

BUFFALOBERRY PATCH

BY GREG FREEMAN, DEPARTMENT NEWS EDITOR

Bald Eagle Removed from Endangered Species List

The U.S. Department of Interior announced the removal of our national symbol from the Endangered Species List. The bald eagle, which came close to extinction decades ago, is now flourishing and no longer needs protection of the Endangered Species Act.

Bald eagles are protected by the Bald Eagle Protection Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which prohibit killing, selling or otherwise harming eagles, their nests or eggs. Whereas eagles are off the list, state wildlife agencies will have added responsibility in monitoring the birds to ensure they don't go back on the list.

"Now that bald eagles are delisted, state agencies will be required to do more surveying than before," said Sandra Johnson, North Dakota Game and Fish Department nongame biologist. "There are 30-40 suspected breeding pairs in North Dakota which will continue to be under close supervision for the next five years."

The increase from 417 breeding pairs in 1963, to the 9,789 pairs found today in the lower 48 states are attributed to cooperative efforts of state and federal agencies.

"The bald eagle's recovery is perhaps the greatest conservation story ever told – a story painstakingly written by passionate and dedicated people across the nation who worked together for decades to bring these magnificent birds back to healthy populations," said Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne.

Individual cooperation is urged to help protect bald eagles. "If you see a bald eagle, it's best that you stay far enough away to decrease any disturbances to the bird," Johnson said. "There's no need to report bald eagle sightings. The Department is most concerned with the number of nests present."

If you suspect that you may have spotted a bald eagle nest, contact Johnson at 701-328-6382.



RON WILSON

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department continues avian influenza surveillance efforts in the state.

Avian Influenza Surveillance Continues

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department, U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Ducks Unlimited continue a cooperative effort of testing wild birds for early detection of highly pathogenic strains of avian influenza.

Dr. Erika Butler, Game and Fish wildlife veterinarian, said Department biologists will conduct morbidity and mortality surveillance through October of any unusual bird die-offs or illnesses. Also, 300 samples from live birds will be taken in conjunction with duck banding efforts in August and September, and 450 samples from hunter-harvested ducks will be collected in September and October.

"Hunters can expect to be asked by a Game and Fish employee if their ducks can be sampled," Butler said. "Sampling only takes a few minutes and does not damage birds."

Hunter-harvested cranes and swans will not be sampled this year because of new developments in surveillance strategies, and geese aren't known carriers of the virus.

In 2006, nearly 1,000 wild birds were tested for the highly pathogenic H5N1 subtype. Results show that all samples from North Dakota tested negative. To date, HP H5N1 has not been detected in North America.

Watchable Wildlife Photo Contest Open

The deadline for submitting photos to the Game and Fish Department's annual wildlife photo contest is September 30.

Prints, slides and digital photos are all acceptable formats for entries in categories for nongame wildlife, game animals, plants and insects. The Watchable Wildlife program's annual promotion poster will be selected from entries that are original, vertical-composition transparencies (slides) or a minimum 8.0 megapixel digital image.

The photographer submitting the poster winner, and all place winners in each category, receive prizes. Each prize-winning photograph will also appear in *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.

Full contest rules were published in the July 2007 issue of this magazine. They are also available at gf.nd.gov; by e-mail request to ndgf@nd.gov; or by calling Nathaniel Umphrey at 701-328-6332.

Sandhill Crane Permits

Hunting permits for North Dakota's 2007 sandhill crane season are available.

As in past years, hunters need a special crane permit, regardless of age. The permit costs \$5 and is available through the Game and Fish Department's Bismarck office.

Hunters can purchase crane permits online at the Department's website, gf.nd.gov. Another option is to send the permit fee, along with personal information, including height, weight, sex, social security number, date of birth, color of hair and eyes, and hunter education number and state issued, to Crane Permit, NDGF, 100 N. Bismarck Expressway, Bismarck, N.D. 58501.



RON WILSON

Deer hunters are reminded that doe licenses remain for the 2007 season.

Antlerless Deer Licenses Available

Interested deer hunters still have time to purchase doe licenses for North Dakota's 2007 deer gun season.

Both residents and nonresidents can apply for these first-come, first-served licenses. Hunters can apply online from the Game and Fish website, gf.nd.gov. Paper applications are available from Game and Fish offices, county auditors and license vendors.

Hunters are reminded that additional doe licenses can be used during the archery season with a bow; deer gun season with a bow, rifle, or muzzleloader; or during the muzzleloader season with a muzzleloader. Hunters must stay in the unit to which the license is assigned.

Muskie Record Broken

Of the 27 species listed on North Dakota's state record fish chart, only the paddlefish entry weighs more than the one Cory Bosch landed July 3.

The Mandan angler reeled in a 46-pound, 8-ounce muskie at New Johns Lake, besting both the pure muskie (46 pounds) and tiger muskie (40 pounds) state records, according to Scott Gangl, North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries management section leader. Genetic testing determined it is a pure muskie. A tiger muskie is a cross between a northern pike and a pure muskie.

New Johns Lake, part of the Garrison Diversion canal lakes, is located in northern Burleigh County. Both species of muskies have been stocked in the canal lakes.

Bosch's catch was impressive, considering it was caught on 10-pound test line. "It seemed like it took forever to land," he said. "It was at least a half-hour, probably even longer."

Bosch caught the 54-inch muskie in 20 feet of water using a Reef Runner while trolling.



Cory Bosch with his record pure muskie.

No Handguns for Bowhunters on FWS Lands

North Dakota bowhunters may carry handguns while in the field except on lands under control of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The 2007 state legislature approved a bill, House Bill 1184, that allows archery hunters to carry handguns, primarily as a response to increasing human-mountain lion contacts in recent years.

According to the FWS, federal regulations prohibit bowhunters from possessing firearms on national wildlife refuges, waterfowl production areas, and other lands managed by the service.

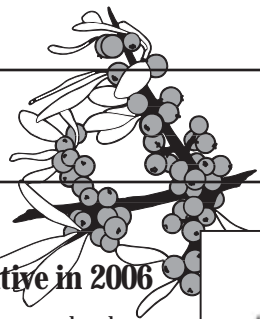
NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS
ON TELEVISION

<p>WILLISTON KUMV - Tuesday - 10 pm KXMD - Monday - noon</p>	<p>MINOT KMOT - Tuesday - 10 pm KXMC - Monday - noon</p>	<p>GRAND FORKS WDAZ - Wednesday - 5 pm</p>
<p>DICKINSON KOCD - Tuesday - 9 pm (MT) KXMA - Sunday - 9 pm (MT)</p>	<p>BISMARCK KFYR - Tuesday - 10 pm KXMB - Sunday - 10 pm CATV - Saturday - 9:30 am</p>	<p>FARGO KVRR - Sunday - 9 pm</p>

INSTANT LICENSING

Online at gf.nd.gov or by phone 800-406-6409

Most types of Game and Fish licenses and applications are available both online at the Department's website, or over the phone. Online license purchases have no surcharge, while instant licensing over the phone carries a service charge of \$4 for transactions of \$70 or less, and \$10 if the cost is more than \$70.



Fishing Statistics Positive in 2006

Despite North Dakota's low water levels and dry conditions last year, fishing license statistics showed positive results. In 2006, residents and nonresidents purchased more than 170,000 North Dakota fishing licenses, and including children, about 200,000 people fished state waters.

Fishing has long been a popular pastime for North Dakota residents. "Most families have one or more members who fish and virtually every North Dakota resident has a family member or close friend who fishes," said Greg Power, North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries division chief. "In 2006, more than one in four residents, 15 years or older, bought a fishing license and on average spent parts of 19 days fishing."

The three big fisheries in North Dakota include Lake Sakakawea, Devils Lake and the Missouri River/Lake Oahe. Numerous small lakes and rivers played a large role for anglers as well. "While Devils Lake and the Missouri River System are important, North Dakota's 300 small lakes, reservoirs and rivers account for nearly 50 percent of all fishing effort and are very important locally," Power said. "Fishing is good not only for walleye, but for northern pike, large and smallmouth bass, catfish, trout and panfish."

While license sales are up from 2005, license sales have been consistently good since rebounding in the mid-1990s. The number of nonresidents coming to North Dakota to fish is also on the rise. "Over a 20-year period, we've seen an increase in non-resident fishing effort in the state," Power said.

The current numbers reflect anglers' enjoyment of fishing in North Dakota. "The state has a strong tradition and heritage of fishing and the statistics speak for themselves," Power said. "The respectable level of license sales can be attributed to a number of events and actions, but most importantly we have decent water levels across most of the state and good to very good fishing."

North Dakota Game and Fish Department
2007 Mountain Lion Management Zones



COLIN PENNER

Mountain Lion Guidelines

Changes have been made to North Dakota's mountain lion hunting season, most importantly the state has been broken up into two hunting zones.

Mountain lions may be hunted statewide by residents using legal firearms during regular hunting hours. No hunting or pursuing with dogs will be allowed until December 1. Cable devices (snaring) and traps are not allowed. The limit is one lion per hunter per season. Kittens (lions with visible spots), or females accompanied by kittens, may not be taken. Any lion taken must be reported to the North Dakota Game and Fish Department within 12 hours and the entire intact animal must be submitted for analysis. Legally taken animals will be returned to the hunter.

- Zone 1: August 31 – March 9, 2008
Open Area: That portion of North Dakota west of ND Highway 8 from the South Dakota border to the south shore of Lake Sakakawea, and south and west of ND Highway 1804 from the Montana border to a point where ND Highway 1804 lies directly across Lake Sakakawea from ND Highway 8. Once a quota of five lions is reached, the season will close immediately. The quota does not include lions taken by USDA Wildlife Services, the Department, private landowners in defense of livestock, for human safety issues, road killed animals, incidental animals taken by traps or cable devices, and those taken on Indian lands.
- Zone 2: August 31 – March 9, 2008
Open Area: The remainder of the state not described as Zone 1. No quota. The season will remain open through March 9, 2008.





WARDEN STORIES

Decoy Details

By *Bill Schaller*



Bill Schaller

Poaching is a serious problem in places and one of the methods game wardens employ to catch

chronic violators is a strategically placed decoy or life-size mount of an animal. These decoys sometimes bring out the worst in people, as if shooting from a vehicle, usually after hours and out of season, isn't bad enough.

A case in point took place just inside the Montana border during North Dakota's pronghorn opener a few years ago. Montana wardens set up a pronghorn decoy a few miles into Montana, as a deterrent in case some hunters got lost.

Well, one hunter didn't realize or care that he was in Montana. He spotted the decoy, stopped his vehicle and opened fire out the window. Because the pronghorn didn't drop, he kept shooting, even as the wardens rapidly drove up to his pickup. The hunter turned around to look at the official vehicle behind him, red light flashing, but apparently he didn't put two and two together, because he still fired another round at the decoy. Talk about focused.

Another time, while working with Game and Fish Department district warden Pat Lothspeich during bow season (some poachers do use bows) in the badlands, a vehicle came along and the occupants spotted our deer decoy. Since it

was after dark, when we typically work the decoy, they shined the headlights on the deer.

The driver and passenger both got out with their bows. After the driver let an arrow fly, Pat yelled, "State game wardens. Shut off your pickup!"

Still, the passenger let an arrow fly and upon hitting the decoy, said to his partner, "I hit it. It won't run."

Yes, focused.

On another occasion, after dark during the deer gun season, a pickup stopped at our decoy setup. With the windows rolled down, I heard one hunter say, "Is it big enough?" and "Okay, who shoots it?"

They even discussed what they would do with the animal (leave it and come back in the morning). That is, until the rifle shot brought a game warden, sheriff's deputy, and a U.S. Forest Service officer down upon them in a hurry.

Most nights on decoy detail don't involve any action because most law-abiding hunters aren't out cruising back roads. Poachers out looking for deer with loaded rifles in their vehicles are usually all too eager to continue their pattern of law breaking ... until they encounter the decoy.

BILL SCHALLER is the Game and Fish Department's district game warden at Killdeer.



CRAIG BIRHLE

HIP Required for Migratory Bird Hunters

As early Canada goose, dove, sandhill crane and regular waterfowl seasons open in September, migratory game bird hunters are reminded to register with the Harvest Information Program prior to hunting in North Dakota this fall.

Hunters who participated in the 2007 spring light goose season and HIP registered do not have to register this fall.

HIP certification is required for all migratory bird hunters, regardless of age, before hunting ducks, geese, swans, mergansers, coots, cranes, snipe, doves or woodcock.

Hunter compliance is essential to obtain reliable national and regional estimates of annual harvest of all migratory game bird species. These estimates provide information biologists need to make sound decisions concerning hunting seasons, bag limits and population management.

Hunters who purchase a license through the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's Bismarck office, website (gf.nd.gov), or instant licensing telephone number (800-406-6409) can easily get HIP certified.

Otherwise, hunters must call 888-634-4798, or log on to the Game and Fish website, and record the HIP number on their fishing, hunting and furbearer certificate.

Hunters are reminded to HIP register in each state for which they are licensed before hunting migratory game birds.

Fur Harvester Class Scheduled in Bismarck

The North Dakota Cooperative Fur Harvester Education Program is sponsoring a fur harvester education class in Bismarck for anyone interested in learning about trapping and furbearer hunting.

The free 16-hour course is September 25, 27 and 29. Preregistration is required by September 11 by contacting John Paulson at 701-258-8777.



GAME & FISH STAFF NOTES



CRAIG BIRHLE

From left, Governor John Hoeven, Terry Steinwand, Game and Fish Department director, and Paul Schmidt, assistant director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, with the Great Blue Heron Award.

Game and Fish Honored with National Conservation Award

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department has received a prestigious international award from leaders of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.

Called the National Great Blue Heron Award, it recognizes significant contributions to waterfowl and wetland conservation. Governor John Hoeven was on hand to accept the award from Paul Schmidt, an assistant director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in July during a special presentation in Bismarck.

"We're extremely proud of our wildlife, and very proud of the work Game and Fish does," Hoeven told a gathering of NAWMP officials. "All the Game and Fish staff are passionate about what they do, and I think that's why they're so successful with these programs."

Since the North American Waterfowl Management Plan was launched more than 20 years ago, the Game and Fish Department has contributed more than \$10 million in matching funds – more than any other non-federal entity – toward NAWMP projects. In addition, Game and Fish has dedicated one staff position to coordinate waterfowl plan goals for the North Dakota Action Group, a committee of representatives from state and federal agencies as well as private conservation and agricultural organizations.

Because of these efforts, Schmidt said, more than 900,000 acres have been enhanced for waterfowl within 44 different

projects in the state. In addition, North Dakota has received more than \$20 million in federal grants for those projects, much of which has ended up with farmers and ranchers who voluntarily cooperate on habitat projects.

"Putting together habitat on the ground, that to me represents success," Schmidt said, "and is the kind of partnership and state success that really makes the North American Waterfowl Management Plan come alive."

The award recognizes not only efforts to benefit waterfowl, but also many other migratory bird species that rely on wetlands.

U.S. Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne wrote in a letter to Governor Hoeven: "The North American Waterfowl Management Plan success in North Dakota, one of the most important waterfowl breeding areas in North America, is due in large part to the significant leading role that the North Dakota Game and Fish Department has readily assumed. They are extremely deserving of this prestigious award, and you have a heart-felt congratulations and thanks for your support in continuing conservation for all the partners in North Dakota."

Game and Fish Director Terry Steinwand said his agency is proud to receive the award. "It couldn't happen without the support of the Governor," he stated.



CRAIG BIRHLE

Pich Retires, Christman Fills Position

Michelle Pich, a long-time employee with the Game and Fish Department's licensing division in Bismarck, retired in July after more than 30 years with the agency.

Pich started her career with the Department in 1977 and spent her entire career in Bismarck.

Peggy Christman was hired to fill the licensing clerk position in Bismarck.



Peggy Christman

Erdle Hired as Fisheries Technician

Wesley Erdle was hired in July as a fisheries technician working in development. He had been a seasonal employee for the Department for the past couple years.

Erdle is stationed at the district office in Bismarck.



Wesley Erdle

Warden Witkowski Retires

District game warden Rick Witkowski, Elgin, retired in July after serving 30 years with the agency.



Rick Witkowski