

OUTDOORS DIGEST OF THE OUTDOORS | GARY HOWEY

Hunting At Top Gun Ranch

2013 Hunting, Fishing Licenses On Sale Dec. 15

PIERRE — The sale of 2013 South Dakota general hunting and fishing licenses gets off to an early start on Saturday, Dec. 15 through storefront license agents around the state and through online license sales. General hunting and fishing licenses extend beyond the calendar year.

The 2013 licenses are valid from Dec. 15, 2012, through Jan. 31, 2014, while the 2012 licenses remain valid through Jan. 31, 2013.

Visit online at <http://www.gfp.sd.gov/licenses/general-hunt-fish/default.aspx> for information about license options and their cost, list and locations of storefront license agents, and the online system for purchasing licenses.

Youth Goose Hunt To Be Held Next Month

PIERRE — The 23rd annual Central South Dakota Youth Goose Hunt will be held in Pierre in early January.

The hunts will be held on Saturday and Sunday, Jan. 5-6. They are free to youngsters who are 12-to-15 years old.

However, young hunters will be required to attend a mandatory information meeting at the Pierre Ramkota at 7 p.m. CST on Friday, Jan. 4. Hunters will be assigned their guides for the weekend and given instructions for their morning hunting sessions on Saturday and Sunday.

Following the Saturday morning hunt, participants can attend seminars on goose calling, decoy placement and be eligible for several prizes.

GFP Commission Finalizes 2013 Spring Turkey Season

The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission has finalized the 2013 Spring Turkey Seasons.

The Prairie and Black Hills seasons will run from April 13-May 19. The Archery Season will run from April 6-May 19 for both units as well.

The commission voted to allow 10 archery turkey hunters access permits to hunt at the Blood Run Nature Area and 10 more to hunt at the Adams Homestead and Nature Area from April 6-30. Those hunters will be selected from a pool of applicants from a free-access permit drawing.

In addition, the Game, Fish and Parks Commission has proposed an increase in the number of bighorn sheep licenses. Instead of two licenses, three will be issued.

One of the three tags will be auctioned off, pending approval of the auction by the Legislative Interim Rules Committee.

Proceeds of the auctioned bighorn sheep tag would be used for research, enhancements and growth of South Dakota's bighorn sheep herd. The tag would be auctioned off at the annual banquet of the Midwest Chapter of the Bighorn Sheep Foundation.

Enjoy Winterfest A Ponca State Park On Dec. 29

LINCOLN, Neb. — Spend a winter day at scenic Ponca State Park on Dec. 29 and enjoy indoor and outdoor activities for the entire family. Winterfest is an all-day event designed to allow visitors to rekindle wintertime family traditions.

Indoor activities include art display, crafts, wine and cheese tasting, soup supper, and entertainment. Outdoor activities include sledding (if weather permits), fruitcake flinging contest, children's kindling hunt, Yule Log Quest, bonfire and hayrack rides.

The Yule Log Quest is a team competition to locate the log within the park. Teams will complete tasks to earn clues to find the log. The kindling found in the children's contest will be used to light the log for the bonfire.

A park entry permit is required for each vehicle entering the park.

Enjoy Christmas At The Cody's Dec. 20-23

LINCOLN, Neb. — Enjoy an old-fashioned holiday at the home of William "Buffalo Bill" Cody with Christmas at the Cody's. The event is Dec. 20-23 from 5:30-8 p.m. at Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park in North Platte.

Tour Cody's house, barn and cabin, each lit up for the season. Visitors to the house will find holiday music, hot cider, cookies, roasted chestnuts, 18 decorated Christmas trees and Santa Claus.

A park entry permit is required. Admission to the house is \$5 for adults. Ages 12 and under and military personnel with identification are free.

Group Offers Reward In ND Moose, Antelope Killings

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A national animal protection group is offering a \$6,000 reward for information that leads to a conviction in the deaths of a moose and two pronghorn antelope in central North Dakota.

The Humane Society of the United States says the animals were killed in last month in Burlingame and Morton counties. The group says the illegal killings occurred during the first week of North Dakota's deer gun season.

The group says a young bull moose was shot near Moffit. And two pronghorns were shot and left along a county road northwest of Mandan.

BY GARY HOWEY
Hartington, Neb.

The crisp morning air was a good indicator fall had arrived and as we came into the end of the field, three roosters cackled, as they exploded from the heavy CRP grass.

They erupted from the cover with the sun radiating off their brightly colored plumage, with every wing beat gaining altitude doing their best to put as much distance between themselves and the orange clad hunters around them.

The shotgun off to my left roared, as did several others around me, connecting with all three birds, tumbling them to the ground, where Kevin Shumaker's yellow lab and several other dogs quickly located and retrieved the birds.

We were hunting with a group of managers from the South Dakota and Nebraska's Graham Tires Stores as well as the winners of their Outdoor Spectacular Promotion at Top Gun Hunting Ranch.

Top Gun Hunting Ranch in Howard is a 3,200 acre hunting ranch with 2,000 of those being in preserve featuring excellent habitat made up of CRP, WRP ground, food plots planted to corn, milo as well as tree belts.

Each field, no matter what it was planted to was set up to accommodate hunters, with food plots, corn fields and grass all allowing the hunters the best opportunity for a shot.

Preserve hunting in South Dakota is pretty popular as it allows hunters, both residents and non-residents the opportunity to have a place to hunt and get together.

The lodge at Top Gun is second to none with rooms set up to fit the hunters needs, featuring excellent meals and shooting facilities giving the hunters an opportunity to sharpen their shooting skills before heading to the field.

The extended preserve season, which runs September through March, gives hunters the opportunity to hit the field prior to the regular season as well during the late season after the first of the year.

There's always excellent hunting at hunt-



As walkers near the end of a milo field, one of several roosters goes airborne in front of two hunters.

PHOTO: LARRY MYHRE

ing preserves as birds are stocked giving hunters excellent hunting opportunities with many of the birds that were stocked supplementing the wild bird numbers in the area.

Top Gun Hunting Ranch is an example of a top quality hunting preserve with great habitat, excellent hunting, guides, dogs and accommodations.

This was my second visit to Top Gun as I'd hunted there the season before, were the hunting had been exceptional.

This year, I would be on the outside looking in, running the camera while Team Outdoorsmen Adventures member Jim Hamilton of Sioux Falls ran the show as I did my best to keep up and be in the right position to get the footage needed.

Kevin had several dogs in the field, so very few birds were able to hunker down, burrowing into the cover, waiting for the hunters to walk by before taking wing.

Using the dogs to our best advantage, we worked the fields into the wind, allowing the dogs to scent the birds ahead of us, down wind, many of which were running out ahead the hunters.

On late season hunts such as this, it's a

good idea to have wing men slightly ahead of the walkers out along the outside of both edges, keeping the birds in the field instead of flushing out the side out of gun range.

Strategically placed at the end of each of the fields and shelterbelts we'd placed blockers, whose job it was to get a bead on any birds running ahead of the hunters flushing out the end.

One third of the way through our second walk, the dogs once again got birdie, picking up the scent of the birds running out in front. The hunter off to the left moved up on the dogs just as another rooster burst from the milo strips. His first shot was a bit hurried, just behind the bird, but the second was dead on, dropping the bird.

The unpicked corn proved to be more of a challenge for the hunters as even though we were in a drought year, it was head high, so the hunters in the middle with the dogs would be pushing the birds to the outside edge wing men and the hunters blocking at the end.

Pheasants are known to hunker down before flushing out of the cover, that's why it's a good idea to have the walkers with the dogs working the very end of the cover

slowly, allowing the dogs to root out those birds near the end.

This is when it all happens at once, as all of the hunters have converged on the end of the field and there could be any number of birds flushing.

As our walkers approached the end, one pheasant took off on a dead run along the edge of the field behind the walkers, taking wing what it thought was far out of range of the hunters when our wing man on the left took aim at the bird, proving the bird wrong, as the wing man made the long shot look easy.

That's when it happened and happened quickly as one, two three and then four roosters and several hens thundered out of the cover.

Guns erupted on both sides of me as the hunters swung on the departing birds, with only the hens and one rooster making their escape.

Our last push would be in the corn, the same fields where we'd ended our hunt last season. With our wing men out in front on either side and blockers blocking the ends attempt to hold the birds in the corn strips until the walkers arrive. As the birds came to the end of the field they'd either hide in the heavier cover or take wing, giving the blockers shots at those birds before the walkers and dogs got within range.

Once again it happened as several roosters blew out the end only to be greeted by the bursts from several shotguns. Once again a few got away, which was good as any hunter knows, you have to leave a few for seed.

No matter what type of cover we hunted in there was plenty of action, excellent dog work, with beautiful flushes from hard flying birds, an excellent day in the field hunting America's most popular game birds, the Ringneck Pheasant at Top Gun Hunting Ranch.

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.



Gary HOWEY

Sayler

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cent death of his mother-in-law prompted he and his wife, Katie, to want to be closer to family, Sayler acknowledged in a resignation press release Thursday.

The 43-year-old Sayler earned his Bachelor's Degree from Ohio Wesleyan University in 1991, spent three years in the private sector in Cleveland and later served as an associate athletic director at Bowling Green State.

Though they spent just six months together in the athletic department, Williams credited the accomplishments Sayler made in his two years on the job.

"He's made a tremendous impact on our program, and I got to know him pretty well during my hiring process and my infancy

month on the job," Williams said. "I'm thrilled to death for him that he was able to go back to his home state.

"When you can be closer to family and close to your home, it's a great opportunity that I can definitely relate to."

With Sayler taking over at Miami University effective next month, USD will move forward with David Herbster as interim athletic director. Herbster, who joined the USD staff in 2007, has been extensively involved in all aspects of the department in his role as senior associate athletic director.

"I couldn't be more comfortable with David Herbster moving forward, he was extremely involved in everything that happened with my hire," Williams said. "I feel like he has been right there alongside Sayler, helping with our overall progression.

"I don't think there would be

anybody as ready to lead us right now."

Herbster, who did not return additional phone calls Friday, is seen by many as the logical choice to take over the position. Williams continued the line of

confidence votes for the senior associate A.D.

"He's completely plugged into USD, he would be the perfect candidate, in my mind, to continue our momentum that we've been

building," Williams said. "To see it all come to fruition, he would be well adept to make that happen."

You can follow Jeremy Hoeck on Twitter at twitter.com/jhoeck

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