

OUTDOORSUPDATE

OF THE OUTDOORS

Habitat: Where Has It Gone?

BY GARY HOWEY
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As anyone who's spent much time in the outdoors knows, habitat is the critical element when it comes to wildlife. Unfortunately, in the upper Midwest, habitat is becoming hard to find and because of this, in many areas, wildlife will suffer because of the lack of habitat.

No one can blame a farmer or producer as the government alls them for putting every acre possible into production. With corn over \$6.00 per bushel, bean over \$14.00 per bushel and land taxes going higher, habitat or waste ground as some folks call it, is disappearing at an alarming rate.

What is habitat, it's an area that offers feeding, roosting, breeding, nesting, and refuge areas for a variety of bird and mammal species. When it comes to habitat, the larger the better, as smaller tracts of habitat create a lane or corridor for the predators to hunt, but every little bit helps.

When I grew up in the 60's in Watertown, S.D. our habitat was the Soil Bank, a combination of grasses, legumes and weeds. Then there was the Set-Aside program most recently the Conservation Reserve Program or CRP.

Right now, any habitat will help as anything is better than nothing! As one of my hunting buddies said, "if habitat continues to disappear at the rate it has, pheasants

will have to start nesting on the top of electric fence posts."

He like other outdoorsmen and women has realized that unless something's isn't done, there'll be no wildlife and on their own have worked hard to keep and enhance what habitats still available.

Some folks think that crop ground, once it's canopy is up makes good wildlife habitat, this may be true for deer, but there's little in a corn or bean field for upland birds, they serve as a food source, which is good, but not much else. Where there used to be weeds, and grasses growing up in the rows and field edges, there's nothing as Roundup Ready corn and beans are now clean.

In some areas, there are still sloughs, which are excellent habitat throughout the year, but they too are disappearing at an alarming rate.

As I mentioned, habitat doesn't have to be huge as something is better than nothing. Areas such as shelterbelts, if not grazed offer all types of wildlife a place to thrive. Food plots, when planted close to other habitat help all wildlife to make it through the tough times.

Wetlands, like those in South Central Nebraska and Northeast South Dakota are excellent habitat, especially in the winter. These areas are used by all species of wildlife including: waterfowl, pheasants and deer.

In some areas, such as the Waubay and Webster, S.D. some of the sloughs or wetlands once used by wildlife have gotten so huge, becoming more walleye habitat than pheasant habitat, fortunately, in those areas, there's still a pasture, grassland and cover for the birds to utilize.

Many states through their Soil and Water Conservation District or Natural Resources

District work in conjunction with the Game & Parks to develop and preserve wildlife habitat. Over the years, their tree planting programs, border planting and Wildlife Habitat programs have done a lot to help wildlife, but because of the budget crisis, many of these programs are either being downsized or eliminated.

But, there's still hope as wildlife groups such as Pheasants Forever off some incentive for putting in nesting cover and food plots. Most local chapter have some type of habitat program with many of them having planters and seed available which helps the framer/producer to establish habitat and food plots. For more information on the Pheasants Forever wildlife habitat programs and a local group in your area, go to their web sites listed

- Iowa: www.iowapheasantsforever.org
- Minnesota: www.minnesotapf.org
- Nebraska: www.nebraskapf.com
- South Dakota: www.pheasantsforever.org/page/1/Find-aChapter.jsp?state=SD
- National Headquarters: www.pheasantsforever.org

Habitat is the key to a sustainable wildlife population and without individuals and wildlife organizations establishing or leaving areas for wildlife, wildlife populations, especially the upland birds will begin to decline.

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is the President of Outdoorsmen Productions LLC and the producer/host of the Outdoorsmen Adventures television series, which airs throughout the upper Midwest on Fox Affiliates. For more information on the outdoors or to contact him go to his web page at www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.

OUTDOOR DIGEST

Three S.D. Towns Make Outdoor Magazine List

NEW YORK — Three South Dakota cities cracked the top 20 in Outdoor Life magazine's fourth-annual list of the "Top 200 Towns for Sportsmen," released this week and available in the May issue of Outdoor Life.

The magazine scored the cities using an extensive set of criteria — topping the list were access to abundant fishing and hunting opportunities, a high quality of life and suitability for families. The magazine also gave greater consideration to towns that boast low unemployment rates, high household incomes and low cost of living.

Rapid City was ranked No. 3, while Chamberlain is No. 12 and Pierre is ranked No. 13.

The city of Bend, Oregon, population 80,000, leads the list as the country's top town for sportsmen. Rising in rank from No. 6 on last year's list, Bend nabbed the top spot for attributes including access to millions of acres of Forest Service land, grassland and wetland, as well as its hundreds of miles of fishable streams and rivers.

In total, 13 Oregon cities made this year's Top Towns list.

For complete details on all 200 towns, please visit OutdoorLife.com/besttowns2011

Birding Festival May 20-22

WAGNER — The Ft. Randall Birding Festival will be held in the Wagner, Lake Andes and Pickstown area May 20-22.

The area boasts at least 322 species of birds of which 164 are breeding species. Experts say that in May there will still be many migratory birds in the area.

Two National Wildlife Refuges and a South Dakota Wildlife Production Area will be featured with field trips to all three. The Lake Andes Refuge borders the 4,616-acre Lake Andes Lake north of the Missouri River and is only 10 miles from the Karl E. Mundt National Wildlife Refuge located on the Missouri River. Red Lake is a short jaunt (six miles) south of the Lake Andes Refuge.

Birding is defined as the act of observing or identifying wild birds in their natural environment. It's an activity the whole family can enjoy together. To add to the birding field trips there will also be optional things to do such as a tour of the Corps of Engineers welcome center and Dam at Pickstown.

The weekend will start out Friday at 7 p.m. (6 p.m. registration) at the Wagner National Guard Armory with an overview of the weekend events. This will be fol-

lowed by a talk on birds and birding in the Lake Andes/Fort Randall area by David Swanson from the biology department at the University of South Dakota. The evening will be capped off with a program on live raptors presented by personnel from the Black Hills Raptor Center. Four species of raptors will be included in the group of avian ambassadors featured.

Saturday morning birders will meet at the Lake Andes National Wildlife Refuge for a guided field trip led by David Swanson. In the afternoon, Ricky Olson, one of South Dakota's top birders, will lead a gull and tern identification field trip and talk. The Red Lake Wildlife Production Area and Ft. Randall Dam will be visited. Saturday evening will feature a presentation and talk about bluebirds by David Jeffcoat, the South Dakota coordinator of Bluebirds Across Nebraska and South Dakota.

A whip-poor-will walk will also take place for the night owls starting from the city park in Pickstown.

Sunday morning will start at the Karl Mundt National Wildlife Refuge for a field trip guided by USF&WS personnel. Among other things Bald Eagle viewing and nesting will be featured until noon when the festival will officially end.

Pre-registration for the festival by May 16 will help with logistics, save money and is highly recommended. To pre-register, go to the web site www.cityofwagner.org download the form and send it to the Wagner Chamber of Commerce. You can also request a registration form by calling the Wagner Chamber of Commerce at 605-384-3741.

Iowa Officials Propose Dove Hunting Rules

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — State outdoor officials have proposed regulations that would govern the hunting season for mourning doves.

The regulations call for the dove hunting season to open on Sept. 1 and continue for 70 consecutive days. Shooting hours would be from a half-hour before sunrise to sunset each day.

The daily bag limit is set at 15 and the possession limit set at 30. The entire state will be open for hunting.

The Legislature's Administrative Rules Review Committee will hold its first review of the issue next month.

Lawmakers this year voted to legalize dove hunting, and Gov. Terry Branstad signed that measure into law.

TROPHY SPOTLIGHT



TOP LEFT: Katie Montgomery caught this 8-pound walleye on April 28. TOP RIGHT: Jackson Raab, 10, of Yankton, shot this turkey on April 17. It was his first turkey.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Parker Poppe, 10, shot this turkey with his father, Jamie, during a mentor program hunt on April 9. The bird, Parker's first, was taken in Yankton County.

Rural Minn. Taxidermist 'Climbed The Ladder'

MERRIFIELD, Minn. (AP) — Nate Miller has seen his share of 20-plus pound northern pike. And recently, he encountered a 32 1/2-inch walleye.

But he'll take a blue-winged cinnamon teal or a gadwall over a trophy fish any day. It's his specialty. Birds, that is. And, it turns out, taxidermy.

Miller, owner of Wild Marsh Taxidermy in rural Merrifield, dominated the 31st annual Minnesota Taxidermy Guild contest earlier this month at the MTG convention in Grand Rapids. His mount of a flying blue-winged cinnamon teal won the Best in Show as the top overall mount in the state and his mount of a perched gadwall earned the Woody award, regarded as the second-best overall mount. Miller competed in the masters division — the top division — and also won the state champion waterfowl and best small waterfowl awards for the mounts.

Impressive considering that Miller, 35, didn't get into taxidermy until 2003 — as a hobby out of his basement — and didn't start entering his mounts in the MTG competition until 2005.

"I've improved by leaps and bounds," said Miller, who grew up in Pillager. "I usually get ribbons (at the competition). I've kind of climbed the ladder. I started in the novice category in 2005 and got better and better at it. Then I went into the professional division and won the best professional and now I'm in masters."

According to Shawn Bakken, new president of the MTG, there were about 130 mounts in the competition.

"There was a lot of nice work there. To win is pretty much an honor," Miller said. "There were a few birds there that were real nice, so I was a little nervous."

But if any of Miller's mounts were going to win the Best of Show, it was the blue-winged cinnamon teal. His masterpiece.

"That would be my favorite. I spent a lot of time on it," Miller, also an avid waterfowl hunter, said of the mount. The bird, a stunning hybrid, was raised on a game farm.

"Sometimes they go together better and sometimes you have to work at it," Miller said of the mounts. "It depends on the specimen. And hunter care."

A laid-off carpenter, taxidermy is now Miller's main business. And his passion.

"I love to do it, I love nature," he said. "I have ducks in a pen out there (at home) that I raise. I love the outdoors."

And that's becoming more and more obvious to those in the know. "He does some phenomenal bird

work," Bakken said. "Typically he brings three or four or five birds (to the annual contest). They're always nice. He's definitely worked his way up the ranks and is deserving of what he's won."

The Minnesota Taxidermy Guild is the state association for taxidermists. Bakken said there are about 200 members and about 150 attended the convention, which rotates between Grand Rapids and Rochester. Besides the competition, the gathering also offers numerous


seminars and educational opportunities and is a venue for taxidermists to talk shop, exchange ideas and even shop for supplies from attending vendors.

"It's a great place for people to get an education," Bakken said of the convention. "There are a lot of seminars. And the judges (for the competition) come from around the U.S. They're usually the best, the top world and national title holders. When they judge stuff they really look it over and give it a critique."

To Be Well...


What You Need To Know About Skin Cancer

**Tuesday, May 3rd
Noon-1:00 pm
Avera Professional Office Pavilion Amphitheatre**



**James Young, DO
Dermatologist
Yankton Medical Clinic, P.C.**

Dr. Young will present on the prevention, diagnosis & treatment of skin cancer.



**Michael Peterson, MD
Radiation Oncologist
Avera Sacred Heart Cancer Center**

Dr. Peterson will present on the various forms of radiation treatment for skin cancer.

This forum is free and open to the public. Space is limited, however, so please make reservations by calling **605-668-8080**. A light lunch will be served.


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