

## **NDG&F February 28th Newsletter**

### **Winter Wildlife Concerns? Think Habitat**

Another North Dakota tough winter provides a prime example of how important habitat is to wintering wildlife.

Kevin Kading, private land section leader for the state Game and Fish Department, said wildlife depends on quality winter habitat to survive, especially in times like this when North Dakota is in the midst of a third consecutive severe winter. "Grasslands, wetlands and other habitats for nesting, breeding or raising their young are equally important for wildlife during other times of their life cycle, but the most important factor for wildlife in severe winters is thermal cover," Kading said.

The Game and Fish Department has funding and programs available for private landowners interested in enhancing or developing habitat or wildlife food plots on their land. Kading said private land biologists will work with landowners to develop habitat and find programs that fit the landowner's specific needs.

Thermal cover consists of dense thickets of shrubs or multi-row tree and shrub plantings with essential zones, such as a north and west prevailing wind barrier, a snow trap or open area that allows snow to drop in, an interior loafing or wintering area and backside protection on the south and east sides. Sizes, shapes and configurations of these habitat blocks depend upon the landscape and contour of the land, suitable soils and sites that provide the best opportunity for survival. Large, dense stands of cattail wetlands can also provide winter cover, but even those can fill in with snow in severe winters.

"When developing winter habitat, landowners should also consider having food plots available nearby," Kading said. "Food plots need to be close to winter habitat so animals have adequate cover and protection from exposure."

Landowners interested in developing winter habitat should visit the department's website at [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov), or contact a private lands biologist at a regional Game and Fish office in Williston (774-4320), Dickinson (227-7431), Riverdale (654-7475), Devils Lake (662-3617), Jamestown (253-6480), Harvey (324-2211) or Bismarck (328-6300).

### **Darkhouse Spearfishing Season Closes March 15**

Anglers are reminded that North Dakota's darkhouse spearfishing season closes March 15.

Interested individuals who would still like to get out for the first time this year must register with the North Dakota Game and Fish Department. Registration is available through the department's website, [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov), or through any Game and Fish Department office.

March 15 is also the deadline for anglers to remove permanent fish houses from state waters.

### **Remove Permanent Fish Houses March 15**

State law requires permanent fish houses to be removed from North Dakota waters by midnight March 15.

Anglers are reminded to not wait until the last minute to remove a fish house because access on some lakes could be restricted due to snow.

Fish houses may be used after March 15 if they are removed daily.

### **North Dakota Bighorn Sheep License to be Auctioned**

The Midwest Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation will auction a North Dakota bighorn sheep license at its annual fundraiser and banquet March 5 in Bloomington, Minn.

North Dakota has auctioned a bighorn sheep license each year since 1986 to fund sheep projects in the state, raising more than \$800,000.

Last year's license sold for \$35,000. One hundred percent of the proceeds from the sale of the license, along with an additional annual grant of \$15,000, are used to enhance management of North Dakota's bighorn sheep.

For more information contact Brett Wiedmann, North Dakota Game and Fish Department big game biologist, Dickinson, at (701) 227-7431.