

OUTDOORS DIGEST

Winter Bird-Watching Offered at Lewis & Clark Recreation Area

Lewis and Clark Recreation Area is offering a chance to experience winter bird watching. A "self-guided hike" leads park users to many different species of wintering birds.

Brochures and a registration book are located outside the Welcome Center park office door. Bird/suet feeders have also been placed in areas of the park along the birding trail to attract the wintering birds.

"Walkers may follow the marked trail in different directions through grassy areas, along established park roads, or on the existing bike trail," said Shane Bertsch, District Park Supervisor.

Bertsch also reminds park visitors that a park entrance license is required year-round for all vehicles entering the park and may be purchased at the self-pay station at the entrance booth if the park office is closed.

For more information, contact Lewis & Clark Recreation Area at (605)668-2985.

Neb. Firearm Deer Harvest Down 21 Percent From 2012

LINCOLN, Neb. — Total firearm deer harvest for the nine-day 2013 November firearm season was 36,882, a 21 percent decline from 2012.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission eliminated approximately 87,000 permits and bonus tags in 2013 in response to the epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) outbreak of 2012. A significant reduction in harvest was expected.

Harvest totals by Game and Parks district are: Northeast, 9,290; Northwest, 5,705; Southeast, 7,457; and Southwest, 14,430.

Details of harvest by sex, species and unit are not yet available, but check station data reveals the largest harvest declines occurred in southeast Nebraska, where nearly all bonus antlerless tags had been eliminated. The area least affected by EHD and permit reductions was the western half of southwest Nebraska, where a 6 percent decline in harvest occurred.

Total harvest for 2013 is expected to be approximately 50,000 deer. Archers have had better success in 2013, with more than 2,400 whitetail bucks harvested compared to 1,843 whitetail bucks taken during the same time span in 2012.

Deer season remains open through Jan. 18, 2014.

GFP Reminds Hunters To Register For Winter Depredation Hunts

As winter approaches in South Dakota, the Department of Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) reminds resident hunters of a unique opportunity that may exist later this winter.

The GFP has a Wildlife Damage Management Program that assists landowners with various wildlife depredation abatement techniques. However, when other methods are ineffective, GFP may utilize willing hunters to help reduce damage caused by wildlife.

"Winter depredation hunts are a valuable management tool that GFP uses in some situations to alleviate wildlife damage to landowners' stored-feed supplies," said Wildlife Damage Program Administrator Keith Fisk. "Depredation hunts are largely dependent upon the severity of the winter, snowfall accumulations and the number of animals involved. During mild winters, few hunts are conducted; however, when extreme conditions cause wildlife to congregate near farmsteads and livestock feeds, depredation hunts are more common."

South Dakota residents may register for potential depredation hunts for deer, antelope and turkey starting Dec. 1, 2013. Hunters can register for depredation hunts (free of charge) at <http://gfp.sd.gov/hunting/depredation-hunts.aspx> and are encouraged to register for counties near their home or within close driving distance.

Once registered, hunters are then put into a random drawing to determine eligibility once a depredation hunt is authorized.

Winter depredation hunts focus on assisting landowners with wildlife damage, but also can provide hunters with another hunting opportunity after traditional hunting seasons are closed. For more information, please visit the GFP website or contact GFP at (605)223-7660.

Neb. G&P Offers Online Waterfowl Videos

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission is offering instructional videos for waterfowl hunters on YouTube.

The six-video series is geared toward intermediate-level hunters who want to improve their skills.

The series has videos about duck decoy spreads, pond blind concealment, calling Canada geese, ghillie suits, layout boat blinds and field layout blinds. The videos are available on the Game and Parks website at <http://1.usa.gov/1azuwXi>.

Other Game and Parks videos are available on the commission's YouTube page, <http://www.youtube.com/user/NG-PCvideo>.

Of The Outdoors | Gary Howey

Preserving Your Trophy

BY GARY HOWEY  
Hartington, Neb.

I remember the hunt, where I took the first duck I would want to have mounted, I was heading north on Hwy 81 when I spotted several ducks dabbling along the shoreline of a small dam.

Back then, my Brittany, Calico and I spent Saturday mornings driving the area, hoping to do some pond jumping for waterfowl.

As we burst over the dam, three mallards went airborne, a drake and two hens. I frantically tried to draw a bead on the drake as my Brittany prepared to hit the water to retrieve the duck that would soon tumble into the pond.

I emptied my shotgun into the drake, rocking the drake with all three shot, unable to put the bird down for good and as they flew off to the west, I called myself several names and proceeded to pick up the empties.

When I finally looked up, not only were the ducks gone, so was my hunting dog, I searched frantically for the dog, calling his name at the top of my lungs.

Great, no ducks and no dog, the only thing I could do was to head back to my old 53 GMC and start driving the field and roads looking for him.

After a half hour of driving around, I returned to the dam thinking perhaps that he had returned. Using my binoculars, I looked over the pond and the pasture out to the west, noticing movement. I jumped into the truck I pounded my way across the rough pasture, hoping the movement would be my dog.

As I got closer, it was obvious something was moving out there, as it would move 10 or 15 yards, stop and then after a short pause, move again. Getting closer, I could see it was Calico, but he was not coming when I called him.

As he came over a small knob, I could see he was carrying something, a mallard drake.

The drake was huge, almost more than my dog could carry and it was not dead. Talk about a proud moment, even though my shooting was sub par, my little Brittany had followed the duck as it flew off and caught up with it when it landed.

I dispatched it, threw it in my vest and headed for the truck and I drove around with the bird in my hunting vest the rest of the morning.

Once I got home I realized it was a banded bird and pretty darn good looking except for the neck which was a "little" stretched out with some feathers messed up from being carried



Gary HOWEY



Abby Hochstein, left, and her father Kyle of Hartington, Neb., are pictured with Abby's first deer she took during this year's Nebraska deer season in western Nebraska.

around in a vest for half a day. I just had to have this trophy preserved and had to take it to a taxidermist. So, what if it had feathers out of place and its neck was a bit longer than it was when it was alive, I thought a taxidermist was a magician and could repair the damage.

At the time, I really could not afford to have it mounted, but, it was my first Mallard and it had a band.

I threw it in a plastic bag and chucked it in the freezer until I could convince my wife that this was just something that I needed to do.

Back then, I thought taxidermists were miracle workers and could make anything look good, no matter what it looked like when they received it.

To make a long story short, the duck came back; looking like a semi plucked long necked duck, not one I was proud to show off to my friends, one I hid in the basement.

Thankfully, we had a cat that knocked it off the wall and took a bite out of it, giving me an excuse to pitch it.

Now, we all know taxidermists can only do so much and if not taken care of properly, you are not going to be happy when it comes back from the taxidermist.

What we should do in order to assure your fish, bird or deer looks as good when it is on your wall as it did in the field.

In order to get the scoop on what you should do if you are going to take your trophy to a taxidermist, I talked with several taxidermists and this is what they suggested.

What you do before bringing your prize to them is important; treat it with tender loving care.

Big Game

- Whenever possible, bring it directly to the taxidermist.
- Keep in mind how you want it

mounted; do not cut far up the neck of the cape. You always want to leave extra cape. The taxidermist can cut some cape off, but cannot add any.

- On an animal, you plan to have mounted, be gentle when you drag it. If you have to drag it long distances, try to place something such as a plastic tarp under the animal.
- Whenever possible, put the game head and cape into a freezer as soon as possible.
- Wrap a towel around the ears, face and nose then place a heavy plastic bag over it.
- Avoid folding or rolling the cape or it may lose hair, called slipping. Too much slipping makes the cape unusable.
- Don't leave it in the freezer for too long as it can get freezer burn.

Birds

- Whenever possible, bring it directly to the taxidermist.
- Look them over, checking for ripped skin or loose feathers.
- Keep the carcass dry, cool and clean. Avoid field dressing (gut) the bird; the taxidermist should make all of the incisions.
- Fold both wings into the body of the bird.
- Bring along some paper towels when you go hunting, use them to stuff down the beak—which will stop the blood from getting on the feathers.
- Rinse or wipe as much blood off the feathers as you can.
- Tuck the head under or next to the wing.
- To keep the feathers from being torn up, bring along a plastic bag, to put the bird in to keep the feathers in place and to protect it when bringing it home.
- Butcher paper also works well for wrapping a bird before putting it in the freezer.
- It is a good idea, to reinforce the

tail feathers, keeping them straight.

- If you cannot get the bird to a taxidermist quickly, place the bird in a chest freezer, avoid freezers that self defrost as they can dry out and ruin a bird
- Do not leave in a freezer for an extended period as it may freezer burn, causing the feathers to slip.

Remember, if you want your animal, bird or fish to come back from the taxidermist looking lifelike, be gentle with it before you take it to him.

Fish

- Take a picture of the fish you plan having mounted as the taxidermist can use the photo to make the colors on the fish look natural.
- It is also a good idea to take measurements of the fish, allowing the taxidermist to recreate the way it looked when it came out of the water.
- Take the fish to the taxidermist as quickly as possible.
- If getting the fish to a taxidermist quickly is not possible, wrap it in a wet towel and then put it in a plastic bag, making sure all fins are flat against the fish, which prevents them from breaking and then place in a freezer.

Remember, if you want your animal, bird or fish to come back from the taxidermist looking lifelike, be gentle with it before you take it to him.

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is a former tournament angler, fishing and hunting guide. He is the Producer/Host of the award winning *Outdoorsmen Adventures* television series, which can be seen on Fox affiliates throughout the upper Midwest. In the Yankton area it airs on local channels 2 & 98 Saturday at 6:30 pm and Sunday at 7:00 am. He and Simon Fuller are the hosts of the *Outdoor Adventures* radio program Monday-Saturday at 6:45 am on *Classic Hits 106.3* and *ESPN Sports Radio 1570*. If you are looking for more outdoor information, check out [www.outdoorsmenadventures.com](http://www.outdoorsmenadventures.com).

Solo Prairie Hunt Suits Minnesota Man Just Fine

BY SAM COOK

(c) 2013 Duluth News Tribune (Duluth, Minn.)

Every year, the pheasant hunter and his yellow Lab go west in early November. Alone.

The hunter pitches a tent at a little campground, lives simply and hunts birds.

The hunter is a friend of mine. He does the big hunts, too. Lots of hunters, plenty of dogs, orchestrated marches. He likes those hunts, too.

But once each fall, he needs to get away on his own. He drives far into North Dakota and sets up camp. He cooks most of his own meals on a single-burner stove.

"I love camping. I don't mind sleeping on the ground," says the hunter, 59, after this year's hunt. "When you have a good bird dog, it's really unfair to hunt them once a year."

They hunt for two and a half, three days. They hunt

mostly on one farmer's land. His name is Larry. My friend knows the rules. Larry wants to be asked for permission to hunt every day. The hunter always takes Larry a big bottle of Dave Rogotzke's maple syrup, collected just outside of Duluth. Larry likes that. Larry has never denied the hunter permission to hunt. Unlike some North Dakota landowners, Larry asks for no money from the hunter.

My friend likes talking to Larry, listening to his stories. He is in no hurry. He will have time to hunt.

Larry tells him about the 34 inches of snow they had in October. How his cousin lost 350 head of cattle. They went into the draws for protection and were drifted over. Gone.

When the conversation with Larry is finished, my friend and his Lab, Rose, go hunting.

"I saw lots of birds," he said. "They were in winter

mode, roosters all grouped up, 40 eyes staring at you."

A lot of the birds flushed far ahead of him, but he got close to a few. Rose put them up, brought them back.

"I could have done better," he said. "There must have been three other shots I should have made."

That's the way it always is. Opportunities lost. Still, he shot his three-day limit of

three birds a day.

He never saw another hunter, on the road or in a field.

Evenings came on fast.

"It gets dark about 5:30," the hunter said. "I turned in about 7:45. There's nothing to do. I've never gone to bed after 8. The Big Dipper is in the northwest sky when you crawl in the tent."

The nights were cool, down

to 20, he said

"When you're a winter camper, 20 is toasty," he said.

For most of three days, this is what he does: Talks to Larry. Hunts. Cooks supper. Walks Rose one more time. Goes to bed.

"I don't mind being alone," he said. "I love the ability to be on your own schedule and pace."



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