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August 19 Iowa Outdoors

1 message

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IOWA OUTDOORS

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES | CONSERVATION AND RECREATION DIVISION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: AUGUST 19, 2014

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CAMPERS READY FOR LABOR DAY WEEKEND

Most of the campsites with electricity in Iowa state parks available for reservation have been snapped up for weeks ahead of the Labor Day holiday.

The unofficial end of the summer holiday remains one of the more popular weekends during the peak camping season.

"We've had a good summer and I expect that to continue with our campgrounds near capacity for Labor Day weekend," said Todd Coffelt, chief of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources State Parks Bureau. "The weather forecast is good and fishing should be good making for a great weekend."

The best news of the summer may be that Wilson Island State Recreation Area, in Pottawattamie County, and Lake Darling State Park, in Washington County, recently reopened after years of repairs and renovations. The campgrounds at both state areas are open but not on the reservation system for 2014.

The few available sites on the reservation system will likely fill so campers making last minute plans should move quickly. Campgrounds with the most electrical sites available are Marble Beach and Pilot Knob with 11 each, Lake Wapello with six and Lake Keomah with four.

Campers looking for a campsite should check the reservation website frequently. Go to www.iowadnr.gov and click on the reservation link in the lower left hand corner of the homepage.

Not all campsites are reservable: 25-50 percent of the campsites at each park are available for first come first served camping. Campers without reservations should plan to arrive early in the week to secure a site.

MEDIA CONTACT: Jim Lawson, District Parks Supervisor, Iowa Department of Natural Resources State Parks Bureau, 515-281-5972.

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ACCESS TO LOST GROVE LAKE OPENS FRIDAY

PRINCETON - The water level in Lost Grove Lake has risen enough that the Iowa Department of Natural Resources will begin opening some access areas to the lake on Friday.

Fisheries biologist Chad Dolan said the main three-lane boat ramp south of the dam, the parking lot for the mid lake ramp south of the corner of 230th Ave and 250th, and the 230th Ave. shoreline access on the north side of the lake of will be opened.

"The lake isn't full so long trailers and pontoons should use caution when launching," Dolan said. "The mid lake ramp will still be closed but the parking area will be open so anglers can access the 3,000 foot fishing trail."

Not all access will be opened. Workers need to repair some erosion damage to the parking lot at the south shore access at 230th Ave. and the west boat ramp on the northeast side of the 220th causeway will remain closed because of the lack of water.

Dolan said if the area has normal precipitation during the winter and spring that he expects all the access will be opened in the spring.

Conservation officers will have a regular presence at Lost Grove Lake with the opening of the access areas.

MEDIA CONTACT: Chad Dolan, Fisheries Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, [319-694-2430](tel:319-694-2430).

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MOURNING DOVE BANDING, HUNTING SEASON PREVIEW

It was not hard to see why the mourning dove is the most populous game bird in North America. As we bounced through the picked field, 30 or 40 lifted off ahead of us and to the sides; winging away from the millet-baited wire traps that held seven or eight less wary doves.

Yet, this handful of birds and a few more in the next set of wire live traps would bring the DNR wildlife crew from Otter Creek Wildlife Area in Tama County to their banding goal of 100. And over the next day, they would fit another 80 with tiny aluminum leg bands, to pad their quota. "You never catch them all. There are so many doves and we'll catch only a small percentage," explained wildlife technician Rodney Ellingson.

Setups across Iowa in August yield similar results...where 2,000 banded doves is the goal for this summer. Since 2003, 18,000 doves have been banded and released in Iowa. As any are harvested or recaptured, those bands tell wildlife biologists a lot about where the birds nest, age structure, their migration habits and just how many mourning doves are out there.

Even in mid-August, doves were on the move.

"We see a lot more birds. We know some are local, some are early migrants," noted Ellingson. "Yesterday, we had some (already banded) recaptures; probably from the northern part of the state. They are definitely on the move; after a few cooler nights."

That is what hunters want to see, with Iowa's dove season opening September 1. The state's newest season, hunters are still 'trickling' into the dove fields; as more learn how to hunt the elusive, fast moving game bird.

"An estimated 8,200 dove hunters harvested about 118,000 doves in 2013," said DNR upland wildlife research biologist Todd Bogenschutz. "Band return data shows hunters harvest about 2 percent of Iowa's doves. The population has remained stable here over the last decade."

Regionally, the 2013 estimated dove population in the Central Management Unit was 141 million.

Scouting is important for successful dove hunting. Many of the better areas are along food plots on public hunting areas and on private fields enrolled in IHAP—Iowa's Hunter Access Program. Sunflowers have proven most popular in the first three seasons. Contact the area wildlife biologist for locations of dove plots. Observations by field staff indicate an abundance of doves this fall. Visit <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Hunting/MigratoryGameBirds/MourningDoves.aspx> for more information.

Iowa's mourning dove season runs through November 9, 2014. The daily bag limit is 15 doves (Mourning and Eurasian Collared combined) with a possession limit of 30. Shooting hours are half hour before sunrise to sunset. Dove hunters are required to register with the federal Harvest Information Program (HIP). Hunters can register with HIP online or thru any license agent. Go to <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Portals/idnr/uploads/Hunting/migratoryregs.pdf> for information.

Non-toxic shot is not required for dove hunting except on areas *requiring* it be used. A list of public areas requiring non-toxic shot for doves is in the 2014-15 hunting regulations (p. 17) <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Hunting/HuntingLicensesLaws.aspx>

Rabbit, Squirrel Seasons Open, Too...

The 2014-15 hunting seasons for cottontail rabbits and fox and gray squirrels open August 30.

Hunters should see better rabbit numbers than last year. Southern Iowa shows higher densities heading into the fall. Slow walks through abandoned farmsteads, fence lines...and stomping brush piles are proven rabbit-locating methods. Having a beagle alongside is a big plus.

"Beagles and other trailing dogs can increase your success and improve the quality of the hunt," suggests Bogenschutz. With a daily limit of 10 and a possession limit of 20, the cottontail season extends through February. Hours are from sunrise to sunset. Roadside counts of rabbits will be posted in early September at www.iowadnr.gov/pheasantsurvey .

Acorns are beginning to set on oak trees around Iowa; with a few dropping already. That is an obvious hint that squirrel season gets underway, August 30.

"Iowa's squirrel numbers should be similar to last year," anticipates DNR forest wildlife coordinator Jim Coffey.

Drought conditions in 2013 generally held nut production below normal. With up to three litters a summer, squirrels can rebound quickly. If hunting in an area with poor acorn production look for alternate food resources such as hickory or walnut trees. Southern Iowa experienced a better mast production for these species last year.

Squirrels provide high excitement and low hunting pressure opportunity...yet perennially, are an underutilized game species. They are great introductions to the outdoors for young hunters. The squirrel season is open through January 31. The daily bag limit is six (fox and gray squirrels combined) and the possession limit is 12. There are no restrictions on shooting hours.

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

REAP: 25 Years of Enhancing and Protecting Iowa's Resources

REAP KEY TO CREATING BANNER LAKES AT SUMMERSET STATE PARK

REAP funding has made possible Iowa's newest state Park. Nestled in the rolling landscape between Des Moines and Indianola, Banner Lakes at Summerset State Park opened in 2004. Serving as a midway point for the 13-mile Summerset Trail, it has quickly become a favored recreational destination.

Only the second Iowa state park established in the last 27 years, Banner Lakes at Summerset State Park provides fishing, boating, hiking, mountain biking, picnicking, target shooting and hunting. Couple that with a stellar location and most would agree: Banner Lakes is a great addition to Iowa's state park system.

Once the scene for Iowa's largest strip-mining coal operation in the 1930's, the Banner Pits (named after the Banner Coal Company) became a public hunting area in 1954. Responding to changing recreational demands, REAP funding has set up new and enhanced recreational opportunities — introducing Summerset State Park as a welcome diversion from the trappings of urban civilization.

"Banner Lakes is a popular area for as small as it is, due to its proximity to Des Moines," said Iowa State Park Bureau District Supervisor Jim Lawson.

As one of central Iowa's few stocked trout fisheries from October through May, South Banner Lake provides anglers plenty of possibilities. Trout up to 10 pounds are stocked annually.

Banner Lakes also provides occasion for excellent boating and shoreline fishing. The Iowa Trail's Crew constructed a new cantilevered fishing pier with REAP funding. The original handicap-accessible pier has also been renovated, and rocking provides additional shoreline fishing access along the main boat ramp. All motor sizes are allowed on the lake, at no-wake speeds. Other species in both lakes include channel catfish, largemouth bass, bluegill, and crappie.

Fire grills and picnic tables make up numerous shoreline picnic locations on the large lake and adjacent to the main parking area. Restrooms are available at the entrance, concession and boat ramp at the large lake. Banner Lakes' two-mile paved multi-use trail loop connects to the Summerset Trail, while an additional five miles of hard-packed single-track mountain biking trails offer added fun.

"REAP serves as an important source of funding for us and allows our projects to take place. Much of the work we do wouldn't get done without that funding source; it's extremely important to all the facilities we have," Lawson said.

Before its transformation into a recreational area, the wildlife area was too rugged for family use. Shooting up washing machines and microwaves was the primary "recreational activity." Rock tailings were used for bullet backdrops — causing ricochets to zing every which way. The dumping got so bad that wildlife management personnel would have to use dump trucks to haul out shot-up trash every month.

Now shooting is done in the safe, controlled environment of the adjacent Banner shooting range, which provides updated range facilities including sheltered shooting benches and a hard surface parking lot. Banner range also adjoins Middle River Wildlife Area, which provides outstanding public hunting

opportunities on 1,000 acres.

“REAP has really turned Banner Lakes around into a useful piece of property for us; a lot of people enjoy it,” Lawson 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 that 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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HAWKEYE WILDLIFE SHOOTING RANGE TO HOST ARCHERY EVENT AUG. 31

SWISHER - An archery safety and demonstration day is planned for Aug. 31, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the archery range on the Hawkeye Wildlife Management Area, 2065 Amana Road, near Swisher.

Attendees can learn about how to safely use archery equipment, practice at the 20, 30, 40, 50 or 60 yard targets from the ground or 12 foot shooting platform. They can also have their equipment checked for hazards.

The event is being presented by Fin & Feather and Palo Outdoors.

For more information, contact David Giese, range safety officer, Iowa Department of Natural Resources Shooting Sports Program, at [319-330-5914](tel:319-330-5914).

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AUGUST IS NATIONAL TREESTAND SAFETY MONTH

Last year Iowa had six treestand falls, all resulting in personal injury. Tree stand incidents are one of the leading causes of injury to hunters. The DNR urges hunters to utilize the following safety tips:

- National studies show that up to 30 percent of hunters that use a treestand without using/wearing the proper safety equipment will fall during their lifetime.

- Always wear a safety 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. 1 in 2 treestand users do not use a fall arrest device.
- 86 percent of treestand incidents occur while climbing in and out of a stand
- A safety strap should be attached to the tree to prevent you from falling more than 12 inches.
- Always inspect the safety harness for signs of wear or damage before each use.
- Follow all manufactures' instructions for use of a safety harness and stand.
- Follow the three point rule of tree stand safety. Always have three points of contact to the steps or ladder before moving. This could be two arms and one leg holding and stepping on the ladder or one arm and two legs in contact with the 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, PLD (personal locator device) and flashlight on your person at all times and within reach even while you are suspended in your FAS. Watch for changing weather conditions. In the event of an incident, 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.
- Always know your physical limitations. Don't take chances. Do not climb when using drugs, alcohol or if you're sick or un-rested. If you start thinking about how high you are, don't go any higher.
- For more treestand safety tips visit: http://www.tmastands.com/_safety.html

For more information, contact Megan Wisecup, Hunter Education Administrator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, at 515-238-4968.

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