

Game Animals & Hunting – Law Enforcement

1992

At WNT, game mammals include whitetail deer, cottontail rabbits and gray and fox squirrel. WNT attempts to recreate historic natural communities that, as nearly as possible, are representative of the condition that existed in the middle 1800s. The nearly as possible portion of the last statement is an acknowledgement that not all species can be restored to the landscape. Some species, such as passenger pigeons, are extinct; and other species, such as wolves, cannot be stored to the landscape – mixing wolves with people and livestock would be inappropriate.

Because species of large predators, such as wolves, will not be restored to the landscape, populations of some animals, especially deer, will be managed using hunting. Monitoring of game species will be important. At present, the staff is using figures and survey techniques used by the Iowa DNR as the base for our population management.

A thorough survey of the fauna of WNT is planned for the future. Initial survey work will begin in the coming year and will serve as baseline data valuable in understanding changes in animal populations as ecological restoration and reconstruction strategies are applied to the landscape.

Approximately 80% of lands within WNT are currently dedicated to agricultural production. Eventually, these lands will be converted from row crops to pasture to tallgrass prairie and oak/hickory savanna. A revised hunting plan will replace the Interim Plan developed, pending completion of the Refuge Master Plan. Over time, additional revisions to this Interim Plan will be required to respond to changes in habitat and species distribution.

The deer gun season was a success with approximately 28 deer harvested over two, week long sessions. The 1992 deer hunting success surpassed early estimates that 12 to 20 deer would be taken on WNT during the 1992-93 bow, muzzleloader and gun seasons. The original estimates were based on available approximation of deer densities, hunter densities and past hunter success rates.

Pheasant hunters reported average to good success during the abbreviated season that ran from December 5th to January 10th.

The late start reduced the number and success of quail and partridge hunters. Some late season rabbit hunting was observed, but no success/effort data was collected.

Due to the lack of suitable habitat and the nature of WNT, no waterfowl hunting has been proposed.

Refuge staff worked closely with the Iowa DNR in the planning and implementation of the Interim Hunting Plan. Project Leader Birger worked to coordinate enforcement with

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the Iowa DNR, Iowa State Patrol and the Jasper County Sheriff's Department to insure adequate enforcement of the Refuge hunting program. As anticipated, Refuge staff experienced good cooperation with state and local officials.

Reaction to opening WNT to hunting was positive. The local community and region maintain a strong hunting tradition. There is strong support for a hunting program at WNT.

In spite of the rocky start created by the delay in approval of the Interim Hunting Plan in Washington, the 1992 season was considered a success. The last minute approval from Washington allowed for continuity in hunting on the property during the transition from private to public ownership. Local sportsmen and women appreciated our efforts to provide wildlife oriented recreational opportunities.

1993

Whitetail deer, cottontail rabbits, grey and fox squirrel, bobwhite quail, pheasant and turkey make up the game animals found on WNT.

Hunting was allowed during the regular state season for all these species except turkey. During the transition between agriculture and native vegetation, the upland game bird populations should do well. Once we get a majority of the Refuge seeded to the native species, we anticipate a decline in the pheasant numbers and possibly in the number of quail. Deer and turkey should do well in open grass and savanna areas.

The Refuge has not instituted any formal census or survey methods yet; we are awaiting the development of a more complete monitoring plan. In the absence of our own data, we rely on information from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources for population trends in our game animal component.

Other Resident Wildlife --- No Refuge based surveys were made for game animals or other resident wildlife. The following information is excerpted from the statewide pheasant and game survey conducted by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. It serves as an indication of populations in the area comparable to WNT.

A 30% decrease was noted in the pheasant populations in Iowa relative to the 1992 data. Decrease in numbers of birds in WNT's local ecotype zone was probably due, at least in part to, lack of snow cover during part of the winter and due to the wet spring in 1993. During the spring, brood numbers decreased by 37% statewide perhaps due to poor hen survival through the winter or due to poor nest success.

Though some counties in southern portions of WNT's range produced better quail numbers than others, there was a decrease of 9% in the statewide quail roadside index in 1993 as compared to 1992. This decrease is attributed to lower counts in some regions, to

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light snowcover in winter and heavy rains in spring; both of which probably resulted in quail mortality.

Hunting --- Peterson and Aplin made necessary modifications to the 1992 Interim Hunting Plan and resubmitted the document to the Regional Office on April 20th, 1993. The plan was published in the Federal Register on May 18th, 1993.

With minor exceptions, the 1993 WNT hunt was concurrent with State of Iowa seasons and bag limits for upland game bird, squirrel, and white tail deer. WNT confined all hunting to the period between October 2nd and January 10th, 1994. No special permits were required.

Refuge upland game bird hunting was spotty at best. Extremely wet spring and summer conditions significantly reduced bird populations throughout central Iowa. IDNR surveys reported a 35% decrease in pheasant populations from 1992 levels. Quail and gray partridge populations were similarly impacted. Cool weather and wet fields delayed corn and soybean harvests, further reducing hunter success.

Initial bird hunting pressure was fairly high. Checks made opening weekend estimated 35 vehicles and 100 hunters on October 30th and 16 vehicles and 50 hunters on October 31st. Hunter reports revealed early season success was spotty with few quail and no partridge taken. Hunting pressure declined substantially during the latter part of the season.

Refuge staff predicted strong hunting pressure and solid harvest figures for the 1993 shotgun deer season. These predictions were based on the success of local hunters who harvested 23 deer on the Refuge during the 1992 season. In anticipation of a large harvest, WNT staff recruited members of the Iowa State University Fish, Wildlife, and Biology club to operate a deer check station. Students were in place during the first three weekends of the seasons to weigh, age, and check deer for external parasites. In the end, the station became the Refuge equivalent of the Maytag repair headquarters, with only one 18 month old buck being checked during the entire season.

Actual shotgun deer season results revealed smaller hunter numbers and a meager harvest. Hunting pressure for the opening weekend of the first (antlered deer only) season was estimated at 45 hunters per day. Mid-week hunting during the first season was estimated at 5 hunters per day. Second season (either sex) hunting pressure was estimated at 20 hunters per day during the weekends and <5 hunters per day during the week. Refuge staff and “local experts” attributed poor hunting results to a number of possible causes, including:

Disturbance of Refuge deer herd by large numbers of pheasant hunters. This theory was supported by the strong deer harvest on private lands adjacent to WNT.

Changes in Iowa regulations. IDNR adopted an antlered deer only early season for parts of Iowa, including the Refuge, in 1993. This, in effect, reduced the efficiency of group deer drives. This technique is the most popular form of deer hunting in

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central Iowa. By the second (antlerless) season, deer movement patterns appeared significantly altered. This may have contributed to low hunter success.

Low hunter efficiency. Refuge staff notes many hunters new to WNT lacked knowledge of the site and a coordinated hunting strategy. These groups appeared to disrupt deer movements without corresponding hunting success.

Late corn harvest due to wet field. Standing corn made deer more difficult to locate.

1994

Game Mammals – Census data on game animals (except deer) was included in general mammal surveys conducted in the summer during baseline data gathering efforts. At time of publication, the Iowa Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit had not fulfilled its contract.

In the absence of our own deer population data, we rely on information from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources for population trends. According to IDNR data, deer populations increased dramatically in the mid-70's to mid-80's. Deer populations from 1988 to present have stabilized at relatively high densities. Though 1994 data are not yet available, in 1993, 600 deer were harvested, resulting in an average statewide density of 1.4 deer per square mile.

The deer density for Jasper County based on hunter harvests is .8 deer per square mile. For comparison, the estimated deer density in Allamakee County in the northeast corner of the state is 4.9 deer per square mile and in Grundy County in north-central Iowa; the deer density is .1 deer per square mile. Differences in these rates reflect differences in general land use patterns that affect available deer habitat, and differences in hunting regulations. Allamakee County has a relatively large amount of woodland and rough terrain, in contrast to Grundy County, a more level and heavily agricultural part of the state.

Jasper County rates are somewhat higher than in some other parts of the state because woodland and CRP areas exist throughout the hilly landscape. In addition, the hunting season is limited to bucks only in the first season, though it is for any sex in the second season. This hunting system favors survival of females and an overall increase in reproduction.

With minor exception, the 1994 WNT hunt was concurrent with state of Iowa seasons and bag limits for upland game bird, squirrel, and white-tail deer. WNT confined all hunting between October 1st and January 10th. No special permits were required. Refuge staff produced a hunting leaflet that included the following Refuge specific regulations:

Hunting of the species not listed in the brochure is prohibited on the Refuge.

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Refuge access is from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

Trapping of fur-bearing animals is prohibited on the Refuge

The construction or use of permanent stands or ladders is not permitted

All portable stands must be removed at the end of the day's hunt.

Hunting of species is permitted only within the dates indicated by this brochure.

Hunting was authorized for the following species and seasons:

Upland Game Birds

Cock Pheasant – October 29th through January 10th

Quail – October 29th through January 10th

Gray Partridge – October 8th through January 10th

White-tail deer

Bow – October 1st through December 2nd / December 20th through January 10th

Muzzleloader – October 15th through October 23rd / December 19th through January 10th

Shotgun – December 3rd through December 7th / December 10th through December 18th

Other

Squirrel – October 1st through January 10th

Cottontail – October 1st through January 10th

1994 Refuge upland game bird hunting was good. Populations of Ringnecked Pheasant recovered dramatically from the low 1993 numbers caused by extreme wet spring and summer conditions throughout central Iowa. Quail and Gray Partridge populations, however, did not experience similar recoveries.

Initial bird hunting pressure was high. Published reports describing Walnut Creek as an undiscovered “8000 acre pheasant hunting paradise” in a national sporting magazine generated a great deal of interest for hunters throughout the Midwest. Checks made opening weekend estimated 100 vehicles and 220 hunters on October

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29th and 24 vehicles and 60 hunters on October 30th. Spot checks of hunters revealed fair to good success opening weekend with an average of 1.5 birds/ per hunter/ per visit. Hunters reported few quail and no partridge taken. The greatest barrier to hunter success opening weekend may have been the crowded conditions that lead in some cases to less efficient hunting strategies.

Hunting pressure declined substantially for the remainder of the season.

Refuge staff predicted strong hunting pressure and solid harvest figures for the 1994 shotgun season. These predictions were based on the historic success of the local hunters who harvested 23 deer on the Refuge during the 1992 season. While 1993 harvest success declined, Refuge staff predicted that the increased knowledge of public hunting opportunities at WNT would increase hunting pressure and success. In anticipation of a large harvest, WNT staff recruited members of the ISU Fish, Wildlife, and Biology Club to operate a deer check station. Students were in place during the first two weekends of the seasons to weigh, age, and check deer for external parasites. In the end the station became the Refuge equivalent of the Maytag Repair Headquarters, with only one year-and-a-half old buck being checked during the entire season.

Actual deer/ shotgun season results revealed smaller hunter numbers and an extremely poor harvest. Hunting pressure for the opening weekend of the first season (antlered deer only) was estimated at 45 hunters/day. Midweek hunting was estimated at 5 hunters per day. Second season (either sex) hunting pressure was estimated at 20 hunters per day during the weekends and less than 5 hunters per day during the week. Refuge staff at “local experts” attributed poor hunting results to a number of possible causes, including:

Disturbance of Refuge deer herd by large numbers of pheasant hunters. This theory was supported by a generally larger deer harvest on private land adjacent to the Refuge.

Low hunter efficiency. Staff noted many hunters new to the Refuge lacked knowledge of the site and a coordinated hunting strategy. These groups appeared to disrupt deer movements without corresponding hunting success.

Interest in deer bow and muzzleloader, and squirrel and cottontail hunting was thin.

Law Enforcement – both project leader Birger and ROS Petersen attended law enforcement refresher at Camp Dodge, Iowa, in late March. WNT staff has established good relations with IDNR enforcement, Jasper County Sheriff’s officers, and Prairie City officers.

LE – No major problems were encountered during hunting season; three “notice of violations” were written.

1995

The construction zone south of 96th, between 129th and the east Refuge boundary, was closed to hunting 1995-96. (Refer to Hunting Brochure in the information packet.)

Hunters were required to wear blaze orange while hunting on the Refuge. A new Special Refuge Regulation stated: “All persons engaged in gun hunting activities are required to wear some article of solid blaze orange outer-wear clothing or hat. When deer hunting with firearms you are required, per State of Iowa Regulation, to wear one or more of the following articles visible, external, solid blaze orange clothing: a vest, coat, jacket, sweatshirt, sweater, shirt, or coveralls.”

Law Enforcement – Enforcement activities were average in 1995. Most activities centered around the hunting seasons. Below is a list of citations issued:

Trespass on National Wildlife Refuge: 7 citations

Destruction of Government Property: 1 citation

Failure to comply with Special Refuge Regulations: 5 citations

LE - Two incidents of theft occurred during 1995. Both occurrences involved radios being taken from tractors, one belonging to the Refuge, the other to a local contractor working on site. There was also a set of miscellaneous hand tools and wrenches taken from the Refuge tractor.

LE - ROS Petersen graduated from the FLETC in March and completed Refuge Officer Basics training in August. There are now two collateral duty Refuge Officers on the Refuge.

Hunting - The construction zone south of the 96th, between 129th and the east Refuge boundary, was close to hunting in 1995-96.

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1996/7

Hunting pressure was down slightly during 1997 compared to 1996. This was, in part, due to the decreased population estimates for pheasant and quail in this part of the state. The majority of hunters using the Refuge are pursuing pheasants with the number-two game animal being deer.

Deer hunting pressure remained low again in 1997. There was a slight increase in the numbers of hunters using the early muzzleloader and the bow season. This still amounted to only a handful of hunters. Success rates were low for these seasons. The regular gun seasons showed about the same numbers of hunting during the openers and then numbered dropped off dramatically.

In FY96 law enforcement issues continued to be a challenge for the Refuge staff. A total of 25 offenses occurred, which included larceny, vandalism, trespass, and hunting violations. A total of 13 citations were issued for these hunting violations and vehicle trespassing. There were two collateral refuge officers on staff: ROS Petersen and Project Leader Birger. A majority of their law enforcement patrols were conducted during the hunting seasons.

In FY97 a total of 13 offenses occurred, which included vehicle trespass and hunting violations. A total of 10 citations were issued for these hunting violations and vehicle trespassing.

1998

Law Enforcement issues at this Refuge have never been a large problem. The majority of incidences occur during the hunting season and even then there are relatively few major problems. This past hunting season, Operations Specialist Petersen was the only Law

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Enforcement person on staff. He spent a considerable amount of time patrolling, especially on weekends. Only three citations were issued, all for “Failure to Abide by Refuge Special Regulation, No Blaze Orange While Gun Hunting”. We are looking into having another staff person attend FLETC to help with this effort.

1999

Law enforcement at the Refuge has never been a large problem. The majority of incidents or violations occur during the hunting seasons and even then there are relatively few.

One recurring problem is with hunters parking in Refuge field approaches and out in the fields. This was encountered at 17 different approaches on the Refuge. Drivers were not cited for this because it was not enforced during the pheasant hunting season. By deer hunting season, vehicles were parked even further into the field approaches. A solution would be to gate or fence off these approaches and construct designated parking areas.

The only Refuge Officer on staff for most of FY99 was ROS Bernie Petersen. Refuge Officer Tim Bodeen arrived in June and assisted ROS Petersen with the law enforcement program.

Four hunting citations were written in FY99, which is minimal compared to the record number of hunters utilizing the Refuge. The Refuge had one car rollover that damaged 30 feet of the bison enclosure fence. The driver left the county road, rolled over in the ditch and slid to a stop along the bison enclosure fence. The Iowa State Patrol responded to the accident.

In FY2000, Park Ranger John Below will be attending the Land Management Police Training at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center.

2000

Law enforcement issues at the Refuge have never been a large problem. The majority of incidents or violations occur during the hunting seasons and even then there are relatively few. The Refuge Officers on staff for most of FY2000 were Public Use Specialist Tim Bodeen who departed for Indiana in August and Park Ranger John Below who graduated from FLETC at the end of January.

One recurring problem is with hunters parking in Refuge field approaches and out in the fields. This was encountered at all the different farm approaches on the Refuge. Temporary parking areas will be constructed for next year to eliminate this problem.

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The dumping of meth lab waste is a new problem to the Refuge this year. A meth lab training was done by the Drug Task Force in Jasper County. As a result, staff found 3 dump sites to add to the sheriff's department's 5 for a total of 8 dump sites on the Refuge.

Two hunting citations were written in FY 2000, which is minimal compared to the record number of hunters utilizing the Refuge. Both these were for fishing in a closed area. The Refuge had one car in the ditch that damaged two stop signs. Another accident involved one car rear ending another while watching the bison and elk. The Jasper County Sheriff's Office responded to both the accidents.

2001

The Refuge Officer during FY 2001 was Park Ranger John Below who completed ROBS in October, 2000. Compliance checks of pheasant and deer hunters are the main duties of LE Officer at the Neal Smith NWR. A special thanks to Kevin Stephenson (Laguna Atascosa NWR) who helped for a month during October/November. Walt Kocal (Special Agent) and Brent Taylor (DeSoto NWR) also helped check over 300 hunters the opening day of the pheasant season.

The recurring problem with hunters parking in field entrances and driving on fields was solved by making parking areas around the Refuge. Signs were posted saying "No Vehicles Beyond This Point" to mark the boundaries of the field entrances and parking areas. The parking areas were also noted on the hunting map. Of the ten notice of violations issued, the majority were violations for no blaze orange, not removing deer stands, hunting non-game species and not having a hunting license. Twenty-nine warnings were issued, mainly for parking along the main entrance road.

Dumping of meth lab materials is still a problem on the Refuge. The sheriff's department reported seven dump sites on the Refuge during this period. Staff members found two of those sites.

Vandalism to signs and a Refuge vehicle occurred on two separate occasions. No suspects were found. Jasper County Sheriff's office has taken the cases.

2002

John Below is a collateral duty officer and the only Refuge staff employee with law enforcement authority. Compliance checks of pheasant and deer hunters are the main LE duties. Officer Susan Cooper (Desoto NWR) provided much needed help checking 200 hunters during the opening weekend of pheasant season.

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Officer Below went on two LE details for a total of four weeks. The first detail was for Homeland Security to St. Louis over the 4th of July week and the second detail was to Oregon doing a fire security LE detail.

A new regulation requiring non-toxic shot on the Refuge went into effect in FY02 for all upland game hunters. Signs were posted and 47 warnings were issued for hunters who were not in compliance with the new law. Five citations were issued for blaze orange and parking violations during the fall hunting seasons. Dumping of meth lab materials is still a problem especially during spring and early summer. The sheriff's department has cleaned up several sites on the Refuge.

Other problems occurring on the Refuge were breaking and entering old buildings that are Refuge property and littering, particularly during the hunting seasons. Volunteers collected seven truckloads of garbage from the ditches after the hunting season.

2003

Dual function officer John Below is the only staff employee with law enforcement authority on the refuge. The hunting season from Oct. 1st through Jan. 10th still seems to be the busiest times on the refuge. Major duties include compliance checks of pheasant and deer hunters during these times. Rod Hanson (DeSoto NWR) provided much needed help in checking the 250 hunters during opening weekend. Six citations were written, along with several warnings for having lead shot, blocking field entrances and not wearing blaze orange. Hunting regulations were published in September and Officer Below visited several sporting goods and archery shops in the area to distribute the regulations.

Officer Below went on one LE security detail during the period to a fire camp on the Montana/Idaho border. Below attended annual refresher training in Arizona, where he was trained on the new Glock handgun.

We continue to find meth labs and litter from visitors on the refuge. Clean up along the roads produced two truckloads of garbage.

On March 26, three wildfires were discovered on the refuge; no suspects were found. All three fires were small and were either extinguished by refuge staff and volunteers or went out by themselves. Gates to control access and new signs have been requested to help combat these issues. Feral dogs and cats have become a problem on the refuge. Two dogs were chasing elk in January, Officer Below was able to catch one and chase the other off the refuge. Feral cats continue to kill wildlife and are becoming more numerous on the refuge. The Animal Rescue League of Jasper County has picked up all the animals that we were able to trap.

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2004

FY 2004 was a busy year for law enforcement. Twenty-one citations and five warnings were issued for possession of lead shot while hunting. Twelve parking violations were issued along with 26 warnings of parking in field entrances. Hunters hunting without blaze orange are still a problem with seven citations written; one person was caught hunting in a closed area, and two hunters accessed the Refuge early. Twenty-six warnings were issued for the following reasons: hunting in a closed spring turkey season, illegally training dogs on the Refuge, illegally collecting fall mushrooms, and running a stop sign.

Five investigations occurred this year. The first was a case of two truckloads of garbage dumped on the southern section of the Refuge. A suspect was found and the garbage cleaned up. The second investigation dealt with unauthorized burning on a field entrance along 119th. A stakeout was set up and the violator was apprehended. Jasper County Sheriff and Prairie City Police assisted and pressed additional charges for driving restrictions. The suspect also had an arrest warrant in Colorado. The third investigation was a chemical runoff onto the Refuge, but no charges were filed. Special Agent Justin Mays and the Iowa DNR assisted in the case. The fourth case was an ongoing case of meth lab dumping on the Refuge and the lands surrounding it. Nine labs were dumped on the Refuge with many more to the south. The Jasper County Drug Task Force caught three of four individuals making meth less than ¼ mile from the Refuge boundary. The final investigation involved a hunter reported being shot while hunting. Officer Rod Hansen and Officer Below investigated the accident. The hunter had been sprayed with shot, and no injury was involved.

Five traffic incidents occurred on the Refuge. Four automobile accidents resulted in tow service assistance. Three of the four accidents were a result of drivers watching wildlife and driving off the road. A citation was issued for the fourth incident for driving off the road. A camper fire was put out by the owner and Officer Below, thanks to a local visitor who reported the fire. The family was able to continue their trip with just a short delay and minor damage (photo 38 and photo 39).

Officer Below participated in two details this year. One was assisting Homeland Security at Mount Rushmore during the 4th of July weekend and the other was to provide security assistance for the Florida hurricane aftermath.

2005

(Oct. '04)

Boot and Hager assisted Below in preparing for the hunting season by placing signs and spreading gravel in parking areas.

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Zone Officer Geoff Donaldson helped Officer Below during the opening day of pheasant season. Over 350 pheasant hunters were checked during the opening weekend. Two notices of violation were issued. Below also checked over 200 deer hunters during the month of October.

(Nov. '04)

November was a busy month with the pheasant season and the bow deer season open at the same time. Twelve violations were written by Officer John Below, most of which were for possession of lead shot while hunting. The other violation was for parking in a field entrance. Six lead shot warnings and four parking warnings were issued. Officer Below responded to two alarms from dispatch indicating motion in the visitor center building, and investigated a dead deer with its antlers cut off and a rifle shot on the refuge. Plans are being made to attempt to work some nights to stop poaching on and around the refuge.

(December 2004 – FY 2005)

The refuge required a special refuge permit for the shotgun deer season this year. Over 150 hunters signed up to hunt deer on the refuge and are required to send the permits back with hunting information. One NOV was issued for shooting from the road was issued and three warnings (two for lead and one parking). Poaching became a problem in December with three more deer found dead on the refuge with their antlers cut off. One bison was shot with a bow and arrow, a veterinarian was called in to help anesthetize the animal and remove the arrow (See Dec. ARS report for details and photos).

2005

January 2005

Below investigated the bison/arrow incident (see last month's report) by talking with neighbors and hunters. The reward for the arrest and conviction of the perpetrator was at \$5000 by month's end. Two citations were issued for lead shot and closed area violations. On the last day of the pheasant season six spent shotgun shells were recovered from the closed area along 102nd.

February 2005

The bison investigation continued to be the main priority for the month of February. The arrow was returned from the Iowa Crime Lab without finding fingerprints. Two interviews produced no clear leads despite hundreds of "wanted" posters up in towns across Central Iowa. New information from the Jasper County Sheriff's office will result in another interview with them in early March.

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March 2005

The bison investigation is still underway, and Below is waiting for word on a meeting between the defense lawyers and the county attorneys.

Below responded to a vehicle that drove into the ditch.

April 2005

April was a busy month for Law Enforcement. The bison case is still alive as we await more interviews and conferring attorneys. This is a joint case between the Sheriff's office and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Another investigation in April involved a person dumping some construction materials on the road by Thorn Valley Savanna. Thanks to ROS Rich, a credit card receipt was found in the heap. Below traced the receipt to the store where he secured the name of the person. Through questioning, Below was able to ascertain that this indeed was the perpetrator, and issued him a citation.

Jasper County Sheriff's office helped Refuge Officer Below give a briefing on safety and meth labs to the cub scouts who collected trash on Earth Day. Parts of six different meth labs were found on the refuge by the scouts and the officers. Six different generators were found on two different roads.

Smaller problems continue to be garbage and beer cans on the roads, demonstrating that drinking and driving is an issue on refuge and county roads. Dogs on and off leash is a minor problem that occurs on somewhat of a regular basis. Mushroom hunters have invaded the refuge finding lots of mushrooms this year. A bon fire was reported to Officer Below by a visitor but all was cleaned up before he got there. Officer Below attended his annual refresher at NCTC and was gone for a week in April.

May 2005

Several patrols were done in the evening hours to hopefully stop the after hours littering. Five interviews were also done of teachers and friends of the suspect in the bison case. Two warnings were issued for people walking their dogs on the refuge. The security system was faulty again and several false alarms were received. Over Memorial Day weekend three water heaters were dumped on the refuge. The investigation is ongoing.

June 2005

Investigations continue on illegal dumping and the bison shooting case. Officer Below attended DWI training in LaCrosse Wisconsin and left for Homeland Security Detail over the 4th of July. Officer Below also attended court to defend a citation he wrote but the

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defendant did not show. Main problems in June were dumping, littering and dogs on refuge.

July 2005

Officer Below was sent on a homeland security detail to the Jefferson Memorial in St. Louis for the Fourth of July. There he was stationed along the perimeter to help the screeners/volunteers if any problems arose. July 17, Officer Below coordinated security with several State Patrol officers for the Governors' Family Day at the refuge.

Several minor problems arose during the month of July. Fireworks were set off in a brochure rack and a truckload of garbage was left along the auto tour route (on public property). Littering is the largest problem we face in the summer.

August 2005

Officer John Below was sent on a LE wildfire detail in SW Washington. Below was assigned the duty of Day Shift Supervisor for the 14 day detail.

Below prepared the hunting brochure and deer hunting permit for the upcoming hunting season.

September 2005

Officer Below has accepted a job at the Horicon NWR and will start December 11. Below was gone most of the month with only 25 hours of LE mainly writing and working on the hunting brochure and patrol, garbage and dogs seem to be the problems for September.

October 2005

October was a busy month with the start of deer and upland game hunting on the refuge. Officer Below visited several sporting goods stores to drop off the refuge specific regulations and answer questions about hunting on the refuge. The Iowa Conversationalist magazine was reported to list the refuge as one of the top three spots in Iowa to pheasant hunt. Below also did an interview with Channel 8 news on the opener of the pheasant season.

Below wrote 4 NOV's -- two for lead shot; one for shooting too close to a building; and one for hunting in a closed area. Below also issued 20 warnings for things such as dogs on refuge before the season, parking, lead shot, and being in a closed area.

Susan Cooper and Rod Hansen from DeSoto NWR provided LE assistance on opening pheasant season weekend. Below estimated around 400 hunters on the refuge over the weekend.

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November 2005

2006

February 2006

There has been increase in activity in the visitor center parking lot after hours according to the county sheriff and Stapleton who observed suspicious activity one evening while he was at work. The sheriff's office and the Prairie City police have requested we lock the gates on the entrance road.

March 2006

Jasper County dispatch called Zone Officer (ZO) Gensmer to report that suspicious activity was observed near the maintenance shop on March 18th. Vehicle traffic was reported there at about 10:30pm, and a search of the shop area was done by sheriff's deputies and Gensmer. No one was found and no buildings appeared to have been entered. Gensmer remained in the area for several hours. A minor motor vehicle accident was reported on March 21st, about 8:00pm. A visitor tried to turn around on the entrance road and ran into the ditch. The driver was assisted by JCSO deputies, and ZO Gensmer. There was no property damage or injury.

May 2006

Another dump site was discovered on the refuge. Information in the garbage provided a name of a person. Zone Officer Gensmer is in the process of investigating.

August 2006

Hager and Allen mowed, posted signs and information boxes at all hunter parking areas. Hager and Allen also surveyed and posted boundary signs along the borders of Coneflower and North Middle Units.

September 2006

All parking areas are mowing and posted and refuge hunting leaflets have been distributed to all the brochure boxes at each parking area in anticipation of the beginning of the hunting season starting in Oct.

October 2006

Gensmer worked the opening day of pheasant season. Despite the good weather and abundant birds, hunter numbers were down from last year. Two notices of violation were

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issued. Hunters said many of their colleagues found it difficult to hunt in the tall grass and others said last year was so crowded many hunters went to other areas.

2007

February 2007

Several Notices of Violation were issued to a father and three sons for hunting rabbits on the refuge out of season. They were reported by a neighbor. Gensmer investigated and found the group with several rabbits, lead shot, and a hunting brochure which states when the rabbit season is and that lead shot cannot be used on the refuge for small game.

March 2007

Vandals destroyed several signs throughout the refuge. Most have been replaced but a few will need to be reordered from the Sign Shop.

April 2007

There were several law enforcement incidents this month. A deer carcass was found about 100 yards off the road inside the bison enclosure with its antlers sawed off. This is disturbing in two aspects – one is that someone is walking or driving around in the closed area of the bison enclosure and the other is that someone is illegally killing deer on the refuge.

A pile of trash was dumped along the roadside within the refuge boundary but with some sleuthing by the zone officer the culprit was contacted and confessed to the dumping. A notice of violation was issued.

June 2007

Vandals struck again and destroyed the three new brochure boxes at the entry kiosk. These had been replaced a couple of months ago after vandals destroyed the original ones.

Gilbertson continued to work with the RO on the ongoing theft investigation.

A driver lost control of his vehicle on State Highway 163 and drove off the road through the refuge fence. The county sheriff was on the scene and took care of the individual. One corner post and some wire were destroyed.

August 2007

Game Animals & Hunting – Law Enforcement

In an oversight last month, we failed to report an additional case of vandalism. This time it was at the production plot where vandals had driven onto the plots destroying plants, irrigation line, and irrigation control boxes.

September 2007

Krueger and Gensmer visited two FmHA easements in Madison County to check for violations. Some minor violations were observed, but further investigation needs to be conducted due to the lack of signage on the easements.

October 2007

Zone Officer Gensmer contacted approximately 37 bow hunters and 113 pheasant hunters this month. He did not issue any Notices of Violation but issued one warning for driving on a closed road. He investigated two dumping sites and a report of a dead deer.

Rod Hansen, officer from Desoto NWR, worked the second Saturday of the pheasant season. He checked approximately 60 hunters between 8:00am and 4:00 pm; issued one citation for lead shot; and encountered a group of hunters who were “drinking” their lunch in a parking area and had them vacate the refuge.

2008

January 2008

Gensmer issued two warnings for being on the refuge after closing. He is also investigating an incident where he discovered a pile of deer carcasses on the refuge.

March 2008

The zone officer issued two trespass warnings; investigated a meth lab dump; and inspected two FmHA easements.

July 2008

Special Agent Mays and DNR officer Bragg investigated unusual activities and after Gilbertson reported seeing loggers entering the refuge savanna after hours. They suspect the men were scouting ginseng root, although the officers were unable to find anything. Refuge staff is keeping a wary eye for any unusual activity.

October 2008

The following incidents were reported by Zone Officer Gensmer:

1 NOV for speeding on road through bison enclosure

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1 NOV for shooting from the tour road.

2 NOV's for possession of toxic shot while hunting.

2 written warnings for parking violations.

3 verbal warnings for night trespass.

2 verbal warnings for blocking gates. (subjects were present in the vehicles)

1 verbal warning for leaving stands overnight. ("I made the hunter go back and get it when I observed that he returned to the truck empty-handed" *quote by Gensmer*)

November 2008

Gensmer was busy this month with 8 NOV's , 6 written warnings, and 16 documented verbal warning. The NOV's were for 5 toxic shot, 1 off-road driving, 1 parking on the entrance road, and 1 hunting deer in small-game only zone.

Written warnings were for 5 parking in no parking areas or blocking gates, and 1 off-road driving.

Verbal Warnings were for 1 juvenile hunting deer in the small-game only area; 2 hunting behind no hunting zone signs (only 10 feet behind); 3 parking violations (owners present); 11 possession toxic shot while still in the parking area but not yet hunting.

Lead shot is a problem this year, probably because we are getting a lot of non-resident and non-local first-time-to-the-refuge hunters. Pheasant numbers are down, locals are not hunting here this year to any extent, and folks are hearing that we have more birds than are found in their areas. There were several investigations into trespass, and leaving stands overnight.

December 2008

Two NOV's (notice of violation) were issued to pheasant hunters for possession of toxic shot this month. Three verbal warnings were given for the same violation, hunters that hadn't left yet their vehicles. Three written warnings were issued for parking outside of designated areas or blocking field access roads.

Gensmer investigated reports of road hunting from the tour road, overbag by one of the "deer drive" groups who hunt adjacent to private land, and hunting in a closed area along the buffalo pasture fence.

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Gensmer assisted two groups of hunters in retrieving wounded deer from the no hunting zones, a persistent problem that should be reviewed as these hunters are reportedly using the retrieve excuse to chase deer from these sanctuary areas to areas open to hunting. This was the same group as in previous years.

A number of complaints were received from pheasant and lone deer hunters that the large groups of deer-drive hunters are ruining the hunting experience for other hunters. One of the clubs that hunt the refuge number up to 30 hunters, and drive the prairie, walking a line that pushes deer section by section. Gensmer saw this group fire over 40 shots at a herd of deer on one drive, killing only 3, but admittedly wounding several that weren't retrieved. These folks also are telling the other hunters that they have priority as they have hunted the area for many years. Several of the complainants told me that they are afraid to bring their kids on our hunts as long as the big groups are there.

This is posing a safety issue, as well as taking the sportsmanship from the activity.

Gensmer suggests restricting the size of a hunting party, stop the "drives" from occurring, or restrict shotguns as a method of take. We should also stop "party hunting" by definition, requiring each hunter to have in possession an unused, valid tag of their own and requiring them to stop hunting when the tag is filled. These hunters can now kill their deer and keep hunting until all the tags in the party are used. These are all excellent suggestions but will need a fulltime LE officer during the hunting season to enforce this, at least for the first couple of years.

2009

January 2009

An issue arose this year when the refuge deer season closed but the IA DNR had an extended one week antlerless deer season. Several hunters were out and about on the refuge. They were advised of the closed season on the refuge and left. No NOV's were issued. We need to change this next year to coincide with DNR.

June 2009

There has been an increase in burglaries in the neighborhood. Staff was reminded to be diligent in keeping vehicles, doors, and gates locked and to report any vehicles parked in field entrances. There has been an increase in littering – mostly beer cans – along the entry road and county roads within the refuge.