

OUTDOORS DIGEST

OF THE OUTDOORS | GARY HOWEY

S.D. GFP Conservation Officer Honored

PIERRE — South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks conservation officer Brian Humphrey has been honored by Shikar-Safari Club International as the South Dakota Wildlife Officer of the Year.

Humphrey, the conservation officer for Hutchinson and Turner counties, has been with GFP since 1997.

"Brian is very deserving of this award," said Marty Pennock, who is Humphrey's supervisor. "He has always shown extraordinary dedication to both the wildlife resources and the people he serves. He holds himself to the highest standards in all aspects of his work."

In receiving the honor, Humphrey was not only praised for his law enforcement work but also helping private landowners and sportsmen implement conservation programs. He is part of a team that enrolled more than 8,000 acres of land into the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program in his area.

Humphrey works on area lakes to oversee safety and law enforcement and is a past Boating Officer of the Year award winner. He logged more than 300 hours assisting in the Missouri River flood relief efforts last year.

One of his duties with GFP is serving as a training officer for other conservation officers. He also works as a mentor for newly assigned officers in his area and to officers who transfer into the region.

"Brian is an experienced and respected officer who truly cares about making the department the best it can possibly be," Pennock said. "His strength is his value of duty and his ability to serve people, while promoting an excellent image for our agency."

The Shikar-Safari Award is awarded annually in all 50 states and in 10 Canadian provinces by the 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 in the implementation of wildlife conservation programs.

The award was presented to Humphrey at a recent regional meeting in Sioux Falls that included many of his fellow conservation officers and other Wildlife Division staff. He was also honored at the November GFP Commission meeting in Madison.

Wildlife Action Plan Open Houses Scheduled

PIERRE — The state Game, Fish and Parks Department is revising its comprehensive South Dakota Wildlife Action Plan, and it will host two open houses for the public to learn more about the effort.

The first open house is on Dec. 12, from 6 – 9 p.m. MST at the GFP Outdoor Campus West in Rapid City. The second open house is on Dec. 13 from 6 – 9 p.m. CST at the GFP Outdoor Campus East in Sioux Falls. Each open house will begin with background information on the plan's purpose and approach. Game, Fish and Parks staff will be on hand to accept comments and answer questions.

In exchange for accepting certain federal funds, each state has prepared a comprehensive wildlife plan to outline how the needs of all fish and wildlife species should be addressed. Plans were developed under a broad framework, but customized to meet the needs of individual states.

South Dakota's plan was approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2006. The Game, Fish and Parks Department is the lead agency in plan development and committed to revise the plan five years after its initial approval.

State wildlife action plans serve as a framework for state wildlife agencies and potential co-operators to work together for wildlife and healthy habitats. While much of the focus of the plans is to avoid future endangered species listings, the plans also help maintain common species in the face of known and likely future challenges.

Nebraska Will Stock More Lakes With Rainbow Trout

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — More Nebraska lakes will be stocked with rainbow trout this December.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Department says David City's west park pond and Lincoln's Holmes Lake and Bowling Lake will be stocked with 10-inch-long trout.

These lakes are being stocked as part of a second round of trout stocking. The state stocked a number of other urban and park lakes around Nebraska in October.

Fishermen can check the schedule of all fish stockings online at www.outdoorNebraska.org.

Helping The Hungry Processors Still Accepting Deer

LINCOLN, Neb. — Hunters may still offer deer to 14 contracted meat processors and, if accepted, have processing costs paid by the Hunters Helping the Hungry program. Processors will accept deer until their quotas are met.

Processors still accepting deer and the quantity they may accept are: Bayard Processing, Bayard, two; KDK Meats, Bridgeport, one; Kelley's Custom Pack, North Platte, six; The Butcher Shop, Fairfield, four; Melcher's Locker, Lindsay, eight; County Butcher, Humphrey, six; Butchery, Ullyses, 10; Bob's Custom Meats, North Bend, nine; Wahoo Locker, Wahoo, one; Panama Locker, Panama, two; Van Fleet Meats, Ralston, one; Stoyrich House of Sausage, Omaha, seven; Den's Country Meats, Table Rock, five; Pelican's Meat Processing, Johnson, 12.

Once quotas are met, hunters may consider using the free Deer Exchange program to find and contact persons who would like to receive venison.

Hunters Helping the Hungry combines cash donations and donated deer to produce ground venison that is distributed to Nebraskans in need. No permit or tax dollars are used. Visit OutdoorNebraska.org to make a cash donation to the

It won't be long before those of us who live for ice fishing will be headed north to do some hard water fishing.

I'm not what you'd call a hard water fishaholic, but I do enjoy it, especially when the bite is on.

The hardest thing when it comes to ice fishing, besides the ice, when fishing a new body of water is to know where to start fishing.

Anyone whose did much ice fishing has more than likely heard of Dave Genz as he has developed many of the tactics and gear used for run & gun ice fishing as he revolutionized ice fishing.

I had a chance to sit down with Dave recently and talk about locating fish on a new lake. Below are some of Dave's fishing tips as well as observations I've made while out on the ice.

According to Genz, "if you're fishing a body of water where weeds are standing upright, these offer protection and producing oxygen, so the fish will be in these weed beds.

Fish haven't had time to go into their super slow mode yet and are still roaming around looking for one last big meal.

The best early season ice fishing comes in areas that still have good weeds. The weeds give the smaller pan fish a place to feed and some protection from the larger predators.

A good starting place is an area that has holes protruding from the ice. Drill several holes around them until you find the edge, hole or a pocket in the weeds. Bluegills, perch and crappies like to hang out around these edges.

You'll want to move around and drill a bunch of holes when ice fishing. It seems that you'll get the majority of your bites the first couple of times you drop your bait down a hole.

I've seen anglers pull a couple of fish out of a hole and then camp there for hours waiting for the next bite. Not me, I like the old run and gun method. I'll drill dozens of holes and jump from one to another, taking what ever I can from each hole before that spot goes dead."

I've fished with Dave several times and he lives by his run and gun method, never spending too much time in one spot unless the fish are biting, he covers a lot of ground, drilling holes in every direction

BY BRENT FRAZEE

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. — It all started in the spring of 2008 with a knock on the door of an old farmhouse in northwestern Kansas.

Rob Robinson, a firefighter from Starkville, Miss., had traveled almost 1,000 miles to hunt turkeys in Kansas. Not just any turkeys — the Rio Grande turkeys that roamed western Kansas.

Robinson was on a mission to complete turkey hunting's Grand Slam, shooting each of the country's four species of wild gobblers. And the birds in western Kansas were on his checklist.

So, he held his breath when Gillan Alexander, who farms 1,400 acres near Nicodemus, Kan., a town settled by African-Americans following the Civil War, came to the door. A portion of Alexander's farmland has been in his family for four generations.

Alexander, 55, listened as Robinson politely asked for permission to hunt.

"As long as you respect my land," Alexander said, "you can go out there."

Robinson was directed to a patch of land owned by one of Alexander's friends, and the results were memorable.

"Within 15 minutes, I had my bird," Robinson said. "It was unbelievable."

And so began a special friendship.

Fast forward to one Thursday morning. Robinson and Alexander were sitting in a hospital room at the University of Kansas Hospital. Robinson dressed in his camouflage pajamas. They are recovering from an operation the previous Monday in which Robinson gave Alexander the ultimate gift — one of his kidneys.

"Rob is my hero," Alexander said, getting choked up. "He's my living angel."

"I never asked him to do this. He heard about the troubles I was having and he just did it on his own, getting tested to make sure his kidney was compatible and everything."

"I'm calling my new kidney Mississippi in honor of him."

Robinson laughed and then got serious.

"I didn't even hesitate in getting tested when I heard what bad shape he was in," said Robinson, 43. "We had become real good friends. We would text each other every day."

"When the doctors told him that he needed a kidney transplant, all I could think about was helping him."

Alexander had been diagnosed with a kidney disease almost 20 years ago. His condition had deteriorated to the point that he needed dialysis six days a week.

"He had reached the point where a transplant was about the only option," said Timothy Schmitt, the sur-

geon who operated on Alexander. "And the sooner, the better."

"In this area, you can wait 2{ years to get a kidney once you go on the list. But things worked out for the best in this case."

"He (Alexander) got a living kidney, which always works better and lasts longer. Things look good at this point."

Robinson downplayed his gift, saying he didn't think twice.

"Gillan has been so good to me," he said. "One year I was staying in a tent and it was cold. He invited me to stay in his house."

"I've taken him out hunting and we've always had a great time. He's one of the most down-to-earth guys I know."

Before he met Alexander, Robinson had developed an affection for Kansas. He had hunted pheasants there several times over the years, then turned to deer hunting.

When he was bird hunting, he noticed the abundance of wild turkeys roaming the fields and wooded areas, and he decided to try his luck at that sport. In 2007, he shot a huge Eastern species turkey that turned out to be a Kansas state record.

That started a passion that led Robinson to several states in pursuit of sub-species of wild turkeys. He shot birds at various locations and had his sights set on a Rio Grande bird.

When he saw Alexander's land, he knew it was prime turkey-hunting property.

"Out there, there aren't a lot of trees," he said. "When you see a patch of woods, you know there's a good chance it's going to hold birds."

But showing gratitude for gaining permission to hunt had little to do with his decision to give Alexan-

der one of his kidneys, Robinson said.

"I did this out of friendship," he said.

Sean Kumer, who operated on Robinson, was impressed with the story of how the two men ended up at the University of Kansas Hospital.

"It's always heartwarming when you hear stories about how unusual circumstances bring two people together like this," he said. "To think, a friendship that developed through hunting turned out to have a big effect on someone's life. That's impressive."

Alexander summed it up by uttering a few short words from a Bible verse.

"Hebrews 13:2," he said. "Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing so, some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it."



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Dave Genz has developed and come up with numerous ice fishing methods and when Genz speaks, ice fishermen listen because he knows ice fishing.

until he finds fish.

Now days, I use a power auger, as drilling many holes with a hand auger is quite a job.

When I first started ice fishing up in Wiertown, the first auger we ever used was a hand auger. I found the best way to use it was to reopen holes dug by other fishermen. We'd punch a few of my own holes and also open up old holes. The more holes you punch and can fish through, the better your catching percentage will be.

When fishing cold weather, you'll want to use a light limp line as it has less memory and doesn't coil up on you. If I'm fishing water that is super clear, I may go to a monofilament line as light as a 2-pound

test.

Try a small ice fly, or just a small gold hook with a split shot for pan fish. Tip the hook with a wax worm or maggot. I suspend my bait under the tiniest float or bobber I can find. Your bobber should just barely protrude above the water line. The less force it takes to pull the bobber under, the better your chances will be of hooking the light nibbling fish.

When using a foam or cork bobber with the small took pick that snubs against the line, I like to have just the toothpick or the very top of the bobber above the water. This way the fish can take the bait into his mouth and not feel any resistance.

I really like light weight rods for panfish

ones that have a soft touch. They need to be limber enough to detect a bite, yet solid enough to be able to set the hook on the fish. I've found that a short fiberglass lightweight rod works as well as any rod for hard water fishing.

If you fish out of an ice sled or ice house, a short rod is the only way to go, because in most cases, you don't have room to set the hook with a longer rod.

When I'm fishing on a pond for panfish, very seldom will I use my reel to bring the fish in as most of the ponds aren't that deep. I'll leave the rod and reel on the ice and when the bobber goes under, I'll grab the line and pull the fish in hand over hand.

You'll hook an occasional bass in a pond and a bass can be a tough opponent any-time of the year. Bass can put up a real fight through the ice and as long as you don't try to bring him to fast, you can land them hand over hand.

As the season progresses the fish will move out into deeper water looking for more comfortable temperatures. If you have a fish locator, it makes the looking a lot easier and they'll help you to pin point the exact depth that the fish are holding at.

Fish will suspend and move up and down as they feed. Don't get stuck in a rut and fish only deep in the deeper water, because fish move both vertically and horizontal. Try one depth and then another, keep experimenting until you find the right spot.

When fishing early ice, safety is a big concern. Let the ice get good and hard before you venture out onto it. Watch for soft spots such as areas where springs are present or where the water is moving under the ice as these areas take longer to become hard.

For safety sake, carry a floatation cushion, rope and some ice spikes with you. If you happen to break through the ice, you can use the ice spikes to dig into the ice and climb out of the hole. A flotation cushion works great for kneeling or setting on the top of your bucket or seat and can be thrown to anyone that might fall through the ice.

Early season ice fishing can be fast and furious, keep warm, be mobile and have a great ice fishing season.

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is a former tournament angler, fishing and hunting guide, the Producer/Host of the award winning *Outdoorsmen Adventures television series* which can be seen on Fox affiliates in the upper Midwest. He and Simon Fuller are the hosts of the *Outdoor Adventures radio program on Classic Hits 106.3 and ESPN Sports Radio 1570*. If you're looking for more outdoor information, it can be found at www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.

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