



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

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Investigation finds Michigan residents unlawfully took nearly two dozen deer over 16 years

CEDAR COUNTY, Iowa – In an effort to provide quality, legal deer hunting opportunities for Iowans, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conducted a joint investigation that put an end to an illegal scheme to take white-tailed deer in Iowa. An Iowa Department of Natural Resources investigation into the illegal use of state-issued, Iowa landowner tenant deer tags, which first began in 2017, led to a larger investigation that revealed 16 years of illegal activity by out of state poachers in rural Cedar County that has dated as far back as 2002.

“Thanks to one single tip from the public which led us to the initial investigation and eventually turned into something much greater, we were able to put a stop to years and years of illegal activity,” said Eric Wright, DNR conservation officer. “Deer hunting is a very popular sport and hobby across our state and we want to ensure that all hunters are doing so fairly and abiding by the law.”

The investigation found that a Michigan family group that spanned three generations - a grandfather, his two sons and two grandchildren - were poaching trophy-sized white-tailed deer on a privately-owned Iowa farm without the required hunting permits or tags. Douglas Leo Hebert, age 49, of Indian River, Michigan, along with his 51-year-old brother, Jeffrey Leo Hebert of Bay City, Michigan, and their 73-year-old father, Leo Frederick Hebert of Bay City, Michigan, contrived the illegal arrangement over the course of 16 seasons, where the Iowa landowners supplied them with lodging and tags for any deer that were harvested by the group in exchange for fishing opportunities in Michigan.

Over the course of the investigation, Iowa Department of Natural Resources Conservation Officer Eric Wright and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service special agents from Iowa and Michigan uncovered 19 white-tailed deer that were taken illegally, 17 of which were bucks. The investigative team also found that the Michigan residents never purchased, nor applied for, the required non-resident hunting privileges in the state of Iowa. Per plea agreement, charges were not filed on the juveniles.

Through a plea agreement reached between the Cedar County (Iowa) Attorney's Office and the defendants, the Michigan-based Hebert family agreed to pay more than \$51,000 in fines and forfeit 17 deer mounts, as well as the two compound bows and a crossbow which were used to take the deer. Additionally, their access to hunting privileges in Iowa was suspended for a minimum period of three years. This plea agreement has a greater impact to their access to hunting across 46 other states, because Iowa is a member of the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact. This suspension may be observed in any of the other member states at the discretion of the appropriate authorities in those states. The three Iowa residents involved who knowingly aided and abetted the Michigan poachers cooperated fully throughout the investigation and agreed to pay fines totaling \$780.

"Collaborating with our state law enforcement partners is a central part of how we work to protect wildlife populations from over harvest and illegal commercialization. My thanks go out to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources law enforcement team," said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Special Agent in Charge Greg Jackson.

Concerned citizens help us stop poaching and other wildlife crime. We encourage anyone who has knowledge of unlawful hunting to report it to their local conservation officer or call the Turn In Poachers (T.I.P) Hotline at 1-800-532-2020 or at www.iowadnr.gov/tip.

[Learn more about the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact.](#)

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Two greater yellowlegs search the mudflats for food at the Hawkeye Wildlife Area. The 13,500-acre area in northwest Johnson County is one of Iowa's premier birding area for shore birds spring migration and supports excellent bird diversity all year. It's popular with hunters and non-hunters, drawing visitors from across the state. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.

Hawkeye Wildlife Area: The high tech corridor's rough and rugged neighbor

SWISHER, Iowa - Hawkeye Wildlife Area has a well-earned reputation as an important birding area during the spring migration and as a duck hunting hot spot during the fall.

But it's much more than just a convenient stopping place to rest and refuel along the migration route.

This 13,500-acre public playground covers the upper end of the Coralville Reservoir in northwest Johnson County near a population of nearly 400,000 Iowans who can enjoy a wild escape all year long.

Steve Woodruff, wildlife management biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) at Hawkeye, said it may be cliché but there's really something here for everyone from bird watchers, berry pickers, mushroom hunters, photographers, professors, students, hunters, anglers, hikers, shooters, archers to get-away-from-it-all-ers.

Even Cyclone fans.

One reason that it attracts such diversity of users is the diversity of its landscape and the wildlife that call it home. Hawkeye has areas of hardwood timber, floodplain timber, upland, prairie, wetland, river, reservoir and a desert.

Yes, a desert.

The dunes on the hill

Thousands of years ago, the same high winds that created western Iowa's Loess Hills also created sand dunes on select hills on Hawkeye. The soft sandy soil on these hills is noticeable as soon as the foot hits sand. Prickly pear cactus is here reinforcing the areas decidedly desert-like feel.

The area is in transition back to its historic desert-like habitat and Woodruff plans manage it as a sand dune and grass environment. The conversion began this spring when 80 goats were released on 16 acres to eliminate unwanted vegetation and small trees that have appeared over time.

"Goats are selective eaters but love the thorny stuff," he said.

These goats happily munched their way through multiflora rose, nettles and poison ivy leaving behind vegetation that is more manageable. The goat experiment was a success and plans are to have them again next year.

Wet soils constant battle

Life in a floodplain can be challenging for habitat managers and the lowlands at Hawkeye are no different. It's a constant battle to prevent willows and Reed canarygrass from taking over and about the only thing that can keep it in check is farming.

"We do get questions about why we crop parts of the area, but it keeps invasives at bay and does add some diversity and benefits to wildlife. Without it we'd be solid willows and Reed canarygrass which has very little wildlife benefits," he said.

Overlooking a large oat field a few weeks from harvest, grasshoppers are everywhere. Grasshoppers feed pheasant chicks and the harvested oat fields will be excellent for dove hunting. Once the oats come out, a portion of the area will be planted to cover crop for deer browse and goose loafing.

But farming in a floodplain is a gamble. It all depends on the weather and at any time the crops can go under water.

"Any income generated by the crop leases goes directly back into maintaining the area and that benefits hunters and non-hunters alike," Woodruff said.

Just outside the flood zone is a prairie in full bloom providing cover for young pheasants and turkeys to navigate under the safety of the leafy canopy while dining on an all-you-

can-eat buffet of insects. A quail is calling off to the east. That's encouraging, he said.

Water level at Coralville Reservoir

Hawkeye Wildlife Area is owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and managed by the Iowa DNR. The Corps maintains the water at a certain level on Coralville Reservoir for summer recreation, and then raises it in the fall ahead of waterfowl season. Once that season closes, it's allowed to drop.

The lower water level exposes mudflats and sandbars which is a magnet for shorebirds migrating north.

Karen Disbrow, past president and current events coordinator for the Iowa City Bird Club, said the area draws birders from across the state, especially during the spring, and many of the 429 possible bird species encountered in Iowa could pass through Hawkeye.

"We get black-crowned night herons here and sometimes we get yellow-crowned night herons," she said, noting one recent sighting of the yellow-crowned night heron was in the back corner of the ponds off Green Castle Road, just south of the intersection with Swan Lake Road.

She said it's the diversity of habitat at Hawkeye makes it attractive outside of the spring migration. "It's great year round for birding," she said.

She said the Iowa City Bird Club is hosting their annual pelican festival Sept. 9 at the Iowa DNR's office at the Hawkeye Wildlife Area, [2564 Amana Rd. NW, Swisher](#). The event is free and kid friendly.

The Iowa DNR's online hunting atlas at www.iowadnr.gov/hunting offers visitors a map to help navigate the area. There are various state and local websites that keep birders in the loop about what species has been spotted in the area, plus some maps that show where to find different species and newsletters to keep everyone in the loop on birding activities. Disbrow recommended www.iowabirds.org/, <https://ebird.org>, <https://iowaaudubon.org/> and www.icbirds.org.

Shooting sports

Hawkeye is one of a few areas in the state with developed shooting ranges. The ranges are on the north side and built to accommodate pistols, rifles, shotguns and bows.

The pistol and rifle range has three bays of different lengths with a bluff as the backstop. The trap shoot area has designated shooting sites and drop zone and next door is the archery range offering targets at different distances and an elevated platform.

"The archery range is a great place to learn to shoot a bow," he said. "It gets substantial use, especially in September ahead of bow season."

The range is open from sunrise to sunset and it is free and open for the public. A range master is on hand to provide assistance at the three ranges.

“All we ask is for the shooters to clean up after themselves,” Woodruff said.

Friends of Crescent Pond

A few residents living nearby established the Friends of Crescent Pond, whose purpose is to impound a little more water on Crescent Pond and step one was to fix and elevate an old road through the area. The group has funded a new culvert under the road and is now focused on re-grading the road damaged from previous floods.

Why the interest in ponding more water?

“A lot of them are duck hunters and the expanded area will provide more waterfowl hunting opportunities,” said Woodruff.

Knap Creek project

A long-in-the-works project to install a mile long dike along the floodplain of Knap Creek could be done this fall.

The dike includes a water control structure that will allow Woodruff to keep water off the floodplain in the summer which allows it to vegetate. In the late summer, he will install a series of boards that will create a temporary dam backing up water on 300 acres.

Converting the 300 acres into a seasonal wetland provides more opportunity for all visitors and especially for waterfowl hunters – which could increase the use of the area.

“After years of weather delays and funding issues, we’re hoping that this is the year,” he said.

Dog trail area

About 300 acres on the south edge of Hawkeye is a designated dog trail area that provides a realistic hunting experience for the competitors. It is most frequently used in the spring and early fall.

Given its proximity to Iowa City and Cedar Rapids, it gets a lot of use. “It’s pretty popular,” said Woodruff. “A lot of people come to the events to work their dogs.”

Outdoor classroom

Professors and students from Cornell College and Mount Mercy College in Cedar Rapids will soon be conducting studies on the area. The University of Iowa will soon be studying the impacts of goat grazing at Hawkeye.

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Fishing regulations to be relaxed at Elm Lake in Wright County

CLARION – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources will relax the fishing regulations at Elm Lake starting Aug. 1st to allow anglers to more freely harvest fish before the lake is renovated this fall.

The 460-acre shallow natural lake is being renovated to remove abundant common carp and bullhead populations and improve the water quality and habitat in the lake.

Anglers with a valid sport fishing license may harvest all sizes and unlimited quantities of any species of fish from Elm Lake. Any number of poles will be allowed, but anglers must remain in site of these lines. Trot lines and nets will be allowed (name and address must be attached if left unattended).

Dynamite, poison, electric shocking devices, or any stupefying substances will not be allowed. It is illegal to sell fish or stock captured fish into public waters.

Liberalized fishing regulations for Elm Lake will be in effect until Nov. 15, 2018.

The lake will be restocked with yellow perch, northern pike, largemouth bass and bluegill in the Spring of 2019.

Media Contact: Scott Grummer, Fisheries Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 641-357-3517.

Water level to drop at Hickory Grove Lake ahead of restoration

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the Story County Conservation Board plan to start drawing down Hickory Grove Lake near Colo in Story County as early as August 6th as part of the continued lake restoration efforts to improve water quality and enhance accessibility and recreational opportunities.

Planned restoration work includes dredging soft sediment from the lake bottom, stabilizing the shoreline with rock riprap, renovating the fishery and park amenity upgrades. Fish habitat structures will be installed throughout the lake for better sport fishing. The project is expected to be completed as early as spring of 2020, with the goal of returning the lake to full pool in the spring and early summer of 2020.

Fishing regulations at Hickory Grove Lake were relaxed on July 10, to allow anglers to more freely harvest game fish before the lake is renovated. Liberalized fishing regulations will remain in effect until the in-lake construction begins.

Hickory Grove Park is a popular camping and fishing destination. The lake is also home to a popular triathlon each spring.

Watershed improvements already made include a pond, livestock exclusion structure, bioreactor, and stabilizing the streambank to reduce the amount of nutrients and sediment reaching the lake. Current watershed efforts involve building 25 revetment rock silt dikes, stabilizing the shoreline with rock riprap on the north edge of the lake, and trail and drainage tile repairs on the south end of the lake.

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2018 Operation Dry Water results in seven BWI arrests

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources conservation officers, park rangers, and seasonal water patrol officers, USFWS, and local county sheriff's deputies participated in the 2018 Operation Dry Water enforcement campaign June 29 through July 1.

During the three day enforcement, 79 officers spent a total of 900.5 hours enforcing Iowa boating laws and ensuring all safety measures were in place on vessels they encountered. The following are totals as a result of the enforcement projects state-wide.

BY THE NUMBERS:

Total vessels contacted: 837

Total boaters contacted: 2,483

Total BWI arrests: 7

Total citations/warnings issued: 133

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DNR law enforcement conducts enforcement at FootFest

LANSING, Iowa – Conservation officers and seasonal water patrol officers from the DNR, as well as an officer from the Lansing Police Department, conducted an enforcement project surrounding FootFest in Lansing on July 14.

During the enforcement project, a total of four boats were stopped with three out of the four boats having an operator charged with Boating While Intoxicated. Other charges included: drug paraphernalia, a warning for light violation and a registration violation. In total, the officers encountered 24 people among the boats that were stopped.

“It is very important that we conduct these enforcement projects, and continue to do them,” said Dakota Drish, DNR Conservation Officer. “Of the few boats we stopped, 75-percent of them had operators over the legal limit and that is quite shocking.”

The DNR reminds boaters to bring along a designated driver and follow all boating laws.

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