



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

**IOWA DNR**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**June 11, 2019**

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## **Transformation taking shape at Rathbun Wildlife Area**

Change is coming to the west end of the Rathbun Wildlife Area, along the south fork of the Chariton River that has long been sought out by deer and turkey hunters for excellent habitat along the river corridor.

Looking at the 150-acre section from the parking lot above, the transition to upland habitat is easy to visualize. In a few years, this area in eastern Wayne County may be the new “secret” hotspot for pheasant and quail hunters.

“The area has a lot of potential for really good upland hunting and after a few years of doing some extensive upland habitat management, we hope to see that potential become reality,” said Heath Van Waus, wildlife technician for the Rathbun Wildlife Unit.

The transformation began last year.

A combination of disking and mowing was used along a draw that divides the south fork area from north to south to create soil disturbance to eliminate cool season grasses and encourage the growth of beneficial annual plants. Unwanted cottonwood and elm trees were dropped onto the disturbed area over the winter to reduce predator use and to create shrubby cover for quail, nesting areas for turkeys, and as a fawning spot for deer. There’s a lot of quail in the area, Van Waus said, and they will be gearing management of the area to increase the quail population.

Fire will be used across the grassland when needed to keep encroaching brush at bay. Van Waus will be watching how the prairie responds to the fire.

“There’s definitely a lot of prairie plants out here. Obviously the spiderwort is doing well,” he said.

The emerging grassland surrounds a 30-acre wetland basin. Van Waus said they partnered with a local farmer last year to cut and hay Reed canary grass off the basin that allowed crews to spray the invasive plant, knocking it back and allowing plants preferred by ducks, to return.

Canary grass is an invasive plant that grows in wet soils creating dense habitat that offers little benefit to wildlife.

“It’s a constant fight with canary grass and we know this isn’t a permanent fix but if we can use a farmer to help us hay it, we can spray and/or disk it. By compiling these few management tools, it’ll give us at least three years of beneficial habitat,” he said.

This spring, a four acre sunflower field was planted just south of a soybean food plot. Turnips and radishes will go in next.

“This section is only about 150 acres but it has about everything a hunter could want,” he said. “It would be a great place for a youth turkey season hunt. There’s not much for competition.”

### **Sunflower fields**

Managing sunflower fields takes precise timing to get the seed planted and the fields sprayed to keep the ground bare between the rows.

“You get a certain date that you have to get the fields in so you can mow them at the right time so the birds will use them. If you mow sunflowers when the heads are milky, they’ll rot on the ground and the doves won’t use them,” he said.

The four acre field on the west end along the south fork will host 10-15 dove hunters come Sept. 1. The field is only about a third of a mile walk from the parking lot down the maintenance lane. The dead trees to the north of the field will likely perch spots for doves.

“Dove hunting popularity is growing so fast. The demand on these sunflower fields is only increasing,” Van Waus said.

### **Chronic wasting disease**

The west end of the south fork section of the wildlife area will be part of the expanded Corydon Deer Management Zone. The expanded zone will increase the amount of public land available to hunters looking to extend their hunting later into January and provide the DNR with additional deer tissue samples to survey for the always fatal disease.

### **Battling illegal activity**

It’s a constant battle to keep off-road vehicles from illegally riding on the wildlife areas around Lake Rathbun. “They cut cable gates, and tear out tube gates,

ripping the areas up,” he said.

Access areas and parking lots are also used to unload unwanted trash, like the pile of landscaping debris left at the north fork parking lot.

### **Fishing too**

Need a place to go fishing? The south fork of the Chariton River is popular cat fishing destination with the water is high.

**Media Contact:** Heath Van Waus, Natural Resource Technician, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 641-203-6179.

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## **Charge filed in May 25 boating incident at Browns Lake**

**SALIX, Iowa** -- DNR Conservation Officers have filed a charge and warnings as a result of a boat incident that happened at Browns Lake on May 25 that left two people seriously injured.

A citation was issued to Nicole Baker for violating speed and distance rules. Baker was the operator of the boat pulling behind two tubers when the tubers crashed into a stationary boat. Baker was also issued a warning for boat registration violation. Chad Riker, the operator of the stationary boat, was also issued a warning for boat registration violation.

Both tubers are still hospitalized but the DNR does not have specific conditions on either of them.

**Media Contact:** Steven Griebel, DNR Conservation Officer, 712-301-4009

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## **Illinois couple pleads guilty to illegally harvesting ginseng in Geode State Park**

**DANVILLE, Iowa** -- After several months of investigation from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' Law Enforcement Bureau and State Parks Bureau, in conjunction with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Ki Pil Park and Jaemyung Yoo of Chicago, IL, pleaded guilty to several ginseng related charges.

On July 4, 2018 Park and Yoo were stopped just outside Geode State Park for speeding in a minivan registered to Yoo. Upon further investigation, it was discovered Park and Yoo possessed 67 freshly harvested ginseng plants. DNR Conservation Officer Paul Kay and State Park Ranger Andrew Kuckler interviewed Park and Yoo and determined the ginseng was illegally harvested in Geode State Park. Neither Park nor Yoo possessed ginseng harvester's permits. State law prohibits harvesting ginseng on state owned lands. Harvesters must

also possess a ginseng harvester's permit and the season runs from September 1 until October 31 each year.

The officers seized the ginseng plants, along with equipment relating to the digging of ginseng. Park and Yoo each received state park rules citations and were released. Photo evidence from a phone revealed Park and Yoo had been in Geode State Park harvesting ginseng, as well as state parks in Wisconsin and Illinois within the last four years. Officer Kay then turned the case over to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service for further investigation.

After several months of investigating, Park and Yoo were each charged with 32 ginseng related charges in Iowa. Park and Yoo each pleaded guilty to one count of not possessing a ginseng harvester's permit, one count of harvesting ginseng on state owned lands and three counts of harvesting ginseng out of season. Along with the fines associated with the charges, both Park and Yoo were assessed liquidated damages of 150% of the market value of the ginseng they illegally harvested. The investigation remains on-going in other states.

**Media Contact:** Paul Kay, DNR Conservation Officer, 319-759-0751

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## Public meeting to discuss Lake Sugema fish renovation

**KEOSAUQUA, Iowa** - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will host a public meeting at 6 p.m., June 25, at the Lacey Keosauqua State Park main lodge at the west entrance, to discuss the proposed removal of gizzard shad from Lake Sugema.

Gizzard shad, an injurious species, were illegally introduced to Lake Sugema in 2015. Growing gizzard shad populations have reduced game fish populations, decreased water quality and limited fishing activity.

Information will be presented on the history of the Lake Sugema fish community, the problems gizzard shad have caused, and plans to eliminate this injurious species.

The Iowa DNR plans to treat Lake Sugema in the fall of 2019 (pending workable weather conditions) with a very low concentration of rotenone that is about 4 percent of the normal dosage to eliminate gizzard shad. This low treatment level allows the DNR to specifically target the shad with few impacts to other game species. Rotenone, a natural pesticide derived from the roots of certain members of the bean family from South America, is a common tool that fisheries managers use to manage sport fish, improve water quality, and manage endangered species.

Any person attending the public meeting and has special requirements such as those related to mobility or hearing impairments should contact the DNR or ADA

Coordinator at 515-725-8200, Relay Iowa TTY Service 800-735-7942, or Webmaster@dnr.iowa.gov, and advise of specific needs.

**Media Contact:** Mark Flammang, Fisheries Management Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 641-647-2406.

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## Spawning stress causes panfish kills in Iowa lakes

Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) fisheries biologists are starting to receive phone calls about dead bluegill and crappies in lakes.

“Several dozen dead panfish were reported at Lake Iowa Park in Iowa County early last week,” said Paul Sleeper, fisheries management biologist.

These natural fish kills are a common occurrence at a number of lakes each spring during spawning season. The spawning season is very stressful.

“We see more spawning stress fish kills when we have a cool spring and then everything warms up quickly, like it did this year,” explained Sleeper. “Everything comes in to spawn at once and any infection can spread quickly through the population.”

Spawning season is not the only time natural fish kills occur, it also happens during ice out and the heat of July-August. Natural fish kills periodically occur when populations reach certain levels and it usually only affects the weaker fish of one species.

If you see several species or sizes of dead fish or a pollutant present, call the DNR’s 24-hour spill line at 515-725-8694 as soon as possible. Quick reporting can help DNR staff identify the cause of a fish kill and potentially stop a fish kill in progress.

**Media Contact:** Paul Sleeper, Fisheries Management Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 319-350-8399.

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## Water level to drop at Meadow Lake

**GREENFIELD, Iowa** – The water level of Meadow Lake near Greenfield in Adair County will be lowered 3 feet starting June 14, to help improve the size of bluegills in the lake. The water will be released slowly over the next two weeks to avoid any downstream impacts.

A water level draw-down is a common fisheries management technique used to improve the size of panfish. Meadow Lake has an abundance of 6-inch bluegills that lack the quality anglers are looking for.

“Crowding the fish into a smaller area makes them more susceptible to predation by largemouth bass and reduces the number of small bluegills,” said Bryan Hayes, fisheries management biologist. The reduced number will improve growth

in the coming year. “A draw-down in 2016 had this effect and we had good bluegill fishing in 2017 and 2018,” Hayes noted.

The draw-down is expected to have minimal effect on public access to Meadow Lake. The boat ramp will be usable and the lake will remain open during the draw-down. Meadow Lake will be allowed to refill starting in September.

Meadow Lake is a 34 acre lake in the middle of the 317 acre Meadow Lake Fish and Wildlife Area located in the north central part of Adair County. It has a maximum depth of 20 feet and an average depth of 7.3 feet.

**Media Contact:** Bryan Hayes, Fisheries Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 712-769-2587.