

NDG&F April 18th Newsletter

Hunter Ed Class for Women Offered in Bismarck

A hunter education course for women only is offered in May at the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's main office in Bismarck.

The course involves one evening of classroom instruction, self-paced internet classes, a written exam and an instructional clinic for shooting shotguns, rifles and muzzleloaders.

"This course will provide a great opportunity to meet the state's requirements for hunter education, while providing additional opportunities to learn in a women's-only environment about how to be a safe and responsible hunter," said Brian Schaffer, education coordinator.

The initial class will meet Tuesday, May 3 from 6-9 p.m. Participants will have more than a week to complete an online portion, take a short exam and print a certificate of completion. On May 14 at 9 a.m., the class will gather at Game and Fish to complete a field day exercise, take the final written exam and participate in the instructional shooting clinic.

Students [should register online](#) at the Game and Fish Department's website, gf.nd.gov. To register, click on buy and apply, and "online course enrollment" under the hunter education heading. The course number is 2715.

Students who do not have access to the Internet and want to sign up for the class can call the hunter education program 328-6615.

MRS Walleye Tagging Study Continues

North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries biologists are on the final leg of a four-year walleye tagging study on the Missouri River and Lake Oahe.

South central district fisheries biologist Paul Bailey said this spring's goal in North Dakota is to tag 4,000 adult walleye, which would bring the four-year total covering the entire reach to more than 36,000 fish.

The study area extends from the Garrison Dam in central North Dakota downstream to Oahe Dam in South Dakota, and involves a major collaboration of biologists and researchers from North Dakota Game and Fish, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, and South Dakota State University.

"The study is designed to assess walleye movements, mortality and what proportion of the walleye population is harvested annually by anglers," Bailey said.

The study targets adult walleye, each fitted with a metal jaw tag stamped with a unique number to identify the fish, and a phone number to report the tag. Anglers can either keep or release the fish. Anglers practicing catch-and-release can write the tag number down and report it, leaving the tag on the fish when released.

Bailey said the study has provided biologists with some valuable information. “The angling mortality rate that we’ve seen in the first three years of the study has been about 17-27 percent, depending on the region of Lake Oahe and the Missouri River that we are in,” Bailey said. “Those are all acceptably low rates of mortality that basically says that anglers are not having a negative impact on the fishery at the present time.”

In addition, Bailey believes a lot of anglers assume there is a walleye migration that occurs every spring, similar to a spawning run. “The information that we are getting suggests that this really isn’t the case,” he added. “What anglers are seeing is really an illusion, based on water temperatures.”

Movement patterns suggest over half of the tagged walleye that were reported by anglers were caught within 10 miles of where they were tagged and released. However, Bailey said the pattern shows fish tagged in North Dakota moved greater distances than those tagged farther downstream, and North Dakota fish moved both upstream and downstream after tagging.

While the tagging portion of the project will be completed this year, anglers will be able to report tagged fish as they are caught in the future.

Anglers can report tags by calling the phone number found on tags, which, anglers should note, is a South Dakota phone number. Tag information can also be reported on the Game and Fish Department’s website, gf.nd.gov, or by calling 701-328-6300.

Anglers should record the date and location of the catch, whether the fish was kept or released, tag number and length and weight (if the fish was measured). Anglers who report tagged fish can keep the tag, and will receive a letter providing some history on the fish.

A small portion of the tags offer a reward to anglers to encourage returns, Bailey said, with these tags clearly marked “Reward.”

Reward tags must be physically turned in to Game and Fish offices in Riverdale or Bismarck, or to a Game, Fish and Parks office in South Dakota.

Graner Bottoms Ramp to be Closed

The Graner Bottoms boat ramp located south of Mandan will close Monday, April 25 for approximately 2-4 days for minor repairs.

The timing of the project is aimed to coincide with lower releases from Garrison Dam, which will aid in the completion of the project.

Although this work may cause a temporary inconvenience for anglers, the repairs are necessary and will assure future protection of the ramp and safe operation by the public.

[Status updates](#) are available by visiting the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's website at gf.nd.gov

Report Bald Eagle Nest Sightings

The State Game and Fish Department is asking for help in locating bald eagle nests in North Dakota.

Game and Fish Department conservation biologist Sandra Johnson said the department is looking for locations of nests with eagles present, not individual eagle sightings. "Eagles are actively tending to eggs or their young in April," Johnson said, while noting it is easy to distinguish an eagle nest because of its enormous size.

Historically, Johnson said eagle nests were found along the Missouri River. Now, they have been observed in more than three-quarters of the counties in the state, mostly near streams and mid- to large-sized lakes. However, they are also found in unique areas such as shelterbelts surrounded by cropland or pasture.

Johnson estimates the state has around 170 active bald eagle nests, possibly more.

Nest observations should be reported to Game and Fish at 701-328-6300, or by email at ndgf@nd.gov.

Observers are asked to not disturb the nest, and to stay away at a safe distance. Johnson said foot traffic may disturb the bird, likely causing the eagle to leave her eggs or young unattended.

Tennessee Man Cited for Guiding Without License

A Tennessee man has lost his hunting privileges for 18 months and was fined more than \$4,000 for acting as a hunting outfitter in North Dakota without a license.

Robert "Adam" Whitten, 40, of Counce, Tenn., was charged Oct. 24, 2015, by district game warden Erik Schmidt, Linton, after Schmidt followed up on a complaint of unlawfully placed "No Hunting" signs on private property.

Through his investigation, Schmidt determined Whitten, who had acted as an outfitter in the past in Tennessee, was staying on a rented farmstead in southwestern Emmons County for most of the month of October. Prior to his arrival in North Dakota, Whitten took money from nonresident hunters for what he was advertising as a place to stay and access to 5,000 acres of hunting land for waterfowl and upland game.

In North Dakota it is illegal to act as a guide or outfitter without first securing a license through the North Dakota Game and Fish Department. Licensed outfitters in North Dakota are required to pass a written test, be certified in first aid, and carry liability insurance, among other requirements. The definition of outfitting in North Dakota includes providing facilities or services and receiving compensation from a third party for the use of land for the conduct of outdoor recreational activities including hunting.

Schmidt charged Whitten with two counts of outfitting without a license, both Class A misdemeanors. The maximum penalty for a Class A misdemeanors in North Dakota is a \$3,000 fine and one year imprisonment.

Under a plea agreement approved by South Central District judge Thomas Schneider, Whitten was required to pay \$3,325 in fines and court costs, with \$1,000 suspended for a period of two years for the

first count and \$3,025 in fines and court costs with \$1,000 suspended for a period of two years for the second count.

In addition to fines and fees, Whitten had his hunting privileges suspended for 18 months and was placed on unsupervised probation for one year. Because North Dakota is a member of the North American Wildlife Violator Compact, Whitten could potentially lose hunting privileges in other compact states.