

NDF&G September 16th, 2009 Newsletter

Waterfowl Season Outlook Promising

Prospects for North Dakota's upcoming waterfowl season are much improved over last year due to recharged water conditions across the state, according to Mike Johnson, game management section leader for the state Game and Fish Department. Opening day for North Dakota residents is Sept. 26 for ducks, coots, mergansers and geese. Nonresidents may begin hunting waterfowl in North Dakota Oct. 3.

Johnson said the fall flight of ducks from North Dakota is expected to be up about a third from 2008 and similar to 2004. The brood index from the Game and Fish Department's annual mid-July survey was down 2 percent from 2008, but was twice the long-term average. The water index observed during the survey was up 132 percent from last year and 63 percent above the long-term average.

Prospects for the continental fall duck flight are good, Johnson mentioned, with North Dakota's contribution well-above the long-term average. "We had large numbers of breeding ducks this spring, and duck production in North Dakota was again high at 87 percent above the 1955-2008 average," Johnson said.

Almost one-third of the duck production is blue-winged teal, which are early migrants, Johnson noted. "Many blue-winged teal migrate through the state early, and while there are always some around at the start of the season, approximately 80-90 percent migrate out of the state by Oct. 1," he said.

Continental estimates of May breeding duck numbers indicated that most species were in good shape going into the breeding season. However, spring habitat conditions in much of prairie Canada were considered fair-to-poor this year. "Duck production from these areas is expected to be down," Johnson said. "Despite these reports, the number of ducks that migrate through North Dakota should be fair-to-good. Of course, the success of this year's waterfowl season is highly dependent upon our fall weather and habitat conditions, and the migration patterns they produce."

Snow goose and Canada goose populations remain high and large numbers will migrate through the state this fall, Johnson noted. However, small Canada geese in the Tall Grass Prairie population, and Mid-Continent snow geese both had below average years on their arctic nesting grounds. "Weather conditions in the arctic this spring were not good for goose production so hunters will see fewer young snow geese and small Canada geese," Johnson added. "Reduced numbers of young birds in the fall flight make goose hunting more difficult." Hunters can find additional information on the status of ducks, geese and swans at the Internet website, flyways.us.

Resident hunters must possess a general game and habitat license and a fishing, hunting and furbearer certificate. In addition, hunters ages 16 and older must have a small game license and federal duck stamp. Nonresidents must purchase a nonresident waterfowl license, including the general game and habitat license, and certificate. Hunters age 16 and older must possess a federal duck stamp.

Nonresident youth hunters from states that provide a reciprocal licensing agreement for North Dakota residents qualify for North Dakota resident licenses. See the 2009 North Dakota Waterfowl Hunting Guide for details.

All migratory bird hunters are reminded to register with the Harvest Information Program prior to hunting. Hunters who purchase a license through the state Game and Fish Department website (gf.nd.gov) or instant licensing telephone number (800-406-6409) can easily get HIP certified.

Otherwise, hunters must call (888) 634-4798, or access the department's website, and record the HIP number on their fishing, hunting and furbearer certificate. Those who registered to hunt the spring light goose season in North Dakota do not have to register with HIP again, as it is required only once per year in each state hunted.

Hunters should refer to the waterfowl hunting guide for season regulations including licensing requirements, dates, bag limits, season zones and nonresident hunting zones.

Herd Reduction Deer Gun Seasons Open Soon

Two special herd reduction antlerless deer gun seasons will open soon. These seasons are designed to lower deer numbers in specific regions of the state.

A seven-day season for does in northeastern North Dakota in units 2C and 2D opens at noon Sept. 25 and continues through Oct. 1. Only hunters with a unit 2C or 2D antlerless license are eligible to participate. Hunters must stay in the unit for which the license is assigned.

An eight-day antlerless season in southwestern North Dakota in units 3E1, 3E2, 3F1, 3F2 and 4F opens at noon Oct. 2 and continues through Oct. 9. Only hunters with a unit 3E1, 3E2, 3F1, 3F2 or 4F antlerless license are eligible to participate. As with the special season in the northeast, hunters must stay in the unit for which the license is assigned.

Deer hunters who would like to participate in the herd reduction seasons can purchase remaining doe licenses for these units online at the North Dakota Game and Fish Department website, gf.nd.gov.

In addition, landowners are still seeking doe hunters in 10 hunting units, including herd reduction season units 3E1, 3F1 and 3F2. Interested hunters can get their name on a list of possible participants by accessing the Game and Fish Department's website. Hunters who do not have Internet access can call the department's main office in Bismarck at (701) 328-6300.

Waterfowl Hunters Reminded of ANS Regulations

Waterfowl hunters are reminded to do their part in preventing the spread of aquatic nuisance species into or within North Dakota.

In fact, waterfowl hunters and late-season anglers traveling near Devils Lake are encouraged to stop by an ANS inspection site at Cenex West.

The Devils Lake Chamber and Cenex West are operating a boat inspection site. Inspections focus on aquatic vegetation in or on the boat, including any equipment and in livewells, and drained/dry livewells and bilges. Boats with problems are provided use of a power washer and an area for cleaning.

Waterfowl hunters must clean boats, decoys, waders and other hunting equipment before leaving a water body. Hunters must also drain water from all hunting equipment prior to leaving the water, and are encouraged to brush their hunting dogs free of mud and seeds.

Cattails, phragmites, bulrushes and terrestrial plants may be transported as camouflage on boats. All other aquatic vegetation must be cleaned from boats prior to transportation into or within North Dakota.

Detailed ANS information and prevention regulations can be found in the 2008-10 North Dakota Fishing Guide, or by accessing the Game and Fish Department website at gf.nd.gov.

Bowhunters Reminded of Regulations, Etiquette with Tree Stands

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department reminds bow hunters of two regulation changes involving hunting from tree stands on state wildlife management areas.

It is important to follow all regulations of the managing agency when using tree stands on public hunting areas. One new regulation requires tree stands left unattended on state Game and Fish Department wildlife management areas to have an identification tag displaying the owner's name, address and telephone number. This will allow Game and Fish personnel to contact the owner of a tree stand if a conflict should arise, and most likely will deter theft of tree stands on public land.

The other regulation change extends the deadline for removing tree stands from WMAs an additional three weeks to Jan. 31. The archery season has been extended into January in recent years, and this will allow archers plenty of time to remove tree stands.

The Game and Fish Department also recommends that bowhunters: check with landowners before erecting or using tree stands on private property; do not use the tree stand of another hunter without that hunter's permission; and do not remove or tamper with a tree stand without the owner's or landowner's permission.

Tree stands are private property, and theft constitutes a criminal violation that should be reported to the local sheriff's department. Bowhunters are reminded that additional concurrent season deer gun licenses can be used with a bow during the archery season in the designated hunting unit.

Some Boat Ramps Temporarily Closed for Improvements

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department, in cooperation with local county park boards, is closing Kimball (Desert) and Little Heart bottoms boat ramps along the Missouri River beginning Sept. 21 for major reconstruction. Weather permitting, these two ramp projects should be completed by mid-October.

The timing coincides with lower releases from Garrison Dam, resulting in lower river levels needed for construction of the ramps. Work includes extending the bottom end of each ramp, along with removal and replacement of deteriorated portions of the existing ramps.

In addition, water recreationists are reminded the Hazelton boat ramp south of Bismarck is closed from Sept. 14-17 to pave the newly constructed parking and turnaround area. The ramp is scheduled to be open Friday, Sept. 18.

Also on the Missouri River, boat ramp renovations at Sanger and Steckel (Wilton) have been completed and both ramps are open.

The boat ramp on Alkaline Lake (Kidder County) near Streeter is also scheduled for work. The ramp will be closed from Sept. 21 through early October to replace the existing metal and concrete plank with poured cement.

Although construction may cause a temporary inconvenience, the new ramps will be a major improvement over the existing facilities.