



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nov. 21, 2017

**The recently issued news package included a bad link in the deer tissue sample brief. The link has been corrected. Please use this version. Sorry for any inconvenience.**

- [Iowa's 2017 shotgun deer season preview](#)
- [Public meeting to discuss bird conservation area near Ottumwa](#)

## Iowa's 2017 shotgun deer season preview

The first of Iowa's popular shotgun deer seasons is Dec. 2-6 when an expected 60,000 orange clad hunters head to the timber. That group will be followed by another 60,000 hunters who prefer the Dec. 9-17 second shotgun season.

Each contingent will also pack along thousands of antlerless tags, to extend their time in the field.

Fans of cold weather purchase about 40,000 tags for the Dec. 18-Jan. 10 late muzzleloader season.

Iowa's shotgun seasons allow for group drives; drivers pushing deer toward blockers. Anyone in the group may tag a downed deer—with their own tag. That stands in contrast to other states—and even Iowa's more solitary muzzleloader and bow seasons. However, it has proven to be an efficient method for taking deer, since modern deer hunting was introduced here in the early 1950s. Whatever the season, any deer must be tagged before it is moved or within 15 minutes—whichever comes first.

It also holds the potential for danger, as drivers move closer to, or across, their friends on a drive.

That's why wearing solid blaze orange is mandatory. The minimum amount covers a hunter's torso. But more is better.

For several years now, deer hunters have noticed fewer whitetails than in the early 2000s. That is by design. A decade ago, state lawmakers instructed the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to reduce the deer population, after steady growth through the previous few decades.

With addition of county and season specific antlerless tags, generous quotas, and a couple extra seasons, near Thanksgiving and during January, hunters responded. Adaptive

regulation changes have lowered the deer herd to mid-1990s target levels, in all but a handful of counties.

Hunters in 27 north central and northwest counties have no county antlerless tags and may take only antlered deer during the first shotgun season.

Iowa's overall deer harvest across all seasons last year was 101,397, down more than 30 percent from the 2006 peak and the 2017 harvest should be similar.

"Hunters working with landowners at the local level is the best and most efficient way to keep deer numbers at acceptable levels and provide a high quality deer herd," stresses Tyler Harms, wildlife research biometrician for the Iowa DNR.

**Media Contact:** Tyler Harms, Wildlife Research Biometrician, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-432-2823 ext 112.

### **Deer hunting safety reminder**

Hunters are encouraged to use safe hunting practices and to discuss the hunting plan so each member of the hunting group knows where the others will be at all times during the hunt. Hunters must wear one of the following articles of external visible solid blaze orange clothing when hunting deer with a firearm: vest, jacket, coat, sweatshirt, sweater, shirt or coveralls. An orange hat alone is not sufficient.

### **Safety Tips**

- Treat every gun as if it is loaded, keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction
- Unload the firearm and open the action, especially when crossing obstacles
- Wear plenty of blaze orange. Hunters want to be seen from all sides in the woods and fields
- If using a new gun or a gun that has not been used for a while, be sure to practice before the season opens to get reacquainted with it
- Be sure of the target and what's behind it
- Don't shoot at running deer
- Discuss the hunting plan with everyone in the group. Outline the role for each person and where they will be throughout the hunt. Plan your hunt and hunt your plan. Communication is critical to ensure everyone knows where each other is at all times.
- Bundled up – keeping your finger off the trigger and muzzle control are both extremely important as bulky coats and gloves increase chances of an accidental discharge
- Most hunting in Iowa is done on private land. Hunters should touch bases with the landowner before the season opens to make sure permission to hunt is still granted. Other hunters may also have permission to hunt the same area.

**Media Contact:** Megan Wisecup, Hunter Education Administrator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-238-4968.

## **Don't wait to buy deer license**

Hunters planning to participate in Iowa's shotgun deer season are encouraged to purchase their licenses ahead of time to avoid long lines at the retailer.

The DNR expects around 60,000 hunters to participate in the first shotgun season and so far, about 32 percent of the licenses have been sold. Iowa's first shotgun deer season begins Dec. 2.

## **Report your harvest**

The deer is down, tagged and on its way to the truck. But the harvest is not complete until the deer is registered; either online, over the phone or at a license vendor.

Online, it takes just a couple minutes. Go to [www.iowadnr.gov/deerhunting](http://www.iowadnr.gov/deerhunting) and click (left margin) on 'Report Your Harvest.' From there, scroll down and follow instructions. Be ready to enter your tag's nine-digit harvest report number. By phone? Call 800-771-4692.

The deer should be reported by the hunter whose name is on the tag...and it must come before midnight, the day after the deer is tagged.

Reporting your harvest is important because harvest numbers are used to manage Iowa's deer herd annually and it is required by law.

## **Deer tissue samples**

The Iowa DNR's wildlife staff will continue collecting tissue samples to test for the presence of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in Iowa's wild deer herd.

Many hunters voluntarily contribute samples of their harvested deer for these testing efforts.

Most samples are obtained by wildlife staff, checking with hunters in the field or at home processing points.

Iowa DNR's website provides information about CWD and other information on infectious disease at: <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Hunting/Deer-Hunting/Deer-Disease-Information>

## **Turn in poachers**

See something in the field that doesn't look right? Report hunting violations to Turn in Poachers as soon as possible by calling 1-800-532-2020. Provide as much information as possible like a description of the individual(s), vehicle and time and location of the violation.

You can remain anonymous.

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# Public meeting to discuss bird conservation area near Ottumwa

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will discuss the proposed designation of the region including Soap Creek, Fox Hills and Eldon Wildlife areas, Stephens State Forest, Lake Wapello State Park and Pioneer Ridge Nature Area as a state Bird Conservation Area (BCA) during a public meeting on Dec. 7.

The meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. at the Pioneer Ridge Nature Center, six miles south of Ottumwa on the east side of Hwy. 63.

"This proposed Bird Conservation Area is extremely unique in Iowa, because it contains land cover that includes 35 percent grassland, 45 percent woodland, and much wetland habitat - providing homes to at least 114 nesting bird species, many of which are declining at an alarming rate," said Bruce Ehresman, wildlife diversity biologist with the Iowa DNR.

"From birds of large forests, like red-shouldered hawk, whip-poor-will, and wood thrush, savanna species such as barn owl and red-headed woodpecker, to declining grassland birds like bobwhite quail, meadowlarks, and bobolinks, this unique area includes portions of the Des Moines River, Soap Creek and adjoining private lands, providing an ideal southern Iowa setting for improved bird conservation efforts," Ehresman said.

Wildlife biologists and private lands specialists work with willing landowners to find ways to improve their properties for birds. This program is entirely voluntary, non-regulatory, and can result in extra incentives for landowners to make bird habitat improvements.

"Focusing efforts on a Bird Conservation Area helps draw attention to the needs of birds that are in trouble, and it allows the local community and concerned citizens an opportunity to take action to help these birds," said Jeff Glaw, area wildlife management biologist for the DNR.

"Declining nesting species ranging from game birds like bobwhite to nongame birds like screech owls will benefit from the creation of the Soap Creek-Stephens Forest Bird Conservation Area."

Establishing this Bird Conservation Area will likely increase recreational opportunities and be an economic boost for southeastern Iowa.

While a high percentage of bird species are declining, watching birds is one of the fastest growing pastimes in North America. According to a recent U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service survey, people in Iowa now spend more dollars on watching wildlife than on hunting wildlife and fishing. Together, these recreational activities bolster Iowa's economy by about \$1 billion each year.

**For more information**, contact Bruce Ehresman, Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, at 515-432-2823 or Jeff Glaw, Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, at 319-293-7185.