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March 24 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: MARCH 24, 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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4TH OF JULY WEEKEND CAMPSITE RESERVATIONS OPEN SOON

Campers anxious to reserve spots for the 4th of July weekend should mark April 3 on their calendars, when reservations for a Friday arrival open.

Electric sites go quickly, and some sites will already be reserved by campers arriving prior to the holiday weekend.

Information on Iowa's state parks is available online at www.iowadnr.gov including links to the reservations page.

MEDIA CONTACT: Sherry Arntzen, State Parks Bureau, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, [515-725-8486](tel:515-725-8486).

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IOWA'S SPRING TURKEY SEASONS BEGIN APRIL 13

Iowa's turkey flock had an excellent hatch in 2014 leading to the possibility that hunters should see increased opportunities to harvest a bird during the 2015 spring turkey season.

The younger birds, called Jakes, are often more vulnerable, responding to calls in groups and competing among themselves to see which one can get to the call first. The older Toms are can be more cautious and reluctant to respond to the sirens temptations.

"We're still seeing good groups of turkeys in winter flocks, but they will be breaking up soon as we head into the breeding season," said Jim Coffey, forest wildlife species technician for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Iowa has turkeys in every county with higher numbers being found in areas where there is a more diversified mixture of timber with agriculture.

Coffey, who participates in spring turkey hunting seminars geared toward first time and novice hunters, said confidence is key and that confidence comes from talking to other turkey hunters, spending time in the woods and learning from your mistakes.

"The number one piece of advice I can give is to pattern your gun before going out.

This is the sport of one shot – you need to know what that shot will be when you pull the trigger,” he said. “Don’t get hung up on calling – but understand when to call. A common mistake is calling too much. You want to tease the bird. Once you call, stay put, because he knows where you are.”

Hunters can help increase their chance of harvesting a bird by sharpening woodsmanship skills; learn when to move and when to stay still, and about the biology and habits of the bird.

Coffey said turkeys have excellent vision so hunters who use the timber to blend in to the background may see more birds. He also said scouting is important. Understanding what the bird wants to do biologically is important to us as hunters.

“Watch the turkeys, understand the turkeys and realize we are playing on his home court. Position yourself between where they are, and where they want to go is a key to success,” he said.

At the end of the day, only about one-third of spring turkey hunters actually bag a turkey but most don’t use that as a measuring stick for success.

“The experience in the woods with your kids or with friends; watching the timber come alive with wildlife and the newness of spring that’s what it’s all about,” Coffey said. “It’s really something pretty special and I would hope that our turkey hunters share it by taking their neighbor or child or spouse along this year.”

SIDEBAR: Hunting Atlas Available Online

Hunters have a new tool that may improve their in the field experience even before opening day.

The Iowa hunting atlas is an interactive map that shows all 680,000 acres of public hunting land that is owned by the state, county or federal governments. The atlas is available online at www.iowadnr.gov/hunting. A mobile version is also available.

A click on an area will show basic information like zone and open season, and links to maps, if available.

MEDIA CONTACT: Jim Coffey, Forest Wildlife Species Technician, Wildlife Bureau, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, [641-774-2958](tel:641-774-2958).

SPRING TURKEY HUNTING SAFETY TIPS

An estimated 50,000 hunters will be in the timber this spring pursuing the illusive wild turkey and while the woods will not be crawling with hunters, there is a chance for an occasional encounter.

Hunters should practice defensive hunting techniques. Hunters should make a loud statement like “hey – hunter over here,” if they see someone coming into the same area. One loud noise shouldn’t scare a bird too much because loud noises happen in the woods. However, don’t make motion or throw something to get the other hunters attention.

“Turkey hunters are looking for movement,” said Jim Coffey, forest wildlife species technician for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. “Don’t wave your hand or make a movement because a movement could be misconstrued.

“If you walk in on someone they’re probably hearing the same bird you hear, just turn and walk away. Find a different ridge to enjoy the morning.”

The timber will change a lot from early April to middle May reducing the distance hunters can see so it will be important that hunters continuously check their distance for their zone of fire.

“You can’t call the bullet back once you pull the trigger so it’s important to know your target and what’s beyond before taking the shot,” Coffey said. He often recommends setting out distance stick for reference points. This allows hunters to know exactly how far away a bird is and if it’s within the weapons range.

Hunters should also respect other hunters.

“They are out there trying to do what you are going to do. The competition is between turkey and hunter – not hunter and hunter,” Coffey said.

One way to avoid walking in on other hunters is to go later in the morning.

“Rather than try to get out in the woods for the first gobble, go out a little later, like around 9 a.m., you may have the area all to yourself,” he said.

Safety Tips

- Avoid wearing patriotic colors – red, white and blue. These colors are also

shared by gobblers.

- Bring a blaze orange game bag or turkey vest to use to carry the harvested bird out from the woods.
- Avoid using a gobble call.
- Using a hunting blind can be helpful if taking a young person on their first hunt, or for hunting companions to use.
- Make sure you have permission to be on the land and find out if anyone else has permission to the land and which season they will be hunting. Just because you had permission a few years ago, does not mean you have permission this year.

MEDIA CONTACT: Jeff Barnes, Recreation Safety Officer, Law Enforcement Bureau, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, [515-290-4907](tel:515-290-4907).

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SPRING TURKEY SEASONS

Iowa's spring season begins April 4 with an Iowa youth only hunting season that covers two weekends and allows hunters younger than 16 when they buy the turkey license to participate. The reason for the season is to concentrate on the development of future hunters. They must hunt one on one with a mentor age 18 or older at all times and the mentor must have a valid turkey hunting license for one of the spring seasons.

No more than one youth for each licensed adult mentor and the mentor may not carry a bow or firearm. An unfilled youth license may be used in any other spring season. The season ends April 12.

The first of Iowa's four regular spring turkey seasons is April 13-16, second season is April 17-21, third season is April 22-28 and the fourth season is April 29-May 17. An archery only license is good from April 13-May 17.

Hunters may purchase two spring turkey licenses with one license for Season 4. Resident spring turkey licenses are statewide. Hunters participating in the youth only season may also purchase a Season 4 license. Shooting hours are one-half hour before

sunrise to sunset.

Successful hunters are required to report their harvest by midnight of the day after it is tagged. The easiest way to report is to log on to www.iowadnr.gov. Other ways to report are by calling the phone number listed on the tag or by going through a license vendor. Be sure to write the harvest registration number on the harvest report tag.

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FROG AND TOAD SURVEY WORKSHOPS SCHEDULED IN APRIL

Since 1991, volunteers around the state have been performing frog and toad surveys for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The 2015 monitoring season is rapidly approaching and the DNR is looking to recruit new volunteers to get involved with this important citizen science program, said Stephanie Shepherd, wildlife biologist who coordinates the program for the DNR.

Surveyors venture out on fine spring and summer evenings to drive a survey route and listen for frogs and toads at up to 10 wetland sites. The distinctive calls help them identify what species are breeding at each site and they also record the abundance of each species.

Interested new volunteers may attend one of three training workshops in April held in partnership with the local county conservation boards. The schedule is for the evenings April 10th in Scott County, April 13th in Dallas County, and April 16th in Sac County.

For more information on how to register for one of these training workshops and get involved visit the DNR website www.iowadnr.gov/volunteerwildlifemonitoring or email to VWMP@dnr.iowa.gov.

“Once the data are turned in, they help us examine trends for these highly vulnerable amphibians, which are also good indicators of water quality,” Shepherd said.

In 2014, volunteers surveyed 74 survey routes across the state and detected 14 of 18 possible frog or toad species. The most common species were the boreal chorus frog, American toad, cricket frog and eastern gray treefrog. The species heard most frequently

was the chorus frogs which was detected on 74 percent of the wetlands surveyed.

The only species not picked up on any wetlands was the Fowler's toad, pickerel frog, crawfish frog and wood frog.

"Overall, 2014 was an average year for frogs and toads with most species on a relatively stable trend. The only species that has shown some declines in the last two years is the bullfrog, which as a species that needs permanent water bodies and spends two years as a tadpole, is responding to the drought in 2012," she said.

MEDIA CONTACT: Stephanie Shepherd, Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Bureau, [515-432-2823](tel:515-432-2823).

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PRAIRIE CHICKEN FESTIVAL APRIL 4

KELLERTON, Iowa – The annual Prairie Chicken Festival will be held at Kellerton Grasslands Bird Conservation Area, two miles west and one mile south of Kellerton, on April 4. Viewing will begin before dawn and last until the birds diminish their courtship dancing and booming, around 9 a.m.

Prairie Chickens have been reintroduced to the area and each spring their courtship dances occur where their booming calls resonate across southern Iowa hills and valleys. The site provides a wildlife viewing platform, and spotting scopes and binoculars will be available. There's ample parking and viewing is wheelchair accessible.

"It is really quite a show and something that was lost to the Iowa landscape during the 1950s," said Pat Schlarbaum, with the DNR's Wildlife Diversity Program.

The two part celebration reconvenes at noon at Blank Park Zoo, 7401 SW Ninth St., in Des Moines.

MEDIA CONTACT: Pat Schlarbaum, Wildlife Diversity Technician, Iowa Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Bureau, [515-432-2823](tel:515-432-2823).

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SPACE STILL AVAILABLE AT SPRING OUTDOORS WOMAN WORKSHOP

The Iowa Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program still has reservation space available for its second annual spring workshop at Honey Creek Resort State Park. The two-and-a-half-day event will be held April 24-26, 2015.

Most classes still have openings, but are filling fast. Classes still open include introduction to firearms, fishing, preparing your harvest, turkey hunting, fly fishing, lake fishing, Dutch oven cooking, geocaching, archery, basic shooting, motorboating and landscaping for wildlife.

Honey Creek Resort is located on the shores of Lake Rathbun in Appanoose County and offers spacious guest rooms, scenic nature trails, an indoor waterpark and whirlpool, Rathbun Lakeshore Grille & Lounge, and other amenities associated with a quality resort experience.

The deadline for registration without a late-fee penalty is April 3. Cost of the spring workshop is \$250 for a single-occupancy room and \$200 for double occupancy. The fee includes instruction, program materials, equipment use, meals and lodging. Registration materials and more information can be found at www.iowadnr.gov/bow

Contact: Julie Sparks, BOW Coordinator, Iowa DNR, [515-725-8285](tel:515-725-8285) or julie.sparks@dnr.iowa.gov

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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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