

OF THE OUTDOORS | GARY HOWEY

# Pheasant Habitat: Here Today And Gone Tomorrow

BY GARY HOWEY  
Outdoorsmen Productions LLC

When I was a youngster growing up in Watertown during the Soil Bank Program days, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, we could go out at noon and easily have our pheasant limit and be back in a half hour to watch the Minnesota Vikings' football game.

The Soil Bank Program (Soil Bank Act) was designed to divert land regularly used for crop production to conservation uses, which was a huge boost to wildlife as it created habitat and as anyone whose spent much time in the outdoors, habitat is the key to good wildlife populations.

Like anything else things change, which included the government programs when planting crops become the top priority and the Soil Bank program went by the wayside.

For many years, habitat in some areas was pretty slim as was the pheasant population. When the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) came into being with the 1985 Farm Bill, habitat improved, as did the wildlife populations.

This last year, I hunted several states and in many areas had to look hard for what I could honestly call good habitat.

There were spots and I do



Gary HOWEY



OUTDOORSMEN PRODUCTIONS PHOTO  
Gary Kubicek, Sioux City, Iowa, and Simon Fuller, Yankton, found excellent pheasant hunting last fall near Gregory, in areas where good habitat exists.

mean spots where you'd find some habitat, with the CRP and the sloughs being the best habitat around. Unfortunately because of the dry fall this year many of those sloughs will be plowed, disked, planted, tiled and drained. In many of these areas the CRP fields are due to come out of the program in 2012.

Last year, in the Northern Plains states there were 800,000 acres pulled out of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) with an additional 6.5 million acres scheduled to be pulled nationwide this year.

CRP is not just there for wildlife, it serves numerous purposes including helping to restore

wetlands, improve water quality and helping to prevent soil erosion.

In the 25 years that CRP has been in existence, more than 2 million acres of wetlands have been restored, while 2 million acres of riparian, which are buffers between land and water that act as a filter, preventing millions of pounds of nitrogen and phosphorous from flowing into our nations streams, rivers and lakes.

Just how much land may be coming out of CRP in 2012, well let's break it down so we can understand it more clearly.

There are 640 acres in a square mile, so if we divide the acres by

640, we should come up with the square miles of land that could possibly and may very well be taken out of the program and converted to cropland.

In Iowa there will be 232,000 acres (362.5 square miles) coming out of CRP while in Minnesota we'll see 292,000 acres (456.25 square miles). In South Dakota 227,000 acres (354.69 square miles) with 840,000 acres (1,312.5 square miles) of habitat being plowed and planted in North Dakota In Nebraska where I live, another 202,000 acres (315.63 square miles) will go under the plow as well as 520,000 acres (812.5 square miles) in Kansas plus a whopping 697,000 acres (1089.06 square miles) in Montana.

The total acres in the northern plains states that will be coming out of CRP is just over 3 million acres or 4,687.5 square miles which would be about the size of the state of Connecticut.

We're talking "Big" numbers here as nationwide there will be 10,156 square miles of acres of CRP coming out, more acres than in the states of Vermont (9,615 Sq. Miles), New Hampshire (9,283 Sq. Miles), Massachusetts (8,262 Sq. Miles), New Jersey (7,790 Sq. Miles), Hawaii (6,459 Sq. Miles), Connecticut (5,006 Sq. Miles), Delaware (2,026 Sq. Miles) and Rhode Island (1,213 Sq. Miles).

The reason for all these acres coming out of CRP is simple "Dollars" because corn and bean prices are up. As of this writing, corn is bringing approximately \$6.04 a bushel, while beans were at \$12.05 per bushel.

Locally, cash rent on dry-land runs from \$250.00 to \$350.00 per acre while irrigated ground is

bringing \$375.00 to \$525.00 an acre.

The payments offered in the latest CPR sign in Cedar county where I live, which opens up March 12th one month, the price paid runs from \$113.00 to \$180.00 per acre which is based on the soil rental rates.

The loss of thousands of acres of CRP habitat along with the severe winters and wet springs we've had, has been tough on the pheasant population. Fortunately the mild winter we're having this year and if we have a decent spring, the pheasants may have a decent hatch and in areas where there's decent habitat, the population should rebound.

With the loss of all this habitat some folks think pheasant hunting may be a thing of the past and in some areas it may be a tough go, but we need to remember that in several states there are still areas with good numbers of birds and even though their numbers may be down, there will still be good hunting in certain areas, those areas with habitat.

Wit the loss of millions of acres of CRP, pheasant hunting that was here yesterday may be gone tomorrow, as without habitat wildlife just can't survive.

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is the President of Outdoorsmen Productions LLC, the Producer/Host of the Outdoorsmen Adventures television series and the Co-Host of Outdoor Adventures radio. More information on the Midwest outdoors can be found on his web site [www.outdoorsmenadventures.com](http://www.outdoorsmenadventures.com) or on facebook at [www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=1191335080](http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=1191335080)

## South Dakota GFP Offers Apple App For Hunters, Anglers

PIERRE — The South Dakota Department of Game Fish and Parks has just released a smart-phone application that will make life easier for hunters and anglers.

The GFP application, or app, is a free download at the App Store for users of the Apple iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch. It allows sportsmen to purchase and apply for licenses via their phones, provides GPS-enabled maps of public hunting areas and fishing access, and provides access to the current South Dakota Fishing and Hunting Handbooks.

The iPhone app, which joins a similar GFP app for Android phones, also has links to the GFP website, Facebook page and YouTube channel.

"Technological tools like these apps allow South Dakota hunters and anglers to have a lot of useful information at their fingertips," said GFP Secretary Jeff Vonk. "Three years ago, we decided we wanted to be at the forefront of this technology, and I am proud to say we are one of the first states to provide these tools to sportsmen and women."

The new apps also have room to grow.

"We have plans to add some fun, educational aspects to the app, and it also will offer different links during different times of the year," said app creator Chris Marsh, GFP geographic information system specialist. "Currently, users can access the mountain lion hunting season totals, but as soon as snow geese show up in the state, they'll be able to follow that migration as well."

"The recent development of these mobile apps represent a significant efficiency improvement in state government operations," said Dom Bianco, commissioner of the state Bureau of Information and Telecommunications. "Game, Fish and Parks continues to be a leader in supporting Gov. Dugaard's e-Government initiative. We applaud GFP's efforts to increasingly shift government services online and in a mobile-friendly format by creating tools that its customers can access away from home and in the field."

South Dakota sportsmen have responded well to the new mobile tools, Vonk added.

"We have more than 8,000 people using our GPS downloadable maps. In three months, more than 6,000 people have downloaded our Android app, and over 50,000 people have viewed our waterfowl migration/hunting opportunity maps," Vonk said. "I believe that makes for more informed and more active hunters, and that is our ultimate goal."

**Volunteers Sought For SE Neb. Deer Hunt**

BEATRICE, Neb. (AP) — Volunteers are being sought to help with a deer count at Homestead National Monument near Beatrice in south-east Nebraska.

The count is scheduled for March 10.

Organizers say no experience is needed and that volunteers should just show up at the Education Center for a 9:30 a.m. orientation.

The walkers will hike about three-quarters of a mile through the prairie. Other people will be stationed on a road west of the monument to count deer as they leave the area.

Volunteers are being advised to wear long pants, long sleeves and good walking shoes.

The count will take a couple of hours.

Homestead National Monument of America sits about four miles west of Beatrice.

# South Dakota State Men Look To Make Their Next Step A NCAA Berth

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK  
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SIoux FALLS — After stumbling to a 6-24 record in 2006-07, the South Dakota State men's basketball team has made a steady climb up the ranks of NCAA Division I. With a 24-7 record this season, the Jackrabbits feel they are ready for the next step.

The one known as the 'Big Dance.'

SDSU, which posted a 15-3 Summit League record to finish second in the regular season standings, will be attempting to secure the school's first-ever Division I men's basketball tournament berth when it begins play in the Summit League Championships today (Saturday) at Sioux Falls Arena.

Since that 6-24 mark, the Jackrabbits' victory total has

climbed from eight to 13, then 14 and 19 before this season's 24-victory campaign.

"We have more experience," noted South Dakota State head coach Scott Nagy. "We have more depth, more talent than we've had in the past, which is a credit to recruiting and hard work."

The Jackrabbits were unbeatable at home this season (14-0) and posted a 6-3 road mark in Summit League play. Three of their four non-conference road losses came against major conference teams (Minnesota, Georgia, Nebraska), and the Jacks also earned a 19-point win at PAC-12's Washington.

"Probably our biggest key was being better on the road," Nagy said of the team's record and league finish.

One of the biggest reasons for the Jackrabbits' success has been

Nate Wolters. The junior guard averaged 21.2 points, 6.1 assists, 5.0 rebounds and 1.6 steals per game, the only player in Division I this season in the 20/6/5 category. He is a skilled penetrator, as evidenced by the 214 free throws he has shot this season, and can hit from outside as well.

"Nate loves the game. He is in the gym all the time," Nagy said. "He has great instincts, and we've been able to put good players around him."

The Jackrabbits have been able to put a strong perimeter offense around Wolters, as Jordan Dykstra (11.6 ppg, 5.1 rpg), Griffon Callahan (10.9 ppg, 4.9 rpg), Chad White (9.5 ppg, 3.5 rpg) and Brayden Carlson (7.3 ppg, 3.1 rpg) have all hit 42 or more three-pointers, led by Callahan's 70 makes from outside.

"At our level it can be hard to

get a good center. One way to compensate for that is to have good perimeter play," Nagy said. "When you have a guard like Nate, even average players can hit some of the shots that open up."

Tony Fiegen (7.2 ppg, 3.8 ppg) joins Wolters, Dykstra, Callahan and Carlson in the Jackrabbits' first five. White, Taevaunn Prince (6.8 ppg, 3.7 rpg) and Zach Monaghan (2.3 ppg, 0.6 rpg) have also recorded starts. Zach Horstman (3.0 ppg, 1.2 rpg) and Marcus Heemstra (2.7 ppg, 2.3 rpg) have also contributed for SDSU.

The Jackrabbits open the tournament in tonight's 8:30 p.m. contest, drawing Indiana-Purdue-Indianapolis (14-17), who feature the Division I active scoring leader in Alex Young at 2,276 points. Young ranks fourth in the league in scoring a 20.7 points per game, and is averaging 5.9 rebounds, 2.0 assists and 1.6 steals per game.

"They have a kid who will probably be an NBA player in Alex Young," Nagy said.

Stephen Thomas (11.3 ppg, 3.0 rpg, 3.6 apg) and Ian Chiles (10.4

ppg, 3.4 rpg) also average in double figures for the Jaguars. Christian Siakam (9.0 ppg, 5.8 rpg) and Lyonell Gaines (6.4 ppg, 4.4 rpg) round out IUPUI's first five.

To make a run in the Summit League Tournament — and give themselves a chance at a NCAA berth — the 15th-ranked scoring offense in the NCAA (79.5 ppg) will need to play some defense.

"We need to defend and rebound. If we get our guys to be good defensively, it will rub off on both ends," Nagy said. "If we do that, we give ourselves a really good chance to win."

The SDSU-IUPUI game (8:30 p.m.) is Saturday's final contest, preceded by top-seeded Oral Roberts (26-5) against Indiana-Purdue-Fort Wayne (11-18) at 6 p.m. Sunday's quarterfinals feature Western Illinois (16-13) against North Dakota State (17-12) at 6 p.m., followed by Oakland (17-14) against Southern Utah (13-16) at 8:30 p.m.

Semifinal games will be played Monday evening, with the championship set for 8 p.m. Tuesday.

# Crofton

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The Lady Warriors won primarily because of their defense — holding the second-seeded Lady Irish to three field goals in the second half.

"To be honest, I'm not sure how we came back," Crofton coach Aaron Losing said. "It was defense, probably."

Also playing a key role? Bridget Arens.

After scoring 12 points in the first round, Arens responded with 10 points in Friday's fourth quarter alone. The victory was especially sweet for her after missing last year's state tournament because of a concussion.

"I'm just glad I'm here for this one," Arens said. "That was extremely tough (last year). It was hard to get over, but it made me want it even more."

Early on, the Irish dominated on offense, taking a 9-2 lead three minutes into the game. St. Patrick's would keep the lead the rest of the way, though Crofton trimmed it two.

The Lady Irish led by as many as eight points, 22-14, before Crofton pulled within 22-18 at half-time.

"Coach said at half that we were playing horrible defense," Arens said. "When he says something like that, we all just looked at each other."

"We started saying, 'Hold the rope,'" she added. "That's been one of our mottos."

The concept worked in the third quarter, as there were only six points scored. St. Patrick's led 26-20 heading into the frenetic fourth.

The Lady Irish led 28-24 with 6:40 to play before a pair of Arens put-backs at the rim tied the game at 28 with 3:58 to play. St. Patrick's missed a point-blank layup with 2:30 left and Crofton came down and capitalized with the Arens go-ahead basket.

"We just had to keep playing defense," Losing said. "We were hoping to get clicking. I was impressed with the way we battled."

Maria Wortmann and Allison Arens finished with four points apiece for Crofton, while Kelsey

Foxhoven added three points.

Shelby Allberry scored 13 points for St. Patrick's (23-3), which will play for third place today against Pender.

Yet, it's Crofton who will try to finish its season one better.

"It's really special for these kids," Losing said. "Bridget was devastated last year that she couldn't play after that concussion. I'm just really excited for our

seniors, too."

The appearance in the state championship game will be the fifth in eight years for the Lady Warriors, who won three straight from 2005-07 and lost last year.

Of course, the current players are relatively new to the experience.

"I knew we'd be young this year, but we're still pretty good," Arens said.

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