

OUTDOORSUPDATE

OF THE OUTDOORS:

Habitat Key To Healthy Population

BY GARY HOWEY
Hartington, Neb.

As anyone who spends much time in the outdoors and enjoys wildlife can tell you, habitat is the key to having healthy populations.

When I talk about habitat, it isn't something complicated and doesn't need to be huge tracts.

Upland birds, deer, turkey and even songbirds all need some sort of cover (habitat): a place to roost, raise their young, to feed and loaf.

These places can be grassland such as CRP, pastures, ungrazed wooded draws or shelterbelts all of which serve a purpose, helping wildlife to grow and survive.

Unfortunately, with the corn, bean and land rent high, habitat for upland birds, turkey, deer and other wildlife has taken the back seat and has disappeared at an alarming rate.

CRO Fields, abandoned farmsteads, shelterbelts and sloughs, all of which once provided some cover are no longer there as they've been planted, removed or drained.

In some areas, the closest thing to habitat or nesting areas would be alfalfa which makes great nesting areas for pheasant and turkey as well as place for does to hide their young fawns.

Unfortunately, most of these critters haven't moved out of the field before the first cutting when a lot of hens, chicks and fawns come in contact with the cutter.

We're lucky there are individuals and wildlife organizations doing their best to develop habitat by putting in nesting cover and food plots, giving wildlife a place to retreat when other areas are no longer available.

Pheasants Forever, Quail Unlimited and other conservation groups have programs where they provide seed, rental of planting equipment and some funding, helping cooperators to plant grasses, legumes and food plots.

Many state run agencies also have pro-



TEAM OUTDOORSMEN ADVENTURES PHOTO
Team Outdoorsmen Adventures member Doug Haas of Mitchell is pictured with the birds he took from a corner pivot planting while hunting in central South Dakota.

grams helping to establish and retain habitat as well as helping with tree plantings and shelterbelt renovation.

It doesn't take a lot to create an area (habitat) for wildlife as even the smallest project can help.

Last week, Team member Bill Christensen and I put in two food plots, adjacent to existing shelterbelts and nesting cover.

The location that food plots/nesting cover are established is a very important part of the entire equation, as it should be adjacent winter cover, allowing wildlife access to these areas without having to travel far to reach them.

The closer your planting is to cover, shelterbelts or wooded draws, the better!

In order to make sure that we got the most out of our food plot, we wanted to work with an experienced company that had worked with wildlife land development and management.

That's where Midwest Food Plots, a Des Moines, Iowa, company (www.midwestfoodplots.com) came in.

They would help us develop a plan, making sure that everything would be done correctly, ensuring the food plots would be productive.

Our first step was to take several soil samples at each site and have them analyzed by our local Central Valley Ag, www.cvcoop.com as this let us know exactly what the plots needed as far as fertilization.

We'd disked both plots several times, loosening up the soil while leaving enough crop residue on the surface to protect the field from soil erosion.

After several conversations with the folks at Midwest Food Plots, we decided that it would be a good idea to plant a variety mixture, giving a variety of wildlife species food that would be available throughout the year.

When Midwest Food Plots pulled in, they'd brought along a PLOTMASTER planter that could be used behind a four-wheeler.

This compact unit planted the seed, rolled and packed the ground in one pass, making the planting quick and easy.

On Plot # 1, which also included a winter wheat planting, we planted Punishing Perennials, a combination of Chicory and Small Burnett.

This fall we'll follow up that planting with Power Hour Sunflower, a blend of Turnips, Radishes and Sunflower.

On Plot # 2, which is bordered on both sides by corn fields, we used a John Deere planter to put in forage soybeans in the center of the plot, which will be knocked down in August when we'll broadcast Killer Canola Blend, the same mixture we'd planted in Plot # 1.

Around the edge of the soybeans, we put in more of the Punishing Perennials and Serious Sainfoin, a blend of Red Clover, Ladino Clover and Sainfoin.

With the blends and the time they'll be planted, wildlife in the area should have a good food source available throughout the entire year.

We then fertilized both plots and then had a nice rain fall in the area a couple of days later, which should be everything needed to get them off to a good start.

In order to track the progress on each plot at each site, we'll install benchmarks allowing us to set up our cameras and film from the same location on each visit.

We also put in a RAKS mineral station for the deer, which helps the bucks and does get the minerals they need to not only develop better racks, but also help the does raise healthier yearlings.

Game cameras on each site were the finishing touches as these would give us a 24-hour way of tracking what wildlife are using the site.

With timely rains and baring any natural disasters, we should have two excellent wildlife areas, which will help numerous wildlife species to make it through the year.

Wildlife plantings needn't be huge as the corner of pivots, along field borders and other areas that aren't planted can become excellent habitat.

Wildlife needs all the help they can get to survive, especially following a winter like last year and the acre or two we put in just might be enough to help produce another hatch of pheasants or help a deer make it through the year.

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is the producer/host of the award-winning "Outdoorsmen Adventures" television series that airs throughout the Midwest and can be seen on-line at www.MyOutdoorTV.com.

If you'd like more information on what's going on in the outdoors, go to www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.

OUTDOOR REPORT

Black Hills Deer Season Finalized

CHAMBERLAIN — The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission voted to reduce the number of deer tags available to Black Hills deer hunters for the upcoming 2010 season.

Deer herd population data indicates the Black Hills deer population continues to decline and significant reduction in the antlerless harvest is needed to increase the deer population to acceptable levels for both hunters and landowners.

The 2010 Black Hills Deer Season will see 100 fewer resident and 8 fewer non-resident "Any Deer" licenses, 500 fewer resident and 40 fewer non-resident "Any Whitetail" licenses, 300 fewer resident and 24 fewer non-resident "Antlerless" deer licenses and 1,400 fewer resident and 112 fewer non-resident "Antlerless" Whitetail licenses compared to last year.

Trapping Regulations Changed

CHAMBERLAIN — Trappers will no longer be able to claim or mark a potential public land trap site before the mink trapping season opens due to a vote by the South Dakota Game Fish and Parks Commission.

The prohibition states that no person may place any trap (set or unset), stake, cable, chain, wire or other device used for the purpose of attaching a trap or otherwise attempt to claim or mark a trap site on any public road right of way or public lands or waters open to trapping within 30 feet of water from October 1 to the day before the opening of the mink season.

The Commission also voted to extend the March 1 deadline for trapping on or in muskrat houses to March 15.

Antelope Season Proposed

CHAMBERLAIN — The South Dakota Game Fish and Parks Commission proposed to issue the same number of licenses for the upcoming 2010 Antelope Season as were sold in 2009, but the number of tags issued will be approximately 8,000 less than last year.

The Commission proposal will eliminate the three tag antelope license option that has been able the past two years. A total of 12,413 licenses will be available, with a vast majority of these licenses being two-tag licenses.

Residents who want to provide written comments on the Antelope Season proposal may do so until 5 p.m. Wednesday, June 7. Comments may be mailed to Game, Fish and Parks Commission, 523 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD, 57501, or e-mailed to wildinfo@state.sd.us.

All comments must have the sender's full names and addresses in order to be included in the public record.

Comments may also be presented in person during the GFP Commission public hearing, which is scheduled for 2 p.m. CDT on Thursday, July 8th at the Ramkota Hotel in Pierre.

East River, National Wildlife Refuge Deer Seasons Proposed

CHAMBERLAIN — The South Dakota Game Fish and Parks Commission proposed to double the number of three-tag deer licenses available for the upcoming 2010 East River Deer Season compared to 2009.

The Commission proposed to offer 520 fewer one-tag and 3,875 fewer two-tag licenses, but to offer 2,550 more three tag licenses.

The Commission also proposed to offer landowners the opportunity to obtain two free antlerless licenses in any unit that has leftovers after the second drawing. The 2010 Legislature passed a law that requires GFP offer the free landowner tags.

The Commission also proposed a change that would allow licensed deer hunters for the Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge to hunt antlerless deer from Jan. 1-9, 2011.

Residents who want to provide written comments on the East River Deer and National Wildlife Refuge Deer Season proposals may do so until 5 p.m. Wednesday, June 7. Comments may be mailed to Game, Fish and Parks Commission, 523 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD, 57501, or e-mailed to wildinfo@state.sd.us.

Comments may also be presented in person during the GFP Commission public hearing, which is scheduled for 2 p.m. CDT on Thursday, July 8th at the Ramkota Hotel in Pierre.

GFP Updates Resident Canada Goose Management Plan

PIERRE — The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department has updated the state's Resident Canada Goose Management Plan and it is available for viewing on the GFP website.

The plan may be viewed at: <http://gfp.sd.gov/news/todaynews/SDResidentGoosePlan.pdf>

The update was compiled by the GFP Division of Wildlife after gathering input from the Canada Goose Management and Depredation Working Group and the public. This will serve to guide resident Canada goose management for the next five-year period.

"Key objectives of the plan are to reach and maintain a spring population index of 80-90,000 birds as a three-year average, provide maximum hunting opportunity, and reduce crop damage caused by resident Canada geese. The most recent three-year spring population index is 137,000 Canada geese," GFP waterfowl biologist Spencer Vaa said.

Tools that will be used to meet these objectives include increasing the daily bag during the early fall Canada goose hunting season from 5 to 8; working with other states and the U.S.

Fish & Wildlife Service in the Central Flyway to increase the bag during the regular Canada goose hunting season; and implementing an August managed take of resident Canada geese.

The primary techniques in GFP's operational Canada Goose Damage Management program include using electric fences, food plots, vegetation buffer strips, hazing, and opening up shorelines for loafing and feeding sites on state Game Production Areas and federal Waterfowl Production Areas.

Other information included in the Plan are data on resident Canada goose research conducted by the Department in cooperation with SDSU, band return data, and a map showing restoration releases by county from 1967-1998.

"The restoration of the giant Canada goose in South Dakota is a remarkable story and one that offers significant challenges but also opportunities. The updated Plan will help guide management of a wildlife resource that provides recreational hunting and viewing opportunities but also relief for producers," Vaa said.

Kan. Anglers Zero In On Catfish

BY MICHAEL PEARCE
(c) 2010, The Wichita Eagle

TUTTLE CREEK LAKE, Kan. — Every summer, thousands of kids cast bobbers and bait near rocks for tiny panfish.

But Jeff Hawkins, 39, is far from a kid, and the fish that towed his bobber from under near a rocky shoreline last week wasn't a panfish — or tiny.

It took Hawkins several minutes of give-and-take fighting before he had the channel catfish close enough to be netted by his father, Jon.

"Now that's the kind of fish we're looking for," Jon Hawkins said as he unhooked the six-pounder that wore the dark color and oversized head of a male fish.

He was right up there in the rocks where you'd expect them to be.

For about the last decade, the Hawkins have come to expect to find spawning channel catfish in shallow water along Tuttle Creek's rocky shorelines in early June.

The fish are often males protecting nests.

"When they're really going, it's pretty exciting," Jeff Hawkins said. "You toss the bobber in there, you kind of see a flash and it's gone. Sometimes it seems like the splash (of the bobber) attracts them. That's when it's really fun."

His father and another friend had such a fun day last weekend when they each caught their limit of 10 channel catfish.

Their combined catch totaled an estimated 120 pounds. A bait not often associated with catfishing is their favorite.

"A lot of guys use nightcrawlers and some use minnows but they also catch a lot of other little fish, like crappie and white bass," Jon Hawkins said. "It seems when I use leeches about all we get are channel cats."

Last week he stuck with leeches while a fishing partner used big minnows.

"I think I had nine fish and he didn't have any by the time I talked him into switching to leeches," he said.

Shrimp are also a popular bait for spawning channel catfish. Like most fish, channel cat can



MICHAEL PEARCE/WICHITA EAGLE/MCT
Jeff Hawkins poses for a recent portrait with a six-pound male channel catfish caught in shallow water near rocks at Tuttle Creek Lake, Kan.

be finicky when it comes to proper spawning conditions.

Weather systems and falling water levels can push them from the shallows.

Jon Hawkins prefers warm and calm conditions. Late afternoon and evenings during steady weather are usually best.

The Hawkins have key elements that often give them added hope when searching for promising fishing areas.

They like shorelines with lots of big boulders in the shallows.

"I think it's the big cracks and crevices where they actually do their spawning," John Hawkins said.

Gar rolling nearby also give added promise.

Jeff Hawkins said gar seem to

appreciate the same spawning conditions as channel catfish. Catfish also like to feast on eggs laid by gar.

Since last weekend's great success, a combination of changing weather patterns and falling water levels had greatly hampered spawning activity on Tuttle Creek.

Eventually the Hawkins found a section of shoreline with rocks the size of washing machines and gar rolling nearby.

It was there they placed seven nice-sized channel cats in the livewell in a few hours of fishing.

Better times could be coming.

"Things ought to break loose this weekend. It's supposed to get pretty hot," Jeff Hawkins said. "That ought to get the fish going in the shallows."

TROPHY SPOTLIGHT



SUBMITTED PHOTO
Ken Schaefer of Yankton caught this 46-inch Musky on Lake Plantagenet in northern Minnesota on June 11. The fish was caught on an eight-pound line on a gold spoon.

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