NEVADA WATERFOWL ASSOCIATION

August 2017

The FLYER

Volume 30 No. 2

nevadawaterfowl.org

Field Trip Edition

Effects of Harvest

Water Not Everywhere

New Wood Duck Student

Brent Decoys In Iceland

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May 2017 Volume 30, No. 1

Nevada Waterfowl Association

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ARTICLES

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The *FLYER*

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The *FLYER*

The Flyer is the official newsletter publication of the Nevada Waterfowl Association and is published three times per year. Guest articles are welcome. Our classified section is available for advertising.

The articles and views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those shared by the NWA membership, its officers, or Board of Directors.

MISSION STATEMENT

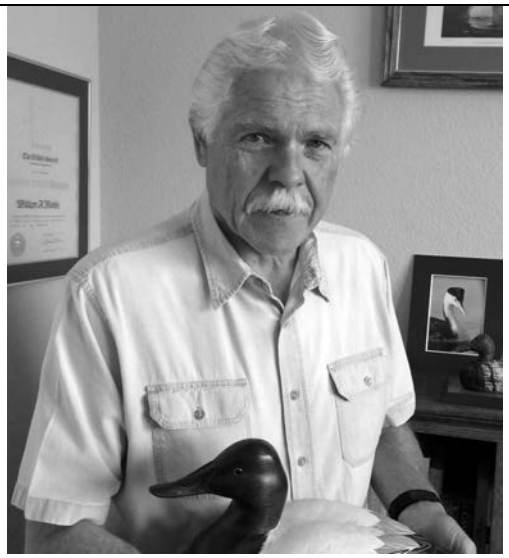
Nevada Waterfowl Association's mission is to protect, restore, and enhance Nevada's wetlands and the wildlife dependent upon them, especially waterfowl and shorebirds. Nevada Waterfowl Association works closely with organizations such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nevada Department of Wildlife, Lahontan Wetlands Coalition, The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, and other conservation organizations that share our goal of preserving Nevada's unique desert wetlands for future generations to enjoy. Nevada Waterfowl Association is a family oriented conservation organization that was created in October 1987 as a 501 ©(3) tax-exempt non-profit corporation by a group of individuals who were alarmed at the rate of loss of Nevada's unique desert wetlands. Nevada Waterfowl Association intends to become a statewide organization through the formation of local chapters throughout the state. Nevada Waterfowl Association is founded upon the principle that all monies raised by the Association in Nevada, will be spent to help Nevada's own wetlands and wetland-dependent wildlife. All donations are tax deductible.

U. S. Postal Service Identification Statement

Nonprofit Organization
Publication Title: The FLYER
Statement of Frequency: 3 Times a Year
Authorized Organization's Name and Address:
Nevada Waterfowl Association
5081 Albuquerque Rd.
Reno, Nevada 89511
Subscription Price:
No Cost to Members

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Willie Molini



At long last waterfowl in Nevada finally have water. As everyone is aware, the winter of 2016-2017 was exceptional, and the major river systems of western and northern Nevada were at or near record flows during the spring and early summer of 2017. In fact, the Carson River carried the greatest water flow on record. Yet, with this abundance of water there are several areas of concern. Carson Lake and Pasture is truly a lake and all infrastructure there is currently under water with more still to come. There is a possibility that this area could remain closed during the waterfowl season. We can only wait and see what happens. Unfortunately, due to various circumstances the Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge has received less than desirable water levels in several units to provide for optimum waterfowl food production, and while Humboldt Sink is full with considerable water flowing into Jessup Flat, the Toulon unit has received very little water. Members of NWA Board have been working diligently with the respective management agencies including NDOW, Stillwater NWR and the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District to try and address these management concerns. However, with the abundance of water this year, it is almost certain that waterfowl will be very broadly distributed come the waterfowl season. Agencies will also need to be diligent in monitoring for potential outbreaks of botulism. In mid-June, Board members, Norm Saake, Ben Sedinger and Bill Henry did an aerial reconnaissance of the Lahontan Valley and took photos and made a video of the wetland and water situation in the valley. This work will provide a record of the water situation in this most unusual water year.

On April 22, 2017, we held our annual fund raising dinner at the Atlantis Hotel. The dinner was successful, and I want to thank dinner chairman Daryl Harwell and all the other dinner committee members for their hard work in putting on this successful dinner. I particularly want to thank all of you who attended the dinner and our many donors who collectively contribute the work of our organization.

There will be a fundraising event for the Wood Duck project on August 19, and I encourage your participation in this event to help continue this very unique work. The Board voted to send a letter of recommendation to Governor Sandoval in support of Rex Flowers as a sportsman representative on the Wildlife Commission. This letter has bene sent to the governor.

The 2017 legislative session came to conclusion in early June, and the NWA through its representation on the Board of the Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife did considerable work at the legislature. For the most part we were successful in representing and protecting the interest of sportsmen and women. The Coalition's initiative to educate the general public about the wildlife management program in Nevada and the pivotal role that sportsmen play in delivery of sound and sustainable wildlife management was, unfortunately, not successful because of political maneuvering. There is, however, an alternative program under development known as "Wild Harvest" which is being co-sponsored by the Department of Wildlife and Nevada Bighorns Unlimited. In order to show consolidated support for this program, the Coalition has sent a letter of request to all Nevada sportsmen organizations requesting that they contribute to this public education effort. The NWA Board voted to join in this program and contribute $1,000. I will update you on the progress of the program in a future "Flyer".

I wish you all a good summer and a successful fall waterfowl season.

William A. Molini, President

EFFECTIVENESS OF DUCK HARVEST REGULATIONS

by Ben Sedinger

Effectively managing duck harvest is a difficult proposition. These populations can be highly variable from one year to the next. It is not uncommon for a duck population to explode and nearly double during a wet year. Predator populations that eat ducks also fluctuate. Some years there are large disease outbreaks, other years few ducks die from disease. There is also considerable variation among regions; while we might be experiencing a drought in the West, the North East US could be experiencing record precipitation events. This variation is not uniform across species either; redheads are not pintails and pintails are not wood ducks.

In the United States, waterfowl harvest regulations are set based on a complex process that seeks to maximize harvest potential while minimizing any detrimental effects on hunted waterfowl populations. To set duck harvest regulations, computer models are fed estimates of population size, habitat conditions and past harvest amounts to predict how liberal regulations can be without having a negative effect on the population.

In this way, waterfowl harvest management is using the best science available to inform that management; which is a good thing! However, this approach assumes that by restricting harvest, more birds will survive from one year to the next. We manage most harvest based on this assumption although recent research is finding that reducing duck harvest does not necessarily mean more ducks will survive to the next year.

We call this compensatory harvest mortality, which just means that harvest is not increasing the total amount of mortality in a hunted population. Another way to think of this is harvest mortality and natural mortality being in balance so that when harvest goes up, natural mortality goes down and when harvest goes down, natural mortality goes up.

How can this be you might ask? Well, there are two ways that harvest might be compensating for natural mortality:

1. No matter the species of duck, every summer there is a huge surge of individuals into the population after the nesting season due to production of ducklings. Populations swell by more than double as ducklings learn to fly and enter the population. This often means there is more competition for food and other resources like water, roost sites, or cover. With increased competition comes crowding and more potential for disease outbreaks. This also might provide better opportunities for predators. Harvest might compensate for natural mortality if hunting reduces the population down to a level such that these negative effects of a high population size are decreased.

2. No two ducks are the same, even within the same species. For example, some hens will hatch a nest seven years in a row while others will not survive their first nesting attempt. Many ducks don't survive to be one year old but others survive to be ten years old. Some ducks are bigger than others, some are smaller and many are average. There is some research that found hunters tend to shoot smaller than average ducks. If hunters are mostly shooting the poor quality ducks, that very likely would not have survived until the summer, then harvest should have very little effect on the population as a whole (hunting removes individuals that 'would have died anyways').

Since 2010 there have been 3 studies that have looked at how harvest affects 3 different duck species: pintails, redheads, and lesser scaup. Chris Nicolai was involved with the papers examining redheads and lesser scaup. In cooperation with Chris, I have been able to explore this question with data collected from the Fallon wood duck project. We are planning on publishing our results in the next year!

In Fallon, we band ducks throughout the year. The information we collect in Fallon allows us to estimate survival rates and also harvest rates from hunter shot banded birds. Using this information, we have found a direct relationship between hunting mortality and natural mortality. As hunting mortality increases, natural mortality decreases and vice versa. From these results we can conclude that harvest is compensating for natural mortality in Fallon wood ducks.

The pintail research was done by another group of researchers at Texas Tech. They looked at long term survival rates of pintails (1970-2003) in relation to harvest regulations to see if those regulations appeared to be affecting survival. Bag limits for pintail during the study spanned 0 to 10 pintail per day. The researchers found that survival rates were not affected by bag limits. That is, restrictive bag limits did not result in more pintails surviving from one year to the next.

Similar results have been found in another study of mid-continent redheads; restrictive bag limits do not result in greater survival to the next year. This study also looked other drivers of population health and found that change in redhead

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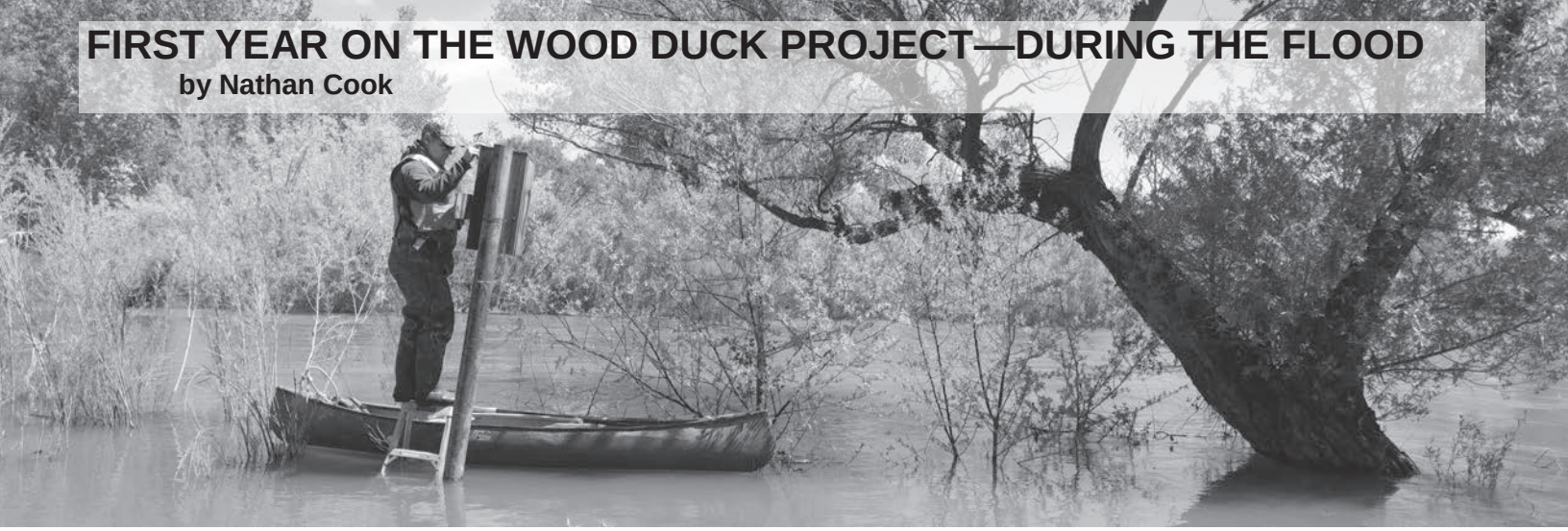
Chris Nicolai (center) with his two Fallon wood duck project students, Steve Olson (left) and Ben Sedinger (right) at Stillwater after a great swan hunt.

FIRST YEAR ON THE WOOD DUCK PROJECT—DURING THE FLOOD

by Nathan Cook



My name is Nathan Cook. I am new to Nevada and to the Fallon Wood Duck Project. I started as a MS Student at the University of Nevada, Reno in January. I am continuing the work on the project of monitoring the nesting boxes and active nests along the Carson River. I am also continuing to capture and band wood ducks. It has been a good nesting year so far

I am from Southeast Idaho and attended Utah State University. I have worked for the USU Ecology Center, US Forest Service and Idaho Fish and Game. I have worked on a Wildlife Management Area owned by Idaho Fish and Game for the last four seasons in North Idaho as the Senior Wildlife Technician. This Wildlife Management Area is on the Canada-US border and is a wetland with a focus on waterfowl production and hunting access. I grew up in summer heat similar to Fallon but feel that I was pampered in North Idaho with the hottest days usually only reaching the 90s and I am not particularly looking forward to the days in excess of 100 degrees.

With plenty of extra snow in the mountains and a wet spring the Carson River has been running higher than normal. The stretch of river with the project's boxes is below Lahontan Reservoir so the flows have been regulated. However, the river height has stayed consistently high, over flood stage, except for a few weeks where the flow dropped really low, I mean to about normal levels. This amount of water has changed our process for accessing wood duck boxes along the river.

Normally we would carry a step ladder and walk from box to box. At first this year chest waders were sufficient to check most boxes using the same ladder and walking between boxes but after a short while boats were needed to not overtop waders. I went swimming in my waders more than once checking boxes this year. The high water allowed us to use canoes and kayaks to float the river and check boxes with greater speed except a few times when boats were overturned. Fortunately, we always wore life jackets however several tools, hats and glasses were not so lucky. The Russian olive branches with thorns made for some exciting maneuvering through "danger alley" as one volunteer called it. A few boxes were flooded by river water and several more were knocked over in soft soil and the constant push of flowing water. There were even a few boxes removed accidentally by the irrigation district's efforts to increase flow of river by clearing the vegetation from the banks of the river along some stretches.

This amount of water flowing down the river has also changed the habitat. It has created flooded cottonwood areas on the edges of the river with plenty of willows and other riparian plants that provide good cover and food for brood rearing. We have seen the breeding females respond. For example, last year, during the fifth year of drought, there were a total of 58 nests found in our Wood Duck nesting boxes and this year as the nesting season is winding down, but not quite done, we have found 131 nests. That is the highest number of nests ever found during one breeding season for the Fallon Wood Duck Project. However, there are many more wood duck boxes in place now than the previous record year, with 129 nests.

My MS research will focus on analyzing data collected from geolocators. Geolocators are devices that can record multiple variables such as temperature, wet/dry and light intensity and for this project they are attached to the wood ducks' plastic leg bands. They have batteries and memory storage that last about 2 years once activated. They don't transmit any data so must be retrieved from the bird. They were attached to ducks captured during net trapping and nest box captures. They have been and will continue to be recovered through the same methods in addition to being returned by hunters from harvested birds. About 120 geolocators have been put out on Wood ducks, mostly females, during 2013-2016 and 13 more were placed on males only in spring of 2017. Many of these geolocators have been collected already.

One of the things that can be studied with the geolocator data is location and movements. While most of the wood duck population in Fallon are local and do not move much, there has been a subset of wood ducks captured and banding through the project that have been shot by hunters in different locations around the west. With geolocator data we hope to see where and when these local birds do move and also see when other migrating wood ducks pass through the Fallon area and where else they might travel.

Light-levels recorded on geolocators can show when females enter nesting cavities for egg laying and incu-

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WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE—EXCEPT

By Norm Saake

Waterfowl hunters have been waiting for the last 5-year drought to end and for the marshes to again be full of water and birds. So it is of no great surprise that with all this year's record or near record flows in most major river systems in the State that they are expecting a banner waterfowl season. Conditions are good to great in some locations, but unfortunately some traditional wetlands have too much water, while other areas remain dry.

I have spent a couple of days each, flying wetlands in Ruby and Lahontan valleys and half a dozen days driving around looking at conditions on the ground. In addition members of the NWA Board have spent several days meeting with representatives of the Federal Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), both in Fallon and Sacramento, NDOW up on the Humboldt WMA, and with TCID dealing with several problem areas.

Good news first.

Mason Valley WMA has experienced flooding conditions this spring and early summer, but Isaac Metcalf is reporting that all ponds will have water for this season. Some of the areas on the western side of the complex have had some road and dike flooding damage, so access may be limited. Looks like a good season there.

Ruby Lake NWR has received good water receipts this year and by hunting season, I would expect to see good hunting conditions on this wetland. This portion of Nevada opens earlier than the rest State and if you have never visited Ruby Lake, you are missing one of the most picturesque wetlands in Nevada, with good hunting opportunity and few hunters to deal with. When I flew this area in May, bird numbers looked very good, with lots of canvasback pairs on the marsh.

Franklin Lake WMA finally has water for the first time in about five years. The entire area was full when I flew it in May, and while bird numbers were low at this time because of the lack of feed, it should be a bumper year for this wetland. Hunters need to be aware that half of the wetlands are on private property and only the south portion is open to public hunting.

Jessup Flat is another area that seems like it has been dry forever, but water began flowing into this area in early June. In less than three weeks, the area filled and by the end of the month water was flowing out of the marsh and into the Carson Sink. For those of you who have hunted this area in the past, you are going to be surprised at the reduction in tamarisk on this area from the last time you hunted there, and cover will be more limited this season.

Carson Lake/Greenhead Hunting Club is suffering from more water than has been recorded on this area in over a century. In order to prevent private property flooding in Fallon from this year's record flows on the Carson River, water was diverted to this area via a specially constructed weir in the largest canal in the Newlands Project. For a while, more water was being discharged this direction than was being sent down the main river channel. Water levels currently are so high that almost all internal dikes and roads are submerged, and water is flowing to Stillwater via a newly constructed 16 mile ditch. There are rumors floating around that the area may be closed to hunting this fall by the Bureau of Reclamation for safety reasons surrounding the high water levels and submerged fences. Hopefully this will not occur and the area may provide some fair to good hunting on portions around the perimeter of the area, although access will be very limited.

Humboldt WMA has received flood water from the Humboldt River's near record flows since early this spring and both the Upper and Lower Humboldt Lakes are so full that they resemble one big inland sea. It is not know at this point if water levels are going to be too high to produce much in the way of feed, but past years, when water levels were high, the area has been able to produce tremendous amounts of high quality feed. With these high water levels and the lack of hunting cover brought about by the last five years of drought, hunting conditions are expect to be tough to say the least.

As of this writing (June 27) Toulon is still almost completely dry this year. When I checked the area on my return from flying Ruby Valley, the last part of May, there was

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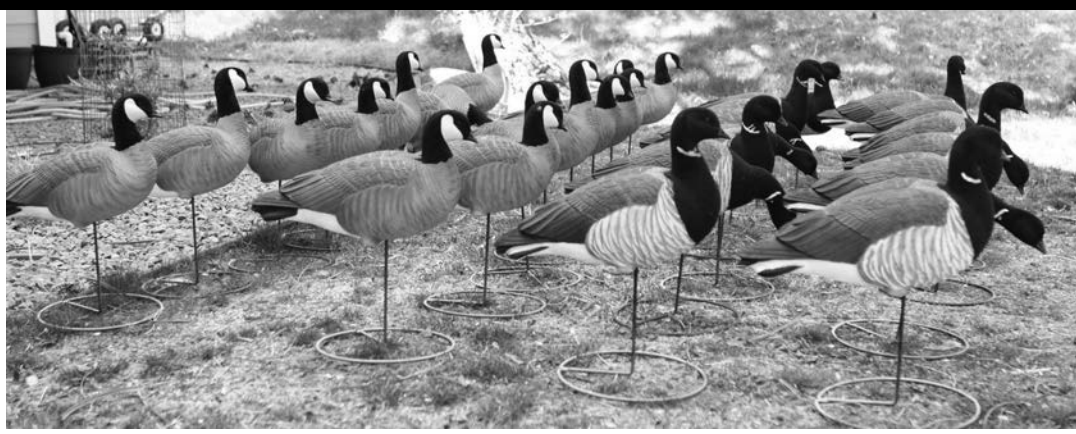
BRENT, DECOYS, AND A TRIP

By Chris Nicolai

Brant are my favorite birds of all. I spent 15 years of my life focusing on studying them, I carve decoys of them, and just like them for many reasons. Well, they made life exciting again with a recent adventure. I received a random email from some waterfowl researchers in Ireland. We had met here in Reno when my lab at UNR hosted the North American Arctic Goose Conference in 2005. At the time, I helped organize the 250 attendee meeting including painting about 2 dozen plastic goose shell decoys as all the arctic goose species in the world as centerpieces for the banquet tables.



The cackling goose decoys transforming into Irish brent decoys. The finished brent were ready to be shipped before the full 30 were requested.

Well, some Irish brent (yes, they are called brent in Europe) researchers remembered those decoys and sent me an email this past March asking if I was the guy who painted those 12 years ago. I replied saying yes. They immediately asked if I could carve a dozen Irish brent decoys to be used for their cannon netting efforts in Iceland in 5 weeks. I quickly said no for three reasons: 1) I'd charge an arm and a leg to carve that many decoys, 2) I can't carve that many that fast, and 3) if I was making that many brent decoys, they were going into my own brent hunting rig! But, I offered to paint a bunch of plastic Canada goose decoys instead. They said go for it!

Immediately, I knew I wanted to use the Avery Newbold cackler full bodies. But, I knew they had been out of production for nearly 10 years. I looked until the point of giving up and realized no new ones existed and the used ones were treasured and not available. I called a decoy sales place in Wyoming to order another model, telling them the story of what I was looking for, and why. Upon telling this story, they exclaimed "well we have 5 half dozen of those on the shelf". I immediately responded that I'd take them all!

Well, they arrived in days, and the kids and I started working on repainting and flocking these to look like Irish brent. We did a dozen for the Irish guys, and looked at the cost of shipping. Yup, $600 to ship a dozen to Iceland! I immediately emailed the Irish guys. They didn't like the news either. But, they had a question: "how many decoys did you buy"? I told them I had a total of 30 and they responded by saying "can you paint them all and hand deliver them if we'll cover the airfare"? Well, that was a heck of an offer. I never had plans to visit Iceland, but man, my wife sure did, and she already warned me that I better not be thinking of going without her. She is a teacher, so time off during the school year is a no-no. After a few days of thinking about it, I took a leap of faith and committed to going to Iceland. Always best to beg for forgiveness than ask for permission, right? Besides, the Iceland guys told me to tell her I was doing reconnaissance for another trip to include her another time. Perfect, plans were laid!

I got the 30 decoys painted, packaged, and stuffed into 2 boxes at the maximum size Delta airlines would allow and purchased an airfare.

I stayed awake for the 19 hour flights and landed in Reykjavik at 6:30 am their time. The guys were at the airport ready to go. Decoys were thrown in the rental car and we raced off about an hour away to where the rest of the crew was setting the cannon net for captures. Keep in mind, brent are terrestrial or aquatic grass eaters and don't respond to bait like mallards do here. They ordered my decoys as they wanted something

Group burying cannons, setting the net, and a pile of decoys to be deployed. Excellent scenery! There is actually a king eider down on the coast.

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GOOD BYE KATTIE

By Jim Giudici

Kattie did not make it. I had to put her down last August.

There is a special bond that develops between a duck hunter and dog. Kattie was extra special. She was what some people call a "Heart Dog". Such a dog comes along once or twice in a hunter's lifetime. A unique and powerful bond combined with a special level of understanding and communication develops between a hunter and such a dog. That was Kattie and I. We always seemed to know what the other was thinking. For example, sometimes I would tell her what to do and she would tell me where to go.

I got Kattie as an eighteen month old black lab female who had washed out of competition training because she was so timid. I got her after my father passed away to be a companion for my mom as well as a hunting dog for me. Kattie fit both roles perfectly. In fact, I did not take Kattie hunting the last three years mom was alive. Instead, Kattie stayed home with mom full time. I was afraid mom would forget I had Kattie out hunting and go wandering around the neighborhood looking for her. Those three years off did not phase Kattie's hunting skills at all when the next hunting season came around.

Readers of The Flyer may recall that I thought I was going to lose Kattie during last duck season. I did not know at the time, but she had developed a bleeding ulcer brought on by all the medications I was giving her for various ailments combined with the physical stress of letting her hunt too much in bad weather. Once the vet told me what was happening, I adjusted Kattie's medications and kept her warm and dry inside for a couple of weeks. By the end of the season, she was doing so well that I took her hunting on the last afternoon. I wrote about that miracle ending of the season in last spring's Flyer.

I knew Kattie and I had dodged a bullet and were on borrowed time. I also knew that as Kattie passed her 14th birthday last spring, our time together was drawing to a close. My hope was that she would make it to another season and pass away either making another retrieve or while sleeping in front of the fireplace. But that was not to be.

There is no need to describe the problems she developed or the steps I took to keep her going. It is sufficient to say it was a long, slow fade. I did what I could to delay the inevitable. But old hunting dogs die. We hunters owe it to our dogs to be there for them when they need us to end their suffering. We do not want to do it too soon, and we do not want to do it too late. We hope they will let us know when they are ready. Then we have to call the vet to do it for them. It always breaks our hearts when the end comes.

They say a dog has only one-seventh the life expectancy that humans have. I am convinced God gives dogs such short lives so that we get to have and love as many different hunting dogs as possible during our lives. Each hunting dog is unique and leaves us with memories we will cherish for the rest of our lives.

A while ago, Pope Francis was asked by a young boy if there was a place in heaven for his dog. The Pope responded along the lines of: "Who am I to say that dogs do not go to heaven?" I like to think that Kattie's sprit lives on reunited with my mom and dad in heaven. I also hope to see all of them again when it is my turn.

Friends have asked me if I will get another hunting dog. I believe that anybody who hunts ducks owes it to the birds to hunt with a dog. But even with the start of this new season, I am not ready yet. I will get another hunting dog when the time is right for me to do so. And the process of building a relationship and set of experiences and memories will begin again.

There was some guy in England a couple of hundred years ago nicknamed Bill who said it best: "It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved".

So, Kattie, I loved you dearly and will cherish my memories of you and our adventures and mis-adventures. I hope I did not disappoint you and that I lived up to your expectations for me. Forgive me if I caused you to suffer in any way or if you were not ready. I did what I thought was best for you. I did the best I could.

So good- bye Kattie, good- bye. I will always love you.

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better than the crude decoys they normally used to attract the geese, which they put far away from net as the birds didn't like them; hoping they'd land where there were no decoys (i.e. by the net). Given that, my decoys were placed far, ~100 yards from the net. I scratched my head, but hey, I'm in a new country, I'll do as they do. Well, we backed off and in 10 minutes the first flock came in, and landed right in my decoys! Yes, 100 yards from the net…….

So, we walked those birds out and moved the decoys right by the net. We backed off, and 15 minutes later another flock came in and landed. BOOM! Net fired and we had 10 Irish brent. Hadn't even been 150 minutes since I landed in Iceland! We did this 3 more times that day, ate at midnight, went to bed at 2am (their time). My first day in Iceland ended after 38 hours of being awake.

I hung out for a week and got to travel around the west side of Iceland repeatedly setting cannon nets and decoys. We caught nearly 200 birds. One day, we had just finished gathering 25 birds out of the net, and we were resetting the net for another attempt at the same spot. The decoys were still set up and we were working within 20 feet of the decoys. A flock came in and landed right in the decoys again, but the net was still in our arms. A brent actually copulated with one of my decoys. Wow, what an honor!

Success within 2 and a half hours of landing in Iceland. A real Irish brent with some of the decoys I painted.

But, what was really exciting, was that on the last capture of my trip, we caught something different. There are 3 subspecies of brent in the world. I did my MS and PhD on the black brant, likely capturing or resighting well over 100,000 individuals. These Irish brent are the same subspecies as Atlantic brant, which I had hunted last year and banded in the Canadian arctic over the past 3 summers. And lastly, there is the dark-bellied brent, or Russian brent. Well sure enough, we caught one in the final shot. So cool! They are not common at all in Iceland. As far as I know, maybe I'm the only living person to have handled and banded all 3 subspecies of brent in the wild?

Good times! They took great care of me and shoved a lot of birds in my arms. And I made a bunch of friends and learned the lay of the land to take the wife back there another day, and maybe to hang out with my decoys some more!

The biggest highlight of the trip was in the final capture when we caught two different subspecies of brent. Note the one in my right hand has a pale belly; it is an Atlantic brent (*Branta bernicla hrota*). The one in my left hand is a dark-bellied, or Russian, brent (*Branta bernicla bernicla*).

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bating eggs. This allows us to study the breeding propensity of the wood ducks. Breeding propensity is the proportion of females that breed each year. The traditional assumption is that all females try to breed every year. As referenced earlier there are more than double the number of nests from last year. There are a lot more nesting females this year and most did not hatch last year. Where did all these other nesting females came from? Were these females around last year and were just waiting for the right conditions which never came? Did these females go elsewhere with better conditions last year to nest or are these females hatched from other areas that saw the great nesting conditions here this year? These are some of the questions I hope to answer and better understand breeding propensity.

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still no water being delivered to this very productive marsh. I drove up there last evening and still little or no water is being delivered to the area and it has probably less than 2% water cover at this time. This is a real shame, since only 5% of the water dumped on the Humboldt, Jessup, and Carson sinks would have been more than enough to have fill and maintain Toulon for the entire year. Hunting on Toulon is projected to be almost non-existent.

Now for the area that has caused the Board of Directors of the Nevada Waterfowl Association more heartburn in the last few years than any other wetland. The Stillwater NWR is probably the most important wetland complex in Nevada. The Federal government, and to a much lesser extent NWA, have purchased one of the largest prime water rights of any wetland in the western half of the country, which is valued at about $55,000,000.00 at current market prices and has an annual water delivery bill of almost half a million dollars per year. NWA raised money almost 30 years ago and purchased the very first water rights for this refuge and has spent a big portion of its budget fighting legal battles in an attempt to maximize Stillwater's water resources. Prior to the last part of the 1990's, Stillwater was jointly managed by both the FWS and NDOW for almost the whole 50 years of it existence. That ended with the passage of Public Law 101-618 which turned management of Stillwater over completely to the FWS, and was suppose to transfer Carson Lake to the State.

In three of the previous four years, the refuge has failed to take its full allocation of purchased water, in spite of those being serious drought years when wetland habitat was at a premium. This year, the public would expect that everything would be filled to over flowing, but this is not the case. Granted, that the TCID has not been able to ship as much water to the refuge as it needed early in the season because of limitations on its delivery system, but management of existing water receipts has been confusing to those of us who are familiar with what should be happening. Less than 10% of the water spilled this year would have more than filled all of Stillwater. In some cases, water levels in units were kept so low that new stands of cattail have developed where they have never been before, and in other cases water levels have fluctuated so that ponds were low and then were near flood stage and upland nesting cover was inundated. On top of that last week, two units in the sanctuary portion were burned at the peak of the nesting season.

In the spring, the North Nutgrass Unit, the most important unit at Stillwater in terms of bird use, received its first water in several years and began growing a good crop of waterfowl food plants. Water deliveries to this unit, as of this date, have been cut off or restricted and water is being sent to less productive units. The unit has been steadily dropping for the last few weeks and at some point all the food value produced will be lost if good flows of water are not reinstated soon.

Because of conditions at Stillwater, Board members traveled to Sacramento to meet with the Assistant Regional Director for Region 8 of the FWS. After a two and a half hour meeting we were hopeful that things might improve, but after over a month with no noticeable changes, we asked for a second meeting with the FWS. That meeting took place in Fallon and only lasted one and a half hours. At the meeting we were informed that things were not going to change and that we needed to realize that the current refuge manager was going to have to learn from her own mistakes. Offers from three long-term wetland managers have been made, but they have all been rejected. This is not a situation where learning from one's own mistakes makes a lot of sense, especially when such a high value resource is at stake.

Even with all the problems at Stillwater, there should be some fair to good hunting opportunity this season. One good thing did come out of the meetings. The hunting closure on the Fallon NWR – Battle Grounds has been lifted and the area is back open again this year. The signs out there are a little ambiguous, but hunting is an authorized use of the area. Access to this area is primitive at best, but there can be some great hunting opportunities if you don't mind the rough roads.

This will probably be the only NWA newsletter before the season, but there are plans for NWA to fund two aerial surveys this fall and results will be posted on the website.

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populations is driven by population size and habitat conditions. More redheads are produced during wet years than dry years. Also, fewer redheads are produced when the population size is high and more are produced when the population is low.

At the beginning of 2016 a third study came out that provides evidence for compensatory harvest mortality lesser scaup. These researchers also provided some suggestions for the managers of lesser scaup harvest. They say, "We conclude that hunting mortality played a minor role in affecting population dynamics of lesser scaup and waterfowl managers could take a less cautious approach in managing harvest."

What does this all mean for duck harvest management? During the 1800's and early 1900's hunting nearly led to the extinction of many bird species, including wood ducks, so we know that hunting can have detrimental impacts on duck populations. But within the current constraints (7 bird bag limit, shotgun plugs, restrictions on hunting over bait or live decoys, only hunting in the fall, etc) it seems like modern hunting is not having much of an effect at all on duck population health.

This begs the question, why do we have species specific harvest restrictions? In the Pacific flyway hunters can legally harvest 7 ducks a day. Within that 7 bird bag though, only 2 pintails (now one), 2 redheads, 2 hen mallards, 3 scaup and 2 canvasbacks are allowed.

If harvest is compensating for natural mortality, as research has shown, these species specific restrictions are not actually helping these populations in any way.

On top of this, the average duck hunter shoots two ducks per day spent hunting. This is the average (roughly) no matter the flyway. If the average hunter shoots two ducks per day and a species specific restriction also restricts harvest of some species to 2 ducks per day, it makes you wonder how effective these restrictions really are?

The bottom line is that we still do not have a clear understanding of how harvest affects duck populations. We manage our waterfowl harvest with a sliver of fear and caution because we did overhunt these birds in the not too distant past. But given current 'fair-chase' laws and reasonable bag limits and season lengths, I think it is time to think harder about how effective restrictive harvest regulations are at improving duck population health.

The research papers cited are:

Arnold, T. W., Afton, A. D., Anteau, M. J., Koons, D. N., & Nicolai, C. A. (2016). Temporal variation in survival and recovery rates of lesser scaup. The Journal of Wildlife Management.

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Rice, M. B., Haukos, D. A., Dubovsky, J. A., & Runge, M. C. (2010). Continental Survival and Recovery Rates of Northern Pintails Using Band-Recovery Data. The Journal of Wildlife Management, 74(4), 778-787.

NWA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Yes, I want to join NWA and help in the effort to save Nevada's endangered desert Wetlands and the wildlife that is dependent on them.

_____ New Member _____ Renewal

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____Zip_____

Phone ( )_____Email Address_____

PLEASE CHECK ONE

_____	Canvasback (under 16)	$5.00
_____	Student Membership	$10.00
_____	Regular Membership	$25.00
_____	Sponsor Membership	$100.00
_____	Marsh Sponsor	$500.00
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*Available in five annual payments of $200.00

☐ Enclosed is my check or Money Order for $_____

☐ Please charge to my VISA or Mastercard

Card#_____ Card Type_____ (Visa or MasterCard only) Expiration Date_____

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Please mail to: Nevada Waterfowl Association
5081 West Albuquerque Road
Reno, Nevada 89511

8TH ANNUAL
WOOD DUCK EVENT

COME BE PART OF DUCK BANDING PROJECTS
FALLON CONVENTION CENTER – AUGUST 19, 2017
GET OUTSIDE! GOAL IS TO GET AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE TO BAND A DUCK!

ALL AGES ENCOURAGED!

5:30AM	Duck Banding
9:30AM	Marsh Duck Banding
Noon	Doors Open - Kid's Stuff
1pm	Spaghetti Luncheon
1:45pm	Presentation
2:30pm	Fundraiser

Tickets are $15 for adults and $5 for kids under 16

Artwork • Hunting Trips • Cold Bay, Alaska Hunting Trip • Guns
Kid's guns • Decoys • camping gear

For Tickets Call:

Ben 775.233.0678
Jamie 641.330.2662
Chris 775.830.1632

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