

North Dakota Outdoors

Warden stories with Ken Skuza

By Doug Leier, North Dakota Game and Fish Department

Like many growing up hunting, fishing and trapping, my memories of our North Dakota game wardens were my first exposure to natural resource law enforcement. In LaMoure, it was Harold Bellin. In Valley City, Delbert Tibke. Prior to becoming a game warden myself, I rode along with Ken Skuza who took me under his wing and helped mentor me in my first post at Bottineau.

Here’s a few of warden Ken Skuza’s favorite stories in his own words:

Back in the 90s I was stationed in Kenmare when I received a call about a lynx in a garage just north of town. At that point and time in my career I thought to myself, right, a lynx. I drove into the farmyard and staring out of a window in the garage was a lynx. I talked to the individual and agreed with her that it was a lynx.

She wanted it removed. So, not the smartest thing I’ve ever done, I grabbed my

fishing net out of the back of the truck and walked into the garage, closing the door behind me. Yep, that lynx was not a happy guy. He was staring at me, hissing and swatting one of his paws.

I walked up to the lynx, and he jumped at me. I swung the net and luckily caught the lynx in midair. It twisted around so fast in the net, the net acted like a straitjacket and the lynx was caught. I placed it into my dog kennel and took it to the vet in Minot.

A few years back I received a call from the Game and Fish wildlife division in Riverdale. They requested my help with a sick moose south of Riverdale. I arrived a short time later and talked with the guys. They pointed out the moose to me and told me it was sick or hurt due to the way it was walking around.

Before I went into the field, I called the landowner and told him what was happening, and that I would be driving on his field. I drove within 100 yards of the moose and watched it



Everyone loves to hear game warden stories. Photo courtesy of North Dakota Game and Fish Department.

with my binoculars. The moose was very thin. Every rib was showing, and his hind quarters were nothing but bone.

I decided the moose needed to be put down.

I drove up within 50 yards of the moose and shot and it went down. I put the shotgun into the backseat of the pickup and looked up. The moose was not only on his feet but was charging me at full speed.

It happened so fast I did not have time to move the truck. The moose came right at the

front of my truck and at the last minute turned and left a pack of hair on my hood. The moose went by my truck and fell over for the last time.

Upon examination of the moose, it was blind and would not have lived much longer.

More recently, I received a call about two bucks with locked antlers. I made two mistakes that day: One, I brought another warden, and two, I got out of my pickup.

It may not be widely known but wardens like to poke each other when a mistake is made.

I arrived on location with the two whitetail bucks. I drove out to the deer, and one was not alive.

The other one appeared to be exhausted. I told the other warden I was going to shoot the antlers off one of the deer. I got my shotgun out and walked up to the deer.

The deer that was alive looked to be at its wits end. I put the shotgun up to his antlers and pulled the trigger. Well, he wasn’t exhausted. He jumped up and raked me from my ankles to my chest with his one remaining antler. I still had one finger in the trigger mechanism of the shotgun. The antler caught that too. Breaking my finger and making a bloody mess.

To this day I get reminded of the deer locked together.

Everyone loves to hear stories from the field.

Read more warden stories at <https://gf.nd.gov/enforcement/behind-the-badge>.

OUTDOORS BRIEFS

Gratis application process improved

North Dakota landowners applying for deer gratis licenses will notice improvements to the online application process.

The new system simplifies land selection by allowing users to click on property descriptions rather than manually entering lengthy details.

During the first year, applicants need to search and select their lands. In subsequent years, a convenient renewal button will speed up future applications. An additional link is available to reference previous years records.

These changes help validate eligible records more efficiently, ultimately reducing the time required to process the deer lottery. By improving accuracy and preventing errors, the system ensures a smoother experience for applicants and a timely lottery for those eager to receive their results.

Step-by-step guidance is available on the North Dakota Game and Fish Department website by visiting gf.nd.gov/buy-apply/help/gratis-application.

General deer and muzzle-loader lottery applications will be online in early May. The deadline to apply is June 4.

Spring mule deer survey begins

The state Game and Fish Department’s annual spring aerial mule deer survey is set to begin

in early April in western North Dakota. Weather permitting, the survey takes about two weeks to complete.

During the survey period, people could notice low-flying small airplanes over some parts of the badlands.

Game and Fish biologists have completed aerial surveys of the same 24 badlands study areas since the 1950s. The purpose of the survey is to determine a population index to assess mule deer abundance in the badlands.

- Summer Workshop for Educators
- Earth Day Patch Contest Winners

Summer workshop for educators

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is sponsoring Pollinators in the Classroom, a professional development workshop for educators.

Pollinators in the Classroom will be held June 10-11 at United Tribes Technical College in Bismarck. The workshop will explore pollinators, what they are, where they live, life cycles, importance, and how you can make a difference. It will be fun and fast paced with many hands-on activities educators can use in their classrooms, and incorporate discussion of classroom and curriculum integration.

Students will receive a copy of the Urban Pollinator Program Curriculum, and should be prepared for walking field trips in the area. All materials

are included. The course is suitable for k-12 educators.

For more information contact curriculum specialist Sherry Niesar at 701-527-3714 or sniesar@nd.gov. Register by clicking on the link.

Earth Day patch contest winners

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department announced the winners of the 2025 Earth Day Patch Contest. Over 1,600 students from 100 schools entered this year’s contest.

Winners in four age categories are Tryg Klindworth, Beulah (K-3); Mariah Achtenberg, White Shield (4-6); Jazmin Vasquez, Minot Bishop Ryan (7-9), and Brielle Volk, Mohall (10-12). Achtenberg’s design was chosen as the overall winner and will be made into the 2025 Earth Day patch.

Youth and adults who participate in cleaning up public lands receive the 2025 patch to celebrate Earth Day and their service. Projects that qualify for the Earth Day patch include refuse pick-up on local, state or federal properties and landscaping on public property including planting trees, bushes and pollinator plants.

Groups participating in the service projects are encouraged to take the following precautions to ensure their safety: keep young people away from highways, lakes and rivers and only allow older participants to pick up broken glass or sharp objects.

Participants are asked to contact Sherry Niesar at 701-527-3714 or sniesar@nd.gov to receive a patch.

BCDC releases RFP for new restaurant opportunity in Bowman

Courtesy of Bowman County Development Corporation

Bowman, ND — Bowman County Development Corporation (BCDC) has officially released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the purchase or operation of the newly renovated restaurant property located at 706 Highway 12 West in Bowman, North Dakota. Formerly home to JABBR’S restaurant, the site has been fully renovated by BCDC to support a full-service sit-down dining operation and must include breakfast and lunch service.

This unique opportunity invites entrepreneurs, restaurateurs, and developers to establish a new restaurant in a high-visibility, high-traffic corridor at the intersection of U.S. Highway 12 and U.S. Highway 85. This strategic location offers unmatched visibility and accessibility, making Bowman a natural stop for regional travelers and long-distance tourists. The city already benefits from strong pass-through traffic, which is expected to increase significantly in the coming years.

The RFP offers flexible options for ownership or operation, including purchase,

lease, lease-to-own, or contract for deed arrangements. All proposals must include a comprehensive business plan and demonstrate alignment with Bowman County’s economic development goals, particularly those focused on tourism, workforce retention, and community vitality.

The 3,792-square-foot building features a commercial-grade kitchen, ADA-compliant restroom, and seating capacity for up to 100 guests. Recent upgrades include new equipment, lighting, flooring, and HVAC systems, offering a turnkey opportunity for the right operator.

Proposals are due no later than May 23, 2025, at 5:00 PM MST. Property tours are available by appointment, Monday through Friday.

Interested parties may contact Sarah Nagel to receive the full RFP. Alternatively, the RFP is also available on our website at bowmannd.com. Submissions should be directed to:

Bowman County Development Corporation
Attn: Sarah Nagel
PO Box 1143
13 E Divide
Bowman, ND 58623
Email: sarah@swnd.com



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