

reminds all hunters and landowners of federal waterfowl hunting regulations concerning crop manipulation (baiting). Farm producers who use their land for hunting or lease the hunting rights on their land need to make sure they are following federal waterfowl hunting regulations concerning baiting.

“With the drought and heat conditions in Kansas this year and the failed corn crops in parts of Kansas, farmers are looking to manipulate some crops to prepare the fields for next year,” says Kenny Kessler, USFWS special agent.

“As a waterfowl hunter or land manager, it is your responsibility to know and obey all federal and state laws that govern the sport. While it is permissible to manipulate a crop for dove hunting, the only legal hunting that can occur for waterfowl is if, under these circumstances, the crop is ‘normally’ harvested,” Kessler explains. “Rotary mowing of a corn crop, for example, would not be a ‘normal’ harvest, and therefore, hunting waterfowl would not be allowed on or near the areas manipulated.”

Hunters should avoid hunting waterfowl over unharvested crops that have been trampled by livestock or subjected to other types of manipulations, such as disked down crops where grain has better scattered or exposed. Areas where grain is present and stored, such as grain elevators and grain bins, are illegal to hunt waterfowl

over, as are areas where grain is present for the purpose of feeding livestock. Additionally, hunting over freshly planted wildlife food plots that contain exposed grain is illegal. Finally, it’s illegal to hunt croplands where a crop has been harvested and the removed grain is redistributed or “added back” onto the area where grown.

On the other hand, waterfowl hunting is allowed in fields of unharvested standing crops, including over standing crops that have been flooded. It’s also permissible to flood fields after crops are harvested and use these areas for waterfowl hunting. It’s advisable for landowners to follow normal harvesting timelines if corn fields are planned to be used for hunting waterfowl.

For additional information, see Waterfowl Hunting and Baiting, and Dove Hunting and Baiting on the USFWS website, [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov) or contact Kessler at 785-232-5149 or Wichita, KS, at 316-788-4474.

## **MICHIGAN DNR Offers Fall Pheasant Hunt for Women in Metamora Oct. 15**

The Department of Natural Resources is offering a guided fall pheasant hunt designed for women through the department’s Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program (BOW). Hunters Creek Club in Metamora will host the hunt, on Saturday, Oct. 15, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Beginners are welcome for this three-bird-limit hunt. The day will start with safety orientation, then target practice with one-on-one instruction and extra attention and instruction for those who have never bird-hunted before.

After lunch, participants will break up into small groups and head out to the field for a guided, walk-up hunt with dogs. Birds will be cleaned by Hunters Creek staff.

For this hunt, participants will need a small game license or apprentice license. For license information, visit [www.mdnr-licensing.com](http://www.mdnr-licensing.com). Hunter orange as the outermost clothing layer is required by law.

Several 20-gauge shotguns, hunter orange vests, and eye and ear protection for target practice will be available for participants’ use. Target ammunition, donated by Federal Ammunition, also will be provided.

Attendees should bring one box of shotgun shells - field load - for the hunt in the afternoon. Ammunition is available for purchase at the Hunters Creek Pro Shop.

The \$150-per-person cost includes target practice, the guided hunt and lunch with participants’ menu choice in the Hunters Creek dining room. Hunting license and guide gratuities are not included in the registration fee. The registration deadline is Oct. 6.

Hunters Creek Club is located at 675 E. Sutton Rd. in Metamo-

ra. For driving directions and more information, visit [www.hunterscreekclub.com](http://www.hunterscreekclub.com).

BOW is designed to be a non-competitive program in which each individual is encouraged to learn at her own pace. The emphasis is on the enjoyment, fun and camaraderie of outdoor activities, and sharing in the success of one another.

For registration forms and information on this and other BOW programs, visit [www.michigan.gov/bow](http://www.michigan.gov/bow).

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the state's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations. For more information, go to [www.michigan.gov/dnr](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr)

## **MINNESOTA Dry conditions may create challenges for waterfowl hunters**

In spite of abnormally wet conditions earlier this year, waterfowl hunters may find access to lakes and wetlands challenging in some areas this fall.

"Some hunters may be surprised by water levels, especially at the very shallow sites," said Ken Varland, area wildlife supervisor for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). "Some wetlands are significantly lower than they were at this time last year."

With above-average temperatures and below-average pre-

cipitation over the past couple of months, the water evaporates quickly, Varland said.

Wet and dry cycles are a natural part of healthy wetlands. Low water levels during the growing season allow germination of emergent vegetation such as cattails and bulrushes. These plants filter nutrients and create a healthy balance in the wetlands, which provides food and protective cover for waterfowl and other species of wildlife.

"Wetlands will naturally fill as we get rain," Varland said. "But without precipitation, access by boat will become increasingly more difficult on some wetlands through the fall."

Hunters who make the extra effort to access wetlands may be rewarded, though. According to the annual DNR spring waterfowl survey, the state's breeding population of mallards is estimated to be 17 percent higher than last year. The combined population of ducks such as wood ducks, ring-necked ducks, gadwalls, northern shovelers, canvasbacks and redheads is estimated to be 22 percent higher than in 2010.

"This year it is especially important to get out before the opener and do some scouting," Varland said. "It could make the difference between a disappointing waterfowl opener and a successful one."

More information about waterfowl hunting is available online.

## **Minnesota's pheasant index falls 64 percent from 2010**

A severe winter followed by a wet spring contributed to a significant decline in Minnesota's pheasant counts. According to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the pheasant population index declined 64 percent from 2010 and is 71 percent below the 10-year average.

Contributing factors include:

- \* A second consecutive severe winter, resulting in hen counts 72 percent below the 10-year average.

- \* Cold, wet weather during the April through June nesting period, resulting in brood counts 75 percent below the 10-year average.

- \* Loss of nearly 120,000 acres of grass habitat enrolled in farm programs such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) since 2007.

Severe winters combined with cold, wet springs are doubly hard on pheasant populations. That's because fewer hens survive the winter and those that do are less successful in producing broods.

Pheasant hunters are expected to harvest about 250,000 roosters this fall, the lowest harvest since 1997. This compares to harvests that have exceeded 500,000 roosters five of the past eight years. The 500,000 bird harvests correspond with a string of mild winters and high CRP enrollment.

"We expect hunters to harvest

a similar number of birds in 2011 as they did in 2001, which was another year with a severe winter followed by a cold, wet spring," said Kurt Haroldson, a wildlife biologist for the DNR's Farmland Wildlife Population and Research Group in Madelia. Haroldson noted survey results indicated an unusually low ratio of hens to roosters.

This suggests hen mortality was high or hens were nesting or caring for young broods during the survey. If the late nesting effort was greater than normal, the 2011 pheasant population and the fall harvest may be higher than forecast. Pheasant populations can rebound quickly given good habitat, mild winter weather and favorable spring nesting conditions.

Minnesota is not the only state to see pheasant index declines. Wildlife officials in South Dakota reported a 46 percent population index decline. North Dakota's spring population survey showed a decline, too.

The pheasant population estimate is part of the DNR's annual roadside wildlife survey. The survey summarizes roadside counts of pheasants, gray (Hungarian) partridge, cottontail rabbits, white-tailed jackrabbits and other wildlife observed in the early morning hours during the first half of August throughout the farmland region of Minnesota.

The highest pheasant counts were in the east central region, where observers reported 51

birds per 100 miles of survey driven. Hunters will find fair harvest opportunities in pockets of south-central and southwest Minnesota, but harvest opportunities in most of Minnesota's pheasant range are rated poor to very poor.

This year's statewide pheasant index was 23 birds per 100 miles driven, the lowest index since 1986. The pheasant index in southwest Minnesota, typically the state's best pheasant range, fell 82 percent from last year to 19 birds per 100 miles driven.

Haroldson said the most important habitat for pheasants is grassland that remains undisturbed during the nesting season. Protected grasslands account for about 6 percent of the state's pheasant range. Farmland retirement programs such as CRP, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, Reinvest in Minnesota and Wetlands Reserve Program make up the largest portion of protected grasslands in the state.

High land rental rates and competing uses for farmland diminish the economic attractiveness of farmland conservation programs. During the next three years, contracts for 550,000 acres of CRP lands are scheduled to expire. If not re-enrolled, this would reduce CRP acres in Minnesota by 36 percent.

To help offset continued habitat losses caused by reductions in conservation set-aside acreage, DNR has accelerated acquisition of wildlife management

areas in the farmland region of Minnesota. DNR also supports habitat conservation on private lands by working with a variety of partners in the Farm Bill Assistance Partnership and Working Lands Initiative. Also, nearly 10,000 acres of private property will be open to public hunting through the state's new Walk-In Access program.

The August roadside survey, which began in the late 1940s, was standardized in 1955. DNR conservation officers and wildlife managers in the farmland region of Minnesota conduct the survey during the first half of August. This year's survey consisted of 166 routes, each 25 miles long, with 148 routes located in the ring-necked pheasant range.

Observers drive each route in early morning and record the number and species of wildlife they see. The data provide an index of relative abundance and are used to monitor annual changes and long-term trends in populations of ring-necked pheasants, gray partridge, eastern cottontail rabbits, white-tailed jackrabbits and other select wildlife species.

The gray partridge index was similar to last year but 75 percent below the 10-year average. The cottontail rabbit index was also below the 10-year and long-term average. The jackrabbit index was 96 percent below the long-term average. Finally, the mourning dove index was 26 percent below last year and 29 percent below the 10-year average.

The 2011 August Roadside Report and pheasant hunting prospects map is available online.

## Hunting seasons to open soon; DNR offers helpful reminders

Minnesota's dove, rail and snipe seasons – the first small game hunting seasons of the fall – will open Thursday, Sept. 1, according to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The state's sandhill crane and early goose seasons open Sept. 3, followed by the small game and archery deer seasons on Saturday, Sept. 17. The duck season opens Sept. 24, the pheasant season Oct. 15, prairie chicken (by permit only) Oct. 22 and the statewide firearms deer season on Nov. 5. Youth waterfowl day is Sept. 10. Take a Kid Hunting Weekend is

Sept. 24-25.

"Before long, the crisp mornings and the sight of orange- or camo-clad hunters will be common again," said Dennis Simon, DNR wildlife chief. "Hunters should take a good look at the regulation book this year as a number of season, bag limit, and other changes have been implemented in the name of opportunity and simplicity."

The 2011 Hunting and Trapping Regulations Handbook is available online. Copies soon will be available wherever hunting licenses are sold.

Simon said ruffed grouse,

waterfowl, and deer numbers look good this year. Pheasant numbers, he predicted, will be down from last year. This is due to mortality from last winter's deep snow and tough winter roosting conditions, plus a protracted cool, rainy spring that reduced survival rates of newly hatched chicks.

Other information hunters should know includes:

\* **Walk In Access (WIA) program:** Lands enrolled and posted in this new program will be open to public hunting from Sept. 1 through May 31.

\* **Take a Kid Hunting Weekend:** This annual event will coincide with duck season opener. Adult residents accompanied by a youth under age 16 may hunt small game without a license or Minnesota waterfowl stamp on Sept. 24-25.

\* **Sandhill cranes:** The state's second sandhill crane hunting season will open Sept 3. It is limited to the northwest goose zone in northwestern Minnesota. A valid small game license and sandhill crane hunting permit (\$3) are required. The agency is preparing a sandhill crane management plan to guide the bird's future management in Minnesota. This will include identifying any additional crane breeding monitoring or assessment needs.

\* **Chronic Wasting Disease:** CWD's presence in southeastern Minnesota has prompted several regulatory changes, including the creation of a new CWD management area called Area 602. Deer harvested in this

area will be subject to mandatory sampling for certain deer, as well as additional transportation requirements.

\* **Hunter Choice:** This new deer area designation will allow hunters to take one either-sex deer without having to enter the either-sex deer permit lottery or possess an either-sex permit.

\* **Apprentice Hunter Validation Program:** This program, which previously allowed a one-year exemption from firearms safety certification, has been changed to allow a two-year exemption.

\* **Handgun possession:** The possession of a handgun by a person authorized to carry and possess other firearms not legal for big game is allowed while muzzleloader hunting.

\* **Early antlerless deer season:** This season is not being offered this year. If necessary, it will be offered in 2012.

\* **Deer stands:** The 16-foot height restriction for elevated stands has been removed.

\* **Site Validation coupons:** These will be required for trappers harvesting fisher, pine marten and river otter.

\* **Bear baiting:** Drums may be used on private land.

A complete calendar of hunting and fishing season openers, closings and lottery application deadlines is available online.

## **Prairie chicken, fall turkey leftover licenses available starting Sept. 19**

Prairie chicken hunters who were unsuccessful in this year's lottery for the prairie chicken hunting season may apply for a very limited number of surplus permits starting at noon on Monday, Sept. 19, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) said.

Likewise, fall turkey hunters who were unsuccessful in this year's lottery for the fall turkey hunting season may apply for a surplus permit starting at noon on Monday, Sept. 19.

Five prairie chicken permit areas have surplus permits. Area 801 has nine, area 803 has four, area 804 has two, area 808 has three and area 811 has one.

Nearly 7,000 fall turkey permits are still available. This year's fall turkey season runs from Oct. 1-30.

The DNR makes surplus permits available at all Electronic Licensing System (ELS) outlets and online.

Information on surplus license availability and the status of lottery applications is available online.

Hunters who did not enter the lottery will be able to purchase any remaining surplus licenses beginning at noon on Thursday, Sept. 22.

Because hunting access in many zones is limited, hunters should obtain landowner permission before getting a leftover permit. A hunter who

obtains a surplus permit does not lose any existing preference for future lottery drawings.

## **Duck season offers more options, opens one week earlier**

A season of change is coming for Minnesota waterfowl hunters.

Opening day, opening day shooting hours and the annual youth waterfowl hunt all will be earlier than in the past. Bag limits for wood ducks and hen mallards will be higher than last year. And north and south hunting zones have been added to provide additional hunting opportunity.

"We needed a change," said Tom Landwehr, commissioner for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). "We heard from waterfowl hunters that they supported these changes, and with waterfowl hunter numbers at record lows, we don't expect season changes to negatively affect breeding populations."

Landwehr said the 60-day, six-duck limit waterfowl season will open Saturday, Sept. 24, opening day shooting will start one-half hour before sunrise and youth waterfowl day will be Saturday, Sept. 10. Duck bag limits are consistent with most other states in the Mississippi Flyway.

"The changes are designed to maintain Minnesota's waterfowl hunting tradition by increasing opportunity and better utilizing the federal regula-

tory framework set by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under which we operate," Landwehr said.

The changes reflect input from a recently formed citizen waterfowl hunting focus group.

This year's earlier-than-usual opener will allow hunting when greater numbers of migrating wood ducks and blue-winged teal are around, yet maintains late-season opportunities.

Hunting north of Minnesota Highway 210 – the North Duck Zone – will be allowed continuously through Tuesday, Nov. 22. Hunters in the South Duck Zone – anywhere south of Highway 210 – will have a split season. Hunting will be allowed Sept. 24-25 to take advantage of early migrations then close for five days. The season in the south will resume on Saturday, Oct. 1, and continue through Sunday, Nov. 27, Thanksgiving holiday weekend.

"As we set this year's season, we looked hard for ways to improve hunter opportunities and satisfaction while maintaining healthy waterfowl populations," said Landwehr. "I believe this framework strikes that balance."

Legal shooting hours on Sept. 24 will be one-half hour before sunrise rather than the 9 a.m. start that has been in place for the past seven years. Shooting hours end at 4 p.m. daily statewide until Saturday, Oct. 8, when hunting will be allowed until sunset.

Hunters will be able to keep

up to four mallards, two of which may be hens, and three wood ducks. The hen mallard and wood duck limits increased by one compared with recent years. Daily limits for pintail, scaup and redhead remain at two. Hunters may still take one canvasback and black duck. The possession limit is twice the daily bag limit.

Minnesota's 2011 mallard breeding population is estimated at 283,000, which is 17 percent higher than last year's estimate of 242,000 breeding mallards, 3 percent above the recent 10-year average and 26 percent above the long-term average. The continental population is 9 percent above 2010 and 22 percent above the long-term average.

"While we are very concerned waterfowl hunter numbers have been in decline in Minnesota, the Dakotas and Canada," said Landwehr, "fewer hunters has resulted in lower duck harvests. In Minnesota, we are confident our mallard population is strong enough to absorb an increase in harvest, given the reduced pressure."

The special September Canada goose season will remain similar to last year. September Canada goose season opens Saturday, Sept. 3, and runs until Thursday, Sept. 22 statewide, with a bag limit of five Canada geese per day.

The opening of the 85-day regular Canada goose season coincides with the opening of duck season on Saturday, Sept. 24, and retains a daily bag

limit of three. Hunters north of Minnesota Highway 210 may hunt continuously through Saturday, Dec. 17. Hunters in the south zone may hunt Sept. 24-25 and resume on Saturday, Oct. 1, continuously through Thursday, Dec. 22. Another goose zone near Rochester will provide additional late hunting opportunity.

Minnesota's traditional Youth Waterfowl Day will be conducted Saturday, Sept. 10, two weeks before the regular duck opener. It is timed to provide youth with an opportunity to hunt abundant early migrating teal. To participate, youth 15 and younger must obtain a free small game hunting license, a Harvest Information Program (HIP) certification, and be accompanied by a non-hunting adult. Duck limits will be the same as the regular season and youth will be able to take five Canada geese.

"I'm really looking forward to this waterfowl season, and I hope Minnesota's duck hunters are, too," said Landwehr. "Given favorable weather conditions, Minnesota hunters should see more birds in the sky and more in their bag. And if that happens – and the entire conservation community continues to work together on providing the food, cover, nesting and refuges areas that waterfowl need – it will be a good thing for hunters, waterfowl, and the businesses whose livelihoods are linked to hunting."

Hunters should consult the waterfowl hunting regulations

supplement for additional details. The booklet will be available at all license vendors and online by late August.

## **Duck and goose numbers improved; wetland conditions excellent**

Minnesota's 2011 breeding duck and goose populations improved from last year, according to results of the annual Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) spring waterfowl surveys.

The state's estimated breeding duck population was 687,000 compared with last year's estimate of 531,000. This year's estimate is 11 percent above the long-term average of 622,000 breeding ducks.

This year's mallard breeding population was estimated at 283,000, which was 17 percent higher than last year's estimate of 242,000 breeding mallards, 3 percent above the recent 10-year average and 26 percent above the long-term average.

The blue-winged teal population was 214,000 this year compared with 132,000 in 2010, and near the long-term average of 219,000 blue-winged teal.

The combined populations of other ducks, such as wood ducks, ring-necked ducks, gadwalls, northern shovelers, canvasbacks and redheads, was 191,000, which is 22 percent higher than last year and 7 percent above the long-term average.

The estimated number of wetlands (Types II-V) was 360,000,

up 33 percent from last year, 44 percent above the long-term average, and the highest wetland count on record.

“When you combine the wet conditions across much of Minnesota last fall, lots of snowpack, and above average spring precipitation, it’s not surprising that we saw record wetland numbers across the survey area this spring,” said Steve Cordts, DNR waterfowl specialist. “With such good wetland conditions, I would expect production, or the number of young ducks hatched, to be good this year.”

The same waterfowl survey has been conducted each May since 1968 to provide an annual index of breeding duck abundance. The survey covers 40 percent of the state that includes much of the best remaining duck breeding habitat in Minnesota. A DNR waterfowl biologist and pilot count all waterfowl and wetlands along established survey routes by flying low-level aerial surveys from a fixed-wing plane. The survey is timed to begin in early May to coincide with peak mallard nesting activity. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service provides ground crews who also count waterfowl along some of the same survey routes. This data is then used to correct for birds not seen by the aerial crew.

The Canada goose population was estimated at 370,000, which was higher than last year’s estimate of 311,000. The number of breeding Canada

geese in the state remains high, but has been relatively stable over the past 10 years. Since 2001, the DNR has conducted a helicopter survey of nesting Canada geese in April. The survey, which includes most of the state except the Twin Cities metro area, counts Canada geese on randomly selected plots in prairie, transition and forested areas.

Although breeding duck numbers increased relative to last year, the goal in the DNR’s Duck Recovery Plan is to attract and hold a breeding population of 1 million ducks while maintaining Minnesota’s rich waterfowling tradition.

“We remain committed to improving breeding and migration habitat for waterfowl in the state as one of our highest priorities,” said Dennis Simon, DNR Wildlife Section chief, “but we also realize it will require the DNR and all our partners to continue to focus our efforts to accomplish that long-term goal.”

The status of breeding duck populations and wetland conditions in other areas of North America is good to excellent. Total breeding duck numbers increased 11 percent from last year and were 35 percent above the long-term average. Mallard breeding populations increased 9 percent from last year and were 22 percent above the long-term average. Wetland habitat conditions in the Dakotas and southern Canada are near record high levels this spring.

The Minnesota waterfowl report can be viewed online at [www.mndnr.gov/hunting/waterfowl](http://www.mndnr.gov/hunting/waterfowl).

The DNR will announce this fall’s waterfowl hunting regulations in early August.

## **NORTH DAKOTA Large Duck Flight Expected**

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department’s May and July waterfowl surveys indicate hunters can expect a large fall flight similar to recent years. Opening day for North Dakota residents is Sept. 24 for ducks, coots, mergansers and geese. Nonresidents may begin hunting waterfowl in North Dakota Oct. 1.

Mike Johnson, game management section leader, said North Dakota’s fall flight – breeding ducks and the young they produce in the state – is based on data from the May breeding duck survey and the July brood survey. “This year’s production was down from last year, however, there are strong indications of an exceptional late hatch of ducks this year,” Johnson said. “Since our surveys have been completed, observers have been seeing large numbers of newly hatched ducks throughout the state.”

The brood index from the Game and Fish Department’s annual mid-July survey was down 26 percent from 2010, but was 19 percent above the long-term average. Average brood size was 7.7 ducklings, up 1.0 from last year. The longterm

average is 7.1 ducklings per brood. The water index observed during the survey was up 52 percent from last year and 105 percent above long-term.

Results from the May breeding duck survey indicated the duck index was down 9 percent from 2010, but exceeded the long-term average by 85 percent. Water conditions in May were up 31 percent from 2010 and 128 percent from the long-term average.

Resident hunters must possess a general game and habitat license and a fishing, hunting and furbearer certificate. In addition, hunters age 16 and older must have a small game license and federal duck stamp.

Nonresidents must purchase a nonresident waterfowl license, including the general game and habitat license, and certificate. Hunters age 16 and older must possess a federal duck stamp. Nonresident youth hunters from states that provide a reciprocal licensing agreement for North Dakota residents, qualify for North Dakota resident licenses. See the 2011 North Dakota Waterfowl Hunting Guide for details.

All migratory bird hunters are reminded to register with the Harvest Information Program prior to hunting. Hunters who purchase a license through the state Game and Fish Department website ([gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov)) or instant licensing telephone number (800-406-6409) can easily get HIP certified.

Otherwise, hunters must call (888) 634-4798, or access the

department's website, and record the HIP number on their fishing, hunting and furbearer certificate. Those who registered to hunt the spring light goose season or the early Canada goose season in North Dakota do not have to register with HIP again, as it is required only once per year in each state hunted.

Hunters should refer to the waterfowl hunting guide for season regulations including licensing requirements, dates, bag limits, season zones and nonresident hunting zones.

### **Youth Pheasant Weekend Oct. 1-2**

North Dakota's two-day youth pheasant season is Oct. 1-2. Legally licensed residents and nonresidents ages 15 and younger may hunt roosters statewide.

Resident youth hunters, regardless of age, must possess a fishing, hunting and furbearer certificate and general game and habitat license. Nonresident 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 nonresident small game license.

Shooting hours are one-half hour before sunrise to sunset. Youth ages 12 and older need to have passed a certified hunter education course. The daily bag limit and all other regulations for the regular pheasant season apply.

An adult at least 18 years of age must accompany the youth hunter in the field. The adult may not carry a firearm.

See the 2011 North Dakota Small Game Hunting Guide for additional information.

### **Hunting from Duck Boats Requires Safety**

Waterfowlers hunting from boats are encouraged to wear properly-fitted life jackets while on the water.

Nancy Boldt, boat and water safety coordinator for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, said there are comfortable jackets available with life jackets already built in.

"They are no longer too bulky to wear, you can't even tell you have one on," Boldt said.

Eight people have drowned in state waters since 1998 while hunting from a boat, and none were wearing life jackets. Boldt wants to make sure a duck hunter doesn't become another statistic.

"Capsizing and falling overboard from small boats are the most common types of fatal boating accidents for hunters," Boldt added. "With all the gear in the boat, including dogs, it can quickly become unbalanced."

In addition, wearing a life jacket will not only keep the overboard hunter afloat, but also help him or her to slow the loss of critical body heat caused by exposure to cold water.

## Waterfowl Hunters Reminded of ANS Regulations

Waterfowl hunters are reminded to do their part in preventing the spread of aquatic nuisance species into or within North Dakota.

Waterfowl hunters must clean boats, decoys, waders and other hunting equipment before leaving a water body. Hunters must also drain water from all hunting equipment prior to leaving the water, and are encouraged to brush their hunting dogs free of mud and seeds.

Cattails, phragmites, bulrushes and terrestrial plants may be transported as camouflage on boats. All other aquatic vegetation must be cleaned from boats prior to transportation into or within North Dakota.

Detailed ANS information and prevention regulations can be found by accessing the North Dakota Game and Fish Department website at [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov).

## Pheasant Numbers Down, Similar to a Decade Ago

North Dakota's roadside pheasant survey conducted in late July and August suggests poor production this spring, meaning a lower fall population in all areas of the state.

Stan Kohn, upland game management supervisor for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, said the survey shows statewide total pheasants are down 36 percent from last year. In addition, brood

observations were down 38 percent, but the average brood size was up 4 percent. The final summary is the result of 222 runs made along 104 brood routes across North Dakota.

"Brood survey numbers from this summer match closely to numbers from 2001, when hunters harvested 420,000 roosters," Kohn said. "If fall weather conditions hold through most of the year, I could see a fall harvest of about 400,000 birds. But if winter weather sets in early, we could be much lower. Either way, this could be the first fall since 2001 that we harvest less than 500,000 roosters."

Kohn said several factors contribute to the decrease in pheasant numbers: three difficult winters in a row with above average snowfall has reduced spring's adult breeding population; wet conditions during peak hatch in mid-June of 2008, 2009 and 2011 reduced chick survival; and the loss of nesting habitat on the landscape as more Conservation Reserve Program acreage is removed from pheasant range.

"Boiled down, hunters will likely have to put in more time in the field to find success," Kohn said. "But as always, there will be local areas within all four pheasant districts where pheasant numbers will be much above or much below what is predicted for the district."

Statistics from southwestern North Dakota indicate both the number of broods and number of birds observed were down 26 percent from 2010. Observ-

ers counted 14 broods and 118 birds per 100 miles. The average brood size was six. "Census numbers indicate this district will have the best pheasant numbers in the state this fall," Kohn said.

Results from the southeast show the number of birds observed down 54 percent from last year, and the number of broods was down 60 percent. Observers counted four broods and 36 birds per 100 miles. The average brood size was 5.7. "Removal of CRP in the southeast may have already affected the number of birds produced this spring, with weather conditions adding more pressure on spring production," Kohn said.

Statistics from the northwest indicated pheasants are down 53 percent from last year, with broods down 62 percent. Observers recorded two broods and 21 birds per 100 miles. Average brood size was 5.5.

The northeast district, generally containing secondary pheasant habitat with much of it lacking good winter cover, showed 0.4 broods and four birds per 100 miles. Average brood size was six. Both number of birds observed and number of broods recorded were down roughly 66 percent. "Hunters should concentrate their efforts in the southern counties of this district for the best potential to find birds," Kohn said.

The 2011 regular pheasant season opens Oct. 8 and continues through Jan. 8, 2012. The two-day youth pheasant hunting

weekend, when legally licensed residents and nonresidents ages 15 and younger can hunt statewide, is set for Oct. 1-2.

### **Swan Hunt Lottery Held, Licenses Remain**

North Dakota's swan lottery has been held and more than 450 licenses remain. Only hunters who do not have a swan license for the 2011 season can apply, as regulations limit hunters to one license per year.

First-come, first-served licenses are available online at the North Dakota Game and Fish Department website, [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov). Hunters may also request an application by calling the department's Bismarck office at (701) 328-6300.

The statewide tundra swan hunting season is Oct. 1, 2011 – Jan. 1, 2012. North Dakota residents and nonresidents are eligible to apply. The fee is \$5 for residents and \$25 for nonresidents.

### **Space Available for BOW Waterfowl Workshop**

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is still accepting registrations for the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman waterfowl hunting workshop Oct. 1-2 in Bismarck.

Participants will learn firearm and waterfowl safety, shotgun shooting, waterfowl identification, water/field decoys and gear, and techniques for decoying and calling waterfowl. Oct. 2 will feature a mentored

hunt. Participants must possess a hunter education certificate, current hunting licenses and provide their own hunting clothing, boots or waders. Workshop fees of \$20 include instruction, program materials and use of equipment. No lodging is provided.

BOW workshops are designed primarily for women with an interest in learning skills associated with hunting, fishing and outdoor endeavors. Although open to anyone age 18 or older, the workshops are tailored primarily to women who have never tried these activities or who are beginners hoping to improve their skills.

To receive an information brochure and enrollment form, access the Game and Fish website at [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov), or contact Nancy Boldt, BOW coordinator, at (701) 328-6312; or email [ndgf@nd.gov](mailto:ndgf@nd.gov).

### **Landowner-Sportsman Council Signs Available**

"Ask Before You Enter" and "Walking Hunters Welcome" signs are available to North Dakota landowners who encourage hunting on their land during upcoming fall hunting seasons. Landowners can order quantities of four, eight or 12.

The signs are free and sponsored by the North Dakota Landowner-Sportsman Council. To order, contact the North Dakota Game and Fish Department at (701) 328-6300, or email [ndgf@nd.gov](mailto:ndgf@nd.gov). Signs can also be ordered online at the depart-

ment's website [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov).

### **Hunters Asked to Cooperate in PLOTS Survey**

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is asking hunters to complete a short survey immediately after hunting on selected tracts of land enrolled in the department's Private Land Open To Sportsmen program.

Kevin Kading, private land section leader, said the survey will involve about 50 PLOTS tracts statewide. "We will have these survey points on various types of PLOTS tracts so we can hopefully gain a better understanding of what our hunters are looking for in the PLOTS program," Kading said.

Because PLOTS tracts can involve many different types of lands, Kading said they all offer their own unique hunting opportunities for wildlife species such as pheasants, waterfowl and deer. "We have to find that right balance of what hunters are looking for and use our hunter dollars in the most responsible way we can," Kading said.

The postcard-sized survey will be placed on a PLOTS sign at the entrance of the tract. Hunters are asked to complete the survey and place them in the drop box.