

OUTDOORS DIGEST

Of The Outdoors | Gary Howey

Disease Influencing Deer Numbers In Sully County

PIERRE – South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) has received reports of significant deer loss in western Sully County likely due to hemorrhagic diseases such as Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease and Blue Tongue.

In an effort to be proactive on behalf of both the hunter and the deer population, GFP is offering voluntary refunds to individuals who have already received a deer license for unit 59A.

"It is the hunter's option," said licensing office supervisor Shon Eide. "But it is advised hunters return their license and tags for a refund if they are questioning the potential impact this deer loss may have on hunting opportunities."

Hunters who applied in the first drawing will have preference points reinstated for next year. Those wishing to take advantage of the option to return a license for a refund, please mail the license/tags to GFP Licensing Office, 20641 SD Hwy 1806, Fort Pierre, SD 57532. Returned licenses must be post-marked prior to the start date of the East River Deer season, Nov. 21. Refund checks will then be mailed.

Neb. Deer Hunters Enjoy Higher Opening Weekend Success

LINCOLN, Neb. – The opening two days of the Nebraska's firearm deer season saw more hunters fill their tags than last year, according to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. The season opened Nov. 14.

"Although final harvest figures won't be available until after the season closes on Nov. 22, hunters got off to a great start this weekend," said Scott Taylor, the Commission's wildlife division administrator. Mild weather, dry roads, higher deer numbers, and widely-available deer permits are thought to have led to the increase in hunter harvest.

Compared to 2014, the numbers of deer brought in to check stations on the opening weekend increased about 20 percent in southeast Nebraska, 24 percent in the southwest, 35 percent in the northwest, and 50 percent in the northeast. Statewide harvest was up about 30 percent.

Firearm deer permits are still available for some areas of the state, particularly for antlerless deer. Statewide whitetail buck and youth permits are also available throughout the season. Permits can be purchased through the Commission's website at OutdoorNebraska.org.

Custer State Park To Hold Annual Bison Auction

CUSTER – The 2015 Custer State Park Fall Classic Bison Auction will be held on Saturday, Nov. 21, at the park corrals where 201 head will be sold.

This year's offerings include 10 mature bred cows, 14 open mature cows, five two-year-old bred heifers, 15 yearling heifers, 35 heifer calves, 66 bull calves, 42 yearling bulls, five two-year-old grade bulls, nine two-year-old breeding bulls. Burros for sale include five young jacks, two matched five-year-old gelded jacks and a five-year-old roan mammoth jack.

The auction will begin at 10 a.m. MST at the Custer State Park Buffalo corrals, located 15 miles east of Custer on Highway 16A and then nine miles south on the Wildlife Loop Road. Signs will be posted to assist in locating the corrals.

The auction will also be online at www.DVAuction.com

A buyers' reception will be held prior to the auction on Friday, Nov. 20, from 6-8 p.m. MST at the Creekside Lodge in Custer State Park.

For additional information about the upcoming auction, contact Custer State Park at 605.255.4515 or email questions to CusterStatePark@state.sd.us.

The Future Of Hunting

BY GARY HOWEY

Hartington, Neb.

Just this last week, we were coming down the highway when an SUV came down the highway with a deer carcass strapped on its luggage rack.

It was not a huge deer; it was just a dead deer hanging off the top of the vehicle.

As it approached, I thought to myself that ought to upset the anti hunters! It was not that it offended me to see the deer, it was the fact there are people out there who are looking for another reason to come down on hunters.

Not too many years ago, hunting was a way of life, a way to feed the family.

Things have changed, as our population becomes more urbanized, with more people living in the cities than we do those living in rural areas, removing people from the land and in a lot of cases reality.

Sure, they eat steaks, pork chops and burgers, but many of these people do not realize or want to think about where the food on their plate came from.

As hunters, we need to avoid giving anti-hunting groups ammunition to use against us!

How much effort would it take to throw a tarp over the deer and tie it down with \$5 worth of cargo straps, probably not a whole lot!

We need to think about hunting ethics, which includes respect for the animals we hunt, respecting the rights of landowners as well as the rights of others and abiding by game laws.

The sport of hunting does not have the number of participants it once had, when our country was more rural, some groups list hunting in as far as participant numbers go, with other outdoor activities such as walking, bicycling and picnicking.

To me, the later are not exactly what I would call outdoor activities, but the "powers" that be list them as such and this is what we have to compete with when it comes to statistics.

Why do people hunt? There are numerous reasons, including:

To some, an enjoyable tradition handed down for ages in the family. They would hunt because hunting had been part of their life and was part of the bond that held their family together.

Similarly, some people hunt with a group of friends or business acquaintances because they enjoy the company of friends in the outdoors.

Others hunt because they like wild game as it is healthy free of chemicals or additives.

Some hunt because it gives them the chance to get outside out into the field to relax and get away from the office and their job.

No matter what your reason for hunting, we need to respect others and not give those that are determined to eliminate our sport and our right to hunt using any means available.



Gary HOWEY



PHOTO: GARY HOWEY

Hunting is a family tradition, handed down from one generation to the next with families coming together to share the hunting experience.

What many of these groups do not realize is that hunters are a large part of the wildlife management program. By harvesting surplus animals, we help to reduce crop damage done by wild game as well as helping to fund the Game & Parks, the Department of Natural Resources.

What many of these people do not understand that the killing an animal is not mandatory for a hunter to enjoy the sport.

Statistics indicate that less than half the deer hunters actually bag a deer and it's not uncommon for deer hunters to pass on smaller animals and go the entire season without filling their tag or for upland game bird hunters to hunt all weekend for just a couple of birds.

What you really get out of hunting is what you put into it.

We need to support our sport and as the last election indicated, vote for those that supported hunting and

conservation programs.

Support those groups that help to put conservation and habitat on the ground. Whitetails Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, Delta Waterfowl, The National Wild Turkey Federation and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation are just a few of the conservation groups that help to keep the sport we love, hunting strong.

Another way to assure that the sport of hunting remains strong would be to introduce a youngster to the outdoors. Numerous kids out there would love to have the opportunity to get out into the fields or woods and enjoy the great outdoors.

You could pitch in and help with a youth mentor hunt or a hunter's safety course. As I mentioned earlier, what you get out of hunting depends on what you put back into it.

By pitching in and joining these groups and introducing someone to our sport, you are making sure that

our sport will be here for generations to come.

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 locally in Channels 2 and 98 at Saturday at 6:30 pm and Sunday at 7:00 am. It airs on Saturdays at 6:30 am and on the MIDCO Sports Network Thursday at 5:30 pm and Sunday at 10:00 am. The show can be seen in nine states in the upper Midwest 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.

Falconers And Their Birds Find Good Hunting In Kansas

BY MICHAEL PEARCE

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RENO COUNTY, Kan. – Last week about 250 people from as far as Australia gathered in Hutchinson to celebrate a sport many centuries old.

"Falconry has been around at least 4,000 years," said Sheldon Nicolle, North American Falconry Association director, "and that's what's recorded."

"The only thing that replaced it was shotguns the last few hundred years," added Jeremy Kessler, a falconer from Austin. "Before that, it was the only way to catch a pheasant in the air."

Nicolle said the group, with about 1,800 members, meets annually often in the Midwest or West, to attend falconry-based seminars and swap ideas. Much of the daylight hours are used for hunting.

For this gathering, members brought hunting birds ranging from pigeon-sized kestrels for hunting sparrows to golden eagles for hunting jackrabbits and cottontails. It always takes a lot of space to find good hunting for so many. Nicolle said groups went as far as Dodge City and Liberal to find the best jack-

rabbit populations possible.

Past meetings have been farther west. Fear of their hunting birds killing lesser prairie chickens, a bird on and off federal protection lists lately, was one reason to move east.

"It's been tougher because we do have to drive for jackrabbits," he said. "But the amount of game we're finding has been great. The pheasant and quail populations are definitely up quite a bit since we were last in Dodge City in 2011."

State law grants falconers longer bird seasons than for those who use shotguns. Traditional pheasant and quail seasons open Saturday in Kansas.

Last Thursday morning Nicolle and Kessler started at Potter Creek Outfitters, a hunting lodge north of Pretty Prairie, where there are good numbers of wild and released pheasants.

Kessler began with Chester, a custom-bred gyrfalcon hybrid on his arm, following guide Justin Bremer and his Brittany spaniel, Rylee. When the dog went on point, Kessler removed a hood from the bird and let it fly.

About a minute later the rooster pheasant flushed from



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Jeremy Kessler from Austin, Texas, is seen with a pair of falcons after they took down a pheasant on Nov. 12 near Pretty Prairie, Kansas.

cover, bringing Chester in an aerial beeline from several hundred yards away. The pheasant was no match for the falcon's speed and agility.

Chester first succeeded in knocking the pheasant to the ground, where it flushed again, flying low. Even 100 or

more yards behind the bird, Chester quickly caught up with the pheasant, hit it with his talons and took the bird to the ground.

Kessler let the falcon feast on the pheasant for several minutes as a reward for its good hunting.

Both falconers talked of the work that goes into the sport. It's heavily regulated by federal and state wildlife agencies to make sure the birds are treated well and

wild populations aren't put at risk.

Nicolle said that beginners must work as an apprentice to an experienced falconer. Most are required to live-trap a red-tailed hawk, then care for it and make sure it gets plenty of exercise and hunting time.

Once that's mastered, falconers can move on to more specialized birds like the peregrine falcon Nicolle uses for hunting ducks.

Kessler has another gyrfalcon hybrid and a pure prairie falcon he was allowed to capture as chick in Wyoming. All three birds are amazingly lethal.

"We had a (falcon) that weighed 27 ounces take down a sage grouse that weighed 84 ounces," Kessler said of a hunt in Wyoming.

Falconers spend about an hour a day on basic cleaning, feeding and training of a bird, Nicolle said.

"By the time you consider the time we use to take them hunting," he said, "we can easily invest 500 to 600 hours a year, minimum, on these birds."

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