



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Hunting News

Conservation and Recreation

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Muskrat trapping season extended to April 1 on Lizard Lake

GILMORE CITY, Iowa - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is extending the muskrat trapping season on Lizard Lake, in Pocahontas County, from Feb. 1 to April 1 to offer additional trapping opportunities of a temporarily abundant resource. Iowa's trapping season for all furbearers except beaver closes statewide on Jan. 31.

Musk rats are the aquatic version of cottontail rabbits—their population cycles are dynamic. Their numbers rise and fall dramatically depending upon water levels in marshes and other factors. Musk rats have 2-4 litters per year and, in the food chain, serve as an important prey base for mink, otters, hawks, owls and coyotes.

Musk rats primarily use plants that grow up out of the water to build their huts. Their diet is primarily plant based as well. While muskrats create open areas in marshes they are also capable of stripping the marsh of all its vegetation as their population densities peak.

“Musk rats are an important part of a healthy marsh, and this year, we have a surplus at Lizard Lake. We would like to extend the recreational opportunity by allowing a spring season. The current population allows for the harvest of additional muskrats to preserve some of the beneficial vegetation thereby keeping the lake in a healthy balance. So this extended season is a sort of management tool for us,” said Clint Maddix, wildlife biologist for the Iowa DNR.

“This extended season is a marsh management tool for our area wildlife managers, plus it offers an excellent opportunity for our trappers to extend their season and utilize the surplus of muskrats. Several studies have shown the additional harvest will not reduce the numbers to the point of overharvest,” said Vince Evelsizer, furbearer biologist for the Iowa DNR.

All muskrat trap types allowed during the regular season are legal for the extended season. The use of foot-hold traps during this season is prohibited unless each trap is placed completely inside a muskrat house.

“We are going to allow trappers to place foot-hold traps in the muskrat house (in-house trapping only) to reduce the chances of catching non-target animals, raptors, or migratory birds especially after ice-out later in March and April,” Evelsizer said.

Parking areas at Lizard Lake will have signs alerting visitors to the special trapping season extension.

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