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2007

South Dakota  
**Wildlife**  
Federation

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# OUT OF DOORS

Affiliated with the National Wildlife Federation

VOLUME 47, NUMBER 10

BARCODED FLATS

## Hunters Greeted by Great Weather, Plenty of Pheasants

Beautiful fall weather and a near-record ringneck population translated into a great day for hunters across South Dakota as they took to the fields for the first day of pheasant season.

In the northeast area of the state hunters enjoyed excellent weather and saw plenty of birds according to GFP Regional Game Manager Will Morlock of Watertown.

“Overall, hunters are doing well,” Morlock said. “It’s been a great opener.”

Limits varied throughout the region. Morlock reported hunters bagging an average of 1.5 birds in Deuel County but getting limits in McPherson, Edmunds, Brown and Spink counties.

Morlock reported plenty of hunting parties in Watertown Friday night, but they easily spread out on Saturday into a large area of pheasant country. “There were no big concentrations of hunters,” he said.

If there was one drawback in the region it was the muddy cornfields. “There’s lots of corn standing,” Morlock said, “and the birds are in the cornfields. It’s really muddy and no one wants to walk those cornfields.”

There were few hunting violations in the northeast region. Morlock said the most serious was a hunter cited for reckless discharge of a weapon near a building.

There was a confirmed hunting accident in Clark County. Morlock said a hunter shot at a low-flying bird and hit his blocker in the face and hands. The victim was taken to a Watertown hospital with injuries that were not life threatening.

Hunting conditions were similar in the southeast portion of the state where hunters enjoyed good weather and saw plenty of birds. Hunters in that area were also hampered by muddy conditions.

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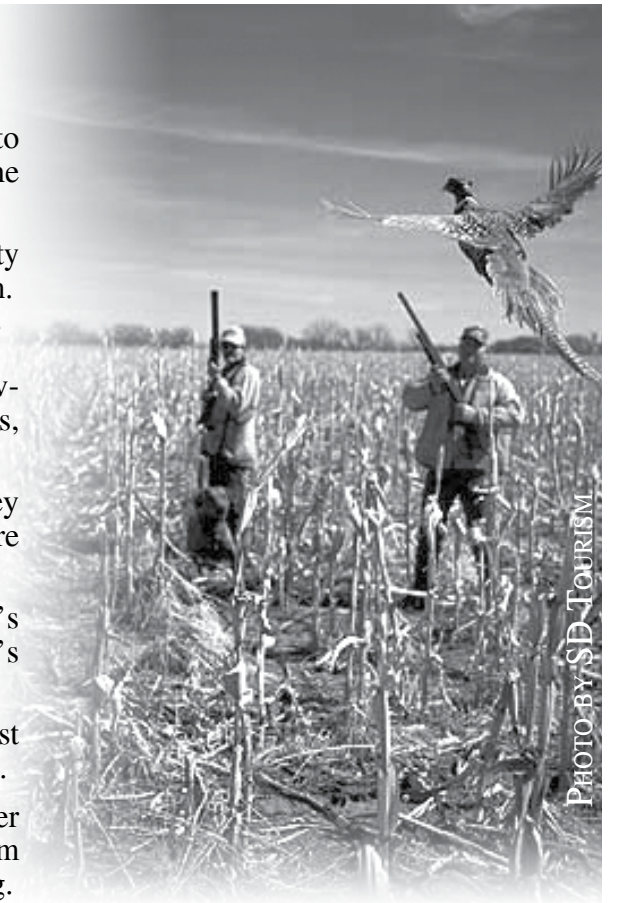


PHOTO BY SD TOURISM

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## Seven Mt. Lions Killed So Far - All Female

RAPID CITY -- Hunters have killed 7 mountain lions in western South Dakota since the lion hunting season began Thursday, November 1.

John Kanta, regional wildlife supervisor for the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks, said a hunter brought in the seventh kill late Sunday. The 2-year-old female was killed in the Southern Hills near Pringle, he said. All of the cougars that have been killed so far have been female. Kanta said none of them appear to have lactated recently or to have kittens. He said he isn't too surprised all of the kills

so far have been female, because the female-to-male ratio of cougars in the Hills is fairly high. But Kanta expects the female-to-male ratio of kills to end up closer to 50-50 by the end of the season, which would be similar to the two prior lion seasons. The season will end when 15 female lions have been killed or 35 total lions have been killed, whichever comes first. If neither quota is reached by Dec. 31, the season automatically ends. It is mandatory for hunters to report lion kills within 24 hours. Each hunter may kill no more than one lion.

**Barb Amundson, of Minnesota was the lucky ticket drawn in SDWF's "Rooster Special" Harley Davidson giveaway.**

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# Executive Director's Update *by Chris Hesla*

**From the reports I have heard, just about everywhere in eastern South Dakota hunters experienced some of the best hunting and bird numbers that rekindle stories and photos from our father's and grandfather's days.**

**As you read this, the Senate has already passed their version of the 07 Farm Bill and now will start into negotiations with the House to combine the two passed pieces of legislation.**

Wow, what a pheasant opener! Even though the wind blew gale force in some areas. From the reports I have heard, just about everywhere in eastern South Dakota hunters experienced some of the best hunting and bird numbers that rekindle stories and photos from our father's and grandfather's days. The phenomenal pheasant numbers are mostly due to CRP and government programs that pay producers to leave some of their land idle and allow them to maintain some habitat. As you read this, the Senate has already passed their version of the 07 Farm Bill and now will start into negotiations with the House to combine the two passed pieces of legislation.

My opening pheasant weekend is spent in Potter County on land owned by a very good friend of mine. It has really grown into a tradition that I look forward to more and more each year. The landowner's son and usually at least two of his friends make their annual trip from Texas, along with about 15 others from across South Dakota. We spend Friday getting the farm ready, putting away equipment for the winter, throw in a little target practice, maybe sighting in a deer rifle or two for the up-coming deer season. Early Friday evening we have a very special meal where everyone coming for the weekend usually creates their specialty and brings it along to share. I, as in past years, smoke some sausage and salsa stuffed deer loins wrapped in bacon until they are medium rare and you can actually cut them with your fork. Friday night is spent in the Legion of Gettysburg, donating money to their fundraising efforts to support youth baseball. It is about my 10th year coming to Gettysburg and you see the same friends and people year after year coming for their own tradition in South Dakota's Pheasant Opener.

I was invited to participate in the Annual Governor's Pheasant Hunt hosted usually the second weekend of the pheasant season. This was the 4th hunt that Governor Rounds had invited me to participate in and I must admit I was nervous,

apprehensive and just humbled after what happened to me at last year's hunt.

Some of you know, during last year's Governor's Pheasant Hunt I made the best shot of my life on a pheasant. It was coming with the gusty winds; it was flying high because it was a wild pheasant not a pen raised one. I lifted my trusty shotgun and fired one shot and the bird folded dead and fell about 10 feet from me. WOW! What a heck of a shot I was thinking as I walked over to where the dead "hen" laid. Yes, I said dead hen - not a beautiful colorful legal rooster, but a dead hen...

Wow, what a shot. I thought again too bad it wasn't a rooster! Here I stand in front of my hunting party of people, a couple of the hunters I knew from Pierre, and many others in the party I had just met the night before at dinner. I was thinking to myself what a great impression I am going to make the Executive Director of the SDWF shooting a hen... To say the least, I felt about one inch tall and wished I could have disappeared into thin air.

I won't bore you with too much more information. I turned myself into, at that time, GF&P Secretary John Cooper when I arrived back at hunt headquarters in Pierre. With all of the hustle and bustle going on at hunt headquarters we decided to have a Conservation Officer contact me the following Monday to take care of this problem. I was issued a ticket for illegal taking of a game animal and I paid my \$94 fine to Tripp County as that was the area I was hunting therefore the fines go back to them. When my name appeared in the local paper for the violation and the fine I paid, it was not very long that the electronic blogs picked up on it and was crucifying me for poaching and a couple of larger newspapers in the state had thought they had a big story of me poaching. However, when the truth came out it wasn't very newsworthy and many people could not believe that I had voluntarily turned myself in for shooting the hen. But then it was the "right" thing to do.



# President's Column *by Rieck Eske*

**Youth are our future, the more we can get involved in the outdoors, whether hunting, fishing, camping, hiking or conservation the better our heritage will continue. I believe that with our help they can preserve our heritage that has been carried on for generations.**

We are very fortunate in South Dakota to have the availability of hunting grounds, thru South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks productions areas, South Dakota School & Public Lands and The Walk In areas among others. Hunting and fishing opportunities have been handed down generation to generations.

Statistics show that youth getting into outdoor opportunities has been declining; fortunately South Dakota is not following the trend. To continue to buck the trend we need to start getting more youth involved in the outdoors. We have hunter education classes, which are doing a great job, but it's not enough.

One way is for affiliate clubs to hold Youth Sportsfests. I know of three right now, Watertown, Huron and Aberdeen that host some sort of Sportsfest. There may be others that I am not aware of. If you would like to sponsor an NRA Youth Sportsfest Camp, there are grants available from the Friends of the NRA, which can help defray expenses.

Aberdeen has just completed its 3rd Annual NRA Youth Sportsfest Camp. In the last three years they have averaged 134 youth. A lot of these youth have never had an outdoor experience, other have. They all learn and try different outdoor activities such as .22 shoot, archery, muzzleloader, trap shooting, boating, fishing, trapping, firearm safety and hunting ethics.

Youth are our future, the more we can get involved in the outdoors, whether hunting, fishing, camping, hiking or conservation the better our heritage will continue. I believe that with our help they can preserve our heritage that has been carried on for generations.

So I'm asking all the affiliate clubs to set up a youth sportsfest or some sort of activity aimed at our children and grandchildren, if not volunteer at one that is already running and get youth from your community involved.

Carry on the tradition.



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## OUT OF DOORS

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# Nature Conservancy Buys Conata Basin Area Ranch

*Re-printed from Rapid City Journal*

The Nature Conservancy has purchased a ranch on the edge of Conata Basin, the center of disputes in recent years over prairie dogs and endangered black-footed ferrets.

The Nature Conservancy closed the deal last week with Wayne and Stacy White to buy 4,000 acres of the Whites' deeded land about 10 miles east of Scenic on the southwest edge of Conata Basin, according to Bob Paulson, Black Hills Area program director for TNC.

The purchase includes the Whites' nearby grazing allotments on the federally owned Buffalo Gap National Grassland, including some in Conata Basin.

One area rancher decried the sale.

"I think it's kind of pathetic when a person is trying to make a living and has to sell his ranch to The Nature Conservancy because he is being encroached upon by prairie dogs on three sides and can't make a living anymore," Charles Kruse of Interior said Monday. "We lost a member of the community."

Paulson said The Nature Conservancy doesn't seek out landowners. The Whites contacted The Nature Conservancy about purchasing the land, Paulson said Monday.

"We're interested because it's one of the most complete prairie ecosystems out there, with bighorn sheep, the ferrets and swift fox, which have been reintroduced," he said.

Paulson said he wasn't sure whether ferrets, swift fox and bighorn sheep are on the ranch's deeded land just south of the old town of Imlay on S.D. Highway 44. But he said they are in the greater Conata Basin area.

Paulson said The Nature Conservancy will continue to graze cattle on the ranch. He said The Nature Conservancy grazes cattle on its properties on the Great Plains because the land evolved with grazing. "It's a very appropriate practice."

The ranch also is home to prairie dogs, he said.

Conata Basin has been at the heart of arguments over prairie dogs among ranchers, environmentalists and the U.S. Forest Service over much of the past decade. The Nebraska National Forest, based in Chadron, manages the Buffalo Gap National Grassland.

Ranchers have complained that expanding prairie dog populations have encroached onto their private land and spread over their federal grazing allotments, ruining both for cattle grazing. They have pushed, with some success, for more poisoning of prairie dogs on both private and federal ground.

Environmentalists have argued that more poisoning of prairie dogs will put at risk the endangered black-footed ferrets reintroduced into Conata Basin in the 1990s, as well as other species that depend on prairie dogs.

Paulson said The Nature Conservancy didn't buy the White ranch to kill prairie dogs but would abide by South Dakota law, which requires poisoning of prairie dogs to stop encroachment from private land onto neighboring private land.

"We would be in contact with groups that keep track of prairie dogs, and if there are problems with the neighbors, we would certainly be a good neighbor and abide by the law," Paulson said.

Paulson said, although the ranch shows the stress of drought, the Whites have been good stewards of the land. "It is in great shape."

Paulson would not disclose the purchase price but said it did not exceed the ranch's appraised value. Pennington County officials did not yet have a record of the sale.

The Nature Conservancy will continue paying property taxes on the land.

The Forest Service has traded land with private landowners in the region to reduce private land interspersed with the federal land.

Paulson said The Nature Conservancy doesn't have a specific plan for a land exchange with the Forest Service, but it could be an option.

"We're confident this is the place we want to be working," he said. "We'll learn more about it as we go along. We definitely don't have all the answers at this point."

Paulson said The Nature Conservancy also is talking with other landowners in the Conata Basin area who have contacted the group.

**We're interested because it's one of the most complete prairie ecosystems out there, with bighorn sheep, the ferrets and swift fox, which have been reintroduced.**

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**Tony has a talent for taking on difficult situations and finding a resolution by communicating with stakeholders to create common-sense solutions.**

## Leif Will Lead GFP Wildlife Division

PIERRE, S.D.—A 20-year veteran of the S.D. Game, Fish and Parks Department has been appointed as the new director of the Wildlife Division.

GFP Secretary Jeff Vonk announced Monday that Tony Leif would lead the Wildlife Division. Leif, the division's wildlife program administrator, replaces Doug Hansen who recently retired.

"Tony has a talent for taking on difficult situations and finding a resolution by communicating with stakeholders to create common-sense solutions," Vonk said. "I look forward to working with Tony on the challenges that face the department."

Leif began his career with the department in 1987 as a conservation officer based in Freeman. He worked as a wildlife biologist and senior wildlife biologist in Huron for 16 years where he was the department's lead upland game biologist with the main focus of his work on pheasant management and research.

Leif moved to Pierre in 2004 where, in his role as wildlife program administrator, he directed statewide management and research of game animal populations and helped steer the department's first mountain lion hunting season into place.

"The Wildlife Division has a national reputation for the quality of its work with the state's natural resources and it's humbling to be chosen to lead that effort," Leif said. "The division staff and the people of South Dakota are passionate about our wildlife resources and I'm excited about the opportunity to work with all of them."

A graduate of Huron High School, Leif earned a degree in wildlife and fisheries sciences from South Dakota State University in Brookings and a master's degree in wildlife science from Texas Tech University. Leif and his wife, Kandee, have four children.

# Holiday Gifts

Specials run through the end of January  
(See order form on page 7)

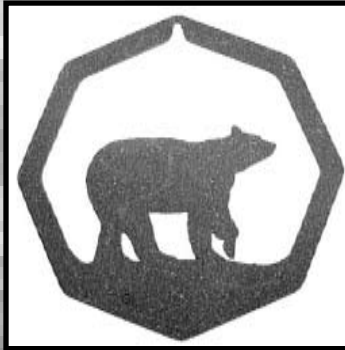
## Ornaments/Fan Pulls



#753-B - Elk (rust)



#745 - 12" Pheasant Oval (black)



#755-B - Bear (rust)



#754-B - Deer (rust)



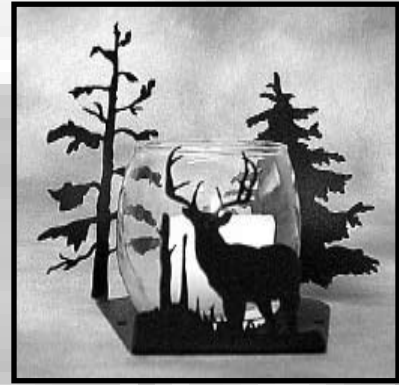
#756-B - Pheasant (rust)



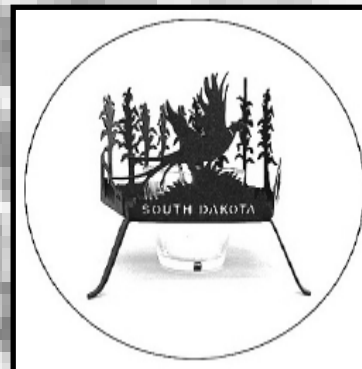
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## Candles



#757-Buck Candlewrap (black)



#462-SD Pheasant Candle Centerpiece

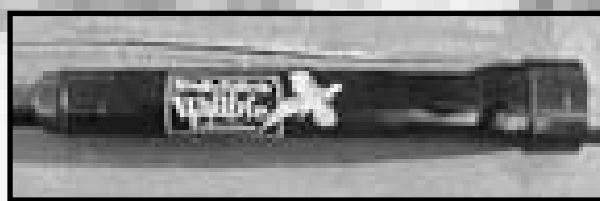


#458-Pheasant Candle Centerpiece

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"SDWF Gear Bag"



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Laser engraved stainless steel glass and coffee mug, detachable lids, non spill



"Spring Ritual" Belt Buckle

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#702-Pheasant Napkin Holder (Copper Vein)



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# Prints

**SPECIAL BONUS:** When you purchase (3) prints, receive a prairie chicken paperweight FREE.



**"TATANKA"** - 20"x24" Mark Anderson



**"SOLITUDE"** John Wilson



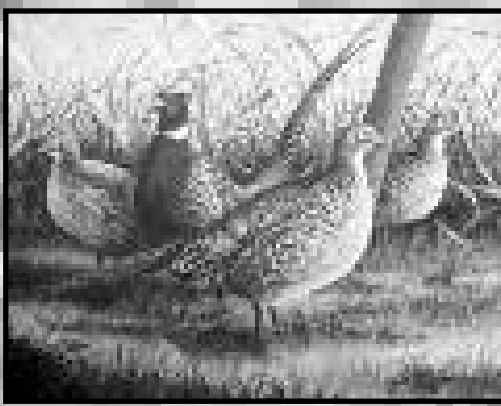
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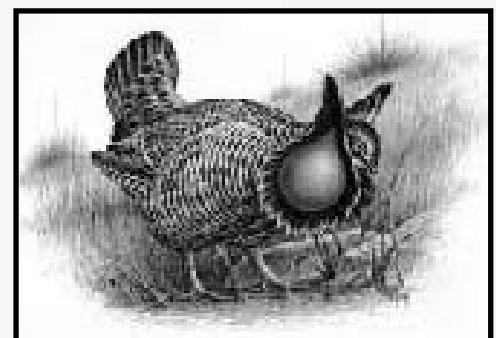
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At the recent Winter Board Meeting the SDWF Board created the SDWF Wildlife Legacy Council. The Council was created to allow recognition of the people who support SDWF above and beyond their membership and raffle donations.

Thank you to the following donors for their contributions to the SDWF. Please consider becoming a member of the Wildlife Legacy Council. SDWF is a 501(c)3 non-profit, all donations are tax deductible.

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# TIPs Calls Lead to 151 Arrests

PIERRE, S.D.--Despite a change in the Turn In Poachers phone number, statistics show that South Dakotans still knew who to call when they wanted to report violations of wildlife laws.

In November of last year, the TIPs number changed to 1-888-OVERBAG or 1-888-683-7224. That change didn't seem to affect the use of the hotline. During the reporting period of July 1, 2006, to June 30, 2007, calls to the hotline prompted 498 investigations, 101 more than during the corresponding reporting period a year earlier.

"Changing the number sure didn't slow down the calls to the TIPs line," said Shon Eide, TIPs Coordinator for the S.D. Game, Fish and Parks Department. "With calls prompting almost 500 investigations, it's easy to see that the public watches out for wildlife violations and that GFP takes those reports seriously."

The investigations in the last reporting period led to 151 arrests, \$23,423 in fines and \$29,100 in civil penalties. The arrests led to jail sentences totaling 623 days in jail with 576 of those days suspended. People who called in wildlife violations to the TIPs line earned \$6,900 in rewards.

With fall hunting seasons getting under way or starting soon, it's important for citizens to be on the lookout for violations of the state's wildlife laws. "Callers to the TIPs hotline can remain anonymous," Eide said, "the important thing is that they call in if they suspect that the law is being broken."

Since its inception in 1984, the Turn in Poachers program has resulted in:

- 8,137 investigations.
- 2,781 arrests.
- \$524,868 in fines.
- \$371,743 in civil penalties.
- 26,547 days in jail with 24,642 of those days suspended.
- 2,204 hours of community service.
- \$103,340 in rewards paid.

### Hunters Greeted... continued from page 1

Limits were common in Beadle, Aurora and Jerauld counties according to GFP Regional Game Manager Ron Schauer of Sioux Falls. In Brookings County hunters averaged 1.5 to two birds. Further south, hunters were averaging one bird each in Yankton, Union and Clay counties. Schauer said an exception in that area was Bon Homme County where 30 hunters had been checked and they had a total of 60 birds.

"Hunter attitudes were good," Schauer said. "They were seeing birds." The mood of hunters was good, Schauer noted, despite the less than ideal hunting conditions. "Having a week of weather before opening day didn't help."

Schauer reported two hunting accidents in the region, both of them minor. One occurred near Mitchell and the other was near Iroquois. "That's a relatively low number of accidents for opening day," Schauer said, noting that hunters seem to be playing it safe in the fields. "They're wearing lots of blaze orange, which we like to see."

Reports from Game, Fish and Parks Department personnel in the field in the central portion of the state noted that hunters there averaged two birds each on opening day with some limits throughout the region.

"Overall the weather was great and most hunters were getting two to three birds," according to GFP Regional Game Manager Andy Lindbloom of Fort Pierre. "Some of the unharvested crops made hunting a little more difficult, but there were lots of birds and plenty of opportunity."

Two minor hunting accidents were reported in the region with most violations also minor including using lead shot on public land, trespassing and overbagging.

# Waterfowl Hunters Using Boats Must Heed Safety, Equipment Rules

PIERRE, S.D.—Waterfowl hunters are reminded that if they use a boat during their hunt they must follow boating safety and equipment regulations.

“The same regulations apply to all boaters,” said Curt Robertson, boating safety coordinator for the S.D. Game, Fish and Parks Department. “It doesn’t matter if you’re water-skiing or fishing or hunting, you have to play it safe and follow the regulations.”

Robertson offers these reminders about boating safety for waterfowl hunters planning their next excursion:

- Each hunter on board needs a life jacket, also known as a personal flotation device. The life jacket must be properly sized for the wearer, readily accessible and in good condition. “Hunters may want to consider using a ‘float coat,’ a U.S. Coast Guard-approved insulated parka that functions as a life jacket,” Robertson said. “According to statistics from the U.S. Coast Guard, more hunters die from hypothermia and drowning than from accidental gunshot wounds.”

- A Type IV throwable flotation device is also required if the boat is 16 feet long or longer.

- It’s typical for boats used for waterfowl hunting to be on the water before sunrise and after sunset. If the boat is on the water at those times, it needs navigation lights.

- Don’t overload the boat. Decoys, waders, guns, ammo and ammo boxes,

dogs and heavy clothing can add considerable weight to the boat. Be sure to check the vessel’s capacity plate for maximum weight.

- Put the life jacket on and keep it on. Wear it to and from the blind, with or without waders. “Even when hunting from shore without a boat, wearing a life jacket is a good idea when setting out and picking up decoys because footing can be unstable,” Robertson said.

- Stay near the shore and avoid crossing large expanses of open water, especially in bad weather.

- Before you depart, give someone your hunting plan. Your hunting plan should include information about where you are going and when you expect to return. When you get back, check in with that person to avoid unnecessary concern and possible search efforts.

- Make sure the boat motor is in good running condition. This is particularly important in colder weather.

- Check the local weather forecast before you go.

Bodies of water across South Dakota have special boating or boat motor restrictions that can have an impact on hunters. Those restrictions can be found on pages 40 and 41 of the 2007 edition of the S.D. Hunting and Trapping Handbook. The handbook is available from GFP regional offices and from hunting license retailers or it can be downloaded from the department’s Web site at [www.sdgifp.info](http://www.sdgifp.info).

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**Jim Randash** - Jim is a South Dakota PWT winner, professional fisherman and 2 time national walleye champion who will speak about fishing on South Dakota lakes and rivers.

**South Dakota Game Fish & Parks** - Presentation of various topics including mercury contaminants in fish, fishing mortality at Hazeldon Lake, history of the Missouri River, and fish diseases and parasites.

**Greg Wagner and Daryl Bauer** - Greg and Daryl are from the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission and will be presenting Saturday evening following the dinner, using comedy to entertain and educate the audience about the great outdoors. Greg is featured regularly on TV and radio shows, including WNAX in Yankton.

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### Don’t Miss It!

# Pheasants Are There If You Know The Tricks

**I think the problem lies in hunters walking the grasslands on these areas at the start.**



*Re-published from the Argus Leader, written by Tony Dean*

**The key is to learn more about pheasant habits and behavior and then use that knowledge to hunt them in the right places at the right times.**

Few things bother Steve Vanderbeek more than receiving letters from dissatisfied hunters who say they find no birds on Game Production Areas (GPA's).

Steve, a habitat biologist with the South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks Department in Sioux Falls, said, "I think the problem lies in hunters walking the grasslands on these areas at the start."

"Most of them hunt too fast and are often wearing clothes

too heavy for the typical warm conditions. So, they spend a couple of hours, see no birds, and go home complaining," Vanderbeek said.

No birds?

Not in that kind of cover at midday, says Vanderbeek. Hunters often tell him they think the birds are in nearby private land cornfields, which they can't hunt because the three-day resident season is open only on public lands.

During the typically warm weather of October and early November, the birds spend much time in the shade of the cornfields, so, they ask, why not plant cornfields on the GPA's?

That makes no sense to Vanderbeek who says there is already plenty of corn in eastern South Dakota. He suggests hunters change the time they hunt. Hunters should begin walking those grassy areas around 3 p.m. The same places that held no birds at the time of the noon opener will likely see their return.

He also said the only times pheasants spend a lot of time in the standing corn is early in the season. Otherwise, in colder weather, they will feed there but return to warmer grass and brushy areas. He says it is the practice of habitat biologists to provide as much key cover, especially nesting cover on the GPA's.

"The key," he says, "is to learn more about pheasant habits and behavior and then use that knowledge to hunt them in the right places at the right times." And, when hunting that cover, the use of a good dog will pay off too.

## Hunters Must Practice Safety First

**Hunters can't let their enthusiasm for opening day cloud their better judgment. They need to practice safe hunting techniques at all times.**

PIERRE, S.D.—The opening day of pheasant season is a time to enjoy the outdoors and renew old acquaintances. However, all of the activity and excitement of the hunt shouldn't be allowed to get in the way of safety.

"Hunters can't let their enthusiasm for opening day cloud their better judgment," said Curt Robertson, hunter safety program specialist for the S.D. Department of Game, Fish and Parks. "They need to practice safe hunting techniques at all times."

To that end, Robertson offers a list of Top 10 safety points that hunters should always keep in mind. They include:

- Watch that muzzle! Keep it pointed in a safe direction at all times
- Treat every firearm with the respect due a loaded gun. It might be loaded, even though you think it isn't.
- Be sure of the target and what is in front of it and beyond it. Know the identifying features of the game you hunt. Know the location of all your hunting partners at all times.
- Keep your finger outside and alongside the trigger guard until you are ready to shoot. This is the best way to prevent an accidental discharge.

- Check your barrel and ammunition. Make sure the barrel and action are free of obstructions and carry only the proper ammunition for your firearm.
- Unload firearms when not in use. Leave actions open; carry firearms in cases and unloaded to and from the shooting area. Unload firearms before you enter a vehicle and leave the action open.
- Wear blaze orange hats, shooting glasses and hearing protection. Keep yourself safe as well as others.
- Don't run, jump or climb with a loaded firearm. Unload firearms before crossing fences or jumping a ditch.
- Stay straight to shoot straight. Shun alcoholic beverages before and during the hunt. Also avoid mind- or behavior-altering medicines or drugs.
- You are responsible! When you discharge a firearm, you are responsible for the results. When in doubt, don't shoot.

GFP brood counts indicate a near record pheasant population in South Dakota this year. "There are plenty of pheasants out there," Robertson said, "so be patient and always take the safe shot."

**There are plenty of pheasants out there, so be patient and always take the safe shot.**

## Sunset Marks End of Shooting Hours

**Hunters need to remember that shooting hours stop at sunset for waterfowl and small game hunting. This is a particularly important regulation for these hunters as the chance of an accident increases as darkness falls.**

PIERRE, S.D.—For hunters, it can be tough to see a good day in the field come to an end. However, when the sun sets, it's time to pack it in.

"Hunters need to remember that shooting hours stop at sunset for waterfowl and small game hunting," said Marty Pennock, a regional law enforcement specialist for the S.D. Game, Fish and Parks Department. "This is a particularly important regulation for these hunters as the chance of an accident increases as darkness falls."

At dusk it can be tough to judge when the sun has actually set, but Pennock reminds hunters that in order to be in compliance with the law, they should wear a watch and have a copy of the 2007 edition of the GFP Hunting and Trapping Handbook.

"The sunrise-sunset schedule at the back of the handbook offers hunters a good reference for judging when shooting hours are ending at the location where they're hunting in the state," Pennock said. "It's always best to stop a little early to stay in compliance with the law and to have a little light left to help you make your way back to your vehicle safely."