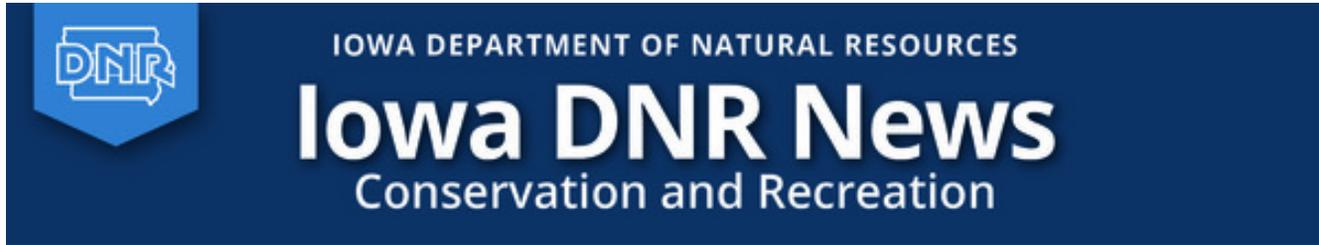


July 3 Iowa Outdoors

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Red Rock's wild side

The evidence was easy to see that hunters had found the recently mowed 10-acre sunflower field at the Red Rock Wildlife Area on the first day of dove season – 25-30 vehicles were parked along the road whose drivers had abandoned their bucket seats for real buckets set few rows deep in the remaining sunflowers waiting for the nation's most popular game bird to come rocketing through.

Mourning doves are one of many species of migrating birds to use Red Rock Wildlife Area on their journey each spring and fall. While the fall migration attracts the attention of hunters, the spring migration is two to three times larger. Both migrations include ducks, geese and white pelicans, but large numbers of shorebirds are attracted to the Red Rock mudflats to rest and refuel for their long journey.

“Shorebirds like mudflats. Red Rock is one of the better places in Iowa to view shorebird migration because we have plenty of mudflats,” said Todd Gosselink wildlife biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for the Red Rock Wildlife Area.

Other migrants follow behind using the migration itself as a food source. A record number of bald eagles - 900 - came through the Red Rock area during a spring migration, with a few staying behind to become year round residents.

Flocks of white pelicans were already using the Runnells and Big Hartford marshes, two of the more popular marshes for duck hunters. At roughly 450 and 500 acres respectively, these marshes can hold thousands of ducks in the fall, if the conditions are right.

Mudflats and marshes are just two habitat types here; the Red Rock Wildlife Area also has prairie, timber, upland and bottomland, riverine and fine windblown sand habitats.

Managing habitat can be challenging. Managing habitat surrounding a flood control reservoir built to hold enough water to cover 65,000 acres is a whole different thing.

Gosselink is responsible for managing 28,000 acres of land west of the mile long bridge. Everything along the Red Rock Wildlife Area is dependent upon the lake and high water is an annual event.

The bottomlands are usually under water each spring as the lake, managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, holds water to prevent spring flooding. Once the water recedes, a local partner will plant beans or corn, depending upon when they can get in.

“The soil is rich and if it doesn’t flood out, they will have excellent yields,” Gosselink said.

This annual farming is a strategy to prevent cottonwoods, willows and cockleburs from taking over the area. The agreement also requires the partner to leave a small percentage of crops standing as a food plot for wildlife.

“The bottomland often has disturbed soil and early successional plants which is exactly what pheasants and quail prefer. If it doesn’t flood in the spring, we can have good reproduction,” he said while watching a rooster pheasant zig-zag ahead of him on a bottomland gravel road.

Gosselink likes to say that this flood zone on the Red Rock Wildlife Area is the wildest place in Iowa. There are no lights and no residents in the immediate area. At night, beyond the occasional set of headlights, the area is completely dark.

The darkness and remoteness of the area does bring with it its share of headaches. An open gate is seen by some as an invitation to do as they please.

“It’s a difficult situation because we want to provide access but if we leave gates unlocked, it becomes a dumping area or off-roading area. It’s a balancing act,” he said.

Gosselink’s staff plan trash collection days every so often to clean the areas, spending scarce budget resources to remove old appliances, tires, household waste – even a dead horse.

While a few bad actors can cause some damage and leave a mess, the Red Rock Wildlife Area is open to everyone.

The mix of habitats and uses means ample opportunity exists for wildlife watchers and hunters alike to enjoy the area all year long.

The timber attracts deer and turkey hunters. Sunflower plots attract dove hunters. Marshes mean ducks and geese. Upland and prairie attract pheasant and quail hunters.

Don’t like to hunt? The diverse forest tree species offers unique hiking opportunities and provides colorful and extended fall leaf viewing.

“It can be fun to see the fall colors from a boat on the lake,” Gosselink said. “And it’s only 40 minutes from Des Moines.”

New Ramps Expand Access

The Iowa DNR has used a combination of grants and partnerships to improve and expand the number of boat ramps on the marshes and river, including a new ramp set to open in 2018 on the north shore one mile west of the mile long bridge.

The new boat ramp, funded in part by a grant from the federal government through the Iowa Department of Transportation, is on a finger on the lake protected from wind and waves, and likely be favored by kayakers.

Other recent projects have improved access to boat ramps at Box Cars and added two new concrete boat ramps at Runnells Marsh.

Red Rock History

According to Native American lore, the red color of the sandstone outcropping on the bluffs overlooking the Des Moines River came from the blood of bison spilled on the rocks.

A town of the same name sits at the bottom of the reservoir just west of the mile long bridge.

The same area as the town was home to the second largest sycamore tree in the United States at the time, whose stump is still visible today at normal pool. The tree was used by Native Americans to come together to negotiate treaties and earned the name Peace Tree.

More recent history was uncovered a few years ago when a deer hunter reported finding a bone near a beach that was determined to be from a mammoth.

Media Contact: Todd Gosselink, Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-238-6936.

All Star team announced for Iowa Scholastic Clay Target Program

Competitors from 166 Iowa high school and 12 collegiate teams have competed for state championships in June in American trap, doubles trap, handicap trap, sporting clays, skeet and international trap and skeet.

Championship shoots were held at the Cedar Falls Gun Club, Mahaska County Izaak Walton League in Oskaloosa, New Pioneer Gun Club in Waukee, and the AVAD Hunt Club in Coon Rapids.

Six boys and six girls who scored the highest in trap, skeet and sporting clay were named to the All-State team. For a complete list of results, go to <http://sssfonline.org>

2017 Iowa All State Boys

Jaydon Biles, Princetown, North Scott Trap Team

Eric Long, Davenport, North Scott Trap Team

Thomas Keeshan, Princeton, North Scott Trap Team

Mason Caruthers, Urbandale, Des Moines Area Clay Crushers

Brent Alman, Bettendorf, Pleasant Valley High School Trap Team

Colten Uitermarkt, Otley, Pella Christian Eagles

2017 Iowa All State Girls

Nicole Breese, Solon, Solon Spartan Trapshooting Team

Emma Von Donselaar, Oskaloosa, Pella Christian Eagles

Alexis Louck, Eldridge, North Scott Trap Team

Sydney Boot, Pella, Pella Shooters Club, Inc.

Cheyanna Sheaffer, Pella, Pella Shooters Club, Inc.

Kennedy Vandevort, Pella, Pella Shooters Club, Inc.

For 2017, more than 3,700 athletes competed in the program, breaking more than 2 million clay targets.

Iowa qualifies 17 teams for nationals

Iowa has qualified 17 teams for the national 2017 Scholastic Clay Target Program and Scholastic Action Shooting Program National Championships tournament July 8-15 in Marengo, Ohio.

The teams are Albia High School, Ankeny Centennial Jaguars Trap Team, Charles City High School, Cherokee County Youth Shooting Sports, Clear Creek Amana High School Trap, Easton Valley Trapshooting Team, Little Ankeny Jaguars Trap Team, Lyon County Straight Shooters, Maquoketa Cardinals Varsity, North Scott Trap Team, Oskaloosa Shooting Team, Ottumwa High School, Pella Christian Eagles, Pella Shooters Club, Inc., Pleasant Valley High School Trap Team, Sibley Ocheyedan Shooting Generals and the Solon Spartan Trapshooting Team.

McIntosh State Park boat ramp reopens

The McIntosh State Park boat ramp, one of Clear Lake's busiest accesses, is now open for use.

Renovation of the boat ramp began just after the Memorial Day weekend and finished just in time for Fourth of July boaters.

Boaters can now enjoy a 3-lane ramp that is wider and longer. The parking lot associated with the ramp has approximately 60 parking spaces for cars with trailers, and the area has a rest room, picnic area with a shelter, playground and beach nearby.

McIntosh Woods State Park is located on the northwest side of Clear Lake between the towns of Clear Lake and Ventura.

State park cabins available this weekend

Currently the following state parks have one or more cabins available to rent for the coming weekend:

Lacey-Keosauqua 319-293-3502

Waubonsie 712-382-2788

Reservations for these cabins can be made online until midnight tonight or through the call center (1-877-427-2757) until 7 p.m., July 3, for a Friday-to-Friday stay. After midnight, the cabins become available for two-night minimum stays but must be reserved through the individual park's office.

Space available in upcoming hunter education classes

Hunter Education Classroom courses are offered by knowledgeable and certified volunteer instructors and Iowa Department of Natural Resources Conservation Officers. Classroom courses are typically 12-15 hours in length and are held over 2 to 3 sessions (days). In order to receive certification, a student must attend all sessions and pass the final exam.

Iowa law requires that anyone born after January 1, 1972 must be certified in hunter education before they are eligible to purchase an Iowa hunting license.

Upcoming Hunter Education Classes

July 13, Dysart, Union Middle School

July 20, Panora, Guthrie County Conservation Board

July 24, Homestead, Amana Sportsmans Club

Aug. 2, Newton, Izaak Walton League - Newton

Aug. 2, Palo, Palo Outdoors

Aug. 3, Toledo, Pioneer Hi-Bred

Aug. 3, Indianola, Izaak Walton League - Indianola

Aug. 4, Nashua, Nashua Fish and Hunt Club

Aug. 7, Elkader, Osborne Nature Center

Aug. 7, Sabula, Sabula Izaak Walton League

Aug. 8, Hawarden, Sioux County Conservation Board, Oak Grove Park

Aug. 12, Waterloo, Hawkeye Community College – Waterloo

Aug. 12, Hamburg, Agrivision

Aug. 15, Birmingham, Southeastern Iowa Sportsman's Society

Aug. 17, Marshalltown, Izaak Walton League - Marshalltown

Aug. 17, Columbus Junction, American Legion – Columbus Junction

Aug. 19, Vinton, Izaak Walton League - Vinton

Aug. 19, Villisca, Villisca Community Building

Aug. 19, Decorah, Northeast Fox and Coon Club

Aug. 22, Clinton, Izaak Walton League - Clinton

Aug. 22, Ames, Izaak Walton League – Ames

Aug. 24, Rockford, Floyd County Conservation Board, Fossil & Prairie Center

Aug. 26, Fairbank, Fairbank Gun Club

Aug. 26, Aurelia, Aurelia Shelter House

Aug. 26, Muscatine, Muscatine County Conservation Board, Environmental Learning Center

Aug. 28, Humboldt, Ox Bow Park

For more information on these and other hunter education opportunities, go to www.iowadnr.gov/huntered