

OUTDOORS DIGEST

Of The Outdoors | Gary Howey

Howard Conservation Officer Wins Wildlife Officer Of The Year Award

PIERRE – Evan Meyer, an eight-year veteran conservation officer with the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) was awarded the Shikar Safari Wildlife Conservation Officer of the Year Award at the November GFP Commission meeting in Mitchell.

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.

Meyer, who has been stationed in Howard since 2008, was nominated for the award by his GFP supervisors for his professionalism, excellence and high standards in both his personal and professional life.

Meyer has provided for the future of GFP by serving as a wildlife training officer. His influence on new conservation officers has proved invaluable.

"Evan is always eager and willing to put the needs of others over his own," said GFP district conservation officer supervisor, Jeremy Roe. "He consistently goes above and beyond his normal duties by serving as a hunting incident investigator, background investigator and firearms instructor."

In addition to his family and work duties, Meyer also serves on the Howard School Board, is involved in the high school wrestling program, assists the morning school acceleration program, serves as an animal control officer and deputy sheriff, and is the former president of the volunteer fire department.

Event Provides Birders

Access To Lake Minatare

The public will have a unique opportunity for viewing birds during an event at Lake Minatare State Recreation Area on Saturday, Dec. 12.

Birders of all ages and skill levels who want to participate in the one-day event may arrive at the lighthouse on Lakeview Point any time between 8-11 a.m. Binoculars, spotting scopes and blinds will be provided.

Employees of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will lead the program. Dan Thornton, lake superintendent, said many birds are expected to be visiting the area at the time, including a variety of migratory waterfowl species and possibly bald eagles.

The 2,158-acre reservoir, which is part of the North Platte National Wildlife Refuge, is closed annually between Oct. 15 and Jan. 14.

The event is open to the public free of charge, but vehicles entering the area must have a 2015 park permit. The permits are available for purchase online at OutdoorNebraska.org or from vendors throughout the state.

P.V.A Veterans Hunt: Those Who Asked Little And Gave A Lot

BY GARY HOWEY

Hartington, Neb.

As a Veteran, I feel privileged to spend time with other veterans and this season, I've had several opportunities to spend time in the field with many of them.

On this trip, Platte, S.D. is our destination, where we join the North Central Paralyzed Veterans of America on the Platte American Legion 2015 P.V.A. Hunt.

Platte, a small community with a big heart, as the community, Platte American Legion, Platte Pheasants Forever and the East River Sportsmen worked together to make this event a success.

I met several P.V.A. members when I checked in upon arriving at Dakota Country Inn and Suites, the headquarters for the hunt.

The event started with a meet and greet get together at the American Legion Hall along with an evening meal prepared by the ladies of the Platte American Legion Auxiliary.

Each morning, before heading out to hunt, the Platte Pheasants Forever and the East River Sportsman put together a great breakfast at the Platte Community Center.

The group, made up with P.V.A. members and volunteers, required us to divide into two groups and hunt with some of the local ranchers. After the meal, it was time to hit the field, one group going north while the other would head west.

I would be filming with the north group while Team Outdoorsmen Adventures member Scott Ulrich would be out with the west group.

Our group would hunt grassland, trees along with some cropland and were able to bag a few birds, as our birds were extremely wild, running ahead of the walkers, coming up out of range of the walkers between them and the blockers.

Scott's group, which had several,



Gary
HOWEY



OUTDOORSMEN PRODUCTIONS PHOTO

After a successful hunt during the Platte, American Legion 2015 P.V.A. Hunt members and volunteers proudly display some of their birds.

hunting dogs with them got into a large number of birds, allowing their group to bag close to their limits.

The following day after breakfast, our two groups combined, hunting together, where we would hunt unpicked corn, sorghum and some grassland. With the help of volunteers who walked the corn and the pointers and flushers the group would have an excellent hunt.

The P.V.A. members would be hunting out of pickup, wheel chairs and in a specially developed 4-wheeler attachment invented by Todd Wesseling of Platte. The attachment allowed a P.V.A. member to ride out in front of the 4-wheeler as Todd maneuvered it along the outside edge of field.

This attachment was mounted to the front of the 4-wheeler and guided by Todd driving the 4-wheeler and steering it electrically.

Early on, during this hunt, I would be filming with the walkers and later filming out of another 4-wheeler side-by-side, while Scott would try to catch the action at the end of the field.

The non-hunting volunteers and hunting dogs slowly pushed their way through the fields. As they moved through the field, the plan

was to push the birds in the direction of the blockers stationed along the edge at and along the end of the field, allowing those in wheel chairs on the ground and in pickup boxes to get an opportunity for a shot.

As we approached the end of the field, the hunters along the outside edge moved forward to set up with the blockers while the walkers paused, allowing the dogs to work the last 25 yards, forcing the birds in the air out in front of the P.V.A. members at the end.

The first bird erupted from the cover, then another and another, with birds exploding out in front and on either side, before long the sky filled with flushing pheasants as the hunters at the end of the field did their best to catch up with these highly flying birds.

On each push through each field, the P.V.A. members had the opportunity, to spend time with friends, to shoot some birds and be a part of this great outdoor tradition, pheasant hunting in South Dakota.

Events like this, give these veterans the opportunity to get out, join others and to enjoy the outdoors. Without the support of people like those in Platte as well as the North Central Paralyzed Veterans

if America, these veterans wouldn't have the opportunity to be part of these events.

Our thanks to the people of Platte, South Dakota, the Platte American Legion and Auxiliary, Platte Pheasants Forever and the East River Sportsman for allowing our crew to take part in this event.

Gary Howey, Hartington, Nebraska, is a former tournament angler, fishing and hunting guide. He is the Producer/Host of the award winning Outdoorsmen Adventures television series, seen locally in Channels 2 and 98 at Saturday at 6:30 pm and Sunday at 7:00 am and on the MIDCO Sports Network Thursday at 5:30 pm and Sunday at 10:00 am. The show airs in nine states in the upper Midwest. He and Simon Fuller Co-Host the Outdoor Adventures radio program on Classic Hits 106.3, ESPN Sports Radio 1570 in Southeastern South Dakota, Northeast Nebraska and on KCHE 92.1 FM in Northwest Iowa. Looking for more outdoor information, check out www.outdoorsmenadventures.com and like Gary Howey's Outdoorsmen Adventures on Facebook.

Braggin' Board

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The 'East River Bird Killers' got their limit of pheasant.



Abbie, a bird dog, is pictured with her limit.



Jason Bohlman shot these three pheasant.



Jason Bohlman, left, and Mike Hood shot these pheasant.

BY BRAD DOKKEN

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No one really knew what to expect when Malala, a female peregrine falcon chick hatched last spring atop the UND water tower, turned up in early August near the new University of North Dakota Medical School building unable to fly.

A trip to the Raptor Center in St. Paul, Minn., followed, but staff found no sign of injury or disease and dubbed her fit to fly after several days of observation. She was driven back to Grand Forks and released Aug. 12.

That would have been the last anyone knew of Malala's whereabouts if not for the numbered bands on one her legs.

Tim Driscoll, the Grand Forks raptor expert and licensed bander who banded Malala and her three siblings in June, got word last week that Malala had been captured alive and well by researchers studying the birds on Padre Island in south Texas as part of the Padre Island Peregrine Falcon Survey.

As the peregrine flies, that's about 1,500 miles.

Driscoll names the birds he bands for convenience, saying it's easier to remember a name than a band number. He dubbed Malala after Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani girl who won a Nobel Peace Prize after surviving an assassination attempt aboard a school bus for defying the Taliban's ban on girls attending school.

There's been a growing interest in Grand Forks' peregrines in recent years, in large part because of the efforts Driscoll and other local birders have made to publicize the banding events



GREGG DONEY/COURTESY PADRE ISLAND PEREGRINE FALCON SURVEY/TNS

Malala, a peregrine falcon chick hatched last spring atop the UND water tower, is alive and well on Padre Island in Texas, where researchers studying the birds captured her last week. The bands on one of Malala's legs identified her.

at the UND water tower. More than 70 people showed up in June to watch Driscoll and a couple of other volunteers band Malala, a second female dubbed Helen and two males he named Lewis and Nelson.

Helen was named after Helen Hamilton, the first woman to graduate from the UND School of Law; Lewis after Bob Lewis, a longtime UND English professor and Hemingway scholar who died in 2013; and Nelson after Nelson Mandela, the South African anti-apartheid activist and politician.

Malala is the only one of the four chicks known to be alive. Helen never fledged and likely died in the nest box, and Driscoll received word Nov. 5 that Nelson had been found dead on the roof of the UND steam plant. The band number confirmed the chick's identity, and Driscoll said he suspects the young male had been dead since late July, judging by the condition of its

body.

Why Nelson wasn't found or reported until early November is anyone's guess.

Lewis very well could be alive, but no confirmed sightings or band returns have been reported.

The peregrine chicks are offspring of Terminator, a 9-year-old female hatched in 2006, and Marv, a newcomer who showed up in the spring of 2014.

Terminator has nested in Grand Forks since 2008, the first year peregrines successfully mated locally.

The fascination with Grand Forks peregrines should come as no surprise. They fly fast, they're remarkable birds and

they're on the comeback after being on the brink of extinction in the early 1970s. Grand Forks and Fargo have the only two known nesting pairs of peregrine falcons in North Dakota, while Minnesota has more than 60 nests, according to the Midwest Peregrine Society. Those nests are mostly along the North Shore, the Twin Cities metro area and the Mississippi River bluffs in southeast Minnesota.

Even if you're not a bird-watcher, it's pretty cool to be reminded now and then of just how far migrating birds can travel. Good on Malala for picking a wintering spot in the sunny climes of south Texas.

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