



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

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Save the Date: Spend January 1st on a First Day Hike in a State Park

DES MOINES -- Free, guided hikes will take place in 26 Iowa state parks on New Year's Day as part of America's First Day Hikes initiative. Hikers can expect to be surrounded by the quiet beauty of nature in winter, and experience spectacular views, beautiful settings and the cultural treasures offered by Iowa's state parks.

All 50 states will participate in the seventh annual national event that encourages everyone to celebrate the New Year with a guided outdoor exploration.

"We are excited to host First Day Hikes again as part of this effort to get people outdoors and into our parks," says Todd Coffelt, chief of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources State Parks Bureau. "These hikes are a great way to get outside, exercise, enjoy nature and welcome the New Year with friends and family."

Last year, more than 1,200 people began the year in an Iowa state park, hiking more than 1,100 total miles.

Staff and volunteers will lead First Day Hikes in Iowa's 26 participating state parks. Some hikes will include wildlife viewing and hot beverages. Hikes will average one to two miles or longer depending on the location. Details about the hikes can be found at www.iowadnr.gov/firstdayhikes. To see a comprehensive national map of First Day Hikes, visit www.stateparks.org. Participants are encouraged to share their adventures on social media with #FirstDayHikes or #IowaStateParks.

Iowa [First Day Hikes](#) will take place at the following 26 state parks:

NORTHWEST

- Big Creek State Park
- Dolliver Memorial State Park
- Gitchie Manitou State Preserve

- Ledges State Park
- Lewis and Clark State Park
- Prairie Rose State Park
- Springbrook State Park
- Stone State Park

SOUTHWEST

- Green Valley State Park
- Lake Anita State Park
- Viking Lake State Park
- Waubonsie State Park
- Wilson Island State Recreation Area

SOUTHEAST

- Honey Creek Resort State Park
- Lacey-Keosauqua State Park
- Lake Darling State Park
- Lake Wapello State Park
- Walnut Woods State Park

NORTHEAST

- Bellevue State Park
- Cedar Rock State Park
- Maquoketa Caves State Park
- Mines of Spain State Recreation Area
- Pikes Peak State Park
- Pine Lake State Park
- Volga River State Recreation Area
- Yellow River State Forest

"America's State Parks provide havens for young and old alike to discover the tranquility and beauty of nature through outdoor recreation," National Association of State Park Directors executive director, Lewis Ledford said. "Hiking offers inspiring ways to improve your physical and mental health, while exploring beautiful public lands in every state."

Last year, more than 62,000 people took part in guided hikes that covered over 114,165 miles on 1,300 different hikes across the country.

Media Contact: Todd Coffelt, Chief, State Parks Bureau, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-725-8485.

Iowa deer harvest nearly identical to 2016

The 2017 Iowa deer harvest is running less than 1 percent ahead of the 2016 totals. So far this fall, 76,204 deer have been reported, compared to 75,909 for the same period last year.

Iowa's second shotgun season ends Dec. 17. Iowa's deer seasons conclude with the late muzzleloader season and archery season, both of which are Dec. 18-Jan. 10, 2018.

As other seasons close, hunters turn attention to coyotes



Coyotes are habitat generalists and can be found near large brushpiles, timber and grass fields, and in particular, fields with switchgrass. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.

An expected 10,000 to 15,000 Iowa hunters will turn their attention to pursuing the state's top predator after Jan. 10. That's when most of Iowa's hunting seasons close, and coyote hunting begins in earnest.

Although its season never closes, coyotes are hunted most often during the winter. The number of Iowa coyote hunters and harvest has been at a record level for four of the past five

years, thanks in part to predator hunting shows and because coyote fur has held its value as most other pelt prices have declined.

“Coyote pelts go for anywhere from \$15-\$30 per pelt depending on the quality and Iowa’s pelts are considered average. Last year’s average price was \$17. The top pelts come from the Dakotas, Montana, and Saskatchewan and Alberta, Canada,” said Vince Evelsizer, state furbearer biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Coyote fur is used as trim for hoods and coats in foreign markets.

Coyote population is distributed fairly well across the state with the highest population in western Iowa. Coyotes are habitat generalists and can be found near large brushpiles, timber and grass fields, and in particular, fields with switchgrass.

Hunters prefer a fresh layer of snow for tracking and the white background makes coyotes easier to see from a long distance. Wind is critical to coyote hunters because it impacts where and how they set up for calling and pursuing coyotes as coyotes have a keen nose and are naturally wary. Wearing snow colored camo is often effective to avoid detection.

Hunters can use predator calls, hunt day or night, use rifles, may hunt over bait and use groups of hunters and or hounds to round them up. There is no bag limit and coyotes can be hunted on a hunting or furharvester license.

“We receive complaints from the public about coyotes’ impact on young deer, turkeys and rabbits; harass pets, and farmers’ loss of livestock. So in that respect, hunters provide an important service by hunting coyotes,” Evelsizer said. “That being said, they’re a very wary game animal worthy of respect. We don’t allow the use of artificial light for night hunting on purpose because we encourage fair chase and it could increase the incentive to misuse the technology to poach deer and other wildlife.”

Coyote trapping is allowed, but it must be done during the trapping season.

Coyote hunting dos & don’ts

Hunters are reminded that the way they hunt reflects on all hunters.

“With our coyote hunters, we especially want to emphasize respect for landowners and their property lines. Take the extra time to close their gates, obey the laws for safe shots, and thank the landowner – keep your interaction with folks while out hunting positive,” Evelsizer said.

Most coyote hunting takes place on private land, and occasionally hunters will cross property boundaries which lead to trespassing complaints. Hunters cannot pursue coyotes using a snowmobile, aircraft or with the aid of artificial light, regardless of light color.

- Be sure to close all gates that were opened, not trespass where permission was not given and to follow fair chase principles
- Don’t shoot over any road right-of-way, gravel or paved
- If running dogs, be sure to have permission from all landowners in the area where the hunt will take place
- Be sure of the target – make sure it’s a coyote and not a dog

Identification

Coyote hunters need to be aware of the possibility – however remote – that the animal they see through their scope is not a coyote but a wolf passing through the state.

“We’ve had a slight increase in the number of reported wolf sightings over the years, and had four wolves shot by coyote hunters during the last three years. They were likely members of the Great Lakes population from Wisconsin or Minnesota that were wandering through,” he said.

Wolves are protected in Iowa and there is no open season. Shooting a wolf has the potential to bring state and or federal fines.

“Hunters want to do the right thing. One of the first rules in safe hunting practices is to positively identify your target and what is behind your target before taking a shot. Wolves are two to three times the size of a coyote. If what you see is larger than the average coyote, it is definitely worth another look before pulling the trigger,” Evelsizer said.

Evelsizer said other than the obvious size difference – coyotes typically weigh 25-40 pounds, while wolves typically weigh 70-110 pounds – there are other characteristics to help determine the identity of the canine.

Coyotes have a pointed snout and their ears are larger proportionally in to their body. Wolves are taller than coyotes, have long front legs and a heavier, squarer frame. There is more detailed information on coyote and wolf characteristics at www.iowadnr.gov/hunting and scroll to the bottom then click on Iowa’s Occasional Wildlife Visitors.

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Annual winter bird survey opens Dec. 14

The annual Christmas bird count begins across Iowa with volunteers working with count coordinators from the Iowa Ornithologists Union to identify one day between Dec. 14 and Jan. 5 to count every bird – seen or heard – in their designated area.

The Christmas bird count began in 1900, and has been called the original citizen scientist project. In fact, enough data has been captured over the years that various scientific organizations have been using the results to document changes in bird populations.

“This has become a winter tradition for hundreds of birders,” said Bruce Ehresman, wildlife biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Diversity Program. “When the weather is good and we have open water, volunteers often document more birds, including one year when more than 100 different species were documented at the Saylorville count area.”

Last year, there were 35 different areas in Iowa where Christmas bird counts were run. Each count is held during one complete day between Dec. 14 and Jan. 5, 2018. Interested

volunteers should visit <http://www.iowabirds.org/Connections/CBC.aspx> to find an area and then contact the count coordinator.

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