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Get hooked on fishing during free fishing weekend June 4-6

Iowa residents can try fishing without buying a license on June 4, 5 and 6 as part of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) free fishing weekend. All other regulations remain in place.

"Lots of people caught the excitement of fishing last spring," said Joe Larscheid, chief of the Iowa DNR's Fisheries Bureau. "Hook more memories in 2021. Grab your tackle box, take the family, and get your lines in the water."

Free fishing weekend is a great time to learn how to fish, take your family fishing, or introduce a friend to fishing. Outdoor fun awaits at hundreds of Iowa lakes, thousands of miles of rivers or a neighborhood pond. Find a list of stocked lakes and ponds that are easily accessible in parks and along trails on the Iowa DNR's interactive Iowa Community Fisheries Atlas at www.iowadnr.gov/Fishing/Fish-Local.

Fun, hands-on fishing events will be offered across Iowa to help families new to fishing get started. Check the general fishing calendar on the DNR website at www.iowadnr.gov/fishing for a list of free fishing events.

Keep the fun going all summer long by buying a fishing license. It's easy to buy a fishing license with the DNR Go Outdoors Iowa online licensing system at <https://license.gooutdoorsiowa.com/Licensing/CustomLookup.aspx>. You can download the public Go Outdoors IA mobile app for iPhone and Android devices to buy and store your fishing license, so you will always have access to your license no matter where you are. Yearly, seven-day, or 24-hour fishing licenses are available.

Get tips for taking kids fishing and catching crappie and bluegills on the DNR website at www.iowadnr.gov/Fishing/Ready-to-Fish.

Media Contact: Joe Larscheid, Chief of Fisheries, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-201-3376.

Iowa's Scholastic Clay Target Program crowns brother and sister as International Bunker Trap Champions



Brother and sister Lexi and Cole Henning, of Wilton, bested all of the competition to win the Men's and Women's Individual titles at the Scholastic Clay Target Program's International Bunker Trap Championship held this past weekend at AVAD Hunt Club, near Coon Rapids. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.

A brother and sister from the Wilton Trap Team dominated the Scholastic Clay Target Program's International Bunker Trap Championship held this past weekend at AVAD Hunt Club, near Coon Rapids.

Cole Henning, a high school sophomore, and Lexi Henning, a 7th grader, bested all of the competition to win the Men's and Women's Individual titles. The Ankeny Jaguars won the team championship for the event. Upon completion of the event, athletes were invited to the National Junior Olympic Match in Hillsdale Mich., in July. The final results are below.

International Bunker Trap Championship

Men's Individual

1. Cole Henning, Wilton Trap Team: 112

2. Sam Gammon, Ankeny Jaguars: 107
3. Dylan Johnson, Ankeny Jaguars: 102

Women's Individual

1. Lexi Henning: 84
2. Erin Neppl, Ankeny Jaguars: 81
3. Madalynn Schroder, Pella Shooters Club: 65

Men's Collegiate Individual

1. Nathan Brandmeyer, Liberty University: 100

Women's Collegiate Individual

1. Sally Jo Geckler, Iowa Central Community College: 65

International Bunker Trap Team Standings

1. Ankeny Centennial Jaguars Shooting Team: 309
2. Carroll County Shooting Sports: 204

The Scholastic Clay Target Program is the largest, fastest growing, and most exciting youth clay target program in the US. Student athletes from elementary through high school and college have the opportunity to compete in sports such as trap, skeet, and sporting clays, as well as Olympic disciplines like bunker trap and international skeet. The next Championship competition is the International Skeet Championship next Saturday and Sunday, May 29-30, at the New Pioneer Gun Club, in Waukee.

The SCTP is a youth development program, first and foremost and we do this through the shooting sports and competitive shooting. The SCTP's mission is to help kids reach their highest potential in becoming the best athletes and young adults they can be. For more information on the Scholastic Clay Target Program in Iowa, contact Chris Van Gorp, DNR Shooting Sports Coordinator at 515-313-8048 or chris.vangorp@dnr.iowa.gov.

Media Contact: Chris Van Gorp, DNR Shooting Sports Coordinator, (515) 313-8048 or Chris.Vangorp@dnr.iowa.gov.

Badger Creek Wildlife Area - Popular hunting and fishing spot west of the Des Moines metro benefiting from change to prairie



The Iowa DNR has been removing invasive honeysuckle, cedars, mulberry, elm, ash and hedge at Badger Creek Wildlife Area as part of the area's overall habitat improvement plan, and replacing those trees with a mix of prairie grasses and flowers. The conversion will help reduce erosion to the lake and attract and support grassland birds to the area. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.

Van Meter, Iowa - A steady stream of people found their way to Badger Creek a few years ago, not for the quality fishing or to hunt pheasants or ducks, but for the food plot planted and managed for the mourning dove season. They were here for the sunflowers.

Engagement photos, senior pictures, family portraits and a flood of selfies – taken, shared and posted to social media – all originated from Badger Creek. The acres of sunflowers brought them here, many, if not most, for the first time.

“Badger Creek became an internet sensation and we had all kinds of people here to get their pictures with the sunflowers,” said Chad Paup, wildlife biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Sitting just 20 minutes from Des Moines in northeast Madison County, the 1,100-acre Badger Creek Wildlife Area, State Recreation Area and lake is popular with anglers, hunters and casual wildlife viewers. “It’s a very popular lake for fishing, ice fishing, kayaking and duck hunting, particularly for teal in October on the shallow water west of the bridge,” Paup said.

The Iowa DNR has been working in the Badger Creek watershed for more than a decade transforming the area around the lake into a diverse, quality prairie that reduces erosion and increases benefits to grassland birds. But getting here took a lot of time, effort and money.

Through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Nonpoint Source Program, the Badger Creek watershed project coordinator engaged neighboring landowners willing to incorporate conservation practices, like cover crops, grassed waterways and the

conservation reserve program, to reduce the amount of nutrients and sediment from entering the lake.

Within the wildlife area itself, they targeted invasive honeysuckle, cedars, mulberry, elm, ash and hedge for removal. “We put a lot of money into removing honeysuckle, to control the erosion coming from the wildlife area itself,” Paup said. “If a person hadn’t been to Badger Creek in a few years, they might not recognize the place.”

While tree removal has been a significant part of the transformation, there are two oak stands, one to the north and the other to the south, that will remain and be the focus of a timber stand improvement project to encourage oak regeneration.

He said the Badger Creek project broke new ground, literally and figuratively, when it came to watershed projects. It was the first project in the state to include creek signs along Iowa’s roads to make people aware that this particular creek drains to Badger Creek Lake, and, in partnership with Iowa State University, it included the innovative practice of placing prairie strips in between the corn and soybean food plots demonstrating the new erosion control practice to landowners.

Gone are the invasive and non-target trees and in its place is a diverse mix of native Iowa prairie grasses and wildflowers, and while it takes time for a young prairie to express itself, the grassland birds have already found it.

“We wanted to address the tree issue first, which we did, and now we have a plethora of grassland bird species out here in the developing prairie,” Paup said.

The battle to keep the prairie free from unwanted invaders is constant, he said, and fire will be used to manage the prairie and kill off any young trees.

“Upland birds avoid nesting near standing trees because of avian predators, so once we cut the stand by the creek on the southwest side, the area will have the potential for more nesting opportunities,” Paup said.

Sitting in the parking lot at the west boat ramp, the sounds of pheasants crowing and male bobwhites whistling stand out from the chorus. In the middle of the week in the middle of May, the lake has a dozen or so people fishing in between the raindrops. Two bald eagles left their nearby nest looking for an easy fish dinner. Two warblers nervously flitted from brush pile to brush pile. This place looks nothing like it did five years ago and the best is yet to come.

Fishing the lake

Andy Jansen has rarely been to Badger Creek and not seen someone there.

“The lake gets tons of use from what we see,” said Jansen, fisheries biologist for the Iowa DNR.

And for good reason. Badger Creek has good numbers of 6 to 8-inch bluegills and a huge class 7 to 8-inch crappies. “There are some crappies in there up to 16 inches,” he said. “There’s a good largemouth bass population up to 18 inches with a few fish over 20. The lake hosts a bass fishing tournament every Monday night.”

There are also good numbers of 16 to 24-inch channel catfish and a small but mighty population of hybrid striped bass up to 20 inches.

“It has some of the biggest redear sunfish – 10-plus inches - they’re just giants,” Jansen said.

In 2018, the DNR began putting walleye fry into the sediment retention structure on the east side and allowed these newly hatched fish to grow to two inches before being released into the lake. Those fish are now 14 to 16 inches and are showing up in angler’s catch.

Jansen’s crew has been working to improve the fish structure by placing brush piles along the roadbed and near the fishing jetties. Looking forward once the watershed work is complete, Badger Creek Lake would be in line for an in-lake project to deepen and armor the shoreline.

Badger Creek Wildlife Area has two boat ramps with courtesy docks, fishing jetties and a modern vault latrine.

Media Contact: Chad Paup, Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-238-5708.

Learn to Hunt program opens registration for Field To Fork Deer Hunting Program

DES MOINES - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is offering a six month workshop to teach skills needed to hunt, field dress and cook white-tailed deer to individuals who have little to no archery hunting experience.

This workshop consists of summer long archery practices, a fall workshop and hunting opportunities throughout Iowa’s archery season. All sessions are lead by instructors that possess the experience to teach skills necessary to become efficient archers and bow hunters.

“For those interested in the challenge of bow 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 spend the summer becoming proficient archers with bows provided by Iowa DNR. As summer progresses, they’ll learn basic strategies for hunting deer such as proper equipment, where to hunt, safe shooting practices and tree stand placement. During the fall, they will learn how to field dress, clean and cook deer from professional butchers and local chefs.

The course will be hosted in Adel, Altoona and Council Bluffs and is geared for participants 21 and older. Applications will be accepted beginning May 26th for all locations. Space is limited so those interested are encourage to apply online right away.

Once accepted, participants will be invited to register for the course. The cost is \$238.50 which includes tags, licenses, books and archery loaner equipment. For more information and to begin the application process, go to <https://forms.gle/ACJQwij96BdGnw4g8>

The program is provided through a partnership with Raised at Full Draw, The Iowa Bowhunters Association, Whitetails Unlimited and various local partners and retailers. 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.

Boaters encouraged to avoid Heytman's Landing and Village Creek boat ramps on Mississippi River

LANSING – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) urges boaters to use caution at the Heytman's Landing and Lansing Village Creek boat accesses with lower water predicted through the week. Boats could run aground as river levels drop due to a partial closure of the boat channel at the mouth of the creek and an obstruction on the channel going under the bridge on the main channel side.

Boaters are encouraged to seek other ramps in the area, including New Albin Army Road, north of Lansing. There are many ramps on the Wisconsin side of the river. The Big Slough and Winneshiek Slough landings are directly across the Lansing Bridge in Wisconsin. Blackhawk Park area has multiple ramps and Dairyland Power access south of Genoa has plenty of parking.

The Iowa DNR is working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to obtain permits to dredge the boat access channel and secure a suitable site for the dredged material at Lansing Village Creek.

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