



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DNR officers help overturned personal watercraft on Lake Manawa

COUNCIL BLUFFS, Iowa – The DNR and Council Bluffs Fire Department were notified of a personal watercraft that had overturned on Lake Manawa, Sunday, June 14.

Multiple individuals, including a six-year-old boy, had tipped over a personal watercraft and were unable to get it turned upright and get back on board.

All of the individuals were wearing life jackets at the time of the incident, but the strong winds and boat wakes created large waves and made it difficult for the child to stay above water.

A DNR Conservation Officer, two DNR Water Patrol Officers and a DNR Park Ranger were able to rescue two individuals including the six-year-old boy. The boy was assessed by first responders and released at the scene. He gave the DNR Conservation Officer a big hug and told him that police officers were his favorite.

Media Contact: Adam Gacke, DNR Conservation Officer, 712-520-5570, Adam.Gacke@dnr.iowa.gov.

DNR conservation officer and park ranger help rescue stranded boaters at Big Creek

POLK CITY, Iowa – On Sunday, June 14, a DNR conservation officer and a DNR park ranger responded to a group of three stranded boaters at Big Creek.

The three people were on a rental boat when one jumped in to swim and got stranded. Another one jumped in to help with a ring buoy. At the same time, the strong winds caused their boat to drift away, so the third individual fell into the water while trying to retrieve the anchor, but was not able to swim. None of the three was wearing life jackets.

The three held onto the ring buoy and nearby anglers helped keep them afloat until a DNR conservation officer arrived and gave them life jackets and pulled them to safety in the boat. All three refused medical treatment at shore.

The DNR reminds everyone to wear a life jacket while on the water and to be cognizant of the current weather conditions.

Media Contacts: Dustin Eighmy, DNR Conservation Officer, 515-883-0228, Dustin.Eighmy@dnr.iowa.gov; Jeff Poen, DNR Park Ranger, 515-205-9135, Jeff.Poen@dnr.iowa.gov

Iowa fisheries biologist selected for Award of Merit

Iowa fisheries biologist Ben Wallace recently received the American Fisheries Society's Fisheries Management Section Award of Merit for his efforts in community based watershed management and lake restoration projects.

The American Fisheries Society (AFS) is the world's oldest and largest organization dedicated to strengthen the fisheries profession, advance fisheries science, and conserve fisheries resources. The AFS Fish Management Section Award of Merit recognizes a singular accomplishment of an individual or group acting as a team or committee for contributions in fisheries management and research.

Wallace is the Iowa Department of Natural Resources fisheries management biologist working out of the Black Hawk Lake Fisheries Management Office for the twelve-county region in northwest Iowa. He has overseen lake and watershed restoration projects at Black Hawk Lake, North and South Twin Lakes and Storm Lake, as well as shallow lake restorations at Lizard Lake and Pickeral Lake.

"Ben has an outgoing personality and ability to work well with a diverse group of internal and external customers to ensure the best possible results with long-term benefits," said Chris Larson, DNR fisheries management supervisor. "His remarkable leadership skills through these restoration projects have improved fishing opportunities, public access, water quality, and education throughout the region he manages."

The multifaceted \$8.6 million restoration of Black Hawk Lake in Sac County began shortly after Wallace was hired as the district biologist in 2009. The goals of the project were to improve water clarity in the lake by reducing nutrient and sediment inputs to the lake and provide a better sport fishery for anglers. Wallace conducted numerous public and private meetings to communicate project goals, benefits and funding sources to state, county, and city governmental staff, local businesses leaders, watershed landowners and private citizens. These partnerships help build long-term support for ongoing lake restoration projects.

Black Hawk Lake has become a destination for anglers and other lake users. Water clarity has increased and aquatic vegetation has returned. This historical bullhead fishery now has excellent populations of bluegills, yellow perch and walleyes.

Media Contact: Chris Larson, Western and Missouri River Fisheries Supervisor, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 712-250-0001.

Field to Fork program accepting applications for deer hunting workshop

DES MOINES - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is offering a program to teach skills needed to hunt, butcher and cook wild deer to individuals who have little to no deer hunting experience.

The Field to Fork program is accepting applications for its Ames and Waterloo classes. The program consists of skills building sessions at an indoor archery range, classroom time and a workshop weekend designed to teach skills necessary to become efficient archery hunters.

“For those interested in sourcing their own protein or red meat, this program provides the opportunity to learn the skills and knowledge it takes to do it yourself,” said Jamie Cook, program coordinator with the Iowa DNR.

Attendance is limited to 10 at each location. Participants must be 21 or older and have either never hunted deer or have little deer hunting experience. Attendees must fill out an application online at <https://forms.gle/Z2Wy95fL3QZBcrsi6>. A kickoff event will be held on June 25, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Ames Izaak Walton League, and July 25, from 9-10:30 a.m. at George Wyth State Park, in Waterloo. Instruction takes place from July through September.

Participants will learn basic strategies for hunting deer and how to field dress, butcher and cook wild venison, and have the opportunity to attend several mentored hunts during Iowa’s archery deer season.

The fee to attend is \$238.50, which covers the cost of instruction, workshop weekend, workbooks, licenses, tags, equipment and supplies. Payment is not due until participants have been accepted.

The program is provided through a partnership with Pheasants Forever, Story County Conservation Board, Jax Outdoors, Double Lung Archery, and the Iowa DNR. It is part of a national effort to recruit, retain and reactivate hunters due to the overall decline in hunting and outdoor recreation.

COVID-19 precautionary measures will be implemented. Social distancing will be established at shooting ranges and within meeting spaces and/or outdoor areas. Handouts or other printed materials will be for individual and permanent use only. Online and electronic media will be utilized; this includes video chat meetings and sessions. Any equipment to be reused or re-handled will be wiped down with disinfectant between uses.

Media Contact: Jamie Cook, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 859-779-0222.

Iowa's 2020 pheasant nesting outlook positive after mild winter

Iowa's recent mild winter and dryer than normal April and May could lead to positive results for pheasant hunters this fall. Hen survival increases during mild winters, and more hens mean more nests and more nests typically means more pheasants in the fall.

Statewide snowfall from December through March was seven inches below the 1961-90 average and Iowa's lowest snowfall total since 2012. Snowfall was below normal in all regions of the state. Winter hen survival was likely above normal for most regions for both pheasant and bobwhite quail.

Statewide the spring months were drier and colder than the 1961-90 average. The spring came early with little snow cover in March. April and May nesting season was cooler than normal and rainfall was one inch below the 1961-90 average. This is Iowa's lowest nesting season rainfall since 1994.

Reports of early and large pheasant broods have been reported, suggesting a good hatch is underway.

The nesting forecast is based on a model that compares 30 years of weather data with the corresponding pheasant counts in August. This prediction is a best guess based on weather data, and it can be wrong. The DNR's August roadside survey is the best gauge of what upland populations will be this fall. The DNR will post its August roadside numbers online at www.iowadnr.gov/pheasantsurvey around Sept. 15.

Media Contact: Todd Bogenschutz, Upland Wildlife Research Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-979-0828.

Heritage Hills is developing into a destination public area 45 miles south of Des Moines



One of Iowa's newest wildlife areas, Heritage Hills is being developed as a large native grassland, with oak savanna, and a timber component less than 45 miles south of Des Moines. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.

It's not often that the opportunity to build a large wildlife area from the ground up comes along, but that's what's happening right now at Heritage Hills Wildlife Area on the

Madison and Clarke County line.

The new and growing public area was created in 2017, when the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) purchased nearly 400 acres of rolling southern Iowa land from the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. Two parcels were added this fiscal year – 139 acres and 135 acres – growing Heritage Hills to nearly 700 acres. Including the parcels in the pipeline will push the area past 1,000 acres.

And it is impressive.

The area's management plan is to develop a large native grassland, with oak savanna, and a timber component. There's also a pond and small prairie stream that flows through the northern portion of the area.

Under a clear blue sky, dickcissels are bouncing in and out of the grasses, bobolinks, bobwhite quail and pheasants can be heard calling from all around and all this is under the watchful eye of a soaring red-tailed hawk.

"This is the classic 'if you build it, they will come,'" said Heath Van Waus, wildlife technician with the Iowa DNR. The Iowa DNR is partnering with the local Pheasants Forever chapter, Iowa Wild Turkey Federation and the state's forest initiative to do the work.

Over the winter, the partners completed 60-70 acres of tree and brush removal, oak savanna improvement and created a transition zone along the timber edges to benefit quail, rabbits and other species. Some trees were cut partially through and left to stand to provide habitat for wildlife species that depend on dead trees for habitat, like woodpeckers, bats and wood ducks.

The transition to native grasses and wildflowers started in the winter of 2017 and each year as the prairie continues to develop; additional grassland bird species would arrive.

"This is the first year that the prairie will really express itself and we will see what grass and wildflower species makes it," said Van Waus. "We'll continue grassland management and creating habitat that should continue attracting grassland birds and, we hope, birders."

Sitting 45 miles south of Des Moines, Heritage Hills has the potential to be one of the more popular wildlife areas in the state.

"It's coming along," Van Waus said. "We plan to burn the grassland next year that will really get the prairie going. The sky's the limit for what Heritage Hills can be. It's fun to start from scratch, develop a long-term plan and provide the best habitat for wildlife and for the recreation users."

Based on the amount of pheasant deer and turkey hunting that's already occurred at Heritage Hills, it's well on its way to becoming a destination.

Bat Study

The Iowa DNR conducted a study in 2016 using acoustic equipment and mist nets to record bat sounds and trap bats to identify what species were using the area. The study

confirmed the presence of the Indiana bat and the northern long eared bat – both either federally or state listed endangered species – as well as big brown bat and red bat.

The combination of food availability, water sources, travel corridors and roosting sites is likely the reason for the diverse bat community. The presence of the two endangered bat species was important because it impacts the management techniques used on the area.

“That’s why our tree cutting dates are when they are so we don’t interfere with them,” he said.

Road construction project to begin at Big Creek State Park

A new road construction project at Big Creek State Park will begin this week, according to DNR park staff.

Crews will be re-surfacing roads on the west side of the lake, which may cause delays and temporary closures to the Williams Drive boat ramp, West boat ramp, Jolly Boat shelter and Inland Cat shelter. The project is anticipated to be completed by July 4 and is the second phase of a road improvement project at Big Creek that began in 2019.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is working with state and local officials to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and has transitioned employees to work remotely. DNR offices are closed to the public during this time and only available by appointment.

In other efforts to further reduce the spread of Covid-19, the DNR is encouraging the use of the online services for purchasing licenses, submitting applications, payments and other daily tasks and interaction with DNR staff.

The **FREE Go Outdoors Iowa app** is available at the App store and Google Play. The Go Outdoors Iowa app allows users to purchase and view hunting and fishing licenses and submit harvest and quota reports, all from your cell phone.

Full list of DNR’s online services: <https://www.iowadnr.gov/about-dnr/about-dnr/online-services-databases>.

Up-to-date information on DNR services, facilities and events impacted by Covid-19: <https://www.iowadnr.gov/About-DNR/Covid-19>.

Technical information for regulated businesses in regards to Covid-19: <https://www.iowadnr.gov/About-DNR/Social-Media-Press-Room/Disaster-Assistance#3057321-covid---19-outbreak>.

Thank you for your patience and flexibility during this time. If you need to contact DNR staff you can reach them by email or phone or by calling (515) 725-8200.