

NDG&F December 19th Newsletter

Missouri River Zone Open for Canada Geese through Dec. 30

North Dakota waterfowl hunters are reminded that Canada goose hunting in the Missouri River Zone is open through Dec. 30, while the remainder of the state closes Dec. 22.

Mike Szymanski, waterfowl biologist for the State Game and Fish Department, said the Missouri River Zone was created in 2008 to provide additional late season hunting opportunities on migrant Canada geese. "Even in years with mild weather conditions through December, a vast majority of the Canada geese that are in the state remain in the Missouri River Zone," Szymanski said.

North Dakota is allowed 107 days for Canada goose hunting as provided by federal framework guidelines, and Szymanski said all those days are accounted for. "Since we take the maximum, the early season in the Missouri River Zone is closed eight days earlier in September than the rest of the state," he added. "That is why we are able to add those days on to the end of the season."

Hunting during the early season in August and September is targeted toward Canada geese that cause depredation problems during early summer, Szymanski said, while in late December it's about providing opportunities for hunters.

Janice Vetter Named Game and Fish Employee of the Year

Janice Vetter, administrative assistant for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's fisheries division in Bismarck, received the agency's Director's Award for professional excellence during the department's annual meeting Dec. 8 in Bismarck.

Terry Steinwand, Game and Fish director, said Vetter has contributed greatly to the department's efforts in oversight of all public and private fish stocking efforts. "This includes assisting and sometimes taking the lead in ensuring proper permitting of all trapping, selling and movement of bait and other fish in and out of North Dakota," Steinwand said.

Vetter was also recognized for her role on the statewide fishing tournament committee, and her work with paddlefish snagging season, private fish hatcheries and bait vendors.

Steinwand said Vetter creates a lasting positive experience with private citizens and has truly enhanced the department's public image. "Janice is extremely personable, and multiple times every year we receive favorable comments acknowledging her friendliness and willingness to assist."

Erik Schmidt Named Wildlife Officer of the Year

Erik Schmidt, North Dakota Game and Fish Department district game warden stationed in Linton, is the state's 2011 Wildlife Officer of the Year. Schmidt was honored recently by the Shikar-Safari Club International, a private conservation organization that annually recognizes outstanding wildlife officers in each state.

In a nomination letter sent to Shikar-Safari, chief warden Robert Timian said Schmidt's district in south central North Dakota provides some of the best hunting and fishing opportunities in the state, and with it brings a lot of activity.

“Warden Schmidt is relentless in his pursuit of violators, and at the same time maintains his professionalism,” Timian said. “He has demonstrated the ability to document many violations, yet maintain good judgment and uses his discretion appropriately.”

In addition, Schmidt also received the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators Officer of the Year award for North Dakota. Each state in NASBLA selects a person for a national award. Among the criteria for receiving the award is boating activity in regards to law enforcement, education, search and rescue, outreach and training.

Boat and water safety coordinator Nancy Boldt said, “Officer Schmidt has become skilled at detection, field testing, arrest and prosecution of impaired boat operators. He is always willing to work when times are busiest on the water, and because of his hard work and dedication the people of North Dakota have a safer environment to enjoy.”

Game and Fish Recognizes Employee Efforts

North Dakota Game and Fish Department Director Terry Steinwand recently honored a number of employees with performance-based awards. Steinwand presented the following awards at the department’s annual staff meeting Dec. 8.

Kevin Kading, Paul Bailey and Justen Barstad, all of Bismarck, received the Special Projects award, given to an individual or group who implemented a successful new project. Kading was recognized for his work with deer depredation, while Bailey and Barstad were honored for their efforts with paddlefish. “A new law added several changes to our agency’s existing deer depredation policy, and Kevin took the lead in meeting with staff and several other agencies, ordering new materials and making changes to the database system,” Steinwand said. “Paul and Justen’s paddlefish tagging effort provided the department with a wealth of information on paddlefish movements, seasonal habitat use and abundance in the Garrison Reach of the Missouri River.”

Greg Freeman, Bismarck, received the Solid Foundation award, presented to an employee who demonstrate exemplary work in their field. Freeman was recognized for extra effort by taking on additional responsibilities in the past year. “Greg’s contributions are an admirable example of challenging one’s own capabilities for the greater good of the organization,” Steinwand said, while highlighting his work in developing and maintaining a newsletter while covering the state legislature, producing feature articles for the department’s North Dakota OUTDOORS magazine and learning new technical processes for helping maintain the department’s website. “He is dependable and responsible, and he expects and receives the same qualities from the staff he supervises.”

Robert Miller, Riverdale, was presented with the Innovations award, which recognizes staff for implementing a process to improve department goals and objectives. Miller was recognized for his efforts to create a new motion detecting device to scare deer away from stored livestock feed supplies. “Reports coming in from individuals involved with deer depredation are that many producers are pleased with them,” Steinwand said. “In fact, Robert’s design has led to more than 90 devices that are being used statewide.”

Bill Haase and Wes Erdle, Bismarck, received the Public Outreach award, presented to an employee or group for showing a significant effort, ability or accomplishment in interacting with the public while promoting the department's programs. Haase and Erdle were recognized for their efforts in providing boating access while much of the state was immersed in flood waters. "Bill and Wes were challenged with the unprecedented task of dealing with access issues on such a large scale, and they were able to restore and maintain access at many areas across the state," Steinwand said.