

OUTDOORSUPDATE

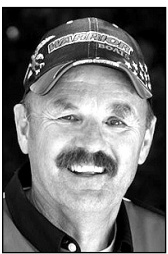
OF THE OUTDOORS:

Nebraska Man Bags Record Turkey

GARY HOWEY
Hartington, Neb.

When Duane Filsinger of Butte, Neb., and his son headed out on their spring turkey hunt last spring, the farthest thing from their mind was taking the highest scoring Merriam ever taken with a firearm that was recorded by the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf).

Well that's just what they did, putting Duane's name at the top of the NWTf list for Merriam turkeys.

Gary
Howey

Like most of the state, Northeast Nebraska has as excellent turkey population, with the majority of the birds found in the area being Merriam.

Merriam turkeys are similar in many ways to the other species of turkeys such as the Eastern, Rio Grande and Osceola, which, all can be found in the United States.

Adult Merriam males are easily distinguished from these species, but closely resemble the Gould turkey of Mexico except that they have a blacker appearance with the lower back and tail margins on the Merriam are usually white.

The Merriam's original territory was Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado, but through stocking programs the birds were stocked out of their original Rocky Mountain terrain.

Because of this successful stocking program, Merriam turkeys are now found in 15 western states.

Merriams are now found from North



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Duane Filsinger of Butte, Neb., took this Tom while hunting last spring in Holt County, Nebraska. It's the NWTf Highest Scoring Merriam Tom ever taken with a firearm.

Dakota south to Texas, (excluding Kansas) and west to Washington, Oregon, California as well as in four Canadian provinces.

If anyone is looking for Merriam turkeys, Nebraska and South Dakota are a

good bet as the top eight birds registered with the NWTf come from these two states.

This is not the first record Merriams ever taken in Holt County as Michael Kluever took the number three bird, which

scored 130,2500, in May of 2005.

In the spring of 2009, the Filsingers were hunting in late May in Holt County and had located a Tom and his hens that looked like might be callable.

As they glassed the bird through their binoculars, it didn't seem to appear much different than other birds they'd seen except that the bird seemed taller than usual.

They set up and tried calling the Tom; unfortunately, he was satisfied with the hens he had, refusing to wander too far from them.

At one point, the hens moved off and Duane and his son were able to get in between the bird and his harem.

They happened to be set up in the right place and were able to take the Tom as he made its way back towards the hens.

The Filsinger Merriam became the Best Overall bird ever taken with a total score of 144,2050 points, which broke the old 2002 record of 136,0000 set by a North Carolina hunter in Meade, South Dakota.

The bird wasn't all that big, weighing in at 22.08 pounds, but other factors entered into the equation put the bird well ahead of other birds.

It's six beards totaling 45" and it's spurs that measured 1.5625" and 1.5000 inches gave the bird more than enough points to put it on the top.

For more information on the Nation al Wild Turkey Federation you can go to www.nwtf.org

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is the producer/Host of the Award winning *Outdoorsmen Adventures television series that can be seen Saturday @ 6:30 am and Sunday @ 7:00 am on Fox KTTM/KTTW-TV Sioux Falls/Huron, SD.*

Fly-Rod Angler Is Gaining Weight For Stripped Fish

BY RAY SASSER

(c) 2010, The Dallas Morning News

DALLAS — Casey Ryan is a dedicated fly fisher from Dallas, who's caught numerous striped bass weighing 10 to 16 pounds in the last three years.

He started fishing for stripers in the Red River below Lake Texoma when big rains in the spring of 2007 loaded the river with fish.

"You could catch small stripers that spring on nearly every cast," recalled Ryan. "As the flood waters started to subside and cool, bigger fish started biting. I caught many double-digit stripers up to 14 pounds that fall and winter."

Ryan mostly fishes with 7- to 9-weight fly rods, but one of his goals was catching a 10-pound-plus striper on a much lighter 5-weight rod. A 5-weight rod is a popular choice when trout fishing for rainbows and browns that weigh less than five pounds.

"I started researching the best places to catch a 20-pounder on a fly, and I was looking into Arkansas, Tennessee and the northeast coast," Ryan said.

In December, Texoma-Red River fishing guide Scott Bridgess saved Ryan some travel expenses. Bridgess often fly fishes for stripers in the lake and the river.

On a December day in the Red River, fishing was painfully slow. In fact, the two anglers had not caught a fish by 10 a.m. Ryan fishes almost exclusively with Clouser Minnow streamers in various colors and sizes.

He had a smaller Clouser already rigged on his 5-weight rod, so he picked it up and started casting the small fly on the assumption that it might tempt a small fish, and catching any fish was better than catching none.

Ryan fishes with a sinking line to get the slow-sinking fly into the strike zone. Ryan made a cast and waited for the fly to sink deep enough before starting his retrieve. A fish bit, and he knew it was a good one, but he was unsure of how good, or if the fish was even a striped bass. Ryan has caught freshwater drum as big as 17 pounds on a fly.

"The fish ran into my backing pretty quickly," Ryan said. "I started getting line back, but the fish fought deep. The fight only lasted five or six minutes. When the fish first came to the surface, I thought it was eight or nine pounds. As it got closer, I thought it might weigh 13 or 14 pounds."

Only when the tired striper was in the boat did Ryan realize that his goal of catching a 20-pounder had been achieved. The fish weighed 21 pounds on a Boga Grip, a device that's accurate enough to be accepted by the International Game Fish Association (IGFA).

"Catching a 21-pound striper on a 5-weight rod is quite an accomplishment in my book," Bridgess said.

It's not such a big deal to the IGFA, which recognizes fly-rod catches according to tippet strength rather than the size of the rod. And the Red River is Oklahoma water, and that state has no fly-rod records.

Had Ryan caught his 21-pounder in Texas waters, it would have been the third-largest striped bass ever reported in Texas on a fly — but a still long way from a state record. That mark was set in 2006 by John Erskine. While fly fishing in the Guadalupe River, he caught a 36.65-pounder.

Bridgess has caught fly-rod stripers from Lake Texoma as big as 15 pounds, but the big ones have come from the Oklahoma side of the lake. The Texoma fly-rod record, as recognized by Texas Parks and Wildlife, weighed 5.03 pounds and was caught by Robert Maindelle in 2002.

"One of my clients caught an 11.25-pounder in Texas waters but did not apply for the record," Bridgess said. "I've caught many fish bigger than the current fly-rod lake record, but I don't want to enter a striper as a lake record unless it weighs 10 pounds or more."

TROPHY SPOTLIGHT



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Sebastian Falkenberg, 10, shot this deer on Jan. 31. It was his first deer.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Jacob Warriner, 11, shot this deer last month.

Lake Trout Lure Anglers To Wilderness Ice

BY SAM COOK

(c) 2010, Duluth News Tribune (Duluth, Minn.)

ON KNIFE LAKE NEAR ELY, Minn. — The raven called gloop, gloop. He came flying over the island on Knife Lake and looked down upon the three of us.

Nobody knows for sure what a particular raven call means, but this raven had to be optimistic. Already, a couple of lake trout were lying on the ice near our fishing holes. Each of them was in the 3-pound range, one by the hole of Al Schroeter, the other alongside Kelly Murphy's. Both anglers are from Ely, and they had driven two teams of Murphy's Alaskan huskies 12 miles on this January morning to get here.

They were fishing one of their favorite spots on Knife. The dogs were staked out on the ice along shore, resting in the balmy 30-degree air, sleeping until it was time for the late-afternoon run home.

We were giving the trout plenty of options, all of which involved dead ciscoes. Murphy, 54, jigged a Smoothie jigging spoon, silver and blue, and Schroeter, 48, was using a Trout Teaser Jr., an airplane jig that resembled a silver Stealth bomber. Schroeter tipped his with a small piece of cisco, and Murphy was using all but the head of a cisco on his Smoothie. Murphy had harvested a winter's supply of ciscoes from Basswood Lake last November.

Our second lines were all tip-ups, each dangling a whole cisco somewhere near the bottom in about 40 feet of water.

We were a day ahead of a forecast snow-storm, and the barometer was dropping.

"I think fish are like people," Murphy said as we jigged. "Before a storm, they all go to the grocery store and stock up. I'm hoping they come to my grocery store and eat my Basswood ciscoes."

In a few minutes, he was cackling a

fiendish cackle, and his stiff ice-fishing rod was wearing a nice bend. Schroeter and I went running to his hole, as ice anglers always do, just to watch Murphy's fish come up. This was another laker from the 3-pound mold.

Murphy leaned back and hauled it flipping and twisting into daylight it had never seen before. It was darker than Murphy's first lake trout, almost black between its creamy spots, and this one had a blush of orange on its fins. Handsome.

Another raven flew over, gargling a guttural bra-awk, bra-awk. None of us knew what that meant, either.

What we knew was that it was excellent to be the only ones in sight on Knife Lake, which stretches for seven miles along the Minnesota-Ontario border. No motors are permitted on the Minnesota side of the lake, which is in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. The north side is in Ontario's Quetico Provincial Park, also a non-motorized area.

You can find lake trout in some drive-to lakes in the Ely area, but the fishing is especially dependable on wilderness lakes, where fishing pressure is light. It's well worth the two-hour dogsled ride to Knife, where we hand-augered holes through 18 inches of ice and fished without shelters.

Lots Of History

Even when the lake trout are biting, the fishing is just one more pleasant aspect of being on Knife Lake. It is good to study the Norway pines on the island where the late Dorothy Molter once sold her root beer. It is good to think about what it must have been like to live here year-around, with prospector Benny Ambrose your nearest neighbor up on Ottertrack.

It is good to put your trust in Murphy's huskies Juanita and Boro and Bone and all the rest whose entire souls are bound up in

pulling sleds. It is good listening to the stories that Schroeter and Murphy tell about other days, other lake trout and other sled dogs.

One senses that Murphy and Schroeter live a very good life here, close to the land. They know how to read overflow on the ice and when to harvest ciscoes in the fall. They know that it's best to replace the treble hooks that come on trout lures with single hooks. They know silence.

A raven called gloop, gloop. The call sounded like the resonant dripping of water.

"One time, I had a raven follow me all the way across Ensign Lake," Murphy said. "Right at eye-level. He was flying into a strong wind."

Nobody knew what that meant, either. But it's been reported that ravens will follow a pack of wolves, knowing that if a kill is made, they will eat when the wolves are finished. It is not far-fetched to think that Knife Lake's ravens have come to associate dogsleds with lake trout carcasses.

Trout Keep Coming

We hauled up another lake trout from a wildly spinning tip-up line. Gleaming. Powerful. Lovely. Then Schroeter hooked one on his Trout Teaser, and Murphy simultaneously coaxed another from a tip-up line. That made six, a three-person limit, all of them on one side of 3 pounds or the other. Enough.

At 3 p.m., Murphy and Schroeter hitched dogs. The huskies raised a din along the shoreline, mad to run. The mushers pulled their snow hooks from the ice, freeing the teams. All barking ceased, replaced by soft panting.

"Haw, haw," Murphy growled.

Boro and Juanita understood the universal North American dogsled command. They veered left, hauling the other eight dogs with them. They intersected the well-packed trail on which we had come in.

OUTDOOR REPORT

Scheels Walleye University Visits

Sioux Falls March 6

SIOUX FALLS — On Saturday, March 6, professional angler Johnnie Candle will present an all new Walleye University in Sioux Falls.

The seminar will be held at the Westmall Theatres, located at 2101 West 41st Street in Sioux Falls. It begins at 8:30 a.m. and will run until 5 p.m. Every person in attendance will receive a package that includes a printed version of Walleye University and a \$10 gift card from Scheels.

Candle is coming off a great season that highlights a 15-year career as a professional fisherman. Last season, he placed fourth overall in the MWC Western Division and qualified for the World Walleye Championship, as well as the National Team Championship.

The 8-hour class will deal with fine points of jig fishing, live bait rigging, spinners and crank baits all before lunch. After a lunch break, marine electronics and targeting trophy walleye will be discussed. The day will end with talk of what's new and exciting in walleye catching tackle.

Walleye University was first introduced in Bismarck, N.D., during the spring of 2000. Since that first year, the seminar has been presented to hundreds of walleye anglers in eight different states. Stops in 2010 include Omaha, Neb.; St. Cloud, Minn.; Mankato, Minn.; Fargo, N.D.; Billings, Mont. and Rapid City.

Those interested are asked to pre-register as seating is limited. Register at Scheels Customer Service in Sioux Falls or by calling 605-334-7767.

GFP Works To Connect Children With Nature

PIERRE — Thanks to a new partnership involving the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department and child-care providers, there will be a lot more kids playing outside this year.

The department recently awarded nature backpacks, filled with items to encourage outdoor exploration, to 180 child-care providers across the state.

"The nature backpack program is a perfect opportunity to partner with child-care providers in getting kids outside more," said GFP Secretary Jeff Vonk.

The program is part of the Game, Fish and Parks' participation in the nationwide Children in Nature initiative. The initiative seeks to make nature a part of children's everyday lives, something Vonk says the department feels very strongly about.

The department hopes to continue the grant program with future installments for pre-school, after-school, libraries and other groups. More information on other opportunities provided by GFP can be found at GFP's Children in Nature webpage.

Cottontail Season Continues Through February

LINCOLN, Neb. — Mentors still have an opportunity this month to help novices gain some hunting experience by going on a rabbit hunt. The cottontail season runs through Feb. 28, according to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

Nebraska has plenty of rabbits, and their meat makes good table fare. Plus, the cover of snow may be used as an advantage to the hunter.

Tracking rabbits in the snow is a good way to learn how many cottontails use an area and what types of cover they prefer.

Overgrown weedy fence lines are good places to find rabbits, especially those located next to fields of corn stubble. When passing a brush pile, kick at it and wait for a rabbit to come running out from beneath it. Walk in a slow, erratic pattern through a weed patch or grass waterway between harvested crop fields, stopping after a few steps and waiting for a rabbit to appear.

The daily bag limit is seven cottontails, and the possession limit is 28. Shooting hours are 30 minutes before sunrise to sunset.

The reward for the hunt is a tasty meal. The NEBRASKAland Magazine Wild Game Cookbook, available at the Commission for \$2, includes a number of rabbit recipes. Call toll-free at (800) 742-0056 or order at NebraskalandGifts.com.

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