

OF THE OUTDOORS | GARY HOWEY

Hunting Doves Late In Season

BY GARY HOWEY
Hartington, Neb.

It was Sept. 27 as I drove towards the pond weds planned on hunting and I was beginning to wonder if this late season dove hunt was such a good idea after all, as I hadn't seen a Dove anywhere. It wouldn't take long for my questions to be answered as we were about to embark on the finest dove hunts I've ever had the opportunity to be part of.

We hadn't been on the pond long when my hunting partner spotted seven small specs on the horizon and they were coming in fast at treetop level, my hunting partner Anthony Thoen and I were ready for them and as they came over the trees, making their final approach on our two motorized MoJo Decoys, as Doves often do, they divided with four swinging to the right while three veered off to the left.

As they roared into the pond, and our first shot rang out, their aerial acrobatics began, as they tumbled, changed altitude and directions making it difficult for us to get a bead on the little buggers, but when the smoke finally cleared, my lab, Mo Jo, retrieved three doves, giving us an excellent start to our late season dove hunt.

Since Doves are migratory, they're one of the most sought-after games birds in

the nation and when the dove season opens it's a huge boost to the ammunition industry as it's said on the average it takes 10 shells to bag a bird and we were trying our best to at least make that average.

The next group came in low from the southeast and where I was set up, tucked into the back of a one of the cedar trees that Anthony had placed on either side of the dam to conceal the hunters, they soon swooped in over the top of the cedar, and immediately did their usual duck and weave towards the pond.

I frantically tried to get on the birds, but simply blew holes in the air as they winged their way towards my hunting partner who was able to take one of the fleeing birds as they blew by him.

We were well on our way to our limits when Dani Thoene, Anthony's brother joined us, adding his MoJo motorized dove to the two we'd put out when we arrived and that's when it really got crazy as we had doves coming in from all directions and they weren't coming in alone, they were coming towards us in squadrons.

Anyone who within hearing distance must have thought a war was going on as at times all three hunters were firing on the incoming birds.

They came from the south, then east, west north and then from two or three directions, and as we'd swing on one bunch of birds, others would come winging in from another direction, to say the least it was hectic and on several occasions, I found myself pulling up on a group of birds, firing on one bird and the swinging on another only to find out that the last



SUBMITTED PHOTO
The three MOJO mechanical dove decoys set up around the small pond attracted the birds, drawing them in while distracting their attention away from the hunters.

shell I fired was the only one I had in my shotgun.

It wasn't too long before Anthony ran out of shells for his 20 gauge and had to make a quick trip back to the house for more ammo, shortly there after, Dani ran short of shells and as anyone who knows me can attest to, I'm "never" short of ammunition ever since I'd run out of ammunition on one occasion while serving in Viet Nam.

Dani and I continued pounding on the birds and when Anthony returned all three of us lit the sky up as groups of Doves continued to make their way into

the dam.

My lab, Mo Jo, had only been out once this season, and that was on a very unsuccessful first day dove hunt and now was getting a workout, retrieving and chasing down all the birds we'd dropped.

The flights continued until just before the end of legal shooting time, which was good as we needed just a couple of birds to fill our forty-five bird limit.

I'm not sure if we'd hit the migration from the North perfectly or if the local birds were just bunching up in preparation for their migration, but what ever it was, it was unbelievable and I've never had the opportunity to see as many and as large groups of doves decoying at one time.

As long as the weather doesn't turn too nasty, there's still a lot of time left in the dove season as it runs through Oct. 30 in Nebraska and though Nov. 9 in South Dakota.

Once wet weather rolls in or there are several days where the temperatures get close to freezing, the doves will make their southward migration and we'll have to wait until next season in order to get the opportunity to hunt the aerial acrobats of the bird kingdom, the Morning Dove!

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is a former tournament angler, hunting and fishing guide. His Outdoorsmen Adventures television series can be seen throughout the upper Midwest on Fox affiliates. For more information on the outdoors go to www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.

Outdoor Briefs: Brian Nielsen Fishing Tourney Set For Oct. 22

The fourth annual Brian Nielsen Fishing Tournament will be held Saturday, Oct. 22, at the Weigand boat docks at Lewis & Clark Lake in Yankton.

Meeting and registration will start at 7:30 a.m., with the start time set for 8 a.m. Weigh-ins will commence at 3 p.m.

All proceeds raised will be donated to local charities.

Cash prizes will be awarded for first, second and third place, along with a prize for the biggest fish.

For more information, or to register, contact Julie and Mark Nielsen at 664-1072 or 665-9522.

GFP Commission Votes To Raise Mountain Lion Quotas

RAPID CITY — The South Dakota Game Fish and Parks Commission has voted to raise the harvest limit for the upcoming 2012 Mountain Lion Hunting Season.

The initial proposal by the commission was for a harvest limit of 60 lions, with a sub-quota limit of 40 female lions. After receiving two months' of written testimony, followed by oral testimony during a public hearing, the commissioners voted to raise the limits to 70 total lions, or a sub quota of 50 females.

The commission also voted to incorporate Custer State Park into the statewide Mountain Lion Hunting Season, which will run from Jan. 1-March 31, unless the overall quota or sub quota is reached sooner. Last year, Custer State Park (CSP) had its own limit of lions and was restricted to 10 hunters.

For the 2012 season, lions harvested in Custer State Park will count toward the statewide season limits. The change will allow more hunters access to the park, under certain rules. Custer State Park rules: A limited number of mountain lion license holders will have the opportunity to hunt in the park. Individual interested in hunting mountain lions in CSP must enter their names into a random drawing to obtain a free Special Access Permit to hunt mountain lions in the park. Those hunters will also be able to hunt outside CSP as part of the regular season.

Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified by email. To maximize lion hunter participation in CSP, successful applicants will be required to respond within four days of the email notification that they plan to participate in order to receive a Special Access Permit. If no response is received, an applicant's name will be removed from the list to get the special permit.

There will be six time periods to hunt mountain lions in CSP; 15 Special Access Permits will be issued for each of those hunting periods. Each period includes two weekends. License holders may submit their names for each hunting period, but will only be drawn for one.

Nebraska G&P Sets 3 Special Deer Hunts

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has scheduled three special antlerless deer hunts.

They will be held at Eugene T. Mahoney and Platte River state parks as well as Schramm Park State Recreation Area.

Successful applicants will get a permit that allows them to hunt antlerless deer in designated areas of a park on designated dates, using specific equipment.

Applications will be accepted through Oct. 31. If there are more applicants than permits, a drawing will be held Nov. 2.

Application forms can be obtained by calling Mahoney park at 402-944-2523, Ext. 7122; Platte River park at 402-234-2217; Schramm park at 402-332-3901; or Game and Parks at 402-471-5597.

Legal equipment at Mahoney and Platte River state parks are archery and muzzleloaders. The legal equipment at Schramm park is archery.

Nebraska G&P Schedules Trout Stockings

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has scheduled stockings of rainbow trout in several state lakes and ponds.

The trout are at least 10 inches long and can be caught in a variety of ways.

The commission says that in the coming week, rainbow trout will be stocked at Benson Park Pond and Standing Bear Lake in Omaha, Auble Pond in Ord, Weeping Water Pond in David City Park West Pond, Pawnee Park West Pond in Columbus and Ansley Lake.

The following week, rainbow trout will be added to Holmes Lake and Bowling Lake in Lincoln, TaHaZouka Park in Norfolk and Lake Halleck in Papillion.

TROPHY SPOTLIGHT



SUBMITTED PHOTO
Jaime Villatana caught this massive, 46-inch, 39-pound, paddlefish on Oct. 2 below Gavins Point Dam.



PHOTO: CAPTAIN NORM'S
Dewayne Llewellyn caught this 3-pound smallmouth bass during a recent outing.



PHOTO: CAPTAIN NORM'S
From left: Wayne Friessen, Steve Wojciechowski, Julie Sudbeck (guide service) and Cindy Dvorak caught these two channel catfish at the Missouri River on Sept. 25.

S.D. Pheasant Counts Down, But Still Good

PIERRE — Pheasant brood counts indicate that pheasant numbers in South Dakota have returned to levels below the remarkable high counts of the past few years.

However, the pheasant population in the main part of the state's pheasant range will still provide quality hunting opportunities.

From 2003 through 2010, the statewide pheasant-per-mile index was at levels not seen in the previous 40 years. The index this year is 46 percent lower than the 2010 index and 41 percent lower than the average of the past 10 years.

"We observed abnormally high mortality of hen pheasants

during the brutal winter of 2010-11," said Jeff Vonk, Secretary of the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department. "The loss of that reproductive potential inhibited the ability of our pheasant population to rebound to the record levels that we have enjoyed in recent years."

Declines in the counts were consistent across the state and most pronounced in eastern South Dakota, where winter's grip was tightest and grassland nesting habitat is diminished.

"We knew this day was coming when important pheasant habitats provided by the cover in Conservation Reserve Program fields were lost," Vonk said.

CRP enrollments in the state

are currently at 1.17 million acres, down from 1.56 million acres in 2007. The reduction equates to over 600 square miles of grassland habitat.

"On the other hand, we were pleasantly surprised how well pheasants responded in central South Dakota, where abundant moisture from winter snow and spring rain allowed grasslands to flourish and provide the essential habitat for excellent pheasant production," Vonk said.

The counts in the main pheasant range are similar to or higher than the counts in 2002 when hunters bagged 1.2 million pheasants. Pheasant hunters harvested 1.8 million pheasants in 2010.

Cards Within Win Of Pennant, Beat Brewers 7-1

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Ryan Braun and Prince Fielder failed to come up with any clutch hits, and sloppy Milwaukee committed four errors.

At least the Brewers are headed home.

Zack Greinke pitched into the sixth inning, but the St. Louis Cardinals took advantage of Milwaukee's shaky fielding to score three unearned runs in a 7-1 in Game 5 of the NL championship series on Friday night.

St. Louis moved within one win of reaching the World Series for the third time since 2004 and first time since winning it all in 2006.

The NLCS now shifts to Miller Park, where the Brewers compiled a major league-best 57-24 home record this season. Game 6 is Sunday.

"I have a lot of confidence in our guys," manager Ron Roenicke said. "They are confident at home. We can win two ballgames at home. We are going to have to play a lot better baseball than what we have played here. So yesterday, I thought we played a great ballgame; clean. We did a lot of things

well. The other two games, no. So we can't play games like that and beat these guys two in a row."

St. Louis went 4-5 in Milwaukee this season, more wins than any other visiting team, and split the first two games of the series at Miller Park.

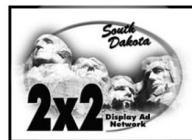
Greinke got off to a shaky start, and his defense didn't help much either.

With one out and Lance Berkman on first in the second inning, Greinke hit David Freese with a pitch and Yadier Molina followed with a double to right that gave the Cardinals the lead.

Third baseman Jerry Hairston Jr. then made a diving stop on Nick Punto's liner before pitcher Jaime Garcia's hard grounder went through his legs for a costly error that allowed two runs to score.

Shortstop Yuniesky Betancourt's error led to another run in the sixth that made it 5-1. Rafael Furcal reached on a two-out double before Betancourt booted Jon Jay's grounder, putting runners on the corners. Albert Pujols then hit an RBI single into left field.

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