

## Briefs: Pheasants Forever Adds New Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist In S.D.

BELLE FOURCHE — Pheasants Forever announced Gillian Brooks as its newest Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist in South Dakota, according to a release Thursday.

Brooks will work with area landowners, farmers and ranchers to implement wildlife habitat conservation measures aimed at increasing pheasant, sage grouse and other wildlife populations. Based in Belle Fourche, Brooks will cover Butte and Harding Counties. Pheasants Forever now has eight Farm Bill Wildlife Biologists in the state ho work to provide technical assistance to farmers and ranchers — through one-on-one consulting — regarding the benefits of conservation programs (such as the Conservation Reserve Program).

By working to develop and implement individual wildlife management plans, these eight biologists represent Pheasants Forever's on-the-ground efforts to ensure landowners are aware of conservation program options. Brooks will be based at the Belle Fourche Field Office and will work in conjunction with other members of the national Sage Grouse Initiative.

"We look forward to having a Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist working in western South Dakota as part of the Sage Grouse Initiative. With the Natural Resource Conservation Service and Pheasants Forever working together, we can provide greater outreach to producers on the importance of managing their rangeland for both livestock and sage grouse," said Sarah Eggebo, District Conservationist in Belle Fourche.

Gillian received her BS in Wildlife Biology from the University of Vermont and her MS in Wildlife and Fisheries Biology from Clemson University. She gained wildlife experience working in Wyoming, Nevada, Alaska, Maine, Oregon and South Carolina.

Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist positions in South Dakota are a result of a partnership between the Natural Resources Conservation Service, South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks and Pheasants Forever. Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever initiated the Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist Program in 2003 with 4 positions, and it has since grown to 90 partnership positions located throughout the United States.

## Neb. Hunters Kill Record Number Of Deer In 2011

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Hunters in Nebraska have set another record for the number of deer killed this year.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission says 64,548 deer were killed during November's firearm, archery and other deer hunting seasons.

That total is 865 more than last year's record harvest of 63,683.

The commission says that a full report on the species, sex and age of the deer killed should be available near the end of the year.

## Conservation Officer Honored By Shikar-Safari Club

PIERRE — Day County Game, Fish and Parks Department Conservation Officer Bob Losco of Webster has been named the 2011 Shikar-Safari Club International Wildlife Officer of the Year for South Dakota.

The Shikar-Safari Award is awarded annually in all 50 states and in 10 Canadian provinces by that worldwide conservation organization. It has been presented to a South Dakota officer each year since 1968. The award honors wildlife officers for their performances in wildlife protection, wildlife law enforcement, and implementation of wildlife conservation programs.

Losco has been with GFP since 1992 and has served as the Day County conservation officer since 1998.

Ben Chambers, now retired conservation officer supervisor in northeastern South Dakota, nominated Losco for the award, citing his diligent work with local landowners among many accomplishments.

"This has been a big challenge, given the number of issues that have resonated in Day County," Chambers said. "Because of his landowner relations skills, Bob has been a leader in carrying out the department's private lands access programs. That includes enrolling more than 50,000 acres of Day County land in the Walk-In Area program. Over the years, Bob has also done a great job working to resolve a variety of issues with landowners, including crop damage caused by Canada geese and deer."

Losco was also complimented for his work with the public, providing public hunting opportunities, conservation work with the many fish and wildlife resources found in Day County, and his work with new conservation officers.

The Shikar-Safari award was presented to Losco at the Club's annual banquet in Chamberlain. In addition, Losco was honored at the November Game, Fish and Parks Commission meeting in Pierre.

## Stave Reappointed As Neb. G&P Commissioner

LINCOLN, Neb. — Gov. Dave Heineman has reappointed Ron Stave of Waterloo to a second term on the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

Stave's second term on the nine-member board of commissioners will run from Jan. 16, 2012 to Jan. 15, 2016. He began his first term on Jan. 16, 2007.

Stave, who represents District II (Douglas County), has been highly involved in, among other things, the restructuring of the State Parks system, privatization of the restaurant at Eugene T. Mahoney State Park and the effort to recruit, develop and retain more hunters and anglers in Nebraska.

"I'm very excited," Stave said. "I have a lot of things I'd like for us to do on the Commission. We've made fantastic strides, but I feel like we can do more."

OF THE OUTDOORS | GARY HOWEY

# Preserves Have Their Place Too

BY GARY HOWEY

Hartington, Neb.

As all of us know, Mother Nature has been pretty nasty the last couple of winters.

Lucky for us, we're able to get out of the wet rains, heavy snow, and gusting winds. Unfortunately, wildlife isn't so lucky and has to bear the brunt of the storm.

Years ago, when there was plenty of winter cover, shelterbelts, creek beds, sloughs, grassland and CRP, wildlife had a fighting chance to survive all of these areas provided shelter.

Not so today as about every inch of ground has been drained, plowed, disked and is either planted or grazed down to a point where it offers no protection for wildlife.

This along with the new modern harvesting equipment, which is so efficient, in many of the fields wildlife can find little if any waste grain to feed on during the winter months, making it tough for wildlife to survive our upper Midwest winters.

Those that do survive the winter are once again faced with little or no cover in which to nest, and if they do find some cover, generally it's not all that large and predators don't have to hunt very hard to find and destroy the nest and kill the hen.

If a successful hatch were pulled off, with the chicks and hen managing to evade predators one would think that things would be looking up for the birds. Not so as Mother Nature has one more thing to throw at them, heavy spring rains.

Because, most of the habitat available will be in ditches and other low areas, a heavy rains will wash out many of the nests, of course some hens will re-nest and with some luck pull of a successful hatch.

Once the chicks are out of the egg, the tough part begins! Since chicks are small, they aren't able to fly right away, so their only defense is to run as fast as their teeny weenie legs will carry them and there just the right size to make a "light lunch", a mouthful for raptors and other predators.

If all of the above aren't making it tough enough on the pheasants, spring and early summer rains can be a killer to young chicks as they are born with down



Indy car driver Johnny Unser (lower left) with a group of employees from Graham Tire after a successful hunt at Top Gun Hunting Ranch near Howard.

not the protective feathers they'll develop as they get older.

These rains dampen the grass and as the chicks walk through it while trailing the hen, the down soaks up like a sponge and hypothermia sets in. There's nothing the hen can do to save them when they fall by the wayside and she just keeps on trucking and when it's time to roost for the night, she may have lost one if not several of her brood.

Pretty depressing isn't it and makes one wonder with all cards stacked against the pheasants why there are any birds left at all.

In areas where there is some cover that will last throughout the year, there will be some birds if the area isn't over hunted while in others, there may be little or nothing.

For those hunters who have no access to hunting land, what options do hunters, especially those from out of state have?

They could hunt the road ditches in South Dakota that haven't been hayed or hunt the Walk In and MAP areas of the state along with hundreds if not thousands of other hunters.

The other option for them is to hunt preserves with their extended hunting season, where pheasants are stocked and

put out on a regular basis, many of which aren't harvested which will survive because of the larger habitat tracts and food plots on the preserve.

Hunting preserves also help to bring dollars into the economy as those hunting there purchase hunting permits which go into the Game, Fish & Parks coffers, helping to develop new and preserve existing habitat.

Those that fly in need will need to rent vehicles to get them to and from their destination, which means they'll also be purchasing fuel. This along with hunting gear and the ammunition they'll buy, help boost the economy, as do the taxes on these products.

Last week I had the opportunity to hunt on a preserve with the folks from Graham Tire and Indy car driver Johnny Unser at Top Gun Hunting Ranch [www.topgunhunt.com](http://www.topgunhunt.com) located near Howard.

Top Gun is a good example of an excellent hunting preserve with excellent accommodations, habitat and tremendous bird numbers.

Our group hunted in excellent cover as well as food plots, with walkers pushing the middle, wingmen off to the side and slightly ahead and blockers at the end of

the field.

If we hadn't known this was a preserve, the way the birds were feathered, hunkered down, ran and flew you'd swear we were hunting wild birds.

There are several things you want to look at when looking for a top of the line hunting preserve.

- Look at their web site; it's photos, and hunter's comments.
- Check out their habitat, as it's essential for all wildlife, excellent habitat makes for excellent hunting.
- Look over their facilities; good preserves also have excellent facilities.

Hunting preserves may not be for everyone, but they provide those hunters who have limited time, no access to land to hunt a place to spend time with good friends, the opportunity to do some hunting, while bringing much-needed dollars into our economy.

*Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is a former hunting and fishing guide and the producer/host of the award winning Outdoorsmen Adventures television series which can be seen on Fox affiliates throughout the upper Midwest. For more information on the outdoors check out [www.outdoorsmenadventures.com](http://www.outdoorsmenadventures.com).*

# 85-Year-Old Michigan Hunter Still Going Strong; Bags 55th Deer

IONIA, Mich. (AP) — Bernard Baxter, 85, has shot almost as many deer as the number of years he has been hunting.

This year on Nov. 16, using his trusty Remington 16-gauge, three-shot automatic shotgun, he shot his 55th, a six-point buck. However, he said he did not think it to be any kind of milestone.

"I just figured it's another one on my list," said Baxter.

A list is certainly something Baxter keeps handy. He has recorded a journal entry for every hunting expedition since his very first time in 1943. It includes who he hunted with, the date and time he began, the weather conditions of the day, whether he used a bow or shotgun, the weight of the

deer, and more.

"I don't know why (I) started doing it, but I kept track every year," Baxter said, adding he would like to remember each outing.

In addition to the 68-year-old journal, Baxter continues to use the same red wool hunting suit he bought in 1943, which is in outstanding condition.

"It's good and warm," he said, adding he also uses a knife of the same age to clean the deer. "As long as it's workable, I keep it."

Baxter lives in Ionia and hunts on the property of Don and Elaine Nash on David Highway.

"I just enjoy being out there," Baxter said. "I like to get out and see the birds and the chipmunks."

Born and raised in Crystal, Baxter said he began hunting due to the interest he gained from his brothers and father who participated in the sport. He first hunted pheasants, he said, and the hobby stuck. From there, he has hunted in the lower and upper peninsulas of Michigan and

in the western part of the United States.

Though he uses a shotgun now, Baxter said he previously would also hunt using a bow.

When Baxter hunts, he said he likes to begin in the early morning before 7 a.m. and stay out for the entire day. The fellowship that

comes with the sport and also breakfast with friends is what he enjoys most, he added.

"I'd like to continue until I'm not able," Baxter said.

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