

NDG&F April 7th Newsletter

Bighorn Sheep Population Stable

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department's annual bighorn sheep survey revealed a minimum of 293 bighorn sheep in western North Dakota, virtually unchanged from the previous count of 297. In total, biologists counted 85 rams, 159 ewes and 49 lambs. Not included are 24 bighorn sheep introduced from Alberta in February, and approximately 30 bighorns in the North Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

Big game biologist Brett Wiedmann said the count in the northern badlands was the highest on record, beating the previous record set in 2012, but the southern badlands population declined 15 percent. "Rams and lambs showed a slight decline, but adult ewes increased," Wiedmann said. "About 75 percent of lambs counted during last summer's survey survived the winter, which is about average, but the recruitment rate of 37 percent was above average."

Game and Fish Department biologists count and classify all bighorn sheep in late summer, and then recount lambs the following March, as they approach one year of age, to determine recruitment. Wiedmann is encouraged by another year of healthy numbers of lambs because it is indicative of a healthy population. "Adult mortality was also low last winter, so we expect another good crop of lambs to begin hitting the ground within a few weeks," he said.

Game and Fish allocated five bighorn sheep hunting licenses for 2014, one more than 2013.

Hunting Guide and Outfitter Test May 17

The next guide and outfitter written examination is May 17 at 1 p.m. at the North Dakota Game and Fish Department office in Bismarck. The test is given periodically to anyone interested in becoming a hunting guide or outfitter in the state.

In addition to passing a written exam, qualifications for becoming a guide include a background check for criminal and game and fish violations; certification in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and standard first aid; and employment by or contract with a licensed hunting outfitter.

Hunting outfitter eligibility requirements include the guide qualifications, as well as an individual must have held a hunting guide license for two years; and must have proof of liability insurance.

Interested individuals are required to preregister by calling the Game and Fish Department's enforcement office at 328-6604.

RAP Auction May 3

Confiscated hunting and fishing equipment will be sold Saturday, May 3 at the North Dakota Wildlife Federation's Report All Poachers auction in Minot. The auction is scheduled for 2 p.m. at the North Dakota State Fair Center's 4-H hall.

Auction items can be viewed between 12-2 p.m. Items include more than 70 rifles, shotguns and handguns; fishing equipment; bows; knives; spotlights; coolers and other miscellaneous merchandise. More information, including a comprehensive list of items for auction, is available by visiting the wildlife

federation's website at ndwf.org.

Proceeds from the auction fund the RAP program. The RAP line, 800-472-2121, offers monetary rewards for information that leads to conviction of fish and wildlife law violators. The RAP line is available 24 hours a day, and callers can remain anonymous.