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Nov. 10 Iowa Outdoors

1 message

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IOWA OUTDOORS

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES | CONSERVATION AND RECREATION DIVISION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: NOVEMBER 10, 2014

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DUCK MIGRATION POWERS UP

Cold temperatures, snow and wind this week across the Dakotas and Minnesota are being watched closely by Iowa waterfowlers. Migrating duck numbers have gradually been increasing in Iowa. This week's weather will push lot of those northern birds south. That is good news here for hunters, birdwatchers and other outdoor enthusiasts IF the ducks and geese stick around.

It's important to look at the whole weather system, not just which way the wind is blowing, where--and on the days--you hunt.

"A lot of ducks are moving south, but how the weather system tracks is important," reminds DNR waterfowl technician Al Hancock. "If we are sitting with west winds blowing out of the Dakotas and through Iowa, that's optimal."

However, he reminds hunters that it is important to look at the rotation of that storm cell; to track wind direction on the backside. If prevailing winds turn out of the southeast or south, it could set migrating ducks down for a couple days. If the north or westerly push continues, they could fly straight through. Most internet weather sites now have wind maps available.

"We had a gradual increase in numbers through the third week of October; no major movements," said Hancock. "However in the last two weeks, we have seen bigger migration."

He charts weekly counts, reported from refuges, hunting areas and other wetland locations across Iowa. The weekly statewide waterfowl report is at www.iowadnr.gov. Click on Hunting, then Migratory Birds, to find your way to the reports...filed each Friday.

From his vantage point last week, in the center of the Hawkeye Wildlife Area refuge, on the Iowa River corridor, one of those reporting DNR workers--wildlife biologist Tim Thompson--could see the number had climbed.

"I'm seeing more ducks coming in than going out. Our count is over 14,000 total; up from about 5,500 the week prior," noted Thompson. "We have more mallards and green-winged teal; not as many pintail as earlier. We are picking up a *few* of the later migrants; a handful of common mergansers, some bufflehead. There is still plenty of season remaining, though."

On the Hawkeye area, Japanese millet and winter wheat, seeded in late summer, provide better fuel for their trip south than the smartweed, aptly named duckweed and other natural vegetation. That can hold waterfowl longer; so long as the weather is not warning them to keep pushing south.

Last week's counts tallied at 72 statewide refuges and other wetlands went from 62,800 to 119,000, just days before strong north and west winds were expected to blow four to six inches of snow into the Dakotas and Minnesota. The counts can change dramatically from day to day; depending on how many arrive and how many 'short timers' are pushed out.

Statewide, the counts—over the long term--provide a look at migration patterns; basically what comes through, when and for how long. That

helps with season setting and better management of wildlife areas for the waterfowl.

“For the short term, they offer an impression of what was using the area during the week,” says Hancock. “When ducks decide to leave an area; *that* is the Great Unknown.”

He emphasizes that studying the weather charts, helps provide better decisions.

Iowa’s duck season, north of Highway 30, extends through December 7. South of 30, it continues through December 11. In the Missouri River zone, closing day is December 18.

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TROUT STREAMS PROVIDE QUALITY FISHING THROUGH THE WINTER

Driving around northeast Iowa last weekend it was apparent that trout fishing remains a popular fall activity when every parking spot at North and South Bear Creek and Waterloo Creek was filled.

“That was good to see,” said Mike Steuck, fisheries supervisor for interior streams with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Interest in trout fishing usually peaks from April through October, which is the stocking season when the Iowa DNR stocks roughly 325,000 catchable sized trout each year. But many of those fish will remain in the stream through the winter providing an experience of fishing for more wild fish, with possibly fewer competing anglers.

In addition to the hold-over stocked fish, Iowa has more than 40 trout streams with consistently naturally reproducing brown trout and another 30 streams where natural reproduction is occurring, but not consistently. These streams have a lot of wild fish available for anglers to test their skills.

“It’s a busy place this time of year,” he said. “We have quite a bit of public ground and public streams so you can always find a place to fish.”

Iowa’s trout season is open all year. Iowa’s trout streams are too.

Even during the coldest of cold spells, the streams are not likely to freeze over for very long due to a steady flow of spring fed water around 50 degrees.

The spring fed streams also have occasional insect hatches on warm afternoons during the winter, which is good news to anglers using dry flies.

“Most common hatches in the winter are midges and they are really small so dry flies will need to be size 24 or smaller,” Steuck said. When midges are not hatching, he suggests sticking with nymphs.

“Of course if you don’t have the patience for fly fishing, you can always use minnows, spinners, jigs, and the plain hook with a night crawler,” he said. Black or brown jigs that imitate beetles and scuds, minnow imitations, small raps, and rooster tails and panther martens, too.

Fall offers an opportunity to catch some larger brown trout that spawn in shallow rocky areas in the fall.

“Be careful where you’re stepping, to avoid disturbing the redds,” he said. Redds are a cleared area in the gravel, usually with a bit more current in it to keep the nest clean.

While much trout fishing attention in the fall and winter focuses on the events surrounding the stocking in ponds and small lakes around the state, plenty of good fishing remains in trout country, Steuck said.

“We have a lot of fish remaining in our streams and plenty of opportunities to catch them,” he said.

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ARCHERY PARTICIPATION BENEFITS FROM POPULAR MOVIE FRANCHISE

Archery is experiencing a wave of popularity thanks, in part, to the successful Hunger Games series, and locally to Iowa’s expanding archery in the schools program.

In conjunction with the release of “Hunger Games: Mockingjay, Part 1” on Nov. 21, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources in partnership with the Iowa Bowhunters Association will be giving away a brand new Matthews Genesis Bow valued at \$200.

To enter the drawing, watch the movie, save the ticket and go to www.iowadnr.gov/archery for instructions. Entries must be postmarked by Dec. 31, 2014 for the drawing in January. The Iowa Bowhunters Association’s National Archery in the Schools Program Foundation is sponsoring the bow for the drawing. The bow will be awarded at Buck Hollow Sports, in Pella. The winner will get to choose either a right or left handed bow and the

color.

Iowa has real life archery stars of its own.

Miranda Leek, from Des Moines, is the current indoor and outdoor champion, a member of the 2014 Senior US National Archery Team and the 2012 U.S. Olympic Team for women's recurve archery.

Bridger Deaton, of Otley, is a member of 2014 Senior U.S. Archery Team for men's compound archery, after his team placed silver in Wuix, China at the 2013 World Archery Youth Championships.

Matt Stutzman, from Fairfield, won a silver medal in the 2012 London Paralympics.

Currently, more than 2,500 elementary through high school student athletes participate in Iowa's National Archery in the Schools program. Parents or students interested in competing in archery at their school can learn more about the program at www.iowadnr.gov/nasp.

There is so much more to archery than the simple bow and arrow. Make sure to also visit www.releaseyourwild.com to spread the love of archery.

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Leading Iowans in Caring for Our Natural Resources.

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