

NDG&F March 29th Newsletter

Game and Fish Summarizes 2009 Deer Gun Season

North Dakota deer hunters took nearly 75,000 deer during the 2009 deer gun hunting season. Overall hunter success was 59 percent, down from 70 percent in 2008.

Bill Jensen, big game biologist for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, said the deer population was down from previous years because of the severe winter of 2008-09. "We were issuing record to near-record licenses for a number of years because of the high deer population," Jensen said. "After the severe winter, the drop in the population was noticeable."

Jensen said the department kept the pressure on whitetails in many units in 2009 because deer numbers were still above management goals. "In the past under similar situations, we lightened up on license numbers too quickly, and the population rebounded almost immediately to numbers well above goals," he said.

Game and Fish allocated 144,400 deer gun licenses in 2009, and more than 98 percent were issued to hunters.

Hunter success for antlered white-tailed deer was 69 percent, and antlerless whitetail was 61 percent. Mule deer buck success was 73 percent, while mule deer doe hunters had a success rate of 74 percent. Hunters with any-antlered licenses had a success rate of 59 percent, while any-antlerless license holders had a success rate of 56 percent.

Hunters drawing a muzzleloader license had a success rate of 34 percent, while youth deer season hunters had a success rate of 51 percent.

Significant snow cover this past winter enabled the Game and Fish Department to conduct aerial white-tailed deer surveys in January and February. Results indicate deer numbers were hit hardest in the east. Unit 2A in the southeast showed the largest decline in the population from the previous winter at more than 60 percent. Other units showing a decrease in numbers were 1, 2C, 2D, 2E, 2F1, 2F2, 2G, 2G1, 2G2, 2I, 2J1 and 2J2. Deer numbers in Unit 2K2, however, showed a stable to increasing population. Units 2B and 2H remained stable.

In the western half of the state, whitetail numbers remained stable to above management goals along the South Dakota border. Unit 3A1 in the northwest showed a slight increase in numbers, while 3A3 remained stable. Units 3D1, 3D2, 3E1 and 3E2 showed declines.

Game and Fish staff will fly the annual mule deer survey in April.

Department biologists are in the process of determining recommendations for licenses in the 2010 deer proclamation, which will be sent to the governor's office for approval in late April.

Deer license numbers are determined by evaluating hunter harvest and deer survey data, deer-vehicle collision reports, depredation reports, advisory board meetings, and comments from the public, landowners and department field staff.

Game and Fish Advisory Board Meetings Announced

Outdoor enthusiasts are invited to attend a North Dakota Game and Fish Department advisory board

meeting in their area.

These public meetings, held each spring and fall, provide citizens with an opportunity to discuss fish and wildlife issues and ask questions of their district advisors and agency personnel.

The governor appoints eight Game and Fish Department advisors, each representing a multi-county section of the state, to serve as a liaison between the department and public.

Any person who requires an auxiliary aid or service must notify the contact person at least five days prior to the scheduled meeting date.

District 2 – Counties: Bottineau, Burke, McHenry, Mountrail, Pierce, Renville and Ward

Date: April 12 – 7 p.m.

Location: Community Center, Granville

Host: to be announced

Contact: Gary Green, 728-6435

Advisory board member: Richard Anderson, Willow City, 366-4625

District 3 – Counties: Benson, Cavalier, Eddy, Ramsey, Rolette and Towner

Date: April 12 – 7 p.m.

Location: Heritage Room, Lake Region State College, Devils Lake

Host: Lake Region Anglers

Contact and advisory board member: Tracy Gardner, Devils Lake, 662-5639

District 1 – Counties: Divide, McKenzie and Williams

Date: April 13 – 7 p.m.

Location: Community Library, Williston

Host: Upper Missouri United Sportsmen

Contact: Wayne Aberle, 774-8792

Advisory board member: Jason Leiseth, Arnegard, 586-3714

District 4 – Counties: Grand Forks, Nelson, Pembina and Walsh

Date: April 13 – 7 p.m.

Location: American Legion Club, Fordville

Host: Dakota Prairie Wildlife Club

Contact: Lynn Baier, 229-3365

Advisory board member: Ronald Houdek, Tolna, 262-4724

District 5 – Counties: Cass, Ransom, Richland, Sargent, Steele and Traill

Date: April 14 – 7 p.m.

Location: Hughes Shelter, Chahinkapa Park, Wahpeton

Host: Red River Area Sportsman's Club

Contact: Wayne Beyer, 642-2811 or 899-1700

Advisory board member: Loran Palmer, West Fargo, 282-8479

District 8 – Counties: Adams, Billings, Bowman, Dunn, Golden Valley, Hettinger, Slope and Stark

Date: April 14 – 7 p.m.

Location: Playhouse Theatre, Mott

Host: Mott Visionary EDC Group

Contact: Deb Marthaller, 260-9465

Advisory board member: Wayne Gerbig, Amidon, 879-6353

District 6 – Counties: Barnes, Dickey, Foster, Griggs, Logan, LaMoure, McIntosh, Stutsman and Wells

Date: April 15 – 7 p.m.

Location: Gladstone Inn, Jamestown

Host: United Sportsmen of North Dakota

Contact and advisory board member: Joel Christoferson, Litchville, 973-4981

District 7 – Counties: Burleigh, Emmons, Grant, Kidder, McLean, Mercer, Morton, Oliver, Sheridan and Sioux

Date: April 15 – 7 p.m.

Location: Sportsmen Club building, Turtle Lake

Host: Turtle Lake Sportsmen Club

Contact: Rick Schwalk, 448-2282

Advisory board member: Frank Kartch, Bismarck, 751-3414

Open Fires Banned on Oahe WMA

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is prohibiting open burning this spring on property managed south of Bismarck and Mandan, as a means to reduce potential for wildfires on a heavily wooded recreation area along the Missouri River.

Jeb Williams, wildlife resource management supervisor, said all open burning, including campfires, is banned until further notice on the Oahe Wildlife Management Area along both sides of the Missouri River. Williams said these woodlands are prone to wildfires prior to spring green-up.

“The combination of mild temperatures forecasted for the next couple weeks and a high fuel load in the river bottoms is of concern,” Williams said. “Plus, it is an area of high use by anglers, campers and other outdoor recreationists.”

While it would seem moisture from heavy snow cover has reduced the potential for wildfires, Williams said last spring provides a good example of what can happen in just a short period of time. “We responded to an 800-acre wildfire in Graner Bottoms just three weeks removed from flood conditions,” he said.

Oahe WMA covers more than 16,000 acres along Lake Oahe south of Bismarck-Mandan, in portions of Burleigh, Emmons, and Morton counties. Burning restriction signs are posted at all entrances to the WMA.

Whooping Crane Sightings Should be Documented

Whooping cranes, one of North America's most endangered birds, have started their spring migration and are making their way through North Dakota. Anyone seeing these rare birds is asked to report sightings so the birds can be tracked.

Mike Szymanski, migratory game bird biologist for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, said it can be surprisingly easy for people to mistake other white birds – snow geese, pelicans, swans and egrets – for whooping cranes.

“But the most common mistake is pelicans because their wingspan is similar and they tuck their pouch in flight, leaving a silhouette similar to a crane when viewed from below,” Szymanski said.

Whooping cranes stand about five feet tall and have a wingspan of about seven feet. They are white with black wing tips, which are visible only when the wings are outspread. In flight they extend their long necks straight forward, while their long, slender legs extend out behind the tail. Whooping cranes typically migrate singly, or in groups of 2-3 birds, and may be associated with sandhill cranes.

Anyone sighting whoopers should not disturb them, but record the date, time, location, and the birds' activity. Observers should also look closely for and report colored bands which may occur on one or both legs. Young whooping cranes were marked during 1975-1988 with colored leg bands to help determine their identity.

Whooping crane sightings should be reported to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service refuge office at Long Lake at (701) 387-4397, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's main office in Bismarck at (701) 328-6300, or to local game wardens around the state. Reports help biologists locate important whooping crane habitat areas, monitor marked birds, determine survival and population numbers, and identify times and migration routes.

Habitats Workshop Scheduled in Wahpeton

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

“North Dakota Habitats” is scheduled April 23-24 at the North Wahpeton Area Teacher Center on the campus of North Dakota State College of Science in Wahpeton. 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.

Workshop instructor Sherry Niesar, a 20-year volunteer wildlife educator with the Game and Fish Department, has a master's in wildlife science from South Dakota State University.

A \$25 registration fee for nonmembers of the Wahpeton Area Teacher Center is required by April 22.

Graduate credit is available through the University of North Dakota.

To register for the workshop, call Jenny Dietz at (701) 671-2242 or e-mail jenny.deitz@ymcacassclay.org.

For information on Habitats of North Dakota, contact Sherry Niesar at (701) 222-8940 or e-mail sniesar@nd.gov