

## **NDG&F May 21<sup>st</sup> Newsletter**

### **Threat of Exotics in State Waters Continues**

Silver carp are the latest threat in the ongoing campaign to stop the introduction and spread of aquatic nuisance species in North Dakota, which features 360-plus fishing waters.

However, silver carp aren't the only ANS threat in a state that is fortunate not to have big management problems with new or expanded exotic populations.

Robert Timian, North Dakota Game and Fish Department enforcement division chief, said ANS violations brought more warnings than citations in the past, but after years of informing the public about the harmful consequences of aquatic nuisance species, things will change.

"Warnings are good during the information phase, but then you need to take direct action," Timian said. "Citations send a message that we are serious about the introduction and spread of aquatic nuisance species in North Dakota."

Current law states all water must be drained from watercraft prior to leaving a water body, including livewells. This means fish, including bait, cannot be transported in a livewell containing water. However, bait buckets and /or any container of five gallons or less in volume can be used to transport legal live baitfish or other bait in water. All other fish species may not be held in water and/or transported in bait buckets/containers when away from a water body. Transportation of fish in or on ice is allowed.

In addition, no aquatic vegetation, or parts thereof, shall be in or on watercraft, motors, trailers and recreational equipment when out of water. Time out of the water needed to remove aquatic vegetation at the immediate water access area is allowed.

All built-in structures to boats, including livewells and bait compartments, and containers (bait buckets) used to transport legal live bait, must also be free of aquatic vegetation.

### **Most Missouri River Boat Ramps Open**

Water recreationists who plan to enjoy the Missouri River over Memorial Day weekend will find that most public boat ramps are usable.

Bob Frohlich, North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries development supervisor, said sites have been cleared of sand and debris after being closed and underwater all of last summer. However, additional large-scale cleanup and reconstruction projects are underway, or are being planned, at some sites.

"This spring, an additional \$2.5 million spending authority was granted to the department by the state's emergency commission and the legislative budget section," Frohlich said. "That, and the support of

many local city and county partners, has been of great assistance in moving the much-needed work forward.”

A major construction project underway surrounds the MacLean Bottoms boat ramp south of Bismarck. “This site has been closed due to safety reasons because of extensive erosion and scouring along the shoreline,” Frohlich said. “It is anticipated that work should be completed and the ramp opened by late June.”

After the project is finished at MacLean Bottoms, crews are hopeful to begin work at Kimball Bottoms. Currently, one lane of the ramp is operational; however, Frohlich said additional work is required. At this point, no start or ending date has been determined.

Cleanup of the park and camping area at Graner Bottoms south of Mandan is ongoing, Frohlich said, and a project to reconstruct the boat ramp is planned for later this fall, if water levels allow.

“While all public ramps along the Missouri River should be operational by fall, it will take years to fully restore these recreation areas to their pre-flood condition,” Frohlich said.

A complete status report of [Missouri River boat ramps](#) is on the Game and Fish website at [gf.nd.gov](#).

### **Sage Grouse Numbers Improve Slightly**

Even though the number of strutting males observed during the spring sage grouse survey was up 15 percent from last year, the population remains well below management objectives. Therefore, the sage grouse hunting season will remain closed in 2012.

Aaron Robinson, North Dakota Game and Fish Department upland game bird biologist, said biologists counted 72 males on 12 active strutting grounds. Last year, 63 males were counted on 12 active leks in the southwest.

“This is great news,” Robinson said. “The population has shown it can possibly come back given the right conditions.”

The number of males counted on leks each spring has gradually declined since 2000. In 2008, spring counts dropped dramatically throughout North Dakota’s sage grouse range due to West Nile Virus.

“Numerous conservation efforts have taken place in the past four years which will hopefully help the population recover,” Robinson said.

Sage grouse management in North Dakota and the entire range of 11 western states is a collaborative effort, Robinson said. “We manage this species as a group and make decisions based on scientific information, ultimately to maintain an iconic western species for future generations,” he added.

Sage grouse are North Dakota’s largest native upland game bird. They are found in extreme southwestern North Dakota, primarily in Bowman and Slope counties.

## **May Highlights Safe Boating**

A public awareness campaign held annually in May emphasizes the need for boaters to wear life jackets.

Nancy Boldt, boat and water safety coordinator for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, said the message reinforces the importance of personal flotation devices.

“Facts prove there is no safety substitute for wearing a life jacket while recreating on public waters,” Boldt said.

Failure to wear a PFD is the main reason people lose their lives in boating accidents. Boldt said each year, about 700 people nationwide die in boating-related accidents. Nearly 70 percent are caused by drowning, and eight of 10 victims were not wearing a life jacket.

North Dakota law requires Coast Guard approved PFDs in the following circumstances:

- On watercraft less than 16 feet in length, one wearable PFD must be on board for each person.
- Anyone being towed on water-skis, surfboard, or a similar device must wear a PFD.
- No person may operate or permit the operation of a personal watercraft without each person on board wearing a PFD.
- Watercraft of 16 feet or longer must have one wearable PFD for each person on board, and one throwable flotation device.
- On any vessel less than 27 feet in length, all persons 10 years of age or younger must wear a properly fastened, Coast Guard approved PFD.

Boaters are reminded to test life jackets for serviceability and fit. All straps and buckles must be intact and there should be no rips or tears in the fabric.

## **Summer Workshop Schedule for Educators**

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is announcing the summer schedule of conservation workshops for educators. Graduate credit is available through the University of North Dakota.

- Mammals of North Dakota – May 30-31, North Dakota Game and Fish Department in Bismarck. Workshop participants are provided with the basis for teaching mammal studies relevant to North Dakota, South Dakota and Montana by integrating life science techniques with visual arts using information found in the Lewis and Clark journals. Links are made between mammals, their habits and morphology adaptations. Materials meet North Dakota curriculum standards. Registration is \$30 payable to Bismarck Art and Galleries Association. Contact BAGA at (701) 223-5986, or email [sherry.baga@midconetwork.com](mailto:sherry.baga@midconetwork.com).

- Science Resources for Elementary, Science and Social Studies Educators – June 4-5, Lake Area Career and Technology Center in Devils Lake. This workshop provides participants with an overview of resources available to educators, including The Whale, Wildlife of North Dakota, Elementary Aquatic Education, and Habitats of North Dakota. A \$10 [preregistration](#) fee is required. Contact Jennifer Carlson, Lake Region Teacher Center, at (701) 662-7650, or email [jennifer.carlson.1@sendit.nodak.edu](mailto:jennifer.carlson.1@sendit.nodak.edu).
- Science Resources for Elementary, Science and Social Studies Educators – June 20-21, Dickinson State University in Dickinson. Same concept as the workshop in Devils Lake. Preregistration fee of \$20 for West River Teacher Center members and \$30 for nonmembers is required. To register contact Joanne Fields at (701) 483-2728 or [joanne.fields@dickinsonstate.edu](mailto:joanne.fields@dickinsonstate.edu).
- Birds of North Dakota – June 27-28, North Dakota Game and Fish Department in Bismarck. Teachers completing this workshop will have a basis for teaching bird studies relevant to North Dakota by integrating life science techniques with visual arts found in the Lewis and Clark journals. Links will be made between birds, their habits and morphology adaptations. Materials meet North Dakota curriculum standards. Registration is \$30 payable to Bismarck Art and Galleries Association. Contact BAGA at (701) 223-5986, or email [sherry.baga@midconetwork.com](mailto:sherry.baga@midconetwork.com).