

# North Dakota Wildlife Federation

## *Flickertales*

*Fall 2024*



*Advocating for the conservation of wildlife, habitat, and access for North Dakota's hunters, anglers, and other outdoor users.*



# North Dakota Wildlife Federation

*The North Dakota Wildlife Federation (NDWF) is North Dakota's oldest, largest, and most effective conservation organization. NDWF was founded in 1935 by hunters, anglers, landowners, and other conservationists : who advocated for the conservation of wildlife, habitat, and access for North Dakota's hunters, anglers, and other outdoor users. Our dedicated affiliates, volunteers, and staff maintain this legacy.*

## **Affiliates**

Barnes County Wildlife Federation  
Beach Firearms & Trap Club  
Cass County Wildlife Club  
Central Morton Sportsmen's Club  
Eddy County Rod & Gun Club  
Garrison Wildlife Club  
Hannaford Conservation & Wildlife Club  
Hiddenwoods Sportsmen's Club  
Kindred Wildlife Club  
Lewis and Clark Wildlife Club  
Missouri Valley Shooting Sports Association  
North Dakota Hunters Education Association  
North Dakota Houndsmen Association  
North Dakota Fur Hunters & Trappers Association  
Red River Area Sportsmen's Club  
Richland County Wildlife  
Stutsman County Wildlife Federation  
Tri-County Trap & Wildlife Club

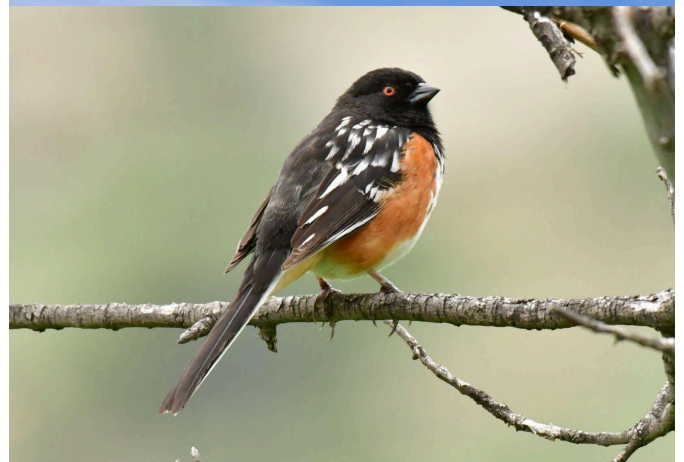
## **Executive Board Members**

Kerry Whipp, President, Pingree  
Greg Gerou, Vice President, Wahpeton  
Rod O'Clair, Treasurer, Jamestown  
Mike McEnroe, Secretary, Fargo  
Dave Brandt, NWF Representative, Buchanan  
Dave Dewald, Past President, Bismarck

## **At Large Board Members**

Josh Holm, Director 1, Valley City  
Courtney Wilhelm, Director 2, Williston  
Mike McEnroe, Director 3, Fargo  
Paulette Scherr, Director 4, Kensal  
Derrick Rogers, Director 5, Valley City  
Nick Simonson, Director 6, Bismarck  
Daryl Simmons, Director 7 Garrison  
Sara Wagner, Director 8, Tioga  
Joe Keller, Director 9, Wahpeton

Photos: Mike LaLonde, Matt Patrias, Nick Simonson, John Bradley



## *From the Executive Director*

As Executive Director of the North Dakota Wildlife Federation (NDWF), I write to you in the midst of a devastating wildfire season. The 2024 wildfires have ravaged western North Dakota, leaving behind not only scorched landscapes but also a trail of destruction for wildlife, ranchers, and communities that depend on these lands.

These fires have burned through vast tracts of our state, threatening ecosystems that are crucial to North Dakota's outdoor heritage. But the damage doesn't stop there. Our ranching communities-stewards of the land for generations-are facing unprecedented losses. The fires have destroyed grazing lands, essential for livestock, and have decimated fencing and water infrastructure critical to ranching operations. Livestock losses are mounting, with ranchers struggling to safeguard their herds. The destruction of fencing and water infrastructure has compounded their difficulties, creating barriers to recovery and threatening the livelihoods of families who are already facing a harsh economic climate. These ranchers not only feed our nation, but play an important role in maintaining the health of our prairies and grasslands by keeping grass right side up.



With this message, I'm asking for your help. The NDWF has launched an [emergency relief fund](#) to support both our wildlife and the ranchers who have been affected by these fires. **Your donation, matched 1:1 with Federation dollars** will make an immediate impact by contributing to the following critical efforts:

- **Rancher Support:** Your donations will help provide relief for ranchers who have lost fencing, water infrastructure, and grazing lands. We are collaborating with agricultural and conservation organizations to provide materials for rebuilding fences, ensuring that livestock can be safely contained, and restoring water access that is critical for both livestock and wildlife.
- **Habitat Restoration:** We are working closely with local landowners, ranchers, and conservation partners to restore critical wildlife habitats that have been devastated by fire. This will include reseeded native grasslands, restoring wetlands, and repairing areas that were damaged in creating firebreaks.

This is a critical moment for North Dakota's ranching communities and the public's wildlife.. The impact of these fires will be felt for years to come, but together, we can begin the process of healing and recovery. The challenges are immense, but with your help, we can support our ranching communities, and protect the wildlife that calls North Dakota home.

[Please consider making a donation today. Whether you can give \\$25, \\$50, \\$100, or more, every contribution will directly support recovery efforts on the ground.](#) Together, we can rebuild the landscapes and communities that make North Dakota such a special place. Thank you for your commitment to conservation, our wildlife, and our ranching heritage. With your help, we can emerge stronger from this crisis and ensure that North Dakota's outdoor traditions continue for future generations. *-John Bradley, Executive Director*



## THE FEDERATION'S WILDFIRE RELIEF PROGRAM

*The North Dakota Wildlife Federation is stepping up to help ranchers in western North Dakota. From now until the end of November all donations to the North Dakota Wildlife Federation will be matched 1:1 up to \$100,000 and go to help rebuild the ranching infrastructure and landscape that was lost in the fires.*

### Donations will go to:



FENCING AND WATER  
TANKS REPAIRS



SOIL HEALTH AND GRASS  
PLANTINGS



RECLAMATION OF  
FIRE BREAKS

### CONTACT US:



701-390-7196



[northdakotawildlife.org](http://northdakotawildlife.org)



PO Box 1091  
Bismarck, ND 58502



**DONATE HERE:**





# Message from Our President

## An Unexpected Opportunity

For more than a week I had been watching a wheat stubble field fill in with Canada Geese in the early morning shortly after sunrise. Positioned on the far eastern edge of the prairie coteau, the field was not much more than one-eighth of a half section, orienting north to south and maybe two hundred yards wide, with much of the field sloping downward to the east. Giant Canada geese would come from the southeast, off the Pipestem Creek one mile away. They would filter in to feed and warm themselves in the morning sun, arriving casually in small flocks of four and six. If left undisturbed, their numbers would grow to one hundred plus. The occasional mallard would also crash the party. This social ritual would require little effort to infiltrate. A dozen large full-body decoys and another dozen silhouettes, with a heavily disguised stubbled ground-blind would adequately do the trick. I could not ask for a more picture-perfect setup. However, there was a potential obstacle – the land was digitally posted.



I reached out to the landowner asking for permission to hunt two days before the weekend. There was an awkward pause after I presented my request. He responded with a question, “What field are you wanting to hunt?” I explained my intentions in more detail than I preferred. The landowner broke eye contact looking at the ground and said, “I have no problem with you hunting my land, but I need to talk to my grandson. I agreed to let him post my land so he and his friends would have a place to hunt when they came home.” My heart sank, but I did my best to muster a polite smile and thanked him for his time. In my mind I knew I was not going to get to hunt this field, and to make matters worse, I just dished out all my scouting efforts on a silver platter. We exchanged phone numbers, and I drove away discouraged.

The weekend arrived and hunting geese had become an afterthought. I did not have a plan-B, so I intended to go grouse hunting instead. It was Saturday night at about 9:00 PM. I had just dropped into my recliner to relax when my cell phone chimed, indicating I had a text message. I recognized the phone number immediately. It was the landowner I had spoken with two days prior. The text read, “Want to hunt tomorrow morning?” I enthusiastically responded with “Yes, thank you,” assuming that he was simply granting me permission. Then a second text came through, “This is Lance, my two friends and I are going to hunt that field you told Grandpa about. We plan to be there at 5:45 AM. Be there whenever it works for you.” My mind went into a sudden tailspin. Do people invite complete strangers to hunt with them? Is this some kind of joke? Maybe I fell asleep in my lounge chair, and I am just dreaming? I turned my head to look at my wife across the living room and said, “I was just

invited to go goose hunting with the family of the landowner I spoke with the other day. Do you think I should go?" My wife smiled and said, "That was very nice of them, of course you should go!" Breaking from my introvert personality, and partially caught off guard by this late-night invitation, I texted back and agreed to meet them at the designated time. For the next hour I sat in my chair pondering what just happened. People just do not invite complete strangers to go hunting with them, do they? Is this even safe? These guys must be half my age. What if they do not have the same hunting ethics I do? What if they do something illegal? Maybe I should not go? It will be Sunday after all, and I was planning to go to church. Maybe I should just text them back in the morning and say I can't make it? Then I realized, I can't do that, he texted me on his grandfather's phone. Crap! What have I gotten myself into?

Early the next morning my alarm started buzzing as I lay in bed already awake. Normally before a morning hunt I would be awake with excitement, but this time I felt apprehension. I got up, made coffee, went through my usual morning routine, tossed my gear in the pickup, and headed out. I arrived a few minutes early and found nobody there. I pulled into the approach, turned my headlights off and sipped my coffee, still wondering if this was a good idea. It was not long, and a large crew cab pickup arrived pulling a home-made enclosed trailer. The truck pulled up alongside and I rolled down my window. Unable to see faces in the dark starry night, I initiated conversation by saying, "Good morning, you must be Lance?" He said, "Yep, so what was your game plan for this morning?" Straight to the point. Sensing they were not interested in chitchat, I gave a quick summary of my original strategy and added that the wind is supposed to be out of the southeast. Then I suggested where and how we should set up. He responded with, "Sounds good, let's do it."

Taking both vehicles, we drove to the spot. All three were out of the pickup and went immediately to work. Little to nothing was said as we set up decoys. They were not rude, just not interested in conversation. All the while I am thinking to myself, either these guys are not morning people, or they are not comfortable having me here. Maybe their grandfather forced them to invite me? Either way, I am here, I know we are going to get to shoot geese, and I am going to make the best of this opportunity.

It did not take long to get decoys set, but a subtle glow was beginning to appear on the eastern horizon. The young hunters already had their blinds stubbled and ready. Probably from an earlier hunt. However, this was my first time out and my blind was still bare. Lance's two friends, without provocation, jumped right in and started helping me stubble my blind, while Lance fine-tuned our decoy spread. I introduced myself to his two friends as we quickly worked. Unconsciously I realized that I had set my blind up about ten feet off to the side of the other three blinds. Lance commented, "you should bring that blind over in line with ours, so we are all in a row." I moved my blind into sequence on the outside edge when Lance spoke up and

said, "I am a left handed shooter. Do you mind if I have the outside edge?" I agreed, and we settled into our blinds. We sat in silence as the sun broke the horizon. We could hear the geese waking with the sun, cackling in the distance. Soon after we heard the unmistakable change in tone and cadence as geese were lifting off the water, heading out for their morning breakfast. Within minutes a small flock of six casually glided over our right shoulders, scoping out our decoy spread. They passed over, flew about fifty yards, and in unison made a wide sweeping turn back in our direction. They were coming in low, cupping their wings for landing. Lance took the lead and gave the command, "Take'em!"

That first volley of shots broke the ice. From then on conversation flowed freely as we lay in our blinds between waves of geese. I got to know all three of them better; where they were from, where they went to college, their degrees, where they work, basic life information. We laughed and poked fun at each other's errant shots. They asked me questions about hunting, my experiences, my opinion on bag limits, chronic wasting disease, baiting, habitat, etc. We even talked about our favorite recipes and cooking methods for wild game. I was appreciative of their curiosity and impressed by their questions and knowledge.

In short order it was 10:30 and we had twenty large Canada geese on the ground. We could hear an offroad vehicle coming through the field. It was the landowner. He stepped from his UTV and approached with a big smile declaring, "You boys have had a good morning," as he admired the lineup of geese we had on the ground. I reached out to shake his hand as I expressed my gratitude for allowing me to be part of the morning hunt with his grandson. He responded, "Don't thank me, it was Lance's idea. But I'm glad to hear you had fun." Then he said, "You boys better hustle up, Grandma has breakfast waiting."

In today's world it is hard not to carry the perception that things are bad and getting worse, especially when things change or don't go our way. We carry a lot of anger, hostility, and negativity around with us. We have lost the ability to trust each other. We group ourselves into generational categories, thinking that ours is somehow better than the next. We criticize, pass judgment, and rarely take the time to get to know one another. On this day I learned that these preconceived notions are not only wrong, but unfair. On this day I spent time with three young men that made me realize that there is still civility in the world and age is only a number. We have a lot in common, if we just take the opportunity to realize.

*For the sake of privacy, the name of the landowner's grandson has been changed.*

- Kerry Whipp, NDWF President

# *Bipartisan Grasslands Conservation Effort Will Help Reverse Wildlife Crisis, Restore Endangered Landscapes*

By: Mike Saccone



WASHINGTON, D.C. — The bipartisan North American Grasslands Conservation Act will catalyze a concerted, collaborative effort to save one of the country’s most important and imperiled landscapes, which support wildlife, communities, livelihoods, and the outdoor recreation economy. The bill, introduced by U.S. Reps. Nancy Mace (R-S.C.), Sharice Davids (D-Kan.), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-Penn.), and Mike Thompson (D-Calif.) will help counter and reverse *the staggering and ongoing loss of grasslands* from conversion to croplands and other drivers, which have exacerbated the wildlife and climate crises.

“Healthy grasslands and shrublands are essential to reducing flooding and wildfires, sustaining robust wildlife populations, and supporting local communities. Building upon the lessons learned over three decades from the highly effective North American Wetlands Conservation Act, the bipartisan North American Grasslands Conservation Act will leverage unprecedented investment to save some of our most imperiled ecosystem,” said Collin O’Mara, president and CEO of the National Wildlife Federation. “This bipartisan proposal will bring long-overdue resources to restore iconic landscapes based upon priorities established through the first-ever North American Grasslands Conservation Strategy, while mobilizing a movement to conserve, restore, and revitalize our prairies for ranchers, hunters, and wildlife alike.”



*“South Carolina’s grasslands are home to some of our state’s most important and iconic wildlife like Northern Bobwhites and the Eastern meadowlark. The bipartisan North American Grasslands Conservation Act will help drive science-based, voluntary efforts to conserve this important landscape and ensure it endures for future generations. Thank you to Representative Nancy Mace and her colleagues for leading this important, bipartisan effort to restore one of South Carolina and the nation’s most threatened ecosystems.”*

*“As the Kansas Wildlife Federation approaches its 75th anniversary, we are committed to contributing to the conversation about grassland conservation in our state,” said Alfonso Leyva, president of the Kansas Wildlife Federation. “Protecting North America’s grasslands is essential for Kansas’ wildlife, ranchers, and environment. The North American Grasslands Conservation Act provides the tools and support needed to restore these vital ecosystems while empowering land stewards to lead the way.”*

*“We know that a huge barrier to protecting Native lands and resources is a lack of sustainable funding,” said Shaun Grassel, CEO of Buffalo Nations Grasslands Alliance and a member of the Tribal Advisory Council for the National Wildlife Federation. “The North American Grassland Conservation Act provides much-needed grants to Tribes and Tribal organizations to carry out Indigenous-led conservation of culturally and ecologically important wildlife species. Together, we can protect an ecosystem that not only mitigates the effects of climate change, but has significance to Native peoples.”*

*Grasslands and sagebrush shrub-steppe are some of the most threatened ecosystems in the world. According to recent research, the United States lost 1.1 million acres of grasslands every year from 2008 through 2016. An average of roughly 1.2 million acres of sagebrush burn each year due to invasive annual grasses, which contribute to and fuel catastrophic wildfires. This habitat loss has caused total grassland bird populations to decline by more than 40 percent since 1966. Some species, such as the Western meadowlark, are at heightened risk of extinction. Species like the bobwhite quail have seen declines of nearly 85 percent over the past several decades.*

*The North American Grasslands Conservation Act authorizes \$60 million in grants to support voluntary grassland and sagebrush restoration and conservation projects, such as incentivizing prescribed burns, managing invasive species, grazing management training and grassland conservation easements. Additionally, the bill’s funding opportunities also will help Tribal nations to engage in grasslands conservation and include Tribal representation on the program’s governing council. The legislation also would promote the application of Indigenous traditional ecological knowledge in restoring and sustaining grasslands.*

## **ND Deer Health Good in Slow Rebound**

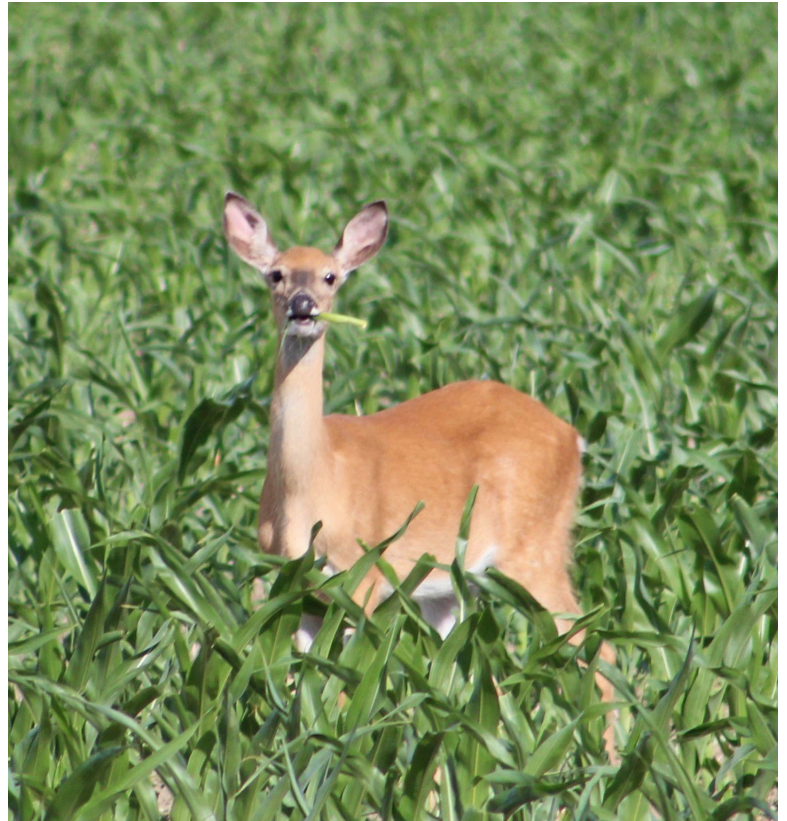
By: Nick Simonson

*Deer populations across the Peace Garden State have recovered from a brutal winter of 2022-23 which decreased their numbers by more than a third in some firearms hunting units following that cold weather season which brought more than 100 inches of snow and below average temperatures to the state.*

*Those conditions piggybacked on dry summers in 2021 and 2022 which triggered outbreaks of epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) across the western portion of the state resulting in significant mortality in the whitetail herds in the region, but also some mule deer and other big game as well. However, with the mild conditions of the past winter, and good cover conditions existing during fawning this spring where habitat was available, deer of both varieties are beginning their long climb out of the recent trough, according to Charlie Bahnson, NDG&F Department Wildlife Veterinarian.*

*“All things considered they are in good shape coming off of a couple tough years and winters. Survival looks like it was really good over the winter and we had really very few winter-related mortalities over the winter and quite a bit of good nutrition and habitat on the landscape usually makes for good production in terms of healthy fawns,” Bahnson explains.*

*While the amount of ground cover in the state remains limited due to a significant reduction in conservation reserve program (CRP) acres over the past two decades, the grass that is present on the landscape was thick and lush, buoyed by timely spring and early summer rains. This in turn provided good protection from predators for whitetail fawns this spring, and anecdotal reports of more does with multiple fawns are a bit more common than last year, when some does had no offspring due to the stress from the tough winter. Conditions now have only started to dry up a bit, an event notable in the west as agents have observed approximately two dozen suspected cases of EHD, confirming a number of them in dead whitetails.*





*“Now that we’re three to four years out from that last bad outbreak, this year it has popped up a little bit to where we’ve had at this point a couple dozen reports of dead whitetail deer being found. Stark County would kind of be the epicenter but kind of radiating around there. A couple dozen reports we’ve tested and confirmed EHD in a portion of those and so far it looks like it’s not severe yet, but we probably have a few weeks to go here,” Bahnson states, adding that the first hard frosts of fall will often kill the midges that transmit the EHD virus to deer.*

*Vigilance also remains high for chronic wasting disease (CWD), a highly transmissible prion-borne affliction which causes irreparable brain damage in deer and other cervids, akin to mad cow disease in cattle and Creutzfeldt-Jacob disease in humans. CWD has been detected in a number of firearms hunting units, most notably in south central and northwestern North Dakota. Though recent detections in hunting units just across the border in Minnesota and Manitoba have NDG&F agents on heightened watch for the disease, and hunters play a vital role in not only keeping it from spreading, but also detecting its presence in an area.*

*“Unfortunately there were [CWD] detections adjacent to [North Dakota firearms unit] 3B1 in Minnesota and then last winter Manitoba found it basically straight north of unit 2B, so it’s here and we have to face reality and accept that fact, and the ultimate goal is to just keep it really rare,” Bahnson details, adding that on top of properly disposing of deer carcasses and not using bait to concentrate animals, hunters can keep an eye out for sick-looking deer and report them, “if you see a sick or dead animal out there that died from an unapparent cause, do reach out and let us know. We investigate those situations for lots of reasons: potential poaching cases, CWD, other disease concerns; that helps us ultimately manage a healthy deer population.”*

*Mortality reports unusual deer deaths encountered in the field can be entered online at: <https://gf.nd.gov/wildlife/diseases/mortality-report>. This year’s North Dakota firearm deer season opens at noon on Fri. Nov. 8 and closes one half hour after sunset on Nov. 24, with 50,100 licenses issued. The state’s archery deer season has been open since Aug. 30 and closes Jan. 5, 2025.*

*Simonson is the lead writer and editor of Dakota Edge Outdoors.*

# Wildlife Friendly Fencing - a Win for Landowners and Wildlife



On a beautiful August morning with a slight chill and coolness to the air, 8 others and I are going up and down ravines and carrying our tools and clip aprons. Aspen, sage, creeping juniper, prairie grasses and wildflowers are our carpet and support as we work by climbing and descending coulees. Then the Bobcat with a wire winder follows to get rid of the culprit we are trying to replace. And finally removing posts with the skidsteer or in steeper spots by loosening it by leaning back and forth until the soil relinquishes its prisoner that it held for the life of that post.

The Kostelecky ranch located just east of Grassy Butte has amazing habitat for elk, mule deer, grouse, pheasants, pronghorn antelope, and other wildlife. Logan has been working with Mule Deer Foundation (MDF), ND Game and Fish (NDGF), and North Dakota Wildlife Federation (NDWF) to try to make improvements to his family's ranch for his livestock operation and Wildlife.

Logan and his dad have a strong passion for cattle and wildlife. They want to improve the ranch operation for wildlife. Logan wants to take down 3 miles of fence that has caused damage to wildlife and their habitat. He is working with MDF and NDWF to replace a mile and half of old fence with Wildlife Friendly fence and remove another mile and half of hazardous fence. Logan has seen areas where wildlife were impacted by the old fence and wants to prevent more damage to wildlife by removing unnecessary fences and replacing the needed fences with more wildlife friendly construction.

Five volunteers, MDF staff, NDWF staff, and the Kosteleckys worked to pull fence. The Bobcat company works with MDF to provide machines at no charge to work on pulling posts and winding wire. The volunteers work to pull clips and gather up posts.



Logan's parents John and Brenda own the ranch and Logan is in the process of taking over the family business. Supporting young ranchers is key to protecting North Dakota grasslands. North Dakota is losing its grasslands and by supporting ranchers, we can save the prairies we have left. The work done by Grassy Butte preserves some beautiful country making it better for mule deer, grouse, pheasants, elk and pronghorn antelope.

Logan identified a 1 mile of fence located along 122 nd Ave NW and a 3,189 ft stretch along the south boundary of Section 27 where Mule Deer Foundation would organize a workday to take out the fence. MDF worked on property Logan rents by Beulah Bay in May 2024 to remove fence and then replace at a cost share of \$1.29/ foot. MDF did not have funds to replace the 8,469 feet of fence in McKenzie County. Using the Holmes funds, NDWF could help this new rancher by helping tear out a fence that is not wildlife friendly and replace it with a wildlife friendly fence. The mile stretch of fence will be moved away from 122 nd Ave NW. Currently, because of the hillside and road, snow sits on the fence and causes issues with the fence. Replacing the fence and repositioning it to a better location will be better for wildlife and his operation. In the future, Logan plans to work with the McKenzie County Soil Conservation District to plant new wildlife friendly trees and remove the old tree line which is a stand of dying Siberian (Chinese) elm trees.

The 3,189 feet stretch of fence is on a hillside and has areas of woven wire where Logan and his dad have observed mule deer get hung up.

Logan is an avid hunter and allows hunting on his land with permission. He has 7-8 elk hunters every year. Throughout deer season (archery and gun), Logan gives permission to 1-2 hunters/weekend. He has signs posted with his phone number so hunters can call and ask. Every year, Logan hosts a participant from The Outdoor Adventure Foundation to come and hunt on his land. Typically, it is a youth with cancer or other life-threatening illness. He is also working with an organization to open a weekend to have a military veteran hunt on his land.

Working with private landowners and ranch operators is a winning combination for conservation. This creates a connection between hunters and landowners that benefits both and most of all benefits the species we want to protect.

By: Cara Greger

## *Spoon Fed*



Few lures are as effective at covering water and triggering big fall trout as a spoon cast out over lakes where these fish are once again rising as the water cools with the season. Properly working a spoon, however, goes a bit more beyond the cast-and-crank which will catch fish, but does much better with a few added tweaks to set trout off and connect with better action for rainbows, browns and other species stocked in our regional waters.

### **Pumped Up**

Spoons help cover water where trout are acclimating to the cooling temperatures. In those lakes and reservoirs of 40 feet deep or deeper, it's likely that anything stocked this spring has made it through the heat of summer and is now actively hunting for anything edible, from larger insects and small crustaceans to silvery baitfish and young-of-the-year fish species inhabiting the shallows. A spoon



helps imitate the latter, and provides the impression of something with more substance, generating a strong reaction strike from those trout returning to the feeding zone at the top of the water column or along the shoreline.

A straight retrieve will work, however adding a few changes to that cadence can help really set trout off when throwing a spoon at them. Speeding up the retrieve or slowing it can help key in on the fishes' mood, and adding a few pumps, jigs and twitches of the rod tip will create an erratic action that will get trout to slash at the metallic offering. Additionally, if you feel a bump of your lure, but don't connect, give the lure a quick rip or twitch, and it's likely that trout that missed the hooks on the first pass will come back again with a harder and more direct hit, and a better chance of a positive connection.

### **Clearly Better**

The waters of fall, especially after turnover and later into the season, can be exceptionally clear on small lakes. In those places that don't get much for autumn moisture, expect clarity to be a major factor when it comes to fishing trout this time of year. As a result, utilizing monofilament lines, or adding fluorocarbon leaders to those setups employing superlines as a base, will make a presentation look more natural as it moves through the water. The clearer and lighter the line, the better; so consider downsizing to six-pound-test monofilament on a reel, or using ten-pound-test fluorocarbon on those spooled with superlines.

Be certain too that hooks are sharp. For small spoons just coming from the package, take a hook hone to their points and drag the tip across your thumbnail to check sharpness. If the point leaves a small white scratch, then it's sharp enough to get the job done. While regulations on North Dakota waters don't delve much into the allowed hooks for trout, many other jurisdictions restrict lures to a single hook per lure and ban trebles for ease of release. Some may also require that those hooks be barbless as well to further limit stress during the release for the water's stocked and natural trout. When traveling around the upper Midwest for fall trout, check season dates and those special regulations to play by the rules and best help preserve the opportunities for future trout fishing, via spoon or otherwise.

This fall, turn to some favorite spoons to give that big bite impression to trout. Work them with a few flicks, twitches and pumps to give the bait a jerky action that aggressive browns and rainbows can't resist this time of year and take water clarity into consideration as well. Put the pattern together and you'll likely connect with some of the late season's best open water fishing opportunities for some very unique species.

*By: Nick Simonson*

## ***Fight fire with fire: Turning a destructive force into a powerful tool for rangeland management***

By Chris Maestas, NRCS Public Affairs and Cara Greger, North Dakota Wildlife Federation Bismarck, ND – Recent wildfires in North Dakota have had devastating effects on landscapes, livelihoods, properties and communities. Wildfires are catastrophic and difficult to manage, especially when conditions align for rapid fire spread. On Saturday, Oct. 5, North Dakota experienced a perfect weather day and environmental conditions for wildfires to start and grow uncontrollably. Normally, local Volunteer Fire Departments are able to manage unintentional fires caused by something as simple as a discarded cigarette or a spark from farm equipment. However, that day was different. Emergency response teams were forced into a reactive stance, battling flames fueled by dry grasses, crop residue, and woody plant species like Rocky Mountain Juniper.

North Dakota faces the age-old dilemma: should we manage fire proactively or reactively? Even with the best preparation, there are times when wildfires are inevitable. Yet, in regions where wildfires persist, could better preparation have mitigated their impact? Could more robust control lines or less volatile fuel sources have made a difference?

One proactive solution is prescribed burning. While many view fire as inherently destructive, in contrast to the unpredictable nature of wildfires, prescribed burns are planned, controlled, and conducted under specific conditions. These burns are carried out with clear objectives, such as reducing invasive vegetation, managing woody species, or promoting native wildflowers. Importantly, prescribed burns only take place when conditions allow for safe and effective management.

A prescribed burn begins with a comprehensive plan outlining conditions for the burn, including wind speed and direction, temperature, humidity, and soil moisture. The plan also identifies nearby infrastructure, contacts for emergency services, and any nearby neighbors. Control lines are established in advance, and a crew—briefed on their assignments and equipped with radios and maps—carries out the burn. This level of preparation gives prescribed fires a crucial advantage over wildfires.

Studies show that prescribed fires produce less smoke than wildfires, and the smoke is more predictable, helping to protect human health and reduce disruption to livestock and wildlife. With prescribed burns, residents and landowners can be notified in advance, and sensitive areas can be protected. Wildlife also benefits from prescribed burns, as these fires are typically slow-moving, giving animals time to evacuate. Burns are also timed to avoid vulnerable periods, such as nesting or birthing seasons.

Fires—whether wild or controlled—are intimidating. But with planning, preparation, and proactive management, we can reduce the risks. Prescribed burns offer a safer, more controlled method of fire management, allowing us to better protect our rangelands and habitats.



# Master the Mentoring Process

By Nick Simonson

Mentored hunts, whether part of an organization's efforts to get new hunters into the field, or simply a one-on-one introduction between a veteran and novice are a big part in recruiting and retaining individuals who will not only enjoy the new experiences they have in the field, but likely will keep them coming back and make them advocates as well for conservation and the preservation of those opportunities. At the risk of stressing the fact, a lot rides on a first hunt and the mentoring process associated with it. What follows are some suggestions for setting up the most complete mentored hunt and set the stage for a lifetime of adventure and advocacy in a new hunter.



## **Plan For Success**

Utilizing time ahead of an event, or a scheduled first trip into the field, make sure the mentored hunter is prepared for what's to come. This means setting out expectations of what may be seen in the field, and how a hunter reacts to an incoming set of ducks or the excitement of a flushing rooster or grouse and how a dog is involved in both. In addition, time at the range shooting clay targets and assuring safe firearm use is crucial to help a new hunter feel comfortable ahead of those first steps in the field. Arrange a meeting time for these events and build up to the day of the hunt. When the big day arrives bake in breaks for lunch or travel and set out the locations of private or public land that will be utilized in the process. Additionally, these preparatory opportunities give the mentor and the mentee a chance to learn more about each other and develop a bond that fosters familiarity and better learning in the field.

## **Gear Up**

The mentoring hunter often has extra gear that can be shared with the mentee, but some items should remain personal to the new hunter, particularly bows or firearms. If the new hunter does not own either, add in some extra time in the planning process – sometimes a few months in advance - so that person can become safe, familiar and competent with the chosen bow or gun. While ammo can be

given by the mentor to the novice hunter, it's often best to advocate for a certain type for the chosen quarry and let them purchase and experiment with what loads work best for them. If it comes down to camo, blaze orange, and other basic clothing, odds are there are more than a few hats and vests accumulated in the back corners of a hunting closet that can be spared, if necessary to get someone started in the field.

### **Keep It Fun and Focused**

The rigors of some hunting can be a challenge for novices. The experienced hunter may be able and willing to walk eight or ten miles in a hunting day to pursue a limit of pheasants, but a new hunter might be sore after mile two and ready to call it. Select parcels of land to explore that match the endurance and attention span of the mentored hunter, while still providing good huntable habitat that sets up opportunities for success.

Whether it's a youth season that requires adult mentors to be unarmed or not, it's often best that the mentoring hunter not carry a firearm while accompanying the student on any mentored hunt. This works in two ways, the first being that the new hunter knows that he or she the only person taking a shot, and the second is that it allows the mentor to provide insight via voice and hand directions and ultimately a full focus on the mentoring process by pointing out changes in dog behavior or birdiness, identifying habitat transitions, or signaling upcoming opportunities instead of setting up a shot. At any time if the weather turns, the wind makes it difficult, or the mentee is ready to be done, it's a good idea to wrap things up and take away from the event what was available, sharing lessons and tips from what was observed and when a follow-up hunt can be held.

With these strategies in mind, mentors can help provide the best experience in the field for new hunters, and point out that success – whether that's birds in the bag or not – comes in many forms, from learning about habitat and animal biology, to developing future strategies for hunts to come. Through this planning and the efforts ahead of and during a mentored hunt, mentors can provide the best experience possible.





P.O. Box 1442, Bismarck, N.D. 58502



P.O. Box 1091, Bismarck, N. D. 58502

# Conservation Notes

## *Talking to Legislators*

### **Issue #102, August 2024**

We need to talk! The future of hunting in North Dakota depends on sportsmen and sportswomen talking to their Legislators and convincing them why it is important to maintain our valuable hunting heritage.

Hunting is an activity valued by our citizens and non-residents alike, and is crucial economically to small town main street. But the prevailing attitude in the legislature is “ it’s always been there and so we don’t have to do anything”. The lack of regular communication from hunters, sportsmen and other outdoor recreationists to our Legislature about how hunting is being impacted, is resulting in the deterioration and potential ultimate loss of our hunting heritage.

Therefore, hunters, sportsmen and sportswomen need to contact their legislators with their concerns And, maybe, if legislators listen and take our sportsmen and women seriously, proactive strategies and programs to preserve our wildlife heritage are possible.

For more information on this message or other conservation topics, contact: John Bradley, Executive Director, North Dakota Wildlife Federation, ([jbradley.ndwf@gmail.com](mailto:jbradley.ndwf@gmail.com)), Mike McEnroe, Past President, North Dakota Wildlife Federation([memcenroe@midco.net](mailto:memcenroe@midco.net)) or Rick Nelson, Past President, North Dakota Chapter, The Wildlife Society, ([bluebill@bis.midco.net](mailto:bluebill@bis.midco.net)). For a complete list of Conservation Notes visit ([ndctws.org](http://ndctws.org))-library

## Events

NDWF and our affiliates host educational and social events throughout the year. Check out our Facebook events page for details. Visit [www.northdakotawildlife.org](http://www.northdakotawildlife.org) for upcoming board meetings information.

**October 26 – NDWF Board Meeting, Dickinson**

**November 8 - ND Deer Hunting Opener**

**January 10th - 11th, 2025 – NDWF Annual Convention, Mandan**

## Make an Impact

For over 80 years, the North Dakota Wildlife Federation has depended on donations from conservationists like you to support our work to protect North Dakota's abundant wildlife, our natural lands and waters, and our unmatched public access to the outdoors for future generations to enjoy. We are able to do so much to protect North Dakota's outdoor heritage because people like you decide to support our work. Your financial support is crucial to our ability to stand up to well-funded special interest groups at the North Dakota Capitol and in Congress. We need everyone who values North Dakota's outdoor heritage to get involved.



### NDWF Membership Form

Individual Membership: \$15 - Associate/Business Membership: \$25 - Educational Organization: Free

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

#### Make Checks Payable To:

North Dakota Wildlife Federation  
PO Box 1091  
Bismarck, ND 58502-1091