

OUTDOORS DIGEST

Waterfowl Association

Rally April 1

BROOKINGS -- The South Dakota Waterfowl Association will hold its annual Social and Rally at 6 p.m. Wednesday, April 1, at Old Sanctuary at 928 Fourth Street, Brookings.

The SDWA is group of dedicated waterfowl hunters who are politically active on waterfowl issues. The primary goal of the SDWA is "to maintain the quality of waterfowl hunting in South Dakota."² The cost of the Social is minimal for members and free to anyone who joins the SDWA that night.

For more information, call SDWA at 605-690-6351.

GFP Seeking Comments

On Pheasant Plan

PIERRE -- The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) is seeking comments on the 2009-2014 pheasant management plan prior to drafting the next five-year plan for 2015-2020.

"The current pheasant management plan focused on fostering a partnership-driven approach for habitat development while ensuring public access opportunities are available for all outdoorsmen and women who enjoy pheasant hunting in South Dakota," stated Tony Leif, director of the Division of Wildlife.

All individuals interested in pheasant management in South Dakota have from now through April 10, 2015, to provide suggestions and comments on the plan in its current form.

The current pheasant management plan can be found online at: <http://gfp.sd.gov/wildlife/docs/pheasant-mgmt-plan.pdf>. Written comments on the plan can be sent to 523 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, S.D. 57501, or emailed to pheasantplan@state.sd.us. Comments must be received by April 10, 2015, and include your full name and city of residence. To request a printed copy of the plan, please call 605.353.7145.

Trout Release Near Pierre

PIERRE -- In an annual rite of spring, thousands of catchable-sized trout will be released by the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) at Oahe Downstream in the coming weeks.

Beginning April 1, 2015, 6,400 11 inch and 3,200 15 inch hatchery raised rainbow trout will be released over a two week period. These releases have proven very popular with anglers, young and old, across the region.

"The trout are extremely popular with families," said Bob Hanten, GFP fisheries biologist. "Usually when we get the first, nice, late winter days, my phone starts ringing with people asking when we are going to stock the trout."

Twenty trout will also be implanted with transmitters to help determine movement patterns of the fish. Biologists aim to get more information to anglers on the availability of the stocked fish and find out where these fish are going after they are released.

Nonresident Waterfowl

License Work Group

Holds Final Meeting

PIERRE -- The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks' (GFP) Nonresident Waterfowl License Work Group held its third and final meeting on March 2, 2015, to finalize their recommendations on the future of license allocations for nonresident waterfowl hunters in South Dakota.

The recommendations and hunter density maps along with a March meeting summary can be found online at <http://gfp.sd.gov/hunting/waterfowl/non-residentwaterfowlworkgroup.aspx>.

"Contrasting viewpoints on the issue of nonresident waterfowl license numbers has made for a challenging task for this work group," said Tony Leif, director of the GFP Division of Wildlife. "I appreciate the commitment the work group members put into seeking areas of compromise on this difficult issue."

GFP staff will present background and work group recommendations to the GFP Commission as an information item at their April meeting. The commission is scheduled to take formal action on license allocations at their May meeting and if any changes are proposed by the Commission, a public hearing on the proposed changes will be held at their June meeting in Pierre.

Warm Weather Accompa-

nies The End Of Snowmo-

bile Season

PIERRE -- Snowmobiling season ends on March 31, capping off a season where snow conditions fluctuated every couple of weeks.

"It was an up and down season this year," said Shannon Percy, Black Hills Trails manager. "It started out well until the end of January, and then we had a two-week warmup. We received additional snow after Presidents' Day weekend, but that was about the last of the snow."

Most of South Dakota's 1,585 miles of snowmobile trails have been empty for weeks due to the unseasonably warm weather and lack of new snow. The season was slow both in the Black Hills and East River, as well as the other "snow states," such as North Dakota, Wyoming and Minnesota.

Snowfall earlier in the season did allow two major Black Hills events to go on as scheduled.

The snowmobile trails in South Dakota are open from Dec. 15-March 31 each year.

Custer State Park Hosts

Earth Day Bluebird Box

Workshop

CUSTER STATE PARK -- On Saturday, April 18, Custer State Park is hosting a Bluebird Box Workshop in celebration of Earth Day. Two sessions will be held starting at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. at the Peter Norbeck Visitor Center.

Attendees will construct a bluebird house from scrap wood to promote recycling as well as an appreciation of birds. They will also learn about why bluebirds nest in these boxes and other facts about these creatures. All participants will take their completed birdhouse home.

Each session has a limit of 20 participants and reservations are required. Participants will also need to bring their own hammer.

Reservations can be made by calling 605-255-4464.

Of The Outdoors | Gary Howey

All About Turkey Decoys

BY GARY HOWEY

Hartington, Neb.

When I started, hunting turkeys back in the 70's it was a new sport in this part of the country and we learned as we went along.

Hunting with decoys was the furthest thing from our minds, as we were new to the sport.

A friend of mine from Crofton, Nebraska, heard about hunters down south using decoys to draw gobblers into shotgun range and since none was available in our area, he made one. Using an old Styrofoam Canada goose decoy, he whittled on it and then painted it to resemble a turkey, well, kind-o- sort of! It looked like a deformed, mostly black Canada goose that had gotten in a fight and LOST. It was bulky, made a lot of noise when going through the woods, but it worked.

If I was going to be serious about turkey hunting, I had to have one and when the first plastic expandable hen decoys came out, I got me one. They folded flat, and could be spread out by using the T-handle stake, making them appear larger. I could easily carry the folded up decoy in the game pouch of

Gary
HOWEY

my turkey-hunting vest. Since they were hard plastic, they too made a lot of noise when walking through the trees.

These first decoys were upright, because of the stake they were on, stuck up in the air quite a ways with the decoys head in the alert position, the way turkeys hold their head when they are alerted, looking around.

To keep my decoy from being positioned too high in the air and to get it out of the alert position, I shortened up the stake, lowering it closer to the ground, tilting it forward into more of a feeding position.

Then there were the foam decoys, allowing me to carry several of these decoys in my game pouch. This is when I started experimenting with putting the hen decoy in the breeding position. I'd place my hen decoy flat on the ground with the Tom positioned a short distance away looking in her direction. This worked well until the wind came up when the foam decoys would jump around, working its way out of the ground, and flying off across the field with me in hot pursuit.

Since then, I have used any number of decoys, some in groups of two, on up to a whole flock, experimenting with silhouette, full bodies, stuffed birds and inflatable decoys.

Today, turkey hunters have a wide variety of turkey decoys they can use. If you are just getting into turkey hunting, it can be confusing as there are so many decoy postures. There's the feeding, breeding, submissive, alert, strutting and so on and so forth.

There are several things I look



SUBMITTED PHOTO

A feeding hen and jake decoy helped the author to call in these two mature Toms at the same time during a South Dakota Spring turkey hunt.

for when I choose a decoy or decoys that I plan to use in the spring. The time of the season and how the Toms are putting together their harems re a few of the things you want to consider before heading out into the woods.

When putting out turkey decoys, you want to use a decoy or decoys that aren't going to alert the birds, a position like the feeding hen, as it is the most natural position in nature.

Almost all turkey flocks have some feeding hens, which are followed closely by strutting Toms, and it doesn't get more realistic or relaxed than that. The other position that works in a flock situation is the breeding (hen on the ground) position. Since the breeding position puts the hen on the ground, they are hard for the Tom to see so you need an upright decoy to get the gobbler's attention.

I use a basic, realistic decoy set up, which is a feeding hen, strutting gobbler and an alert (lookout) hen. The number of decoys, how they will be set up depends on the terrain I'm hunting in.

My most productive set ups are field set-ups or in a clearing where the gobbler can see my decoys. Because turkeys are social birds, if they hear calling and don't see birds or decoys, the jig is up and they will go looking for other turkeys.

What decoys you put out can depend heavily on the social structure of the birds. If it's early spring and the gobblers are messing around, just

starting to put their harems together, a good decoy to deploy would be one that's strutting or upright gobbler.

When I'm hunting in areas where there are a lot of jakes, those running in packs, ganging up on adult gobblers, I'll go with a single jake as a single bird isn't going to spook an adult Tom.

When purchasing a strutting Tom decoy, check out the most important part of the decoy, the tail as it's the tail that the gobblers see and the more realistic it is the better.

While hunting in the Ozarks of Missouri, a friend who lived in the area showed me how used a fan to attract turkeys. Dressed in total camo, he would belly crawl with the fan out in front of him. When the Tom saw the fan, it would strut and move towards him, by moving the fan from side to side, he drew the bird within shotgun range of his clients.

Since that time, I've experimented using a turkey fan to attract gobblers and have had some luck using just a fan.

On one trip, since I had filled both of my tags, I switched roles with my cameraman, filming and calling for him. I set out a hen decoy off to his left approximately 30 yards in front of him. Then, I placed one of last season's gobblers turkey fan against a small tree. To hold it in place, I drove a stake on the backside in the center of the fan and tied it loosely with fishing line so it would move in the breeze.

We got settled down and I made a

couple of quiet, low calls when a gobbler and a jake responded from the other side of the ridge and came trotting over the ridge, both birds paid no attention to the hen decoy, charging towards the turkey fan that was fluttering in the wind. My cameraman tipped him over as he was making his move on the bodiless fan.

Decoys, whether they are silhouettes, foam, hard plastic full bodies or even just a fan help to draws that gobbler into range. If he is looking at the decoy, it's a good bet he will not be looking directly at you, giving you the opportunity to bring your gun up, draw a bead on the trophy you have been dreaming of since last year's turkey season, allowing you to fill your spring turkey tag.

Gary Howey, Hartington, Nebraska, is a former tournament angler, fishing and hunting guide. He is the Producer/Host of the award winning *Outdoorsmen Adventures* television series, seen in the Yankton area on local channels 2 & 98 Saturday at 6:30 pm and Sunday@ 7:00, on KTTM/KTTW-TV Fox-Sioux Falls and Huron at 6:30 am Saturdays and on the MIDCO Sports Network Thursday at 5:30 pm and Sunday at 10:00 am. He and Simon Fuller Co-Host the *Outdoor Adventures* radio program on *Classic Hits 106.3, ESPN Sports Radio 1570 in Southeastern South Dakota and Northeast Nebraska. In Northwest Iowa, it airs on KCHE 92.1 FM. If you are looking for more outdoor information, check out www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.*

South Dakota Pheasants SAFE Practice Nears Acreage Cap

BROOKINGS -- There are 13,249 acres available for enrollment to South Dakota landowners interested in conserving upland habitat for pheasants and other wildlife through the continuous Conservation Reserve Program's "South Dakota Pheasants SAFE" practice.

Standing for State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement, the South Dakota Pheasants SAFE may also be an option for landowners with expiring CRP contracts in 2015. The goal of the South Dakota Pheasants SAFE project is to enroll a total of 81,500 acres in CRP to provide block grass acreages for ring-necked pheasants and other upland birds in the form of nesting, brood-rearing, winter-roosting and escape cover.

There are currently 68,251 acres enrolled in the practice (as of February 2015, the most recent USDA

statistics available). CRP SAFE acres give producers more competitive rental rates than general CRP, as well as additional incentive payments. As continuous Conservation Reserve Program practices, these programs are available for enrollment until acreage allocations are reached.

"This program pays in pheasants and pads the pocketbook" says Dave Nomsen, Pheasants Forever's director in South Dakota. "Not only are many landowners interested in helping our state's prized pheasant population continue to rebound, but they're also recognizing the economic benefit of continuous CRP practices for their more marginal acres. Interest in the South Dakota Pheasants

SAFE practice has definitely increased this year, and we expect these available acres to be signed up quickly this spring."

Nomsen notes that in addition to the wildlife and financial benefits of SAFE, the program also brings soil and water conservation benefits, traditional hallmarks of the Conservation Reserve Program. Pheasants Forever has 10 Farm Bill wildlife biologists located across South Dakota ready to assist landowners with continuous CRP signups.

Through a unique partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, Farm Bill wildlife biologists are located in USDA service centers. Offering assis-

tance for those interested in conservation programs, Farm Bill wildlife biologists can guide landowners from start to finish on CRP contracts while designing plans to benefit wildlife on unproductive crop acres. For these programs, landown-

ers will receive a CRP rental rate payment, 50 percent cost-share for establishment of wildlife cover, a signing incentive payment of \$100/per acre and a practice incentive payment of 40 percent for installed eligible SAFE practices.

**Got An Outdoors Photo You Want To Share?
Email It To jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net**

South Dakota
Waterfowl Association

Annual Social and Rally

Annual Social and Rally • Wednesday, April 1, 6 pm
at Old Sanctuary at 928 4th Street, Brookings, SD

The SDWA is group of dedicated waterfowl hunters who are politically active on waterfowl issues. The primary goal of the SDWA is "To maintain the quality of waterfowl hunting in South Dakota".

Currently, there is a group of commercial hunting outfits and tourism interests that are attempting to ruin the waterfowl heritage we enjoy in South Dakota by increasing the number of nonresident waterfowl licenses. We feel that the current number of nonresident licenses is already too high. The current situation is already creating conflicts with resident duck hunters and thus the number of nonresident licenses should be decreased or at minimum, remain as is.

You need to join now! If you don't get active, our waterfowl hunting heritage will be gone.

SDWA membership is only \$25 for a 3-year membership!

The cost of the Social is minimal for members and free to anyone who joins the SDWA that night!

For more information call SDWA at 605-690-6351.

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