

**OUTDOORS DIGEST**

**Black Hills Snowmobile Season Opens Dec. 15**

PIERRE — Snowmobile Trails in the Black Hills are scheduled to open Sunday, Dec. 15.

Although several feet of snow fell in the Black Hills during an early October blizzard, trail officials say they will need more snow in order to groom snowmobile trails.

"The Black Hills area has seen minimal snowfall since the October blizzard," said Black Hills Trails District supervisor, Shannon Percy. "Grooming operations will be limited until we see additional accumulations."

The early blizzard's heavy wet snow and high winds left much of the trail system blocked with downed trees, but Percy assures that all 350 miles of the snowmobile trails have been cleared.

Some hazards remain off-trail, however.

"Snowmobilers should be aware that downed trees, broken tree tops and dangling branches can fall at any time while riding off-trail. Be aware of your surroundings as trees and debris may cause obstructions," Percy added.

Trails in eastern South Dakota opened Dec. 1, and while there was significant snow in some places, bare spots remain on the trails.

Snowmobile clubs in eastern South Dakota groom, sign and maintain over 1200 miles of trails through a grant in aid agreement with the state.

Current trail conditions are available online at [gfp.sd.gov/snowmobiling](http://gfp.sd.gov/snowmobiling) as well as on the SDGFP Outdoors mobile app.

Trail condition updates are also posted to Twitter accounts dedicated to both the Black Hills and the East River trails ([www.twitter.com/SDsnowBHills](http://www.twitter.com/SDsnowBHills) and [www.twitter.com/SDsnowEast](http://www.twitter.com/SDsnowEast)).

For more information about snowmobiling in South Dakota, visit [gfp.sd.gov/snowmobiling](http://gfp.sd.gov/snowmobiling), or call 605-584-3896 for Black Hills trails information or 605-773-3391 for East River trails.

**Yankton Christmas Bird Count on Dec. 15**

Birders and nature enthusiasts in the Yankton area will join birders across the western hemisphere and participate in Audubon's longest-running wintertime tradition, the annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC), held on Sunday, Dec. 15 in Yankton.

This year, more than 2,000 individual counts are scheduled to take place throughout the Americas and beyond from Dec. 14, 2013, to Jan. 5, 2014. The Christmas Bird Count is an all-day census of birds found in a particular area.

Last year, 28 people observed a total of 82 bird species on the Yankton count day with an additional three species noted during the count week period.

It's the longest-running citizen science project in the nation, and organizers of the 114th Christmas Bird Count are looking for new participants. People of all levels of birding experience from beginners to experts are welcome to participate. You can participate by going birding in the field or by watching the birds at your backyard feeder and reporting your count. There is a special need for more feeder watchers in the Yankton area this year. Please call or email for some simple guidelines.

The 114th CBC is expected to be larger than ever, expanding its geographical coverage and accumulating information about the winter distributions of various birds. More than 2,200 counts were completed last year by more than 60,000 volunteers. The CBC is vital in monitoring the status of resident and migratory birds across the Western Hemisphere, and the data, which are 100 percent volunteer generated, have become a crucial part of the U.S. government's natural history monitoring database.

For more information about CBC participation as either a field observer or feeder watcher, contact Roger Dietrich at 605-660-6247 or [rogerd@iwi.net](mailto:rogerd@iwi.net).

**Grant Funding Will Aid Youth Conservation Education**

PIERRE — South Dakota youth will have more opportunities to learn about the outdoors and conservation through the Tony and Dar Dean Outdoor Education Fund that will be awarding grants in the spring of 2014.

The Tony and Dar Dean Outdoor Education Fund was established in memory of outdoor broadcaster and writer Tony Dean, who died in 2008, and in honor of his wife Dar Dean, an outdoor enthusiast who has a strong commitment to enhancing outdoor education opportunities.

Working in cooperation with the South Dakota Parks and Wildlife Foundation, the Tony and Dar Dean Outdoor Education Fund will provide small grant funding for projects associated with youth conservation education in South Dakota. These small grants are intended to provide resources and support to individuals and organizations desiring to provide quality educational outdoor experiences and are eligible to be used in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to: funding travel for students or groups to educational events; providing supplies and materials to promote outdoor knowledge and skills; creating new activities and events that increase outdoor knowledge and participation among South Dakota families and youth.

The window for accepting proposals will run from Jan. 1 to March 15, 2014. A total of \$4,000 is available to applicants for calendar year 2014 to apply toward activities and projects that will be completed in late 2014 or in 2015. Grant Projects will be funded for a minimum of \$500 to a maximum of \$1500. All applications for the Tony and Dar Dean Outdoor Education Fund small grants will only be taken electronically/online using the application form provided.

The summary of the small grants program and the application form can be found at [www.TonyDean.com](http://www.TonyDean.com).

**Deer Carcasses Showing Up In Neb. County**

BEATRICE, Neb. (AP) — Deer carcasses have been showing up in Gage County ditches and creeks.

Officials aren't sure whether poachers are to blame or the carcasses are being dumped by hunters who legally shot the deer but don't want to properly dispose of them.

Sheriff Millard "Gus" Gustafson told the Beatrice Daily Sun (<http://bit.ly/J18Vnk>) that it's tough to estimate how many cases of illegal animal carcass dumping occur because many go unnoticed or unreported.

Dumping carcasses in ditches is littering, a misdemeanor.

**Of The Outdoors | Gary Howey**

# Habitat Key To Healthy Wildlife Populations

BY GARY HOWEY

Hartington, Neb.

As I made my way out on of town on opening day of the Nebraska pheasant season, I knew I would be wasting my time, but I had to get my Lab out for some exercise.

As I drove through the country, I glanced left, then right, seeing nothing I would consider enough habitat to hide a pheasant. If things did not improve, I wondered if there would be anywhere, I could put my dog on the ground to hunt.

The wooded bluffs, native grass plantings we had hunted for years were now barren hillsides planted to corn and beans.

The tree lines I once hunted deer on were now piles of trees pushed into the corners of the crop ground, waiting to be buried or burned.

It was not too many too years ago, in Northeast Nebraska, there were thousands of acres of prime habitat, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and lands enrolled in the Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP).

I did locate some of the land in Dixon County enrolled in the Game & Parks Map program planted to native grass and food plots where I spent a good part of two hours following Mo, my black Lab through the field, kicking up several hens and one rooster that came up to far out for a shot.

I like many other hunters in the Nebraska and the Midwest are scratching our heads, thinking that pheasant hunting may be a thing of the past, asking ourselves what has happened.

Reports have indicated pheasant populations throughout the upper Midwest are down; take for instance, South Dakota the number one pheasant-hunting destination in the U.S. reported to be down as much as 46%.

That number may be deceiving as South Dakota bird numbers have been so high that a 46% decrease still means you are going to find more birds there than in any other state.

The reasons pheasant and other wildlife populations are down in my area is a combination of things including; the 2012 drought, stunted vegetation growth, emergency haying of CRP, a cold wet spring in 2013, and of course, the lack of habitat.

Over the years, the price of crops, corn and beans have rose steadily, bringing cash rent prices up while the dollars received for enrollment in CRP has stayed low. Even with the increase payment made for CRP enrollment over the last two years, very few acres were enrolled with CRP contracts expiring, or being bought out and then put back into production.

Just how much land in the upper Midwest was converted from non-cropland to cropland, here's the num-



PHOTO: OUTDOORSMEN PRODUCTIONS

Gary Kubicek, left, of Sioux City, Iowa, and Team Outdoorsmen Adventures member Simon Fuller of Yankton are pictured with pheasants they took in an area with excellent habitat during a recent hunt.

ber of acres lost according to the folks at Pheasants Forever. Nebraska leads the top ten, losing 54,876.60 acres followed closely by South Dakota with 27,128.40 acres; Iowa comes in at number five with 22,301.50 acres followed by Kansas with 20,931.50 acres with Minnesota rounding out the top ten with 12,453.10 acres. What we are talking about here is a huge number of acres, habitat and potential habitat acres being broken up, drained and planted.

Some may believe the land put into crop ground has some value as habitat; nothing is farther from the truth! In years past, there was some habitat value in cropland, not a lot, but some, when foxtail, other grasses and weeds came up in the rows. Now, with the Roundup ready seed we have, the rows are as smooth as a newborn babies butt.

The crops now days are pretty much weed free and once the crop comes out, very little is left standing, unless it's some which has been knocked down by the wind.

You have to love wildlife in order to leave farm ground in CRP and not take some of the cash rent offers that are out there.

A good friend of mine, knows what he can get for cash rent on the land he is in CRP, yet, because he enjoys wildlife and he and his boys hunt, he leaves it in.

Unfortunately, when you own the only habitat for miles, the land around his CRP during hunting season, especially during rifle deer sea-

son looks like it's been invaded by a hunter's orange army. With hunters, setting up in the neighboring properties on the fence line in the harvested crop ground, waiting for the deer to cross the fence from the good habitat onto a picked corn or bean field.

While there are a few individuals, who enjoy wildlife and hunting, creating some habitat, but it is not enough and wildlife will suffer because of it.

In the area where I reside, the Natural Resource Districts and the Nebraska Game & Parks have cost share programs helping to create nesting cover, tree plantings and food plots. They try hard, but are not able to compete with what is paid for crop rent, so the number of acres is minimal.

Pheasants Forever are a huge supporter of developing habitat with their experts testifying before the House Agriculture Committee to make sure that CRP and other conservation practices are included in the new budget. With so many of those in congress being from large municipal areas, they need to be educated on programs such as CRP as they are not just a wildlife program, the grasses planted in CRP also help to reduce soil erosion and improve water quality.

Local Pheasants Forever groups offer programs where landowners are paid a small fee per acre for land put into nesting cover and food plots. They furnish seed and provide a planter at a nominal fee. Without the help of this and other wildlife organi-

zations and conservation groups there would be little if any land not turned over.

Other conservation groups such as Ducks Unlimited and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation are also helping by purchasing land, developing it into much needed habitat.

With the tremendous decrease in habitat, we the outdoorsmen and women who so love the outdoors need to support the conservation groups working hard to establish and keep the habitat programs we have in place.

Without improvements in habitat, wildlife numbers will continue to decline, making it tougher for younger hunters to take part in the American tradition of hunting.

Gary Howey, Hartington, NE, is a former tournament angler, fishing and hunting guide. He is the Producer/Host of the award winning Outdoorsmen Adventures television series, seen on Fox affiliates throughout the upper Midwest. In the Yankton area, it is seen on local channels 2 & 98 Saturday at 6:30 pm and Sunday at 7:00 am. It is also available on KTTW/KTTM-TV (Fox) Sioux Falls/Huron, S.D. Saturdays at 7:00 am as well as on MIDCO Sports Net Thursday at 5:30 pm and Sunday at 10:00 am. He and Simon Fuller are the hosts of the Outdoor Adventures radio program Monday-Saturday at 6:45 am on Classic Hits 106.3 and ESPN Sports Radio 1570. If you are looking for more outdoor information, check out [www.outdoorsmenadventures.com](http://www.outdoorsmenadventures.com).

## Wrestling

From Page 7

Holzbauer (120), Blake Bietz (132), Mitch Heisinger (182/195) and Miles Semmler (182/195) each went 3-0 on the night.

Adrian beat Tri-Valley 72-6 and Canton 42-19. Canton beat Tri-Valley 60-16 in the other match.

**PARKSTON 52, ADRIAN 24:** 106 — Logan Mahoney P dec. Alex Larsenburg A 3-1, 113 — Skylar Hieronimus A pinned Rocky Berg P 0:08, 120 — Tyler Holzbauser P dec. Greg Kern A 2-0, 126 — Ryan Elias A dec. Dawson Semmler P 7-4, 132 — Blake Bietz P tech. fall Logan Nelson A 4:00 20-5, 138 — Michael Preuss A dec. Jake Weber P 3-2, 145 — Tony Lynn A dec. Austin Ripp P 6-2, 152 — Logan Rogers A pinned Cameron Fanning P 4:54, 160 — Weslee Dvorak P tech. fall Hunter Heikamp A 4:00 15-0, 170 — Matt Slater A dec. Dillon Stadlman P 2-1, 182 — Mitch Heisinger P dec. Jesse Slater A 3-0, 195 — Miles Semmler P maj. dec. Ben Taracena A 12-4, 220 — Andrew Semmler P dec. Dylan Gyberg A 4-0, 285 — Brady Rieff P pinned Tony Sieve A 0:30.

**CANTON 60, TRI-VALLEY 16:** 106 — Scott Peterson C dec. Caden Larsenburg A 3-1, 113 — Skylar Hieronimus C connor Farr 3-43, 120 — L.J. Bird C dec. Parker Ramstad 2:45, 132 — Logan Nelson A pin. Lane Hillman 0:55, 138 — Michael Preuss A by forfeit, 145 — Ryan Schuman TV dec. Tony Lynn 9-3, 152 — Derek Eldeen TV dec. Logan Rogers 7-2, 160 — Hunter Heikamp A pin. T. Hallam 1:35, 170 — Matt Slater A by forfeit, 182 — Jesse Slater A pin. Cody Johnson 1:10, 195 — Ben Taracena A pin. Willie Heiberger 2:26, 220 — Engle A pin. Brady Johnson 0:40, 285 — Tony Sieve A by forfeit

## Coyotes

From Page 7

"We'll have our hands full, but I know our guys are up to the challenge."

In what James called a "huge" front line, the Phoenix also have 6-foot-9 junior Greg Mays (10.8 rpg, 5.5 rpg) and 6-foot-7 sophomore Jordan Fouze (8.6 rpg).

"They're a veteran group, so a little opposite from us," James said. "We're younger, but trying to become more veteran with time. I think our guys will be ready for it."

Not to mention ready for a victory.

The Coyotes (3-6) have lost three straight games, including Tuesday's 64-62 defeat at Kansas State.

Bringing in the Phoenix

marks arguably the toughest non-conference challenge in the Dome since the 2009-10 season, when the Coyotes hosted Morehead State (with current NBA player Kenneth Faried) and Cornell (which would later advance to the Sweet Sixteen) in consecutive home games.

For the record, USD lost those two games by a combined eight points.

"When we played Cornell,

that went down to the wire, but this year's group is more athletic than that team," James said. "Since we've gone D-I, this would probably be the best non-conference game here."

You can follow Jeremy Hoeck on Twitter at [twitter.com/jhoeck](http://twitter.com/jhoeck). Discuss this story at [www.yankton.net](http://www.yankton.net).

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