

OUTDOORS DIGEST

Of The Outdoors | Gary Howey

GFP Celebrates Fall With Grouse Opener, Annual State Park Events

PIERRE – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) is welcoming fall this weekend with the grouse and partridge hunting season opener and fun events at two state parks.

Hunters have an opportunity to pursue upland game before the pheasant hunting season begins with the grouse and partridge season opening Saturday, Sept. 19, and ending Jan. 3, 2016.

Travis Runia, upland game biologist for GFP, expects grouse hunting to be better than last year.

Last year, 10,757 hunters harvested 35,790 prairie grouse. The complete 2015 prairie grouse hunting forecast can be viewed online.

Also this weekend, Lewis and Clark Recreation Area near Yankton and Fort Sisseton Historic State Park near Lake City are celebrating fall by hosting family-friendly events on Sept. 19 and 20, respectively.

Fall in the Park at Lewis and Clark is Saturday, Sept. 19, from 1-5 p.m.

CDT. The event includes a number of activities including an obstacle course, outdoor cooking, crafts, games, laser shot, BB gun shooting and archery.

Visitors can also enjoy music by Steel Groove, a steel drum group, from 3-5 p.m. CDT.

Become A Certified Youth Fishing Instructor Oct. 17

LINCOLN – Volunteer youth fishing instructors will be certified by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission at a free workshop on Oct. 17 at Ak-Sar-Ben Aquarium.

This workshop, for anyone age 16 and up who wants to learn how to assist new and novice anglers, will be held from 9 a.m. to noon at the aquarium, which is located at 21502 W. Neb. Hwy. 31, Gretna.

Youth fishing instructors will receive training and tools to conduct fishing clinics. These volunteers will have access to Game and Parks' loaner fishing equipment and educational materials for events, as well as receive program incentives.

To reserve a spot in this workshop, contact Lindsey Chizinski by Oct. 14 at 402-471-5591 or [lindsey.chizinski@nebraska.gov](mailto:lindsey.chizinski@nebraska.gov).

Braggin' Board



PHOTOS: TJ'S MINIMART  
**Andrew Schieffer caught this 13-pound, 37-inch Blue Catfish.**

# Grouse Season Is On

BY GARY HOWEY

Hartington, Neb.

Can you feel it? Can't you see it? It is in the air, the cool brisk temperatures and the breeze that will soon bring the cold weather into our area.

My hunting dog, "Mo" knew it was here; he had a little more bounce in his step when I let him out for his run last night!

He came out of the kennel on a dead run, his nose to the ground, tail high in the air and after two or three laps around the yard, ran to the back of the pickup thinking that it was time to go hunting.

You did not need to look at a calendar to know that fall would arrive this week. You could feel it!

With the arrival of fall outdoorsmen and women, know that hunting seasons have begun.

The sharptail grouse/prairie chicken season opened in South Dakota Sept. 19-Jan. 3 and in Nebraska from Jan. 1-Dec. 31.

Hunters in South Dakota who hope to bag a prairie chicken would do best to hunt the south-central part of the state as they are found mixed sharptails east of the Missouri River and west of the Missouri from Haakon and Stanley counties south to the Missouri River.

You will find scattered coveys of grouse on public lands east of the Missouri, with the best hunting being found farther west. In eastern South Dakota, sharptails are present but not as abundant as in the west central part of the state.

The daily bag limit is 3 in any combination with a possession limit of 15 that need to be taken over a five-day period.

The Nebraska Game & Parks lek counts are similar to those of last year, where grouse hunters in the Cornhusker State enjoyed good to excellent success last season.

Grassland conditions have improved significantly through western Nebraska, which could translate into good nesting and perhaps improve numbers of grouse.

In Nebraska, the larger populations of grouse can be found in the western part of the state, with good populations being found from O'Neill west.

West of Highway 81 the daily grouse limit in Nebraska is 3 with a possession limit of 12 birds. Hunters west of Highway 81 need only their upland game permit and habitat stamp to hunt grouse.

East of Highway 81 grouse hunters are required to have the upland game permit, habitat stamp and a special permit that can be obtained through the Game & Parks.

For those of you that do not have a whole lot of experience hunting grouse, you will need to know that these birds are a lot different from other gamebirds.

Unlike their cousins, the pheasant and quail inhabiting the heavy



TEAM OUTDOORSMEN ADVENTURES PHOTO  
**Team Outdoorsmen Adventures Member Doug Haas, from Mitchell, is pictured with a limit of grouse taken when he hunted on the National Grasslands south of Pierre.**

cover found in eastern Nebraska, the grouse is a creature of the prairie.

Like most other wildlife that lives on the prairie, they depend on their eyesight for safety.

Grouse will be found in areas where they can danger coming from a long distances. At times it will be an area with thinnest cover as this gives them the ability to spot danger at a distance.

Since they inhabit the prairie, where it seems like its always windy, look for grouse on the downwind side of a ridge or hill.

Grouse will move into thick cover to get out of the sun and I have found them nestled under a cedar tree on very warm sunny days.

If you are hunting on a day that is very warm, especially during the early season, look for them around stock tanks, ponds or any location where they might easily find water.

The edges of irrigated alfalfa fields are also a good spot to look for grouse as the alfalfa is a good food source for the birds and the irrigation systems wheel tracks generally hold enough water to quench the grouses thirst.

I have found that a good way to locate grouse is by carefully looking a field over before hunting it with my field glasses, as grouse will usually have a sentry or two with their head

protruding above the grass watching for danger.

As a friend of mine once said, "what you want to look for are the sentries. They always have one or two keeping an eye on things, so look for something out there that resembles the top of a bowling ball as the sentry grouse's long neck will be protruding above the cover."

You will not need a heavy game load to hunt grouse as a 7 ½ shot works well during the early season. Early season birds will set longer before flushing, as many of the birds are the young of the year.

Later on in the season, once the birds have been pressured, a 6 shot gives you a little more knock down power at longer range as the birds are more apt to flush wild.

Hunting grouse can be demanding because long walks are common unless you spot the birds before you go after them.

Once grouse have flushed, it is not uncommon for them to pump and glide into the next section or even several sections away before landing. This is especially true during the late season.

When hunting grouse or any gamebird during warm weather with dogs, you need to be sure that you bring along lots of water for both yourself and the dog.

If it is warm, I carry a sports squeeze bottle in my vest and water the dog whenever he looks like he is getting hot.

If you like dark meat, then grouse will be right up your alley. It tends to be a bit dry if over cooked, so it is best when cooked to what I call medium rare.

Grouse hunting is a great way to get out into the states prairies and grasslands to hunt prior to the pheasant opener.

It is also an excellent way to get yourself and your dog in shape for your next hunt.

*Gary Howey, who resides in 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 on KTTM/KTTW- Fox TV, Sioux Falls/Huron, S.D. 6:30 am Saturday and on the MIDCO Sports Network Thursday at 5:30 pm and Sunday at 10:00 am. The show airs in nine states in the upper Midwest. He and Simon Fuller are the hosts of the Outdoor Adventures radio program on Classic Hits 106.3, ESPN Sports Radio 1570 in Southeastern South Dakota and Northeast Nebraska and in north-west Iowa on KCHE 92.1 FM. For more outdoor information, check out [www.outdoorsmenadventures.com](http://www.outdoorsmenadventures.com).*

## Officials: Don't Be Confused By Moose When Hunting

With moose being reported throughout the Panhandle in recent months, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission is urging hunters this fall to be certain of their target before taking a shot.

Moose can be similar in appearance to other big game animals. Elk hunters especially will want to study game closely before firing a shot or releasing an arrow.

Since this spring, moose have occasionally been re-

ported at locations from the western edge of the Panhandle eastward to Bridgeport and Sidney, and now farther north. The latest moose report was early this week – that of a young bull near Crawford in the northwest corner of the state.

Game and Parks officials also remind people to keep their distance from any moose they may encounter as some have been known to become aggressive.

## Custer SP To Host 50th Annual Buffalo Roundup

PIERRE - The South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) will host the 50th Annual Buffalo Roundup and Arts Festival in Custer State Park later this month. The Buffalo Roundup begins at 9:30 a.m. MDT on Friday, Sept. 25. The Arts Festival will open Thursday, Sept. 24, and runs through Saturday, Sept. 26.

"Each year, the Buffalo Roundup brings more than 10,000 spectators from around the world to Custer State Park to view the park's 1,300 buffalo and watch the Old West come alive," said Doug Hofer, director

of the Division of Parks and Recreation. "The arts festival features entertainment and activities for the entire family as well as more than 150 arts and craft exhibitors."

The parking areas for the Roundup, located near the corrals along the Wildlife Loop Road, open at 6:15 a.m. MDT and close at 9 a.m. MDT on Sept. 25. For safety reasons, spectators need to remain in the viewing areas until all the buffalo are corralled; typically around noon.

The annual Arts Festival runs from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. MDT on Thursday and Friday

and from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 26. The Arts Festival takes place near the State Game Lodge.

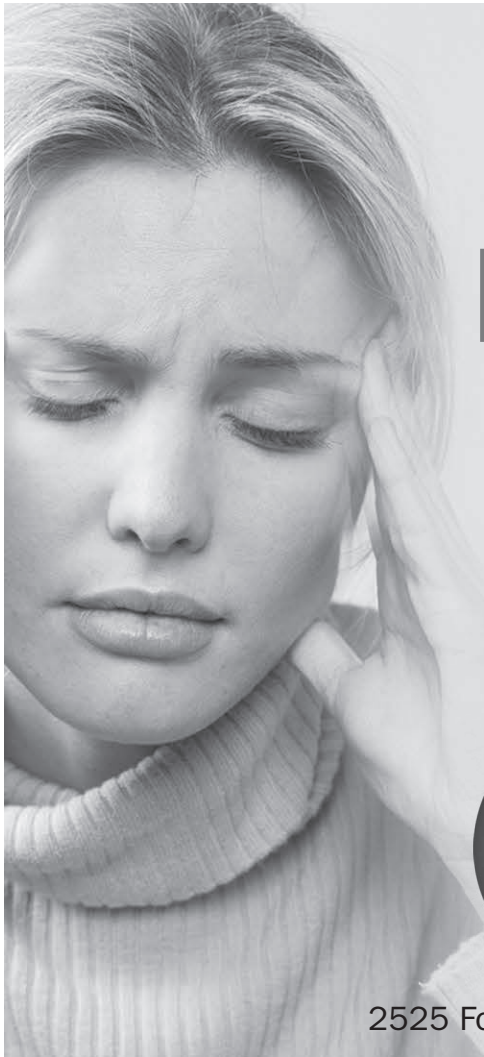
"The Buffalo Roundup serves the purpose of herd management, but it also provides our visitors an experience that is unique in all the world," said Jim Hagen, Secretary of the Department of Tourism. "We hear from visitors around the globe about how incredible it is to watch the bison thunder over the prairie. It's something they never forget."

A state park entrance license is required on Thurs-

day and Saturday, however, there is no cost to attend the Buffalo Roundup or Arts Festival on Friday. Share this year's event photos with us and let others who cannot attend take in the experience with you by using #SDintheField and #HiFromSD when posting images to Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

Next year's Buffalo Roundup will be held Friday, Sept. 30, 2016.

To learn more about the event, visit [custerstatepark.com](http://custerstatepark.com), call 605.255.4515 or email [CusterStatePark@state.sd.us](mailto:CusterStatePark@state.sd.us).




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