

Game and Fish releases midwinter waterfowl survey numbers

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department’s annual midwinter waterfowl survey in early January indicated about 135,000 Canada geese and 9,500 mallards in the state.

Mason Ryckman, department migratory game bird biologist, said numbers were pretty similar to years when Lake Sakakawea is still open, besides the record-breaking number of 300,000-plus Canada geese in 2024.



Photo courtesy of North Dakota Game and Fish

During the 2026 survey, an estimated 109,112 Canada geese were observed on the Missouri River and Lake Sakakawea, another 16,894 on Nelson Lake in Oliver County, and an additional 8,500-plus geese in other parts of the state. Ryckman said Game and Fish staff and partners with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recorded the additional 9,500 mallards across the state.

The 10-year average (2017-26) for the midwinter survey in North Dakota is 115,950 Canada geese and 13,400 mallards. The survey helps biologists gauge wintering distribution of waterfowl in North Dakota, and other states throughout the Central Flyway.

‘JERGENS’ CON’T FROM PAGE 1

Last year, Jurgens served as vice president of the board. He has been with the Walsh County Sheriff’s office since 1991 and has served as Sheriff in Walsh County since 2014.

Jurgens said the executive board of the North Dakota Sheriffs and Deputies Association works closely with the North Dakota Legislature and helps craft bills dealing with issues facing law enforcement in the state.

Re-election bid

Jurgens also announced last week his plans to run for a fourth term as Walsh County Sheriff. Jurgens said experience is very important.

Since joining the Walsh County Sheriff’s Office in 1991, he has served as a Patrol Deputy, Sergeant and Chief Deputy. If elected, it would be Jurgens’ fourth, four-year term as Walsh County Sheriff.

‘NEXT 25’ CON’T FROM PAGE 6

husband finally notices it’s gone, it will be because he’s looking for a notation on the cover rather than the pages inside (those are now best suited to making pressed flowers). We now have a responsibility to ask for and give cell phone numbers to neighbors. This saves time when horses jump the fence, a package is delivered to the wrong address, or a meeting is cancelled at the last minute. A text group can alert a dozen people before they even leave home when a power outage or plumbing issue closes the coffee shop where you expected to meet

**In-kind donations.** We should never forget that the contributions people make to our communities come in many forms. Time and talents are priceless. But it takes real money to pay for the gas to get to and from meetings and events. For many families, that includes extra out-of-the-way mileage to drop off and pick up kids or a babysitter. When you live in the country, those miles and those costs add up. And it doesn’t cost one thin dime to say, “I know it took effort for you to be here, and want you to know it’s appreciated.”

**Common courtesy.** Have you seen that wedding invitations now come with a QR code for your reception

RSVP? Kudos to the couples who make things easy for others. If only mannerly behavior in all situations could be that simple. But sometimes it takes a bit more effort. Like finding the phone number of an organizer to call and say your kid is sick and won’t make it to hunter safety class so the volunteers running it aren’t stalling the start, thinking latecomers are on their way. If you’re the organizer whose phone number is listed as an event contact, remember to check your messages and voicemail so you can relay information from those with the courtesy to call.

**No-shows.** Stuff happens. Plans change. There are good reasons, and there are poor excuses for not showing up. This applies to participants and to volunteers. No-show volunteers make things harder for the ones who do make it. No-show participants cost event organizers time, effort, expenses and other resources that are already in short supply. I would remind that those expenses, like

meals at a wedding reception, are usually paid for up front. When you live where it’s not feasible to make a quick trip to town for stuff after you see who shows up, someone is putting in the effort in advance. Someone is paying for food or supplies for the number of people who said they were coming. Even if it’s a donation, the meat for sloppy joe sandwiches for a hunter safety field day has to be thawed and prepared in advance.

In our rural communities, everything from 4-H to vacation Bible school requires materials and preparation – often paid for and accomplished by volunteers who could be doing something else. Most of them volunteer because they want to contribute to the community. Most of them don’t expect anything more than a bit of courtesy and unspoken recognition that their time and efforts are appreciated.

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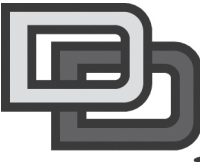
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