



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# Iowa DNR News

## Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Fall urban trout stocking begins October 14

Seventeen lakes across Iowa are gearing up to receive trout this fall. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will release between 1,000 to 2,000 rainbow trout at each location as part of its cool weather trout program that brings trout to areas that cannot support them during the summer months.

“Grab your neighbors, friends and kids and try trout fishing this fall,” said Joe Larscheid, chief of the Iowa DNR Fisheries Bureau. “It’s time well spent. The fish are here, easy to catch and good to eat.”

The fall urban trout stockings are a great place to take kids to catch their first fish. A small hook with a nightcrawler or corn under a small bobber or small simple spinners such as a panther martin or mepps is all you need to get in on the fun.

Bringing trout to cities and towns offers a “close to home” option for Iowans who might not travel to northeast Iowa to discover trout fishing. A family friendly event is often paired with the stocking to help anglers have success and fun while fishing.

The popular program is supported by the sales of the trout fee. Anglers need 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 10.

Children age 15 or younger can fish for trout with a properly licensed adult, but they must limit their catch to one daily limit. The child can purchase a trout fee which will allow them to catch their own limit.

### 2017 Fall Urban Trout Stocking Schedule

Oct. 14, [Lake of the Hills](#), Davenport, 10:30 a.m.

Oct. 20, [Sand Lake](#), Marshalltown, Noon

Oct. 26, [Banner Lake \(South\)](#), Summerset State Park, Indianola, 11 a.m.

Oct. 26, [Big Lake](#), Council Bluffs, 2 p.m.

Oct. 27, [Ottumwa Park Pond](#), Ottumwa, 11 a.m.

Oct. 27, [Lake Petocka](#), Bondurant, Noon

Oct. 28, [Discovery Park](#), Muscatine, 10 a.m.

Oct. 28, [Heritage Pond](#), Dubuque, 10 a.m.

Oct. 28, [Wilson Lake](#), Fort Madison, Noon

Nov. 1, [Bacon Creek](#), Sioux City, 1:30 p.m.

Nov. 2, [North Prairie Lake](#), Cedar Falls, Noon

Nov. 2, [Moorland Pond](#), Fort Dodge, Noon

Nov. 16, [Ada Hayden Heritage Park Lake](#), Ames, Noon

Nov. 17, [Prairie Park \(Cedar Bend\)](#), Cedar Rapids, 10 a.m.

Nov. 17, [Terry Trueblood Lake](#), Iowa City, 11 a.m.

Nov. 18, [Scharnberg Pond](#), Spencer, Noon

Nov. 22, [Blue Pit](#), Mason City, 11 a.m.

Find more information about trout fishing in urban lakes on the [DNR trout fishing webpage](#).

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## Hunters, wildlife share the Lake Odessa lifestyle



*The water level at Lake Odessa is managed to mirror Mother Nature. Summer drawdowns expose mudflats which immediately vegetate with moist-soil plants. Water is allowed to gradually return to the newly established vegetation creating a buffet for migrating birds. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.*

Sitting along the west bank of the Mississippi River in Louisa County, Lake Odessa, with its network of islands, waterways and hidden sloughs, might be the wildest place in Iowa.

It may be the only place in the state where diamondback and copperbelly water snakes are still found. It's home to red eared sliders, softshell, painted and common snapping turtles, otters, beaver, turkeys and deer and is a popular refueling station for pelicans and bald eagles along with ducks and geese by the thousands.

The Mighty Mississippi is the water source that floods the refuge and wildlife area as planned, and occasionally floods the entire area when not planned.

The responsibility for managing Lake Odessa falls to Andy Robbins, wildlife biologist the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

“No two years have been the same here because of the constantly changing water levels on the Mississippi river,” he said. “We can have a drought like this year resulting in some productive habitat management, or a major flood resulting in a levee break. But that’s what makes this system so dynamic.”

Battling the influence of the river is not a recent issue.

A century ago, this area hosted multiple farms and homes, a sawmill and businesses in the floodplain. The residents built canals with a pumping station to try to drain the wet soils to the point where they could farm it. A sand levee standing between them and the mighty river would occasionally give way during high water.

Once the lock and dam system was constructed on the Mississippi and the water level rose, it became too expensive to pump. In the 1930s, the US Army Corps of Engineers began to acquire the parcels that would become Lake Odessa. Over time, the buildings have vanished leaving few visible markers of their existence.

While those buildings are gone, the sand levee remains and serves as an important protective barrier for the existing wildlife habitat. As a result of this levee protection, Odessa has been able to maintain one of the most diverse floodplain forests remaining on the upper Mississippi River.

Robbins' water level management plan attempts to mirror Mother Nature. In the summer, he draws it down to expose mudflats which immediately vegetate with a variety of moist-soil plants. In the fall, he gradually puts water into the newly established vegetation creating a buffet for migrating birds.

"The birds really respond to that in a big way in the fall. They go right to that freshly flooded vegetation," he said.

### **A duck hunting destination**

Every point and pond on Odessa has a name - Round Pond, Phil's Pond, Taylor Pond, The Nightmare, Dynamite Ditch, the list goes on and on. Some names go back to when the area was still called Muscatine Slough, long before it was open to the public.

Duck hunting is a lifestyle and more and more of the 150 cabins and duck shacks on the lake have been converted into year round residences. Those homes generally overlook the area where hunters will literally stake out the parking spot where their boat will be positioned for the dash to their honey hole at midnight on opening day.

It draws well over 1,000 hunters each year from the Quad Cities, Cedar Rapids, Muscatine, Burlington, Washington, and is a second home to the sportsmen of Louisa County. If out-of-towners want to blend in, they should use tumbleweed and pin oak branches on their duck blind. Using any other material is a clear signal that you're not from around here.

### **Year Round Recreation**

Lake Odessa Wildlife Area and the adjacent Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge is a nearly 7,000-acre complex built to attract waterfowl and other migratory birds during their annual migration. But it's much more than just that.

It has an extensive water trail for paddlers to explore. For those who may be apprehensive about tackling the area, the Louisa County Conservation Board hosts paddling events on the lake, including offering a moonlit paddle. There is a lot of interest in bird watching and while the area can be somewhat difficult to navigate, the diversity and numbers is worth the effort.

The area also has a quality deer herd and excellent hunting opportunities for most woodland species.

The Mississippi River is the water source that fills Lake Odessa through an inlet gate on Pool 17. When opened, the inlet is often the best place to fish in the county. "When the inlet is open people are fishing there all day every day," he said.

### **Commitment to Odessa**

Levee breaks and major floods have impacted the management of Odessa for decades, but in recent years have been far too regular for Robbins liking. Odessa's forest is showing signs of the major flooding and more trees are lost with each major flood.

In the last 10 years, about \$20 million has been invested by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as part of a Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Project (HREP) in improving Odessa's levees and fish and wildlife habitat. That project was completed last spring with a formal rededication ceremony with Iowa's congressional delegation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Iowa DNR.

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