



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

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How Do You Outdoors? Visit the DNR Building at the Iowa State Fair for a Chance to Win Prizes and More!

DES MOINES, Iowa – Visit the DNR Building at the Iowa State Fair, August 12-22, for a chance to win prizes, talk to DNR experts, attend outdoor-themed presentations, and more!

With the theme for this year's DNR fair building "How Do You Outdoors?," visitors can vote for their favorite outdoor activity at different stations throughout the building, including: hunting, fishing, target shooting, hiking, camping, boating, watching wildlife, backyard care and helping the environment. Every vote counts as an entry into a prize drawing for dozens of great prizes, including:

- Saylorville Marina - Half Day Boat Rental - \$449 (2 total)
- Red Rock Marina - Half Day Boat Rental - \$449 (2 total)
- Henry - .22 Mini Bolt Youth Rifle - \$304 (2 total)
- Jax Outdoors - Discover Iowa's Great Outdoors Pack - \$300
- Big Creek Marina - 1 Hour Double Hydrobike Rental - \$30 (2 total)
- Big Creek Marina - 1 Hour Paddle Boat Rental - \$25 (2 total)
- Big Creek Marina - 1 Hour SUP Rental for Two - \$50 (2 total)
- Big Creek Marina - 1 Hour Double Kayak Rental for Four - \$60 (2 total)
- Big Creek Marina - 1 Hour Canoe Rental for Four - \$50 (2 total)
- Big Creek Marina - 1 Hour Single Kayak Rental for Two - \$50 (2 Total)
- Honey Creek State Park Resort – Golf outing for four guests, green fees and cart rentals - \$250
- She Goes Outdoors - Outdoors Pack - \$150 (1 total)

- Premier Metal Art - Metal Sign - \$150 (1 total)
- Olofson Shooting Range - Browning Clay Master Shooting Glasses & 1 Hour Range Pass - \$50 each (2 total)
- Seven Oaks Gift Cards - \$25 each (4 total)
- Bass Pro Shops Gift Cards - \$25 each (4 total)
- Scheels Gift Cards - \$25 each (4 total)

New to the fair building in 2021 is an art display provided by the Rain Campaign showing the benefits of water conservation; boats and campers; and a unique children's playhouse constructed from all-native Iowa woods. Visitors also can enjoy the popular large fish aquariums, live birds and turtles in the outdoor courtyard, or even purchase a one-year subscription to the DNR's Iowa Outdoors magazine for \$15 and receive a free t-shirt, or purchase your hunting tags or fishing licenses.

The DNR courtyard provides a nice shady area with many benches and picnic tables for families to enjoy. The courtyard stage will have several interesting presentations by outdoor experts on a variety of topics, such as Dutch oven cooking, state park hidden secrets, lawn conservation ideas, and live animal demonstrations. Find the complete courtyard schedule, along with all the details about the DNR fair displays and state fair promotions at www.iowadnr.gov/statefair

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Sedan Bottoms Wildlife Area offers outdoor recreation on a scale rarely found in Iowa



Blooming bidens, sedges and annual and perennial smartweed have replaced reed canary grass on portions of Sedan Bottoms Wildlife Area, providing high quality food, brood rearing habitat and attracting an impressive number of pollinators to the area. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.

Exline, Iowa - Heading east for two miles on gravel from the Appanoose County town of Exline leads to the 7,300-acre Sedan Bottoms Wildlife Area, an important birding spot that is popular for duck hunting and home to legendary Iowa stags.

The expansive area is a mix of wetlands, upland timber, bottomland timber and grasslands supporting diverse wildlife at a get-away-from-it-all place.

“If you want an opportunity to enjoy a wildlife area away from other people, Sedan Bottoms is for you,” said Heath Van Waus, wildlife biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Sedan Bottoms is an oasis for a number of Iowa birds in need of critical habitat, like red-shouldered hawks, chimney swifts, sedge wrens, bobolinks, Eastern whip-poor-wills, Acadian flycatchers, Henslow’s sparrows and more. Given its size, habitat diversity and location to other large blocks of public and private land, both in Iowa and northern Missouri, as well as its importance on the migration route, Sedan Bottoms was dedicated as an Iowa Bird Conservation Area in 2013.

Its habitat diversity also supports an impressive reptile community including western ribbon snakes, prairie ringneck snakes, northern water snakes and state threatened diamondback water snakes.

The hydrology that makes Sedan Bottoms so dynamic also brings with it the continuous battle that is reed canary grass, an unwanted, hip busting invader that loves moist soil.

“With the weather conditions during the spring and summer months in the last few years we’ve been fortunate enough to get out and implement some of these management practices we want done,” he said.

Van Waus and the Rathbun Wildlife Unit have been using different techniques to suppress the canary grass and add diversity to the plant community. They’ve applied chemicals from above and from the back of utility vehicles to get to the hard to access places. They’ve mowed large sections, used prescribed fire and, when possible, disked in the fall.

The native seedbank that still lives under the invasive reed canary grass and now given way to bidens, sedges and annual and perennial smartweed to outcompete the canary grass and provide high quality food and brood rearing habitat. When its blooming, the number of pollinators here is beyond impressive.

“Every wildlife area is a little different and here, our goal at Sedan Bottoms is to convert a couple hundred acres each year away from canary grass using existing research and things that have worked in the past as well as trying new approaches, to see what works and what doesn’t,” he said. Projects are spread around the area to create grassland diversity.

Van Waus has added a small grain component in the last year from the cover crop seeds raised by the DNR. The 60-80 acres in small grains provides food for birds, is used by deer for browse and grassland birds to raise their broods.

His staff applied the seeds in the fall using a broadcast spreader and/or drill to let the rain and snow work it into the ground. They used the same technique to install food plots that can handle a little wet soil.

“We’ve had better success getting those seeds to take by planting in the fall when mother nature is little more forgiving,” he said.

On this early August morning, wildlife staff have placed boards into the water control structure on Brush Creek, a tributary to the nearby Chariton River, under the watchful eye of a barred owl.

Brush Creek flows through Sedan Bottoms and will back up water through a system of oxbows and other water control structures that will divert the water to the sub impoundments creating a series of shallow wetlands.

Much of the now converted canary grass will have sheet water underneath it, which is great for hunting teal along with numerous other waterfowl species, he said. “When there’s water in the marsh and the acorns are dropping from the swamp white oaks and pin oaks, waterfowl numbers can be pretty impressive,” he said as a pair of wood ducks flew off the creek right on cue.

“It’s walk-in hunting only here - there’s no boats – so you have to carry everything with you, which is a different kind of experience. The sheer size allows most hunters to find hunting spots away from other hunters,” Van Waus said.

That size, along with its location, makes Sedan Bottoms attractive to nonresidents during deer season.

“There’s world class whitetails down here, but they’re not that easy to get to,” he said.

Etcetera

- An old railroad grade running three miles from north to south through the area is a good place to hike, or access birding or hunting spots far from the gravel road. A parking lot off 285th Avenue by the railroad grade is the site of the former town of Sedan, the namesake of the wildlife area.
- 285th Avenue also divides Sedan Bottoms with around 1,150 acres in the north section serving as a waterfowl refuge.
- For those who enjoy hunting for wild edibles, Sedan Bottoms offers a variety of mushrooms, wild asparagus, wild raspberries and blackberries.
- The Rathbun Wildlife Unit started doing quail surveys to gauge quail responses from different management practices. Staff conduct whistling (male) counts in June and covey counts in November.

Media Contact: Heath Van Waus, Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 641-203-6179.

Iowa DNR Conservation Officers Conclude Poaching Investigation

Iowa Conservation Officers concluded a six-month-long investigation into felony weapons charges and wildlife poaching violations involving a deer hunting party in Johnson and Linn counties.

The case began with a TIP (Turn in Poachers) call to conservation officers about a buck deer that was unlawfully shot from the roadway onto private property in northern Johnson County in December 2020. The ensuing investigation uncovered a variety of deer poaching violations that occurred over several years. Multiple violations occurred in 2020 including: hunting out of season, hunting without proper licenses, wanton waste of wildlife, overlimiting, unlawful method of take, tagging and reporting violations, illegal waterfowl hunting, and felon in possession of a firearm. The case resulted in a total of one felony weapons charge, 57 hunting related charges, and multiple written warnings to a hunting group made up of four individuals.

Larry Jones (Cedar Rapids), a convicted felon, pleaded guilty to 10 hunting related charges and is awaiting trial for a felony weapons charge in Linn County. Jones faces 30 additional hunting related charges in Johnson County and is currently awaiting trial. Steve Sinnett (Swisher), pleaded guilty to 13 hunting related charges in Johnson County. Tania Holdren (Cedar Rapids) pleaded guilty to four deer hunting charges in Johnson County. Shane Yarrington (Cedar Rapids) pleaded guilty to one deer hunting charge in Johnson County.

Iowa DNR conservation officers encourage the public to continue to use the Turn In Poachers hotline (1-800-532-2020) and website (<https://programs.iowadnr.gov/tip/>) to

report fish and wildlife crimes.

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Learn to Hunt program opens registration for Sept. 11 waterfowl workshop

DES MOINES - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is offering a program to teach skills needed to hunt, field dress and cook waterfowl to youth who have little to no waterfowl hunting experience.

The workshop will feature knowledge and skills building sessions with instructors that will provide hands-on learning as well as a live- fire wingshooting.

“For those interested in the challenge of waterfowl hunting as a means of sourcing their own protein, 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 waterfowl such as proper equipment, where to hunt, safe shooting practices, and how to field dress, butcher and cook them. The wingshooting session will provide lessons on shooting techniques and range time for those looking to improve their shooting skills.

The course is designed for participants 16 years of age and older and will be held Sept. 11, from 2 to 7 p.m., at Olofson Shooting Range near Polk City. The cost is \$20 and space is limited so early registration is encouraged.

For more information and to begin the registration process, go to <http://events.constantcontact.com/register/event?llr=dep4qyuab&oeidk=a07eidon9y7f41404ea>

The program is provided through a partnership with the Iowa DNR and Delta Waterfowl. 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, 515.350.8091.

Scouts volunteer angling instructor recognized for outstanding fishing program

Marsha Bailey, a volunteer certified angling instructor with Boys Scouts of America, is the 2021 recipient of the Brass Bluegill award from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Fish Iowa! program.

Bailey has been involved with *Fish Iowa!* since 2017, offering fishing programs to all levels of scouts and can be found at Cub Scout Day Camps, Twilight Camps, or helping

a Scout unit with a fishing activity. She serves as a merit badge counselor for the Fishing Merit Badge, Fly Fishing, and Fish and Wildlife Management. She also helps educate other volunteers and parents on basic fishing skills including knots, casting, stewardship, conservation and regulations, as well as equipment maintenance, so they have the confidence to take a Scout unit out and have a successful event.

She initiated, and now chairs, the fishing committee at the Mid Iowa Scout Council. The committee helps Scout units with fishing outings and maintains the equipment at the Council site and the Council camp. In 2020, they still managed to hold socially distanced and responsible fishing events, just on a much smaller scale. Bailey has also offered virtual *Fishing Basics* courses on a national level to other volunteers who teach youth and serves as a course director for the Certified Angling Instructor's course offered through Scouts BSA and partners with the International Game Fish Association (IGFA) to offer their Passports to Fishing program to youth.

Bailey finds volunteering very rewarding. She enjoys helping youth catch their first fish and the smiles it brings to their faces. She notes that fishing builds confidence and independence for youth who are able to put a worm on the hook on their own, or parents who develop basic fishing skills because they want to go fishing with their child, but have never fished themselves.

She is an incredible advocate for fishing, sharing, "I went fishing with my dad as a youth but didn't do much after graduating from high school. Then when my son was a cub scout in first grade, he wanted to go fishing. I've been fishing with youth ever since."

Bailey enjoys fishing because it is inexpensive and people of all abilities can fish. "Fishing does so many things for a youth like building confidence," Bailey said. "It's a skill they can have for life. Fishing brings families together, outside, enjoying each other and unplugged from video games or screens."

Bailey will receive her award, along with a set of fishing poles to use with her programs, at the August 12 Natural Resources Commission Meeting. The Brass Bluegill award has been presented each year since 1996 to an outstanding local program that exemplifies the goals of the Fish Iowa! Angler Education program.

Media Contact: Barb Gigar, training specialist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-494-3891.

2021 Volunteer Fire Department – Wildland Fire Assistance Grants Available

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Forestry - Fire Program, working in coordination with the US Forest Service, has grant money available for Iowa's rural fire departments to help battle wildfires.

The grants offer funding assistance for wildfire suppression equipment, slide-in units, hoses, nozzles, adapters, portable tanks and pumps, personal protective equipment and

communications equipment. Additionally, if a fire department has a special need that can be tied directly to wildfire suppression, this grant allows for such special requests.

The grant provides 50 percent reimbursement for wildland fire equipment with a maximum reimbursement grant of \$3,500 per department. Applications are due on Oct. 15.

Gail Kantak, state wildland fire supervisor for the Iowa DNR, said fire departments should send her a Wildland Fire Report whenever they respond to a wildland fire or provide assistance to a prescribed or controlled wildland fire. Departments actively returning these reports receive priority points in the Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant application scoring process.

All Iowa volunteer fire departments were mailed information about the 2021 Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant. The grant application package and the Wildland Fire Report form are also available online at www.iowadnr.gov/fire.

For more information, contact Gail Kantak at gail.kantak@dnr.iowa.gov, or 515-689-0083