

NDG&F May 10rd Newsletter

Missouri River Safety Day Set for May 20

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department, Cumulus Broadcasting and Gate City Banks are again sponsoring the Missouri River SPLASH – a recreation and boating safety event for everyone who enjoys the Missouri River.

The event is Thursday, May 20 in Mandan from 3-7 p.m. at Moritz Sport and Marine. Displays, hands-on activities, demonstrations, regulations, registrations and prizes are included.

Nancy Boldt, boat and water safety coordinator for the Game and Fish Department, said the event is free, and people of all ages are invited to attend. “This has been a very popular event for the entire family,” Boldt said. “There is a lot of public interaction with many different agencies, and you don’t have to stay for the entire evening. People can come and go as they please.”

Like the last couple of years, people who bring a completed boating safety exam to the event are eligible to win a special prize, Boldt said. “At the very least, if you present a certified boater card you can win a life jacket, tow-behind tube or something else,” she added.

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 Boat North Dakota safety course. In addition, some major insurance companies give adult boat owners who pass the course a premium discount on boat insurance.

The Boat North Dakota safety course is free and available at the Game and Fish Department, or in Bismarck and Mandan at any local boat dealer, all Gate City Bank locations, and at Cumulus Broadcasting.

Sage Grouse Counts Remain Low

Results from North Dakota’s spring sage grouse survey indicate the number of strutting males observed remains well below management objectives. Therefore, the sage grouse hunting season will remain closed in 2010.

Aaron Robinson, North Dakota Game and Fish Department upland game bird biologist, said a record low 66 males were counted on 15 active strutting grounds. Last year, 69 males were counted on 17 active leks in the southwest.

“A big increase in the population was not expected due to last year’s wet spring, including the snowfall we received in June,” Robinson said.

The number of males counted on leks each spring has gradually declined since 2000. In 2008, spring counts dropped dramatically throughout North Dakota’s sage grouse range. The specific cause of the decline was unknown, but West Nile virus was suspected. There is no indication that hunting has caused a decline in the population.

“Our numbers are holding consistent,” Robinson said. “One thing is clear we have not taken another big hit by West Nile which hopefully indicates some resistance.”

Management of sage grouse in North Dakota has followed a specific plan developed by a diverse group of participants. The plan outlines hunting harvest objectives for the species with a recommendation that

the hunting season close if the spring census indicates fewer than 100 males in the population. When the spring breeding population increases above 100 males, Game and Fish Department biologists will recommend the season reopen.

Sage grouse are North Dakota's largest native upland game bird. They are found in extreme southwestern North Dakota, primarily in Bowman and Slope counties.

Spring Mule Deer Survey Complete

Western North Dakota's mule deer population has decreased slightly for the second consecutive year, based on observations during the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's annual spring mule deer survey in April.

Biologists counted 2,272 mule deer in 291 square miles, compared to 2,483 in 2009. Mule deer density per square mile was 7.8, a slight decrease from 8.5 in 2009.

Bruce Stillings, big game biologist, Dickinson, said the badlands mule deer population index still remains higher than the long-term average.

Biologists have completed aerial surveys of the same 24 study areas since the 1950s. The survey assists the department in obtaining solid mule deer population data for the badlands, such as demographic trends and production ratios (buck-to-doe and fawn-to-doe).

Habitats Workshop Scheduled in Valley City

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department and the Valley City 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 June 1-2 at the Valley City Area Teacher Center on the campus of Valley City State University in Valley City. 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 25-year volunteer wildlife educator with the Game and Fish Department, has a master's in wildlife science from South Dakota State University.

A \$20 registration fee for nonmembers of the Valley City Area Teacher Center is required. Graduate credit is available through the University of North Dakota. To register for the workshop, call Sandy Zahn at (701) 845-7282 or e-mail sandy.zahn@sendit.nodak.edu. For information on Habitats of North Dakota, contact Sherry Niesar at (701) 527-3714 or e-mail sniesar@nd.gov.

Game and Fish to Sell Property in Bismarck

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department will sell real property within the city limits of Bismarck at a public auction on June 10 at 11 a.m. at the front door of the Burleigh County Courthouse in Bismarck. Legal description of the property consists of Lots 11 and 12 of Section 3, Township 138 North, Range 80 West of the Fifth Principal Meridian. Located at 814 Airport Road, sale includes the land and buildings on the property that formerly housed the Game and Fish Department's shop and laboratory, and includes

some office space. The department's new shop and lab are located at 3001 East Main Avenue. Written bids in a sealed envelope received by 10 a.m. on the day of the auction will be accepted, and must be accompanied by earnest money for 10 percent of the total bid. Written bids must be addressed to the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, Attn: Paul Schadewald, 100 N. Bismarck Expressway, Bismarck, ND 58501. Written bids will be opened at the start of the auction. It is not necessary to submit a written bid to bid at the auction.

For more information, including an appointment to inspect the property, contact Schadewald at (701) 328-6328.