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Oct. 28 Iowa Outdoors

1 message

Press Releases from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources

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<DNR.Media@dnr.iowa.gov>

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To: Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards <IACCB@mycountyparks.com>



IOWA OUTDOORS

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES | CONSERVATION AND RECREATION DIVISION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: OCTOBER 28, 2014www.iowadnr.gov | [facebook.com/iowadnr](https://www.facebook.com/iowadnr) | twitter.com/iowadnr | [pinterest.com/iowadnr](https://www.pinterest.com/iowadnr)

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PHEASANT OPENER, WARM, DRY...EVEN A FEW BIRDS

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

No crisp, frosty morning as you stepped into the switchgrass or crop stubble this past weekend. Opening day pheasant hunters packed in water...not hand warmers. And with a hefty hike in expected bird numbers this fall; some were even packing out a pheasant or three.

"Most of the groups I checked Saturday morning had a bird; the groups with dogs," assessed DNR conservation officer Brad Baker. He spent part of the day along the Iowa River Corridor, where low lying flood-prone acres have been purchased or taken out of row crops by easements in the last 15 years.

"They were seeing birds today. The last two years, much of the Corridor was underwater (through much of the growing season)," Baker said.

Upland game hunters have a great reason to head into the field this fall. Pheasant numbers, measured across 200 early morning, gravel road routes, are up a whopping 151 percent from last year's record low. Much of that was due to increased winter survival and a hatch that made it through a soggy May and early June. However, biologists also feel many 2013 birds went uncounted, due to bone-dry 'no dew' conditions during last year's August survey.

"We must have seen 20 or 30 on opening day last year," countered three hunters, as I caught with them on the Hawkeye Wildlife Area.

Scott Shrader of North Liberty, Don Truelow of Kansas and Brian Camper of Illinois were wrapping up a drive as I pulled up in the afternoon. They had one rooster for the day; having been over by Cemetery Road and Grabin's Road...near the west end of the public hunting area along the Iowa River in Johnson County.

One of them did note that there were no crops standing in some areas on Hawkeye; likely casualties of late rain this year that flooded young growth...or didn't allow it to get planted at all.

Near that west end location, a Scott County couple could have done without the wet conditions, also... driving through a creek that flooded their pickup's engine. They did have the sense to hunt with their two Labs, near the truck, while waiting for it to dry. They were still waiting at mid-afternoon...though for a *ride* by then.

With mild...almost too warm...weather and a good pheasant count, more hunters should be out through the nearly 11-week Iowa season. After an historic low harvest of about 115,000 birds last year, biologists anticipate 200,000 to 300,000 roosters being taken this fall and early winter.

Most pheasant hunting in Iowa is done in the first two weeks. That might be stretched out a little more, while waiting for the corn to come out of the fields.

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

STORY COUNTY Tough hunting conditions - warm weather and lots of corn in - likely limited hunter participation. Three hunters shot six on Saturday and four on Sunday. Hunted till noon both days.

NORTHWEST IOWA Hunting in far northwest Iowa was very good; lots of hunters and lots of limits. One wildlife area had 20 hunters make one pass and shot 38. Lots of young birds. In the Iowa Great Lakes area,

lots of hunters, pretty good success (everyone happy, some limits). Father and son shot six roosters in 23 minutes by Cheever Lake.

BOONE COUNTY Saturday flushed three roosters and one hen, saw 12 birds on the roads. Sunday shot three roosters flushed around 20 birds in 20 minutes. Monday shot three roosters flushed 17 birds in two hours.

TODD BOGENSCHUTZ Upland Wildlife Research Biologist

WOODBURY COUNTY Saturday found average amount of hunters. Pheasant numbers seemed only okay with so much standing corn. Enough pheasants to keep your interest but probably not lots of limits taken. Most hunters probably had a bird in the bag with an occasional limit here or there. **CERRO GORDO COUNTY** Some WMAs over the weekend had many, many hunters while others had lots of room to hunt. Plenty of pheasants to keep your interest (even with so much standing corn) with hunters probably getting 2-3 birds each.

TERRY HAINDFIELD Wildlife Biologist Upper IA Wildlife Unit

NORTHEAST IOWA Saw one pheasant hunter and his dog. There was no one hunting pheasants at Sweet Marsh and a few groups at Leopold with poor to fair success. I would expect a few more groups around Big Marsh and a little better success there. I have seen a good number of broods in the last month or so.

JASON AUDEL Wildlife Biologist Cedar-Wapsi Wildlife Unit

LOUISA COUNTY There were a few hunters at Cone Marsh WMA on opening morning. Think most people got some shooting. Still standing crops all around the area so should get more birds moving in as the crops are harvested.

BILL OHDE SE District Wildlife Supervisor

CLINTON AND SCOTT COUNTIES Hunting was better than expected. There were lots of hunters and lots of birds on prime public areas. A few shot limits, and most had shooting. Everyone seemed pretty happy.

CURT KEMMERER Wildlife Biologist Maquoketa Wildlife Unit

SPECIAL WALLEYE STOCKING

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Walleyes stocked this week will help fisheries biologists in future stocking decisions.

Spawned this past spring, then raised at the Department of Natural Resources' Rathbun Hatchery, the 8- to 10-inch advanced fingerlings join walleyes already in Pleasant Creek Lake, Lake Macbride and five other Iowa lakes; introduced as tiny, recently hatched fry.

Each just-stocked advanced fingerling walleye has its left pectoral fin clipped to identify it as it shows up in future population surveys...or on the end of an angler's line. Each year a different fin will be clipped to mark the year the fingerling was stocked in an ongoing research project on Macbride and six other Iowa lakes.

In contrast, fry stocked in the spring are not clipped or marked each year. Due to their larger size at stocking, advanced fingerlings are expected to survive well and may provide more consistent recruitment of walleyes, year to year.

"We stock many more fry, but they have a higher mortality rate than advanced fingerlings. These advanced fingerling walleyes are more expensive to raise; however, a larger percentage may reach (catchable) size," explains Rebecca Krogman, DNR reservoir research biologist. "We will be able to determine more clearly several years down the road whether one group grows faster, survives better and ultimately recruits to the fishery more successfully."

The project will include study of the otoliths, scales and spines, referred to collectively as "age structures," from a sample of walleyes. The otolith is a sort of fish 'ear bone' which shows a record of growth, similar to tree rings.

About 9,400 fingerlings went into Macbride this week. Pleasant Creek received about 4,100. They will grow alongside survivors from 2.8 million Macbride fry and 1.2 million fry in Pleasant Creek.

"Every few years, we hope to get a big walleye year from the fry stockings," notes DNR fisheries management biologist Paul Sleeper. "If the food source is there, typically zooplankton, the fry get a good start. If we have a cold front moving through, reducing zooplankton growth, we will have poorer survival."

During these "off years" for fry, the advanced fingerling stocking is particularly important for strategically augmenting walleye populations in Iowa reservoirs.

Natural reproduction is extremely rare in impounded lakes in Iowa, assuring that virtually all 'unclipped' walleyes in future surveys were stocked as fry. They should reach about 12-14 inches by this time next year...and 16-18 inches by fall 2016.

Other lakes in the research project include Big Creek, 12 Mile, Manawa, Little River and Icaria. Big Creek has a several-year head start, with similar advanced fingerlings stocked since 2011, wearing a freeze brand to identify them. The study is expected to conclude in 2019, after at least 5 years of research on the additional lakes.

DRIVERS STAY ALERT FOR DEER MOVEMENT

Stay alert as you travel rural roadsides over the coming weeks.

Autumn deer behavior, crop harvest and peak travel times for motorists combine to hike the risk of vehicle-deer collisions in Iowa. Still, while that combination of factors challenges drivers, Iowa's deer herd has shrunk and the rate of car-deer accidents has dropped significantly.

Through the second or third week of November, Iowa bucks are more active, as the breeding season builds to its peak and they begin searching for does. As they pursue not-yet-ready to breed does, this creates multiple scenarios of fast moving, unpredictable deer crossing highways.

Also, with crop harvest in full swing, deer are concentrated into remaining cover. That often is brushy creeks, trees or fence lines which intersect roads. A third factor will be the change away from daylight savings time, November 2; placing more of us behind the wheel during the deer-heavy dawn and dusk periods.

Minimize your risk by simply slowing down, especially in those low light periods and when approaching those brushy or tree lined 'funnels' near roads. You are also encouraged not to 'veer for deer,' leaving your lane of traffic could cause a collision with another vehicle or a roadside obstacle, such as a utility pole or culvert.

Despite the time of year and a four billion mile annual increase in the miles driven by Iowans over the last 20 years, your chance of hitting a deer has actually declined.

The peak of car-deer collisions was in 2006 at nearly 15,000. In 2013, that number had fallen to less than 10,000. This is attributed to a decade of increased deer harvest. Hunters, Iowa's primary deer management tool, increased their take of does over the last decade. That came through purchase of a liberal quota of antlerless tags, in addition to their regular deer tags.

- Statewide, Iowa has a declining deer herd with the majority of countywide reductions being targeted for portions of central and south-central Iowa.
- Statewide, Iowa's deer herd has been reduced back to levels that existed in the mid-to-late 1990s. More than 80 percent of Iowa's counties are at or below this population goal. Remaining counties are close to the goal. That was a goal targeted by Iowa legislators in 2003, as they instructed the DNR to reduce deer populations.

TREASURED LOESS HILLS STATE FOREST TERRAIN TOUTS

IMPORTANCE OF REAP

Iowa's treasured Loess Hills State Forest (LHSF) would not exist without REAP; it's funding has been vital to the protection of the unique Loess Hills landscape.

Spread throughout west-central Iowa in Harrison and Monona counties, the forest's terrain is characterized by distinctive geological forms. Steep, narrow ridge crests, peaks, saddles, numerous steep side slopes and branching spurs, and precipitous bluffs — some with sheer, nearly vertical faces rising from the adjoining Missouri River floodplain — form an extensive landscape of unique hill forms that is unparalleled in the United States and rare around the world.

Iowa DNR area forester Brent Olson said what makes LHSF unique is its 200-300 foot depth of loess, mainly concentrated in its steep bluffs. While several areas around the world have hills formed from loess — such as the Rhine River region in Germany and the Platte River in southwest Nebraska — China is the only place on earth that has more loess depth, totaling more than 1000 feet in places.

The Loess Hills of western Iowa are an outstanding example of two geological processes: eolian (wind) deposition and erosional land sculpturing. Large areas of flood-deposited sediments, carried in melt water, were left exposed to the wind during seasonal freeze-thaw cycles.

For thousands of years, loess soil was formed by wind carried silt, clay and fine sand. Deposited to the east, it comprises the three types of loess: the oldest, heavy reddish Loveland Loess; light-blue, fine, and compact Post-Kansan Loess; and the top layer of Post-Iowan Loess that makes up the upland regions' immediate subsoil.

Built with REAP funds in 1997, the LHSF Scenic Overlook provides visitors a spectacular view of the forest, Nebraska and the Missouri River Bottomlands.

The LHSF Visitor Center was REAP-funded in 2000, and offers meeting space and displays that educate visiting travelers. An additional \$200,000 in REAP funding brought big, bold imagery inside the center to aid in geological understanding and appreciation. LHSF's Maintenance/Storage building was built with REAP funds and additional REAP funds bought materials for four picnic shelters. LHSF received \$400,000 in REAP funding annually for 15 years to pursue forestland acquisition from willing sellers.

Following the State Forestry Bureau's 10-year forest management plan, REAP pays for tree plantings, prairie seeding's, fencing materials, signs, gravel, parking posts, building maintenance, parking lots, picnic shelters, and contracted services that upgrade, repair, or replace dirt dams, concrete, roads, tubes, wetlands, and fencing. REAP also pays for property taxes on all lands purchased with REAP funds.

Olson explained, "Without REAP the Loess Hills State Forest would not be here, and the other three major State Forests wouldn't have accomplished near as much forestland, savanna, prairie, or recreation management work over the years."

All of LHSF's 11,266 acres are open to the public for hiking, nature study and cross-country skiing. Hunting is allowed, except for areas within 200 yards of residences and the headquarters area. LHSF's parking lots are accessible through all-weather and dirt roads.

Olson said some of LHSF's nicest features are its wilderness areas, which are "definitely a place where you can get away from the busyness of things." There are four picnic shelters and some 48 parking areas for visitors to use. A near-20-mile hiking trail system is in the process of completion, with maps and signage available next summer.

REAP funding of LHSF provides for Prescribed Fire Education for Landowners. Landowners and managers are shown through training workshops how to utilize prescribed fire to achieve management objectives on prairies, savannahs and woodlands. Prescribed burning can enhance habitats for rare species of plants and animals, restore/maintain fire-dependent natural communities, aid wildlife management and maintenance of viewsheds, enhance hazardous fuel reduction and help control invasive species.

In 1998-99, more than \$350,000 in REAP funding provided renovations that dramatically improved Preparation Canyon State Park, which is located within the northern Preparation Canyon Unit of LHSF. The two-loop, in/out park road was blacktopped, the park's pit-toilet system improved and updated picnic shelter constructed — all with REAP funds.

“Preparation Canyon is a very nice, quiet park where you can enjoy hiking, backpack camping and picnic areas,” Olson said.

“The REAP program in Iowa is successful because of the wide range of things the monies have been used for across the state, not only by the DNR, but by counties and many other entities. I believe REAP definitely improves Iowan's quality of life by giving them places to go and visit — places that protect many of our state's greatest resources.

“REAP is a unique program to Iowa and its success has caused several other states to try to copy it in some form or fashion, but nothing has been as good as the original [REAP] Program here in Iowa,” Olson said.

In its 25 years, REAP has benefited every county in Iowa by supporting 14,535 projects. REAP has funded these projects with \$264 million in state investments, leveraging two to three times the amount in private, local and federal dollars.

Collectively, these projects have improved the quality of life for all Iowans with better soil and water quality; added outdoor recreation opportunities; sustained economic development; enhanced knowledge and understanding of our ecological and environmental assets, and preservation of our cultural and historic treasures.

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PUBLIC NOTICE FOR PROPOSED SALVAGE TIMBER SALE AT WILSON ISLAND STATE RECREATION AREA (WISRA)

This notice serves to inform the public in regards to a proposed salvage timber sale, scheduled to be held from December 1, 2014 through March 15th, 2015 at WISRA. The proposed salvage sale includes 40 potentially hazardous trees and 79 logs (from prior hazard tree removals) – removed primarily from the public use areas.

This notice also serves to solicit public comment on this project, as required, before timber sale implementation. Comments can be sent to Chris Anunson, Wilson Island State Recreation Area, 32801 Campground Lane, Missouri Valley, Iowa 51555 or e-mail to him at chris.anunson@dnr.iowa.gov. The deadline

for public comment is November 10th, 2014.

For more information, contact: Lindsey Barney, District Forester, [712-482-6245](tel:712-482-6245) or Chris Anunson, Park Ranger, [712-642-2069](tel:712-642-2069)

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MEETING SET TO DISCUSS PROPOSED BIRD CONSERVATION AREA

PETERSON, Iowa – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources invites the public to discuss the proposed designation of the region including Waterman Prairie Wildlife Management Area as a state Bird Conservation Area (BCA) at a public meeting on November 13. The meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. at the O'Brien County Prairie Heritage Center, located about 4.5 miles southeast of Sutherland – from Hwy. 10 go 1 mile north on Yellow Avenue.

The Bird Conservation Area program is an outgrowth of the national Partners In Flight program, and designation of Waterman Prairie as an official BCA will give national recognition to the area's importance for all nesting and migratory birds that depend on grassland and savanna habitat. If approved, this will be the first Bird Conservation Area within O'Brien, Clay, Buena Vista, and Cherokee counties.

Since grassland birds are the fastest declining group in North America, designating this BCA can lead to improved conservation practices for birds and benefit the many species that are in trouble, said Bruce Ehresman, wildlife biologist with the DNR's Wildlife Diversity Program.

"This designation allows the local community and concerned citizens an opportunity to take action to help these birds. Declining grassland birds such as bobolink, northern harrier, and upland sandpiper, savanna species like the red-headed woodpecker and barn owl, and game birds such as ring-necked pheasant, all will benefit from the creation of the Waterman Prairie Bird Conservation Area," he said.

The Iowa DNR is working with many partners to establish Bird Conservation Areas and encourage the concept of all-bird conservation.

"Current research suggests that we cannot sustain healthy bird populations without conservation efforts to maintain larger blocks of habitat," Ehresman said. "The partnership established between conservation agencies, private conservation organizations, and private landowners is the key to create large expanses of bird habitat and reverse the trend of declining bird populations."

While the core of each BCA is typically made up of a significant amount of public land or land owned by

private conservation organizations, it is important for areas around this core land to also be managed for good wildlife habitat, said DNR private lands wildlife biologist, Kathy Koskovich.

“Since much of that property is privately owned, landowners or land managers who would like to assist with all-bird conservation on their land will be offered technical guidance and since participation is voluntary, there will be no restrictions or requirements placed on landowners,” Koskovich said.

Establishing this Bird Conservation Area should increase recreational opportunities and be an economic boost for Dickinson County.

While a high percentage of bird species are declining, watching birds is one of the fastest growing pastimes in North America. According to a recent U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service survey, people in Iowa now spend more dollars on watching wildlife than on hunting wildlife and just slightly less than what they spend on fishing. Together these recreational activities bolster Iowa’s economy by nearly \$1 billion each year.

MEDIA CONTACT: Bruce Ehresman, Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, [515-432-2823](tel:5154322823).

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UPCOMING BASIC SHOTGUN COACH TRAININGS

The following Basic Shotgun courses are accepting registrations.

Attendees may sign up for the courses online at <http://www.iowasctp.org/shotgun-coach-education/iowa-dnr-basic-shotgun-coach-certification> .

- November 15, Clinton County Sportsman’s Club, DeWitt
- November 22, Shelby County Trap and Skeet, Harlan
- February 28, Ottumwa Izaak Walton League, Ottumwa
- March 14, Yarmouth Gun Club, Yarmouth
- March 21, Cedar Falls Gun Club, Cedar Falls

For more information, contact Chris Van Gorp, Shooting Sports and Range Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, [515-313-8048](tel:5153138048).

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MICK KLEMESRUD Information Specialist

Iowa Department of Natural Resources



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