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October 1 Iowa Outdoors

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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: OCT. 1, 2013

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IOWA BIRD CONSERVATION AREA RECEIVES INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

BOONE - Iowa Audubon, the National Audubon Society and BirdLife International have announced that Iowa Department of Natural Resources' Effigy Mounds-Yellow River Forest Bird Conservation Area has been named a "Globally Important Bird Area."

A major conservation landmark, this international recognition highlights the Iowa region's key role in the global movement to study, protect and preserve at-risk birds.

The Important Bird Area Program is an international effort to designate sites critical to declining bird species for nesting or as stopovers for large concentrations of migrating birds. The highest honor for any Important Bird Area, or IBA, is to be named a Globally Important Bird Area, which entails meeting strict requirements backed by documentation of a site's importance to imperiled birds.

"We are honored that the Effigy Mounds-Yellow River Forest Bird Conservation Area has achieved this international recognition," said Doug Harr, President of Iowa Audubon, a statewide organization based in Boone. "Through years of monitoring and protecting at-risk birds and habitats, we realize this site is invaluable regionally and in the context of interrelated worldwide conservation work. The Globally Important Bird Area designation benefits Iowa region birds, conservation advancement and our communities."

More than 12,000 IBAs are currently are designated worldwide, with nearly 2,700 in the U.S. and 91 in Iowa. Iowa Audubon, an organization focused on bird conservation and community education in the Hawkeye State, oversees a complementary program of Important Bird Areas (IBAs).

"Iowa Audubon and our regional partners understand the importance of protecting key sites for at-risk birds, and the Important Bird Area Program offers opportunities to succeed locally while helping to advance broader global conservation priorities," Harr said.

The rugged, forested, Effigy Mounds-Yellow River State Forest landscape in northeast Iowa was Iowa's fourth Bird Conservation Area. At nearly 135,000 acres, it is one of the two largest of 18 Bird Conservation Areas created by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to date.

Effigy Mounds-Yellow River Forest IBA was found to preserve critical habitat for Cerulean Warblers. Surveyed by Jon Stravers, this bird of eastern U.S. forests has seen its population plummet 70 percent since 1966, according to results of the annual North American Breeding Bird Survey.

"We found that preserving this site would be imperative to protect and preserve one of our region's most treasured species of birds," Stravers said. As a result of Stravers' findings, Bird Conservation International announced in late August that Effigy Mounds-Yellow River Forest and surrounding lands had been given Iowa's first official designation as a Globally Important Bird Area.

Cooperators in managing the Effigy Mounds-Yellow River Forrest IBA include the National Park Service, Iowa DNR, National Audubon Society, Iowa Audubon, US Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish & Wildlife Service, the Allamakee and Clayton County Conservation Boards, and private landowners.

For more information about the IBA program, visit National Audubon's IBA webpage at www.audubon.org/bird/iba/ and Iowa Audubon's IBA webpage at <http://www.iowaaudubon.org/IBA/>.

A DNR brochure about the Effigy Mounds-Yellow River Forest BCA/IBA, containing a complete bird species list for the area, may be found at <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Portals/idnr/uploads/wildlife/bca/EffMo%20-%20YRF.pdf>

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FALL COLORS BEGINNING TO SHOW ACROSS IOWA

Leaf viewers may have a good year to see vivid colors this year, according to Jeff Goerndt, the State Forest Section supervisor at the Iowa DNR.

“I think we’re going to have a good fall color year because of the weather we’re having,” Goerndt says. “You get the best and brightest colors when you’ve got the kind of fall weather we have now where you get sunny days and crisp, cool nights.

Typically, the best fall colors are in Northeast Iowa, but there are some good areas in Central Iowa too, says Goerndt.

Leaves will change across north Iowa between the last week of September to the second week of October. Central Iowa will see leaves changing from the first to third weeks of October. Southern Iowa will see leaves change from the second week to the end of October.

What changes where is subject to weather. How vivid and how long leaves remain is also determined by weather.

As days get shorter, trees release a chemical called phytochrome. This chemical slows down chlorophyll production and allows the tree go dormant. The loss of chlorophyll (which is green) allows the colors of the leaf to show.

Leaf pigment is also influenced by the amount and acidity of sap in the trees. More acidic sap gives trees more reds and brighter colors. Less acidic saps gives trees duller and more yellow colors.

Leaf watching season can be cut short by drought and/or strong wind events.

“Drought can also cause the colors to be less brilliant,” says Goerndt. “When trees are stressed, the leaves tend to turn brown and fall off. In areas where there’s severe drought, we’re seeing early leaf drop.”

The DNR has a fall colors hotline which can be found, along with other information, at: www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/Forestry/ForestryLinksPublications/FallColor.aspx

MEDIA CONTACT: Jeff Goerndt, State Forest Section Supervisor, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-281-5441.

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FALL TROUT STOCKING BEGINS OCTOBER 11

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources will begin its fall and winter trout stocking on Oct. 11, with a release planned for Sand Lake, in Marshalltown.

The DNR has 17 cool weather stockings planned and will release between 1,000 to 2,000 rainbow trout at each location as part of its cool weather trout program that brings trout to areas that cannot support them during the summer months.

Anglers will need to have a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout. The daily limit is five trout per licensed angler with a possession limit of 10.

Children age 15 or younger can fish for trout with a properly licensed adult, but they must limit their catch to one daily limit. The child can purchase a trout fee which will allow them to catch their own limit.

2013-14 Fall Winter Trout Stocking Schedule

Oct. 11, Sand Lake, Marshalltown, 11 a.m.

Oct. 17, Big Lake, Council Bluffs, 2 p.m.

Oct. 18, Banner Lake (South), Summerset State Park, Indianola, Noon

Oct. 18, Petoka, Bondurant, Noon

Oct. 19, Lake of the Hills, Davenport, 10:30 a.m.

Oct. 31, Ottumwa Park Pond, 11 a.m.

Nov. 1, Sand Lake, Iowa City, 10 a.m.

Nov. 2, Heritage Pond, Dubuque, 10 a.m.

Nov. 9, Scharnberg Pond, Spencer, 1 p.m.

Nov. 9, Wilson Lake, Fort Madison, Noon

Nov. 9, Discovery Park, Muscatine, 10 a.m.

Nov. 16, Moorland Pond, Fort Dodge, 1 p.m.

Nov. 20, Bacon Creek, Sioux City, 1:30 p.m.

Nov. 21, Ada Hayden, Ames, Noon

Nov. 22, Prairie Creek Park (Cedar Bend), Cedar Rapids, 10 a.m.

Nov. 27, Blue Pit, Mason City, 11 a.m.

Date TBA, North Prairie, Cedar Falls

MEDIA CONTACT: Mike Mason, Fish Culture Supervisor, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, [515-281-6072](tel:515-281-6072).

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FISH FROM ONE IOWA LAKE AND TWO IOWA RIVERS EXCEED MERCURY ADVISORY LEVEL; FIRST TURTLE TISSUE ADVISORY ISSUED

DES MOINES – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has confirmed the presence of mercury above consumption advisory levels in bass or walleye collected from Lake Iowa, the Turkey River, near Garber, and the Iowa River, near Marshalltown.

The DNR and the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) recommend that individuals should consume no more than one meal (6 to 7 ounces) per week of bass, walleye, or other predator fish caught from the following waters:

- Lake Iowa in Iowa County near Millersburg;
- The Turkey River in Clayton County from its confluence with the Mississippi River 21 miles upstream to confluence with the Volga River near Garber;
- The Iowa River from the upper end of Coralville Reservoir at Hwy. 218 in Johnson County 178 miles upriver to the dam at Iowa Falls in Hardin County.

Also, individuals should consume no more than one meal (6 to 7 ounces) per week of muscle tissue from snapping turtles taken from Pollmiller Park Lake in Lee County. The DNR and IDPH recommend that turtle fat not be consumed because contaminants can reach higher levels in this type of tissue.

This brings the number of consumption advisories in Iowa to 22. The complete list of Iowa's fish consumption advisories is available online at www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/WaterQuality/WaterMonitoring/MonitoringPrograms/FishTissueMonitoring.aspx.

Mercury is a naturally-occurring substance that can be discharged to the environment through industrial processes and through combustion of coal used for generation of electricity.

Fish accumulate mercury in their muscle tissue through feeding. Prolonged and regular consumption of fish with high levels of mercury can lead to neurological disorders such lack of coordination of movements and muscle weakness; impairments of speech, hearing, and walking.

As a result, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Food and Drug Administration recommend that pregnant and nursing women, those planning to become pregnant and children 12 years or younger limit their consumption to one meal per week of all larger size predator fish, such as walleye and

bass. Predator fish are more likely to have higher concentrations of mercury. Consumption of panfish, such as bluegill, by these higher risk individuals is considered safe unless otherwise posted.

Fish are part of a healthy diet. For information on the benefits of eating fish or what types of fish are safe to eat, visit the IDPH's webpage at

http://www.idph.state.ia.us/eh/common/pdf/env/fish_health_issues.pdf

MEDIA CONTACT: John Olson, Environmental Specialist Senior, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-281-8905; or Joe Larscheid, Chief of Fisheries, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-281-5208.

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SAFETY FIRST WHEN HUNTING FROM TREE STANDS

An estimated 50,000 archery deer hunters will climb into treestands in Iowa, and an untold number will fall.

One in every three hunters who hunt from a treestand will fall at some point in their hunting career, and of those, 75 to 80 percent occurs while ascending or descending the tree.

Nationally, 300-500 hunters are killed annually in treestand accidents and another 6,000 will have treestand related injuries.

Tree stand incidents are one of the leading causes of injury to hunters. The DNR urges hunters to utilize the following safety tips:

- Always wear a full body harness, also known as a fall arrest system, when you are in a tree stand, as well as when climbing into or out of a tree stand. Make sure it is worn properly. Treestand harnesses have an expiration date and should be replaced when they expire and/or if a fall occurs.
- A safety strap should be attached to the tree to prevent falling more than 12 inches.
- Always inspect the safety harness for signs of wear or damage before each use.
- Follow the 3 point rule of tree stand safety. Always have 3 points of contact to the steps or ladder before moving. Be cautious that rain, frost, ice, or snow can cause steps to become extremely slippery. Check the security of the step before placing your weight on it.
- Always hunt with a plan and if possible a buddy. Before you leave home, let others know your exact hunting location, when you plan to return and who is with you.
- Always carry emergency signal devices such as a cell phone, walkie-talkie, whistle, signal flare, personal locator device and flashlight on your person at all times and within reach even while you are suspended.

Watch for changing weather conditions. In the event of an accident, remain calm and seek help immediately.

- Always select the proper tree for use with your tree stand. Select a live straight tree that fits within the size limits recommended in your tree stand's instructions. Do not climb or place a tree stand against a leaning tree.
- Never leave a tree stand installed for more than two weeks since damage could result from changing weather conditions and/or from other factors not obvious with a visual inspection.
- Always use a haul line to pull up your gear and unloaded firearm or bow to your tree stand once you have reached your desired hunting height. Never climb with anything in your hands or on your back. Prior to descending, lower your equipment on the opposite side of the tree.
- Be aware of suspension trauma. A rear attached full body harness is intended to prevent falls, not to be suspended in for any length of time. Suspension trauma can happen in less than 20 minutes and can be fatal. Hunters should attach an additional foot strap to the body harness to take the pressure off their upper legs and carry a pocket knife to cut away the harness if the situation turns critical.

MEDIA CONTACT: Megan Wisecup, Hunter Education Administrator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, [515-238-4968](tel:515-238-4968).

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AVOID FALL PLOWING – LEAVE FOOD AND COVER FOR WILDLIFE

Fall tillage practices, even reduced tillage techniques such as disking and chisel plowing, can eliminate waste grains and crop residue that provides important food and cover for species such as pheasants, quail, partridge, turkey, and deer.

Studies of harvested untilled crop fields show wildlife consume 55-85 percent of the waste corn and soybeans between fall harvest and the following spring.

The corn stubble and stalks remaining in untilled cornfields also provide concealment cover for pheasants, quail, and partridge, so the birds are not so exposed to predators when feeding in the winter, said Todd Bogenschutz, wildlife research biologist with the Department of Natural Resources.

Research shows even reduced tillage methods, such as disking and chisel plowing, reduce waste grains available to wildlife by 80 percent and reduce crop stubble by 50 percent or more.

Farmers and landowners can leave a free food plot for wildlife by simply not fall plowing their fields, said Bogenschutz.

"No till farming is a great way to leave food and cover for wildlife. Leaving stubble is also a great way to capture soil moisture for next year," he said.

MEDIA CONTACT: Todd Bogenschutz, Wildlife Research Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-432-2823.

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