



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 15, 2018

- [Campers expected to fill parks over Memorial Day weekend](#)
- [Iowa paddlers advised to avoid downstream of Bevers Bridge Access on popular Boone River Water Trail](#)
- [Boaters to hit the waters this Memorial Day weekend](#)
- [Walleye netting season much later and less predictable this spring](#)
- [New plan aims to reverse monarch butterfly decline](#)
- [Help stop aquatic hitchhikers](#)
- [Iowa residents enjoy free fishing days June 1-3](#)

Campers expected to fill parks over Memorial Day weekend

Campsites will be hard to come by this Memorial Day weekend.

Most electrical and full hookup sites were reserved months ago, and of the 370 campsites still available, most are non-electric. There are around 1,200 non-reservable sites available on a first come basis, but not likely for much longer. To reserve a campsite, visit: <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Places-to-Go/State-Parks/Make-a-Reservation>.

The Memorial Day weekend camping is traditionally the start of Iowa's busy outdoor summer recreation season and the second busiest weekend of the year next to July 4 for Iowa's state parks.

"Campers are itching to get outside and enjoy the beautiful weather after a long winter inside," said Todd Coffelt, chief of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources State Parks Bureau. "Our parks offer a variety of activities for all enthusiasts from hiking the trails to fishing and swimming. There's something for everyone while enjoying the outdoors."

For an up-to-date list of park and trail closures due to renovations and construction projects or weather related, visit: <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Places-to-Go/State-Parks/Alerts-and-Closures>

Campers are urged to help take care of the parks by cleaning up their campsite after themselves. Park managers encourage campers to be cognizant of others camping nearby and obey all park rules and quite hours.

“We hope that campers enjoy their time and make memories while staying in our parks and recreational areas, and do so safely and return again,” Coffelt said.

Tips

- Keep track of the weather and have a plan in case of severe weather
- Pack bug spray, sun screen and a basic first-aid kit
- Check the registration kiosk for activities in the area
- Don't burn trash
- Don't bring fireworks
- Be a good neighbor. Observe quiet hours and pick up after yourself

Firewood

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship requires all firewood sold or acquired in Iowa to have the county and state of harvest location on the label of packages and the delivery ticket for bulk firewood. The rules were added to prevent the spread of invasive species.

The rules only apply to firewood sold and acquired in Iowa.

The rule also requires the Iowa DNR to collect firewood from campers that does not have a label.

Parks closed for renovation

Ledges, Lacey Keosauqua, Geode, Maquoketa Caves and Marble Beach state parks and recreation areas are closed while they undergo renovation.

Media Contact: Todd Coffelt, DNR Parks Bureau Chief, 515-725-8485, Todd.Coffelt@dnr.iowa.gov.

Iowa paddlers advised to avoid downstream of Bevers Bridge Access on popular Boone River Water Trail

WEBSTER CITY - New bridge construction, just downstream from the Bevers Bridge Access, on the Boone River in Hamilton County is creating a dangerous hazard for

paddlers this summer. Thousands of paddlers use this access each year as they paddle down this popular water trail.

Six culverts spanning the river are creating an extreme hazard and some re-circulation on the downstream side is possible at certain water levels.

"All river users should avoid this area for the summer season," said Nate Hoogeveen, Iowa DNR River Programs Coordinator. "From upstream, take out at the Albright Canoe Access or Bever Bridge Access or put in your watercraft at Tunnel Mill Canoe Access downstream."

A map of the Boone River Water Trail is available on the Iowa DNR website at www.iowadnr.gov/Things-to-Do/Canoeing-Kayaking/Water-Trail-Maps-Brochures

Media Contact: Todd Robertson, Iowa DNR River Programs Outreach Coordinator at 515-243-3714.

Boaters to hit the waters this Memorial Day weekend

The unofficial beginning to summer is just days away and that also marks the unofficial beginning of Iowa's boating season. Boaters across the state are anxious to get out on the lake after the long winter and are preparing their watercraft for the long holiday weekend.

Susan Stocker, boating law administrator and education coordinator for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, said safety should be the top priority for all boaters.

"Now is the time to review Iowa boating laws and plan to have patience at the ramp and on the water," she said.

In 2017, there were 41 reported boating incidents on Iowa waters: 22 of those were personal injury; 15 were property damage incidents and 4 resulted in fatalities.

"With the recent storms across the state, boaters should use extra caution for floating debris and higher waters," she said.

Stocker advised to have someone on your watercraft be a lookout for large debris that is often under the water with only a small portion showing above water. It is easy to miss and can cause major damage to your vessel. Be sure to check ahead that the boat ramps are open before heading out.

Just like any party on land, boaters should plan ahead to have a designated sober operator that is cautious with speed and on the lookout for other vessels.

Another way boaters can stay on the water is by inspecting their vessels prior to heading to the lake.

Lifejackets should be in good condition and the right size for each person onboard. Check the fire extinguisher, boat and trailer lights, whistle, and throwable floatation.

Boaters are reminded about the requirement that drain plugs and other water draining devices must be removed and/or remain open during transport to avoid spreading invasive species. Anglers leaving with fish are recommended to put them on ice, whether in a cooler, a bucket or a live well (plug must still be removed and/or opened).

Iowa has more than 231,000 registered boats.

Boating safety tips

- Alcohol and boating don't mix. Wind, sun glare and heat can enhance the effects of alcohol hindering the operator's ability to make decisions.
- Check for open ramps or water hazards before heading out.
- Before leaving the house, check the trailer lights, wheel bearings and the hitch.
- Make sure there is a current fire extinguisher and horn/whistle, a wearable life jacket for everyone and a Coast Guard approved flotation device onboard.
- File a float plan with a friend, including your destination, expected time of return and type of boat.
- Wear your lifejacket - it floats, you don't.
- Inflatable lifejackets are light weight, comfortable and Coast Guard approved. Wear it.
- Take a boater education course available online at <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Things-to-Do/Boating/Boater-Education>. It has valuable information and many insurance companies will offer a discount on boat insurance. Familiarize yourself with Iowa's boating laws.
- Top two safety violations in Iowa are having inadequate life jackets and operating too fast and too close to other vessels.

MEDIA CONTACT: Susan Stocker, Boating Law Administrator and Education Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-313-6439.

Walleye netting season much later and less predictable this spring

This year's unusual cold, late spring delayed walleye collection efforts to some of the latest dates in the history of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) walleye

season.

“Mother Nature presented many challenges this year, but we still met our walleye egg collection goal thanks to the dedication and adaptability of our fisheries staff,” said Jay Rudacille, DNR Warm and Coolwater Fish Culture supervisor at Rathbun.

Crews are usually busy collecting walleyes at Rathbun Lake, Storm Lake, Clear Lake and Spirit Lake within the same couple of weeks in early April. This year, netting operations ended at Rathbun Lake on April 15, a week before netting started at the Iowa Great Lakes (East Okoboji, Big Spirit and West Okoboji) and Clear Lake.

Crews at Storm Lake ended their netting operations on April 24, much later than most years. They netted for three nights, had to stop for a week with the return of winter weather, and netted another four nights. “We usually do not have to stop netting due to poor weather conditions, maybe only taking off a night or two,” said Ben Wallace, fisheries biologist at Lake View. “Taking off a whole week in the middle of the walleye spawn is very unusual.”

“We collected over 100 quarts in a single day this year from Storm Lake, we have never done this before,” said Wallace. He said the 2018 walleye egg collection was excellent at Storm Lake, totaling the second highest amount collected ever.

Ice went out on all three of the Iowa Great Lakes on April 29, breaking the previous records set in 1951. “All three of the Iowa Great Lakes have never gone out of ice on the same day before,” said Mike Hawkins, fisheries biologist at Spirit Lake.

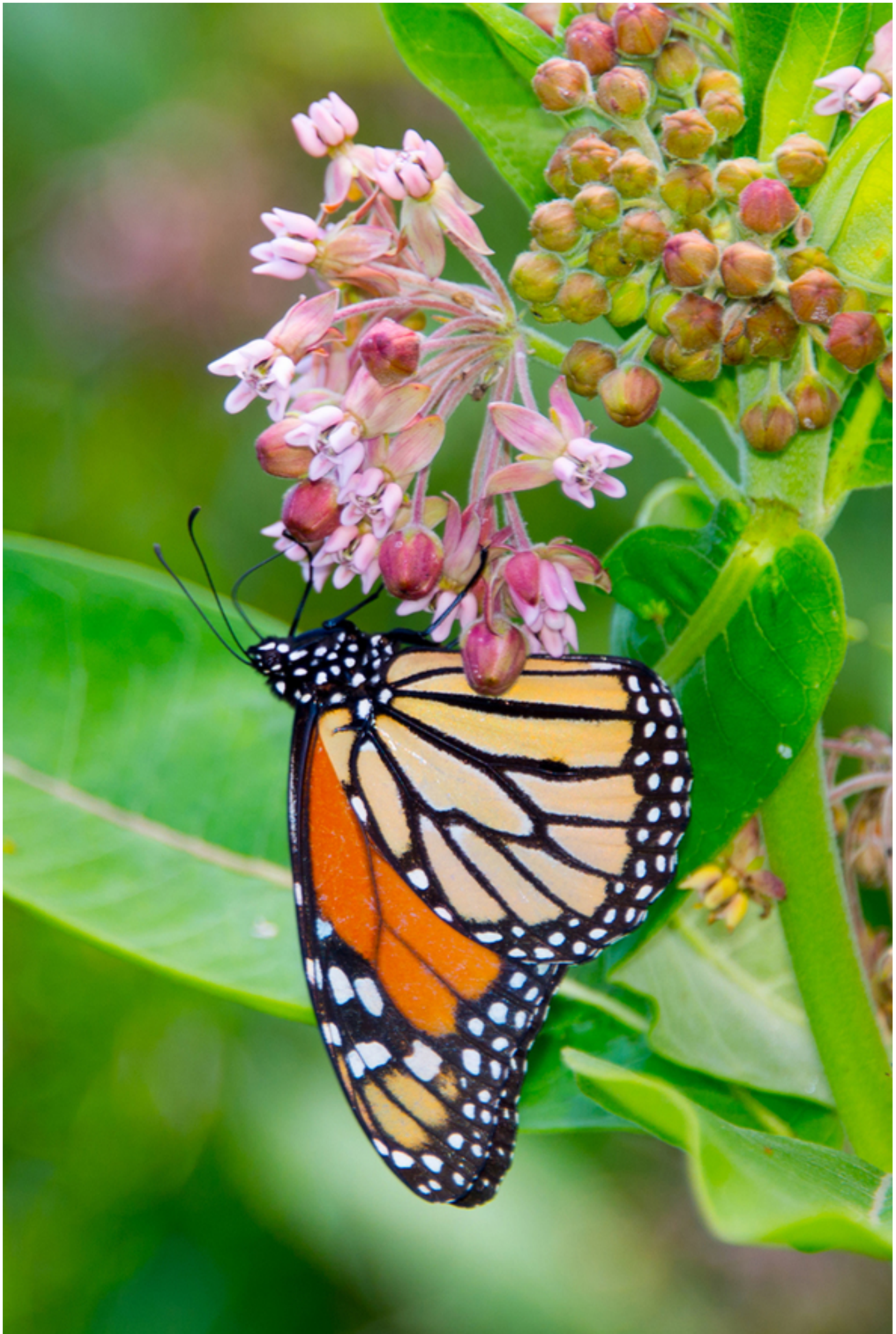
Winter’s ice-covered hold on the Iowa Great Lakes limited walleye netting to East Okoboji Lake only. “Seven crews were ready to net here this year, but only two crews were needed with the persistent ice,” Hawkins said. Staff collected male and female broodstock walleye from the spillway between Big Spirit Lake and East Okoboji Lake.

With little natural reproduction by walleye in Iowa, walleye populations rely heavily upon stockings. Walleyes are stocked throughout Iowa into natural lakes, interior rivers, flood control reservoirs and selected larger man-made lakes.

Iowa is one of the top producers of walleye fry (newly hatched fish) in the United States, second only to Minnesota. The DNR will release more than 151.5 million walleye fry this spring. While the majority of walleyes are stocked as fry, some are cultured in hatcheries and stocked at different sizes. More than 1.1 million two-inch walleyes are expected to be stocked into lakes, rivers, and streams across the state this summer. An additional 340,000, 6-to 9-inch fingerlings will be stocked in lakes later this fall.

Media Contact: Jay Rudacille, DNR Warm and Coolwater Fish Culture Supervisor, 641-647-2406.

New plan aims to reverse monarch butterfly decline



Monarch butterfly on common milkweed plant. Photo courtesy of Edward K. Boggess, monarch conservation liaison for the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

The Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (MAFWA) welcomes public comments through May 31 on a draft conservation plan that provides a blueprint for reversing the decline of the eastern monarch butterfly population.

The draft plan, called the [Mid-America Monarch Conservation Strategy](#), builds on existing efforts of state, federal, and local agencies and private organizations and individuals. It covers a 16-state region stretching from Texas to the Upper Midwest that encompasses the primary production and migratory habitat areas for eastern monarchs (see map). Other eastern monarch states are also collaborating with the plan.

The draft plan identifies conservation goals and strategies for improving habitats in various sectors or categories of land use such as natural areas, agricultural lands, urban lands and rights of way. State wildlife agencies and partners will be working to add milkweed plants where lacking and to ensure diverse, nectar-plant-rich landscapes with blooming species during seasons when monarchs are present.

“In addition to their beauty, pollinators such as butterflies, bees, and other species provide important pollination services critical to our food supplies and economies,” said Terry Steinwand, MAFWA president. “This is the first phase of a long-term strategy that will require increased commitment of people and resources to support enhanced monarch and pollinator conservation and monitoring efforts by many partners over the next 20 years.”

Eastern monarchs, those found east of the Rocky Mountains, have declined by more than 80 percent over the past 20 years primarily due to habitat loss, including reduced milkweed required for reproduction and fewer nectar plants. In 2014 the monarch was petitioned for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act, and a decision on whether listing is warranted is expected in 2019.

Monarchs produce multiple generations each year and undertake a lengthy fall migration from the U.S. and southern Canada to the forested mountains of central Mexico where they overwinter. The goal of the strategy is to coordinate state and partner efforts to restore and enhance habitat to support an average overwintering population in Mexico occupying about 15 acres, consistent with international goals.

The plan primarily focuses on voluntary and incentive-based habitat restoration and enhancement efforts, but also includes priority education and outreach, research, and monitoring needs related to monarch conservation.

For more information, a copy of the draft strategy, and how to submit comments, visit the MAFWA website at [Mid-America Monarch Conservation Strategy](#).

Help stop aquatic hitchhikers

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reminds all boaters and anglers to “Clean, Drain, and Dry” their boats and equipment this Memorial Day weekend to protect Iowa lakes and rivers from aquatic hitchhikers.

Aquatic hitchhikers are invasive species – everything from zebra mussels to Eurasian watermilfoil – that move from one waterbody to another by hitchhiking on boats, in bait buckets and on other equipment used in the water. They often grow quickly and spread fast when brought to another lake or stream due to lack of natural controls.

“The best way to control the negative impacts of aquatic invasive species in Iowa is to prevent their spread to new waterbodies,” said Kim Bogenschutz, aquatic invasive species coordinator for the Iowa DNR.

These aquatic invasive species can create serious problems for Iowa waters by reducing native species and making lakes and rivers unusable for boaters, anglers and swimmers.

Boaters and anglers can unintentionally spread aquatic hitchhikers if they do not take the proper precautions each time they leave a lake or river.

- CLEAN any plants, animals, or mud from your boat and equipment before you leave a waterbody.
- DRAIN water from all equipment (motor, live well, bilge, transom well) before you leave a waterbody.
- DRY anything that comes into contact with water (boats, trailers, equipment, boots, clothing, dogs). Before you move to another waterbody either: Spray your boat and trailer with hot, high-pressure water; or Dry your boat and equipment for at least five days.
- Never release plants, fish, or animals into a water body unless they came out of that waterbody and empty unwanted bait in the trash.

It is illegal to possess or transport prohibited aquatic invasive species. It is illegal to transport any aquatic plants on water-related equipment in Iowa. Signs posted at public accesses remind boaters to stop aquatic hitchhikers and identify infested waters.

Boaters must also drain all water from boats and equipment before they leave a water access and keep drain plugs removed or opened during transport. It is also illegal to introduce any live fish, except for hooked bait, into public waters.

Find more information about aquatic invasive species and a list of infested waters in the current Iowa Fishing Regulations or at www.iowadnr.gov/ais.

Media Contact: Kim Bogenschutz, Fisheries Bureau’s Aquatic Invasive Species Program, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-290-0540.

Iowa residents enjoy free fishing days June 1-3

Iowa residents can try fishing without buying a license on June 1, 2 and 3 as part of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) free fishing weekend. All other regulations remain in place.

“This is a great time to take kids fishing or invite a neighbor or friend to come along,” said Joe Larscheid, chief of the Iowa DNR’s Fisheries Bureau. “You’ll have a buddy forever and someone to always back up your big fish stories.”

Outdoor fun awaits at hundreds of Iowa lakes, thousands of miles of rivers or a nearby pond. “Grab your family and your poles, get away from daily life stresses and create special memories,” Larscheid said.

Several fun, hands-on fishing events will be offered across Iowa to help families new to fishing get started. Check the general fishing calendar on the DNR website at www.iowadnr.gov/fishing for a list of free fishing events.

Get tips for taking kids fishing and catching crappie, bluegills and yellow bass on the DNR website at www.iowadnr.gov/Fishing/Fishing-Tips-How-Tos.

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