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OUT OF DOORS

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Pheasant Ecology Part 1: Nesting & Brood-Rearing Season

By Travis Runia, re-printed with permission from SD Conservation Digest



With nearly six months until friends and family gather to partake in the traditional opening day hunt, pheasants are one of the last things sportsmen are thinking about during spring. However, the nesting and brood-

rearing season of May and June represent one of the most critical times for pheasant populations.

Pheasants are short lived birds with annual survival averaging only 50%. During severe winters such as 2009-2010, survival can be much lower in areas containing marginal or inadequate winter habitat. With such low survival, how do pheasants sustain such high populations each fall? Of all upland game birds, pheasants exhibit one of the highest reproductive potentials, thus enabling them to bounce back after severe losses in short time periods when provided adequate nesting habitat. Despite this, pheasants still rely on quality nesting and brood rearing habitat to recruit new birds to the fall population.

The nesting season begins in late April as hens seek out attractive nesting cover usually consisting of undisturbed grasslands such as lands enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Most hens initiate their first nest during the first half of May, but this can be delayed by unseasonably cold or wet weather. Males have spent the past month establishing and maintaining territories across the landscape. Crowing and wing flapping behavior aimed at attracting females peaks in April but continues through June to serve re-nesting hens.

After courtship, hens lay one egg per day until a full clutch of 10-12 eggs is reached. During the next 23 days, hens will spend 23 hours per day incubating the eggs and leaving for only short intervals for limited amounts of food and water. Egg laying and incubation is extremely energy demanding, and during this incubation period food intake is low. Hens can lose 75% of their body fat and 10% of their body weight in just one month! If not challenging enough, only about 25% of nests are successful in large blocks of undisturbed grasslands and success has been documented much lower in linear and fragmented habitats which are generally smaller in size and are more vulnerable to mammalian predators.

Fortunately, pheasants almost always re-nest and may initiate up to 4 nests in a single season if previous nests are destroyed. Because of the energy demands of producing and incubating eggs, clutch size and egg size decrease for each subsequent nesting attempt. If a third nesting attempt is initiated, the clutch size could be as low as 5 or 6 eggs. Even with low success of each individual nest, 70% of hens may pull off one successful nest through multiple nesting attempts.

Hatching a successful clutch is only half the battle to

recruit pheasants to the fall populations. Pheasant chicks are precocial, meaning they hatch with eyes open and are able to leave the nest and feed themselves within one day of hatching. However, it has been documented that 1 and 2 day old chicks exposed to 43 degree temperatures die after 30 minutes of exposure. Susceptibility to the cold quickly decreases with age, and by 11 days of age the chicks can fully regulate their body temperature. Cold snaps in June can greatly decrease chick survival.

As stated earlier, pheasants are attracted to undisturbed grasslands for nesting sites, such as land enrolled in CRP. But does this same habitat provide for the needs of pheasant chicks? This depends on the structure and composition of the grasslands. Ideal brood-rearing habitat provides abundant insects, aerial concealment, and allows movement at ground level by small pheasant chicks. The average grass field which has not been disturbed recently and lacks diversity does not meet these criteria. Can you imagine a tennis ball sized pheasant chick navigating through thick seven foot tall grass that your Labrador struggles to get through in the fall!

Pheasant chicks primarily eat insects during the first 1-2 weeks of life because they are high in protein. Protein functions as building blocks to form muscle tissue and feathers which allows for rapid chick growth. Without plentiful insects, growth rates and survival of chicks can be greatly reduced. Hen pheasants will often move her brood great distances to find suitable brooding habitat such as "weedy" areas. Broadleaf plants act like insect factories, while also providing aerial concealment without impeding chick movement at ground level. Aerial concealment protects chicks from aerial predators and provides shade during those hot summer days. Even when good habitat is available, it is not uncommon for 1/3 of the chicks to die with predators, extreme weather, and farm machinery representing the highest mortality factors.

South Dakota is fortunate to have an abundance of high quality nesting and brood-rearing habitat which allows pheasants to reach their high reproductive potential. As you head to the field each year, remember that what pheasants were doing in May and June has a huge influence on what you will see each fall.



BARCODED FLATS

We All Live Downstream

Why We Should Care About the Federal Farm Bill

We all live downstream. It's a phrase we have all heard and it applies to most of us, save for the few that live in the proverbial big house on the hill. A few weeks ago a colleague of mine who I have known for over two decades lamented that he hadn't heard the phrase used in the media lately. It did seem odd given last summer's record flooding on the Missouri River, widespread flooding within the James River watershed and flooded conditions around many of the natural lakes and marshes on the Prairie Coteau in the northeast part of the state. It's also striking when you think about the increasingly intensive agricultural practices we see on the landscape, including the now popular practice of installing plastic drainage tile to drain excess water from eastern South Dakota's agricultural fields. My colleague reminded me of how the late Tony Dean, South Dakota's own outdoor media host and conservation advocate, occasionally used the phrase "we all live downstream" to engage and educate hunters, anglers, and maybe even a few soccer moms, about issues related to river and lake management, the federal Farm Bill, wetland conservation, water quality and loss of native grasslands.



Whether it was to better understand how to sustain one of their favorite pastimes, or ensure the well being of their family or community, Tony felt these folks needed to be concerned about such things. If they weren't, they were missing the boat and I firmly believe that was a real concern of Tony's. He knew, and wanted others to better understand, that what's happening on the landscape most certainly affects waters, land and people downstream in a watershed. At times, Tony took on controversial issues, and maybe even strained a few professional or personal relationships in the process, but he did it because he cared deeply about the people and natural resources of the Dakotas. He wanted to help folks understand that getting involved in a healthy discourse about how natural resources are managed was paramount to preserving the quality of life in South Dakota.

Federal Farm Bill Reauthorization and Conservation Programs

If you are an angler, hunter, birder or someone who cares about the less tangible values of the diverse habitat and landscapes of South Dakota, now

By Tim Olson, Senior Habitat Biologist, SD GF&P, re-printed from SD Conservation Digest

would be a good time to follow Tony's lead, get informed and participate in the discussion related to the reauthorization of the federal Farm Bill. Below, I highlight a few priority issues of particular interest here in the Dakotas.

No doubt many of you are aware that every five years Congress needs to reauthorize the Farm Bill. They are once again amidst the process of considering changes to the law that can strongly influence how things look across South Dakota's landscape. Over the last year or so, driven in part by the need to address the realities of the federal budget deficit, there has been considerable discussion of paring down, or eliminating certain conservation programs in the bill such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), and the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP). The wildlife conservation and agricultural communities have long supported these voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs, but cost savings, the desire by some to increase cropland acres, as well as justifiable program streamlining have fueled the discussion.

When the current (2008) Farm Bill was enacted, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that total conservation program spending would comprise about 8% (24.1 billion \$) of total farm bill budget for years 2008-2012. CRP, which has been particularly important in maintaining South Dakota's enviable wildlife populations, was projected to make up about 38% of the total conservation budget. Actual conservation spending has been lower than estimated, and future cuts to such relatively small programs could equate to noticeably less opportunity for producers to enroll marginal croplands, as well as less quality habitat on the landscape. Economic pressures stemming from rapidly rising land values and high crop prices are very likely to lead to less producer interest in re-enrolling existing CRP, or enrolling new acres. Nevertheless, keeping the option on the table for long term risk management, and for the broad environmental benefits provided should make sense to producers, wildlife managers and tax payers alike.

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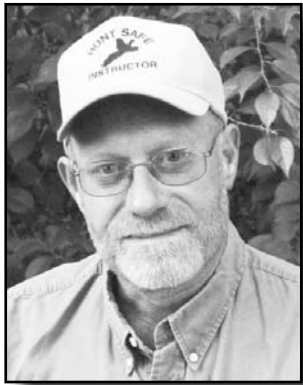
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President's Column *by Bill Antonides*



President,
Bill Antonides

2012 is looking to be a good year in South Dakota for almost anyone and anything that makes its living off the land. I say this with some hesitation, knowing full well we are potentially never more than three weeks away from a drought, or three hours from a flood. It is hard to pick up a newspaper, even during good times, without reading about a weather event or pattern that is a disaster to someone or something.

I think in many cases we overuse the word "disaster." In the old days, excess rain, drought, hard winters, summer storms and even hurricanes were known as "weather." Those who planted crops in marginal soils or built their homes in floodplains or made similar errors in judgment learned the hard way that weather can be merciless. This was before we redefined an unpleasant weather pattern as a "disaster" and decided the government could and should step in any time weather caused a problem.

Nine inches of rain fell in the Aberdeen area on May 6, 2007. The damage to homes, farms, roads and other infrastructure was incredible, and was rightfully called a disaster. FEMA came to town and helped out a great many people and local government agencies who through no fault of their own were in serious financial trouble. The government stepped in where government should and helped out the folks who had experienced an actual disaster and truly needed assistance.

To be clear, not everyone with a claim received money and some assistance was in the form of loans, while in other cases cash flowed from government coffers to fix buildings and bridges and roads which were in disrepair long before the rains fell. Even a benevolent government is not always wise.

This largess is often thought of as free money, because it comes from the government. Sometimes we forget the government is "We, the people." Any money spent comes from our pockets, or more accurately in these times of mind-boggling deficits, from our children's pockets. Every child in the United States owes roughly \$50,000 to the national debt at birth. No wonder babies cry when they're born.

So why do we as sportsmen and conservationists care about this? First, Supreme Court decisions gutting the Clean Water Act have reduced protection to our lakes, streams and drinking water sources by reducing protection to major contributors to these waters: wetlands, ditches and waterways. Wetlands are being drained at an alarming rate, thanks in no small part to regulatory

confusion (or indifference) and access to new tiling technologies that allow cropland to be drained inexpensively and efficiently.

Second, a new farm bill is being written, and although price supports have pretty much gone out the window, we now have crop insurance. Crop insurance is bought by farmers, but at a highly reduced rate. Taxpayers provide somewhere around 60 percent of the price to keep the program going. For those of us who like to eat, this can still be a good thing. We need a stable food source, and farmers work hard and deserve a reasonable opportunity to make a profit.

What is not good is that the new farm bill and crop insurance currently do not require any significant conservation measures to obtain the insurance check. Commodity prices are high, and with subsidized crop insurance as a backup should the market fall, planting crops makes good economic sense even on the poorest soil. The few remaining parcels of native sod, last turned by glaciers, are no longer safe from the plow. The CRP program is also becoming a thing of the past, as the payments are no match for crop rental rates.

When land is cropped, wetlands often disappear due to drainage ditches or to drain tile hidden below the surface of the earth. As the grasslands and wetlands disappear, so do the wildlife and our way of life. Worse yet for the taxpayer, snowpack melting in the spring or even typical rainfall patterns can and have done what nine inches of rain did to Aberdeen: normal weather becomes a disaster. Flooding events are occurring at ever increasing rates and in places they were never a problem before, and the government—

We, the people—open our wallets to help.

Global warming or climate change might still be debatable, but it does not take a genius to see that draining millions of acres of land is causing damage downstream. We are paying to cause disasters, and then paying for the repairs, and ultimately paying to destroy our outdoor heritage.

This is just plain wrong. When the money comes out of our pockets for subsidized crop insurance, and we pay for flood damage and pollution caused by drainage ditches and drain tile, the public has a right to set limits. As we all learned in grade school, one person's rights only go as far as the next person's nose. And something here doesn't smell right.

"Each man is good in his sight. It is not necessary for eagles to be crows."

Hunkesni (Sitting Bull), Hunkpapa Sioux

Executive Director's Update *by Chris Hesla*



South Dakota has been fortunate this spring after having a dry and warm winter, we have been receiving much needed moisture, and that is needed for good habitat. We all know the key to good wildlife numbers is habitat. Although, in some areas, way too much moisture and the moisture that is hard (hail) has struck a wide path of south central SD to Mitchell and beyond. I am looking forward to the end of August to see the results of the GF&P's Annual Pheasant Brood Survey.

This month's Out_of_Doors features the annual winners of the National Wildlife Week Poster Contest. It never ceases to amaze me year after year the unique posters SDWF gets from the affiliates and the young artists in our state. This year there were 26 entries in the contest which makes it difficult to pick the winners. I want to thank the affiliates and the schools that choose to participate in our contest.

As I am writing this column, there are over 75 young adults and many volunteers preparing for our 52nd Annual Camp Bob

Marshall located and held in Custer State Park. I cannot say thank you enough to the many volunteers that give their time to teach conservation to our young adults and the never ending clubs, organizations and individuals that help send these young adults to camp.

SDWF will be sending out the 2012 Pheasant Hunt and Buffalo Shoot raffle tickets very soon. PLEASE support SDWF and purchase tickets when you receive the offer in the mail.

The 21-gun winners will be chosen later this month and placed on the front page of June's issue, thank you to all of you that will win and those that bought a chance and financially support SDWF.

In November of this year, I hope you all take the time out of your busy schedules to vote. Between now and November, PLEASE take time to educate yourself and know where your candidates stand on issues that affect our outdoor pursuits, not only at the local level but also on a National level and exercise your right to vote.

"When I see a bird that walks like a duck and swims like a duck and quacks like a duck, I call that bird a duck."

James Whitcomb Riley 1849-1916

Citizen Science: Watching Plants and Animals - and Listening Too

By Charles R. and Mary Lou Berry

A citizen scientist is a non-scientist who does very local research tasks such as observation and measurement and then gives their data to professional scientists for analysis of wide-scale patterns and trends.

The citizen science projects that we've done usually mean watching some animal or plant and recording our observations. In our newest project we'll never see the animals we are counting, we'll just listen. We have volunteered to eavesdrop on frogs for Frog Watch USA.

Our second year as citizen scientists has brought new experiences and greater knowledge of the natural world around us. Soon, we'll expand our quest by learning more about frogs and toads, their songs, and their wetland habitats.

The purpose of these articles is to encourage you try citizen science as we report on our experiences. You will improve your knowledge of wildlife, involve your family in out-of-doors activities, and increase your understanding of the scientific process. Fish and wildlife management is science based so you'll find many links to your favorite outdoor pastime.

What is Citizen Science?

A citizen scientist is a non-scientist who does very local research tasks such as observation and measurement and then gives their data to professional scientists for analysis of wide-scale patterns and trends. The number of citizen scientists is growing and so is the number of programs. For example, the number of people participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count in South Dakota has grown from 100 to 300 in a decade.

Mary Lou and I have joined thousands of citizen scientists to monitor birds, buds, bees, ice, and nuts. Training, observing and reporting were quick and easy as we followed simple instructions on the project web sites. All projects provide feedback that lets us see how our data contributes to new knowledge. What's more, we've learned about how science works, and how these projects connect to fish and wildlife topics.

Many forces in our lives influence our understanding of science, our respect for scientists and our respect for the process of science as a "way of knowing." One way to improve our science literacy is to try citizen science - you don't need a PhD degree to get involved.

We are participating in three projects this spring. Frog Watch USA is starting and Ice Watch just finished (it melted). This is our second year with The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). Last fall we moved from town to country so we expected new experiences and we weren't disappointed in our new home beside the lake.

The Great Backyard Bird Count

To get started this year, we registered our new "study site" on the GBBC web site, and reviewed the instructions. In response to the question about observer ability, this year we confidently checked the "good" box; last year we checked "fair." You may count for as little as 15 minutes as you record the highest number of birds of each species that you see at any one time. We had our feeders filled and data sheets and bird books ready for the February 17 - 20 count.

We saw gold finches (photo), house sparrows, downy woodpeckers, house finches, chickadees, juncos and blue jays. It was tempting to list the nut hatch and flicker that visited after our counting time ended, but we didn't. If we had added these species we would have been committing a scientific fraud called "cooking the data." This little ethical challenge for us helped us understand the temptations for scientists and importance of scientific honesty in the big-science world where riches, reputations and sometimes life and death depend on experimental results.

We learned a new bird species this year and were excited to find that our observation agreed with nationwide data suggesting a cyclic trend in bird migration. A sparrow look-alike with the red dot on its head sent us to the books and to the GBBC web site. We decided that it was a Common Redpoll. The GBBC reports that Redpolls were observed much further south than usual, which happens in years when conditions are harsh and food scarce in the arctic.

Ice Watching

Project IceWatch is new but already has about 2,500 ice-watching citizen scientists. Ice watching sounds kinda dumb but ice has many important connections to fish and wildlife and to outdoor activities. Waterfowl and other birds come and go in spectacular migrations that are somewhat regulated by ice. The ecology of amphibians, reptiles and other aquatic wildlife is influenced by ice.

Ice fishermen know the guidelines - 4 inches supports a person on foot, 12 inches supports a car. The timing of ice-on and ice-off determines the length of the ice fishing season, and also the health of the fish populations. Winterkill sometimes occurs when ice and snow seal the lake thus reducing dissolved oxygen concentrations and increasing toxic hydrogen sulfide concentrations. Managing winterkill lakes is a major challenge for South Dakota's fisheries biologists.

Our ice watching rules ask us to simply record the percentage of ice cover on a transect across a wetland, lake, or stream. We watched as ice first formed on Lake Campbell (Brookings County) on November 17 and covered our transect on December 5. The ice quickly disappeared during the first few days of March and was gone by March 7.

Lake Campbell has its own story to tell about climate change. We added our data to ice-watch data that a neighbor has been keeping since 1989. The upper graph is the ICE-OFF date; the lower is ICE-ON date. The converging trend lines suggest shorter ice cover periods on Lake Campbell.

Frog Watch USA

Frog Watch USA is a citizen science program of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. For 10 years frog watch volunteers have stood beside wetlands for a few minutes each night to eavesdrop on the mating chorus of frogs and toads. South Dakota has a dozen species so we hope that learning the songs won't be too hard.

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SDWF's Executive Director Chris Hesla is shown receiving a check from South Dakota Walleye Unlimited State Chapters for SDWF's Camo-Coalition and their recent lobbying efforts.

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If you agree, take the time to engage our congressional delegation and let them know that a suite of strong, common sense Farm Bill conservation programs that help restore or maintain South Dakota's soil, water and wildlife resources are important to South Dakotans. The current recommendation from the wildlife community in the northern Great Plains is to maintain CRP at 32 million acres nationwide and to carefully consider establishing a "working lands" CRP option that would allow grazing or other uses compatible with program goals in exchange for reduced rental rates.

Federal Farm Bill Reauthorization, Direct Payments and Crop Insurance

If you have paid attention to recent agriculture media coverage related to Farm Bill reauthorization you may be aware of the considerable discussion about the future of the direct payment program and subsidized crop insurance. With strong commodity prices over the last several years, direct payments, which are not crop price-based, have made up the bulk of farm commodity support spending, far outweighing price related subsidy payments such as marketing loans, countercyclical payments and average crop revenue election payments.

Due to deficit spending and a very a strong farm economy, a budget cutting Congress, agricultural and conservation groups, and scrutinizing tax payers have all called for the elimination of direct payments. In exchange, nearly all agricultural groups are urging a move to even more robust crop insurance programs that will provide a safety net for the ag community. The key will be to develop insurance programs truly designed to protect producers during the worst of times, as well as discourage risky land management decisions such as converting marginal native rangeland or wetlands into cropland.

Last year, the federal government spent \$7.4 billion of tax payers' dollars to subsidize crop insurance premiums nationwide. The government also pays the private insurers delivering the program an additional \$1.3 billion annually. The government premium subsidy rate averages about 60%, but rates in parts of South Dakota are over 70%. A North Dakota producer recently interviewed by the Dakota Farmer indicated the government paid about 67% of his premiums. In the end he paid \$41,000 in premiums and collected \$257,000 in losses. According to the Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute more typical average ratios of indemnities (payments for losses) to producer paid premiums are +/- 200% in the Dakotas.

No matter how you look at it, that is a healthy return on an investment. It's the reason participation in the insurance program has risen steeply in recent years with about 75% of the insurance subsidies going to what's called revenue insurance. Crop insurance subsidies now outpace more traditional commodity program payments to producers and this has led agricultural groups to support elimination of direct payments. But there is a big potential downside for soil, water and wildlife conservation by going that route without also making important changes to the conservation compliance provisions in the Farm Bill.

Re-coupling of crop insurance to conservation compliance and the need for "Sodsaver"

In 1996 Congress eliminated the eligibility requirements for crop insurance program participants to comply with the wetland, grassland and highly erodible land (HEL) conservation provisions in the law. These provisions, commonly called "Swampbuster", "Sodbuster" and HEL management, were originally intended to provide reasonable environmental protection and public benefits in exchange for tax payer supported commodity and incentive-based conservation programs. Congress' intent was to increase participation in the crop insurance programs and phase out some farm subsidies. Failure of that approach resulted in the 2002 Farm Bill restoring price supports, loans and other subsidies.

However, the goal of increased participation in crop insurance programs has been achieved with about 80% of planted acres being covered by subsidized insurance. So what's the downside? In February, using 2010 data, the USDA Economic Research Service estimated that 40% of the cropland acres in the U.S. would not be subject to any conservation compliance if direct payments are eliminated and eligibility for subsidized crop insurance is not re-coupled to conservation compliance in the 2012 Farm Bill. In other words, on those acres, producers could still buy highly subsidized crop insurance without having to meet reasonable wetland and soil conservation standards.

Many wildlife, agricultural and conservation organizations including the South Dakota Chapter of the Wildlife Society, the South Dakota Grassland Coalition, the South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts, the National Farmers Union, and the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition are supporting efforts to convince Congress to once again couple crop insurance subsidy programs with conservation compliance. Some of these same groups, as well as the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association, and the South Dakota

Stockgrowers Association are also calling for enactment of a nationwide "Sodsaver" provision in 2012. Such a provision would make native grassland without a cropping history that is newly converted to cropland ineligible for any crop insurance subsidy, commodity or conservation program benefits.

The above two amendments to the Farm Bill would eliminate unintended incentives for producers to convert more marginal grasslands and wetlands to cropland. Ultimately, protecting fragile soil resources, native grasslands and wetlands through meaningful Farm Bill conservation provisions can save tax payer dollars by maintaining water quality, reducing downstream flooding and providing valuable fish and wildlife habitat.

Whether you are an angler, hunter, farmer, or all three and feel these are reasonable additions to the contract between the nation's agricultural producers and taxpayers, now is the time to share your thoughts with our congressional delegation.

Trends in Agricultural Drainage

Anyone driving across eastern South Dakota over the last several years has probably noticed the huge increase in installation of agricultural drainage systems in cultivated fields. Fields are being ditched, or plastic drainage tile is being installed in herringbone patterns on entire fields to drain "excess" water from fields, many of which contain numerous small wetlands. Those of us in the wildlife management business are often asked "why is this happening?" or "isn't Swampbuster supposed to protect wetlands on ag land?" or "what has changed to allow so much drainage?". The easy part of the answer is that record commodity prices and double digit annual increases in land values are fueling big investments in drainage infrastructure to improve crop production. One can hardly fault a producer from wanting to maximize production, but are wetlands intended to be protected by Swampbuster being affected by what's become an alarming trend in drainage on the landscape?

In a perfect world, producers follow USDA guidance and provisions on where and how drainage can occur without affecting wetlands subject to the conservation provisions of Swampbuster. Unfortunately, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offices have been swamped with thousands of producer requests for wetland determinations on fields where producers might want to install drainage tile. The NRCS has stepped up its' effort to respond to this demand and is mandated to provide protection of wetlands identified through their wetland determination procedures. Nevertheless, trends observed out in the field do make one wonder if things are slipping through the cracks in a system overwhelmed by demand. It is our hope that future reviews of the procedures and annual checks on the system tell us that is not the case. The conservation community needs to be vigilant in making sure that such follow-up monitoring does occur and that the Swampbuster provisions are being administered in a fashion consistent with the original spirit and intent of Congress.

Another trend that has been documented in eastern South Dakota is that some producers have chosen to opt out of participation in federal commodity (e.g. direct payments) and conservation programs that require compliance with the various conservation provisions. By doing so, they no longer have to comply with Swampbuster wetland protection provisions and can drain wetlands without being subject to program constraints. Furthermore, since subsidized crop insurance is not currently linked to conservation compliance, they are still eligible to purchase program supported insurance on those lands. With the current strong farm economy, wildlife and other conservation groups are very concerned that this trend may be on the upswing to the detriment of high value wetlands here in the heart of the prairie pothole region – an area of international importance in sustaining healthy populations of numerous species of wetland dependant migratory birds.

Restoring reasonable protection of wetlands by re-coupling federally supported crop insurance with wetland and other conservation compliance provisions would ensure that the many environmental benefits these prairie wetlands provide are maintained.

Protection of our wetlands is vital to maintain or restore water quality in our lakes, rivers and streams, to protect downstream areas from flooding, and to maintain healthy and economically important fish and wildlife resources.

As Tony Dean liked to remind us, we all live downstream. Protection of soil, grassland, wetland, and water resources through publicly supported farm programs seems like a reasonable expectation for the tax payers' investment in agriculture. If you agree, and care about sustainable natural resource management, and how our quality of life in South Dakota is closely linked to those resources, take Tony's lead and make your voice heard on these issues as the Farm Bill debate unfolds.

SD Wildlife Federation Donors

At the 2003 Winter Board Meeting, the SDWF Board created the SDWF Wildlife Legacy Council. The Council was created to allow recognition of the people who support SDWF above and beyond their membership and raffle donations.

Thank you to the following donors for their contributions to the SDWF. Please consider becoming a member of the Wildlife Legacy Council. SDWF is a 501(c3) non-profit, all donations are tax deductible. These tax-deductible contributions will speak volumes for the future of the SDWF's Wildlife Legacy Council! Please consider your donation today. Donations can be sent to SDWF, PO Box 7075, Pierre, SD 57501.

The Legacy Council consists of five different donation levels. These donation levels were revised October 2011 to: Level V Eagle \$1,000 & above; Level IV Buffalo \$501 - \$999; Level III Elk \$301 - \$500; Level II Deer \$201 - \$300; and Level I Pheasant \$100 - \$200.

April 2012

LEVEL IV BUFFALO THE SPORTSMAN'S CLUB OF BROWN CO. - SD	LEVEL II DEER O'REILLY, LARRY - MO LEVEL I PHEASANT CONNELL, CRAIG - SD	ECKERT, DENIS - SD HIX, DOUGLAS - ID KIEFT, LARRY - MI MAYES, TERRY & LA REE - SD	PAHL, CHARLES - SD
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March 2012

LEVEL V EAGLE BEADLE CO. SPORTSMEN - SD BLACK HILLS SPORTSMEN - SD DAKOTA SPORTSMEN, INC. - SD HIGH PLAINS WILDLIFE FEDERATION - SD LEVEL III ELK BROOKINGS WILDLIFE FEDERATION - SD HAATVEDT, CY - SD HECLA SPORTSMAN CLUB -SD	SD WALLEYE UNLIMITED - SD LEVEL II DEER 29-90 SPORTSMAN'S CLUB - SD BIG SIOUX CHAPTER OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK FOUND. - SD DIETER, CHARLES - SD PEDERSON, TIM - SD PHEASANTS FOREVER YANKTON CHAPTER - SD LEVEL I PHEASANT AKKERMAN, STEPHEN - MN	BAGAU, TERRY - MN BROWN, ALLEN B. - SD CHALUS, DENNIS - CO CRISSMAN, EARLE - SD DAHLBERG, JIM - SD DENISON, LARRY - VA ELBE, ROBERT - WI EVANS, RALPH - FL GOEDE, DAN - SD GRASS LAKES CONSERVATION CLUB - SD HOFTIEZER, GREG - SD	JACKSON, WARREN - SD JUNGERS, ROMAN - WI KRECHMAN, JIM - SD MADLAND, JON - SD NORDBY, DAVID O. - CA SATHER, DUANE - SD TOBIN, THOMAS - SD WHETSTONE SPORTSMAN CONSERVATION CLUB - SD WICKSTROM, GERALD - SD
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February 2012

LEVEL III ELK STAMMER, MARLIN - CA	LEVEL I PHEASANT ANDRESEN, RICH - SD BORMANN, DANIEL - WI	DIVICH, DUANE - TX NEISSL, E.J. - AR RUMPCA, HAL - SD	SIMPSON, JOHN - SD WIDMAN, MARK - SD
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January 2012

LEVEL V EAGLE OLSON, JEFF - SD LEVEL III ELK MCCARTHY, STEVE - SD	LEVEL II DEER BRICK, RICHARD - CA MARTIN, JIM - SD LEVEL I PHEASANT MCCLELLAN, JR., DR. HERBERT - SD	SCHROEDER, JR., KENNETH - SD LEVEL I PHEASANT GOODMAN, RICHARD - OH KASISCHKE, CARL - MI	LEWIS, HOWARD - CA MCCARLSON, PAUL - SD PESEK, RON - SD WIDMAN, RICH - SD
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December 2011

LEVEL II DEER PARCEL, KERRY - SD LEVEL I PHEASANT ADAMS, MEL - TN BLACKBURN, JOHN - SD BOWAR, PAT - SD	COOPER, JOHN - SD DEBOER, JAY - SD FLINT, FORREST - MN FUERST, KEVIN - SD GERRISH, ED - SD HANSEN, KYLE - MN	JOHNSON, DARRELL - SD KING, T. CLEVE - MI MEDEIROS, PAUL - CA MEDILL, COREY - WY MILLER, O. LARRY - SD OVERHEAD DOOR CO. - SD	PAULETTO, JOE - WA RILEY, MIKE - MO SD BOWHUNTERS INC. - SD WISWALL, BRIAN T. - SD
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November 2011

LEVEL II DEER RANDALL, KEVIN - SD SCHEURENBRAND, BRUCE - CA LEVEL I PHEASANT BROWN, MARK - VA FISCHER, JIM - IA	FRYBARGER, JIM - NM GREGORY, J.T. - GA HAY, MARY & JERRY - WI HILL, DAVID - NC JOHNSON, LYNN E. - SD KALLEMEYN, LARRY - SD	MADSEN, CARL - SD MCMENAMIN, ALBERT - CA OLSON, MURDEAN - SD PAQUIN, STACY - MN PENICK, EDWARD - AR PLUMB, GLENN - SD	POPELKA, C.R. - SD RAINEY, TIMOTHY - MN STANFORTH, WINFIELD - CO SWANSON, EARL - MN WISWALL, F. HERBERT - SD
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October 2011

LEVEL V EAGLE CHAPMAN, JOHN W. - PA LEVEL IV BUFFALO LEMONDS, JIM - SD WORDEN, JAMES - CA LEVEL III ELK SCHERSCHLIGHT, JEFFRY - SD TOSCANA, VIC - SD LEVEL II DEER BRAKEBUSH, CARL - WI CROUCH, GARY - TX DRESSING, BRIAN - SD HEEDUM, ROGER - NE	LUTZ, BOB - MT McMASTERS, LEIGH - SD MUDD, WILLIAM - KY PAUL, K-LYNN - AZ SATTTLER, ARNOLD - SD SEELEY, GARY - KS SPEER, HOY - AR SWORDS, L.F. - MS WARE, WILLIAM - MS LEVEL I PHEASANT ALLEN, H. DUANE - TN BUCKNER, EVERETT - AR BUCKNER II, WILLIAM - AR	BURNS, KENDALL - CA BURTON, DON - CO CARDINAL, DANIEL - WI CASLER, DAVID - MO CHRISTOPHERSON, M.E. - SC CUSTER, GEORGE - TX DOMINIANI, DAVE - NE GARVEY, GARY - OH GRIFFIN, JOHN - OK HEIDELBAUER, JEFF - SD HELLEBUSCH, JIM - MO HOCH, JAMES - CA KETTER, JEFFREY - WI	KRODINGER, LAWRENCE - MO LARSON, GREG - SD METRY, MARK - WI MOHS, GERALD - ND OCHOCKI, ROBERT - CA PAXTON, GARY - OK PETERS, DUANE - SD PONTO, NORBERT - SD SIMON, DARREL - SD WAHL, STAN - SD WILLMOTT, HARRY - MN
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September 2011

LEVEL IV BUFFALO SCALET, CHUCK & GINGER -SD	LEVEL II DEER KIEFT, LARRY - MI	LEVEL I PHEASANT CONROY, JOE - MN
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August 2011

LEVEL III ELK HALLSTROM, KEN - SD	LEVEL II DEER FELL, TOM - AL GILBERT, JIM - CA	LEVEL I PHEASANT GARNES, CHESTER - MN SHOEMAKER, TIM - OH
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July 2011

LEVEL II DEER BEALKA, BOB - WI RITCHEY, CHARLES - MI WIDMAN, RICH - SD	LEVEL I PHEASANT GREENWOOD, KEN - OK HANSON, HOWARD - MN NELSON, LAWRENCE - SD	SAMPSON, TERRY - SD SNYDER, ADAM - IN WELCH, HARVEY - IL	WHEELER, STEPHEN J. - SD
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June 2011

LEVEL III ELK JOHNSON, VIRGIL - SD PHEASANTS FOREVER, INC. YANKTON AREA CHPT, - SD	LEVEL II DEER EDER, PHIL - MN PORISCH, ROBERT - IA RANEY, THOMAS - KS	ROBERTS, TOM - SD WILMS, DALE - CA WINTER BROS. UNDER- GROUND, INC. - SD	LEVEL I PHEASANT DAVIDSON, JOHN - SD HATCH, DUANE - SD SAMPSON, TERRY - SD
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May 2011

LEVEL V EAGLE ROBERTS, STEVEN - MN LEVEL IV BUFFALO OLSON, JEFF G. - SD SPORTSMAN'S CLUB OF BROWN CO. - SD LEVEL III ELK ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK FOUNDATION BIG SIOUX CHAPTER - SD	LEVEL II DEER FOXWORTHY, ROBERT - KY LINDNER, RONALD - SD LULEWICZ, JERRY - SD MADSEN, ROYCE - SD O'REILLY, LARRY - MO LEVEL I PHEASANT ANDERSON, EDWIN - TN BELL, BOB - MN CRAIN, NEIL - LA	CRISSMAN, EARLE - SD HANSEN, VIRGIL - SD HIX, DOUGLAS - ID JAFFREY, DR. BRETT - TN JONES CO. SPORTSMAN'S CLUB - SD KASISCHKE, CARL - MI KIESECOMS, BOB - IL KLODOWSKI, MARK - IN KLUNDT, SCOTT - SD	LOWE, STEVEN - MI MILLER, RICHARD - SD POLENZ, ALLAN - OR POPOWSKI, JOHN - SD STENSLAND, JOHN - IA TRAVERS, MD, HENRY - SD VAA, SPENCER - SD
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Continued from page 4

Frog Watch USA has had a review of the program's value. Dr. Douglas Inkley, Senior Scientist Advisor for the National Wildlife Federation writes "Frog Watch USA is a valuable tool for monitoring the status of frogs and toads." In his report he discussed applications of the data and made suggestions for improving the program.

Why Frogs? Frogs and toads are important in the aquatic web of life and their populations tell us much about the health of wetlands. Amphibians have been declining but scientists don't really know why. Frog watch will help us understand the geographic patterns of frog distribution and perhaps the cause of these declines. Frogs and toads are also important in human medicine; compounds from their skin are being tested for anti-cancer and other drugs. As Aldo Leopoldxi wrote, "The first step in intelligent tinkering is to save all the pieces." Perhaps Frog Watch data will help save the amphibian piece of the aquatic habitat puzzle.

We haven't frog watched - I mean frog listened – yet, but the ice is gone from our pothole study site that is registered with Frog Watch USA. As with other programs, the instructions are simple. We should spend a minimum of 3 minutes twice a week listening for frog songs. The hard part will be learning the songs, but the web site gives us plenty of help.

Rachel Gauza, Frog Watch USA National Coordinator wrote in an email that "South Dakota has been very under-represented in the national dataset....only had 28 volunteers from South Dakota." Geeze, we're in prairie pothole region; everyone lives near a wetland! Come on; join us and the 10,000 other frog watchers who are monitoring 8,000 wetland sites nationwide.

Mary Lou says that she much rather listen to frogs than collect them. I want to hear my favorite frog call, the bassoon-like call of the bull frog that sounds like he is saying "Jug-o-rum, Jug-o-rum."

Our Citizen Science experiences

Each of our citizen science experiences has taught us something different about the process of science, yet the method for gaining reliable knowledge is the same whether we are counting bees, recording the date of the lilac bloom, or listening for frog sounds. The feedback from the real scientists makes us feel that we have helped answer important inquiries about our natural world. And, we find fascinating connections to our outdoor hobbies and pastimes.

C. Berry is Prof. Emeritus, Dept Natural Resources Manage., SDSU, Brookings. M. L. Berry is retired from the Brookings Public Library and the Briggs Library at SDSU.

ii See 4 articles about our citizen science experiences, Vol. 51, SDWF's monthly newspaper titled Out of doors.

iii The SDWF encourages public understanding of science because wildlife management is science based; see monthly "understanding science" articles in Vol. 49 of SDWF's Out of doors . www.sdwf.org.

iv Find descriptions of citizen scientist projects at:

<http://www.thedailygreen.com/environmental-news/latest/citizen-science-47121401>

<http://www.nwf.org/Wildlife/Wildlife-Conservation/Citizen-Science/Citizen-Science-Programs.aspx>

<http://scienceforcitizens.net/>.

v Berry, C. The Year of Science: Public Understanding of Science. Proc. SD Academy of Science 88 (2009) 15-24.

http://pubstorage.sdstate.edu/AgBio_Publications/articles/academyofscience/2009/15-24.pdf.

vi National Acad. Sci. 1989. On Being a Scientist. Natl. Acad. Press. 22 pp.

vii <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/science-stories/2012Summary/>. Citizen scientists in 65 SD towns saw 130 sp.; nationwide, 623 sp.. Highlighted trends were: arctic-dwelling Snowy Owls and redpolls irrupted into the Great Plains; certain species had northward range expansion, migrated unusually early, or were unusually scarce.

viii Read the Nature Abounds story at <http://www.natureabounds.org/>.

ix <http://www.aza.org/frogwatch/>. This site also contains the independent evaluation of the project effectiveness.

x Fisher, T. et al. Field guide to South Dakota Amphibians. Free: <http://pubstorage.sdstate.edu/wfs/326-W.pdf>.

xi Leopold, Aldo. 1949. A Sand County Almanac and sketches here and there.

Counties added to goose hunt

The state Game, Fish and Parks Commission is proposing to add four counties to the special August hunt for reducing Canada geese populations that reside in eastern South Dakota.

Brown, Spink, Hutchinson and Turner counties would be added to the zone that already includes Brookings, Clark, Codington, Day, Deuel, Hamlin, Hanson, Grant, Kingsbury, Lake, Lincoln, Marshall, McCook, Miner, Minnehaha, Moody, Roberts and Union counties.

The season's purpose is to help landowners deal with crop damage from resident geese. The season has been in effect for two years and would run Aug. 11-26 this year. There were 3,211 hunters who harvested a total of 30,300 geese in the 2011 season.

The hunt is open only to South Dakota hunters. A federal waterfowl stamp isn't required, but a state small-game or combination license and a state migratory bird certification are necessary. The daily limit is eight geese.

A public hearing is set for June 7 at the commission's next meeting in Pierre.

GF&P biologists had planned for resident Canada geese populations totaling 80,000 to 90,000. The latest three-year average has been 186,000 birds.

The hunt officially is known as a management take. It is different than the general goose season and the early-fall goose season.

**Brown,
Spink,
Hutchinson
and Turner**

Muskrat hunting would be limited under new season

The state Game, Fish and Parks Commission is proposing an uncharacteristic restriction for South Dakota's new muskrat hunting season that was established by the Legislature.

The commission plans to close all public land to muskrat shooting. Trapping muskrats on public land would remain legal.

Normally, the commission is a promoter of public hunting areas and owns many thousands of acres of game and waterfowl areas for public use throughout South Dakota. For muskrats, however, hunting would be allowed only on private land by the property's owner or operator.

Muskrat hunting also would be allowed along public roadways by government highway personnel acting in their official duties.

The season would run April 1 through Aug. 31 statewide.

The proposed regulations were discussed during the commission's two-day meeting Thursday and Friday in Custer State Park. A public hearing will be held June 7 at the commission's next meeting in Pierre.

At least one commissioner made clear he would prefer there wouldn't be a muskrat hunting season.

John Cooper, of Pierre, pondered whether the Legislature should be asked next winter to repeal the new law.

Cooper was the state secretary of game, fish and parks in the Janklow and Rounds administrations. He said muskrats are fur-bearers that are valuable to trappers, and shooting muskrats damages the pelts, bringing a lower price.



ASIAN CARP RANGE INCREASING IN EASTERN SOUTH DAKOTA RIVERS

PIERRE, S.D. - Anglers who see or capture silver or bighead carp outside of the James, Vermillion and Big Sioux rivers or below Gavin's Point Dam are asked to report their findings to the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks.

Anglers may do so online or by calling a local GFP office.

In an effort to slow the spread of silver and bighead carp, anglers are reminded that catching bait below Gavin's Point Dam on the Missouri River and in the James, Vermillion and Big Sioux rivers is now prohibited. While some anglers will be impacted by the prohibition, it is a necessary step to keep those undesirable fish species from continuing to expand their range.

In addition, the Game, Fish and Parks Department reminds anglers coming to South Dakota that they may not bring bait fish into the state, which will help reduce unwanted introductions of aquatic nuisance species and fish diseases.

"Anglers are one of the first lines of defense against the spread of unwanted species," said Geno Adams, GFP fisheries program administrator. "Being aware of what's in your bait bucket and making sure there are no unwanted hitchhikers on your boat are two ways to help fight the spread of these harmful species."



High water levels in eastern South Dakota rivers in recent years have allowed for the expansion of silver and bighead carp in those rivers. Anglers should be aware of the increased possibility of encountering silver and bighead carp, often referred to as Asian carp.

An ongoing research project by South Dakota State University has confirmed that, in addition to the Missouri River below Gavin's Point Dam, those unwanted species have spread along the entire length of the James River and portions of the Vermillion and Big Sioux rivers.

Asian carp were first found in South Dakota just below Gavin's Point Dam on the Missouri River in the late 1990s and began spreading about a decade ago into tributaries of the Missouri River - such as the James River. Both silver and bighead carp are filter feeders and compete for food with young game fish, bait fish and native fish species.

Asian carp can grow to more than 50 pounds and 40 inches in length, and females of the species are capable of producing more than one million eggs per year. Silver carp are known for leaping out of the water when startled by boat motors - sometimes injuring boaters.

Along with range expansion, ongoing research at SDSU is trying to determine the effects of those undesirable species on aquatic food sources in eastern South Dakota's rivers and also document the extent of natural reproduction in South Dakota.

SDWF Announces Wildlife Week Poster Winners

SDWF announces the winners of the annual Wildlife Week Poster Contest. Many of our affiliates from across the state selected their local winning posters and entered them into the statewide competition. This year's contest had a lot of entrants and the winning selections were made with great difficulty.

SDWF pays \$25, \$15, and \$10 to each 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winner, respectively, from all six grades.

1st grade:

1st Place	Brayden Goehring	Lake Campbell Wildlife Club
2nd place	Kylie Sterking	High Plains Wildlife Federation
3rd place	Bo Biever	Whetstone Sportsman Club

2nd grade:

1st place	Trey Saylor	Lake Campbell Wildlife Club
2nd place	Jacob Kolousek	Jerauld County Game and Fish
3rd place	Alexi Moran	High Plains Wildlife Federation

3rd grade:

1st place	Kenzee Schafer	Jerauld County Game and Fish
2nd place	Luke Renner	Lake Campbell Wildlife Club
3rd place	Deavan Boots	Whetstone Sportsman Club

4th grade:

1st place	Gracie Korstjens	Whetstone Sportsman Club
2nd place	Justin Houlette	High Plains Wildlife Federation
3rd place	Clayton Randall	Lake Campbell Wildlife Club

5th grade:

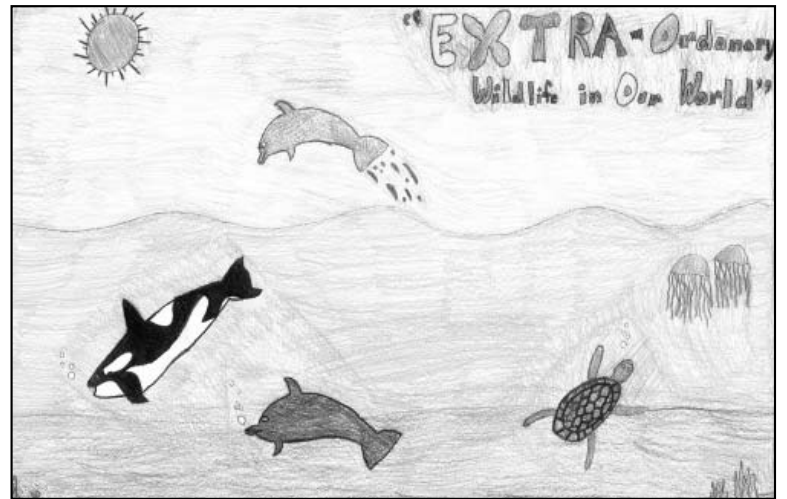
1st place	Maddie Neely	Jerauld County Game and Fish
2nd place	Nolan Hanson	Whetstone Sportsman Club
3rd place	Dawson Schick	Lake Campbell Wildlife Club

6th grade:

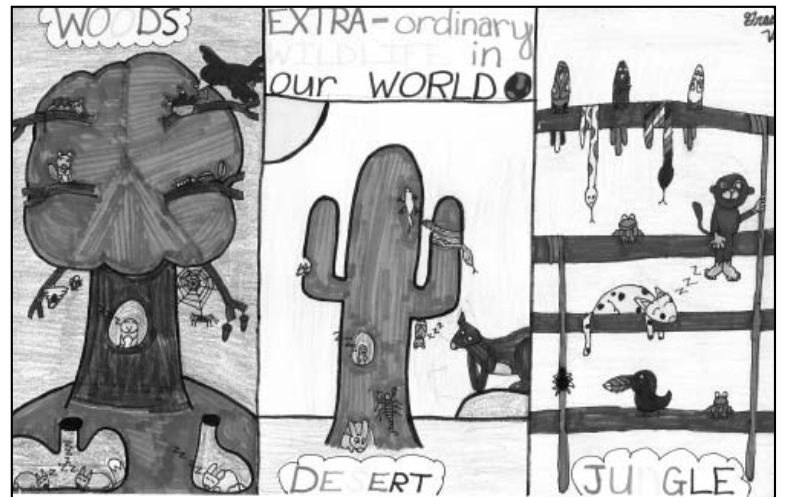
1st place	Micah Schaeftbauer	Lake Campbell Wildlife Club
2nd place	Tyra Biever	Whetstone Sportsman Club
3rd place		



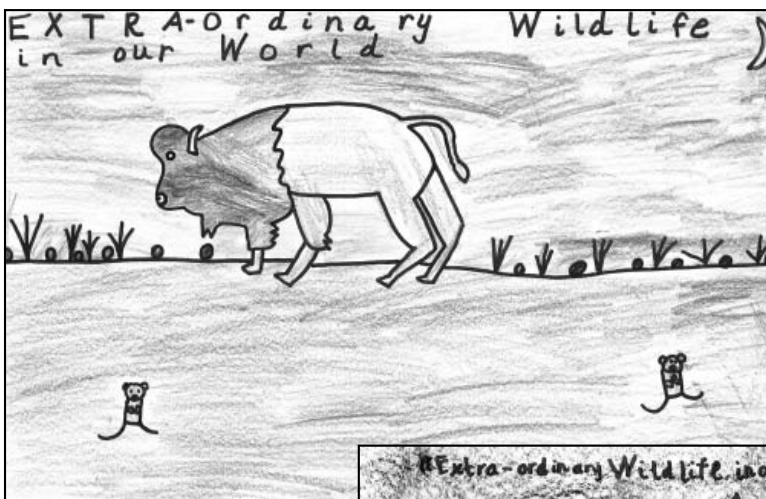
Micah Schaeftbauer
6th Grade



Maddie Neely
5th Grade



Gracie Korstjens
4th Grade



Brayden Goehring
Grade 1



Trey Saylor
2nd Grade



Kenzee Schafer
3rd Grade