



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Trout fishing under a canopy of fall colors

Enjoy the spectacular colors and cool weather this fall fishing for Iowa's prize trout in northeast Iowa's hundreds of miles of trout streams. From easily accessible streams in state or county parks, to those found in Iowa's most wild and remote natural spaces, there are plenty of places to catch rainbow, brown and brook trout.

"It's a busy place this time of year," said Mike Steuck, Iowa DNR fisheries supervisor for interior streams. "Anglers can test their skills with lots of wild fish in these streams."

View some of the best fall colors in the narrow valley of Little Paint, west of Harpers Ferry. Look for trout behind larger boulders and under rock ledges. Let your lure or bait drift around the boulders and just in front of the ledges.

Catch stream-reared brown trout up to 16 inches and 10- to 12-inch stocked rainbow trout in the Maquoketa River. Miles of public access spots line the river in Clayton and Delaware counties. Find rainbow trout in pools and runs while brown trout will be near wood habitat.

The best chance to catch all three trout species in one trip is at Spring Branch Creek, southeast of Manchester. There is great public access to more than 1.5 miles of coldwater stream.

Learn to "read" a stream, to identify habitats that offer food and cover. Trout are not randomly scattered in a stream. They locate themselves along the edge of the current flow near protective cover. The stream current carries food to the trout while it waits.

Trout try to bulk up in the fall for winter and are always hungry. Brown and brook trout lay their eggs in nests called redds in October and November. The eggs stay in these areas of cleaned gravel on the stream bottom until they hatch in late winter or early spring. Be careful where you walk to avoid stepping in or directly above these nests.

"Brown trout are wary, be as quiet and hidden as you can," said Steuck. "If you can see them, they have already seen you and probably will not bite."

Fish overcast and gray days when using spin fishing gear. Trout are less wary of lures at this time. If fly fishing, target midday on sunny and bright days. In cooler fall temperatures, bright warm days can stimulate an insect hatch. Dry flies can still be productive, but the insect hatches become more sporadic and less intense than in the summer.

Early fall is grasshopper time, especially for brown trout. Gather them in the cool of the early morning. Imitation grasshoppers also work well along with nightcrawlers, particularly following light rainfall.

Iowa's trout season is open all year. Iowa's trout streams are too. About 105 coldwater trout streams await anglers in ten northeast Iowa counties. DNR fisheries staff stock trout in 50 streams weekly through October. All October stockings are unannounced.

Anglers need to have a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout. The daily limit is five trout per licensed angler with a possession limit of ten.

Learn more about Iowa's trout streams, including maps, amenities and stocking schedules on the Iowa DNR's website at fishing.iowadnr.gov.

Media Contact: Mike Steuck, Fisheries Supervisor for Interior Streams, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 563-927-3276.

Zebra mussels found in Big Spirit Lake

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is watching Big Spirit Lake after a resident found a single juvenile zebra mussel attached to a rock in the southwest side of the lake on Sept. 23.

Biologists at the DNR's Boone research facility also found a single larval zebra mussel in a water sample collected from Big Spirit Lake in August. The DNR collects water samples and deploys settlement samplers in lakes across the state each summer to monitor for the invasive zebra mussel.

The first zebra mussels in the Iowa Great Lake chain were discovered in the fall of 2012 and have increased in numbers since. Big Spirit Lake flows over a spillway into the rest of the Okoboji Chain.

"Finding both a zebra mussel veliger and juvenile indicates to us that zebra mussels have been introduced into Big Spirit Lake," said Kim Bogenschutz, the DNR's Aquatic Invasive Species Program coordinator. "It's too early to tell if there is an established population in the lake, but it is likely since the other lakes in the chain have growing populations."

Zebra mussels look like small, D-shaped clams that have alternating light and dark bands. Most are less than one inch long. They are filter feeders that can form dense clusters as they attach to hard underwater surfaces. In the case of large infestations, they may interfere with aquatic food chains, kill native mussels, clog water intakes, increase algae blooms, and cover beaches with dead shells.

The City of Spirit Lake recently completed upgrades to their drinking water intakes in the lake in preparation for a possible infestation.

Biologists will inspect boat hoists and docks after they come out this fall for storage. “These structures are quickly colonized and are good indicators of how prevalent mussels are in the lake,” said Mike Hawkins, Spirit Lake District fisheries management biologist.

The Spirit Lake Fish Hatchery uses raw water from Big Spirit Lake in the production facility. Zebra mussels can be filtered and killed in the water used to haul fish from the hatchery to other water bodies. The Spirit Lake Fish Hatchery, along with other Iowa hatcheries, has implemented plans for many years to prevent the spread of zebra mussels and other aquatic invasive species when stocking fish.

“Although we can treat the water leaving the hatchery, zebra mussels can clog pipes and valves, making the infrastructure at the Spirit Lake Hatchery vulnerable to the infestation,” said Hawkins. “Important upgrades are needed to protect the facility.”

The Iowa Great Lakes community has provided important leadership in fighting aquatic invasive species in Iowa.

“This strong partnership and the continuation of these efforts remains our best weapon against these invaders,” Hawkins said. Currently there is no effective treatment to control zebra mussels once they have infested a lake.

Young zebra mussels are microscopic and can be unintentionally transported with water in bilges, live wells or bait buckets. Adult zebra mussels can attach to boats, trailers and aquatic vegetation.

It is illegal to possess or transport prohibited aquatic invasive species, such as zebra mussels, in Iowa. Boaters must also drain all water from boats and equipment before leaving a water access and must keep drain plugs removed or opened during transport.

“Boaters and anglers can unintentionally spread zebra mussels and other aquatic invasive species if they do not take the proper precautions - clean, drain, dry - after each time out on the water,” said Bogenschutz.

- CLEAN any plants, animals or mud from boat and equipment before leaving a water body.
- DRAIN water from all equipment (motor, live well, bilge, transom well, bait bucket) before leaving a water body.
- DRY anything that comes into contact with water (boats, trailers, equipment, boots, clothing, dogs). Before transporting to another waterbody either: Spray your boat and trailer with hot, high-pressure water; or Dry your boat and equipment for at least 5 days.
- Never release plants, fish or animals into a water body unless they came out of that water body and empty unwanted bait in the trash.

More information about aquatic invasive species and a list of infested waters can be found in the Iowa Fishing Regulations booklet.

If you find a zebra mussel, please note its location and contact your local fisheries office or the Aquatic Invasive Species Program in Boone.

Media Contact: Mike Hawkins, Spirit Lake Fish Hatchery at 712-336-1840 or Kim Bogenschutz, Boone Wildlife Research Station at 515-432-2823.

Iowa DNR to host chronic wasting disease meetings Oct. 11 in Harpers Ferry and Waukon and Oct. 17 in Elkader

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources has scheduled three meetings in northeast Iowa to discuss the results from the special scientific deer collection effort conducted during late January and February around Harpers Ferry and in the northern portion of Allamakee County. The collection effort was an important part of the Iowa DNR's chronic wasting disease (CWD) monitoring.

Meetings are scheduled Oct. 11 at 2 p.m., in the Harpers Ferry Community Center, 234 Fourth Street, in Harpers Ferry, and at 6:30 p.m., at the Waukon Banquet Center, 612 Rossville Road, in Waukon. On Oct. 17, a meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. in the Keystone Area Education Association building, 1400 Second Street NW, in Elkader.

"This meeting gives us a chance to present the results of our special collection effort," said Terry Haindfield, wildlife biologist for the Iowa DNR who is leading the effort to combat CWD. "We will also discuss where we go from here, how hunters can submit a tissue sample and how to slow the spread."

The meetings coincide with the opening of Iowa's deer hunting seasons. Archery season opens Oct. 1 and the early muzzleloader season opens Oct. 14. The DNR works with hunters to collect tissue samples for testing.

The Iowa DNR's wildlife staff sets an annual goal of collecting 4,500 samples. Since testing began in 2002, more than 62,500 tissue samples have been collected and tested looking for the presence of CWD in Iowa's wild deer herd. The effort has focused on portions of northeast and eastern Iowa near Wisconsin, Illinois, and south-central Iowa near Missouri, where CWD has been detected. Additional testing has been conducted in Pottawattamie, Cerro Gordo and Davis counties, following positive tests from captive facilities. All counties have at least 15 samples taken to check for CWD. The disease has been found in every state around Iowa.

CWD is a neurological disease belonging to the family of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) or prion diseases. It attacks the brain of infected deer and elk causing the animals to lose weight, display abnormal behavior, lose body functions and die. It is always fatal to the infected animal.

The Iowa DNR has more information about CWD and other infectious disease online at www.iowadnr.gov/cwd.

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