

## **NDG&F July 9th Newsletter**

### **Walleye Stockings Complete**

North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries personnel, along with staff from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service fish hatcheries, recently completed stocking 9.8 million walleye fingerlings in 113 lakes across the state.

Jerry Weigel, fisheries production and development section leader for the Game and Fish Department, said this year's walleye goal required exceptional production from nearly every hatchery pond in the state.

"Overall, we were able to meet every request with Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery contributing 8.7 million fingerlings and Valley City National Fish Hatchery 1.1 million fingerlings. On average the fish were some of the largest in recent years," Weigel said.

Stocking goals for each water body can differ depending on need. Some of the notable stockings include: Lake Sakakawea – 4 million; Stump Lake – 577,000; Lake Darling – 450,000; Devils Lake – 367,000; Heart Butte Reservoir – 325,000; and Lake Ashtabula – 262,000.

"This year's efforts finished in the top five of most waters stocked and most fingerlings stocked," Weigel said.

Stocking conditions were great, Weigel said, with lots of cool water given this year's season was a week earlier than normal. "We had all the fish stocked before this recent hot spell set, which should help increase the chances of good survival," he added. "We'll know more this fall when crews check on survival rate of the stocked fish and determine the amount of natural reproduction."

### **State Fair Conservation Skills Park Expands**

The green space at the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's Conservation and Outdoor Skills Park at the state fairgrounds in Minot turned brown last summer following the Mouse River flood.

Like the rest of the fairgrounds, though, it's coming back nicely this summer and will once again welcome visitors at the state's biggest outdoor gathering July 20-28 at the North Dakota State Fair.

"We've basically had to redo our entire area," said Greg Gullickson, the Game and Fish Department's outreach biologist in Minot, "and we've even added some new space for educational displays."

Construction of a new dock is just one of the improvements, Gullickson said, while mentioning major repairs to structures, landscaping and the fishing pond.

In addition, Gullickson says the free fishing, shooting, archery and furtaker education programs are still a mainstay of the Game and Fish Department's state fair presence.

"Our conservation area is a great place to take a break from other fair activity," Gullickson said. "Our pond is stocked with fish and we invite anyone headed to the fair to stop by and try to catch one."

### **Pheasant Crowing Counts Up**

North Dakota's spring pheasant crowing count survey revealed a 10 percent increase statewide compared to last year.

All four pheasant districts showed an increase compared to last year. The number of crows heard in the southeast increased by 12 percent, northwest by 8 percent, northeast by 6 percent and southwest by 4 percent.

Stan Kohn, upland game management supervisor for the State Game and Fish Department, said birds did not experience excessive mortality last winter.

“Even with the nice winter last year, I anticipated fewer adult birds to be available this spring because poor production in spring of 2009-11 led to fewer young birds entering the fall population,” Kohn said. “However, I did expect to see higher crow count numbers in the southwest because good numbers of birds were observed last winter, but it didn’t pan out in the crow count numbers.”

Even with a somewhat smaller breeding class of birds, Kohn said hens were in better shape this spring because of less winter stress. In addition, he said nesting habitat looked to be in pretty good condition in all areas of the state, and nesting and brooding weather this spring has been almost ideal.

“I expect much better upland game production this summer,” Kohn added. “Pheasant hens are finding better quality nesting and brooding cover on the uplands this spring, and with the good weather, more hens were successful with first clutches, a positive sign of a good production year.”

However, Kohn noted, the loss of CRP is going to decrease nesting and brooding cover in the future, and will negatively affect the pheasant population.

Spring crowing count data is not always a good indicator of the fall population. It does not measure population density, but provides an index of the spring rooster population based on a trend of number of crows heard. Brood surveys, which begin in mid-July and are completed by September, are a better indicator of the summer’s pheasant production and provide insight into what to expect for a fall pheasant population.

Pheasant crowing counts are conducted each spring throughout North Dakota. Observers drive specified 20-mile routes, stopping at predetermined intervals, and counting the number of pheasant roosters heard crowing over a two-minute period during the stop. The number of pheasant crows heard is compared to previous years’ data, providing a trend summary.