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Jan. 28 Iowa Outdoors

1 message

Press Releases from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources

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IOWA OUTDOORS

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES | CONSERVATION AND RECREATION DIVISION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: JANUARY 28, 2014

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1. Lake Darling Lake and Park Renovation Enters Home Stretch
2. Thousands of Bald Eagles Winter in Iowa
3. Spawning Trout – by Joe Wilkinson [photos available electronically]
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LAKE DARLING LAKE AND PARK RENOVATION ENTERS HOME STRETCH

Lake Darling will begin impounding water when the gates are closed during a ceremony at 10 a.m.,

Feb. 12, marking the beginning of the end of a more than \$12 million project to renovate the lake and park that began more than a decade ago.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources, the Friends of Lake Darling, state legislators, local officials, the Washington County Riverboat Foundation, NRCS and others affiliated with the project will be on hand to mark the occasion.

Lake Darling State Park, dedicated in 1950, will have a grand opening for the public in late summer or early fall.

“This is basically a brand new park,” said Tom Basten, southeast supervisor for Iowa DNR’s State Parks Bureau. “We’re hoping to open by midsummer, weather permitting. Some of these new features are a result of public support from the Friends of Lake Darling, the Izaak Walton League, Washington County Riverboat Foundation, the Sheldon Foundation and numerous private donors.”

The park remains closed, but once the work is finished, visitors will enjoy new features across the board.

The renovation includes:

- Replacing the dam
- New sediment catch basins in the watershed
- Two silt dams in the lake
- Lake level raised two feet to increase surface acres
- Installed shoreline riprap, fishing jetties and piers
- New ADA fishing trail
- New roads
- New campground, with 50 amp service
- New boat ramps
- New shelter at boat rental area
- New sand on the beach
- New waterlines throughout the park
- Two new shower buildings
- New dump station
- New fishing bridge
- New trail bridge and others refurbished
- New park lodge
- And three, two bedroom, year round cabins will be built this fall.

MEDIA CONTACT: Tom Basten, Southeast Iowa District Supervisor, Iowa Department of Natural Resources State Parks Bureau, 319-694-2430.

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THOUSANDS OF BALD EAGLES WINTER IN IOWA

Iowa's midwinter bald eagle surveys indicate high numbers of eagles in areas of open water where gizzard shad are plentiful, but the Mississippi River has the greatest concentration.

The Mississippi from Fort Madison to Keokuk reported as many as 2,300 eagles. During Keokuk's Annual Bald Eagle Appreciation Days, upwards of 900 eagles were in the area, many perched on the giant cottonwoods and oaks along the bluffs.

Bald eagles will provide spectacular eagle viewing until the spring thaw. Bald eagle watch events are scheduled into mid-March.

2014 Bald Eagle Watch Events

*events with asterisk have a school day on Friday

Mississippi River Visitor Center, Arsenal Island, Rock Island, Ill.

Saturdays and Sundays, through Feb. 15, 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Combination Eagle Watch and Historic Clock Tower Tours

- Reservations are recommended as group size is limited.
- For more information contact Visitor's Center Staff at 309-794-5338

Coralville Bald Eagle Watch

Feb. 8

Indoor Expo

- Outdoor viewing at Tailwater West Picnic Shelter downstream from the dam at Coralville Lake
- Indoor programs 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. at North Central Junior High, 180 Forevergreen Road, North Liberty
- For more information call 319-338-3543 ext. 6308

Grays Lake Des Moines Bald Eagle Watch

Feb. 14-15

Des Moines Parks and Rec will be hosting a Valentine's Day Bald Eagle Watch at the eagle nest at Grays Lake on Fleur Drive in Des Moines on Feb. 14, and viewing with indoor live eagle at 6th St. on Feb. 15.

- Outdoor viewing and replica nest 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. Grays Lake, Friday
- Outdoor viewing, replica nest, live eagle indoors 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. 6th bridge, Saturday
- For more information call 515-283-4294

Effigy Mounds Bald Eagle Watch**Feb. 22**

- Outdoor viewing at Prairie du Chien Visitor's Center on the River
- For more information call 563-873-3491

Saylorville Bald Eagle Watch**Feb. 23, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.**

- Outdoor viewing at selected sites around reservoir, start at Visitor's Center
- For more information call 515-276-4656

O'Brien County Bald Eagle Watch**March 1, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.**

- Prairie Heritage Center, 4931 Yellow Ave., Peterson
- There will be spotting scopes and binoculars available.
- Ty Smedes will be presenting his book "The Return of Iowa's Bald Eagle" at 11:30 a.m. and 2 p.m.
- For more information call Charlene Elyea 712-295-7200

Sioux Rapids**March 22**

American Legion Building, 200 Main Street, Sioux Rapids

- Registration from 8:30 to 10 a.m.
- Speakers from 10 a.m. to Noon
- Refreshments will be served in the morning. There will be a free will offering lunch at 12:15 p.m.
- Outdoor viewing at selected sites.
- Can pre-register by contacting Wonders of Nature
- For more information call: 712-296-4920 or 712-295-7200

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[Photos for the trout spawning story are available electronically by sending an email to mick.klemesrud@dnr.iowa.gov]

SPAWNING TROUT

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Future fishing sits in trays and raceways, in the DNR trout hatchery near Manchester this winter. With the final spawning of rainbow trout, the stocking class of 2015 is taking shape.

Already, tiny brook trout and brown trout move like dark clouds in the indoor raceways...aware of any movement as they wait for aluminum feeders to clang open. Every 20 minutes, the timer hits and commercial feed drops to feed them. The first of the season's rainbow trout are now sac fry. They and the late spawned eggs sit under a constant, cold stream of spring water. This hatchery, originally a federal facility, was sited here in the late 1800s because of the volume and quality of the water.

"Typically, we rear between 300-350,000 rainbow trout and 50-75,000 brook trout to catchable size annually; with adjustments for fingerling availability, changes in stream management and weather," explains Manchester hatchery manager Dave Marolf. "We also produce between 125,000-175,000 brown trout fingerlings to stock as two-inch fish in May into watersheds that do not already have natural reproduction. That supplements reproduction of browns, in about half of the spring-fed watersheds in northeast Iowa, which do not have to be stocked."

So, about once a week from October through January, it's time to spawn fish. Late in the rotation now, that means netting 6 to 8 pound 'ripe' female rainbows. The brood fish are stripped by hand, as workers gently but firmly rub bellies to steer streams of bright orange eggs—up to 4,000 to 6,000 per fish-- into a net and then plastic bowl.

With similar motions, sperm is extracted from two smaller males—to provide genetic diversity—and mixed into the egg mass. Stirring for 30 seconds with a turkey feather produces 95-99 percent fertilization... dozens of times better than leaving it up to Nature in the stream.

Sometimes, the week-to-week chore turns into a field trip destination, for potential biologists-in-training.

"Pretty interesting. I've never held a trout that big before; really slimy, really small scales. It was difficult to grab on to the tail and support her head," reports Zach Hall of Council Bluffs--a student in Dr. James W. Demastes' Field Zoology class.

Each of a dozen junior or senior University of Northern Iowa biology or education majors pulled on a raincoat and elbow-length rubber gloves to coax a stream of eggs into the waiting net.

"We just started our fish unit. They have been studying specimens for about a week. This gives them a chance to go out and look at animals in the middle of winter," notes Demastes.

The hands-on approach was overseen by hatchery technician Randy Mack.

"Once fertilized, eggs go into trays; then to the incubator unit for 30-45 days (depending on water temperature) before they hatch," says Mack. "From there, it is four or five months indoors before being moved to the big raceways outside...or at the Decorah or Elkader rearing stations."

It takes about a year and a half for them to reach 11-inch, half-pound catchable size. Fish spawned this fall and winter will be in the stocking class of 2015. Come this spring, fish hatched *last* winter will be on the trucks.

Up to 40,000 of us go after trout each year. That number has grown, with the expansion of Iowa's cold weather urban trout program. Unable to survive in warm weather, trout can make it through the winter in 17 small lakes, ponds or renovated quarries throughout the state. Some of the new anglers enjoy the new pastime locally...while others hear the call to head to the bluffs of Trout Country in northeast Iowa.

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REAP GRANT AVAILABLE FOR LAND ACQUISITION

More than \$200,000 in grants is available to cost share land acquisitions with private organizations. Applications are available at www.iowareap.com then click on REAP Grants in the left column.

Applications are due March 14th by 4:30 pm.

The cost-share arrangement entails 75 percent of the acquisition costs coming from Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) and the other 25 percent coming from private contributions. This program provides an excellent opportunity for conservation organizations to help provide additional outdoor recreation opportunities and protect critical habitat. The DNR owns and manages the property that is jointly purchased on behalf of the public.

A project review committee made up of three DNR administrators and three representatives of private conservation organizations selects the projects.

Recent projects include additions to Pine Lake State Park, Pictured Rocks Wildlife Management Area and the Loess Hills Wildlife Area.

REAP is funded from the state's Environment First Fund (Iowa gaming receipts) and from the sale of the natural resource license plate.

MEDIA CONTACT: Tammie Krausman, REAP Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-

281-8382.

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MICK KLEMESRUD Information Specialist

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