

## Briefs: Officials Investigating Wolf Killing In Western SD

CUSTER (AP) — Federal wildlife officials are investigating the killing of a wolf near Custer, in western South Dakota's Black Hills.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service special agent Brad Merrill tells the Rapid City Journal that samples have been sent to a laboratory in Washington state to determine if the animal is "pure wolf."

The gray wolf is on the state list of rare, threatened or endangered species, and sightings are rare. John Kanta with the state Game, Fish and Parks Department says the last confirmed wolf in western South Dakota was hit by a vehicle in March 2006.

Officials have not released details of the recent wolf killing.

## S.D. Diversity Small Grant Proposals Being Accepted

PIERRE — The South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks Wildlife Diversity Program is accepting proposals for its Small Grants Program.

The program provides funding to researchers, educators and naturalists for native wildlife projects. Funding for the 2012 Small Grants Program totals \$35,000 for projects that focus on research related to native wildlife species and their habitats.

Wildlife Diversity Small Grants have funded education, research, and monitoring projects since 1997. A wide range of projects have been completed, ranging from the creation of a field guide on the Tiger Beetles of South Dakota to evaluating the nesting ecology of raptors in the Black Hills.

GFP recognizes that there is a tremendous pool of talent and expertise outside of the department that can be very beneficial to the mission of the Wildlife Division. By making small grants available, the Wildlife Diversity Program is able to use those talents and expertise. The diverse projects completed in the last 15 years have resulted in numerous publications in scientific journals, popular educational products and a tremendous amount of new information on native wildlife species and their habitats.

Grant proposals are due by Feb. 15, 2012. For more information, contact the Wildlife Diversity Program at 605-773-4345 or via email. Additional information and grant application forms can be found at [www.gfp.sd.gov](http://www.gfp.sd.gov).

## Neb. G&P Releases

### Trapped Mountain Lion

LINCOLN, Neb. — A mountain lion unintentionally caught in a foothold trap in Dawes County was tranquilized and released by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission on Jan. 27.

The mountain lion, a female kitten weighing approximately 50 pounds, appeared to be in good health. After the release, the kitten followed tracks of an adult mountain lion and another kitten that biologists believe were the mother and a sibling.

The trap had been legally set and the trapper called Game and Parks immediately upon discovering the mountain lion, as required by Game and Parks policy. High pelt prices for bobcats and an increased effort to trap them may have contributed to the recent incidental captures of mountain lions in Dawes County, according to Sam Wilson, Game and Parks' carnivore program manager.

"The trapper did the right thing by calling," Wilson said. "In situations like this, where a mountain lion has not entered a town or come into conflict with people, we may attempt to release it if it can be done safely and the mountain lion is not injured."

Game and Parks requests fur harvesters immediately contact the agency if a mountain lion incidentally is trapped. Anyone with trail-camera photographs or other evidence of mountain lions should contact the agency at 402-471-0641.

## Custer State Park To Host Snowshoe Hike

CUSTER STATE PARK — On Feb. 11, visitors to Custer State Park will have the opportunity to experience the winter sights and sounds of the popular park, by way of a pair of snowshoes.

The Lover's Leap Snowshoe Hike will guide participants through a dense pine forest, meandering near Grace Coolidge Creek. The three-mile hike is geared toward beginners, allowing participants the opportunity to try the recreational event and explore some of the park's most beautiful winter scenery.

Two hikes will depart that day, leaving at 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. from the Peter Norbeck Visitor Center. Snowshoes are provided, but reservations are required to borrow snowshoes by calling 605-255-4464.

There is no cost for the hikes; however, a park entrance license is required. If the amount of snow does not allow for snowshoeing, a guided hike will be held.

Participants should dress appropriately for the weather, as temperatures in the Black Hills can be unpredictable. Any footwear can be used with snowshoes; however, waterproof hiking boots are recommended.

Custer will host another snowshoe hike on March 3, at 1 p.m. in the Sylvan Lake Area. Reservations for that hike can be made by calling 605-255-4464.

## ND Midwinter Survey

### Shows Record Waterfowl

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A mild, dry fall and an unseasonably warm winter have resulted in a record number of ducks and geese wintering in North Dakota.

The state Game and Fish Department estimated 279,000 birds during its annual midwinter waterfowl survey conducted in January. The previous record was 237,000 birds in 2008, said Mike Szymanski, a migratory game bird biologist with the agency. This year's count includes a record 190,000 geese and a record 88,000 mallard ducks.

"This year's survey was highly abnormal, and numbers of waterfowl within the state were probably underestimated because of the open water and lack of snow statewide," Szymanski said. "The lack of snow cover was especially important in keeping these birds around."

The latest crop, livestock and weather report from the Agriculture Department shows that there was less than 2 inches of snow on the ground on average in North Dakota at the end of January, compared with more than 2 feet last year at the same time. Average temperatures around the state were as much as 15 degrees above normal, and numerous high-temperature records fell during the month.

OF THE OUTDOORS | GARY HOWEY

# How To Get Started Ice Fishing

BY GARY HOWEY

Hartington, Neb.

Learning how to ice fish can seem like a major undertaking for someone who's never tried it before, as the equipment is a lot smaller and more compact.

If there's less than two inches or less on the ground, don't even think about heading out. If there's four inches it can support a group of people walking in a single file while five and a half to six inches are the minimum needed before I'd attempt to go on the ice with a snowmobile or ATV. If you don't have at least eight to twelve inches leave your car on the shore and walk out. Safe ice in order to drive a pickup or truck on should be a minimum of twelve inches with fifteen inches being even better.

Gear that you'd use for ice fishing isn't much different from the equipment you'd use during the regular fishing season, just smaller.

The first thing you're going to need is something to cut a hole through the ice.

When I first started ice fishing, we made due with a steel bar or spud bar with a sharpened chisel. The down side to a spud bar is that they're a man killer and by the time you've hacked your way through much ice, you're so heated up and worn out, you don't have the strength to go fishing.

Hand augers work well and will do a great job as long as they're sharp. There are a couple of styles of hand augers, the spoon and the standard hand auger.

If you're using as spoon, it will take you longer to bore through the ice because

they don't clean the shaved ice out of the hole, so you'll need to stop auguring from time to time to remove the chips from the hole. Where the spoon excels is in opening up old holes that someone else had previously dug. Spoons will open up an old hole a lot easier than other hand augers.

A sharp hand auger will cut through ice quickly as long as you don't have to cut through ice overly thick! You'll need to be in fairly good shape if you're going to punch many holes through thicker ice. It takes downward pressure in order to get the auger to work its way through the ice and with all the heavy clothing you'll be wearing it doesn't take long to wear yourself out when using any style of hand auger.

If you plan on digging a lot of holes, the power auger is the way to go. They generally run about \$300-\$500, but are well worth it if you plan on spending much time on the ice.

Feldmann Engineering, the manufacturers of the Jiffy Ice auger were the first to manufacture a power ice auger. I've used them for years as they start easily and cut fast allowing me to cut as many holes as I want or need without becoming exhausted.

You'll also need some type of scoop to get the slush out of your hole. The most popular are the plastic or metal scoops. I prefer the metal ones because the slush you pull from the hole has a tendency to freeze in the scoop and with a metal scoop I can hit against my boots or the ice to remove the ice. With the plastic scoops you can clear them only once as cold plastic shatters easily.

Locating the fish is made much easier with the use of some type of locator. The locator you used during the summer on your boat will work if you make it portable and get a gel cell battery to power it.

I use the Vexilar flashers FL-18 and FL-20 when I'm on the ice. They're a great unit, allowing me to see my bait, the fish



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Lakes in Northeastern South Dakota are producing good size perch and walleyes. Cory Ewing of Waubay Lakes Guide Service is pictured with one of the big perch taken on a recent trip to Bitter Lake.

and the bottom. As I mentioned in earlier columns, their new Double Vision is an all in one unit with a locator over the top of the monitor for the underwater camera. It's a great unit with great clarity allowing me see everything that's down there.

Getting your gear out onto the ice can be a chore if you have to walk in.

There are numerous sleds available that will not only get your gear out onto the ice; they also allow an angler to fish in comfort. Clam, Frabill and Otter all make excellent ice fishing sleds and shelters that are made to carry your gear out onto the ice and once you're at the spot you plan to fish, they convert to a comfortable

## TROPHY SPOTLIGHT



LEFT: Dave Fender caught these two Walleye, weighing six and nine pounds, on Jan. 22 at the Gavins Point Dam tailwaters. (Captain Norm's)

ABOVE: Garek Novak caught this 3-pound walleye at the Gavins Point Dam tailwaters. (Captain Norm's)

## Bucks

From Page 7

In the loss, Yankton out-rebounded the Lynx 25-19 and was nearly perfect (11-of-12) at the charity stripe. Seitzinger led Yankton with 15 points and five assists, while Youngberg added 10 points.

Despite not reaching the 60-point mark again this season, the Bucks had at least two players in double figures for the second

consecutive game — after not reaching that feat before last Friday.

As tough as the loss is to take, Yankton can't let it linger for long. A road game with Mitchell looms next Tuesday.

"We can't feel too bad, because we've got Mitchell waiting for us," Gross said. "It'll be a battle there, no doubt."

Make no mistake, the Bucks are ready, Fitzsimmons said.

"It's nice to move on, especially against one of the best teams in the state," he said. "Knocking them off; that'd be a fun thing to do."



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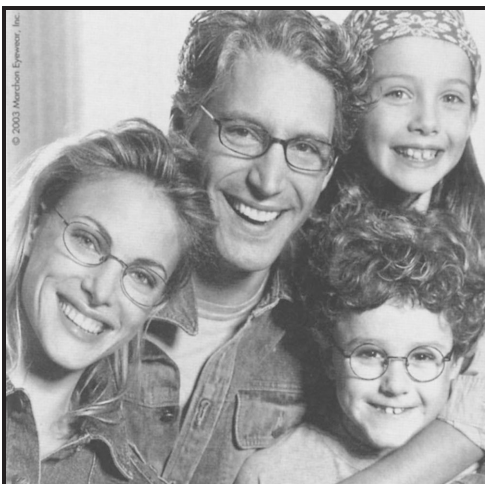
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