

# Hunting

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"We want to let them know they're important to us," said Teri Ellis Schmidt, executive director of the Sioux Falls Convention & Visitors Bureau, which has organized the airport welcome for 14 years.

There, volunteers passed out information about area hotels and attractions. Hunters arriving were given coffee, lemonade and cookies to make them feel at home. The organized greeting was to continue Friday.

Chuck Schlueter, communications manager for the state's Game, Fish and Parks, said Thursday that he expects a strong opening weekend despite the pheasant population decreasing.

"It'll be great hunting, but we won't have the same abundance as we've been having" in recent years, Schlueter said.

According to a 2011 brood-survey report, the pheasants per mile index decreased by 46 percent statewide compared to 2010. The numbers are down 41 percent compared to the 10-year average. The report wasn't bad news

for the whole state, however: Numbers in Winner and Western South Dakota didn't change much from 2010 to 2011. The hardest hit areas were Sisseton, Aberdeen, Huron and Yankton.

Overall, it's a significant blow after several years of near-record pheasant populations in both Dakotas. Experts say a variety of factors lessened the brood: Land that had been pheasant habitat instead is being farmed, rough winters lowered the breeding population, and cool springs meant fewer chicks survived.

North Dakota's pheasant season began last Saturday, and hunters indeed reported seeing fewer birds, said Stan Kohn, Upland Game Management Supervisor with the state's Game and Fish Department.

"It's just one of those things," he said. "We had numbers on the landscape that we hadn't seen in 40 or 50 years. All good things at some point come to an end."

Hunters have a bag limit of three pheasants per day. Kohn said it took some hunters far longer to hit their limit, while others complained they didn't reach it at all.

But Schlueter is optimistic for South Dakota, where the ring-necked pheasant is the state bird

and pheasant hunting is so renowned that it's drawn celebrities such as Clark Gable and Ted Nugent over the decades. This weekend's weather forecast helps with highs in the 60s. That should even be comfortable for the hunting dogs at risk of overheating while aiming to please their masters, said Gary Straight, a veterinarian with the Gregory Animal Clinic in Gregory, S.D.

Mart Dowden, 59, of Mt. Juliet, Tenn., arrived in Sioux Falls on Thursday afternoon and said his upcoming three days of hunting were about more than bagging up to nine birds.

"It's more fun opening weekend," said Dowden, who began hunting here three years ago. "It's like Christmas. You don't celebrate the day after."

Like hundreds of other arriving hunters, he collected not only his bag from luggage claim, but also his weapons: two Benelli shotguns. Then he set off to meet his hunting buddies.

"The opening of pheasant season is a time for family and friends to get together," Schlueter said. "It's a time for sharing memories from the past and creating new memories with each hunt."

"You're going to see a lot of orange."

# Regents

From Page 1A

What is the common denominator among the countries that have surpassed America? Warner said it's a willingness to invest in their educational systems.

"Many more students are coming out of K-12 (in those countries) prepared to go to college," he stated. "These countries see the value in educating more people. We've gotten away from investing in education in this country. We need to find our way back."

The good news for South Dakota, at least, is that college is still affordable, Warner said. Students in the state have among the lowest default rates in the nation for their college loans. Their average debt is \$23,052.

"It tells me they are making the earnings premium that allows them to pay the debt down in the first place," he said.

Raising education levels has many positive effects, such as raising tax revenues because of higher salaries, attracting businesses, lowering unemployment and lowering health care costs,

according to Warner.

"If you're going to raise the quality of life in your community, you need to raise the education attainment level of the people who live there," he said.

Other issues discussed Thursday included the importance of remedial education taking place in K-12 so students don't have to pay for those courses and risk falling behind at the college level, the future of cooperative Extension and agricultural research in the state, and a decision by the Board of Regents this week to reduce the required number of credit hours for graduation from 128 to 120.

"By paying for eight fewer credits, you have the potential to graduate with lower debt," Warner said. "We think that could result in better graduate school enrollments and quicker entry into the workforce so students can begin cashing in their investment. Overall, it's an affordability issue for the total cost of the degree and a strategy to get more people to finish their studies. Time is the enemy. The longer you're at it, the less likely you are going to finish the degree. We want to put students on a fast track, and they can choose more courses if they want."

# Wildlife Groups Sue For More Protection Of Turtles

BY ALAN SAYRE  
Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Several wildlife protection groups are suing the federal agency that regulates fishing in U.S. waters, claiming the government isn't doing enough to protect endangered sea turtles from drowning in shrimp nets.

The lawsuit filed Thursday in Washington claims the National Marine Fisheries Service violates the Endangered Species Act by letting some shrimpers operate without required turtle excluder devices on their nets and exempting some shrimping from the requirement.

The gear is required on many shrimp trawls in federal and state waters, but some kinds of trawls and other nets are exempt under certain conditions. A Louisiana law passed in 1987 makes it illegal for state wildlife agents to enforce turtle excluder device regulations in state waters.

# 5 kids, 1 Man Dead In Colo. Crash

BY P. SOLOMON BANDA  
Associated Press

KIT CARSON, Colo.— Five children and a sheriff's deputy who ran a group home where they lived were killed Thursday morning when his van collided with a livestock trailer.

Howard Mitchell was taking 12 of the children from the home in Kit Carson to Eads at the time of the crash around 7:30 a.m. The school district in Eads, about 15 miles away, said on its website that the Mitchell family had close ties to the community.

The children who died ranged in age from 4 to 17 and lived in the home for adopted and foster children, said Kiowa County Sheriff's office spokesman Chris Sorensen. Seven other children in the van were hospitalized, as well as the driver of the truck.

A photo provided by the Colorado State Patrol showed the front of the van crumpled into the rear of a large livestock trailer. Short skid marks were visible on the patch of U.S. 287 leading to the collision.

The accident happened on a stretch of highway south of Kit Carson that has been under repair for the past month. One lane was closed, and the collision occurred at the back of a line of traffic about 1,000 feet long, said Stacey Stegman, a spokeswoman for the Colorado Department of Transportation.

Sorensen said the normal speed limit on the highway is 65 miles per hour, but speeds were reduced because of the construction zone. Meteorologists said weather conditions in the area at the time were clear, no wind and temperatures in the low 30s.

In Kit Carson, where Mitchell worked as a Cheyenne County sheriff's deputy and also ran the Mitchell House Children's Home, neighbors said they were devastated.

The family are "good people with good hearts," said Annette Weber, manager of the Trading Post restaurant next door to the group home.

Mitchell was a quiet man who spoke little but was respected by the children in his care, Weber said. "He just had a way with kids," she said.

Some of the children from the home worked at the restaurant, she added. "They always came to work, and they always did a good job and they were always more than happy to help us," Weber said.

Kay Piskorski, mother of the Trading Post's owner, said some of the children would come to the restaurant to buy pie for Mitchell and his wife.

"Good kids, all of them," she said. "Things aren't going to be the same. We're going to miss them. It's unbelievable."

Sorensen identified the children who died as Austyn Ackinson, 11; Tony Mitchell, 4; Tayla Mitchell, 10; Andy Dawson, 13, and Jeremy Franks, 17. Weber said Mitchell had adopted Tony and Tayla.

The ages of the hospitalized children were 3, 13, 15, 16, 17 and 17, officials said. The age of one child who suffered minor injuries was not released.

Kit Carson is about 130 miles southeast of Denver. U.S. 287, a mostly two-lane highway, cuts across the sparsely populated eastern plains of Colorado and is popular with truckers on north-south trips through the state.

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1p121 '11 Chevrolet Impala LTZ, p. win.-drs-seat, remote start h. leather, XM, OnStar, Bluetooth, dk. gray, 12,400 miles	\$22,779
1p68a '11 Chevrolet Cobalt LT, p. win.-drs-seat, red, 27,000 miles	\$14,889
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1p65 '11 Chevrolet Impala LT, p. win.-drs-seat, CD, maroon, 11,700 miles, spoiler	\$22,979
1p67 '11 Chevrolet Impala LT, p. win.-drs-seat, CD, black, 17,000 miles	\$18,959
1p124a '10 Chevrolet Impala LS, p. win.-drs-seat, CD, white	\$15,979
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1p55 '10 Chevrolet Cobalt LT, p. win.-drs, spoiler, CD, black	\$14,477
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0p103a '06 GMC Envoy Denali XL, p. win.-drs-seat-sunroof, heated leather, blue	\$23,450
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1p149 '11 Chevrolet Cruze LTZ, auto, air, cruise, p. win.-drs, sunroof, leather, black	
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1p145 '11 Chevrolet Traverse LT, All Wheel Drive, p. win.-drs-lift, remote start, rear camera, silver	
1p146a '08 Chevrolet Impala LT, p. win.-drs-seat, XM, CD, remote start, silver	
1p141a '08 Chevrolet Impala LT, luxury pkg., p. win.-drs, spoiler, heated leather, alum. whls, bright red	
1p139b '06 Dodge Ram 1500, 4wd, p. win.-drs, keyless, CD, alum. whls, white	
1p139c '06 Chrysler Town & Country, p. win.-drs-seat, keyless, fwd, black	
1p129a '06 Mini Cooper "S", sport pkg, supercharged intercooled OHC, htd. leather, dual p. sunroof, CD, chrome pkg, pepper white	
1p7b '05 Chevrolet Colorado LS, fwd, CD, alum. whls, black	
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