

## **Grouse Hunters Encouraged to Submit Wing Envelopes**

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is asking grouse hunters for help with bird management by simply collecting some feathers and sending in wing envelopes this fall.

Wing data allows biologists to monitor production, reconcile bird counts and get a better understanding of the harvest ratio of males to females, and juveniles to adults.

Instructions for submitting wing data are printed on the envelope.

Hunters interested in receiving wing envelopes should contact the Game and Fish Department's main office in Bismarck at (701) 328-6300, or email ndgf@nd.gov. In addition, Game and Fish district offices have a supply of wing envelopes for distribution.

## **Youth Waterfowl is Sept. 17-18, License Required**

North Dakota's two-day youth waterfowl season is Sept. 17-18. Legally licensed resident and nonresident youth waterfowl hunters age 15 and younger may hunt ducks, geese, coots and mergansers statewide.

The daily bag limit and species restrictions for the youth season are the same as for regular duck and goose seasons.

Resident and qualifying nonresident youth waterfowl hunters must possess a general

game and habitat license and a fishing, hunting and furbearer certificate. Nonresidents from states that do not provide a reciprocal licensing agreement for North Dakota residents must purchase the entire nonresident waterfowl license package.

In addition, all youth hunters must be Harvest Information Program certified, and youth ages 12 and older need to have passed a certified hunter education course. Hunters age 15 and younger do not need a federal duck stamp.

Hunters who purchase a license through the North Dakota Game and Fish Department can easily get HIP certified. Otherwise, hunters must call (888) 634-4798, or log on to the Game and Fish website at gf.nd.gov, and record the HIP number on their fishing, hunting and furbearer certificate.

Shooting hours for the youth waterfowl season are one-half hour before sunrise to sunset. An adult at least 18 years of age must accompany the resident youth hunter into the field, and a licensed adult is required to accompany a nonresident youth hunter. The two-day weekend hunt does not count against a nonresident adult hunter's 14-day regular season waterfowl dates.

## **2011 Waterfowl Regulations Set**

North Dakota's 2011 waterfowl season has been set, with season details similar to last year. The only significant change is the elimination of two

waterfowl rest area.

Opening day for North Dakota residents is Sept. 24 for ducks, geese, coots and mergansers. Nonresidents may begin hunting waterfowl in North Dakota Oct. 1.

Hunters may take six ducks per day with the following restrictions: five mallards of which two may be hens, three wood ducks, two scaup, two redheads, two pintails and one canvasback. For ducks, the possession limit is twice the daily limit.

The daily limit of five mergansers may include no more than two hooded mergansers.

The waterfowl rest area 11 miles north and three miles west of Steele in Kidder County, and four miles south and three miles east of Petersburg in Nelson County have been eliminated.

The hunting season for Canada geese in the Missouri River zone will close Dec. 30, while the remainder of the state will close Dec. 22. The season for whitefronts closes Dec. 4, while the season on light geese is open through Dec. 30. Shooting hours for all geese are one-half hour before sunrise to 1 p.m. each day through Nov. 5. Beginning Nov. 6, shooting hours are extended until 2 p.m. each day.

Extended shooting hours for all geese are permitted from one-half hour before sunrise to sunset on Saturdays and Wednesdays through Nov. 30, and on Saturdays, Sundays

and Wednesdays from Dec. 1 through the end of each season.

The daily bag limit for Canada geese during the regular season is three, with six in possession. The daily limit on whitefronts is two with four in possession, and light goose is 20 daily, with no possession limit.

The special youth waterfowl hunting season is Sept. 17-18. Legally licensed residents and nonresidents 15 years of age or younger can hunt ducks, coots, mergansers and geese statewide. Youth hunters must have a general game and habitat license and a fishing, hunting and furbearer certificate. A licensed adult at least 18 years of age must accompany the youth hunter into the field. The daily bag limit and species restrictions for the youth season are the same as for regular duck and goose seasons.

Nonresidents have the option of buying either a statewide waterfowl license or one with zone restrictions. Nonresidents who designate zones 1 or 2 may hunt that zone for only one seven-day period during the season. Nonresident hunters who chose to hunt in zone 1 or 2 and wish to use the full 14 consecutive days allowed, must use the other seven days in zone 3. Hunters in zone 3 can hunt that zone the entire 14 days.

In accordance with state law, nonresidents are not allowed to hunt on North Dakota Game and Fish Department wildlife management areas or conservation PLOTS (Private Land Open

To Sportsmen) areas from Oct. 8-14.

All migratory bird hunters, including waterfowl, must register with the Harvest Information Program prior to hunting. Hunters purchasing a license from the Game and Fish Department can easily get a HIP number. Otherwise, hunters must call (888) 634-4798, or log on to the Game and Fish website at [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov), provide the registration information, and record the HIP number on their fishing, hunting and furbearer certificate. Those who HIP registered to hunt this spring's light goose season do not have to register again, as it is required only once per year.

Hunters should refer to the 2011 North Dakota Waterfowl Hunting Guide, available in early September, for further details on the waterfowl season.

### **Popular Hunting Areas Affected by Flood**

More than half of 72,000 wildlife management area acres along the Missouri River that were once a haven for wildlife and a destination for hunters will likely be devoid of each this fall.

North Dakota Game and Fish Department biologists say nearly 40,000 acres – some of the most pristine public hunting lands in the state – have suffered from months of flooding.

Jeb Williams, wildlife resource management supervisor in Bismarck, said 15,000 acres of

the Oahe Wildlife Management Area have been inundated with water, essentially making it swampland that is at least temporarily unattractive to wildlife.

"This area south of Bismarck-Mandan has been extremely popular with deer and pheasant hunters, because it provides some of the best wildlife habitat in the state," Williams said. "But this year's flood has changed the dynamics dramatically."

There are 20-plus WMAs from Williston to south of Bismarck on the Missouri River System, and many were entirely or partially flooded through spring and summer.

Kent Luttschwager, wildlife resource management supervisor in Williston, said hunters will have to adapt this fall, as wildlife populations that have called the Missouri River bottoms home are now displaced because of high water.

"Lewis and Clark WMA is popular with hunters because it offers some of the most prolific wildlife habitat in the region," Luttschwager said. "But exceptional wildlife habitat has been covered in water for several months."

Dan Halstead, wildlife resource management supervisor in Riverdale, said the spillway channel running through Riverdale WMA near Garrison Dam was originally 30 yards wide, but is nearly 200 yards wide today.

"But this area was only cov-

ered in water for maybe a week as the water quickly made its way back into the channel," Halstead said. Because of this, he said access is gradually coming around, and will continue to improve through September.

"We are going to have some vegetation issues, but the river bottoms in this area is in better condition than Bismarck and Williston, just because of the prolonged effects of overland flooding in those areas," Halstead said.

While no one can predict how much property will be lost to this year's record flood, Luttschwager said it will take time to recover.

### **Upland Bird Numbers Down**

North Dakota hunters should expect to see fewer upland game birds this hunting season, according to Aaron Robinson, State Game and Fish Department upland game management biologist. The season for sharp-tailed grouse, ruffed grouse and Hungarian partridge opens Sept. 10.

"Excessive water has affected reproduction in areas, but there will be some areas good for sharptails," Robinson said. "But no doubt birds will be harder to find."

The spring sharptail breeding population was down 30 percent from last year, with numbers falling from west to east. Losses of native prairie and acreage enrolled in the Con-

servation Reserve Program are negatively affecting the sharp-tailed grouse population in North Dakota, Robinson said. In addition, three consecutive harsh winters and a wet, cold spring this year delayed nesting across the state.

Hungarian partridge numbers are also down, and more localized, than last year, Robinson said. "Scouting areas will be critical to success," he added. "At this time there is not one area that stands out from the rest. The cover is high, so hunters will need to scout and be willing to move to other areas to find localized pockets of birds."

This spring's statewide ruffed grouse drumming counts took a dip of 15 percent from 2010. The number of drumming males increased almost 13 percent in the Pembina Hills, but the Turtle Mountains showed a 28 percent decrease from last year.

The sage grouse and prairie chicken seasons will remain closed in 2011 due to low populations.

Shooting hours are one-half hour before sunrise to sunset. Sharptails, ruffed grouse and Huns each have a daily limit of three and a possession limit of 12.

Hunters, regardless of age, must have a fishing, hunting and furbearer certificate and general game and habitat license. In addition, hunters age 16 and older need a small game license.

For further season information and regulations, hunters should consult the North Dakota 2011-12 Small Game Hunting Guide.

### **Flooding Affects Shooting Ranges, Moffit to Hold Public Sight-in Days**

High water and the after-effects of flooding along the Missouri River will likely keep some public shooting ranges closed throughout the fall.

MacLean Bottoms range south of Bismarck, Wilton Mine range near Wilton, and Lewis and Clark range south of Williston are all closed until further notice.

Schmidt Bottoms range south of Mandan and Riverdale Wildlife Management Area range near Riverdale remain open.

To alleviate congestion in the Bismarck-Mandan area, the Bismarck-Mandan Rifle and Pistol Association, in cooperation with the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, will host several public sight-in days over the next two months at their club shooting range near Moffit.

Jon Hanson, Game and Fish Department hunter education and range grant coordinator, said area residents are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity, especially with MacLean Bottoms and Wilton ranges closed due to flooding.

"The only public range available in the area is at Schmidt

Bottoms south of Mandan," Hanson said. "It is relatively small, and will most likely be crowded as hunting season approaches."

To help minimize traffic at Schmidt Bottoms, Hanson said BMRPA has agreed to provide opportunities for the general public. In addition to a public sight-in weekend already scheduled for Oct. 1-2 (9 a.m. – 4 p.m.), public shooters are invited to BMRPA Sept. 9, 4-7 p.m.; Sept. 23, 4-7 p.m.; Sept. 24, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.; Oct. 14, 4-7 p.m.; Oct. 22, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.; and Oct. 29, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Shooters must abide by club rules, Hanson said, which are listed on the BMRPA website, bmrpa.org. "All participants are asked to respect the property, in addition to other shooters," Hanson said.

The BMRPA club range is located near Moffit at 13839 262 St. SE. GPS coordinates are N 46°395.4 W -100°2230.7. A printable map with directions is available on the BMRPA website.

Shooters sighting in firearms should always wear hearing and eye protection, keep their gun pointed in a safe direction, keep fingers off the trigger until ready to shoot, keep guns unloaded until ready to use, and identify the target and know what is beyond.

## **PLOTS Guide Available Online, at Vendors in Early September**

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department's Private Land Open To Sportsmen Guide for 2011 is now available online at the Department's website, gf.nd.gov. In addition, PLOTS Guides will be available at most license vendors throughout the state in early September.

The guide will feature about 1 million PLOTS acres, a level reached in 2007 and maintained each year since.

Because the guide is printed in mid-August, some PLOTS tracts highlighted in the guide may have been removed from the program since the time of printing. There will also be some PLOTS tracts where the habitat and condition of the tract will have changed significantly. Conversely, Game and Fish may have added new tracts to the program after the guide went to press.

To minimize possible confusion, Game and Fish will update PLOTS map sheets weekly on its website.

Hunters can also view the guide, and find a list of vendors where guides are available, on the website.

The PLOTS Guide features maps highlighting these walk-in areas, identified in the field by inverted triangular yellow signs, as well as other public lands.

The guides are free, and available at county auditor offices and license vendors in the state;

by walk-in at the Game and Fish Department's Bismarck office; and at district offices in Riverdale, Harvey (Lonetree), Williston, Dickinson, Jamestown and Devils Lake.

The guides are not available to mail, so hunters will have to pick one up at a local vendor, or print individual maps from the website.

## **Dove Season Opens Sept. 1, Hunters Reminded of HIP**

North Dakota's dove season opens statewide Sept. 1, and hunters are reminded to register with the Harvest Information Program prior to hunting.

The daily limit is 15 and possession limit is 30. Shooting hours are 30 minutes before sunrise to sunset. The season is open through Oct. 30.

All dove hunters must possess a fishing, hunting and furbearer certificate and a general game and habitat license, regardless of age. In addition, hunters ages 16 and older need a small game license.

Hunters who purchase a hunting license through the state Game and Fish Department's electronic licensing system (gf.nd.gov) or instant licensing telephone number at (800) 406-6409 can easily get HIP certified.

Otherwise, hunters can access the department's website, or call (888) 634-4798 and record the HIP number on their fishing, hunting and furbearer certificate.

Those who registered to hunt the spring light goose season in North Dakota do not have to register with HIP again, as it is required only once per year. However, hunters must HIP register in each state for which they are licensed before hunting migratory game birds.

### **Landowners Seek Early Canada Goose Hunters**

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is starting a pilot program for matching early Canada goose hunters and landowners in much the same way antlerless deer hunters are paired with landowners.

Waterfowl biologist Mike Szymanski said the Game and Fish Department is currently working with approximately 40 landowners across the state who would like to host Canada goose hunters during the early season. Enrolled producers are also a part of the department's depredation permit program during spring and summer.

"These landowners are experiencing Canada goose depredation problems," Szymanski said. "We are using the same technique as the highly successful antlerless deer program, but we do realize the hunting situations for the two species are different."

Interested hunters can get their name on a list of possible participants by accessing the Game and Fish Department's website at [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov). Hunters who do not have Internet access can call the department's

main office in Bismarck at (701) 328-6300.

Hunters must provide their name, address and telephone number, and in the drop-down menu choose the "early Canada goose" season selection. In addition, in the comments section hunters must list up to five counties where they would like to hunt. From this list the department will select the number of hunters landowners have agreed to host. These hunters will be sent the landowner's name, phone number and hours available for contact. If selected, hunters will receive landowner contact information after opening weekend.

Szymanski said landowners may or may not have harvested cropland for hunting early Canada geese, but could have hunting opportunities over water or other situations available.

"The hunter has to abide by the schedule and stipulations presented by the landowner," Szymanski said.

North Dakota's 2011 early Canada goose season opens Aug. 13. The season closes in the Missouri River zone Sept. 7, while the rest of the state has an ending date of Sept. 15.

### **HIP Certification Required for Migratory Bird Hunters**

With opening day of early Canada goose season set for Aug. 13, migratory game bird hunters are reminded to register with the Harvest Information Program prior to hunting in North Dakota.

HIP certification is required for all migratory bird hunters, regardless of age, before hunting ducks, geese, swans, mergansers, coots, cranes, snipe, doves or woodcock.

Hunter compliance is essential in order to obtain reliable national and regional estimates of annual harvest of all migratory game bird species. These estimates provide information biologists need to make sound decisions concerning hunting seasons, bag limits and population management.

Hunters who purchase a license through the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's electronic licensing system ([gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov)) or instant licensing telephone number at (800) 406-6409 can easily get HIP certified.

Otherwise, hunters can access the department's website, or call (888) 634-4798 and record the HIP number on their fishing, hunting and furbearer certificate.

Those who registered to hunt the spring light goose season in North Dakota do not have to register with HIP again, as it is required only once per year. However, hunters must HIP register in each state for which they are licensed before hunting migratory game birds.

### **2011 Small Game and Furbearer Regulations Set**

North Dakota's 2011 small game and furbearer regulations have been set and most season

structures and bag limits are similar to last year. The only significant changes involve the early Canada goose and mountain lion seasons, and an introduction of an experimental fisher trapping season.

The early Canada goose season will open Saturday, Aug. 13, and have a daily limit of eight and a possession limit of 16.

The mountain lion season in Zone 1 will have a season quota of 14 lions, split into an early and late season. The early season opens Sept. 2 and continues through Nov. 20, or until the early season quota of 10 is filled. The late season opens Nov. 21, and will run through March 31, 2012, or until four lions are taken.

As in past years, the mountain lion season in Zone 2 (Sept. 2 – March 31) does not have a quota.

An expansion of fishers in eastern North Dakota has allowed the Game and Fish Department to implement the state's first experimental trapping season. The season quota is 10 fishers taken by traps and cable devices. A limit of one fisher per person is allowed during this season.

Prairie chicken and sage grouse seasons will remain closed due to low populations.

Other small game and waterfowl licensing details are similar to last year.

Only North Dakota residents are permitted to hunt waterfowl from Sept. 24-30 Nonresidents

are allowed to hunt waterfowl in North Dakota beginning Oct. 1. Other waterfowl season details will be finalized in mid-August in the waterfowl amendment to the small game and furbearer proclamation.

In accordance with state law, nonresidents are not allowed to hunt on Game and Fish Department wildlife management areas or conservation PLOTS (Private Land Open To Sportsmen) areas from Oct. 8-14.

Hunters should refer to the North Dakota 2011-12 Small Game and Furbearer guides (available mid-August) for more details on small game and furbearer seasons. Waterfowl regulations will be available in early September.

Early Canada Goose  
 Aug. 13  
 Sept. 15 (Sept. 7 Missouri River Zone) Limit 8  
 Poss 16

Doves  
 Sept. 1 - Oct. 30  
 Limit 15 Poss 30

Hungarian partridge  
 Sept. 10 - Jan. 8  
 Limit 3 Poss 12

Sharp-tailed grouse  
 Sept. 10 - Jan. 8  
 Limit 3 Poss 12

Ruffed grouse  
 Sept. 10 - Jan. 8  
 Limit 3 Poss 12

Woodcock  
 Sept. 24 - Nov. 7

Limit 3 Poss 6  
 Tundra swan  
 Oct. 1 - Jan. 1  
 Season limit of 1 per hunter

Pheasants  
 Oct. 8 - Jan. 8  
 Limit 3 Poss 12

**Swan Hunt Application Available Online**

The online application for North Dakota's 2011 tundra swan license lottery is available on the state Game and Fish Department's website, gf.nd.gov. The deadline for applying is Aug. 17.

Paper applications will be available the week of Aug. 1 from Game and Fish offices, county auditors and license vendors. Hunters can also apply by calling (800) 406-6409. A service fee is added for license applications made by phone.

The statewide tundra swan hunting season is Oct. 1 – Jan. 1, 2012. A total of 2,200 licenses are available. Successful applicants will receive a tag to take one swan during the season. Since swans are classified as waterfowl, nonresidents may hunt them only during the period their nonresident waterfowl license is valid.

North Dakota residents and nonresidents are eligible to apply.

## **SOUTH DAKOTA GFP Introduces Smartphone App for Licenses, Reservations and Information**

The South Dakota Game Fish and Parks Department has unveiled an application for Android smartphones.

The program will allow users to access GFP hunting, fishing and camping information and will enable Android phone owners to purchase general hunting and fishing licenses, apply for big game licenses, make campground reservations in state parks, and access the South Dakota Public Hunting maps using the phone's GPS (global positioning system) functionality.

"Outdoor enthusiasts are some of the most technically savvy people out there," said Chris Marsh, GIS (geographical information systems) specialist with GFP. "They want GPS maps, the ability to buy licenses and make campground arrangements on the fly. This free app will provide Android phone users instant information about these things. They can also check current regulations in our hunting and fishing handbooks."

Marsh is currently working on other smartphone applications, which should be appearing soon.

"Each company has their own programming, software and permissions that need to be worked through," Marsh said. "Ultimately, we want to

provide this information to all smartphone users."

The app can be found at: [https://market.android.com/details?id=com.gfptab&feature=search\\_result](https://market.android.com/details?id=com.gfptab&feature=search_result)

## **Goose Hunting C-O-R-R- E-C-T-I-O-N-S**

The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department is asking that individuals who will be goose hunting in Perkins County this fall be aware of a misprint in the 2011 Hunting Handbook.

On page 22 of the Handbook, Perkins County is listed under both Unit 1 and Unit 2 Canada Goose hunting units. Perkins County is not part of Unit 1 and should only be listed under Unit 2.

The season dates for hunting Canada Geese in Perkins County is Oct. 29 to Feb. 10.

In addition, the Wall Lake Game Bird Refuge in Hand County should be included as part of the listing of state refuges on page 55.

## **Pheasant Counts Decline From Historic Highs, But Still Good**

Pheasant brood counts indicate that pheasant numbers in South Dakota have returned to levels below the remarkable high counts of the past few years.

However, the pheasant population in the main part of the state's pheasant range will still provide quality hunting op-

portunities.

From 2003 through 2010, the statewide pheasant-per-mile index was at levels not seen in the previous 40 years. The index this year is 46 percent lower than the 2010 index and 41 percent lower than the average of the past 10 years.

"We observed abnormally high mortality of hen pheasants during the brutal winter of 2010-11," explained Jeff Vonk, Secretary of the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department. "The loss of that reproductive potential inhibited the ability of our pheasant population to rebound to the record levels that we have enjoyed in recent years."

Declines in the counts were consistent across the state and most pronounced in eastern South Dakota, where winter's grip was tightest and grassland nesting habitat is diminished.

"We knew this day was coming when important pheasant habitats provided by the cover in Conservation Reserve Program fields were lost," Vonk said.

CRP enrollments in the state are currently at 1.17 million acres, down from 1.56 million acres in 2007. The reduction equates to over 600 square miles of grassland habitat.

"On the other hand, we were pleasantly surprised how well pheasants responded in central South Dakota, where abundant moisture from winter snow and spring rain allowed grasslands to flourish and provide the

essential habitat for excellent pheasant production," Vonk said.

The counts in the main pheasant range are similar to or higher than the counts in 2002 when hunters bagged 1.2 million pheasants. Pheasant hunters harvested 1.8 million pheasants in 2010.

"All things considered, pheasant numbers in much of the traditional pheasant range of the state are still good despite the declines in the counts," Vonk said. "Much of South Dakota will continue to provide a premier opportunity to hunt pheasants."

The complete 2011 Pheasant Brood Survey Report, including local survey results for different areas of the state, can be found online at <http://gfp.sd.gov/hunting/small-game/pheasant-outlook.aspx>

### **Hunters Can Donate Geese from August Management Take**

Resident Canada goose populations in South Dakota have continued to increase in recent years, exceeding population objectives and causing high levels of crop damage.

In an effort to reduce the goose population, South Dakota will implement an August Management Take Season for the second year, allowing hunters to harvest eight geese per day from August 13-28.

"We are looking to waterfowl hunters to assist in managing goose numbers, and the August Management Take is one tool

to use in reaching population objectives," said Tom Kirschenmann, chief of Terrestrial Services for the Game, Fish and Parks Department.

To complement the special season, Kirschenmann said hunters can donate their harvested Canada geese to the Sportsmen Against Hunger program for distribution to needy families across the state.

"It's as simple as hunters dropping off their harvested geese at one of the many participating processors found on the Sportsman Against Hunger website and the processors take it from there," added Ron Fowler, Sportsmen Against Hunger coordinator. "Participating processors are key partners in making this program a success. Because both hunters and facilities have varying schedules, it's important for hunters to contact their desired processing facility to determine business hours and deadlines for dropping off geese for processing."

While donating geese is a simple process, hunters must follow specific guidelines to meet federal migratory bird regulations.

"Federal regulations stipulate that the head or one fully feathered wing remain attached to each bird at all times while transported to the hunter's personal abode or a processing facility," said Andy Alban, GFP Law Program administrator. "However, if harvested geese cannot be donated the day they are harvested and taken home for cleaning, hunters are al-

lowed to donate cleaned geese at later dates."

To learn more about donating Canada geese during the August Management Take Season and the location of participating meat processors, hunters can visit <http://www.feedtheneedsd.com> or call 800-456-2758.

### **Duck and Goose Seasons Finalized**

The South Dakota Game Fish and Parks Commission has finalized 2011 Waterfowl Seasons.

The 2011 Duck Season will be split into four zones:

- \* The High Plains Zone, which encompasses all of western South Dakota and portions of most Missouri River counties, season will run from Oct. 8, 2011 through Jan. 12, 2012.

- \* The Low Plains North and Middle Zones, which consist of most of the eastern half of South Dakota, season will run from Sept. 24 through Dec. 6.

- \* The Low Plains South Zone, which consists of parts of Gregory, Charles Mix, Bon Homme, Yankton, Clay and Union Counties, season will run from Oct. 8 through Dec 20.

The daily duck limit will be six, which may be comprised of no more than:

- \* five mallards ( which may include no more than 2 hens)
- \* three wood ducks
- \* two redheads

- \* two scaup
- \* two pintails
- \* one canvasback

The possession limit will be twice the daily bag limit.

The South Dakota Goose Hunting Season will be split into three Units:

\* Unit 1, which consists of most of South Dakota, season will run from Oct. 1 through Dec. 18

\* Unit 2, which consists of Perkins County, portions of Fall River and Custer, and portions of a majority of the counties bordering the Missouri River, season will run from Oct. 29 through Feb. 10

\* Unit 3, which consists of Bennett County, season will run from Jan. 7 - 15

A daily limit of three Canada geese, 20 light geese and 1 white-fronted goose will be allowed with an unlimited possession limit for light geese and twice the daily limit for Canada and white-fronted geese.

For more information on the 2011 South Dakota Waterfowl Seasons, visit: <http://gfp.sd.gov/hunting/waterfowl/>

### **Resident Senior Combination License Proposed**

The South Dakota Game Fish and Parks Commission is considering a proposal that would allow South Dakota residents who are 65 years and older to purchase a Senior Combination Fishing and Hunting License.

The special license would cost \$34. Currently, seniors can get a discount fishing license, but

no Senior Small-Game License option is available.

The commission is also considering a proposal to reduce the current \$25 price of the Nonresident Junior Small Game License to \$10.

Comments on both proposals can be sent to: Game, Fish and Parks, 523 E Capitol, Pierre, SD 57501 or via email to [wildinfo@state.sd.us](mailto:wildinfo@state.sd.us).

Both measures will be decided by the GFP Commission at its Oct. 6 meeting in Rapid City at The Outdoor Campus-West. Public comments will be allowed, beginning at 2 p.m. MDT.

## **WISCONSIN**

### **Waterfowl hunters reminded to be sure of their target**

Don't shoot a swan or a whooping crane

With the opening of the regular Canada goose Exterior Zone hunting season on Friday, Sept. 16 and the northern duck season on Sept. 24, waterfowl hunters are reminded that swans, whooping cranes and other non-game birds are also migrating and to carefully identify all birds before shooting.

Successful efforts to restore trumpeter swans in Wisconsin removed them from the state endangered species list. Whooping cranes are found mostly in central Wisconsin as the result of an ongoing reintroduction project. However, wildlife ecologists remind hunters

that the swans and whooping cranes are protected under state and federal law and caution waterfowl hunters to be sure of their target.

"Accidental or intentional shooting continues to be a concern for our expanding population of trumpeter swans and whooping cranes," says Sumner Matteson, an avian ecologist with the Department of Natural Resources Bureau of Endangered Resources. "Hunters need to know the difference between swans and snow geese to prevent accidents."

### **Trumpeter swans**

Trumpeter swans are the largest waterfowl species in North America. Adults are all white and stand up to 5 feet tall, weighing between 20 and 35 pounds with a 7-foot wingspan. Younger swans, called cygnets, have grayish plumage and are smaller, but are still significantly larger than Canada geese, with which they are sometimes confused.

Trumpeter swans were once fairly common throughout the northern United States and Canada. Market hunting and the millinery trade rapidly depleted nesting populations during the 19th century. By 1900, it was widely believed that the species had become extinct. But a small non-migratory population survived in the remote mountain valleys of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming and later a population of several thousand trumpeters were found to have survived in remote parts of Alaska and Canada.

The DNR began a trumpeter swan recovery program in 1987 in cooperation with the Milwaukee County Zoo and other agencies and organizations. The trumpeter swan was listed as a state endangered species in 1989 and Wisconsin began the first year of an eight-year program to collect trumpeter swan eggs in Alaska that were artificially incubated and hatched at the Milwaukee County Zoo and then released. Wisconsin's original recovery goal was to achieve a population of at least 20 breeding and migratory pairs by the year 2000. In 2009, biologists counted a record 183 trumpeter swan nests in 23 counties and the trumpeter swan was removed from the state endangered species list. In 2011, biologists counted 191 nesting pairs of trumpeter swans in Wisconsin.

### Whooping cranes

The whooping crane is the tallest North American bird. It has a long neck, long dark pointed bill, and long thin black legs. A large crane can stand up to 5 feet tall with a wing span of over 6 feet. Biologists believe that approximately 1,400 whooping cranes existed in 1860. Their population declined because of hunting and habitat loss until 1941 when the last migrating flock dwindled to an all-time low of 15 birds.

Since 1999, Wisconsin has played a major role in efforts to restore a migratory whooping crane population in eastern North America as a founding member of the Whooping

Crane Eastern Partnership (exit DNR), a large group of nine government and private sector organizations, with the mission of restoring a second self-sustaining migratory population, with a core breeding area in Wisconsin. Prior to these restoration efforts, only one migratory population of whooping cranes existed in the wild that winters on the Gulf coast of Texas and migrates north in spring nesting in on the border of Alberta and Northwest Territories in Canada. Any catastrophic event in this area could have completely eliminated the species.

Two release methods are being used to rebuild the population. Initially, all captive-reared crane chicks were conditioned to follow an ultralight aircraft from central Wisconsin to the Gulf coast of Florida. These birds then make the return and subsequent migrations south unaided. This program was supplemented with the direct release of crane chicks into groups of whooping or sandhill cranes in central Wisconsin.

Including juvenile cranes expected to be reintroduced this fall, biologists estimate there are 115 cranes in the Wisconsin to Florida flock and a total whooping crane population of 599.

The unintentional shooting of a protected swan can result in state fines and restitution costs exceeding \$2,000. The state penalty for intentionally shooting a whooping crane is a fine not less than \$2,000 nor more

than \$5,000 or imprisonment for not more than nine months or both. In addition, violators face a three year revocation of all hunting privileges. Federal penalties can be substantially higher.

"Hunters have done a great job in learning the differences between swans and geese," Matteson said. "But with the growing number of swans in the state, we want to remind them to continue to be vigilant in identifying their game."

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### Duck season opens Sept. 24 in Wisconsin's Northern and Mississippi River zones

Hunters looking forward to the opening of Wisconsin's 2011 duck season in the Northern duck zone and new Mississippi River Zone on Sept. 24 should find good numbers of ducks, according to state wildlife officials.

The duck hunt in the northern zone opens at 9 a.m. Sept. 24 and continues through Nov. 22. The new Mississippi river zone, which was requested by duck hunters, also opens on Sept. 24 and runs through Oct. 2, followed by a 12-day split (closure), reopening on Oct. 15 and running until Dec. 4. Aside from opening day, hunting hours begin 30 minutes before sunrise. The southern zone duck season opens at 9 a.m. on Oct. 1 through Oct. 9, and