

NORTH DAKOTA
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GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

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MATTERS OF OPINION



Terry Steinwand
Director

In a feature on fishing in this issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*, Greg Power, Department fisheries chief, is quoted as saying, “Mother Nature’s pendulum does swing wildly and rapidly in North Dakota.”

He was referencing the many factors that influence the state’s game fish to cooperate, and sometimes not, with anglers.

His remark, I feel, works on a number of levels, especially in reference to our weather here on the Northern Plains. This winter thus far, compared to last, is wildly different.

Last winter, Mother Nature’s pendulum swung hard in the direction of snow, which she delivered in abundance early on. Wildlife managers and others who are concerned with the welfare of North Dakota’s wildlife, especially during these times of limited habitat on the landscape, worried how animals were coping under those conditions.

While we’ve all endured our share of bitter cold days this winter, the amount of snow we’ve received is hardly comparable. (Note: Of course, as I write this, it’s snowing in southwestern North Dakota, with several inches predicted.) Knowing that, we’re hoping that North Dakota’s wildlife – deer, pheasants and other animals – are having an easier go of it this winter.

Of course, winter has a big influence on the number of animals we find on the landscape come fall during the state’s hunting season.

In this issue, readers will find the 2017 lottery drawing results for deer, wild turkeys and pronghorn. What you’ll see is that the number of deer gun licenses made available to hunters have increased the last two years. While they are not where many hunters and wildlife managers would like to see them, the population is trending upwards, and a decent winter will help the trend continue.

Often in this space, I talk about the importance of having wildlife habitat on the landscape and our continued efforts to establish more. Game and Fish Department wildlife managers have been tackling this issue for years and we’ll continue to do so down the road, as we understand how important quality habitat is to helping animals survive, especially during the state’s leanest months.

Also of note in this issue is the question and answer article that deals with applying online for lottery licenses for North Dakota’s game species, which include turkeys, deer, pronghorn, swans, elk, moose and sheep.

Considerable thought, planning and many conversations went in to the Game and Fish Department’s plan to require all lottery applications be submitted online. What’s encouraging when considering this move is that the majority of regular lottery applications, as well as the majority of gratis applications, were submitted electronically in 2017.

While we understand that this is nothing new for many of our hunters and landowners, there will likely be some questions. To help with those questions and this transition, refer to the question and answer segment on pages 6-7. The two pages of information will also explain the benefits to phasing out all paper applications.

Going with a glass half-full attitude, I think I can almost see spring from here. Considering that we haven’t received much snow, maybe Mother Nature will grace us with some timely precipitation in the form of late-winter, wet snow and ample spring rains.

I know that many of our fishing waters, pastures, crop fields, duck sloughs and nesting habitats could use the boost. Yet, before winter closes its doors, enjoy the opportunities North Dakota’s great outdoors offers us this time of year.

Terry Steinwand

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURES

2017 Deer Drawing.....	2
2017 Enforcement Division Review.....	8
Productive Prairie Lakes.....	12

DEPARTMENTS

Buffaloberry Patch.....	18
Back Cast	25



Front Cover

Dark-eyed juncos are familiar backyard birds to many North Dakotans. At one time considered a separate species called the slate-colored junco, these birds are now classified as one of several color phases of the dark-eyed junco. *Photo by Craig Bihrl, Bismarck.*



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2017 DEER DRAWING

By Ron Wilson

Two years doesn't make a trend, but it's a start.

After falling to a nearly four-decades-low of 43,275 licenses in 2015, the number of deer gun licenses Game and Fish made available to hunters increased in 2016 (49,000) and 2017 (54,500).

Prospects for more deer gun licenses in North Dakota in 2017 didn't look good initially as winter 2016-17 started with record amounts of snow in most places by early January.

Then, as unpredictable as the weather can be on the Northern Plains, temperatures increased and snow gradually started melting in late January. By March, evidence of that record amount of snow was gone in most places.

Once again, hunters could draw just one license for the 2017 deer gun season. The number of licenses in North Dakota increased by 5,500 last year compared to 2016.

Like most years, drawing a buck license in 2017 wasn't easy. According to Randy Meissner, Game and Fish Department licensing manager, after 13,402 resident gratis licenses and 456 nonresident licenses were subtracted from the overall license allocation, just 22,223 buck licenses were available for the 66,203 hunters who applied for them as their first choice in the lottery.

For the second time since 2012, the Game and Fish Department allowed hunting of antlerless mule deer in all but one hunting unit in western North Dakota. The 2017 spring mule deer index was higher than the previous year for the fifth consecutive year.

Game and Fish maintained a conservative harvest strategy for the state's pronghorn population in 2017, while encouraging population growth. For the fourth year in a row, the agency allowed a limited season, allocating 410 licenses, 320 fewer than 2016.





Nearly 2,500 mule deer buck licenses were made available to hunters in 2017, up 200 from 2016.

Lottery at Work

No matter if you're new to North Dakota's deer gun season, or a veteran of wearing fluorescent orange each November, there are always questions on how the Game and Fish Department's lottery system works.

Using deer as the example, though turkey works the same way, this is how it works.

If you fail to draw your first license choice in any given year, you receive a bonus point. You do not have to apply in the same unit, or for the same deer type each year, to qualify. You get an additional bonus point each year you apply and do not receive your first license choice. You maintain your accumulated bonus points as long as you apply in the first drawing at least once every two years.

You receive additional chances in the drawing for each bonus point accumulated. For points one through three, you are entered in the drawing two times the number of points you have. So, if you have two points you would get four additional chances to be drawn, compared to a person who got his or her first choice the previous year. If you're both competing for the same license, you have five chances, he or she has one.

When you accumulate four or more points, the number of additional chances is determined by cubing your bonus points. So, when you have four points, you will be in the drawing 64 additional times, 125 times if you have five points, and so on. Bonus points are accumulated as long as you do not draw your first license choice and apply in the first drawing at least every other year. You do not receive bonus points in years you do not apply.

Each drawing is still random, but the more bonus points you have, the better your odds. When you receive your first license choice, you lose your bonus points and start over. Bonus points can only be earned, or used, in the first drawing for each species in each year.

The license lottery consists of four separate drawings, one for each choice on the application. First, we hold a drawing for the first unit/first deer choice. When those are issued, we draw for the first unit/second deer choice, then the second unit/first deer choice, and finally the second unit/second deer choice.

2017 DEER LICENSE LOTTERY RESULTS

Percent of applicants who received their first choice of license.

POINTS											
UNIT	LICENSE TYPE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	OVERALL
1	A Any Buck	11.1	22.7	35.3	45.8	97.1					30.4
1	B Any Doe	92	86.4	100	100						91.7
2A	A Any Buck	2.6	11.4	8.1	16.8	88.1	80	100			22.1
2A	B Any Doe	94.1	87	83.3	100	90.9					90.9
2B	A Any Buck	2.3	6.6	8	11.8	61.9	68.2	66.7	100		14.1
2B	B Any Doe	27.7	58.4	63.9	64.3	76.5					50.8
2C	A Any Buck	0.3	2.2	3.7	7	35.7	50	83.3	100		11.7
2C	B Any Doe	2.4	13	18.8	16.7	50	50				15.6
2D	A Any Buck	3.5	8.3	20.8	23.3	84.4	100				22.2
2D	B Any Doe	89.3	78.9	95.3	100	100					98.9
2E	A Any Buck	0.4	1.2	0.8	5.3	27.1	53.6	56.1			11.7
2E	B Any Doe	13.5	21.2	52.9	40	75	75				33.5
2F1	A Any Buck	29.5	65.8	84.8	88.7	100	100				52.2
2F1	B Any Doe	95.6	100	87.5	100	100					95.8
2F2	A Any Buck	11.5	29.6	37.8	59.3	95.8	100			100	30.3
2F2	B Any Doe	97.7	82.7	66.7	80						94.4
2G	A Any Buck	20.4	56.7	62.9	75	91					48.7
2G	B Any Doe	81	95.6	96.8	100	100					89.9
2G1	A Any Buck	3.1	9.9	20.5	29	88.6	83.8		100		22.4
2G1	B Any Doe	89.5	89.3	78.9	78.6	100	100				88.6
2G2	A Any Buck	16.8	42.3	56.8	69.8	93.4	100				40.4
2G2	B Any Doe	95.9	86.5	85	66.7	100					93.9
2H	A Any Buck	29.2	63.9	82.1	77.1	83.3	100				50.9
2H	B Any Doe	97.2	100	100	100	100					97.6
2I	A Any Buck	14.1	37	54.2	59.9	95.9	100	100			35.6
2I	B Any Doe	95.8	95.5	87.5	100	66.7	100				95.4
2J1	A Any Buck	17.6	44.9	61	81.5	96.2	83.3			100	43.1
2J1	B Any Doe	97.1	94.1	100	100	100					97
2J2	A Any Buck	28.7	64.5	82.8	89.7	91.7	100				53.1
2J2	B Any Doe	97.7	92.5	100	100						97.2
2K1	A Any Buck	9	14.2	32.8	34.8	93.2	84.6				27.2
2K1	B Any Doe	97.2	79.5	81	75	100					93
2K2	A Any Buck	14.1	36.6	50.9	64.3	96.7	100	100			35.6
2K2	B Any Doe	93.1	94.2	91.7	100	100					93.2
2L	A Any Buck	25.3	60.7	81.5	81.2	100	100				49.7
2L	B Any Doe	100	100	100	100						100
3A1	A Any Buck	6.7	17	29.4	40.6	93.9	90.8	90.9	83.3		27.7
3A1	B Any Doe	96.6	100	93.3	72.7	100	100	100			95.3
3A2	A Any Buck	22.9	51.8	67.2	82.3	84.2					44.8
3A2	B Any Doe	95.8	90	76.9	100	100					94.6
3A3	A Any Buck	5.6	13.7	18.3	25.7	91	89.8	100	100		24.6
3A3	B Any Doe	96	89.5	68	90	100					92.9
3A4	A Any Buck	9.9	20.7	34.3	47.2	94.6	81.8	66.7	100		28.6
3A4	B Any Doe	93.3	82.1	73.3	81.8	100					90.1
3B1	E MD Buck	7.6	14.9	32.4	40.8	90	100				25.9
3B1	C WT Buck	2.3	10	11.2	11.5	74.6	92.1	100			16.9
3B1	F MD Doe	53.8	100	100	100	100					78.8
3B1	D WT Doe	91.7	100	75	100	100					92.3
3B2	E MD Buck	19.3	55.6	76.9	42.9	66.7					40.4
3B2	C WT Buck	19.3	46.2	48.6	82.4	83.3		100			36.5
3B2	F MD Doe	100	100								100
3B2	D WT Doe	95.7	100		100						94.6
3B3	A Any Buck	12.7	46.8	50	78.3	87.5	100				36.3
3B3	B Any Doe	95.8	100	100	100						96.8
3B3	C WT Buck	66.2	96	100	100	100					82.3

POINTS											
UNIT	LICENSE TYPE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	OVERALL
3B3	D WT Doe	98.7	90	100		100					98.2
3C	A Any Buck	5.3	15.3	15.3	32.4	90.6					18.2
3C	B Any Doe	51.4	82.9	50							67.7
3C	C WT Buck	51.4	82.8	90.8	100	100					69.1
3C	D WT Doe	98	100	50	100	100					97.7
3D1	A Any Buck	20.4	52.8	67.9	76	100					42.8
3D1	B Any Doe	100	100	100							100
3D1	C WT Buck	98.1	100	100		100					98.3
3D1	D WT Doe	100									100
3D2	A Any Buck	12	36.4	52.3	65.5	96.4	100	100			35.1
3D2	B Any Doe	98.4	88.9	100	100						97.9
3D2	C WT Buck	70.1	95.5	85.7	75	100					78
3D2	D WT Doe	100	100								100
3E1	A Any Buck	17.5	41.3	65.8	65.5	81.8	66.7				37
3E1	B Any Doe	92.6	100	100							93.5
3E1	C WT Buck	62.7	95	90.3	100	100					76.3
3E1	D WT Doe	100	100								100
3E2	A Any Buck	34.7	71	90.7	94.1	66.7				100	55.8
3E2	B Any Doe	96.4	100	72.7							95.4
3E2	C WT Buck	97.9	100	100							98.1
3E2	D WT Doe	100		100							100
3F1	A Any Buck	26.3	65.3	77.8	79.3	100					54.4
3F1	B Any Doe	98.3	100								97.3
3F1	C WT Buck	99	100	100							99.1
3F1	D WT Doe	100	100								100
3F2	A Any Buck	26.9	68.9	83.3	92.6	100	100	100	100		51.8
3F2	B Any Doe	97.1	90.9	100	100						96.6
3F2	C WT Buck	98.6	100	100							98.7
3F2	D WT Doe	87.5									87.5
4A	E MD Buck	3.9	7.8	8.5	9	76.2	82.6	100	100	100	16
4A	C WT Buck	33.5	67.6	87.5	88.2	88.9	100				55.4
4A	D WT Doe	96.2	100		100						97.1
4B	E MD Buck	2	2.3	4	6.3	38.8	59	68.4	88.9	83.3	17.6
4B	C WT Buck	77.9	94.8	81.8	100	100	100				89.6
4B	F MD Doe	94.7	100	100	100			100			96.3
4B	D WT Doe	100	100	100							100
4C	E MD Buck	0	2.1	3	3.4	28.7	45.6	58.6	73.9	78.3	15.4
4C	C WT Buck	63.2	92.7	90	100	100	100		100		77.9
4C	F MD Doe	96.6	100		100		100				93.2
4C	D WT Doe	88.9	100								90
4D	E MD Buck	1	1.8	4.6	6.2	48.2	71.6	84.3	91.3	100	19
4D	C WT Buck	100	85.7	100	100	100	100				98.1
4D	F MD Doe	90.2	81.8	75		100					88.1
4D	D WT Doe	85.7	100			100					87.5
4E	E MD Buck	12.4	32	50.9	57.7	84.2	100	88.9			38.1
4E	C WT Buck	98.6	100	100							98.9
4E	F MD Doe	86.4	100			100					87.5
4E	D WT Doe	100	100								100
4F	E MD Buck	33.5	74.4	88.6	100	100	100	100	100		65.7
4F	C WT Buck	99.4	100	100	100						99.5
4F	F MD Doe	100	100								100
4F	D WT Doe	100	100	100	100						100
MUZ	C WT Buck	0.1	0	0.1	0.3	2.1	4.4	7.9	10.4	20.7	3.7
MUZ	D WT Doe	33.7	72.9	87.2	82.1	100	100		100	100	52.1

2017 Lottery Stats

Deer

- 54,500 – Number of deer licenses available, up from 49,000 in 2016.
- 77,622 – Number of people – not including about 10,000 gratis applicants – who applied for deer gun season lottery licenses, up from 74,179 in 2016.
- 46.63 – Percent of successful applicants, excluding gratis and nonresidents, for deer gun and muzzleloader licenses.
- 1.45 – Average bonus points of applicants who received their first choice.
- 15 – Maximum number of bonus points for any applicant.
- 11,386 – Number of applicants with four or more bonus points.
- 12.67 – Percent of applicants with four or more bonus points.
- 4,490 – Number of applicants with four or more bonus points who drew their first choice of license.
- 21.35 – Percent of applicants with four or more bonus points who applied for a mule deer buck license.
- 48.85 – Percent of applicants with four or more bonus points who applied for a muzzleloader buck license.

Turkey

- 5,685 – Number of spring turkey licenses available to hunters, down from 5,815 licenses in 2016.
- 77.7 – Percent of applicants who received their first license choice in the spring turkey drawing.
- 3,505 – Number of fall turkey licenses available to hunters, down from 3,510 licenses in 2016.
- 73.5 – Percent of applicants who received their first license choice in the fall turkey drawing.

Pronghorn

- A limited pronghorn season was offered for the fourth consecutive year in four hunting units.
- 410 – Number of licenses available to hunters, 320 fewer than 2016.
- 8,756 – Number of people who applied for available licenses.

2017 PRONGHORN LOTTERY RESULTS

Percent of applicants who received their first choice of license.

LICENSE TYPE	POINTS									OVERALL
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
02B	0	0	0	0	1.2	2.8	2.9	4	8.3	0.6
03A	0	0	0	0	1.5	20.6	4	45.5		2.7
03B	0	0.3	0.7	0.6	1.9	6.2	8.2	8.3	20	1.7
04A	0.4	0.1	1.3	1.5	11.2	24.2	31.6	54.3	35.7	4.3
04C	1.2	0	0	0	3.7	8.2	25	43.8	33.3	2.5

2017 SPRING TURKEY LOTTERY RESULTS

Percent of applicants who received their first choice of license.

LICENSE TYPE	POINTS									OVERALL
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
2	87.1	100	100							88.8
3	100	100								100
4	62.6	100	100							86.4
6	100	100								100
13	100	100	100							100
17	35.5	81.1	87.5							62.8
19	100	100	100							100
25	100	100								100
27	42	81.2	82.4	100						66.8
30	100	100								100
31	100									100
37	46.5	87.6	91.9	100						60.8
40	100									100
44	100	100								100
45	100	100								100
47	100									100
50	58.1	88.5	100							68.5
51	100	100								100
53	16	42.1	33.3							29.2
98	66.9	98.6	100							85
99	100	100								100

2017 FALL TURKEY LOTTERY RESULTS

Percent of applicants who received their first choice of license.

LICENSE TYPE	POINTS									OVERALL
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
2	22.5	43.2	80	100						35.3
3	100	100								100
4	41.1	87.5	100							55.1
6	51.9	60								56.2
13	100		100							100
17	37.7	75	92.9							55
19	100	100								100
25	100	100								100
27	39.7	67.9	85.7	100						65
30	100	100								100
31	100									100
37	56	89	100	100						64.9
40	100									100
44	81.4	100								84.8
45	100	100	100							100
47	100	100								100
50	54.7	90.6								62.9
51	100									100
98	76.3	88.9								84.4
99	85.7	100								91.5

Donations for Deer Habitat

Unsuccessful applicants in the Department's deer drawing can now donate their refunds to the agency's Private Land Open To Sportsmen program.

North Dakota lawmakers created this option in 2015. Proceeds

to this point from about 4,900 resident and nonresident deer hunters total nearly \$153,000.

Donations will be earmarked for projects in areas of the state where wildlife habitat has been lost and deer numbers have declined.

Lottery Applications Now Online – Only

Editor's Note: Applying online for lottery licenses for North Dakota game species, such as deer and wild turkeys, is nothing new to many people. Yet, as Game and Fish Department officials embrace a long-range plan to phase out paper applications, there will likely be some questions. What follows are a number of questions and answers to help people with possible uncertainties about the process.

Q: *What is the background behind the Game and Fish Department's initiative to require that all lottery applications be submitted online?*

A: In 2015, the North Dakota Legislature passed a law that required the Game and Fish Department to develop an all-electronic licensing system and phase out the old paper license books. That went into effect April 1, 2016, so for nearly two full years now all license buyers have had to purchase their hunting and fishing licenses through the Game and Fish website, at license vendors who are linked into the Game and Fish electronic licensing system, or by calling the Game and Fish toll-free instant licensing system at 800-406-6409 any time day or night.

Another part of that plan was that paper applications for lottery licenses, which includes spring and fall turkey, deer gun,

swan, pronghorn and moose, elk and sheep, would eventually be phased out within a few years as well.

Q: *Why now?*

A: In 2017, more than 90 percent of regular lottery applications, and nearly 75 percent of gratis applications, were already submitted online/electronically. In addition, starting last year, Game and Fish moved the nonresident deer, swan and fall turkey applications to online-only with few associated problems.

With a significant majority of hunters already comfortable with online applications, and relative success with the other seasons last year, Game and Fish administration felt it was the right time to take the next step and go to online-only for the high volume deer and moose, elk and sheep lotteries.

In addition, Game and Fish will

realize significant cost savings from not having to print and distribute paper applications, and not having to hire as many temporary employees to key in all the data contained in paper applications. Another major benefit is that the time lapse between the application deadline and when the lotteries are run should be reduced considerably.

Q: *Will this new initiative also include gratis applications?*

A: Yes, all gratis applications will now have to be submitted online using the Game and Fish website, gf.nd.gov. The deadline for gratis applications is the same as for regular lottery applications.

Q: *Will the deer application deadline change for hunters?*

A: No, the established deer deadline will remain the same for both lottery and gratis applicants, which is June 6 in 2018, but

Game and Fish will start taking gratis deer applications earlier than lottery applications for deer, approximately April 1.

Q: *Applying as a gratis applicant, do I have to submit my legal land description if I've applied on paper before?*

A: Whether previously submitted online or on paper, gratis land descriptions are electronically entered into the Game and Fish system. Gratis applicants will be able to copy the land description from the previous year into this year's application by clicking a button. However, previous gratis applicants will still have to bring up their land descriptions and add the number of acres for each tract. In addition, any changes to land included on a gratis application from the previous year will have to be made online.

Q: *How many people will this effect?*

A: Approximately 3,000 of 13,000 gratis deer license applications last year came in via paper, as did about 7,000 of nearly 80,000 regular deer gun applications, so it's a small percentage of prospective

hunters who have not previously used the online system. About two-thirds of the gratis applicants who submitted paper forms last year have used the online system before to purchase other licenses.

Q: *Is it still possible to use the toll-free instant licensing number to submit lottery applications?*

A: Regular lottery applications are still accepted through the toll-free number, but gratis applications are not.

Q: *What if I don't have a credit card?*

A: The best option is to purchase a prepaid credit from a retail merchant. Anyone who does that should keep the card even if there isn't a remaining balance, as unsuccessful applications would receive an electronic refund that would go back on that card. You can also use a debit card.

Q: *Is this being implemented for the first time for all lotteries?*

A: No, as mentioned earlier, last year the entire swan and fall turkey license applications were online-only, as were nonresident deer applications.

Q: *If I don't have a computer, what are my other options?*

A: Among the options are using the toll-free instant licensing phone number (nongratis lottery applications only), having a friend or relative submit the application for you, go to a public service location such as a public library, or stop at any Game and Fish district office for assistance. Payment accepted at Game and Fish district offices will be credit or debit card only.

Q: *Can I go to a vendor to apply in a lottery?*

A: No, the electronic system that vendors use is not set up to handle lottery applications. However, vendors on their own may choose to provide a computer that would allow customers to go to the Game and Fish website to complete the application process.

Q: *Will I still be able to apply on a party application?*

A: Yes, the online system is set up to handle party applications, as is the toll-free instant phone licensing system.

The online application deadline for once-in-a-lifetime elk, moose and bighorn sheep licenses is March 28. This will be the first time that all applicants must apply online for these coveted North Dakota big game licenses.



2017

ENFORCEMENT DIVISION REVIEW

By Robert Timian

While another year has come and gone, 2017 started much the same as 2016 ended for North Dakota Game and Fish Department wardens, with rotating assignments for law enforcement related to the Dakota Access Pipeline protest.

Though much has been reported on this issue, I will add how proud I am of the way all law enforcement personnel responded, game wardens included, to protect and enforce the rule of law for everyone.

In 2017, lawmakers gathered at the 65th Legislative Assembly in Bismarck where Game and Fish officials tracked 28 bills, 11 of which were passed and signed into law. As licensed peace officers, with the primary responsibility of enforcing laws related to game and fish and boating, we have a vested interest in any changes or additions to laws.

When we do make suggestions for, or about laws, we base those suggestions as enforcement officers on a philosophy that laws should be the minimum necessary to accomplish what is needed. They should be clearly written to make understanding, following and enforcement straight forward.

As wardens, we also ask ourselves a series of questions: Do we believe the bill as written will accomplish what is intended? Is it enforceable? Does it appear to us that it will cause other negative, unintended consequences?

While as enforcement officers we submit these suggestions into the process, they are just that – suggestions. The legislature is the law-making body, and when a bill becomes law it is our duty to enforce it.

The purpose of looking back at 2017, or any other year, to review all things, including types and numbers of violations, reported incidents and investigations, is not to reminisce, but to help chart a course and make decisions going forward into 2018 and beyond. Our commitment is to continue to look for ways to improve using the resources provided, for we are in a constant race with those individuals intent on disregarding and violating laws that reflect the will of the people.

ROBERT TIMIAN is the Game and Fish Department's enforcement division chief.



Erik Schmidt, Game and Fish Department warden in Linton, checks with an angler ice fishing on Dry Lake earlier this winter.

2017 Summary of Violations

BIG GAME	
Hunting in closed season	10
Failure to wear fluorescent orange	17
Tagging violations	31
Exceeding limit	1
Killing wrong species or sex	8
Other big game violations	28
Total	95
SMALL GAME	
Using gun able to hold more than 3 shells	56
Hunting in closed season	8
Illegal possession/taking	8
Exceeding limit	19
Failure to leave identification or sex of game	51
Killing wrong sex or species	2
Nontoxic shot violation	10
Failure to carry federal waterfowl stamp	7
Wanton waste	10
Hunting in unharvested field	19
Other small game violations	72
Total	262
BOATING	
Use of unlicensed or unnumbered boat	138
Failure to display boat registration	121
Operating without lights at night	35
Inadequate number of PFDs	255
Water skiing violations	24
Reckless or negligent operation	4
Operating vessel under influence/intoxicated	11
Other boating violations	55
Total	643
FISHING	
Fishing with excessive lines	53
Exceeding limit	87
Fishing in closed/restricted area	5
Failure to attend lines	11
No identification on fish house	8
ANS violation	130
Paddlefish violations	8
Other fishing violations	46
Total	348

FURBEARER	
Shining (using artificial light)	13
Illegal possession/taking	2
Harassing furbearers with motor vehicle	10
Other furbearer violations	10
Total	35
GENERAL	
Use of motor vehicle off established trail	15
Use of motor vehicle in restricted area	38
Harassing wildlife with motor vehicle	5
Hunting on posted land without permission	59
Hunting before/after legal hours	16
Wanton waste	7
Aid in concealment of unlawful game	8
Hunting in wrong unit/closed area	5
Loaded firearm in motor vehicle	64
Discharge of firearm within/on motor vehicle	6
440 yard violation	5
Littering	52
Other general violations	16
Total	296
LICENSING	
Failure to sign/affix stamp	18
Hunting/fishing/trapping without proper license	235
Failure to carry license on person	334
Misrepresentation on license or application	21
Other licensing violations	14
Total	622
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS/REFUGE	
Failure to obey posted regulations	29
Camping	21
Tree stand violations	10
Possession of glass beverage containers	14
Baiting on WMA	4
Prohibited uses of motor vehicles	12
Other WMA/refuge violations	4
Total	94
MISCELLANEOUS	
Possession of controlled substance	13
Possession of drug paraphernalia	13
Open container	28
Minor in possession	17
Criminal trespass	28
Other miscellaneous	27
Total	126
COMMERCIAL	
Commercial violations	25
Total	25



MIKE ANDERSON

Game and Fish Department wardens are committed to safeguarding the state's waters from aquatic nuisance species. To help in this effort, water users are legally tasked with ensuring that all water is drained from boats and other watercraft, including bilges, livewells, baitwells and motors before leaving the water.

Incidents 2017 – Top 10 Counties

(An incident is defined as any situation that requires a response from a game warden. It does not have to be a crime. The situation could be, for example, a stranded angler.)

- Burleigh – 251
- Ramsey – 234
- McLean – 206
- McKenzie – 175
- Morton – 172
- Richland – 168
- Ward – 162
- Cass – 154
- Williams – 141
- Mountrail – 138

Citations 2017 – Top 10 Counties

- Ramsey – 266
- Williams – 136
- Burleigh – 136
- McKenzie – 133
- Benson – 103
- Richland – 99
- McLean – 98
- Mountrail – 97
- Stutsman – 89
- Barnes – 84



TY STOCKTON


Zachary Schuchard, Game and Fish Department warden in Richardton, checks hunters during opening weekend of the 2017 deer gun season.

productive **PRAIRIE** lakes

By Ty Stockton

An angler fishes through the ice on Sibley Lake in Kidder County earlier this winter.





Fishing in North Dakota has never been better. The state boasts 22 species of game fish and 449 bodies of water where anglers can wet a line.

Quite a few of those fishing holes are relatively new. Since the early 1990s, when a long drought ended and a wet cycle began, previously dry lakes filled, and the North Dakota Game and Fish Department stocked many of these new waters with fish.

“At least 50 of those new lakes are producing good walleye,” said Greg Power, Game and Fish Department fisheries division chief.

A strange thing happens when a new lake is formed. Scott Gangl, Department fisheries management section leader, said the technical term for the fertility of a new body of water is “trophic upsurge.”

“It’s an explosion of nutrients, insects and resources fish thrive on,” he said. “When you flood vegetation or soil that had been dry, the nutrients are released into the water. Insects feed on these nutrients, and minnows – mostly fathead minnows in North Dakota – eat the insects, and this provides a fantastic food source for predatory fish, like walleyes.”

Because of this trophic upsurge, walleyes stocked in these new prairie lakes grow rapidly. Game and Fish fisheries biologists compile data on walleyes throughout the state, including growth rates. They’ve found that the average walleye in traditional waters, such as Lake Sakakawea, Lake Oahe or Lake Tschida, is 6 inches long at the end of the first growing season; 10 inches after two growing seasons; 14 inches

after three seasons; and 16 inches after four seasons.

By contrast, walleyes in the nutrient-rich new prairie lakes, such as Sibley (Kidder County), Lehr WMA (McIntosh County), Kraft (Sargent County) and Twin Lakes (LaMoure County), are 9 inches at the end of the first season; 14 inches after two seasons; 16 inches after three seasons; and 18 inches after four seasons.

With walleyes growing faster in these new prairie waters, anglers have good opportunities to catch good-sized fish within a few years of the lakes being established. “Our strategy is to stock the heck out of those waters,” Gangl said. “If there are enough minnows, sometimes you can’t put enough fish in them to get the fathead



PAUL BAILEY

With a menu of scuds, fathead minnows and other prey, walleyes stocked in North Dakota's new prairie lakes grow rapidly.

populations down enough to let the fish get hungry, so we stock those waters with as many fish as we can.”

This means there are potentially more good-sized walleyes in the lakes than the minnow populations will comfortably feed. This in turn means

plenty of fish under the surface are hungry enough to take the bait offered to them by an enterprising angler. In short, it's a recipe for a good bite.

The fish stocked in these lakes don't grow to catchable-size right away – and in fact, walleye aren't stocked

immediately after lakes flood. Once a lake is established, fisheries biologists evaluate its viability. Among the considerations are the length of time it will likely hold water, the number of minnows it holds, and whether it can be accessed by the public.

“We can stock a lake if we have good, legal public access,” said Paul Bailey, Department south central fisheries district supervisor. “It might be a section line or a road, but often we get easements from willing landowners.”

Even after all of that, walleye are not usually the first fish stocked.

“We stock perch first,” Bailey said. “Perch deposit their eggs on flooded vegetation, so they do well in those newly flooded lakes.”

The perch serve two purposes, Power said. They provide another game fish for anglers to target, and they become an intermediate food source for growing walleyes when the larger, predatory fish are released into the lakes.

Once the forage base is established, either through minnows that naturally occur in the waters or perch that are trapped and transported from other waters in the state, walleyes are

NORTH DAKOTA FISHING WATERS	
YEAR	NUMBER OF FISHABLE WATERS
1950	30
1963	150
1971	110
1980	139
1990	186
2000	208
2010	340
2012	365
2017	449



Yellow perch and walleyes taken through the ice on Dry Lake.

TY STOCKTON

stocked in the lakes. The walleyes come from the Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery, and they're mostly stocked as 1- to 2-inch fingerlings, though a few waters receive nearly microscopic fry (the developmental stage immediately following the fish hatching from their eggs).

From there, managing the fishery is a balancing act. If a lake has too many minnows, they outcompete perch for forage, and perch numbers decline. Also, when minnows provide more than enough food for walleyes to eat, they are not as interested in taking an angler's lure.

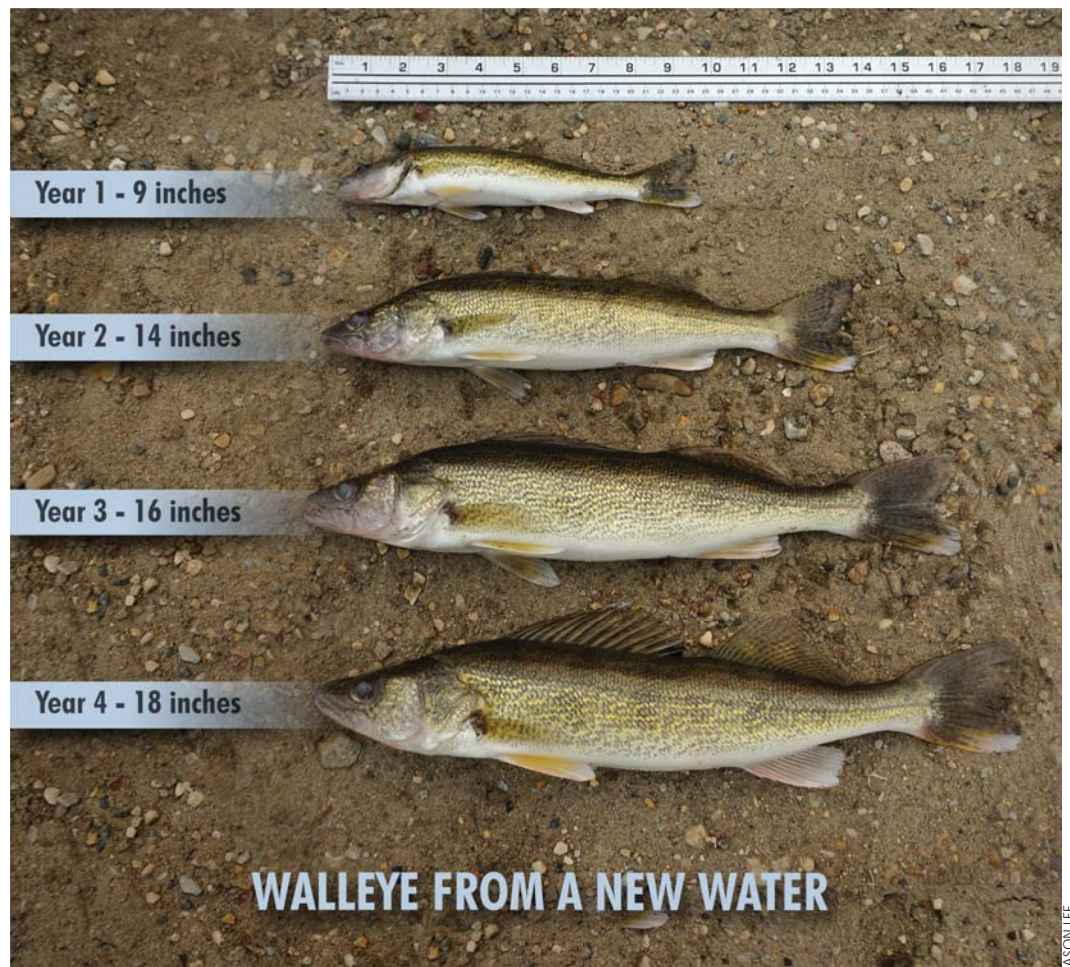
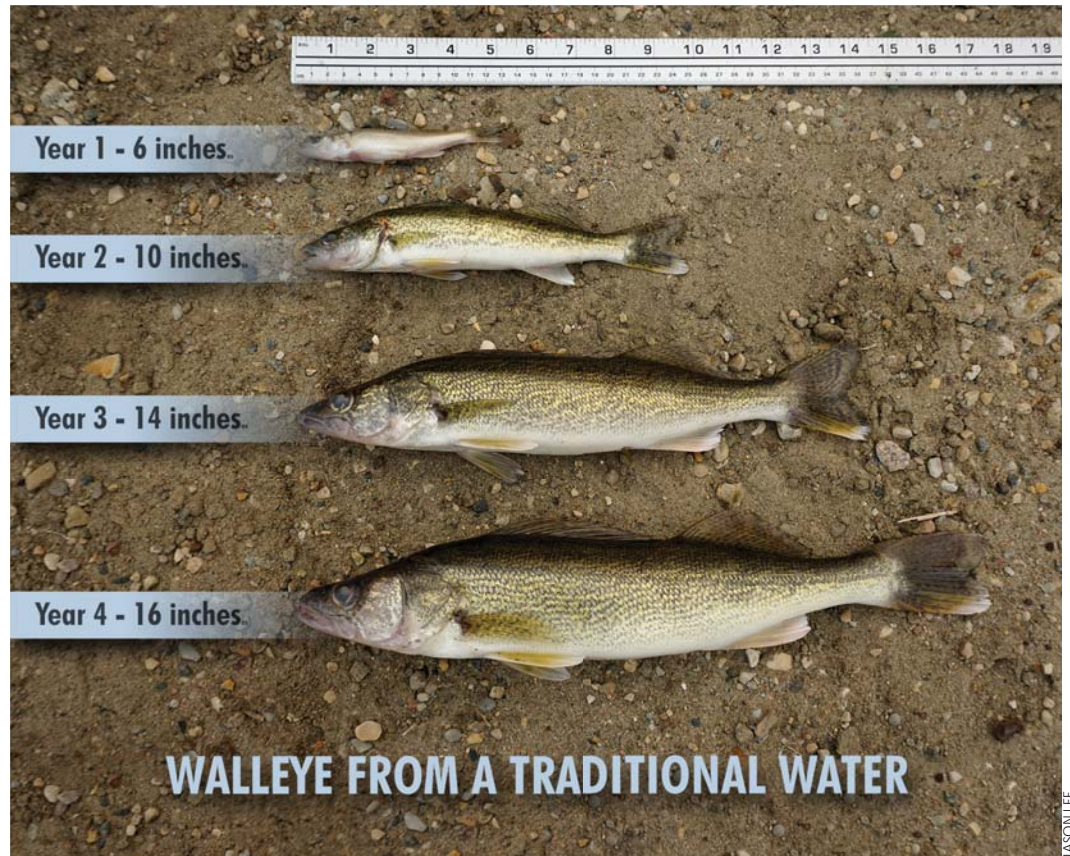
If walleye populations grow too quickly, fathead minnow numbers start to dwindle. That's where anglers enter the management picture.

"Anglers help with the predator-prey cycle," Gangl said. "If we don't have enough anglers fishing a certain water, the walleye populations get too big, and they bring down the minnow populations. We need anglers to take some fish out of the lakes, so the minnow and walleye populations remain balanced."

Winter is a great time to find some of those hungry walleyes, too. Some of the newer lakes lack boat ramps, so the only way to get out to the middle of those lakes is to get there on the frozen surface.

So check with your local bait store or online ice fishing forum to find where the big ones are biting. You'll not only have a good chance to put some fryers in the pan, you'll also help Game and Fish keep the predator-prey balance to ensure these waters continue to provide good fishing opportunities for years to come.

TY STOCKTON is the photographer for the Game and Fish Department.



FORAGE

and other factors

By Ty Stockton

The Facebook post from the North Dakota Game and Fish Department says there are thousands of walleye in the lake you like to fish, so you grab your tackle and beat feet for the water. But when you get there, you try every lure in your tackle box, cast into 43 different likely spots, but you don't get so much as a single bump on the end of your line.

What gives? Is this some sort of Candid Camera moment? Are you the butt of some cruel YouTube video, being laughed at as the most gullible angler in North Dakota?

Not at all. The netting surveys and other measures Game and Fish biologists use to monitor fisheries are good indicators of the numbers of fish below the surface. But the fact that there are a lot of fish in a lake doesn't necessarily mean those fish will take an angler's lure. There are a lot of factors that affect the bite.

"If the fish are well-fed from natural sources, they might not get into the bite," said Scott Gangl, Department fisheries management section leader. On the flip side, "if you have a great bite, it indicates a lack of natural forage." That forage, for the most part, is fathead minnows.

But Gangl said other factors play into the bite, as well.

"Weather patterns play a part," he said. "When

you see fronts rolling in, the fish may bite – or they may stop biting. Weather plays a role, but it's not necessarily consistent." He said as weather changes, you may see a change in fish activity.

Another weather-related factor is water temperature. Certain species of fish are adapted for different water temperatures. Trout are cold-water fish, so the colder the water, the more active they become. Walleye are cool-water fish, so as the water temperature drops they may become more active to a certain temperature, then settle down as the temperature continues to drop.

"Early ice is usually popular," Gangl said. "The water's still cooling, but it hasn't gotten as cold as it's going to get. As the temperature drops, the fish's metabolism slows, and after the ice has been on for a while, and the water is colder, you might get that midwinter lull in activity."

Gangl said he's been fishing and has seen lots of fish on his Vexilar, but none of those fish would take his lure. "Sometimes it just happens like that," he said. "There are obviously a lot of fish down there, but none of them are interested in the bait. You might get one to bite from time to time, but it's pretty slow. Then all of a sudden, it all changes, and you get the rest of your limit in an hour."

Often, that sudden change hits near sunset,





TY STOCKTON

If the fish aren't biting, but you know they're there, you can blame it on the weather, available prey, and so on.

or the fish will bite early in the morning, then suddenly stop as the sun gets higher. Gangl said this could be because walleye are better adapted to hunting in the dark than their prey – fathead minnows – are to seeing danger in darker water.

“It’s a factor of efficiency,” he said. “Fish forage on what is optimum. They try to get the best food they can get with the least amount of energy expended.”

Every fish in every fishery is an individual, so there are no scientific standards for what triggers the bite. You can move to new holes if the fish

aren’t biting where you are, and maybe you’ll find a few active fish somewhere else. Or you can sit still and keep fishing, waiting for the conditions to cause the fish to get hungry.

After all, it’s called “fishing,” and not “catching,” for a reason. Greg Power, Department fisheries division chief may have said it best: “Mother Nature’s pendulum does swing wildly and rapidly in North Dakota.”

The best bet is to be in the right place at the right time when that pendulum swings your way.



TY STOCKTON



BUFFALOBERRY PATCH

By Greg Freeman, Department News Editor

Two Deer Test Positive for CWD

A whitetail buck and a mule deer doe, taken during the 2017 deer gun season from unit 3F2 in southwestern North Dakota, tested positive for chronic wasting disease, according to Dr. Dan Grove, wildlife veterinarian for the state Game and Fish Department.

Since 2009, the total now stands at 11 deer to test positive for CWD in North Dakota, and all were from within unit 3F2.

In 2010, the Game and Fish Department implemented special regulations in 3F2 and surrounding units to limit the natural spread of the disease, and to protect the rest of the deer, elk and moose herds in North Dakota.

In addition to the 350 samples tested for CWD from unit 3F2, another 1,050 were tested from deer harvested last fall by hunters in the central third of the state, and from any moose or elk taken during

the hunting season. In all, more than 1,400 samples were tested.

Since the Game and Fish Department's sampling efforts began in 2002,



Bill Jensen, Department big game management biologist, helps with the Department's effort earlier this winter to sample deer for chronic wasting disease.

more than 31,000 deer, elk and moose have tested negative for CWD.

"The Department takes the risk of CWD to the state's deer, elk and moose herds seriously," Grove said. "CWD is considered a permanent disease on the landscape once an area becomes endemic."

The hunter-harvested surveillance program annually collects samples taken from hunter-harvested deer in specific regions of the state. In 2018, deer will be tested from the western portion of the state.

The Game and Fish Department also has a targeted surveillance program that is an ongoing, year-round effort to test animals found dead or sick.

CWD affects the nervous system of members of the deer family and is always fatal. For more information on CWD, refer to the Game and Fish website, gf.nd.gov.



PERMANENT FISH HOUSE DEADLINE

State law requires removal of permanent fish houses from North Dakota waters by midnight March 15.

Anglers are advised to use caution because mild weather conditions can quickly result in unstable ice conditions.

Fish houses may be used after March 15 if they are removed daily.

In addition, it is illegal to leave fish houses on any federal refuge land or on any state-owned or managed land after March 15.



Jeff Faught, Game and Fish Department pilot, flies along the Missouri River north of Bismarck during the Department's midwinter waterfowl survey in January.

Geese Tallied in Midwinter Survey

An estimated 135,000 Canada geese were counted in early January during the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's annual midwinter waterfowl survey.

The midwinter survey was started in 1935 and is a cooperative effort with other state and federal wildlife agencies. It is now considered the longest-running, large-scale wildlife survey for migratory birds in North America.

Mike Szymanski, Game and Fish

Department migratory game bird management supervisor, said the number of birds counted in January along the Missouri River and Nelson Lake in Oliver County was likely higher than expected.

"We actually had a surprisingly large number of geese using the river," Szymanski said, noting that Lake Sakakawea was frozen over during the time of the survey.

While 135,000 geese isn't one of the highest midwinter tallies in North

Dakota, more geese were surveyed this winter than last (about 26,000 geese) when early snow and cold made wintering conditions difficult.

Interestingly, Szymanski said most of the Canada geese counted during the midwinter survey are birds that primarily breed in Saskatchewan, Canada.

"More than 90 percent of our geese that we count during the midwinter survey are going to be migrant birds," he said.

Grants Support High School Trap League

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is launching a program to provide grants to local clubs or communities that offer high school trap shooting.

Marty Egeland, Game and Fish education section leader, said the grants are designed to support the North Dakota high school trap league.

"The grants are to be used for the infrastructure to support youth shooting, for example trap throwers, trap houses, sidewalks and voice pulls," Egeland said.

Grant dollars are also available to help with start-up costs for new teams that are forming this year.

Interested applicants can print out grant applications online at the Game and Fish website, gf.nd.gov. For more information, contact Egeland at 701-328-6612, or email megeland@nd.gov.



A participant in the North Dakota State High School League Clay Target championship held at the Shooting Park near Horace.



TY STOCKTON

Russ Kinzler counts the age rings of a walleye. This otolith (right), or ear bone, was taken from a walleye.



TY STOCKTON

Counting Rings and Aging Walleyes

Russ Kinzler, Game and Fish Department Missouri River fisheries biologist in Riverdale, counts the age rings on a magnified image of an otolith from a walleye caught in Lake Sakakawea. The 24-year-old fish was the oldest known walleye ever taken out of the lake by Game and Fish biologists. Kinzler said he has aged 23-year-old walleye from Sakakawea, and he sees a few others each year in their early 20s.

The otolith is the ear bone from a fish. Kinzler cracks the bone in half at the midpoint, then uses the candle on his desk to slightly singe the cross-section of the bone. He places the otolith in a dab of Play-Doh on

his microscope stage, then examines the rings. Each ring represents a year of growth, much like a tree's rings indicate age.

Kinzler said even though this fish was old, it wasn't as big as a person might expect. He said it was 4.5 pounds at a maximum, and was just over 20 inches long.

Kinzler spends some time in winter aging fish caught during the summer months. He ages not only the walleyes from Lake Sakakawea, but also sauger and rainbow smelt. It's a tedious process, cracking the otoliths in half, holding them over a flame with tweezers, and counting and recording the rings for each individual fish. This year, he

aged 650 walleye, 200 sauger and 250 smelt. But it's important work.

"The growth data shows us how healthy the fishery is," he said. "We're also getting mortality information out of that – it tells us an estimate of how many fish we're losing out of the system each year."

Though the mortality hasn't been calculated from this year's data yet, Kinzler said it's been holding around 30 percent for the last several years. That's normal for a fishery like Lake Sakakawea. If the data begins to show a higher mortality, Kinzler and the rest of the fisheries division will investigate the reasons and put processes in place to reverse the trend.

By Ty Stockton

Nonresident Any-deer Bow Licenses

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department will have 502 any-deer bow licenses available to nonresidents in 2018.

Applicants must apply online at the Game and Fish website, gf.nd.gov. Paper applications are not available.

The application deadline is March 1.

Up to five applicants can apply together as a party. A lottery will be held if more applications are received than licenses available. Any remaining licenses after March 1 will be issued on a first-come, first-served basis.

The number of nonresident any-deer bow licenses available is 15 percent of the previous year's mule deer gun license allocation. The Game and Fish Department issued 3,350 mule deer licenses in the 2017 deer gun license lottery.



GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT PHOTO

NASP Tourney in March

The North Dakota National Archery in the Schools Program state tournament is scheduled for March 23-24 at the State Fair Center in Minot.

The tournament will feature team and individual categories in elementary, middle school and high school, including awards and prizes, and up to \$20,000 in college scholarships available to the top 10 boys and girls in each grade division.

Additionally, the top 10 boys and girls qualify for NASP nationals in Louisville, Kentucky.

The state tournament and all other local and regional NASP tournaments are open to any student in grades 4-12 who attend a school that offers NASP lessons during the school day. If a school has an after-school club, third-graders are also welcome, with permission from the coach and principal.

For a complete listing of tournaments in North Dakota, go to the official NASP tournament website at <http://www.nasptournaments.org/>. A certified NASP archery instructor must register participants for all NASP tournaments.

For more information, or to find out if your child's school participates in NASP, contact Jeff Long, North Dakota state coordinator, at jrlong@nd.gov, or call 701-328-6322.

Spring Light Goose Conservation Order

North Dakota's spring light goose conservation order opens Feb. 17 and continues through May 13.

Residents must have a valid current season 2017-18 (valid through March 31) or 2018-19 (required April 1) combination license; or a small game, and general game and habitat license. The 2018-19 license is available for purchase beginning March 15.

Nonresidents need a 2018 spring light goose conservation order license. The cost is \$50 and is valid statewide. Nonresidents who hunt in the spring remain eligible to buy a fall season license. The spring license does not count against the 14-day fall waterfowl hunting season regulation.

In addition, nonresident youth under age 16 can purchase a license at the resident fee if their state has youth reciprocity licensing with North Dakota.

A federal duck stamp is not required for either residents or nonresidents.

Resident and nonresident licenses are available online at the North Dakota Game and Fish Department website, gf.nd.gov, by calling 800-406-6409, and at license vendors.

Hunters must register annually

with the Harvest Information Program prior to hunting in each state. The HIP number can be obtained online, or by calling 888-634-4798. The HIP number obtained for North Dakota's spring conservation order is also valid for North Dakota's fall hunting season.

The Game and Fish Department will provide hunters with migration updates once geese have entered the state. Hunters can access the department's website, or call 701-328-3697, to receive generalized locations of bird sightings in North Dakota until the season ends or geese have left the state. Migration reports will be updated periodically during the week.

The spring conservation order is only open to light geese – snows, blues, and Ross's. Species identification is important because white-fronted and Canada geese travel with light geese. The conservation order is closed to whitefronts, Canada geese, swans and all other migratory birds.

For more information on regulations refer to the 2018 Spring Light Goose Hunting Regulations and the 2017 North Dakota Waterfowl Hunting Guide.



CRAIG BIHRLE



Pat Lothspeich, Department outreach biologist, teaches a hunter education class at Game and Fish headquarters in Bismarck.

MIKE ANDERSON

Hunter Education Classes

People interested in taking a hunter education class in 2018 are reminded to register early as most classes are held the first few months of the calendar year.

To register for a hunter education course, students need to sign up online at the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's website, gf.nd.gov. Classes are added throughout the year as they are finalized.

After accessing the Buy and Apply link, click on the hunter education link and "list of hunter education courses."

Classes are listed by city, and can also be sorted by start date. To register for a class, click on "enroll" next to the specific class, and follow the simple instructions. Personal information is required.

Those interested in receiving a notice by email when each hunter education class is added can click on the "subscribe to news and alerts" link found below the news section on the Game and Fish home page. Check the box labeled "hunter education" under the education program updates.

In addition, SMS text notifications of new classes can be sent directly to a cell phone. Simply text "NDGF HunterClass" to 468311 to subscribe to this feature.

State law requires anyone born after December 31, 1961 to pass a certified hunter education course to hunt in the state. Hunter education is mandatory for youth who are turning 12 years old, and children can take the class at age 11.

YOUTH GRANT PROGRAM APPLICATION DEADLINE

Wildlife, shooting, fraternal and nonprofit civic organizations are urged to submit an application for the Encouraging Tomorrow's Hunters program, a North Dakota Game and Fish Department grant program developed to assist recruitment of the next generation of hunters and shooters.

The maximum grant allowed is \$3,000. The program currently helps fund approximately 40 club and organizational events and projects each year, with an average grant of \$1,550.

Grant funds help cover event expenses, including promotional printing; event memorabilia such as shirts, caps or vests; ammunition and targets, and eye and ear protection.

Past funding has enabled several groups to conduct youth pheasant and waterfowl hunts, while others have sponsored trap and other shooting events, including archery and rifle shooting.

One change for this year is that all grants associated with high school trap

league teams have a separate grant fund and application form, and these will be for newly-formed teams in 2018 only.

Any club or organization interested in conducting a youth hunting or shooting event can get more information, including a grant application, from the Game and Fish Department website, gf.nd.gov, or by contacting outreach biologist Pat Lothspeich at 701-328-6332.

The application deadline for a 2018 grant is April 10.

Earth

Day 2018



North Dakota Earth Day Patch Contest

The state Game and Fish Department's annual Earth Day awareness campaign is accepting entries for design of a 2018 Earth Day patch. North Dakota students ages 6-18 are eligible to participate. The deadline to submit entries is March 15.

The Game and Fish Department will announce a winner in three age categories – 6-9, 10-13, and 14-18. Each winner will receive a pair of binoculars. The final patch design will be chosen from the three winners.

The winning design will be used on a patch given to members of Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, 4-H clubs and any school participating in Earth Day cleanup projects on state-owned or managed lands in

North Dakota in April and May.

The patch should incorporate some aspect of Earth Day – celebrated April 22 – or keeping North Dakota clean. It must be round and three inches in diameter. There is a limit of five colors on the patch, and lettering must be printed. Name, address, age and phone number of the contestant must be clearly printed on the entry form. Only one entry per person is allowed.

Earth Day contest rules and entry forms are available on the Game and Fish Department's website, gf.nd.gov. For more information, contact Pat Lothspeich by email at ndgf@nd.gov, or call 701-328-6332.

**Watchable
Wildlife 2017
Contest**
Nongame
Runner-up
Lazuli bunting
Thomas W. Wirtz,
Bismarck



Checkoff for Wildlife

North Dakota citizens with an interest in supporting wildlife conservation programs are reminded to look for the Watchable Wildlife checkoff on the state tax form.

The state income tax form gives wildlife enthusiasts an opportunity to

support nongame wildlife like songbirds and birds of prey, while at the same time contributing to programs that help everyone enjoy all wildlife.

The checkoff – whether you are receiving a refund or having to pay in – is an easy way to voluntarily contribute

to sustain this long-standing program. In addition, direct donations to the program are accepted any time of year.

To learn more about Watchable Wildlife program activities, visit the North Dakota Game and Fish Department website at gf.nd.gov.



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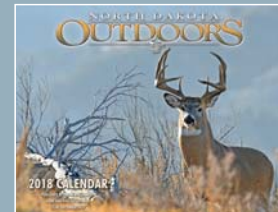
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For more options to receive Game and Fish news and information, visit the Game and Fish website at gf.nd.gov.

RECEIVE:

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- Season Opening Dates
- Maximum Harvest Quotas
- Other Timely Updates

MAGAZINE



WEBSITE

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TV/BROADCAST

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BISMARCK

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

DICKINSON

KQCD - Saturday - 5 pm (MT)
KXMA - Sunday - 9 pm (MT)

FARGO

KVRR - Saturday - 9 pm

GRAND FORKS

KVRR - Saturday - 9 pm

MINOT

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

WILLISTON

KUMV - Saturday - 6 pm
KXMD - Sunday - 10 pm
Monday - Noon

NORTH DAKOTA
GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
100 North Bismarck Expressway
Bismarck, ND 58501-5095
701.328.6300
Email: ndgf@nd.gov



back cast



By Ron Wilson

As I write this, a note stuck to the bottom of my computer monitor reminds me the spring turkey application deadline is looming.

It's on my to-do list and I'll get to it.

Wild turkey hunters have to apply online this year, following the agency's move to require that all lottery applications – for spring and fall turkey, moose, elk, bighorn sheep, swan, pronghorn and deer – be submitted online.

For myself, and many others, applying for a lottery license online is old hat, nothing to it, really. I can't tell you the last time I filled out a paper lottery application, but I know it's been years.

In our hunting camp, the hard part isn't securing a spring gobbler license in the unit we hunt. We've been lucky in that regard. The hurdle, the one we've tried pretty hard to clear, is killing a tom.

We've played along like you'd expect, rising long before our neighbors stir, but not early enough to greet the paper boy who chucks our daily read, bound tight with a rubber band, at our sliding glass door.

Even after we throw in a 40-minute drive, some messing around at the vehicle to quietly unload hunting gear, and a short hike into the woods, we're still ahead of schedule. Beating the sun, getting ahead of the day and the birds, has never been an issue.

But luring a mature tom, or a young jake, for that matter, with our practiced, but doubtful calls, hasn't gone as planned.

Of all the wild game we pursue in North Dakota, turkeys rank up there as one of the most intriguing. I wonder if we'd continue to lean this way if we'd had punched a license or two in recent

years, but we also recognize that snow and cold remain a real possibility, but we also recognize that the worst is behind us.

Today, as we hunker indoors under a wind chill advisory, with the same forecast on tap for tomorrow, the thought of hunting turkeys in spring, sitting with our backs against old cottonwoods in a river bottom somewhere and picking off the occasional tick, sounds darn good.

We're weeks from that, of course, but I can imagine it. I picture turkeys, let's say a dozen or so, roosting in cottonwoods about the same size that we are leaning against.

As sunrise nears, the birds start talking, loudly responding to seemingly innocuous noises, like bawling livestock, barking dogs, slammed pickup doors. When the big birds exit their roosts and hit the

ground, it's no surprise. Their entry into the day, while effective, lacks a certain amount of grace.

Then again, considering our success in the field over the years, the birds would likely say the same about us.

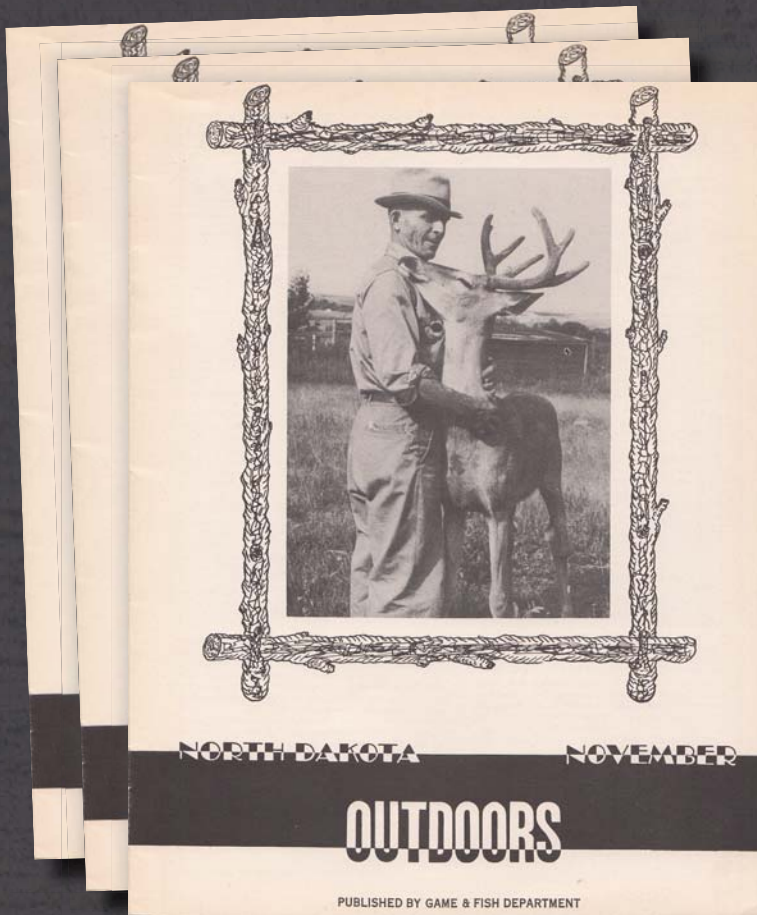
RON WILSON is editor of North Dakota OUTDOORS.



CRAIG BIRHLE

years, bloodied our hands with a bird that was introduced into the state more than a half-century ago.

I think so. At this time of year, turkeys for us and other hunters who have grown weary of winter and pine for spring, are the carrot dangling at the end of the stick. When the hunting season opens in mid-April, we



J.E. Reck with a whitetail buck raised at the Game and Fish Department's game farm at Spiritwood Lake. This photo ran on the cover of the November 1942 issue of North Dakota OUTDOORS. Reck was a caretaker at the game farm and a photo caption at the time said the buck was at ease around Reck, but would "scurry away" around strangers.

A LOOK BACK By Ron Wilson

In late summer 1931, the first issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS* was published and made available to the public.

If you do the math, that means the magazine turned 87 this year. Not a milestone, certainly. Just a point of interest.

If you thumb through the thousands of pages and years of articles, as we have, you'll notice great change in North Dakota's natural resources and the way the Game and Fish Department conducts business.

On the flip side, it's interesting how some things haven't changed, as wildlife managers today are dealing with many of the same issues their predecessors wrestled with, such as safeguarding wildlife habitat, increasing and decreasing animal numbers, hunter and angler expectations, fallout of drought and difficult North Dakota winters, and so on.

There is no cutoff of, say, 10 years, to qualify as a subject for A Look Back. Technically, we could write about something from the February 2012 issue of *OUTDOORS* and it would qualify because, well, that would be taking A Look Back.

Yet, for whatever reason, the tendency is to knock off the dust from some of the older issues to see what's between the **front and back covers**.

Which brings us to the following nuggets published in a feature called **Strands of Sport**, which appeared in a number of issues in 1942:

- We are constantly urging hunters to use retrievers this fall. Do you have yours? It is not permissible to use setters, pointers and droppers.
- If the sportsmen's organizations in North Dakota have anything to say about it, the axis powers are in for a hot time. Many of the clubs are appropriating a portion of their funds for the purchase of War Bonds. This is really making their money do double duty.
- A rumor is out that a hunter from Fargo bagged a black-tail buck in the Badlands with a 30-inch horn spread. Quite some rack we think.
- Many farmers are short of shells, and it would be a nice gesture on the part of the hunters if they leave

a little ammunition with him after the hunt.

- The Frosted Food Locker in Bismarck reports that one cock pheasant brought in for dressing weighed five pounds. If there were any heavier birds killed last fall, sportsmen are urged to notify the department.
- The open winter has been a boon to trappers in the state, and it is anticipated that the take of furbearers is the largest in many seasons.
- When you see ducks and geese winging their way north this spring in V formations think of Victory – Buy defense savings stamps and bonds.
- A friend of mine found a gold band ring lying beside the entrails of a deer. It appeared that the man cleaning the deer had it slip from his finger. The ring is engraved on the inside, which will make it easy for the owner to identify.

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.