

Waterfowl Hunting Property near Dawson, ND

I am the last of three generations of North Dakota duck hunters. I no longer live in that state, however, and have decided my duck hunting days are over. As a result, I am selling part of a storied hunting marsh located approximately three miles south of Dawson, North Dakota.

This marsh has gone by many names over time. Historically, it was often called either the "Big Slough" or the "Black Slough". Others called it the "DeVore Slough", after a pioneering farmer named Sam DeVore. Most of the wetland, however, is now owned by the federal government and that portion is known as the Kleppe Lang Waterfowl Production Area. I will hereafter refer to it as the "DeVore Slough".

The DeVore Slough is just west of the Slade National Wildlife Refuge. The Dawson Game Management Area is also in the immediate vicinity. As these names suggest, it is a region rich in game and hunting opportunities.

The 140-acre tract I am selling is the most northerly portion of the DeVore Slough. When the wetland is full about 10 acres of grass and trees remain. The rest is water. There is slightly more than a half mile of shoreline and the beach is almost pure sand. Most recently, the water level was very low for a short period in the early part of this century. In general, however, this basin has held a lot of water since the 1990's. When Lake Isabel is full it drains through an outlet that runs under Highway 3 and feeds into the DeVore Slough. In turn, this wetland basin drains to the west through a shallow ravine. Therefore, there is a limit to how high the water can get. In recent decades it has frequently been at or near that limit and that is where it is now.

The Dawson area has long been a mecca for waterfowl hunting, and the DeVore Slough is frequently mentioned in historical accounts. For example, William B. Mershon was an avid and wealthy duck and goose hunter in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He typically spent the autumn months traveling in a private rail car to those locations on the northern plains where the greatest concentrations of waterfowl could be found. Based on his published "recollections", Mershon hunted in the Dawson area from 1883 through 1889. Describing the "Big Slough back of Sam Devore's house", Mershon wrote:

Such clouds of waterfowl as we saw here ... I have never seen before and have never seen since. I remember standing on the edge of the Sam Devore Slough when something alarmed the waterfowl and they fairly darkened the sky when they got up, and the roar reminded me of a heavy train moving at a rapid rate of speed over a long, resonant trestle.

Wm. B. Mershon, Recollections of My Fifty Years Hunting and Fishing, p. 126 (1923).

