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March 18 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: MARCH 18, 2014

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SAFE HUNTING YEAR IN '13

With no fatalities, 11 injuries and six cases of property damage, Iowa hunters matched a record low in 2013; continuing a decade long run of safe hunting seasons. That 17-incident year tied 2008, though '08 did register a gun related fatality. Still, when any incident could result in tragedy, the goal is 'zero' across the

board.

“We continue seeing a trend of self-inflicted incidents. There were seven this year. That has stayed pretty steady over the last four, five years,” reviews Megan Wisecup, safety education programs coordinator for the Department of Natural Resources. “It gets back to basic firearm handling. Point the muzzle in a safe direction. Keep your finger off the trigger, until ready to shoot. And take an extra minute when crossing obstacles to unload.”

A jacket drawstring....a handgun falling from a truck...thick brush on a creek bank. Each triggered a gun to fire in 2013. Linn, Marion and Floyd counties each recorded two 2013 incidents. The others were spread among 11 central, eastern and north-central counties.

The key to the long term drop can be traced directly to many Saturday mornings or Sunday afternoons...in mandatory hunter education classrooms and outdoor safety courses.

“Back in the 60s; we were seeing over 100 incidents and up to 20 fatalities a year,” underscores Wisecup. “Hunter education--voluntary since 1960—became mandatory in 1983. Since then, we have seen a drastic drop in the numbers of hunting incidents.”

There were 11,505 Iowa students certified in 368 classes 2013. The 10 hour sessions, usually spread over two or three days, teach basic understanding of hunting regulations, first aid and ethics, as well as safe firearm handling, and wildlife understanding; all under the watchful eyes of nearly 1,300 volunteer instructors.

“We like the traditional classes for younger students; those 12 up to 16 years old,” outlines Pat Jorgensen, recreational safety officer for the DNR, in eastern Iowa. “They get a lot more hands-on type learning; live firing, a safety trail with ‘shoot/don’t shoot’ scenarios. They handle firearms in a safe manner.”

The classes and emphasis evolve over time. For instance an ‘online only’ course is now available for adults; recognition that work schedules and juggling family commitments don’t always leave two or three days in a row to sit through a class.

Even the areas of emphasis are updated through the years. With upwards of 50,000 archery deer hunters, now; a noticeable climb in tree stand falls—some fatal—brings special attention to tree stand safety.

“We focus more on putting up stands; carrying equipment up and down the tree,” says Jorgensen. “Using three point contact climbing (meaning three hands/feet are in contact with the ladder or stand at all times), too.”

And the emphasis on safety continues in the stand. A decade ago, most tree stand hunters slid a single strap around their waist...*if that*. Now, full body harnesses are recommended.

“Still, people are not always properly wearing them. That has resulted in injuries...and death,” warns Jorgensen. There were two fatal bow hunting falls in 2012.

In upland game or deer hunting, firearm hunters are wearing more blaze orange than years past. The minimum might be a ‘torso covered’ (deer hunting) or an item ‘at least 50 percent blaze orange,’ (upland game), however, instructors stress that more is always better;

Hunter Ed Classes Fill Fast

Born after 1971? You need hunter education to purchase an Iowa hunting license. Go to www.iowadnr.gov and click ‘Hunting’ (top bar), then ‘Hunter and Safety Education’ (left column). Scroll

through the DNR hunter education section. Learn which classes are available and where. Upcoming classes in the area;

And plan ahead. Since volunteer instructors are on their own time, most classes come in March, early April...and late summer and early fall; before Iowa's major hunting seasons.

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PLAY PARK MADNESS WITH THE DNR ON FACEBOOK

DES MOINES — Take time this March to fill out another kind of bracket and support your local state park. Join the DNR's Park Madness on Facebook, and be in the running to win a free weekend of camping and two Iowa camping t-shirts.

Beginning March 20, two state parks from each region of the state will face off to determine which park will be Park Madness Champion. To vote for a park, go to the DNR's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/iowadnr and comment on the Park Madness posts with your park of choice. Be sure to "like" the DNR's page while you're there to see future Park Madness posts.

The tournament schedule is as follows:

- March 20: northeast regional, Maquoketa Caves vs. Pine Lake
- March 24: southeast regional, Lake Wapello vs. Walnut Woods
- March 26: southwest regional, Lake of Three Fires vs. Green Valley
- March 30: northwest regional, Brushy Creek vs. Lewis and Clark
- April 2: eastern semifinal
- April 3: western semifinal
- April 7: Park Madness Final
- April 8: Park Madness champion announced

The DNR will announce the Park Madness champion April 8 on Facebook. To enter to win the prize package, comment on the April 8 Park Madness post. One winner will be chosen at random from those that comment on the post to win two free nights of camping at the "champion" park and two Iowa camping shirts.

A full bracket is available and will be updated on the DNR's website at: www.iowadnr.gov/ParkMadness

For more pictures of parks in the running, visit the DNR on Pinterest at www.pinterest.com/iowadnr and check the "Iowa State Parks" board.

MEDIA CONTACT: Jessie Brown, DNR, at 515-281-5131 or Jessie.Brown@dnr.iowa.gov

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IOWA KIDS “TAKE IT OUTSIDE” WITH IDNR ART CONTEST

More than 1,800 Iowa K-12 students participated in this year’s Iowa Department of Natural Resource’s “Take It Outside” art contest. Entries featured children enjoying their favorite natural places in Iowa – from prairies and forests to lakes and streams.

From hiking, fishing, hunting, reading under a tree to bird watching, lying in the grass, and climbing trees – this year’s participants showed us the wonderful ways they like to enjoy Iowa’s natural resources.

Schools were asked to submit posters in the following categories: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12. All categories were for original hand-drawn artwork. Winners were selected based on portrayal of theme, creative expression, originality, visual appeal, and artistic merit.

Individual winners (by category):

Category I: Grades K-2

1st Place – Emma F., Homeschool

1st Place – Ethan H., Homeschool

Best Use of Color – Krystal W., Benton Community Schools

Category II: Grades 3-5

1st Place – Nathan P., Mid-Prairie HSAP

Best Use of Theme – Rebecca U., Pleasant Valley Schools

Most Creative – Molly S., South Tama Schools

Best Use of Color – Amelia J., Des Moines Catholic Diocese

Category III: Grades 6-8

1st Place – Carmen A., Benton Community Schools

Most Creative – Tyler P., Ames Schools

Best Use of Color – Emily P., Southeast Polk Community Schools

Category IV: Grades 9-12

1st Place – Gabby R., West Marshall Schools

Best Use of Theme – Tessa M., North Polk Schools

Individual artists who placed first in each category received a prize package of exploration and/or outdoor recreation supplies. Every participant received a certificate from the IDNR. Winning entries will be displayed during the Iowa State Fair at the DNR building.

MEDIA CONTACT: Shannon Hafner, DNR, at (641) 747-2200 or shannon.hafner@dnr.iowa.gov

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OUTDOOR NOTES

Officers with the Iowa DNR will officially score new or old white tailed deer antlers in the Lime Creek Nature Center in Mason City, from 1-3 p.m., on March 22, as part of an **Antlers and Aging** workshop. There is no charge for the program but registration is required. Call [641-423-5309](tel:641-423-5309) to register.

Some **urban trout stocking** dates have been moved back a few weeks due to late ice conditions. The stocking at Sand Lake, in Iowa City, has been moved to April 12 at 10 a.m. The stocking at Sand Lake, in Marshalltown, has been moved to April 12 at 11 a.m. Events will be held as part of each trout stocking.

The E.B. Lyons Interpretive Center at the Mines of Spain Recreation Area is hosting an Owl Prowl at 6 p.m., March 22. Find out how owls can see in the dark; hear a mouse moving through leaves, and why they are called the **Ghost Bird**. Jared McGovern, from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, will lead the program. Dress for the weather because the program includes an outdoor hike to call in the owls. For more information, call [563-556-0620](tel:563-556-0620).

It appears that a new **male peregrine falcon** has turned up at the Capitol in Des Moines. The previous male, 39A, died from an infection from a talon injury last year. From all appearances, the Capitol will once again host nesting falcons.

Naturalists, youth group leaders and others who want to learn to teach others about paddling efficiently and safely are reminded to sign up for the **DNR's Paddling School**.

School dates and skills are: May 6 – Flat-Water Essentials; May 20-21, Canoe School; June 25-26, Canoe School; Aug. 20-21, Kayak School; Sept. 17-18, Canoe School. Registration and a \$25 fee required for the course. For more information go to www.iowadnr.gov/Recreation/CanoeingKayaking.aspx or call Todd Robertson with the Iowa DNR's Rivers Program at 515-979-9536.

The average ice out for **Big Spirit Lake** is April 4. The most recent fishing report said the lake has 30-plus inches of ice. Looks like a late ice out is a distinct possibility.

The Iowa House of Representatives commemorated the 25th anniversary of the **Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP)** program Tuesday morning with a resolution honoring the program's successes and the Iowans who contributed to them.

Over the last 25 years, REAP has benefited all 99 Iowa counties 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.

Throughout this anniversary year, the Iowa Outdoor News packet will feature REAP projects from around the state and highlight the work of Iowans in creating the REAP program. For more information, go to www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/REAP.aspx or contact Tammie Krausman, Iowa DNR REAP Coordinator, at 515-281-8382 or Tammie.Krausman@dnr.iowa.gov

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