

OUTDOORS DIGEST

Of The Outdoors | Gary Howey

GF&P: 11 Pheasant Season Reminders

PIERRE - Pheasant season brings family and friends together for exciting and fun memories, and the South Dakota Game Fish and Parks Department offers some reminders to make sure all hunters have safe and legal outings.

The daily limit for pheasants is three, with a possession limit of 15; however a hunter cannot possess 15 pheasants until after the fifth day of the season.

** It is illegal to allow a firearm to protrude from a motor vehicle or conveyance attached to it while on a public highway during the hunting season. This includes hunters riding to and from fields in the back of pickups.

** It is illegal to shoot from a motor vehicle, including an ATV while hunting pheasants. This also includes hunters riding in the back of pickups to and from fields.

** When riding in an ATV, firearms must be completely enclosed in cases and unloaded. Landowners on their own land and those who have concealed pistol permits and carrying pistols are exempt from this provision.

** It is illegal to shoot pheasants and other small game from ATVs, except for properly permitted disabled hunters.

** When small-game animals, such as pheasants, are lawfully shot from road rights-of-way and fall onto private land, those animals may be retrieved by unarmed hunters.

** Don't forget your license. While hunting, you must be in possession of your hunting license; those 16 and older must also have a valid form of identification for the purpose of verifying identity.

** The use of nontoxic shot for small game is required on most public lands, but not all. Non-toxic is not required on U.S. Forest Service National Grasslands, state school lands or on most GFP-managed and leased properties designated at Walk-In Areas when hunting small game, such as pheasants or grouse.

** Respect the land, landowners and people in your hunting group.
 ** Safety and enjoyment of friends and the outdoors leads to a successful hunt.

S.D. State Parks To Host Halloween Events

PIERRE – Campgrounds are open year-round, and several parks will host trick-or-treaters at special events this Halloween season.

Make plans to attend a Halloween event: Halloween Night Hike, Friday and Saturday, Oct. 23-24, 5:30 to 8 p.m. MDT at the Peter Norbeck Visitor Center in Custer State Park. Participants take a guided one-mile night hike along a path lit only by jack-o-lanterns during this festive educational event. Reservations are required. Info/reservations: 605.255.4464

Canine Halloween Hike and Costume Contest, Saturday, Oct. 24 at 3 p.m. CDT at Good Earth State Park near Sioux Falls. Bring your dog in costume and join a guided hike. Prizes will be awarded for the best costumes. Dogs must be on a leash. Info: 605.987.2263

Big Sioux Trick or Treat Trails, Saturday, Oct. 24, 5 to 8 p.m. CDT at Big Sioux Recreation Area near Brandon. Dress in your Halloween costumes and trick-or-treat along the trail. Bring a flashlight and search for reflective signs along the way. Info: 605.582.7243

LaFramboise Island Trick or Treat Trails, Sunday, Oct. 25, 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. CDT at LaFramboise Island Nature Area in Pierre. A trail marked by reflective signs will guide participants through the wooded nature area. Trick-or-treaters can gather prizes, informational material and treats by visiting event sponsors at stops along the trail. Bring a flashlight. Info: 605.773.2885

There is no cost to participate in any of these events, although a park entrance license is required at Custer, Big Sioux and Richmond Lake. Participants should wear comfortable hiking shoes and dress for the weather. Children must be accompanied by adults

Costumes are encouraged for the hikes but not required.

Reservations for campsites, camping cabins and group lodges can be made online at campsd.com or by calling 1.800.710.2267.

For more information on the state parks or to see a calendar of upcoming events, visit gfp.sd.gov or call 605.773.3391.

Producers Should Consider CRP Opportunities

LINCOLN, Neb. – Agriculture producers are encouraged to visit their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office to see what continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) opportunities are available.

Continuous CRP is a great option for those areas of a farm that are underperforming or difficult to farm. This is also a great time to consider enrollment in the General CRP Sign-up, which starts Dec. 1.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and other partners offer a variety of additional incentives that can make CRP a good business decision.

There are practices available to fit every operation. Among them is the Highly Erodible Land Initiative, which can improve water and air quality, as well as provide wildlife habitat. Another practice, the Nebraska State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement, aims to enhance habitat for bobwhite quail and greater prairie-chickens. CRP doesn't just benefit these species; deer, turkeys, and waterfowl also thrive.

CRP assists farmers, ranchers and other ag producers to use their environmentally sensitive land for conservation benefits. As a result, CRP has provided economically viable solutions for producers and valuable habitat for wildlife.

Minn. Governor's Pheasant Opener

BY GARY HOWEY

Hartington, Neb.

The fall colors were just beginning to pop as we made our way down into the Minnesota River Valley outside of Mankato, Minnesota. The sun was reflecting off the brightly colored leaves, with the reds of the Sumac, along with the red orange and yellows of the Maples looked like one of Terry Redlin's paintings. The valley was lit up with the fall colors and there would be more to come as it was early October and Mother Nature had not yet finished the painting of the trees along the hillside and river valley.

It was pheasant hunting season in the upper Midwest with Team Outdoorsmen Adventures member Larry Myhre and I heading to Mankato for the Minnesota Governor's Pheasant Hunting Opener.

Since I had made several trips to the Mankato area in the past, filming and hunting for waterfowl and archery deer, I knew the area held good numbers of wildlife and having an opportunity to return to the area to sample their pheasant hunting was something I just could not pass up.

This would be a two-day event, starting with a 1:00 o'clock tour Friday of Minneopa State Park and its bison herd, followed by a Swam Lake tour, Swan Lake is a large property spanning 10,000 acres, one of the largest prairie potholes in the contiguous United States. Followed by an opportunity to shoot trap and a trap shooting demonstration by Julia Giefer, 2013 Miss Nicollet, a college student and outstanding shooter.

Friday night at the banquet at the Verizon Wireless Center, over a splendid meal, we had an opportunity to meet some of the fine folks from the Mankato area who helped to put this event together. There we were informed as to what team we would be hunting with; Larry would be hunting with Team 12 while I would be on Team 7.

Over breakfast the following morning, we met with our landowners and fellow hunters. Our Hunter Hosts would be landowners John, Paul and Richard Fitzsimmons and the hunters on our team, which included Senator Tim Walz, his brother Craig, two of the senator's aides Peder Kjeseth and Randolph Bri-



PHOTO: RANDOLPH BRILEY

Minnesota State Senator Tim Walz takes aim on one of the two birds he took during the 2015 Minnesota Governor's Pheasant Opener held near Mankato, Minnesota.

ley, Pat Rivers MN. DNR, Mark Remme, and Jack Zimmerman.

The Senator and his brother made the trip to the field with me, during the ride, I was surprised to find out he was originally from Nebraska and had relatives in my hometown Hartington as well as having common friends in the Valentine area.

Upon our arrival to a large CRP field with heavy grass, brush and trees surrounded by un-harvested corn, our plan was made as to how to approach it. Because of its size and the number of hunters in our group, it needed to be hunted on two passes.

As we made our way into the field, the heavy dew was obvious; pheasants are not fans of heavy dew or getting wet, so they have a tendency to move from wet grass early to drier areas, which could mean, many of the birds may have already made their way into the un-picked cornfields.

I would be on the inside wing while the Senator would be on the outside, with the other two shooters, senator's aides and our dog handlers working in between.

Fearing I might lose what was left of my hearing, I decided to wear my earplugs, hoping to protect it, not thinking the earplugs would also make it tough for me to hear the other hunters or the sound of a rooster flushing.

Fifty yards into the walk, a rooster erupted from the cover to my right, but by the time, I heard one of the other hunters yell rooster, the bird had made its escape.

Hearing loss or not, out came the

earplugs and when the next bird blew from the cover, I brought my gun up, firing at the bird which was well out of range, but, it was one of those deals, I was going to get some shooting, no matter what.

Makin the turn at the end of the first push, those of us on the inside of the field slowed allowing our wingman to swing wide along the shelterbelt and to cover the edge along the un-harvested cornfield.

We would swing into a low spot in the field and, if I learned one thing from hunting hundreds of fields for pheasants, anytime you come across a depression in a field, one out of the wind, you should be ready, as upland game birds love these sheltered areas, especially those with good cover.

Just a few feet into it, out in front, well out of range a flock of birds, ten to fifteen birds erupted in front of us. I was tempted to take a shot, but by the time I had my shotgun shouldered, they had safely made it into the unpicked corn. For early season birds, these birds were spooky, so getting close enough to get a shot would be the toughest part of this hunt.

As our line straightened out, our wingmen, the Senator with his aides worked along edge of the field, just into our second pass that was when a rooster made the last mistake of its life getting up in front of the Senator. In one fluid motion, he shouldered his shotgun, swung on the bird, dropping it in one shot. The rest of the push was uneventful and with one bird in hand, we loaded up and made our way to our

second field.

It would be one with be short-grass, including a slough along the bottom center of the field. Before heading into it, Fitzsimmons, indicated there was one well-educated rooster here as he had encountered it several times, one of those wise old birds.

With this information in hand, our group spread out to make one last pass before the O.A.Vee Wildlife Memorial Wildlife Management Area dedication at noon. I was positioned on the wing on the high ground while the Senator would work along the low ground along the slough.

Shortly after beginning our push, a rooster erupted down below, grabbing air, pumping hard, attempting to put distance from the black Lab that had forced it from the thick cover. Once again, another Minnesota pheasant made a mistake, coming up in front of the Senator, and as before, his shotgun came up quickly putting the bird down just a few wing beats from where the dog had first flushed it

We encountered no birds as we made awe made our way back to our trucks, we reminisced about the hunting, beautiful weather and fall colors.

Approaching our vehicles, guns slung over our shoulders with most unloaded, a thunderous cackle or a laugh was heard as a long tailed beautifully colored "wise old rooster" broke from the cover, flew right over us off into the cornfield.

What a great way to end a hunt, with new friends, laughing amongst ourselves, and the memories of another successful Minnesota Governor's Pheasant Opener.

If you would like more information on Mankato and all the area has to offer, check out these web sites www.visitmankatomn.com and www.mnng-pho2015.com.

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, 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.

TROPHY SPOTLIGHT



PHOTO: CAPTAIN NORM'S
Drew Curphy caught this 63-pound paddlefish.



PHOTO: CAPTAIN NORM'S
Ben Koehler of Rosholt, S.D., caught this 71-pound, 50-inch paddlefish.



PHOTO: CAPTAIN NORM'S
Frank Novotny of Wisner, Nebraska, caught this 70-pound, 48-inch paddlefish.



PHOTO: CAPTAIN NORM'S
John Wulf, of Meadow Grove, Nebraska, caught this 65-pound, 48-inch paddlefish on Oct. 21.



PHOTO: CAPTAIN NORM'S
Jon Evensen of Springfield, S.D., caught this paddlefish.



PHOTO: CAPTAIN NORM'S
Kevin Weiland of South Yankton, Nebraska, caught this 44-pound, 51-inch paddlefish.



Sponsored by:



PHOTO: T.J.'S MINIMART
Jean Koupal caught this 12-pound, 27.5-inch paddlefish on Oct. 13.



PHOTO: T.J.'S MINIMART
Vytas Retikis caught this 44-pound, 45-inch Flathead Catfish earlier this month below Gavin's Point Dam using cut bait.



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