

NDG&F April 12th Newsletter

Bighorn Sheep Survey Shows Mixed Results

North Dakota's bighorn sheep population was primed for expansion after record numbers in 2008, but two consecutive severe winters have at least temporarily halted progress.

Brett Wiedmann, big game biologist for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department in Dickinson, said exceptionally deep snow last winter affected lamb recruitment significantly more than adult mortality. "It seems bighorns can handle frigid temperatures, but because of their short legs deep snow takes a heavy toll on them, especially lambs," Wiedmann said. "They expend a tremendous amount of energy foraging, and become even more susceptible to predators and harsh weather conditions when they are trapped on a ridge with no place to go."

The 2009 annual bighorn sheep survey, which covers a period from April 2009 to March 2010, revealed 296 bighorn sheep in western North Dakota, a 5 percent reduction from 2008 but still 8 percent higher than the five-year average. The northern badlands' population was down 2 percent from last year, while the southern badlands' population saw a 15 percent decrease.

In total, biologists counted 100 rams, 166 ewes and 30 lambs.

Each summer, typically in August, Game and Fish Department biologists count and classify all bighorns. Biologists then recount lambs in March to determine lamb recruitment.

Lamb recruitment was low at only 20 percent, Wiedmann said, which is well below average in North Dakota. Only 60 percent of the lambs counted last summer survived the winter, while 80 percent survived and 50 lambs were recruited into the population in 2008. "Lower lamb recruitment in 2009 is the primary factor contributing to this year's reduced count," he added.

While lamb recruitment was low, the adult population remained stable and the ram-to-ewe ratio increased to 60 rams per 100 ewes.

Wiedmann said the adult segment of the population more than held its own. "Overall, I am encouraged with the survey results even after these two brutal winters," he added. "Really, it is surprising that any lambs were able to survive all winter long in such deep snow."

Time to Think Boating Basics

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department reminds outdoor enthusiasts of the requirements for youngsters operating a watercraft.

State law requires youngsters ages 12-15 who want to operate a boat or personal watercraft with at least a 10 horsepower motor to first pass the state's Boating Basics Course. In addition, major insurance companies give adult boat owners who pass the course a premium discount on boat insurance.

The course is available for home-study from the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's Bismarck office. Two providers also offer the course online, and links to those sites can be found by accessing the department's website at gf.nd.gov.

While the home-study course is free, students will be charged a fee to take it online. The online provider

charges for the course, not the Game and Fish Department. The fee stays with the online provider. Upon completion of the online test, and providing a credit card number, students will be able to print out a temporary certification card, and within 10 days a permanent card will be mailed.

The course covers legal requirements, navigation rules, getting underway, accidents and special topics such as weather, rules of the road, laws, life saving and first aid.

For more information on Boating Basics contact Nancy Boldt, North Dakota Game and Fish Department, by e-mail at ndgf@nd.gov; or call (701) 328-6300.

Game and Fish Pays \$434,000 in Property Taxes

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department recently paid \$434,595 in taxes to counties in which the department owns or leases land. The 2009 in-lieu-of-tax payments are the same as property taxes paid by private landowners.

The Game and Fish Department manages more than 200,000 acres for wildlife habitat and public hunting in 50 counties. The department does not own or manage any land in Traill or Renville counties. Following is a list of counties and the tax payments they received.

County	Tax Due	County	Tax Due	County	Tax Due
Adams	138.22	Grant	765.49	Ramsey	1,368.41
Barnes	3,910.03	Griggs	318.10	Ransom	1,166.55
Benson	2,581.81	Hettinger	2,844.91	Richland	14,099.64
Bottineau	3,520.49	Kidder	9,452.67	Rolette	17,457.83
Bowman	1,551.18	LaMoure	6,022.68	Sargent	12,366.20
Burke	636.68	Logan	1,208.89	Sheridan	54,227.49
Burleigh	29,043.80	McHenry	1,550.10	Sioux	363.61
Cass	5,456.51	McIntosh	6,008.13	Slope	1,484.94
Cavalier	23,666.50	McKenzie	24,289.65	Stark	239.64
Dickey	13,327.40	McLean	42,543.36	Steele	7,854.78
Divide	3,003.32	Mercer	11,445.57	Stutsman	6,081.63
Dunn	6,960.95	Morton	15,561.11	Towner	1,738.30
Eddy	3,151.26	Mountrail	10,894.90	Walsh	8,131.44

Emmons	2,755.93	Nelson	4,423.37	Ward	76.11
Foster	2,400.00	Oliver	2,458.78	Wells	34,712.13
Golden Valley	178.77	Pembina	14,460.09	Williams	4,952.67
Grand Forks	9,985.47	Pierce	1,758.47		