

NDG&F January 11th Newsletter

Ice Fishing Facing Challenges

Wet conditions the past few years have produced a record number of water bodies in North Dakota that are managed as fisheries, many with young populations of pike, perch and other species. However, another year of near-record early winter snowfall over much of the state is generating concern regarding access to these waters.

Greg Power, North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries chief, said this winter is similar to the past two years when anglers had a tough time getting to some lakes to fish. "We're still in the first half of winter and already the state is blanketed, on average, with more than a foot of snow on the level," Power said. "Unfortunately, according to the latest long-term National Weather Service forecast for North Dakota, difficult winter conditions are expected until spring."

As in other years with abundant snowfall, the Game and Fish Department has received some inquiries about removing snow from access areas, but Power said the department does not have the equipment or funding to maintain access to lakes in winter. "Some lakes have a few local individuals or groups that pitch in and try to keep access points open, but when the wind blows it can and does nullify all the work in short order," Power said. "In harsh winters, the cost to try to keep access open could easily run into the millions of dollars."

A few fishing tournaments have already been postponed or cancelled due to poor access, Power said, and potential contestants should keep in contact with their local organizers on their tournament status. In addition to access issues, heavy snowpack has fisheries biologists concerned about the potential for low oxygen levels in many lakes. "History has shown that the likelihood of winterkill increases when substantial snow comes early and stays on the lake," Power said. "As in the past during tough winters, we will undoubtedly lose some fish populations in some lakes to winterkill, but it's just too early to predict how many or which ones."

44 Eagles Counted on Survey

The annual mid-winter bald eagle survey conducted Jan. 6 along the Missouri River from Bismarck to the Garrison Dam revealed 44 bald eagles, according to Patrick T. Isakson, nongame biologist for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department.

The aerial survey is conducted nationwide to estimate the number of bald eagles wintering in the lower 48 states. "We count the birds as close to a target date as possible to minimize the chance that birds are counted more than once," Isakson said.

The number of bald eagles wintering in the state generally depends on the amount of open water and availability of prey – fish and waterfowl. "This year's count was slightly above average, a bit of a surprise as waterfowl numbers along the Missouri River are low," Isakson said. "A majority of the eagles counted were in a stretch of river from Stanton to the Garrison Dam, the area with the highest concentration of waterfowl."

Eagles are relatively easy to spot as they prefer to perch in large cottonwood trees along the river. Adult bald eagles have a white head and tail and a dark brown body, while immature bald eagles are brown

with irregular white plumage. Golden eagles, which are also counted, are dark in color and have a gold cap on their head.

Hunter Ed Instructor Workshops and Banquet Scheduled

North Dakota Game and Fish Department hunter education instructors are invited to attend one of three regional workshops scheduled in 2011.

The workshops are Jan. 22 at the Spirit Lake Casino in Devils Lake; Feb. 26 at the Gladstone Inn in Jamestown; and March 12 at the Airport International Inn in Williston.

Each workshop runs from 1-5 p.m., with registration beginning at 12 p.m. Instructors are asked to call the Hunter Education office in Bismarck to preregister. Workshops in 2012 will be offered in Fargo, Grand Forks, Minot and Dickinson.

Instructors are also reminded of the 27th annual Hunter Education Instructor Conference and Recognition Banquet on Feb. 12 at the Best Western Ramkota in Bismarck. Conference invites, agenda and registration information were mailed out to all certified instructors.

Hunter education instructors are volunteers and provide their expertise and time free of charge.

Volunteer instructors must be 18 or older, have hunting experience, have not been convicted of a felony or serious law violation and have successfully completed hunter education. Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer hunter education instructor should call Jon Hanson, hunter education coordinator, at (701) 328-6316.

Habitats Workshop Feb. 11-12 in Minot

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department and the Minot Area Teacher Center are sponsoring a wildlife conservation and resource management workshop for teachers, environmental educators and anyone else who works with youth.

“Habitats of North Dakota” is scheduled Feb. 11-12 at the Minot Area Teacher Center, 1609 Fourth Ave. N.W., Minot. The five North Dakota habitats – wetlands, badlands, prairie, woodlands and riparian – will be studied, with the North Dakota Studies Habitats curriculum used as textbooks.

The fast-paced workshop offers a hands-on approach educators can use in their classrooms and on field trips, and in discussing classroom and curriculum integration. All supplies are provided.

Curriculum materials are suitable for grades K-8, and include mathematics, language arts, social studies, visual arts and life science. In addition to the Habitats curriculum, other Game and Fish Department learning trunks will be reviewed.

Workshop instructor Sherry Niesar has a master’s degree in wildlife science and teaches many educator workshops in the region.

To register for the workshop, contact the Minot Area Teacher Center at (701) 857-4467, or e-mail deb.sisco@sendit.nodak.edu. A \$10 registration fee for materials and refreshments is required.

More information can be obtained by contacting Niesar at (701) 527-3714, or e-mail sniesar@nd.gov.

Nonresident Any-Deer Bow Licenses

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department will have 1,091 any-deer bow licenses available to nonresidents in 2011.

The number of nonresident any-deer bow licenses available is 15 percent of the previous year’s mule

deer gun license allocation. The Game and Fish Department issued 7,275 mule deer licenses in the 2010 deer gun lottery.

The department will begin issuing any-deer bow licenses March 1. All applications received on or before March 1, 2011, will be treated equally. If more applications are received than there are licenses, each application will be assigned a number. Numbers will be drawn to issue the licenses. Applicants who request to apply together as a party will receive one number. Additional numbers will be drawn to establish a waiting list. If returned licenses become available, these applicants will be offered the licenses. A separate check is required for each application.

If licenses remain after March 1, these will be issued daily on a first-come, first-served basis.