

## **NDG&F October 6th Newsletter**

### **Motorists Warned to Watch for Deer**

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

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

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

Deer-vehicle accidents are at times unavoidable. If an accident does happen, motorists are reminded that a law passed by the 2013 state legislature eliminates the need for the driver involved in an accident to notify law enforcement authorities, if only the vehicle is damaged. Deer-vehicle accidents that involve injury or other property damage still must be reported.

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

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

Always wear your seat belt.

Don't swerve or take the ditch to avoid hitting a deer. Try to brake as much as possible and stay on the roadway. Don't lose control of your vehicle or slam into something else to miss the deer. You risk less injury by hitting the deer.

If you spot deer ahead, slow down immediately and honk your horn.

### **Order 2015 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 2015. Along with outstanding color photographs of North Dakota wildlife and scenery, it also includes sunrise-sunset times and moon phases.

To order, 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.

## **Contest to Determine PLOTS Cover**

The deadline is months away, but now is the time to frame the perfect photograph for a contest that will determine the cover of the 2015 Private Land Open To Sportsmen guide.

From end-of-day hunting shots, to scenic action or landscape shots, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department wants to feature hunter photos on the 2015 PLOTS cover and elsewhere that showcase North Dakota's strong hunting heritage.

The department's free PLOTS guide, which highlights walk-in hunting areas across the state, was first published in the late 1990s.

The only real contest guideline is that photos must include a PLOTS sign, front-facing or silhouette.

The contest deadline is April 30, 2015. Log on to the Game and Fish Department's website, [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov), to [learn more](#) about contest prizes, rules and entry information.

## **Bighorn Sheep Survey Shows Decline**

Results from this summer's bighorn sheep survey indicate the population in western North Dakota is lower than last year.

State Game and Fish Department big game biologist Brett Wiedmann said the July-August survey showed a minimum of 287 bighorn sheep, down 4 percent from 2013. Results revealed 82 rams, 153 ewes and 52 lambs.

Due to an ongoing disease event in the northern badlands, Game and Fish biologists have verified more than 20 bighorn sheep deaths over the summer. Wiedmann said the survey is a tale of two segments of the state's population. "The four herds in the northern badlands not affected by the die-off increased 28 percent from last year, with the lamb count increasing 46 percent," Wiedmann said. "However, the eight herds impacted by disease declined 25 percent, with the lamb count declining by 66 percent." Although population levels were down markedly in portions of the northern badlands, biologists were pleased to see a slight increase in the southern badlands.

The department's survey does not include approximately 40 bighorn sheep that live in the North Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

Game and Fish wildlife veterinarian Dan Grove said only time will tell how severe the die-off will be.

"Mortalities so far have been significant but not yet catastrophic," Grove said. "However, the outbreak is ongoing, and we have detected a virulent strain of bacteria from biological samples collected from dead bighorns. Consequently, impacts will be more apparent when females and lambs are recounted next March, but the full extent of the outbreak likely will not be realized until the 2015 survey is completed."

Each summer, Game and Fish Department biologists count and classify all bighorn sheep, a process that takes nearly six weeks to complete as biologists locate each bighorn herd in the badlands by tracking radio-marked animals from an airplane, and then hike into each group to record demographic data using a spotting scope and binoculars. Biologists then complete the annual survey by recounting lambs in March to determine lamb recruitment, or lambs that survive the first winter.