November 1 Infolunch: Big Game Hunting – Alaska and Wyoming

The Brookings Wildlife Federation will hear BWF President, Mr. Spencer Vaa, tell about two big game hunting adventures at the November 1 Infolunch at the First Lutheran Coffee House.

Vaa is one of Brookings’s most traveled and accomplished outdoorsmen. He has taken us on hunts from Africa to Alaska and throughout the Rocky Mountains. This month he will take us caribou hunting in Alaska’s Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and bighorn sheep hunting in Wyoming.

Vaa had to be lucky to get a license to hunt bighorns in Wyoming, which warns prospective hunters that “obtaining a bighorn sheep license is akin to winning the lottery. Drawing odds are typically less than 1 percent. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department also warns that hunting bighorn sheep is logistically difficult and physically demanding and typically involves packing gear long distances into rugged country, often at high elevations.

The restoration of the Bighorn sheep population is a Wyoming success story. In 1960 there were estimated to be 2,000 Bighorn Sheep in Wyoming, restricted entirely to the northwest corner of the state. Today, there are between 6,000 and 7,000 Bighorn sheep, mostly in “core herds” in the Absaroka, Teton, Gros
Ventre, and Wind River mountain ranges. However, the state’s “trap and transfer” program has reestablished populations in 10 other areas.

The most contentious issue in Wyoming’s management plans is not hunting or the number of licenses but the interaction between Bighorn Sheep and domestic sheep and the transmission of disease. At the October 2017 BWF meeting, we heard about diseases in bighorn sheep in the Hills. Dr Jon Jenks said that here were about 300 bighorn sheep in South Dakota in four herds, and he reported on his research on disease problems.

Vaa also traveled above the Arctic Circle to hunt caribou in the Arctic National Wildlife refuge. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) manages the caribou herds that migrate through the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge - the largest refuge/wilderness area in North America.

The FWS’s caribou population estimates allow for sustainable harvest (subsistence and sport hunts). Two herds use the Refuge. The Porcupine Herd numbers approximately 100,000 animals, while the Central Arctic Herd of about 23,000 animals. Hunters are required to hire a guide for caribou hunts.

The Infolunch is open to the public. The BWF is affiliated with the South Dakota Wildlife Federation and the National Wildlife Federation. The BWF is in its 40th year of supplying conservation information and activities to the Brookings community. For more info contact BWF President Spencer Vaa 695-6867.

October Infolunch Review: Bee Industry and importance of pollinators

The Brookings Wildlife Federation hosted Mr. Bret Adee of Adee Honey Farms. Wow! What a good presentation. When have we had a speaker that opened his talk with Bible quotes about our Earth stewardship responsibilities? Mr. Adee spoke of the value of the bees for pollination of crops and prairies. He spoke of political, economic and environmental “storms.” He is comfortable as a lobbyist in Washington, and at meetings of the giant chemical industries, but in the same breath he can tell you about hives he has on the Jensen place near Colman. He said that the chemical companies know that their insecticides are hurting him, but they shrug “we’ve gotta make a profit.” He said that the politicians know that honey is an agriculture crop, but they shrug “compared to corn and cotton, you are small-potatoes.” The most memorable thing from his presentation is his attitude – not blaming anyone but saying “we can do better.”

More on Insecticides

Bret Adee talked about one class of insecticides – neonictinoids, which we have heard about from another Infolunch speaker, Dr Jon Lungren (Feb. 2018). Now the Brookings Register (Oct 18) has a front page and in-depth article about his SDSU studies as part of a research team that link neonics as the likely cause of birth defects in deer. Neonics are used to coat and protect seeds of crops by killing a wide range of insects. The neonics are systemic (stay inside the plant as it grows) so a bite of pollen can be lethal.

A scientist working with Lungren is Dr Jon Jenks, who we have also heard from occasionally as he and his students have talked about big game studies from east river deer to Black hills cougars, bighorn sheep, and elk. Jenks keeps a captive deer herd for research just north of town. He fed deer the neonics in their drinking water. He was perplexed as to how neonics got into his control group of deer. Jenks said that “neonics are all over the place.” Neonics are found in human
foods. The research team’s analysis of neonics also turned up some high concentrations in deer from North Dakota, and Minnesota deer are being studied now.

Jenks and Lungren take Adee’s approach - not pointing figures but suggesting that we can do better. Lungren said “I do think we need to use them with a whole lot more respect than we are fight now.”

The Register article said that the SDSU research team would be publishing in a peer-reviewed journal soon the results of their studies on pheasants – not saying where I heard it, but be prepared for shocking results.

Editor’s Note: Mr. Adee showed a list of other insecticides hurting the bees. On his list is a chemical that I have been watching for because I wanted to “bitch” a little. Sulfoxaflor: This a “Trump against Obama” issue. The EPA had restrictions on the use of Sulfoxaflor because it was highly toxic to honeybees at all life stages and harms wild pollinators like bumblebees even at low doses. In July, the EPA dropped the restrictions on sulfoxaflor for use on 190 million acres of US cropland. I’m just repeating news here that I hope is factual, but I did do some literature research the issue. It seems that the EPA reversed their opinion because of new data from industry-funded studies. Mr. Adee’s American Beekeeping Federation is taking EPA to court on that one.

FYI: The link is still active if you want to read the Washington Post article about Lungren, who worked at the SDSU insect lab, and his bee and pesticide research. The Washington Post article is titled “Was a USDA scientist muzzled because of his bee research?” at https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/was-a-usda-scientist-muzzled-because-of-his-bee-research/2016/03/02/462720b6-c9fb-11e5-a7b2-5a2f824b02c9_story.html?utm_term=.84ed1a524022.

SDWF ACTION ALERT RESULTS!

The SDWF leadership issued an Action Alert calling for SDWF members to contact GFP Commissioners and ask that they oppose changes in the mountain lion hunting regulations. The issue was permitting 250 nonresident licenses among other things. If you responded to the Action Alert, then your response did impact the GFP Commission. Following is a report on the GFP Commissioners meeting from Ranch Radio KBHB

“RAPID CITY, S.D. - The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks commission made several changes to the mountain lion and coyote hunting season. Changes discussed but rejected by the commission include adding 250 nonresident mountain lion licenses and expanding the allowance for the use of dogs in a hunt that originates on private land to cross over or culminate on any public lands where unleashed dogs are permitted.”

Good for You!

Brookings City Councilor Ope Niemeyer for what he said during a discussion of Brookings drainage plan: “The whole idea is for it to slowly go somewhere and not inundate our neighbors to the south either.” This is the “golden Watershed rule” – do unto your downstream neighbors as you would have your upstream neighbors do unto you.

BWF member Harry Mansheim for his letter to the Register about lawn care…”need to pay attention and not spread the pellets into the street. The fertilizer ends up in our river…”

Megan Johnston, (Bobcat freshman) for her speakout column to the Register about plastic pollution (https://brookingsregister.com/article/stop-using-plastic-straws). She agrees with the BWF Newsletter bitching
about plastic; try the paper straws (top shelf at HyVee). When my Grandson Camden looks out over the ocean a few years from now, he’ll be looking at an ocean with more plastic than fish – so the predictions go.

*SDSU Wildlife and Conservation Club* (Nick Peterson) for signing onto the GFP Adopt-a-Lake program; they picked up litter at Lake Campbell on Oct 19. This was also opening day of pheasant season so their volunteerism was a bit of a sacrifice.

*Friends of the Big Sioux River*, a group of volunteers in Sioux Falls who are monitoring river conditions and advocating for better water quality. [https://friendsofthebigsiouxriver.org/read-our-summer-issue-of-the-otter/](https://friendsofthebigsiouxriver.org/read-our-summer-issue-of-the-otter/)

**Friends of the Big Sioux River**

This is basically a Sioux Falls group, but we’re “watershed neighbors” – right? Take a look at their newsletter. The summer issue discusses the history of Wall Lake and clean up efforts there. The same causes and consequences go for other lakes in the watershed. You can receive their newsletter for free; they ask for donations.

Take a look at their web site. They have the best simple description of water quality standards that I have seen (click on water quality monitoring). There are three primary contaminants that impair river water quality: 1) total suspended solids (TSS) from soil erosion, 2) *E. coli* bacteria from animal waste, and 3) nitrates from fertilizer. The Friends volunteer to sample several waters. Graphs on their website depict safe levels and test levels.

The Lake Campbell Sportsmen’s Club samples Lake Campbell in the same manner that the Friends sample the waters in the Sioux Falls area. The Sportsmen are especially concerned about two measurements: 1) levels of *E. coli*; relates to swimming, and 2) algae (chlorophyll) and transparency; relate to esthetics/fishing.

Samples this summer had *E coli* levels <18 CFU (colony forming units); the safe *E. coli* level limit is 126 CFU (but there was one wild measurement in May of 785 CFU, which obviously needs checking). Other data show that chlorophyll and light transparency are too high to support the designated uses of the lake as a warmwater fishery ([https://denr.sd.gov/documents/impairedlakes.pdf](https://denr.sd.gov/documents/impairedlakes.pdf)).

Campbell is in the same class as Albert, Whitewood, Hendricks, and the Oakwoods. Poinsett, Cochrane and Pickerel are better. “Big deal!” you say, “The water quality data has proven the obvious.” Yes, but the numerical data are a quantitative value that can be used to set goals and determine which way the lake is going. **Editors note:** I’m reminded of the cliché “One good measurement is worth a hundred opinions.”

Anyway, these “impaired lakes” usually provide some good fishing but the natural conditions (shallow, wind-swept, warm, turbid) limit sustained fishing quality and management options (so says Todd StSauver, regional fisheries manager).

**Three Billion Birds Lost**

How many times have we seen the phrase “3 billion birds lost” in the news lately? Every conservation magazine I get talks about the loss of 3 billion birds. You can read a pretty good overview at the following site
Scientists arrive at this number using a SWAG factor (scientific wild-ass guess) that includes a variety of bird “counts” including Christmas Bird Count that some Brookings residents have been involved in for years. This citizen science data agrees with data from 143 weather stations that use radar that detect rain clouds and also clouds of migrating flocks of birds.

The article cited above goes into all of the usual suspects and conservation actions needed. Now here’s one interesting finding – populations of waterfowl and raptors are increasing. These are the species that are being protected by regulations and helped with conservation actions. The “dinky birds” are on their own to fight it out with the forces of evil. What are the forces of evil?

I saw a tiny little picture graph at the bottom of page 20 in Nat Geo (10/19) that was titled “Death Toll.” Researchers compiled data from a number of studies to estimate the number of birds killed yearly by human activity. Here are the results in descending order: stray cats 1,768 million, owned cats 764 million, building strikes 624 million, highways 213 million, power lines 55 million, and “other” 7 million. You wind energy proponents – file this data for your next debate.

When the pussy lovers saw the data, they brought out their claws in defense – there is a book about it titled Cat Wars (yes, available on Amazon). The author of the “anti-cat” Nat Geo article writes “People generally agree that the feral cat population is too large…long after humankind has faded from this planet, cats will surely be scratching around whatever’s left of it.” The author then states “Me, I don’t have the answer.”

Back to the Christmas Bird Count…you ought to take a look at the data that this famous citizen science project has produced. The Audubon folks have done an amazing job at presenting decades of info with simple, understandable graphics. Go to https://www.audubon.org/conservation/where-have-all-birds-gone and click on “CBC Trends Viewer.”

Most trends show less birds at Christmas time in the south and more in the north. Click on the state map option and then hover over South Dakota to get year by year trends – try ring-necked pheasant to see the “ups and downs” and then hover over poor Nebraska which shows only “downs” since 1967.

**Update on the Brookings Prairie**

The Brookings Prairie is an undeveloped park located outside the city limits on the southwest corner West 44th St South and 470th Avenue. The acquisition of the park was assisted with fund from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Read more about the LWCF in the article below.

**Last we heard:** The prairie had not been grazed or burned for years and consequently the invasive grasses took over. After several years of urging by the BWF, the City found the time and right weather to burn the prairie. Last summer we followed in photos the development of a lush, dense stand of big blue stem interspersed by flowering forbs.
Update: This year the big blue stem grass did not show up. The main native prairie grass was Indian grass that grew in scattered clumps. Indian grass seed head looks like a single feather (settlers said the grass looked like single-feather head piece worn by Native Americans). BWF member and wetland scientist Dr. Dan Hubbard said, “The prairie was “ponded” this spring and big blue doesn’t like its feet wet – don’t worry it will be back, and besides, Indian grass is one of my favorites.” So, like our wetlands that naturally fill up and dry up, I suppose our grasslands also have a cycle.

Visit with Senator Rounds (By Chuck Berry)

Senator Rounds took questions for one hour when he visited Brookings a couple of weeks ago. I expected some shouting and finger pointing because that is the politics you see on TV. However, the SRO crowd was polite and so was Sen. Rounds. I wanted to hear if there would be any questions about the environment. There weren’t. I saved my question until I got more facts for an email.

In an email later I was as politic as I could be. First I praised the Senator, then I asked for something (kinda like prayer – Adoration then Supplication). Here is what I wrote…

Thanks for your attention to the three big pieces of conservation legislation: 1) Farm Bill with its conservation provisions, 2) John Dingle Conservation Mgmt and Rec Act (S 47), and 3) Recovering America’s Wildlife Act (S 3223). Passage of all of these has/will really show that Congress is getting something done on for conservation.

I am so happy that S47 permanently authorized the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), but the legislation did not include funding. To get this legislation working, would you please support permanent funding for the LWCF (S 1081, LWCF Permanent Funding Act), which uses revenues from offshore drilling fees to help conservation in inland states. The President’s 2020 budget would gut the LWCF, actually decreasing it by 105% (is that possible?). The LWCF has helped establish the Brookings Nature Park, the Brookings Prairie, and other amenities that allow Brookings residents to enjoy the outdoors. Statewide, the LWCF has helped enhance many public lands such as Wind Caves, Missouri National Rec. River, and other lands.

I am a member of the South Dakota Wildlife Federation, which also supports passage of Recovering America’s Wildlife Act (HR 3742, S 3223). This bill moves revenues from energy and mineral development on federal lands to the Federal Aid to Wildlife Restoration Fund. This legislation would fund our state programs to help nongame species remain common (game species are already getting a LOT of help). Conservation is conservative, so let’s protect common species so that they don’t become rare and cost more money to recover in the future.

In summary, please co-sponsor and vote for S3223 and S47. Thanks for your consideration of my request.

Editors Note: https://www.lwcfcoalition.com/; see this site for in-depth analysis and download the 2-page fact sheet dealing only with South Dakota. Now, all conservation groups say that Congress has stolen money from the LWCF each year – sounds like a fact check is needed. I looked at the CBO analysis of the LWCF (stay with me, easy to do at https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/47/text) and the CBO says that there are unspent millions in the account, so it looks like nothing has been stolen. I was sure that budget-conscious Dusty would see this and distrust the conservation groups that said that the money is stolen (stay with me). So I wrote to Amy Lindholm at the LWCFCoalition who told me that the money that looked like it was still in the LWFC account is actually an IOU!!! Yes, Congress has taken the money and left an IOU for conservation. What Brave Sierra!!!
"Freedom is lost gradually from an uninterested, uninformed and uninvolved people"

Thomas Jefferson

BWF – SDWF – NWF Newsbytes

**Infolunches:** Have an Infolunch speaker or a story to tell? Contact Spencer Vaa 692-7219.

**BWF Board:** Thanks to our Board members P. Wagner, D. Micko, Bob Kurtz, and T. Wieczorek for their contributions of time and talent to the BWF. Past Pres. Rich Widman and Treasurer Lawrence Novotny usually attend Board meetings.

**BWF Membership:** Membership Year: July 1 – June 30; membership categories are: 1) Trophy ($100), 2) Magnum ($50), and 3) Regular ($30 single, $40 family) to BWF, Box 104, Brookings SD 57006. Thanks to Treasurer Novotny for keeping member lists. **We finally dropped 22 non-renewing members from the snail mail and email list after several months of reminders, Sorry to see you go.** This month we sent 115 email newsletters and 8 snail-mails. Thanks for renewing Fixit Shop, Tim Pederson, Rich Thoreson, Arthur Kranz, Todd Haaseth.

**BWF Newsletter:** Posted at the SDWF website [http://www.sdwf.org/](http://www.sdwf.org/), and mailed monthly to 139 email and 10 snail mail addresses; Contact cberry@itctel.com with news or photos for the next newsletter or address change. Thanks T. Wieczorek and Barbara Horten for copying and mailing paper copies.

**South Dakota Wildlife Federation:** [http://www.sdwf.org/](http://www.sdwf.org/) and [http://www.sdwfcamo.net/](http://www.sdwfcamo.net/), The SDWF is the oldest wildlife conservation advocacy organization in South Dakota with membership of over 3,400 sportsmen and women in 16 affiliate clubs across the state. The newspaper titled *Out of Doors* is mailed 6 times/yr. A partner to the SDWF is the CamoCoalition ([https://www.sdwfcamo.net/](https://www.sdwfcamo.net/)) that follows legislation and takes action.

Have you ever scanned the list of donors that is printed in small font in each *Out of doors*? The BWF was listed in Jan 2019 for our contribution from our raffle, and former BWF members Chuck and Ginger Scalet now in Kansas (Ginger was BWF President) give SDWF a Christmas gift; also see donations from Brookings residents who are not BWF members?

**SDWF Exec. Secretary Chris Hesla wants us to know about “South Dakota Gives”**. SDWF is registered to receive your contributions and money from a pool that is given on one day called Giving Tuesday, December 3. Every participating nonprofit has the chance to win. Check out the details at [https://www.southdakotagives.org/about](https://www.southdakotagives.org/about)

**National Wildlife Federation:** The National Wildlife Magazine is $15/yr at [www.nwf.org](http://www.nwf.org) or write to NWF 11100 Wildlife Center Drive, Reston, VA 20190-5362 [$5 goes to the magazine, $10 deductible]. Membership for $15 includes 6 issues. You can order Ranger Rick for your kids/grandkids and help SDWF at the same time! Go to [www.nwf.org/sdwfkidsgift](http://www.nwf.org/sdwfkidsgift).

*If it wasn’t for the last minute, nothing would ever get done.*
Brookings Wildlife Federation
Celebrating 40 years in Brookings

Affiliated with: National Wildlife Federation
South Dakota Wildlife Federation

Interests: Conservation, hunting, fishing

Activities: Kids Fishing Weekend
SDSU Scholarships
Information meetings, seminars
Monthly newsletter
Black Hills Conservation Camp
Brookings County Conservation
State Policy Watch
Conservation Small Grants
Public information, education, awards

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