

Breeding duck numbers decline again

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department’s 78th annual spring breeding duck survey conducted in May showed an index of about 2.66 million birds, down from 2.9 million in 2024 and 3.4 million in 2023.

The 2025 breeding duck index was the 33rd highest on record and exceeded the long-term (1948-2024) average by 7%, according to Mike Szymanski, Department migratory game bird supervisor.

“Things are continuing to decline a little bit as far as duck populations go. The mallard population estimate was down 26% from last year and is the lowest estimated mallard breeding population on our survey since 1993,” Szymanski said. “Blue-winged teal, green-winged teal and pintails also had significant population declines, whereas the declines for gadwall, shovelers and ruddy ducks were not as significant. We did have a few species – wigeon, canvasbacks, redheads and lesser scaup – that showed increases from last year on our survey.”

Szymanski said there are a few things factoring into the declines, including poor wetland conditions for early migrating species like mallards and pintails. Many of these birds, which arrived in North Dakota before the nourishing rains in May, likely spurned the state because of dry conditions and headed to search for breeding areas farther north. Also, the decline in breeding duck numbers has a lot to do with the loss of CRP and perennial grasses on the landscape used for nesting cover by ducks.

“We’ve lost so much grass on the landscape that it makes it really hard for duck populations and other ground-nesting

birds to do well,” Szymanski said. “One metric we look at is going back to 1994 to 2016 when we had really good wetland conditions and a lot of grass, a lot of CRP on the landscape. Our total duck population is now down 34% from that time period’s average, and our mallard breeding population in North Dakota is down 57% from that average. Those are pretty significant declines.”

Like in year’s past, Szymanski and crew covered more than 1,800 miles of transects counting wetlands and waterfowl down to the species and social grouping on both sides of the road. This spring, the wetland count was the 52nd highest on record but was down 38% from last year.

“We do our survey based on phenology and migration ecology of ducks coming through the state and this year it happened to be timed before we got quite a bit of rain later in May. So, not having much snow melt in the spring, our wetland counts were down quite a bit,” he said. “Conditions were pretty dry and that affected how ducks settled in the state. The western third of the state was very dry and then the eastern two thirds of the state was still quite dry, but a little bit better when we ran the survey.”

Szymanski reiterated that for duck populations to rebound in North Dakota and provide good

opportunities for hunters, more grass and water are needed.

“North Dakota is the duck factory of the United States and North America. We have a lot of folks relying on us to produce ducks, not just our hunters here in North Dakota, but hunters all across the Central and Mississippi flyways,” he said. “When we have poor production in North Dakota, other folks feel it as well. Unfortunately, the direction we’re going right now is smaller and smaller fall flights.”

As always, Szymanski cautions waterfowl hunters about reading too much into our survey numbers just yet. He said that while the Mid-continent duck populations aren’t what they once were, we’ll know more once the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service releases their fall survey area results sometime in early fall.

“And we’ll see how July goes when we do our duck brood survey,” he said. “Wetland conditions are a little bit improved from where they were in early May, but they’re still not great. We likely would have had disastrous production if we didn’t get the rain we got. Hopefully, having some fair wetland conditions going into June will help us out and get a little duck production this year.”

Watch the breeding duck survey webcast with Mike Szymanski.

Public Notice

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department will be releasing approximately 1334 acres of land on the Lonetree Wildlife Management Area to the highest bidder for hay land. Lonetree WMA is approximately 14 miles southwest of Harvey. 30 individual fields and 25 actual bid sites will be bid and hayed separately. The average bid site size is approximately 53 acres. In addition, 26.6@ will be bid at Forward WMA, 4 miles south and 2.5 miles east of Harvey, ND.

No haying is permitted before August 1, 2025, or after September 1, 2025. Bales must be removed by midnight of September 15th, 2025. Payment must be received on the day of the sale. Bids will be accepted on a per acre bid basis. Interested bidders are encouraged to obtain maps of the fields/sites at the Lonetree WMA office. Bids will be on an open (competitive) bid basis with bidding to begin at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday July 15th, 2025, at the Lonetree WMA office. The actual figures are subject to change before the bid date. Questions may be directed to the ND Game and Fish Department at 701-328-6332.

City of McClusky

Hiring Position: Assessor

Qualifications: Obtain Assessors Class II- 80 hours – International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO) certificate for North Dakota within a 2-year period. Classes will be reimbursed upon completion of certification test. Use software with training. Some Field work. Make your own hours as needed. Salary Varies

Mechanic/Equipment Operator Position Open

The Board of Sheridan County Commissioners will be accepting applications for a Mechanic/Equipment Operator position for at the McClusky shop of Sheridan County. Qualifications are to have experience in repairing and performing a variety of skilled and semi-skilled work in operation of medium to heavy equipment utilized in road construction, maintenance, and repair projects. Must have a valid driver's license. Wages \$20.00-\$25.00 per hr. plus benefits - negotiable upon experience. Up to a 45-hour week. Starting date of hire is as soon as can be.

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Shirley A. Murray, Sheridan County Auditor

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The City of Goodrich Consumer Confidence report

The City of Goodrich Consumer Confidence report - 2024 Annual Drinking Water Report is available and posted at Goodrich City Hall and the USPO for public review. If you would like a copy, please contact John Parson at 701-441-1816.

ABBREVIATED NOTICE OF INTENT TO AMEND NORTH DAKOTA ETHICS COMMISSION RULES RELATING TO THE COMPLAINT PROCESS

TAKE NOTICE that the North Dakota Ethics Commission will hold a public hearing to address proposed changes to the N.D. Admin. Code ch. 115-02-01 at 9:30 am on Tuesday, September 9, 2025 at 600 E Boulevard Ave, Judicial Wing Rm. 321, Bismarck and on Microsoft Teams. These are not emergency rules.

A copy of the proposed rules and a link for the hearing may be found at www.ethicscommission.nd.gov or obtained by calling (701) 328-5325. Written comments may be submitted on the Ethics Commission's website or to 600 E Boulevard Ave, Dept 195, Bismarck, ND 58505 until September 22, 2025. If you plan to attend the public hearing and will need special facilities or assistance relating to a disability, please contact the Ethics Commission at the above telephone number at least 14 days prior to the public hearing.

Dated this 26th day of June, 2025.
Rebecca Binstock, Executive Director, North Dakota Ethics Commission