



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Dewey's Pasture Wildlife Complex is a bucket list destination



Dewey's Pasture's combination of high-quality prairies, shallow lakes, wetlands and oak savanna makes it one of Iowa's premier public areas. And after more than a decade's worth of restoration work on many of these systems, for Dewey's Pasture, today is the 'good 'ol days.' Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.

The 8,000-acre Dewey's Pasture complex, in northwest Iowa, is one of the best representatives of pre-settlement grassland-wetland ecosystems in the state and one of Iowa's premier public areas.

That high-quality habitat was recognized when Dewey's Pasture was named one of Iowa's Bird Conservation Areas in 2006, citing its importance for grassland, waterfowl and shore birds. Its combination of prairies, shallow lakes, wetlands and oak savanna also supports deer, butterflies, pheasants, dragonflies, amphibians, reptiles and unique fish species.

For many of the areas that make up Dewey's Pasture, today is the good old days, thanks in no small part to more than a decade's worth of restoration work on these systems.

In 2012, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) lowered the water level in Trumbull Lake – while receiving an assist from Mother Nature in the form of a drought – as part of its shallow lakes management plan. The lake dried out and shorebirds by the thousands covered the bed from July to September, including some rare and hard-to-find-in-Iowa birds.

Vegetation took root and when the water returned, Trumbull Lake became a completely different place – no more turbidity, no more poor water quality or lack of vegetation. The now dynamic wetland attracted yellow-headed blackbirds, grebes, ruddy ducks, redheads and more. King rails were seen here. Black terns and Forster's terns, too.

It's a popular destination for Iowa birders, with many making an annual trek to northwest Iowa to see wetland birds, said Dr. Stephen Dinsmore, interim chair, Departments of Natural Resource Ecology & Management and Entomology at Iowa State University. "It's a fun experience to get to a part of the state where wetlands dominate," Dinsmore said.

It's also attracted the fishing community as Trumbull Lake has a growing reputation for high quality yellow perch and northern pike which were reintroduced after the drawdown.

"Fish and wildlife species have responded very well to the management on Trumbull," said Rob Patterson, wildlife biologist for the Iowa DNR. "It's become a waterfowl hunting and ice fishing destination."

Improved habitat and reduced carp numbers allowed the perch and northern pike to grow more quickly and grow larger.

A few unique native fish species have also responded to the improved habitat. Banded killifish and central mudminnows, species which have become increasingly rare in Iowa, have dramatically increased in number following the project.

The high-quality shallow lake also brought in kayakers who enjoy its calm water.

"People figured out it's a pretty good place to go kayaking and it's a pretty good place to learn to kayak. Restored shallow lakes offer an excellent opportunity to kayak in a natural setting and also to view wildlife," Patterson said.

Since that initial renovation, each spring, the DNR will lower the water level exposing mudflats to promote near shore aquatic vegetation to keep the area productive.

Trumbull Lake wasn't the only lake on Dewey's Pasture complex that is being restored. Beginning in 2008, the Iowa DNR along with Palo Alto and Clay County Conservation Boards, Lost Island Lake Association and Ducks Unlimited partnered on a plan to get Lost Island Lake and its network of connected sloughs and marshes back to a healthy state.

The lake battled issues with poor water quality, lack of aquatic vegetation and a large population of carp that perpetuated the problems. The plan included removing more than 1 million pounds of adult carp and buffalo from the lake, installing fish barriers preventing carp from accessing the marshes to spawn, lowering water levels in the marshes to solidify the marsh bottom and promote vegetation growth, and to stock northern pike and walleyes in the main lake.

The project resulted in improved water quality, improved fishing, healthy marshes supporting wildlife and attracting migrating birds, waterfowl and other marsh wildlife.

One of the key marshes, Barringer Slough – the largest natural intact marsh in Iowa – is still in good shape, as evidenced by the presence of bladderwort, a yellow flowered aquatic plant growing near the outlet.

"Bladderwort is a sign that the marsh is in a healthy state. Ten years in to the project, that's a good sign," Patterson said.

Following Mother Nature's example for managing a prairie

Patterson works with local cattle producer John Sorenson, from Graettinger, to focus grazing pressure on plants competing with the newly emerging prairie. Sorenson has 15 cow calf pairs on about 75 acres of the Holte Tract as part of a grazing practice.

"The intent is to control competition, with inter-seeding forbes into the native grass seeding," said Patterson. "Thus far we have successfully added 40 species to the site through this management."

Prior to becoming part of Dewey's Pasture, the Holte Tract had at one time been used as a pasture. Sorenson has been working with the DNR for the past 6-7 years on this tract that and said it's been working well.

"I think it's great for me to utilize some ground that was previously in pasture," Sorenson said. "If we can utilize that today and can benefit everybody, it works."

Patterson fences off the cattle from one third of the Holte Tract each year in order to use prescribed fire as part of the prairie management.

Barringer' wintering pheasant population

The dense stand of cattails at the 900-acre Barringer Slough is attractive to pheasants looking to escape winters worst, drawing huge numbers of the popular gamebird.

"Not many people will hunt that," Patterson said. "It's pretty daunting."

Etcetera

- Dewey's Pasture complex grew out of the original 500 acres of high-quality remnant prairie, that, along with Smith's Slough, was recognized as a National

Natural Landmark by the National Park Service in 1975.

- More than 230 migratory and nesting birds have been seen on Dewey's Pasture.
- Dewey's Pasture is a high value area to small animals like butterflies, bees and other insects living in the habitat that's been there for thousands of years.
- Sandhill cranes have shown up and while it hasn't been confirmed as a nesting area, experts believe its only a matter of time as sandhills are consistently nesting across north Iowa.
- The conservation community has been heavily involved in the development and management of Dewey's Pasture. "About any project that comes up, they're interested in helping with," Patterson said.
- Dewey's Pasture attracts hunters from across Iowa as well as from around the country who hunt it all season long. While not known as a deer hunting hotspot, there are nice bucks out there, but without the large tracts of timber, it's a different type of hunting. The complex is a trapping hotbed, drawing trappers from across the state for its muskrats.
- After spending a day at Dewey's Pasture, stop in to Bully's Bar and Grill in Ruthven for burgers, pizza and more.

Media Contact: Rob Patterson, Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 712- 330-2563.

Backbone State Park celebrates 100 years with dedication ceremony, sign unveiling



DUNDEE, IA – With the 100th anniversary of Iowa state parks in full swing, Backbone State Park celebrated its centennial with a re-dedication ceremony on Friday, July 24. Local community members joined Governor Kim Reynolds, DNR Director Kayla Lyon and park staff for the ceremony, which took place in front of the park’s newly renovated Beach Lodge.

The ceremony included a Governor’s Proclamation announcing 2020 as the Iowa state park centennial.

“Early conservationists and state leaders sought to protect Iowa’s most unique and historically significant natural spaces,” said Kayla Lyon, DNR Director. “We are proud to continue this tradition, as Iowans appreciate Backbone and all Iowa state parks for their contributions to quality of life in our state.”

Mike Carr, grandson of the original landowner who donated the Backbone park land, spoke about the history of Backbone, while Roger Helmrichs, president of the Backbone State Park Friends group, presented a time capsule to be opened in 100 years.

According to Lyon, the centennial celebration is also about planning for the future, which included launching a new “look and feel” to state park signage. “We have created a master plan that provides consistent, recognizable and welcoming signage for Iowa’s state parks,” said Lyon. The DNR unveiled the design with a new portal sign at Backbone’s south entrance.

Also recognized in the ceremony was a \$650,000 grant from the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust. The grant helped restore several CCC-era buildings including

the historic beach lodge, boat house and auditorium, along with other improvements, in time for the park's centennial celebration.

Backbone State Park was Iowa's first state park, originally dedicated on May 28, 2020. Iowa is home to more than 70 state parks and forests. For more information about Iowa state parks, visit www.iowadnr.gov. Visitors can also sign up for the Iowa State Park Passport at: <https://explore.traveliowa.com/parks>

DNR investigating boating accident on Lake Delhi

DELAWARE COUNTY, Iowa – On Sunday, July 26, at approximately 7:30pm, DNR Conservation Officer Dakota Drish responded to a personal injury accident involving a water craft (PWC) on Lake Delhi.

Gavin Cooper of Monticello, Iowa, was operating the PWC when he hit a wave. The impact caused Cooper's face to hit the handlebars causing facial injuries. The impact also knocked him off of the PWC, landing face down in the water unconscious. He was rescued by nearby witnesses and pulled from the water.

Cooper was wearing a life jacket at the time of this accident and was transported to a Manchester hospital for his injuries.

The Iowa DNR continues to investigate and was assisted by the Delaware County Sheriff's Office in response.

Media Contact: Dakota Drish, DNR Conservation Officer, Dakota.Drish@dnr.iowa.gov.

Learn to Hunt program opens registration for virtual dove hunting workshop

DES MOINES - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is offering a free virtual workshop to teach skills needed to hunt, field dress and cook mourning dove to individuals who have little to no dove hunting experience.

This virtual workshop consists of online knowledge and skills building sessions with instructors that possess the experience to teach skills necessary to become efficient dove hunters.

"For those interested in the challenge of dove hunting as a means of sourcing their own protein or red meat, this program provides the opportunity to learn the skills and knowledge it takes to do it all yourself," said Jamie Cook, program coordinator with the Iowa DNR.

Participants will learn basic strategies for hunting dove such as proper equipment, where to hunt, safe shooting practices, and how to field dress, butcher and cook dove.

The course is geared for participants 16 and older. Those under 16 must have an adult register and participate in the course as well. Space online will be limited so register right

way to ensure your spot. For more information and to begin the registration process please visit: <https://www.register-ed.com/events/view/161414>

The program is provided through a partnership with Pheasants Forever 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.

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

Wilson Island to remain closed through 2020

MISSOURI VALLEY, Iowa - Wilson Island State Recreation area will remain closed through 2020 while the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) works with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to outline the cleanup and repair plan for the popular public area, north of Council Bluffs.

Wilson Island was closed in March 2019, when Missouri River flood waters covered the area, then stayed for more than nine months. Once the waters receded, state park officials found the area covered under a blanket of silt ranging from inches deep in some locations to more than eight feet in others and the equivalent of hundreds of dump truck loads of debris that had washed in to the park.

Chris Anunson, state park ranger with the Iowa DNR, said while there was some damage to the electrical system, most of the infrastructure survived the flood.

“Following the high waters in 2011, we redesigned much of our park infrastructure based on minimizing flood damage and that paid off,” he said. “Our biggest issue right now is dealing with silt deposits. We hope to get the majority of the work done this fall and winter, then get the area reseeded this spring. This is a tentative timeline, but I believe it is obtainable. We know people want us to reopen – we do too – but we have to do that responsibly, for the resource and for our visitors.”

While Wilson Island is closed, the DNR has been reviewing the layout of the 550-acre area that sits on the inside curve of the Missouri River, for opportunities to further reduce the impacts of flooding from Big Muddy. State park officials are considering different clean up and redevelopment plans based on what FEMA provides as its costs estimates and guidance.

“We are taking a hard look at our campground footprint to determine what should be where, to minimize damage from future flooding. Hopefully what comes out of this is a plan where the campground and the park as a whole, can live with the river,” he said.

Media Contact: Chris Anunson, State Park Ranger, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 712-642-2069.

Coronavirus and fishing in Iowa survey underway

Anglers who bought a 2020 Iowa fishing license may receive an email from Louisiana State University encouraging them to participate in a survey to share their fishing experiences in Iowa during the coronavirus pandemic. The 5-minute survey is part of a nationwide study.

Media Contact: Jeff Kopaska, Fisheries Bureau, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-204-8021.

Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship issues guidance on proper disposal of unsolicited seed deliveries

DES MOINES, Iowa – Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig confirmed today that the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship is aware that individuals in Iowa have received unsolicited seed shipments from China and other countries.

The Department is asking anyone who receives unlabeled seed from an unknown origin to retain the original packaging and report it immediately at 515-281-5321. Recipients should not open the seed packet, plant the seed or attempt to destroy it. The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship or United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) will collect, analyze and properly destroy the seeds.

“The Iowa Department of Agriculture is working closely with the USDA to trace, collect and properly destroy these unknown seeds to protect our agriculture community from plant and seed-borne diseases,” said Secretary Naig.

Unlabeled seeds and seeds from unknown origins should never be planted. They pose the risk of introducing an invasive plant species or seed-borne diseases that do not currently exist in the United States. APHIS is working closely with the Department of Homeland Security’s Customs and Border Protection and State departments of agriculture to prevent the unlawful entry of prohibited seeds and protect U.S. agriculture from invasive pests and noxious weeds.

The USDA APHIS issued a news release stating this may be a “brushing scam,” where people receive unsolicited items from a seller who then posts false customer reviews to boost online sales.

Media Contact: Keely Coppess, Communications Director, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, 515-326-1616.

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.