

QUWF



Quail & Upland Wildlife Federation

Making a Difference for Wildlife and Clean Streams, One Acre, One Stream, at a Time

THE HABITAT GUIDE

Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation

Notes from the Dashboard: It's a wrap for '23! Merry Christmas!



By Craig Alderman — *As we approach another year ending of dedicated habitat conservationists working for our country and its wildlife, I would like to say thank you to our chapters, members, sponsors and all the volunteers who make the entire mission possible. God bless you all.* Thank you for your dedication, your volunteer time (and your families), the constant need of reporting, and the patience as we deal with the many wheels that keep the organization growing and on track.

The website, web store, internet-based membership, email and internet add to the mix of “geez.” Thankfully, our new webmaster has good control and security over our systems. We changed from Hughes Net to Starlink, a game changer indeed, for our rural internet and for the first time we can really appreciate what high speed internet means.

Thank you to the College of the Ozarks whose students manage, literally, our social media platforms, coop notices and are a pleasure to know and work with. Calvin Chainey is our social media manager, and he’s doing a great job.

Behind the scenes what happens here at the office seems a constant hair pulling, stress packed schedule constantly dealing with past and present accountants, the IRS, trespass, theft and damage on our lands, state governments, the federal government and the endless reports, paperwork and information they demand from a 501c3 organization.

Truly, I am so thankful when chapters submit reports on time, get the information I need when I need it and are helpful to the office staff. The IRS now requires a yearly update of those who are in compliance with our by-laws and reports to renew their nonprofit status for the next year and allow us to submit all reports for our chapters. No gray area, they act quickly to cut anyone off not in compliance.

Your EOY chapter reports and habitat reports are very important for the 990 reports we are required to send in. Please keep track of your accomplishments and activities. **Membership is KEY, please build it.**

With five computers running here at the office, dealing with STARLINK, Square, Apple, ATT, Brightspeed, DJI, Meta, Google, Microsoft, Adobe, EPSON, Netgear ORBI, and Quicken is another separate near daily battle of Tylenol but a must to keep the wheels turning.

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For all your chapter needs, please call Leslie Casanova direct at Sportsman Insurance Agency at 1-800-925-7767.

In most cases, Leslie can have your insurance the same day!

Also, any questions concerning banquets and/or vendor programs, please call the QUWF National Office at (417) 345-5960.

Continued from Page 1 — Habitat equipment repairs are constant: Using a majority of donated personal equipment (don't we all) to help landowners in our coops, the repairs are never ending.

From tires to new decking, new lights, replacing a UTV, parts, dozer repairs (that one stings), backhoe and tractor repairs (yep these hurt the savings account too), supplies and time.

Time is the big bandit for us all but we juggle the time in the woods and fields because we enjoy it so and that is what this is all about.

Special thanks to our long-time sponsors that helped us get the ball rolling many years ago and stay with us today; **RUGER Firearms, Truax Drills and Equipment, ALPS Outdoorz, Sportsman's Insurance.** They are not just sponsors, they are friends who have believed in our mission, see the results and battle with us.

SUPPORT them every time you can.

They understand we, as the 1% that actually work the land, are dealing with the veteran and local private landowners "turning the dirt", making the difference on the ground. Others are organizations dealing with users of the resource, but few make a difference on the ground with their members. The original drafter of the U.S. Farm Bill stated "unless you turn the dirt, nothing else matters".

What can I say about our Chief Biologist Nick Prough! He is, in my biological and professional opinion, the absolute best wildlife and grassland biologist today. We have worked together for over 30 years.

He never stops (literally and truly) researching, studying and finding new solutions for private landowners based on "constant boots on the ground experience." He studies weather, patterns, rainfall / snowfall and its impact and affects constantly.

He is an accepted expert on spraying and seeding being factory trained and staying in contact with the factories to this day. He and I started this organization with a dedication to wildlife still unmatched to support private landowners, the true backbone of conservation.

Our Bulk Seed Program Manager, Betty Richardson, too has worked with me for over 30 years in various organizations. She handles all the bulk seed of all varieties she can find, across the U.S. and in fact we supply other organizations with their bulk seed needs because of her expertise in sourcing, negotiating and logistics in getting seed where it needs to be.

Tractor Trailer loads of seed are not an easy task. She lives in a farming community in Kansas and knows the lifestyle, problems and issues for private landowners and is a Lifetime Member of QUWF.

Finally, my office staff, the battle-worn team who, when the "all hands-on deck" call goes out are here to get the job done. Kristy (AKA "lil bit"), Christine, Jessica, and Dorine. I absolutely could not and would not do this without their help, support and understanding though they all say I work way too much.

We intend to continue the millions of wildlife habitat acres worked by QUWF members, chapters and landowners across the U.S. each year. Where you work, there is success!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Craig Alderman is the Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation executive director.



Nebraska firearm deer harvest down 18%

Preliminary results from the 2023 Nebraska November firearm deer season show statewide harvest was down 18% from 2022 and down 29% from the 2018-2022 average.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission expected these results for the Nov. 11-19 season based on several factors that indicated a decline in harvest was coming. Lower harvest and deer populations were recorded in 2022 and led to Game and Parks reducing the number of permits available for 2023.

Other factors indicating the decline included:

- Permits and harvest had increased in 2019 and 2020 because of depredation complaints across much of the state.
- Severe drought affected nearly all of Nebraska in recent years, leading to an increase in epizootic hemorrhagic disease.
- Severe winter conditions, which reduced available food sources and increased stress, affected deer populations in northern Nebraska.



In Game and Parks' northwest district, the 2023 harvest was down 26% from 2022 and 35% from the five-year average. In the southwest district, harvest was down 21% from 2022 and down 37% from the five-year average. The northeast district was down 16% from 2022 and down 30% from the five-year average, and the southeast district was down 11% from 2022 and down 9% from the five-year average.

Final harvest results will be available following the close of all deer seasons. Archery season closes Dec. 31, while muzzleloader season is Dec. 1-31. The late antlerless season will run Jan. 1-15, while the River Antlerless late season will run Jan. 1-31.

Hunters are invited to learn more about the 2023 season, big game research and management and more at the big game public informational meetings scheduled in person and online beginning Dec. 6.

Visit [Calendar.OutdoorNebraska.gov](https://calendar.outdoornebraska.gov) to find a meeting near you.

Hunters wishing to donate venison can use the Deer Exchange or Hunters Helping the Hungry programs.

Visit [OutdoorNebraska.gov](https://outdoornebraska.gov) for more details.

December is the start of bird feeding season

“Winter bird feeding is a great way to observe and learn about our year-round bird residents such as black capped chickadees, nuthatches and blue jays. It’s also a great time to learn about winter visitors such as evening and pine grosbeaks.” said Jillian Kilborn, Vermont Fish and Wildlife’s bird project leader.

Here are some basic bird feeding tips from Vermont Fish and Wildlife:

- Make your own feeding mixture to maximize the number of species visiting your yard. Black oil sunflower seed is a favorite of many birds, but when mixed with “thistle” (or “nyjer”) or cracked corn you will be sure to attract a wide variety of species. Don’t forget the suet to attract woodpeckers and even chickadees.
- Mix up the type of feeders you use. Hopper feeders are great for large birds such as blue jays, while tube feeders are best for smaller birds. Elevated tray feeders will attract birds that usually feed on the ground including juncos and larger bodied winter visitors such as evening grosbeaks.
- Place your feeders near natural habitat, or even add a habitat for birds to hide. A Christmas tree is a great addition to a snowbank next to your feeder to provide quick cover.
- Keep your feeders clean. Only put out enough food for a day, and wash feeders every couple of weeks in a 10 percent bleach solution and let dry to prevent the spread of bacteria and disease.

If you decide to feed birds, remember:

- Feeding can expose birds to hazards they might otherwise avoid. The risks of predation are higher close to people, especially from domestic cats -- the leading cause of bird deaths in North America. Keep cats inside and take feeders down if predators become frequent visitors.
- Don’t feed birds when bears are active. Most bears are in dens from December 1 to April 1, but some will delay hibernation or re-emerge to feed during periods of warmer weather.

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Ask Alexa to play 101.3 Real Country or AM 560 in the Morning, or go online and download the free app.

Continued from Page 3 — Remove bird feeders immediately if you see signs of bears or know a bear is active in your community. Bears that learn to associate food with a house will continue to return, potentially leading to property damage and dangerous encounters with people. Further, it is illegal to feed bears in Vermont.

- Once you've started feeding the birds, keep your feeders stocked. Although wild birds are not entirely dependent on bird feeders, they can become accustomed to this easy food source. If you wish to stop feeding during winter months, gradually taper off the amount of food you provide rather than stopping abruptly, giving the birds a chance to find other food sources. This is especially important when food is scarce in late winter or during periods of extreme weather.

- Finally, report your observations. While watching your bird feeders, you can participate in one or more bird monitoring projects by looking up the [Audubon Christmas Bird Count](#), the [Great Backyard Bird Count](#) and [Project Feeder Watch](#) and eBird -- all collect important information for understanding bird populations.

As winter sets in, find a comfortable spot inside where you can watch the birds visiting your feeders. Figure out what birds they are, observe how they interact with each other, and see what they prefer to eat. It's a perfect way to get to know the birds around you better.



Ohio: Report furbearing sightings for research

Editor's Note: there is no better link than having sportsmen and women with the family, keeping their eyes open for furbearers as "citizen scientists." Helping our wildlife requires we keep tabs on their locations, numbers, habitat and food sources. Great effort and program by Ohio!

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife is seeking reports of gray foxes, river otters, black bears, and other furbearers. Reports can be submitted to the [Wildlife Reporting System](#) at wildohio.gov and on the [HuntFish OH](#) mobile app. Wildlife biologists use public reports to monitor populations of these secretive species.

The [gray fox](#) is one of two fox species found in Ohio, although it is less common than the red fox. Gray foxes prefer wooded areas and thick brush, whereas red foxes use a mix of habitats, including agricultural areas and woods. The gray fox has a distinguishing black tip to its tail and has a unique ability among canines to climb trees. The species is most abundant in the forested portions of eastern Ohio. Its nocturnal and secretive habits make the gray fox difficult to track. Submitting photos or sightings, as well as carcasses, to the Division of Wildlife will help guide gray fox management and provide biologists with information on population health, demographics, and genetics. Gray foxes are active during the winter as peak breeding nears.

[River otters](#) were once extirpated from Ohio but were reintroduced to four watersheds between 1986 and 1993. Today, they are found nearly statewide and are no longer listed on Ohio's endangered species list. A highly regulated trapping season allows for limited harvest opportunities for river otters. Following the start of trapping season on Dec. 26, trappers are asked to submit river otter carcasses upon harvest. Information on the age, sex, and reproductive status of river otter carcasses is used to monitor the status of the population.

[Black bears](#) are endangered in Ohio and were once extirpated. The species began naturally recolonizing eastern Ohio at the end of the last century, and while sightings are still relatively uncommon, they have been increasing in recent years. Report sightings and, when possible and safe, photos of black bears to the Division of Wildlife.

Please contact your [county wildlife officer](#) to submit river otter and gray fox carcasses. Submitted carcasses can be from harvests or roadkill, although it is not permitted to collect roadkill carcasses. One can report the location of roadkill to their local wildlife officer. Other furbearers that citizen scientists can report include fishers, badgers, weasels, and bobcats.

Hunting and trapping of foxes is permitted from now through Jan. 31, 2024. River otter trapping is permitted from Dec. 26 to Feb. 29, 2024. Check the latest [Ohio Hunting and Trapping Regulations](#) for more information.

The mission of the Division of Wildlife is to conserve and improve fish and wildlife resources and their habitats for sustainable use and appreciation by all. Visit wildohio.gov to find out more.

Perazzi acquired by Czechoslovak Group

Czech CSG Group, the global industrial-technology company owned by Czech entrepreneur Michal Strnad, announces the purchase of the majority stake in the Italian, family-owned Armi Perazzi S.p.A., manufacturer of high-quality shotguns for sport shooters and elite hunters. Typical owners of these premium firearms, of which Perazzi produces approximately 1,500 units per year, are Olympic medalists, successful competitive shooters being amongst them. One such individual is the Czech Olympic gold medal winner in trap from the 2022 Beijing Olympics, David Kostelecký. CSG also operates two small-caliber ammunition factories in the USA.

The company's founder was Daniele Perazzi, an Italian gunsmith who realized his dream of producing the highest-quality shotguns worldwide when he founded the Armi Perazzi company in 1957. Currently, the company is led by the founder's descendants, Mauro and Roberta Perazzi. CSG acquires an 80-percent stake in the company while the Perazzi siblings share the remaining 20 percent equally. The business will continue to be run by the Perazzi family and the current management team. The acquisition process on the selling side was assisted by the Milan-based consulting and investment company FAI, with legal advice provided by the law firm Gianni & Origoni.

The purchase of Perazzi is CSG's second major acquisition in Italy. Last year, the company acquired a majority stake in Fiocchi Munizioni, the manufacturer of small-caliber ammunition, which operates production facilities in Italy, the UK, and the USA (where it has two production sites: one in Ozark, Missouri, and the second in Little Rock, Arkansas). Perazzi serves the American market through its subsidiary, Perazzi USA Inc., in Azusa, California. Perazzi USA is the sole importer and distributor for the United States market.

Mauro Perazzi said, "The decision to find a strategic partner to whom we would sell a majority stake in the company was motivated by our desire to ensure a secure future, sustainable growth, and strengthen the company's unique position in the global luxury arms market. We decided to partner with CSG, which also has roots as a family business, because CSG understands our history and business philosophy."

Roberta Perazzi added, "With CSG's entry into Armi Perazzi, we expect to strengthen our competitiveness. We see CSG as a strong, successful multinational company that will allow us to continue to produce prestigious hunting and sporting firearms. CSG will help us succeed in the market and open up new business opportunities with its experience."

Michal Strnad, owner of CSG, commented on the acquisition of Armi Perazzi: "Armi Perazzi is a prestigious brand in the field of firearms for sport shooters and elite hunters. At the same time, it is a stable and prosperous company that the Perazzi family excellently manages. The motivation for this acquisition is not only financial but also to strengthen CSG's international prestige and reputation as a global and innovative industrial group expanding in Europe and the USA."

CSG's manager responsible for the acquisition of Armi Perazzi and its future development is CSG Investment Director Stanislav Kuba, who summarizes the goals for the company's further development: "We want to maintain the excellence and exclusivity of Armi Perazzi products, bring new customers to the company, and also to leverage its strong brand, especially in connecting CSG further to the shooting sports."

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Continued from Page 6 — A long-time user of Perazzi shotguns is sport shooter and successful Czech trapshooting competitor David Kostelecký, who commented on the fact that the company is being acquired by a Czech owner: "I have an excellent partnership with Armi Perazzi that has lasted for over twenty years. They provide me not only with their great shotguns, but also with constant service and support. I know Mauro and Roberta Perazzi very well, having visited their Lombardy factory on several occasions. They are great people and responsible entrepreneurs. I am very happy that this prestigious Italian company is becoming a part of CSG, and I look forward to continuing our relationship."

Recently, CSG also announced signing an agreement with the NYSE-listed US company Vista Outdoor to acquire its Sporting Products division, which manufactures leading global brands of small-caliber ammunition such as Federal and Remington. The acquisition of Armi Perazzi proves that CSG is systematically working on its strategic plan to build itself as a global leader in the sport shooting and hunting category.

About Armi Perazzi

Armi Perazzi S.p.A. is a firearms company specializing in the segment of shotguns for the sport discipline of trap (shooting at asphalt or clay targets) and for hunting. Perazzi's guns have helped top shooters from different countries win 62 Olympic medals at 11 Olympics. The company has offices in Italy and California, USA, and exports its products to 50 countries.

The company's founder is the Italian gunsmith Daniele Perazzi who, in 1956, filed the first patent for a shotgun of his production and opened a small workshop. A year later, he set up a factory and began hiring employees. Daniele was personally involved in producing firearms in his company until he died in 2012, when he was 80 years old. His descendants currently run the company. Roberta Perazzi is in charge of finance and administration, and Mauro Perazzi is responsible for production.

Perazzi is located in Botticino, Lombardy, Italy. The production plant occupies an area of 9000m², and the neighboring shooting range covers another 11000 m².

Armi Perazzi produces an average of 1500 firearms per year. The key business, which accounts for 80-percent of sales, is producing models for sport shooting. Each shotgun is custom-made according to the customer's requirements and takes 6 months to produce, from component machining to testing.

Although the company uses modern technology in its production, a significant part of a product is handmade by experienced gunsmiths. All customers can shoot their guns in the on-site shooting tunnel before final testing. The stocks and handguards are made of walnut from centuries-old trees. According to the customer's wishes, the metal parts of the firearm are engraved by master craftsmen.

The company's revenues for 2021 amounted to EUR 14.3 million and is highly profitable.

About CSG Group

The global industrial-technology group CSG, owned by Czech entrepreneur Michal Strnad, has key manufacturing plants in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Spain, Italy, Great Britain, India and the USA, and exports its products all over the world.

In the USA, CSG is established via two production facilities of its member company Fiocchi, which produces small caliber ammunition in Little Rock, Arkansas and Ozark, Missouri. CSG also has a history of cooperation with leading U.S. corporations like Raytheon and GD (via its European subsidiary GDELS) and delivered the unique, portable POLR-1 radar unit (capable of detecting living objects behind walls and non-metallic obstacles) to several US customers in the law enforcement segment.

CSG continuously invests in the development of its companies while expanding its core businesses. The group includes, for example, the Czech car manufacturer Tatra Trucks, the world's leading manufacturer of small-caliber ammunition, Fiocchi, and the Czech radar manufacturer Eldis.

More than 10,000 employees work in the companies incorporated into the CSG holding and in related companies. In 2022, the holding's consolidated revenues reached over USD 1 billion. The main fields of CSG are engineering, automotive, railway, aerospace, defense, and production of small-caliber ammunition. Thanks to the strong pro-export orientation of the holding, CSG products can be found on all continents, and the number of customers of the holding is constantly growing.

Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board holds special meeting

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board will hold a special meeting for a final vote on the furbearer rule. The furbearer rule was updated per Legislative directive in Act 159 and Act 165 of 2022, to implement best management practices that modernize trapping and improve the welfare of wildlife taken and to regulate the practice of hunting coyotes with dogs.

The virtual meeting will take place at 5:00 p.m., Thursday, December 14, 2023. Most board members and department staff will be attending remotely. There is an in-person option for members of the public who cannot attend virtually at the Dewey Building, 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier, VT 05620.

All board meetings are open to the public. Details are provided in the agenda posted to the [department's website](#).

Information on the regulations and the process for updating the rule can be found on the [department's website](#).

Association applauds passage of duck stamp modernization

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association) applauds Congress for passing the *Duck Stamp Modernization Act of 2023*, [S. 788](#). On Tuesday, December 12, the full House passed the bill by a vote of 403-20, following passage in the Senate by Unanimous Consent earlier this year.

“We thank Congress for responding to the need to modernize the Federal Duck Stamp Program for today’s sportsmen and women,” said Chuck Sykes, Director of the Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries and President of the Association. “Waterfowlers are critical to the continued success of the American System of Conservation Funding, and this legislation will make one of the most impactful programs in the country even more accessible for current and future hunters.”

Once enacted, the *Duck Stamp Modernization Act of 2023* will authorize the electronic version of the Federal Duck Stamp for use through the entirety of a waterfowl hunting season, decreasing barriers to compliance and streamlining accessibility while preserving the rich history of the Duck Stamp artwork.

“As home to some of the best waterfowl opportunities in the world, we are deeply grateful to Senator Boozman (R-AR) for his leadership on this bill with Senators Manchin (D-WV), Marshall (R-KS), and King (I-ME),” said Austin Booth, Director of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. “We thank them on behalf of our many waterfowl hunters and countless others who benefit from the work enabled by the Duck Stamp Program.”

The foundation for passage of S. 788 in the House was laid with the success of near-identical legislation from Representatives Garret Graves (R-LA) and Mike Thompson (D-CA), which passed the House in September.

“We thank Representatives Graves and Thompson for their steadfast leadership delivering yet another major accomplishment for conservation,” said Robert Shadoin, Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

“Representative Graves has ensured once again that Louisiana is at the forefront of modernizing conservation efforts both at home and on Capitol Hill.”

The Association also thanks Senators Carper (D-DE), Capito, (R-WV), and Cassidy (R-LA) for their support as original cosponsors of S. 788 and urges swift enactment and implementation of the *Duck Stamp Modernization Act of 2023*.

Chronic wasting detected in new Wyoming elk hunt area

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department has confirmed the presence of chronic wasting disease in Elk Hunt Area 122. The disease was detected in a hunter-harvested cow elk in early November.

Elk Hunt Area 122 is in the Casper Region and is bordered by three areas where CWD was previously detected. CWD was detected to the north in Hunt Area 129 in 2021 and to the south in Hunt Areas 19 and 7 in 2008 and 2001, respectively.



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Continued from Page 8 — To ensure hunters are informed, Game and Fish announces when CWD is found in a new hunt area. The Centers for Disease Control recommends hunters do not consume any animal that is obviously ill or tests positive for CWD.

Continued monitoring of CWD over time is important to help Game and Fish understand the potential impacts of the disease as well as evaluate future management actions for deer and elk. A map of CWD endemic areas is available on the [Game and Fish website](#). The disease is 100% fatal to deer, elk and moose that have been infected. In 2022, Game and Fish personnel tested 6,701 CWD lymph node samples from deer, elk and moose — primarily submitted by hunters.

Please visit the Game and Fish [website](#) for more information on CWD testing, transmission and regulations on transportation and disposal of carcasses.



Ruger celebrates 75th anniversary of Sturm, Ruger & Co.

In celebration of its 75th Anniversary, Sturm, Ruger & Co., Inc. is proud to announce the immediate availability of commemorative firearms from each of Ruger's firearm manufacturing facilities: a Mark IV™ Standard model, a pair of 10/22® Sporter models, and an LCP® MAX. While each of these models is tastefully embellished with 75th Anniversary markings, pricing for each remains competitive and in keeping with Ruger's tradition of providing high-value firearms at modest prices.

"Ruger has come a long way in 75 years," remarked CEO Chris Killoy. "From humble beginnings in the Red Barn in Connecticut to three powerhouse manufacturing operations in Arizona, New Hampshire, and North Carolina – and with more support facilities throughout the United States – Ruger has made its name by providing top-quality firearms that represent a great value to the shooting public. On behalf of our almost 2,000 dedicated associates, I thank our customers for making our first 75 years such a success!"

From the Prescott, Arizona manufacturing facility, Ruger's 75th Anniversary is commemorated with a Standard model of the iconic Mark Series pistol. Featuring a fully adjustable rear sight, an undercut Patridge front sight, and a heavy, tapered barrel, this attractive pistol balances well in the hand and retains the classic styling of the iconic Standard Pistol that launched the Company in 1949. Additional details include a 75th Anniversary logo engraving on both the receiver and the bolt, and handsome, fully checkered grip panels.

The Newport, New Hampshire manufacturing facility offers two 75th Anniversary models of the timeless 10/22 rimfire carbine. Each model features a stainless steel barrel, silver-finished receiver, polished bolt engraved with the 75th Anniversary logo, a match-sanded butt pad, and front and rear sling swivels. Model 31275 has a traditionally stained and checkered hardwood stock, while model 41275 has an unstained hardwood stock adorned with striking, dark checkering.

Mayodan, North Carolina, the location of Ruger's newest manufacturing facility, offers a unique LCP MAX to celebrate the Company's 75th Anniversary. While still amazingly compact, the LCP MAX is a double-stack, ten-round version of the enormously successful LCP. The Anniversary model of the LCP MAX features a stainless steel slide adorned with an engraved 75th Anniversary logo and a silver-anodized aluminum trigger. Like all LCP MAX models, the 75th Anniversary LCP MAX features a highly visible tritium front sight, square-ledge, dovetailed rear sight, and a reversible magazine release.

These four Ruger 75th Anniversary models are shipping now, and will be available throughout 2024.

For more information on the Ruger 75th Anniversary models or to learn more about the extensive line of award-winning Ruger firearms, visit [Ruger.com](#), [Facebook.com/Ruger](#) or [Instagram.com/Rugersofficial](#).



NE awarded federal grant for wildlife highway crossing study

The Nebraska Department of Transportation and Nebraska Game and Parks Commission recently were awarded a \$400,000 federal grant to explore ways to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions in western Nebraska along Nebraska Highway 71.

NDOT and Game and Parks will use the funding to explore the feasibility of bighorn sheep crossings in the Wildcat Hills region, where 18 of the 26 bighorn sheep collisions have been recorded between 2009-2023. This study will focus on reducing vehicle and property damage, as well as wildlife deaths.

“Because of the geography of this area, bighorn sheep regularly cross the highway here, an area near the entrance to the Wildlife Estates housing area,” said Todd Nordeen, big game research and disease program manager with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. “With the Heartland Expressway’s continued development, traffic between Rapid City, South Dakota, and Denver will continue to increase as will the risk of crashes — and potential bighorn sheep fatalities.”

Part of the grant funding will be used to purchase 10 new radio tracking collars to be placed on bighorn sheep to track their movements; three bighorn sheep in the region already have tracking collars. Data from their movements will be used to assess whether a wildlife crossing would successfully connect the sheep’s habitat — rocky escarpments found on both sides of the highway — and reduce collisions.

The study also will help determine the need for and potential cost of a wildlife crossing area, typically in the form of underpass tunnels, viaducts or overpasses across a highway, in addition to other possible mitigation strategies. If the study concludes a crossing is feasible, other wildlife in the Wildcat Hills would benefit. The area is home to two bighorn sheep populations, as well as elk, mule deer, white-tailed deer, wild turkey, mountain lions and countless other mammals.

Should a crossing be warranted, it would be a first of its kind in Nebraska. Wildlife crossings have been built and utilized successfully in many other Midwest and Western states, including Colorado, California, North Dakota and Arizona. NDOT and Game and Parks would pursue additional grant money to support construction of any recommended crossing solutions or alternatives.

Doug Hoevet, NDOT District 5 Engineer said, “NDOT is committed to reducing all crashes on the highway system. This study allows us to partner with our fellow agency to evaluate the best way to reduce crashes while protecting a unique wildlife resource that is important to our area.”

The study is expected to be completed in 2024.

The funding for this study was made possible by the federal Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which makes \$350 million available to states over a five-year period. It can support projects that construct wildlife crossings over or below busy roads, add fencing, acquire tracking and mapping tools, and more. In addition, the program supports the U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Roadway Safety Strategy, which sets a goal of achieving zero roadway deaths and serious injuries through a Safe System Approach to prevent crashes from happening in the first place.

Projects funded by this program will reduce wildlife crashes, which will in turn reduce associated economic impacts, such as loss of income, medical costs, property damage and a decline in productivity and quality of life, while simultaneously improving habitat connectivity to sustain the environment and improve the overall safety of the traveling public.



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Notes from the Road:

Time to start or continue work on the “Big 3” in 2024



By Nick Prough — Many of us have worked on many different habitat efforts throughout 2023 for many different species of concern we are managing habitat for. I applaud everyone’s tireless efforts working on a whole host of different habitat projects that affects such a wide variety of habitat conditions for an even wider variety of species too numerous to mention.

I was thinking the other night about the top 3 things that many landowners and land managers need to be focusing on for 2024 as we continue through winter and start thinking of the upcoming spring habitat season.

Here is my top “Big 3” that I believe almost every landowner and land manager should add to their increased efforts on for 2024. Many of us have been working on several if not all of these efforts the past year but I believe we must all continue to increase our efforts even further to make an even more significant impact on the landscapes we are working on so hard to improve.

1. More brood rearing habitat and cover for wild turkey and quail. This has continued to be a very limiting factor on many landowners’ properties and one that has drawn a lot of attention of many biologists that are assisting landowners with their habitat efforts. The lack of quality and quantity both of good brood rearing habitat needs to be improved on many if not all landowners wanting to improve their habitat conditions as well as their local populations of wild turkeys and quail.

To simply have more and more nesting and escape cover without this vital key piece of the puzzle will often lead to much lower results than one expects no matter how much of the other two types of habitats you continue to increase, I have personally seen this occur now for many years on countless landowners’ properties.

2. Reduction and control of invasive plants from the landscapes you are managing. This has been an ever-increasing effort and push the past several years of quite a few landowners and land managers and this increased effort needs to become more mainstream in order for the invasive plant species to be set back and not continue to expand across the landscape at such a rapid pace.

Whether you are speaking of Johnsongrass, Sericea Lespedeza, Teasel, Autumn Olive, or one of the many others, we all have to continue to do our part to reduce and for that matter eliminate these highly invasive plant species from the landscapes we are managing. Otherwise, many of our excellent habitat conditions we are working so hard on year-round can be overrun or offset by these rapidly expanding invasives.

3. Continued reduction of nest predator problems of ground nesting birds including wild turkey and quail that are occurring nearly everywhere one looks across the landscape. This has continued to be a hot topic in many conservation discussions circles the past couple years and one that can’t continue to be ignored or the gains in doing the above two efforts alone can be offset or destroyed all together very quickly.

More and more landowners are starting to see this first hand on their properties and that this is another vital piece of the puzzle they are working on to better improve their local bird populations they are spending so much time and money on improving the habitat conditions for but weren’t always getting the results they were wanting to see in a reasonable timeline.

This third effort in conjunction with the other above two parts of the “Big 3” can help landowners improve their total efforts across their lands as well as help them see their results out on the landscape in a much more reasonable time period.

So once again, as you turn the calendar page on 2023 and begin your upcoming habitat planning for 2024, be sure to figure out what your Big 3 is as well and start including those as a major part of your 2024 management efforts. Keep up all the great work out there that each of you, your landowners, your chapters and conservation partners are doing on crucial wildlife habitat projects, youth field day events, as well as all your other conservation outreach efforts, you are working on in your local communities each and every day, as you are definitely ... **“Making a Difference for Wildlife One Acre at a Time!”**

Nick Prough is the QUWF chief wildlife biologist and landowner liaison.

Chainsaw personalities: The Stalling Syndrome

As a heavy user of chain saws, I try to keep mine in great shape, all 8 of them. There is nothing more frustrating than being out in the woods and have it sputter or worse, not start or run right. I do not run any ethanol gas in any of my gas or gas oil mix engines, that is just a problem waiting to destroy a carburetor.

Once a year they go into the dealer (he supports our chapter as well) for a tune up if used heavily, inspection, chain /bar replacements, filters etc. Well, this year, I took my 193T trim saw (my favorite for limbing) for the yearly health check as it was constantly stalling if you took your finger off the throttle.

First outing after the tune up and it ran for about 5 minutes and started stalling again, and getting worse, the saw could not breath. Then I remembered from my STIHL training an old “watch for” “personality of chain saws” a condition to check. That condition is twofold, first, replace the air filter yearly; second when the saw begins to lose power or stall, the culprit maybe the muffler and the anti-spark screen installed on all saws. Simply put, they will and DO plug up with carbon.

I took it apart and, as they say “*sur-nuff*,” the spark screen was completely carbonized over. The saw was not breathing at all. I should have noticed it. When this happens the exhaust and oil are forced out around the screen making it an oily mess near the outside of the saw.

To clean the screen, remove the case cover, then the screen cover (depending on model) should be visible, remove* it from the muffler. I then use a spray brake cleaner applied to the screen with a brass brush lightly, don't be too aggressive to not break the screen. It takes about two applications to get it back clean again then I blow it clean with the air gun. If any portion of the screen has broken, get a new one, don't put it back in and keep another on hand in your parts kit in the field.

Note here: STIHL uses star head fasteners so if you are going to service your saws or pole saw get a full set of T-Handle Star drive wrenches. Many AG attachments are also using the Star Drive fasteners now. Check your owner's manual for the type of screen and muffler you have on your saws.

If your saw is over 5 years old, with heavy use, replace the muffler which should come with a new screen, and the muffler gasket as well (see photo right). Over the years carbon and old oil accumulates inside the muffler and you cannot clean it. They are not too expensive and will really help the saw's performance.

The 193T cranked up great and ran for hours limbing out several large oak trees taken down on the farm. I did order a new muffler with gasket and extra screens and will replace them when they come in.

ALWAYS WEAR PROTECTIVE CHAPS, HEARING PROTECTION, EYE PROTECTION AND OR A HARD HAT COMBO WHEN USING A CHAIN SAW.



Did you know?

QUWF has four landowner coops: The Grouse Coop and the Niangua Coop in Missouri, and the Catskill Mountains Wildlife and Oregon Joint Wildlife coops.

Interested in forming a coop?

Email Craig Alderman at admin@quwf.net.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks hiring game wardens

Do you like to be in the Montana outdoors working with hunters, anglers and boaters? Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is seeking applicants to fill nine game warden positions.

“It’s one of those jobs where It’s not even a job,” said Region 6 Sergeant FWP Game Warden Andy Matakis.

“It’s a way of life. It’s being that person in your community that people can rely on. No two days in this job are the same.”

To watch Matakis at work, [click here](#).

To become a game warden in Montana, applicants must successfully complete the Montana Law Enforcement Academy Basic Course or have equivalent training.

Typically, a game warden is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to support field staff, respond to the public and address wildlife issues. Job demands are heaviest during weekends and holidays.

Wardens must be in excellent physical health. The position requires frequent climbing, bending, pushing, pulling, dragging and lifting. Duties include working with sick or injured wildlife; removing illegal kills; trapping and relocating animals; backpacking; horseback patrols; and operating boats, snowmobiles and OHVs. Good communication skills are also necessary as use of force incidents can occur. Wardens must be in excellent mental condition as they must deal with all types of personalities and stress levels.



Game wardens can experience potentially dangerous interactions with criminals while enforcing the law and can be subject to assault and encounter hazardous substances. Because of these potential situations, good communication skills and strong mental health are necessary.

“I like to say you earn your badge every day,” Matakis said. “It’s not something I take lightly.”

Women and minorities are under-represented in this job category and are strongly encouraged to apply. Successful applicants will be subject to a full background investigation.

For more information, go to fwp.mt.gov/aboutfwp/enforcement/warden-hiring. To apply, [click here](#). Applications will be accepted through Jan. 1, 2024.

Boone and Crockett Club approves new position statement

The Boone and Crockett Club board of directors passed a new [position statement](#) supporting the delisting of recovered wolf and grizzly bear populations and resuming state management and oversight of the two species. The position statement was passed last week during the Club’s 136th Annual Meeting in Louisville, Kentucky. For most of its history, the Club and its members have been actively involved in wolf and grizzly bear policy, research, and developing best management practices. The Club understands the biological, sociocultural, economic, and political factors associated with managing these two species, and is well-positioned to help promote results-driven, successful conservation strategies moving forward.

“Keeping species at no risk of extinction listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) misuses the ESA, wastes the resources of the ESA program needed for other species, impedes conservation, and erodes support for the ESA,” the statement reads. “The Boone and Crockett Club maintains that state and tribal wildlife agencies have the expertise and the capacity to successfully manage recovered wolves and grizzlies and refine their management policies to ensure populations remain robust and to mitigate any new challenges that arise. These agencies and their associated commissions are also in the best position to address the effects on wildlife and people from wolf and grizzly conflicts.”

The B&C position statement notes that state management plans must ensure that population objectives are based on science and their means are effective and ethically acceptable to society. Most people agree that neither persecution nor wholesale protection are appropriate as the primary approaches to wolf and grizzly bear management.

Continued on Page 14

Continued from Page 13 — Still, due to the litigation that has affected management of both species (which is summarized in the situational overview of the position statement), stable governance has not been achieved as has been implemented with numerous other wildlife species under state and tribal management. Without stable management, the problems of depredation, threats to human life, property damage, and nuisance cannot be adequately addressed.

The statement continues: “State management must outperform the ESA requirement that a state management plan constitutes an ‘adequate regulatory mechanism,’ meaning that a plan gives reasonable assurances that a species will not become threatened or endangered again. The even larger challenge for state wildlife agencies is showing the entire country that a species once almost eliminated, then restored, can now be sustainably managed. State wildlife agencies have demonstrated exceptional success with many other species. Continued coordination between the states and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) will maintain delisted status and help withstand litigation.”

The Club has been and will continue to work with state and federal leaders to ensure state-level policies sustain wolf and grizzly populations. However, state management of any species comes with challenges. Managing wolves and grizzlies is expensive, hunting and trapping may not suffice to achieve population goals, and public debate over how many wolves and grizzlies there should be and where they should occur is contentious.

“The Club believes these debates should not be held in courts of law, but in the administrative venue of state wildlife commissions supported by the professional analysis of wildlife agencies,” the statement concludes.

“This is where most wildlife management policies have been made successfully for more than a century.

However, decisions will not be made in these venues so long as wolves and grizzlies are listed under the ESA and managed by the FWS.”

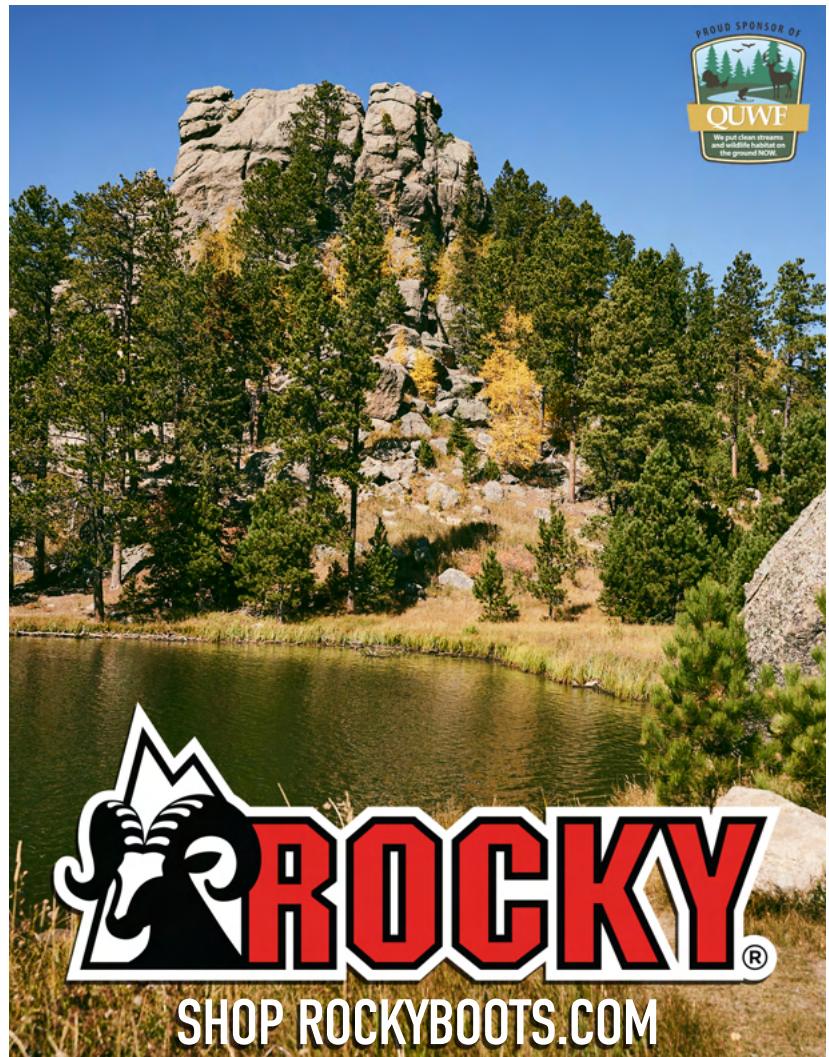
Wyoming: Checking CWD results is easy

Hunters who had tissue samples collected from their deer, elk or moose this hunting season for chronic wasting disease testing can easily check the results on the [Wyoming Game and Fish Department’s website](#). Results from the Game and Fish Wildlife Health Lab are typically available within three weeks.

Hunters can check their CWD results by visiting the [Game and Fish veterinary services webpage](#) and logging into their user account.

“Game and Fish appreciates all hunters who submit samples. Hunters play a critical role in helping Game and Fish understand the disease and achieve CWD monitoring goals,” said Craig Smith, deputy chief of the Wildlife Division.

If CWD is detected in the sample provided, hunters may dispose of the meat without violating any laws concerning the waste of game meat. The CWD report, available to print from the Game and Fish account, will give permission to dispose of the meat. Meat should be [properly disposed of in an approved municipal landfill](#).



Avian flu found in Canada geese at Laurel's South Pond

Editor's Note: the Avian flu continues to be a significant factor in the U.S., little is publicized as the government does not want the true numbers of poultry that had to be destroyed to alarm the public but it is a significant number of chickens and turkeys as well as wild birds. If you find dead birds, please report them to your state wildlife agency ASAP.

Canada geese that were found dead at Laurel's South Pond earlier this week have tested positive for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks staff responded to reports of sick and dead Canada geese at the popular Laurel park on Tuesday, Nov. 28. Carcasses were transported to FWP's Wildlife Health Lab in Bozeman for HPAI testing.

Avian influenza (AI) virus is a naturally occurring virus in birds. AI viruses are classified into two groups, based on the severity of disease they cause in infected birds. Low pathogenic AI viruses generally cause no clinical illness, or only minor symptoms in most birds. HPAI viruses are extremely infectious and fatal to poultry and some species of wild birds. Some species of waterfowl can carry and spread the virus without developing symptoms of disease.

Since the HPAI outbreak began in Montana in April, 2022, the virus has been detected in just under 200 wild birds. This is only a subset of total bird mortality, as not every dead bird is tested for HPAI. Cases of HPAI in wild birds declined significantly over the summer months, but FWP started receiving reports of new mortality events in November, likely associated with the fall bird migration. A similar pattern occurred the previous year, with fewer cases in summer 2022, followed by a spike in cases that fall and winter.

Continued on Page 16

QUWF welcomes All veterans. All the time.

The Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation was formed to focus on and help veteran landowners, veteran sportsmen, and all veterans who are interested in the great outdoors.

QUWF staff will help all veterans find and get benefit assistance through the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) or other resources.

You are NOT alone.

Veterans who served our country honorably deserve and have earned the right now to enjoy its freedoms and receive the support and benefits they deserve.

We are the ONLY VETERAN FORMED and managed national wildlife and conservation organization in the U.S. QUWF and our chapters support veteran businesses as well. Let us know.



Continued from Page 15 — In Montana, various species of geese and scavenging birds such as eagles, owls and hawks have been the most heavily impacted wild birds. While it's difficult to predict what level of wild bird mortality will occur this winter, FWP is continuing to investigate cases of sick or dead wild birds to determine the cause.

HPAI has also been detected in some mammal species in the state including grizzly bears, skunks, red foxes, raccoons and mountain lions. In spring of 2023, a domestic dog in Ontario, Canada was confirmed to be infected with HPAI when it died after chewing on a wild goose. Similarly, at least three outdoor domestic cats tested positive for HPAI in Wyoming and Nebraska when they died, likely after consuming dead birds that were infected.

Although the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** considers risk of HPAI spread to humans to be very low, Montanans should take precautions when handling game birds or any sick or dead bird they find. Whenever possible, avoid contact with sick or dead wildlife. Even if a bird is not suspected to have died from a contagious disease, gloves should always be worn if a dead animal must be handled for disposal. Keep domestic dogs and cats away from sick or dead birds and bird excrement.

The public is encouraged to report unusual or unexplained cases of sickness and/or death of wild birds by calling their local wildlife biologist or the wildlife lab in Bozeman at 406-577-7880 or 406-577-7882. Cases of sick domestic poultry can be reported to the Montana Department of Livestock at 406-444-2976.

Bird hunters should follow these simple precautions when processing or handling wild birds:

- Do not harvest or handle wild birds that are obviously sick or found dead.
- Wear disposable latex or rubber gloves while cleaning game.
- Do not eat, drink or smoke while cleaning game.
- Clean game birds outdoors or in a well-ventilated area
- People and equipment that have been in contact with wild game birds should avoid contact with live poultry.

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Continued from Page 16 — Wash hands with soap and water or alcohol wipes immediately after handling game.

- Wash tools and work surfaces used to clean game birds with soap and water, then disinfect with a 10 percent solution of chlorine bleach—one part chlorine bleach to 10 parts water.
- Separate raw meat, and anything it touches, from cooked or ready-to-eat foods to avoid contamination.
- Cook game meat thoroughly to an internal temperature of at least 165°F.

Songbirds are not common carriers of HPAI. However, bird feeders can cause various bird species to congregate, which creates environments that increase disease transmission. Those who maintain bird feeders should follow these simple precautions:

- Keep feeders away from areas used by poultry.
- Thoroughly clean bird feeders every two weeks.
 - Wear disposable latex or rubber gloves when cleaning bird feeders.
 - Brush debris off bird feeders.
 - Disinfect feeders with a 10 percent solution of chlorine bleach—one part chlorine bleach to 10 parts water.
 - Remove debris, feces and seed hulls from below feeders and throw away.
 - Wash hands with soap and water or alcohol wipes immediately after cleaning bird feeders.

For more information on AI in wild birds in Montana, visit fwp.mt.gov/conservation/diseases/avian-influenza.



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Ohio's weeklong deer gun hunting season results

Ohio's weeklong white-tailed deer gun hunting season concluded on Sunday, Dec. 3, with hunters taking 70,118 deer, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife. Last year, hunters took 71,931 deer during the gun week. The three-year average for deer harvest during the seven-day gun season is 71,322. An additional weekend of deer gun hunting will happen on Dec. 16-17.

During the deer gun week, hunters checked 25,044 antlered deer (36% of the harvest) and 45,074 antlerless deer (64%), a category which includes does and button bucks.

The top 10 counties for deer taken during the week of gun season were: Coshocton (2,441), Tuscarawas (2,260), Ashtabula (2,189), Muskingum (2,076), Knox (1,880), Carroll (1,864), Guernsey (1,798), Washington (1,582), Licking (1,570), and Harrison (1,533). Coshocton County also led the state in 2022 with 2,457 deer checked.

Straight-walled cartridge rifles have become more popular since becoming legal for deer gun hunting in 2014. This year, straight-walled cartridge rifles were used to harvest 60% of the deer checked during the seven-day gun season. Shotguns accounted for 34% of the total. In addition, 4% were taken with a muzzleloader, 1% with archery equipment, and 1% with a handgun.



This year, 389,181 deer permits have been issued through Sunday, Dec. 3. Nonresidents have purchased 37,543 hunting licenses, many of them to enjoy Ohio's terrific deer hunting opportunities. The most popular states that hunters traveled to Ohio from include Pennsylvania (7,078 nonresident licenses), Michigan (4,733), West Virginia (3,560), North Carolina (3,105), and New York (2,852).

In the 2023 deer season, archery and firearms hunters have taken a total of 167,732 deer through Sunday, Dec. 3. Hunters have another opportunity to harvest a deer with a firearm during the bonus gun weekend, Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 16-17. The muzzleloader season is Jan. 6-9, 2024. The archery season remains open through Sunday, Feb. 4, 2024. Find more details in the [2023-24 Hunting and Trapping Regulations](#).

Successful deer hunters can check their game using the [HuntFish OH](#) mobile app, available for free in the Android and Apple app stores. Users can also explore public hunting areas, purchase hunting licenses or deer permits, see county bag limits, and so much more. Beyond the app, hunters can check game by visiting [ohiogamecheck.com](#), calling 1-877-TAG-IT-OH (1-877-824-4864), visiting a license sales agent, or calling 1-866-703-1298 (landowner operator-assisted; fees apply).

Last year, hunters generated \$1.9 billion in economic spending in Ohio, [according to a recent report](#) released by the Wildlife Management Institute, Responsive Management, and Southwick Associates. The research found that 5% of Ohio's adults, about 500,000 individuals, participate in hunting, with 91% of those hunters taking part in deer hunting.

The mission of the Division of Wildlife is to conserve and improve fish and wildlife resources and their habitats for sustainable use and appreciation by all. Visit [wildohio.gov](#) to find out more.

ODNR ensures a balance between wise use and protection of our natural resources for the benefit of all. Visit the ODNR website at [ohiodnr.gov](#).

A county list of all white-tailed deer checked by hunters during the 2023 deer gun hunting week is shown below. The first number following the county's name shows the deer harvest numbers for 2023, and the three-year average from 2020, 2021, and 2022 is in parentheses. A three-year average provides a better overall comparison to this year's numbers, eliminating year-to-year variation because of weather, misaligned season dates, timing of the crop harvest, and other unavoidable factors. Numbers below are raw data and subject to change.

Adams: 967 (1,037); Allen: 458 (399); Ashland: 1,420 (1,473); Ashtabula: 2,189 (2,064); Athens: 1,083 (1,277); Auglaize: 476 (440); Belmont: 1,345 (1,199); Brown: 832 (937); Butler: 276 (344); Carroll: 1,864 (1,777); Champaign: 487 (479); Clark: 232 (214); Clermont: 583 (689); Clinton: 307 (232); Columbiana: 1,464 (1,383); Coshocton: 2,441 (2,380); Crawford: 631 (653); Cuyahoga: 53 (46); Darke: 344 (343); Defiance: 907 (903); Delaware: 427 (426); Erie: 297 (317); Fairfield: 663 (774); Fayette: 144 (136); Franklin: 189 (169); Fulton: 435 (396); Gallia: 1,023 (1,136); Geauga: 753 (633); Greene: 216 (258); Guernsey: 1,798 (1,902); Hamilton: 114 (146); Hancock: 646 (644); Hardin: 540 (608); Harrison: 1,533 (1,365); Henry: 431 (462);

Continued on Page 20

Continued from Page 19 — Highland: 1,008 (1,119); Hocking: 1,004 (1,111); Holmes: 1,507 (1,605); Huron: 1,153 (1,168); Jackson: 937 (1,018); Jefferson: 1,088 (890); Knox: 1,880 (1,979); Lake: 203 (175); Lawrence: 655 (689); Licking: 1,570 (1,772); Logan: 740 (785); Lorain: 735 (730); Lucas: 114 (129); Madison: 159 (209); Mahoning: 621 (589); Marion: 344 (395); Medina: 683 (727); Meigs: 1,049 (1,221); Mercer: 400 (406); Miami: 261 (255); Monroe: 1,184 (1,145); Montgomery: 163 (197); Morgan: 1,294 (1,333); Morrow: 746 (697); Muskingum: 2,076 (2,173); Noble: 1,215 (1,288); Ottawa: 191 (180); Paulding: 563 (564); Perry: 1,046 (1,130); Pickaway: 335 (267); Pike: 647 (677); Portage: 685 (694); Preble: 323 (327); Putnam: 462 (406); Richland: 1,357 (1,378); Ross: 959 (1,090); Sandusky: 322 (336); Scioto: 718 (761); Seneca: 970 (908); Shelby: 452 (429); Stark: 1,040 (970); Summit: 210 (207); Trumbull: 1,446 (1,202); Tuscarawas: 2,260 (2,240); Union: 398 (390); Van Wert: 300 (277); Vinton: 590 (854); Warren: 259 (325); Washington: 1,582 (1,491); Wayne: 917 (882); Williams: 733 (739); Wood: 413 (370); Wyandot: 583 (782).
2023 total: 70,118 3-year average total: 71,322



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Northeast Montana Havre Check Station results

The results are in from the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Havre check station for the 2023 hunting season. The check station was open for eight weekends from Oct. 7 (the opener of general antelope and pheasant) through Nov. 26 (the end of the deer/elk general season). Overall, hunter numbers and upland game bird harvest were above average, and big game harvest was below average.

Biologists gather a lot of valuable information and biological data on game animals brought through check stations. FWP appreciates all hunters’ cooperation in this effort. Note that the harvest data described below includes only animals that were brought through the Havre check station and is only a partial representation of the region-wide harvest.

Hunter numbers (2,017) were up 2% from 2022, and 15% above the long-term average.

“Hunter numbers were up this year, and warm and dry weather during most of the hunting season likely contributed to the high participation,” noted Havre-area biologist Scott Hemmer, who manages the station.

Mule deer checked totaled 533 for the year, which was down 12% from last year and 2% below the long-term average.

For the year, 149 white-tailed deer were brought by the station, which was 9% higher than 2022, and just 2% below the long-term average.

“Deer hunter reports varied across the region, however most hunters reported seeing fewer mule and white-tailed deer this fall,” adds Hemmer. “Deer hunter success (number of deer/hunter) was 19% below the long-term average.”

Continued on Page 22

2023 Havre Check Station Harvest Summary

	Total	% 2022 Harvest	% Change Long-term Average
Pronghorn Antelope	177	-5%	-29%
Mule Deer	533	-12%	-2%
White-tailed Deer	149	9%	-2%
Elk	25	-34%	-36%
Pheasant	725	37%	-2%
Sharp-tailed Grouse	163	7%	30%
Hungarian Partridge	122	47%	102%
Ducks	89	2%	47%
Hunters	2017	2%	15%

Continued from Page 21 — The number of antelope checked, whose general season ended on Nov. 12, saw slightly lower numbers than 2022, and 29% below the long-term average. 177 antelope were brought by the check station this year.

“Antelope license quotas in some districts were reduced, due in part to lower populations resulting from recent extended drought and winter weather conditions,” said Hemmer. “Antelope hunter reports reflected harvest success, as most hunters indicated fewer antelope seen this year.

For the year, 25 elk were recorded, which is 34% below last year and 36% below the long-term average.

Upland bird numbers saw a substantial increase in harvest this year. For the eight weeks that the check station was open, the pheasant harvest of 725 birds is above last year (37%), and just below the long-term average. Sharp-tailed grouse (163 birds) harvest was just above last year’s total, and 30% above the long-term average. Gray (Hungarian) partridge harvest (122) was well above both last year and the long-term average.

“Upland bird hunter reports this year have been mostly positive,” noted Hemmer. “A lot of juvenile birds came by the check station, which is a good indicator of population growth. Favorable weather during hatching and brood-rearing months, combined with improved habitat conditions thanks to timely precipitation, seemed to rebound bird numbers across the region.”

Duck harvest (89) was up slightly from last year and was well above the long-term average.

FWP Region 6 thanks all hunters for stopping by the check station.

“Overall, it appeared a lot of hunters were able to make it out into the field this fall,” said Hemmer. “We sure appreciate and enjoy visiting with the hunters that come by the check station, and it’s great to hear stories about a successful hunt. Thanks for stopping by!”



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Wolverines listed as endangered species

Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is committed to deciding what needs Endangered Species Act protection by the end of FY 2024.

This week the FWS listed the Wolverine as Endangered. The Wolverine was listed as Endangered in 48 states. The listing does not include wolverines in Alaska and Canada, which number in the thousands.

This will impact many trails and riding areas. Snowmobilers were not granted any protection in the listing. There will be a 60-day comment period. We will need to get all snowmobilers involved in submitting comments. We will work on suggested talking points in the coming days.

Other listings coming? The FWS continues to study Monarch butterflies, which have been teetering on the brink for years.

Gray wolves are currently being reassessed by the FWS, as the agency faces intense political pressure from all sides as it decides whether to stick with an earlier, court-reversed determination that the species can be removed from the ESA list.

Northern long-eared bats pose problems of their own, with the agency's decision to move the species from threatened to endangered status stirring displeasure from lawmakers of both parties in Minnesota and other states.

Craig A. Alderman, executive director
admin@quwf.net

Nick Prough, chief wildlife biologist and
 wildlife partnership coordinator
chiefbiologist@quwf.net

Betty Richardson, seed program manager
habitatseedmngn@quwf.net

JD Kennedy, social media and research
 coordinator intern

Laura Hazelett, American Falconry
 Conservancy president

Advertising and circulation
admin@quwf.net

Membership
membership@quwf.net

Website Design
 Wehrenberg Design Company, Springfield, MO

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