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May 26 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: MAY 26, 2015www.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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EDITOR'S NOTE: For 27 years, Joe Wilkinson has told stories of hunting, fishing, camping and conservation in Iowa through his unique writing style in the *Iowa Conservationist* and *Iowa Outdoors* magazines and this weekly news package, and through his video talents as weekly segments carried on TV stations across Iowa. This is his final story. Wilkinson will retire from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources on May 28.

FISH SURVEYS? SHOCKING!

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

A flip of the switch cranks up the generator. Adam Thiese peers over the bow and guard rail; an eight foot dipping net in hand. As long as he keeps a foot on the mat at his feet, a pulse of direct current travels out from the electrodes mounted on the side of the boat...through Coralville Reservoir. A similar safety mat is at the feet of boat operator Chris Mack, a few days ago in the shallows above and below Mehaffey Bridge.

And the electroshocking run is starting to yield results. A couple drum—sheephead—wriggle to the surface. A white crappie, then a couple bluegills, dart erratically off to the side and then float. Thiese acts fast. The fish are not injured; just stunned. He works the net under, scooping them up out of the water. With a lean behind, he flips the net and the fish plop into an on-board holding tank.

Working in 15 minute increments, fisheries workers hit the same stretches every spring. Here—and in lakes across Iowa. Mack is with the Lake Macbride fisheries station; which is responsible for management of lakes and streams in Linn, Johnson, Iowa and three other counties. Thiese is on loan for the day from the Fairport Station, on the Mississippi River.

As the juice is cut, they head towards shore to work up the fish.

“We take lengths, weights; population data to monitor our different lakes and see how our fish populations are doing,” explains Mack. “The obvious thing we can see is year classes; based on the different length of a fish species that we see. Did we have a good spawn the year before? Or was a good spawn a few years ago showing up now with a good up and coming year class?” Water temperature and clarity are also gauged, as they make their entries.

They noted each time an 8- or 9-inch walleye was captured. Most walleyes in the Reservoir are stocked each spring as day-or-two-old fry. The tiny fish are gobbled up pretty heavily, but in a good year, with lots of cover (meaning high water at the right time over shoreline vegetation) there will be more small walleyes like we noticed. The two pairs of fisheries eyes made out a couple same-size saugers, too.

On the next run, a couple big figures turned from underwater shadows to stunned carp. Big ones. But the crew didn't bite. By the time they were 30 feet away, the 8- or 9-pound rough fish had recovered and waggled back to the bottom.

“Primarily, we are looking at game fish; species we can adjust things for a little. Out here on the reservoir, rough fish are a given. We would spend a lot more time, just picking them up out here,” nodded Mack.

But there were moments.

It seems the speed attained by the guy with the net is directly related to the size of the walleye floating alongside the boat. Thiese was a lightning bolt, hauling on board a 22-incher; one of about six they pulled up, as I rode with them.

“The longest was 22.8 inches, weighing 4.09 pounds,” noted Mack. “We had another, though, 4.71

pounds. It was 22.4 inches.”

A few largemouth bass, some catfish....a couple 12-inch white bass came up on about every run. Not a lot of crappies, though, despite the thought that we were in the middle of the crappie spawn, with females and males moving into spawn.

“Would have liked to have seen more crappies,” admitted Mack. “We just had a little cool down; water temperature dropped. I would suspect as it comes back up, the fish will be coming in.”

That’s why each lake is monitored year after year. One year might suggest a boom...or a bust in various fish populations or growth. Looking back a few years generally shows some ups and downs...but with steady management, they data stays close to normal.

That is what anglers get for their money. The shocking surveys, as well as summer and fall netting surveys...and all fisheries management in Iowa are paid for through their license fees and excise taxes on angling equipment.

I learned years ago not to ask to have them take my picture holding one of the big walleyes. It’s just another day at the office for them.

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IOWA RESIDENTS ENJOY FREE FISHING DAYS JUNE 5-7

Iowa residents may fish without a license on June 5, 6 and 7 as part of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources’ free fishing weekend.

Free fishing weekend is the first weekend in June each year. It allows Iowans an opportunity to try fishing without purchasing a license. All other regulations remain in place.

Fishing is an activity that can be done during any stage in life and is a great way to spend time together as a family. “We want people to fish because it is a good, wholesome activity,” said Joe Larscheid, chief of the Iowa DNR’s Fisheries Bureau.

DNR staff will be at popular fishing spots across the state to help beginner anglers get started. They will assist with setting up fishing poles and distribute small kits with basic terminal tackle for panfishing along with tips and a few fun items.

“If someone needs a little instruction, there are fun, hands-on fishing clinics available to teach parents or kids the basics of fishing,” said Larscheid.

A list of fishing clinics, derbies, and other fun events co-sponsored by the DNR are available on the

special events page. Log on to www.iowadnr.gov then click on Special Events Application System under the Event Calendar and Search for Events.

Anyone catching their first fish is encouraged to take a photo of it and send it in to receive the DNR's first fish award. The DNR will commemorate the event with a certificate suitable for framing and the submitted photo.

Information on the first fish program is available in the Iowa Fishing Regulations and online at <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Fishing/MasterAnglerFirstFish.aspx>.

MEDIA CONTACT: Joe Larscheid, Chief of Fisheries, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-201-3376.

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LABOR DAY WEEKEND CAMPSITE RESERVATIONS OPEN SOON

DES MOINES – Just as one holiday ends, it is time to think about another.

Campers hoping to reserve spots for the 2015 Labor Day weekend need to mark June 4 on their calendars, when reservations for a Friday arrival open.

“Even by June 4 some sites will already be reserved by campers arriving prior to the holiday weekend,” says Sherry Arntzen with the DNR Parks Bureau. “And electric sites always go quickly.”

For more information on Iowa's state parks and to make a reservation, visit www.iowadnr.gov/parks

MEDIA CONTACT: Sherry Arntzen, State Parks Bureau, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-725-8486.

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JUNE IS INVASIVE SPECIES AWARENESS MONTH IN IOWA

DES MOINES – Governor Terry Branstad proclaimed June as Invasive Species Awareness Month as a way to draw attention to the threat Iowa's woodlands, wildlands and waterways are under from unwanted pests.

Each year in Iowa, millions of dollars, both public and private, are spent to control invasive plants, insects, animals and diseases. Invasive species threaten Iowa's lands and waters by competing with and destroying native plants and animals and by disrupting complex natural ecosystems.

Emerald ash borer, zebra mussels, oriental bittersweet, Eurasian watermilfoil, and bighead and silver carp make the news as they increase their presence in the state.

"Awareness of invasive species is an important first step towards behavior change which can prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species in Iowa," read the proclamation.

"Invasive Species Awareness Month is an opportunity for government to join forces with business, industry, conservation groups, recreation groups, community organization and cities to take action against the introduction and spread of invasive species."

For more information on Iowa's invasive species and what you can do to help, visit the www.iowadnr.gov and visit the fisheries and forestry web pages.

MEDIA CONTACT: Forestry: Tivon Feeley, Forest Health Program Leader, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-725-8453 or tivon.feeley@dnr.iowa.gov or Kim Bogenschutz, Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-432-2823 or kim.bogenschutz@dnr.iowa.gov.

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LANDOWNERS ENCOURAGED TO GET MULTIPLE BIDS BEFORE SELLING TREES

It was the first ticket that Dave Tierney can remember writing in his 24 plus years as a game warden for buying timber without being bonded. That's not to say that it's a rare case – foresters and game wardens hear about it all the time – it's just the first time a victim retained enough evidence that Tierney could issue a citation.

Justin Kay, 34, of Ponca, Neb., allegedly purchased walnut trees on Jan. 2 and Feb. 17, from an individual without being bonded. He was cited May 4 for buying timber without being bonded, which is a serious misdemeanor. Kay's court date is June 10 in Harrison County.

Kay has since become bonded.

Tierney and district forester Lindsey Barney hear horror stories from landowners taken by unscrupulous timber buyers who approach them at home catching them off guard, give them an offer well below market value, remove only the high value trees and often leave the property in a mess.

"I hear these stories often and want to educate log buyers and landowners about this issue," Barney said. "The landowners may think the unsolicited offer is a good deal, but to get a better idea of fair market value, we

encourage them to get at least three bids from bonded timber buyers.”

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources has a list of bonded timber buyers online at <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/Forestry/WoodIndustryLogging/BondedTimberBuyers.aspx>

The bonding process is simple – timber buyers need to fill out an application and submit it to the Iowa DNR with either a corporate surety bond or a certificate of deposit and renew annually to continue to be bonded. The bond requirement is 10 percent of what is purchased from a grower annually; the minimum is \$3,000 and the maximum is \$15,000.

“Landowners should consider visiting with their district forester as they prepare for a timber sale so the trees are selected in a way that is sustainable and not just target the high value trees,” Barney said.

A list of district foresters is on the DNR’s website at <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/Forestry.aspx> then click on the [Contact information for all of the Forestry Bureau](#) pdf at the bottom of the page.

MEDIA CONTACT: Lindsey Barney, District Forester, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 712-482-6245.

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JUNE IS GREAT OUTDOORS MONTH

DES MOINES -- While the 2015 Memorial Day weekend was a soggy start to the summer recreation season, there are plenty more days ahead to enjoy the outdoors.

Governor Terry Branstad recently proclaimed June as Great Outdoors Month, encouraging all Iowans and visitors to step outside, enjoy the state’s scenic beauty and recreational opportunities, and renew their commitment to stewardship of Iowa’s natural resources.

“Getting outdoors promotes good health for both the mind and body, and helps create memorable experiences with family and friends” says DNR Director Chuck Gipp. “Iowa has outstanding opportunities for safe and fun outdoor recreation.”

Studies show children average about 10 hours a day in front of a screen and many leading health organizations recommend outdoor recreation as a remedy to the adverse effects of this inactivity.

Great Outdoors Month is designed to focus on the importance of simple outdoor activity and appreciation of Iowa’s natural resources, by promoting biking, swimming, hiking, paddling, fishing, hunting, boating, bird watching, camping and general nature exploration of our lakes, prairies, woodlands, rivers and wetlands.

The national economic impact of outdoor recreation exceeds \$650 billion in annual expenditures, and in Iowa alone, outdoor recreation supports some 105,000 jobs.

“Enjoyment of the outdoors fosters a deeper appreciation of our natural resources,” says Gipp, “which eventually leads to better environmental stewardship. And no one understands this better than Iowans, who realize the direct relationship between natural resource conservation and the quality of life in our state.”

Great Outdoors Month allows us to celebrate the partnership of federal, state and local agencies, the recreation and tourism industries and recreationists which makes outdoor opportunities available.

For ideas on what to do or where to go to enjoy Iowa’s great outdoors, visit: www.iowadnr.gov; www.traveliowa.com or www.mycountyparks.com

MEDIA CONTACT: Todd Coffelt, Chief of State Parks, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-725-8485.

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Leading Iowans in Caring for Our Natural Resources.

Please Note: My new phone number is 515-725-8280, and new fax number is 515-725-8201.

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