



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Volunteers invited to state park spring clean-up events

Several Iowa state parks are hosting spring clean-up events to get ready for the summer season this April and May. Events will be tailored to each park's needs and could include activities such as litter and branch pick-up, painting, trail work, and clipping back limbs and plants.

"We greatly appreciate the time and energy our volunteers provide to help take care of Iowa's parks," said Todd Coffelt, State Parks bureau chief. "Even if you haven't visited one of these parks, we invite you to come out for an event and spend time outdoors lending a hand."

Here's a list of some of the state park volunteer events for April and May:

- **Walnut Woods State Park, Polk County** – April 7, 9:00 a.m. to noon. Help pick up branches and limbs to get ready for the mowing season. Volunteers should dress for the weather and wear sturdy boots/shoes. Meet at the bird blind parking area just behind park office. Participants may help during all or any portion of the time frame. Contact Tim Gedler at 515-285-4502.
- **Lake Anita State Park, Cass County** – April 20, 5:00 – 8:00 p.m. Join a DNR naturalist on an earth hike to pick up litter. Participants can also make plant pots from recycled newspaper to plant milkweed seeds and take home. Meet in the campground near the popcorn stand. Contact Anne Riordan at (641) 747-8383.
- **Springbrook State Park, Guthrie County** – April 21, 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Help remove weeds and a newly established pollinator plot. Activities that day will also celebrate Earth Day week, including art projects and family activities. Meet at the campground gazebo. Contact Anne Riordan at (641) 747-8383.

- **Bellevue State Park, Jackson County** – April 21, 9:00 a.m. Help paint picnic tables and fire rings, remove vegetation on trails, and more. Dress appropriately for outdoor work. Volunteers can bring their own tools such as rakes, clippers and paint brushes; tools will also be provided by park staff. Meet at the Dyas Unit shower building. Contact Andy Roach at (319) 201-9235.
- **Elk Rock State Park, Jasper County** – April 21, 8:00 a.m. Join the Friends of Elk Rock State Park for a trail clean up and park work day. Dress for the weather and bring work gloves. Meet at the equestrian campground. Contact Chad Rowson at (641) 842-6008.
- **Walnut Woods State Park, Polk County** – April 22, 1:00 – 5:00 p.m. Participate in a hike to pick up trash and work in a pollinator plot at Purple Martin Lake. Family activities will include art projects and making pots from recycled newspaper to plant milkweed seeds and take home. Meet in the campground. Contact Anne Riordan at (641) 747-8383.
- **Brushy Creek State Recreation Area, Webster County** – April 28, 9:30 a.m. Pick up sticks and garbage in the campgrounds, picnic areas, fishing areas and on trails. Bring gloves and water, wear long pants and sturdy shoes. Prizes for the greatest quantity of trash and the most interesting piece of trash. Meet at the park office. Contact Amber O’Neill at (515) 543-8298.
- **Palisades-Kepler State Park, Linn County** – May 12, 10:00 a.m. – Join the Friends of Palisades-Kepler in several activities such as tree clean-up, leaf raking and trash pick-up along trails. Wear long sleeves and pants, and bring gloves and extra rakes if possible. Meet at the park lodge. Please register your attendance by emailing: palsofpalisades@zoho.com. Contact Jim Hanson at (319) 895-6039.
- **Bellevue State Park, Jackson County** – May 19, 10:00 a.m. Beautify and clean up the Butterfly Garden in the Nelson Unit. Volunteers can bring gloves and any of their own garden tools and/or seeds to help replant plots at the butterfly garden. Meeting at the Bellevue State Park Nature Center. Contact Andy Roach at (319) 201-9235.

Eager paddlers need to use extreme caution

After a long, cold winter and cool and wet spring so far, Iowa paddlers are ready to put an end to their “cabin fever”. The fluctuation in air temperatures have made the warming of water temperatures a much slower process, and it take several weeks before rivers and lakes are at the ideal temperature for water recreation.

While late winter and early spring paddling can provide solitude, exercise and an opportunity to see amazing wildlife, it also must be done with safety in mind.

“Many paddlers, especially those just starting out, fail to realize that although temperatures may be above average during some of the winter, the water is still

dangerously cold and you must be prepared,” said Todd Robertson, certified paddling instructor at the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. “The general rule of thumb is that if the water and air temperature does not equal 120 degrees, you are at risk for hypothermia and cold water shock.”

Safety Tips for Paddling in Cold Water Conditions

Always wear a life jackets. Not only does the life jacket help keep your head above water, it helps to keep your organs warmer.

Dress for the water temperature, not the air temperature. Plan as if you were to be in the water at some point. A wet suit or dry suit is a must. Dress in layers so you can peel a layer off if you get overheated.

Consider attending classes to improve boat control skills before heading out in cold water.

Stay away from strainers, wood/branch piles that can pull a paddler under. These are usually found on outside river bends where the current is going and are deadly hazards that must be avoided.

Don't paddle alone, especially when cold water is present, use a buddy system. Go with a small group of paddlers and know which paddler has the most experience.

Bring along a dry bag with extra clothing to change into should you get wet. Get out of wet, cold clothing as soon as possible. Having the right gear and understanding the stages of hypothermia is crucial for remaining safe.

Have a float plan. Let others know where you are paddling and when you are expected to return.

Media contact: Todd Robertson, DNR, 515.243.3714, Todd.Robertson@dnr.iowa.gov.

Annual spring wildlife survey underway

Ordinarily, a slow moving vehicle at night in the Iowa countryside spotlighting deer, raccoons or coyotes would send Iowans to their phone, speed-dialing their local conservation officer, but in this case, it may be the officer doing the shining.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources annual spring spotlight survey is underway with Wildlife and Law Enforcement staff conducting nighttime counts of all furbearing animals, and white-tailed deer.

The survey begins in early spring an hour after sunset, preferably on a night with a clear sky, low wind and high humidity. Each county has a preselected route covering 50 miles

of varying habitat. Surveyors will follow the route driving below 20 miles per hour, shining spotlights from both sides of the vehicle.

But step one for the survey is to alert the local county sheriff of the activity, in case they get any suspicious vehicle calls.

“This is a big effort,” said Tyler Harms, wildlife researcher with the Iowa DNR who collects the data from all of the routes. “This survey is the primary way we count deer and a major source of population data for our skunks, badgers, opossum, red fox, coyotes and other furbearers.”

The survey routes were designed to include all types of habitats found on the Iowa landscape in an effort to not skew the number of animals counted in either way.

“We include river bottoms, prairie habitat, farm fields, pastures, timber stands and acreages on our routes, so we can collect information on which habitat types these species prefer most,” said Harms.

The spring spotlight survey began in the late 1970s as a raccoon-only survey to determine if there was any impact of increased harvest on the population during a time of high pelt prices. Over time, it transitioned to include all furbearers and deer.

“Data collected from this survey are used as one factor to estimate deer populations and provide valuable information for making management decisions for our furbearer species,” Harms said.

Media Contact: Jim Coffey, Wildlife Research Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resource, 515-774-2958.

Family trout fishing event Saturday at Summerset Park

INDIANOLA – A family trout fishing event will be held at Banner Lake South at Summerset Park, north of Indianola, this Saturday, April 7 at 11 a.m. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will release 1,400 rainbow trout.

Anglers must 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 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 buy a trout fee which will allow them to catch their own limit of five trout.

The Warren County Izaak Walton League will provide a free lunch for approximately the first 100 anglers.

The free event is sponsored by the Warren County Izaak Walton League and the Iowa DNR.

Media Contact: Ben Dodd, Fisheries Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-432-2823.



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