

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission also is seeking cash donations to HHH, which was created by the Nebraska Legislature in 2012, so it can continue to feed Nebraskans. Each dollar donated provides two meals of ground venison. More than 850,000 meals have been distributed since the program began.

Learn more about the program and how to support it at OutdoorNebraska.org/HHH or contact program coordinator Jordyn Riha at 402 471-5431 or jordyn.riha@nebraska.gov

UPLAND HUNTERS FIND VARIABLE SUCCESS ON OPENING WEEKEND

Comments Off on Upland hunters find variable success on opening weekend

Hunters returned to rural Nebraska the weekend of Oct. 29 for the 2022 upland bird hunting season opener and found variable success.

Based on field reports from Nebraska Game and Parks Commission staff and law enforcement, pheasant hunters had the greatest success in parts of northeast and south-central Nebraska, including the Rainwater Basin. Many hunters also found good numbers of quail, especially throughout their core range in south-central and southeastern Nebraska.

In Nebraska's traditional pheasant strongholds, including the southwest and Panhandle regions where drought conditions have been prolonged, success was more limited.

Upland hunters planning trips to Nebraska are reminded that habitat conditions are highly variable this fall.

"The ongoing drought conditions, coupled with emergency haying and grazing of CRP lands, have greatly reduced the availability of suitable habitat in many areas," said John Laux, Game and Parks' upland game program manager. "When cover is more limited, scouting becomes even more crucial. Finding quality cover is going to be more challenging this year and hunters should focus on tracts adjacent to irrigated cropland, wetlands and other water sources – where birds can make a living despite the dry conditions."

Crop harvest also is ahead of schedule this fall – with 80% and 97% of the state's corn and soybean acreage harvested, respectively, according to an Oct. 31 U.S. Department of Agricul-

ture report.

Hunters looking for new places to hunt are encouraged to pick up the Nebraska Public Access Atlas, which consolidates and displays more than 1.2 million acres of publicly accessible land throughout the state. This includes more than 370,000 acres of private lands enrolled in Game and Parks' Open Fields and Waters Program. The atlas is available at Game and Parks offices and numerous vendors throughout the state. It also can be viewed at OutdoorNebraska.org/PublicAccessAtlas.

Nebraska's pheasant and quail seasons run through Jan. 31, 2023. For more information on upland bird hunting in Nebraska or to view this year's Upland Outlook, visit OutdoorNebraska.org/Upland.

NORTH DAKOTA WETLAND CONDITIONS FAIR FOR DUCK HUNTING

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department's annual fall wetland survey indicates fair wetland conditions for duck hunting throughout the state.

Andy Dinges, Department migratory game bird biologist, said the number of duck hunting wetlands are up statewide about 26% from extreme drought conditions experienced last fall, but still 29% below the long-term average. The number of duck hunting type wetlands counted on the survey was the sixth lowest since 2003.

He said all regions are still below average for the number of duck hunting wetlands observed, but the northwest (up 102%) and north central (up 51%) showed the greatest improvement from last year.

While the number of wetlands recorded in the northeast and south central regions were similar to fall 2021, Dinges said the southeastern part of the state saw about a 30% increase in the number of duck hunting wetlands.

"Wetland conditions were pretty good this spring and early summer throughout most of the state following spring blizzards and above average rainfall through early summer, but much of the state has received below average precipitation for the last two to three months causing most of our ephemeral wetlands to dry up," Dinges said. "However, we are still holding on to most of our semi-permanent

wetlands. Most of these remaining wetlands are in good shape, providing a promising outlook for the season. However, some semi-permanent wetlands are certainly beginning to dry up and hunters should expect mud margins around some wetlands, possibly making hunting more difficult."

The quality of waterfowl hunting in North Dakota is largely determined by weather conditions and migration patterns. Dinges said fair to good reproduction for ducks in traditional breeding areas this year still makes for good fall hunting opportunities.

"Hunters should always scout because of everchanging conditions and distribution of waterfowl," he said. "Hunters should also be cautious driving off-trail to avoid soft spots, and while encountering areas of tall vegetation that could be a fire hazard."

The fall wetland survey is conducted in mid-September, just prior to the waterfowl hunting season to provide an assessment of conditions duck hunters can expect. Duck hunting wetlands are classified as seasonal and semi-permanent wetlands.

YOUTH PHEASANT WEEKEND

North Dakota's two-day youth pheasant season Oct. 1-2 is a great opportunity to introduce a new hunter to the outdoors with limited competition.

That's when legally licensed residents and nonresidents 15 and younger can hunt rooster pheasants statewide. An adult at least 18 must accompany the youth hunter in the field. The adult may not carry a firearm.

Resident youth hunters must possess a fishing, hunting and furbearer certificate and general game and habitat license. Non-resident youth hunters from states that provide a reciprocal licensing agreement for North Dakota residents qualify for North Dakota resident licenses. Otherwise, nonresident youth hunters must purchase a non-resident small game license.

Hunters 12 and older need to have passed a certified hunter education course or obtain an [apprentice hunter validation](#), which allows an individual to hunt small game for one license year without completing hunter education.

The daily bag limit and all other regulations for the regu-

lar pheasant season apply. See the [North Dakota 2022-23 Hunting and Trapping Guide](#) for additional information.

WISCONSIN

DNR SEEKING HUNTING MENTORS FOR NEW HUNTERS

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is encouraging experienced hunters to share their skills and knowledge with novice hunters by becoming hunting mentors this fall.

Mentored hunting is a one-on-one learning experience that can be a great way to help new hunters navigate hunting scenarios with the guidance of somebody with experience.

"Not only do we see interest in learning to hunt from people of all different backgrounds, but many established hunters ask us how to mentor someone new," said Emily Iehl, DNR Hunting & Shooting Sports Program Specialist. "Hunting involves skills that can be uncomfortable to teach and learn with someone you don't know, such as navigating the woods at night, handling firearms and processing the emotions that come with harvesting an animal. Knowing that you are with somebody you can trust is important."

The DNR offers a variety of opportunities to help facilitate mentored hunting for people of all ages and backgrounds:

Mentored Hunting Program

This one-on-one mentoring opportunity gives novice hunters a chance to try hunting without first completing a Hunter Safety course. No special steps are required to purchase a mentored hunting license – [log in to GoWild](#) to buy a hunting license and any necessary stamps. If the account does not have a valid Hunter Safety Certificate on record, the license will automatically print as "Mentored Only."

Anyone hunting with a Mentored Only license must stay within arm's reach of a licensed hunter (mentor) over age 18, must have all required hunting approvals for the applicable season (license, permit, tag, etc.), and must comply with all other hunting laws, including season, bag limit and weapon regulations. Under the Mentored Hunting Law, mentors may have any valid, non-expired Wisconsin hunting approval,