

OUTDOORS DIGEST

Snowmobile Trails In Eastern South Dakota Close After A Great Season

PIERRE — Eastern South Dakota experienced great snowmobiling conditions during the 2012-2013 snowmobile season, but March 15 marks the official end of the season for the east river trail system.

"After last winter, when snowfall was minimal, snowmobilers were able to take advantage of great riding conditions throughout this winter" said Tony Schmitt, State Trails Program Specialist of the Department of Game, Fish and Parks. "Snowmobile clubs were busy and did a great job maintaining the trails in their areas."

Through a Grant-In-Aid program, local snowmobile clubs groomed, signed and maintained over 1,152 miles of trails this season.

The trails in the Black Hills officially remain open until March 31, but with warm temperatures expected, grooming will be on a limited rotation.

"Grooming operations will be limited to those areas that have snow cover unless we receive additional snow accumulations," said Shannon Percy, Black Hills Trails District Park Supervisor. "The outer fringes of our system are starting to shrink up."

For further information on trail conditions, please contact the Black Hills Trails Office at 605-584-3896, or you can follow trail conditions at our website and on Twitter @SDSnowBHills.

The snowmobile trails program is funded entirely by snowmobile users through license registration fees, fuel tax reimbursement and an excise tax on the sale of snowmobiles in South Dakota.

Spring Turkey Season Opens March 25

LINCOLN, Neb. — The Nebraska spring turkey hunting season opens for archers March 25.

Spring turkey hunters must use archery equipment March 25-April 12 and may use either archery equipment or a shotgun April 13-May 31. Youth hunters must use archery equipment March 25-April 5 and may use either archery equipment or a shotgun April 6-May 31.

Hunters under age 16 need a youth spring turkey permit, hunters age 16 and older need a spring turkey permit, and landowners need a landowner spring turkey permit. The bag limit is one male or bearded female per permit. Youth and spring turkey permit holders may purchase up to three permits each for the spring season. Landowners may purchase one spring permit.

Permits may be purchased at OutdoorNebraska.org.

NASP Tourney March 23

LINCOLN, Neb. — As many as 500 archers from around the state are expected to compete in the annual National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) state tournament March 23 in Lincoln.

The event takes place at the Lancaster Event Center, 4100 N. 84th St. The first of two flights of competition begins at 10 a.m.

NASP is a national target archery program for students in grades 4-12. More than 200 schools in Nebraska have NASP as part of their curriculum.

Fort Randall Dam Tailwater Trout Stocking

The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department will stock approximately 15,000 trout below Ft. Randall Dam.

If weather permits, the first stocking of trout in the boat basin below Ft. Randall Dam will occur on Friday, March 15.

"About 7,500 trout will be released on March 15 with the remaining 7,500 arriving on March 22," Jason Sorensen, GFP Fisheries Biologist in Chamberlain said.

Trout are stocked annually below Ft. Randall Dam to provide a unique fishing opportunity in addition to other excellent fishing opportunities available in the area.

Crews from McNenny State Fish Hatchery in Spearfish will stock brown trout and two strains of rainbow trout below Ft. Randall Dam. "There are 5,000 each of brown trout, Shasta strain rainbow trout and McConaughy strain rainbow trout scheduled to be stocked below Ft. Randall Dam," Sorensen said.

One strain of rainbow trout has been marked with a fin clip to aid in differentiating them. An on-going research project hopes to help maximize stocking efficiency.

Monitoring is done over the course of several years to decrease the effects of variables such as weather and post-stocking survival. One main objective of the stocking is to return trout to the angler creel.

According to Sorensen, the trout range between 9-12 inches in length and bite readily, providing excellent angling opportunities for kids of all ages as well as adults. Excellent shoreline access and boat launching facilities in the area provide angling opportunities for both boat and shore anglers.

Spearing/Archery Survey Results Available Online

PIERRE — South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks recently finalized results from a series of surveys aimed at gauging angler attitudes towards spearfishing and bowfishing in South Dakota.

Both anglers who held a game fish spearing and archery fishing permit during the 2011 fishing season and those who did not hold this permit were randomly surveyed in this effort.

The objectives of these surveys were 1) to gather basic statistics on spearfishing and bowfishing user groups; 2) to gather information regarding available opportunity for spearing and bowfishing in SD, and hook/line angler attitudes towards these opportunities; and 3) to better understand resident spearing and bowfishing anglers' perceptions of safety issues, rules and regulations, as well as perceived conflict with hook/line anglers.

Results from this survey will be used to identify group and individual views, values, wants, and needs regarding spearfishing and bowfishing, and incorporate this human dimensions data into the decision-making process in relation to the overall health of South Dakota's fisheries resources.

To view the results from these surveys, visit the Game, Fish and Parks website at <http://www.gfp.sd.gov/fishing-boating/tackle-box/default.aspx>

Gary Howey | Of The Outdoors

Final Goose Hunt Of Season

BY GARY HOWEY

Hartington, Neb.

The two trailer load of decoys we were hauling bounced down the trail leading through the field as we headed for the pit located about a half mile behind the Steffen Brothers lodge just north of Pierre.

We were hoping the geese would be flying as they did the day before when we'd arrived in Pierre as the sky along the east side of Lake Oahe was full of birds heading out to feed.

Our group consisted of myself, Team Outdoorsmen Adventures members Larry Myhre (Sioux City, Iowa) and Tom Mitchell (KELO-FM Radio, Sioux Falls), Justin Larson (S.D. Tourism), Paul, Dave, Larry Steffen and a couple of the guys working for them, all which would be a big help putting out the hundreds of Dakota Decoys needed to draw these late season geese in.

About an hour later, the decoys were out and we were in the blind, ready for our morning hunt.

Paul would be doing the guiding and the calling with Justin, Tom, Larry, and I in the pit off to his left.

Then we heard it, the sound of approaching geese off in the distance, the first flight appeared as specks in the distance, verily visible off to the southwest, as a small group of Canadas could be seen winging their way north in our direction, looking to be callable as they were coming on low.

Paul called for the flags with Justin, Larry and I working the smaller black landing flags, doing our best to simulate the movement of geese coming into the field.

At the same time, Paul started calling loud with the geese far off and toning it down as they came closer. It didn't take long for us to realize that Paul's calling and our flagging caught the birds attention as the lead goose made the turn towards us, with the rest of the flock falling in behind it.

With each wing beat, they came our way, closer and closer, loosing a little altitude as they made the turn coming into the south end of the field we were set up in.

Once it looked as if the birds were committed, Paul called for the flags to be pulled in, from this point on, it was up to Paul to convince them that this was the place to be.

On the first pass, they were a bit high with Paul telling us to let them make one more swing. They swung wide, gained some altitude and seemed to be headed off when Paul called for the flags again, as he hit them with a boisterous come back call.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Pictured (left to right) are columnist Gary Howey, Tom Mitchell (KELO-FM Radio), Larry Myhre (Sioux City, Iowa) and Paul Steffen (Steffen Outdoor Expeditions) with a limit of late season Canada Geese taken near Pierre.

Whatever Paul was saying to the birds, must have been what they wanted to hear as hearing it, they made the turn, swinging wide, turning back towards the blind, setting their wings as they made their final approach into our decoys, as they got within range, Paul called, "take them", as five hunters, shotguns up, rose from the pit.

Larry and I took the birds on the right, with Tom going after those in the middle while Paul and Justin pounded the ones on the left side.

The birds, realizing they'd been duped, frantically grabbed for air, attempting to gain altitude, while trying to put as much distance between themselves and the hunters.

As the smoke settled, several didn't make it as two crashed down on the left, one in the middle, with two more tumbling down on our side of the pit, making for a great start as we took five birds out of the first flock of geese we'd seen.

The geese kept coming, with smaller callable flocks moving our direction throughout the morning, giving us numerous decoying opportunities.

It just makes sense the larger flocks of geese would be tougher to call in as they have so many eyes looking your way that the slightest thing will make them flair. It could be movement, glare off of the decoys or something that isn't quite right in your decoy spread.

Not only were we working with the

smaller more callable flocks of geese heading out to feed, we also had lifelike decoys, decoys set up forcing the birds to set their wings in range, these along with the calling and our flagging helped to draw flock after flock of the birds in.

We were able to hear the geese coming off Lake Oahe to the southwest, moving north, long before we could see them. For some reason, the majority of the geese were off to the west of our setup, putting them too far west to do us any good.

Once we had the birds in sight, our flags would come up with Paul wailing on the call, attempting to draw the birds attention to our decoy spread.

Flock after flock responded to Paul's calling, giving us the opportunity to fill our five man limit of fifteen birds in less than forty minutes.

With the birds working so well, we made the decision to stay in the pit, getting as much footage for our Outdoorsmen Adventures television series.

On they came, wanting what we were offering, coming from great distances to look over our decoy spread, giving us some great footage.

As anyone knows, late season hunting can be feast or famine, as we found out the next day.

That evening, weather reports indicated bad weather would be coming in on Sunday. Because of this, our plan would be to get into the field earlier than

we had on the previous day. Since all wildlife including waterfowl seem to know long before we do if bad weather is on its way and will head out prior to its arrival to feed that we'd be set up waiting for them when they came out.

We set out two trailer loads of decoys in the same field hoping to catch some of the earlier flights.

Unfortunately, the birds coming off the lake on Day two were in large flocks, and seemed to know exactly where they wanted to be, Flying high heading north, not to be detoured.

It was one of those late season hunts, with only a couple of birds even looking at us, but it will be a trip to remember as we filmed and shot a lot of birds the first day as well as spent time with some good friends, doing what we enjoy doing, spending quality time back home in the outdoors of South Dakota!

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is a former tournament angler, fishing and hunting guide. Howey is the Producer/Host of the award winning Outdoorsmen Adventures television series which can be seen on Fox affiliates throughout the upper Midwest. He and Simon Fuller are the hosts of the Outdoor Adventures radio program on Classic Hits 106.3 and ESPN Sports Radio 1570. If you're looking for more outdoor information, it can be found at www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.

Drake Fires Men's Coach Phelps

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Drake has not retained basketball coach Mark Phelps after five seasons.

Athletic director Sandy Hatfield Clubb announced the move Thursday, a week after the Bulldogs were knocked out of the Missouri Valley tournament.

Phelps was hired to replace Keno Davis, who led the Bulldogs to the Valley title in 2008. But Phelps couldn't keep Drake near the top of the league standings.

Bulldogs star Rayvonte Rice transferred to Illinois before the season, and Drake stumbled to a 15-17 finish.

Phelps leaves Drake with a record of 77-86. The Bulldogs never posted 20 wins under Phelps and only twice finished above .500 overall.

Drake has always been one of the tougher jobs in the country, combining high academic standards with a spotty history in basketball. Phelps is just the latest in a long line of Drake coaches who failed to overcome those challenges.

Phelps, who spent 12 seasons as an assistant under Herb Sendek at N.C. State and Arizona State, was hired to replace Davis in the spring of 2008 after the program's first NCAA tournament appearance in 37 years.

Davis, now the coach at Central Michigan, parlayed a spectacular one-year run that included The Associated Press Coach of the Year award into the job at Providence.

Many believed Davis's heroics in squeezing 28 wins out of the Bulldogs would prove to be fleeting.

Those critics proved to be right.

Phelps's teams finished 7-11 in the Valley four times, save for a 9-9 record in 2011-12 behind Rice.

Drake showed flashes of improvement this season, beating league champion Creighton at home and winning at Indiana State. But the Bulldogs were very inconsistent as well, losing by 30 on the road at Northern Iowa and against the Bluejays.

YANKTON JOAD ARCHERY



MANKATO, Minn. — Seventeen archers from the Yankton JOAD (Junior Olympic Archery Development) Club competed in the JOAD National Indoor Championships in Mankato, Minn., on March 8. Ten of the 17 archers finished in the top 25 in their respective divisions, with two top-10 finishes among them.

Thirteen of the archers stayed on to shoot in the U.S. In-

door Nationals that weekend, and eight placed in the top 25 (two in the top 10).

The participants were (in alphabetical order): Courtney Anderson, Cedar Bartos, Hannah Bartos, Elias Bartos, Fisher Bartos, Kevin Colgan, Kellie Geigle,

Amanda Haas, Emma Harris, Danielle Herrlein, Kendra Hunhoff, Walker Hunhoff, Faith Jeffcoat, Josie Jensen, Hailey Johnson, Matthew Peterson (not pictured) and Brandon Shuey.

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