation agency directors from the Atlantic, Mississippi and Pacific flyways, as well as several national conservation organizations. What the council does is review project proposals that fall under NAWMP, and pass along recommendations for funding.



(Top) North Dakota's prairie potholes are a valuable continental natural resource, and are integral to the success of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.

(Right) North Dakota is typically the number one duck production state in the lower 48, and in good years, it may produce more ducks than all the other states combined.



The final decision on which projects get NAWCA dollars lies with the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, which is chaired by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, and also includes the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, the administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and two members each from the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate.

Once a project is approved, the grant money becomes available, not as a direct payment, but as matching dollars to combine with other nonfederal sources. As such, Steinwand says, the projects that eventually get funding are those that come with committed partners already in place to contribute the match to the NAWCA grant money available.

Since NAWCA first passed 30 years ago, the federal grants have added up

to \$1.7 billion. On the other side, more than 6,000 partners, from national organizations and businesses, to state conservation agencies, to local wildlife clubs and individuals, have contributed nearly \$5 billion in matching dollars.

What all these dollars mean is new, preserved or restored habitat in the form of wetlands, grasslands, and anything else that might help wetland-related migratory birds. And North Dakota, because of its position in the Prairie Pothole Region, and its significance to the continent's breeding duck population, is a big part of that.

Since the first North Dakota NAWMP project got underway 30 years ago (see sidebar on Chase Lake Prairie Project), the state has hosted 85 projects that conserved about 1.7 million acres. Continentally, NAWCA grant money has been invested in more than 2,800 proj-

ects involving around 30 million acres. "It benefits waterfowl, and benefits other wetland obligate birds, whether it be sandpipers or avocets and many others bird species," Steinwand said.

But there's more to it. "The vast majority of those funds," Steinwand added, "actually go to landowners who voluntarily enroll land in NAWCA projects ... it really is a win-win for places like North Dakota."

While 30 years is an appropriate milestone to acknowledge the successes of NAWCA, it's also a time to redouble efforts to address future challenges. "Even though we've made some tremendous progress," Steinwand said, "we still have a long way to go."

But fortunately, the desire to develop projects and recruit partners is holding steady. "There continues to be a lot of

interest," Steinwand noted. "The enthusiasm in North Dakota, across the United States and Canada and Mexico, has continued in the years I've been on the council ... so I'd say that unless that enthusiasm wanes ... this is going to continue to be successful. All our partners, they come back every year. They're still as excited as they've ever been.

"With that continued support of our partners, with continued support of Congress and the states, I believe we'll be successful well into the future."

CRAIG BIHRLE is the Game and Fish Department's communications supervisor.



Hunters have contributed greatly to the success of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.



A sign promoting "Profitable Agriculture and Abundant Wildlife" provided the backdrop for speakers at the Chase Lake Prairie Project dedication in September 1989.



One of the signature events at the Chase Lake Prairie Project dedication was moving dirt to plug a drainage canal that would lead to the first wetland restoration under the project. Many more have followed in the 30 years since.

Chase Lake Prairie Project

The first major North American Waterfowl Management Plan project in North Dakota got off to a rousing start 30 years ago this fall on the windswept North Dakota prairie in western Stutsman County.

Dubbed a "National Flagship Project" of the NAWMP, the Chase Lake Prairie Project dedication in September 1989 attracted about 600 people that included many landowners who would eventually become partners under the project's motto of "Profitable Agriculture and Abundant Wildlife."

The Chase Lake Prairie Project is still active today, having received numerous North American Wetland Conservation Act grants over the years, and having fulfilled the words of the late North Dakota Governor George Sinner, who told the gathered crowd, "The partnership on which the project and the foundation are founded transcends state lines and even national boundaries. The commitment to this project is indeed continental. We are proud of North Dakota's role in the ... North American Waterfowl Management Plan and the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture, and we stand ready to further the causes of the project, proving the goals of agriculture and wildlife can be achieved together."

By Greg Freeman, Department News Editor

CWD Surveillance Continues

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department will continue its Hunter-Harvested Surveillance program during the 2019 hunting season by sampling deer for chronic wasting disease from units in more than half of the state.

Samples from hunter-harvested deer taken in the eastern portion of the state will be tested from units 1, 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E, 2F1, 2F2, 2G, 2G1, 2G2 and 2L. In addition, deer will be tested in the northwest from units 3A1, 3A2, 3A3 (that portion of the unit north of U.S. Highway 2) and 3B1, in the west from units 4B and 4C, and in the southwest from units 3C (the portion of the unit west of the Missouri River), 3E1, 3E2, 3F1 and 3F2.

Dr. Charlie Bahnsen, Game and Fish wildlife veterinarian, said surveillance is conducted to estimate where CWD is located, and to determine the infection rate in the area. He said the Department uses the information to guide its efforts in managing the impacts of the disease.

"CWD has not been found in the eastern third of the state and our surveillance goal in that area is to confidently say that it is still not present in the area," Bahnsen said. "We need to test a lot of deer to reach that conclusion, so it is important for hunters to consider dropping off their deer for testing."

Bahnsen said it's likely that additional positive deer will be found this fall in units 3A1, 3B1, 3F2 and 4B where CWD has been previously detected.

"Infection rates are relatively low in those areas, but in previous years only a small portion of hunters have submitted heads for testing," he added. "Most infected deer will look perfectly healthy and the only way to tell is by having them tested."

Hunters are encouraged to drop off the head of an adult or yearling deer at one of nearly 100 collection sites across

the state. Hunters wishing to keep the deer head can bring it to a Game and Fish district office during business hours to have it sampled. Fawns and head-shot deer cannot be tested. Testing results will be provided to hunters within 2-3 weeks by email or text message, based on their preferred communication method listed on their Game and Fish account. To add or update contact information, visit My Account at the Department's website, gf.nd.gov.

Hunters should note a carcass or head of a deer taken from units 3A1, 3B1 or 3F2 may not be transported to a collection site outside of the unit. Exception: deer heads taken in units 3A1 or 3B1 may be transported between those units.

More information on CWD, including transportation restrictions, is available at the Game and Fish website.

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

- Alexander – Sather Lake Recreation Area
- Beach – Gooseneck Implement
- Belfield – Badlands Taxidermy
- Belfield – Superpumper
- Bismarck – 3Be Meats
- Bismarck – NDGF Office
- Bismarck – West Dakota Meats
- Blaisdell – BJ Taxidermy
- Bottineau – Mattern Family Meats
- Bowbells – The Joint



TY STOCKTON

- Cando – K&PE Meats
- Carrington – Barton Meats Inc.
- Carson – Hertz Hardware
- Casselton – Casselton Tesoro
- Cooperstown – Miller's Fresh Foods
- Crosby – Cenex/New Century Ag
- Devils Lake – Lake Region Sportsmen's Club/City Sanitation Dept.
- Devils Lake – NDGF Office
- Dickinson – NDGF Office
- Dickinson – Wildlife Creations
- Dunseith – Wayne's Food Pride
- Dwight – David's Taxidermy
- Edgeley – Cenex
- Elgin – Gunny's Bait and Tackle
- Elgin – Melvin's Taxidermy
- Ellendale – True Value
- Enderlin – Maple Valley Lockers Inc.
- Fargo – NDSU Veterinary Diagnostic Lab
- Fargo – Prime Cut Meats

- Flasher – 8 miles east on Hwy 21
- Fordville – Jelinek Brother Taxidermy
- Fort Yates – Prairie Knights Quik Mart
- Glen Ullin – Kuntz's Butcher Shop
- Grafton – Tractor Supply
- Grand Forks – Grand Forks Gun Club
- Grassy Butte – Sweet Crude Travel Center
- Great Bend – Manock Meats
- Grenora – Farmer's Union
- Gwinner – Stoppeworth Taxidermy
- Gwinner – Teal's Market
- Hettinger – Dakota Packing
- Horace – J&K Taxidermy
- Jamestown – NDGF Office
- Jamestown – Windish's Deer Processing
- Kenmare – Farmer's Union
- Kenmare – Jessica Ware's Taxidermy
- Lakota – Zimprich Taxidermy
- LaMoure – LaMoure Lockers
- Langdon – Farmer's Union Cenex
- Langdon – Hursman Taxidermy
- Larimore – E-Z Stop Convenience Store
- Linton – Bosch's Meat Market
- Linton – Scherr's Meats
- Lisbon – Sheyenne National Grassland Office
- Mandan – Butcher Block Meats
- Mapleton – Jason's Taxidermy
- Mayville – Cenex
- Milnor – Milnor Locker
- Minot – AAA Taxidermy
- Minot – Blom's Locker and Processing
- Minot – Frenchy's Taxidermy
- Minot – State Fairgrounds
- Minot – Wallen's Taxidermy
- Mohall – Engebretson Processing
- Mohall – Farmer's Union
- Mott – 4 Corners Car Wash
- New Leipzig Hertz Hardware
- New Leipzig 12 miles south on Hwy 49
- New Town – Three Affiliated Tribes Fish and Wildlife Division Office
- New Rockford – Risovi Taxidermy Studio
- Oakes – Butcher Block
- Park River – Jim's Super Valu
- Powers Lake – Farmer's Union
- Ray Horizon – Cenex
- Reynolds – Weber's Meats
- Rolette – The Meat Shack
- Rugby – Cenex
- Scranton – Wolf's Meat Processing
- Selfridge – Cenex
- Sentinel Butte – Buffalo Gap Guest Ranch
- Sheyenne – Wild Things Taxidermy
- Solen – Hettich Salvage
- Stanley – Stanley Ace Hardware
- Tioga – Recycling Center
- Valley City – Valley Meat Supply Inc.
- Wahpeton – Aber Taxidermy
- Wahpeton – J&R Taxidermy
- Walcott – Brantley's Antlers
- Walhalla – North Dakota Forest Service Office
- Watford City – Farmer's Union Cenex
- West Fargo – West Fargo City Sanitation
- Williston – Bickler Taxidermy
- Williston – Dave's Heads or Tails Taxidermy
- Williston – Mounts By Mert
- Williston – NDGF Office
- Williston – Zerr's Taxidermy



CRAIG BIRLLE

Chronic Wasting Disease Detected in McKenzie County

Two mule deer taken in September tested positive for chronic wasting disease, including one during the archery season from deer gun unit 4B in McKenzie County, where CWD had not previously been found. The other deer was harvested during the youth season in unit 3A1 in Divide County where CWD was first detected last fall.

North Dakota Game and Fish Department wildlife veterinarian Dr. Charlie Bahnson said the finding in 4B marks the first detection of CWD in the badlands.

"This is an iconic place to hunt big game where people travel to from across the state," Bahnson said. "By no means does this first detection spell doom for hunting in this area, as long as we are proactive in trying to keep infection rates from climbing. We also need to reduce the chance of CWD spreading to new areas."

Game and Fish will review its CWD management strategy after the deer rifle season and will consider making revisions for next season. While unit 4B does not have carcass transportation restrictions in place for 2019, Bahnson does recommend that hunters in 4B submit their deer for testing, and avoid transporting high-risk carcass parts, such as the brain and spinal column, outside of the hunting unit.

More information on CWD, including transportation regulations, can be found by visiting the Game and Fish website, gf.nd.gov/cwd.

Dead Deer Permit Needed

North Dakota Game and Fish Department enforcement personnel are issuing a reminder that a permit is required before taking possession of a dead deer found near a road or in a field. Only shed antlers can be possessed without a permit.

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



Fall Fish Survey Completed

North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries biologists have completed fall reproduction surveys and the future looks promising, especially compared to a year ago when many waters were struggling.

Scott Gangl, Department fisheries management section leader, said many lakes already had low water levels going into last winter, and then a heavy snowpack resulted in significant winterkill.

“Good moisture throughout the summer rejuvenated the habitat in many of the smaller lakes around the state, primarily in the central and southeast,” Gangl said.

The cooler, wet summer produced ideal receiving conditions for stocked pike and walleye. “We saw really good survival and growth on most stocked species,” Gangl said.

Similar to last year, Devils Lake saw fair to good numbers of walleye, with the catch close to average.

“However, we saw very low numbers of yellow perch, which means there wasn’t a good reproductive year for perch,” Gangl said.

In Lake Sakakawea, Gangl said there was a good catch of young walleye.

“This was a result of a combination of stocking efforts and natural reproduction,” he said. “We also saw a lot of rainbow smelt, so the forage base is still pretty solid.”

Lake Oahe has had several years of good reproduction of walleye, Gangl said, including this year.

“The walleye population continues to be dominated by smaller fish,” he said. “Lake Oahe is lacking forage, which causes fish to grow slower than they should.”

Reproduction surveys evaluate natural reproduction, stocking success and forage abundance.

WINTER FISHING REGULATIONS

Anglers are encouraged to refer to the 2018-20 North Dakota Fishing Guide or the Game and Fish Department’s website at gf.nd.gov for winter fishing regulations.

Some winter fishing regulations include:

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



WILDLIFE VIEWING DEVICES ON PRIVATE LAND

Outdoor recreationists who install devices for viewing wildlife on private land should be aware of a state law that was passed during the 2019 legislative session.

House Bill 1503 requires an individual who enters private property and installs a device for observing, recording or photographing wildlife to receive written permission from the landowner. Otherwise, the device must be identified with a permanently affixed metal or plastic tag with either a registration number issued by the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, or the individual’s name, address and telephone number.

An equipment registration number can be generated by visiting “Buy and Apply” at the Game and Fish website, gf.nd.gov. One registration number will be issued that can be used on all equipment that requires identification.

The equipment registration number does not expire.

Advisory Board Schedule

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

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

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

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



Terry Steinwand, Game and Fish Department director, addresses those gathered at an advisory board meeting in Dickinson in spring 2019.

CRAIG BIHRLE

- **DISTRICT 8** – Adams, Billings, Bowman, Dunn, Golden Valley, Hettinger, Slope and Stark counties
Date: November 25 – 7 p.m. MT
Location: Choice Financial Bank, Belfield
Host: Belfield Sportsmen’s Club
Contact: Roger Decker 701-575-8876
Advisory board member: Dwight Hecker, Fairfield
- **DISTRICT 3** – Benson, Cavalier, Eddy, Ramsey, Rolette, and Towner
Date: November 25 – 7 p.m.
Location: Munich Fire Hall
Host: The Ville Café, 501 Main St, Munich
Contact: Heather Barker, 701-317-4390
Advisory board member: Thomas Rost, Devils Lake
- **DISTRICT 2** – Bottineau, Burke, McHenry, Mountrail, Pierce, Renville and Ward counties
Date: November 26 – 7 p.m.
Location: Velva Wildlife Club
Host: North Dakota Fur Trappers and Harvesters Association
Contact: Rick Tischaefar 701-460-1055
- **DISTRICT 8** – Adams, Billings, Bowman, Dunn, Golden Valley, Hettinger, Slope and Stark counties
Date: November 25 – 7 p.m. MT
Location: Choice Financial Bank, Belfield
Host: Belfield Sportsmen’s Club
Contact: Roger Decker 701-575-8876
Advisory board member: Dwight Hecker, Fairfield
- **DISTRICT 6** – Barnes, Dickey, Foster, Griggs, Logan, LaMoure, McIntosh, Stutsman and Wells counties
Date: November 26 – 7 p.m.
Location: SE Region Vo-Tech Center, Oakes
Host: Ludden Sportsmen’s Club
Contact: Eric Larson 701-210-0410
Advisory board member: Cody Sand, Forbes
- **DISTRICT 1** – Divide, McKenzie and Williams counties
Date: December 2 – 7 p.m.
Location: Missouri Fairgrounds, Williston
Host: Missouri Basin Bowmen
Contact: Steve Rehak 701-770-3643
Advisory board member: Beau Wisness, Keene
- **DISTRICT 5** – Cass, Ransom, Richland, Sargent, Steele and Traill counties
Date: December 2 – 7 p.m.
Location: Cogswell Community
- **DISTRICT 4** – Grand Forks, Nelson, Pembina and Walsh counties
Date: December 3 – 7 p.m.
Location: Cavalier Cinema
Host: Shane Feltman
Contact: Bruce Ellertson 701-247-2915
Advisory board member: Bruce Ellertson, Lakota
- **DISTRICT 7** – Burleigh, Emmons, Grant, Kidder, McLean, Mercer, Morton, Oliver, Sheridan and Sioux counties
Date: December 3 – 7 p.m.
Location: Game and Fish Department, Bismarck
Host: Capital City Ladybirds Pheasants Forever Chapter
Contact: Lora Isakson 701-426-9045
Advisory board member: Dave Nehring, Bismarck
- **DISTRICT 6** – Barnes, Dickey, Foster, Griggs, Logan, LaMoure, McIntosh, Stutsman and Wells counties
Date: November 26 – 7 p.m.
Location: SE Region Vo-Tech Center, Oakes
Host: Ludden Sportsmen’s Club
Contact: Eric Larson 701-210-0410
Advisory board member: Cody Sand, Forbes
- **DISTRICT 4** – Grand Forks, Nelson, Pembina and Walsh counties
Date: December 3 – 7 p.m.
Location: Cavalier Cinema
Host: Shane Feltman
Contact: Bruce Ellertson 701-247-2915
Advisory board member: Bruce Ellertson, Lakota
- **DISTRICT 7** – Burleigh, Emmons, Grant, Kidder, McLean, Mercer, Morton, Oliver, Sheridan and Sioux counties
Date: December 3 – 7 p.m.
Location: Game and Fish Department, Bismarck
Host: Capital City Ladybirds Pheasants Forever Chapter
Contact: Lora Isakson 701-426-9045
Advisory board member: Dave Nehring, Bismarck



Darkhouse Spearfishing Opens at Ice-Up

North Dakota's darkhouse spearfishing season opens on most state waters whenever ice-up occurs. Legal fish are northern pike and nongame species.

All individuals who participate in darkhouse spearfishing must first register online at the North Dakota Game and Fish Department website, gf.nd.gov. In addition, anglers age 16 and older must possess a valid fishing license.

Spearers and anglers are reminded that materials used to mark holes must be in possession as soon as a hole greater than 10 inches in diameter is made in the ice.

North Dakota residents who do not have a fishing license may spear during the winter free fishing weekend Dec. 28-29, but they still need to register to spear.

All waters open to hook and line fishing are open to darkhouse spearing except:

- East Park Lake, West Park Lake, Lake Audubon – McLean County
- Heckers Lake – Sheridan County
- Larimore Dam – Grand Forks County
- McClusky Canal
- New Johns Lake – Burleigh County
- Red Willow Lake – Griggs County
- Wood Lake – Benson County

Anglers and spearers should refer to the 2018-20 North Dakota Fishing Guide for more information.

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.

STAFF NOTES



Doug Howie

Howie Retires, Francis Fills Position

Doug Howie retired in September after more than 40 years with the Department. Howie started in 1975 as part of a crew conducting woody draw browse transect surveys. Much of his career was spent in private lands – from the early days of habitat and wildlife food plots to assisting with the development of what most hunters know today as the Private Lands Open To Sportsmen program.

Curt Francis, a private land biologist in Dickinson since 2016, has filled Howie's position in Bismarck.



Curt Francis

Buckley Assumes New Role

Todd Buckley has accepted the wildlife resource management biologist position in Williston. He has been in the Williston office as the private land biologist since 2012.



Todd Buckley

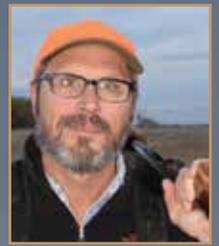
Wright Hired in Williston

Nikki Wright was hired in September as the administrative assistant in Williston.



Nikki Wright

BACKCAST



By Ron Wilson

This deer season we'll hike by, and occasionally step in, an untold number of deer droppings. The unmistakable piles – deposited on skinny trails in cattail tangles, grassy sidehills, buckbrush patches and where we park the pickup – are as much a part of the rural landscape as wooden fence posts and multi-row shelterbelts planted years ago by hardworking hands.

These randomly discarded deer signposts are so commonplace, they rarely provoke conversation or much acknowledgement, save for the occasional nudge with the toe of a hunting boot.

For the once-in-a-lifetime cow elk hunter in western North Dakota, who has hiked many backcountry miles, fueled by water, jerky and peanuts stuffed in a backpack, but has yet to bump a single animal or spot one three or four draws over through binoculars, finding elk droppings in shaded timber an hour hike from the pickup, will stop you in your tracks, bring you to a knee for closer inspection.

Wildlife biologists will tell you that elk droppings look much like what is left behind by whitetail and mule deer, other than the pellets are, as we've seen over and over in states west of here, bigger and more oval shaped.

What they don't tell you is how fired up you'll be to find them. It's proof to the 16-year-old with the cow tag in his pocket that the animals certainly do exist and that, at least on this day, where Billings and McKenzie counties bump up against each other off the driven path, we're hunting in the right spot.

Which, of course, is a big confidence boost in a pursuit that often leaves you questioning whether you're going about it entirely wrong.

North Dakota's deer gun season interrupts our elk hunt out west and we welcome it. Not because we need a break, but because, like a lot of hunting families I suspect, we've been looking forward to this early November season for weeks, maybe longer.

Our oldest kids are flying in from out-of-state, Grammy and Grandpa are driving over from Grand Forks and a big gathering over smoked ribs and other fixings is set for Saturday night. And if it all goes as planned in the field, we'll process deer in the garage on Sunday.

This early November gathering, this collection of likeminded family and a few hunting friends is something we never question because we know we're going about it correctly.

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.

NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

JANUARY, 1957
15c



In this issue . . . Summary of Activities - 1956
N. D. Outdoors Subscription Contest

This exceptionally fine mule deer was taken by Ray "Bud" Mitten of Watford City. Ray took the animal with the bow shown. The deer weighed 258 pounds field dressed.

A Look Back By Ron Wilson

When we take a look back, no matter the year, really, deer hunting stories like this one published in the January 1957 issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS* are common.

This hunting tale is from the 1956 deer hunting season. That year, the Game and Fish Department made available about 39,000 licenses to hunters.

Another deer season has come and gone, and the big guns once more silenced and put in the rack, while the super brains may dominate the timbered lands for another year.

Our story begins at noon on November 9, 1956, with a hunting party of 31 sportsmen from 11 different towns and cities hunting 7

miles southeast of Washburn.

Before the hunt, the traditional instructions were given as is customary in this camp. The map of the layout was displayed, and a numbered spot assigned to each hunter so that all hunters are intact at all times. Hunting in this fashion every hunter shoots his own deer, thus the novelty of the sport is equally shared by all and tends to bind the ties of true sportsmanship closer together.

While on the stand, the ever-mounting anxiety and the test of waiting for the time to begin shooting can only be divulged by a true sportsman. After the firing began, it was not long and it was all over with. Only a few scattered

shots were fired after 3 o'clock. At 4 o'clock, two truck loads of deer were unloaded at the camp and the count revealed 31 deer.

If there ever was a more sorrowful looking group of sportsmen, I have yet to see them. As they gazed over the deer they realized that their hunt was finished for another year, and it all happened in three short hours. Making the situation all the worse were the distant sounds of other hunters' gun ringing in our ears. Every shot seemed to sink us deeper into our gloom . . . and therefore resolved unanimously that this deer season was too short – yes indeed, much too short.

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.