



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 22, 2019

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Ice anglers welcome cold weather

After an unusually mild winter, cold weather has finally arrived across Iowa and is covering previously open lakes and ponds with a layer of ice. But anglers are cautioned that just because arctic weather is here, they shouldn't abandon their ice safety practices.

"The cold weather definitely helps to grow ice, but when ice is covered by a blanket of snow, the snow acts like insulation, slowing ice growth. Anglers should treat all ice like new ice and check its thickness frequently when heading out," said Joe Larscheid, chief of Fisheries for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

The DNR recommends a minimum of four inches of clear ice for fishing and at least five inches for snowmobiles and ATVs.

Anglers have been ice fishing across north Iowa for the past month, but the rest of the state has seen limited opportunity. "We've all been waiting for cold weather to get here, let's just give it some time to make ice," he said.

Safety Tips on the Ice

- No ice is 100 percent safe.
- New ice is usually stronger than old ice.
- Don't go out alone - if the worst should happen, someone will be there to call for help or to help rescue.
- Let someone know where you are going and when you will return.
- Check ice thickness as you go out - there could be pockets of thin ice or places where ice recently formed.
- Avoid off-colored snow or ice. It is usually a sign of weakness.
- The insulating effect of snow slows down the freezing process.
- Bring along these basic items to help keep you safe: hand warmers, ice cleats to help prevent falls, ice picks (wear around your neck) to help you crawl out of the water if you fall in, a life jacket, a floating safety rope, a whistle to call for help, a basic first aid kit and extra dry clothes including a pair of gloves.

Media Contact: Joe Larscheid, Chief of Fisheries, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-201-3376.

Missouri and Big Sioux rivers paddlefish fishing season opens Feb. 2

The paddlefish fishing season opens Feb. 2 on the Missouri and Big Sioux Rivers and goes through April 30 (sunrise to sunset).

Anglers fishing for paddlefish must have a valid Iowa fishing license, along with a special paddlefish license and unused transportation tag(s).

Please keep track of your catch and effort and return the survey card after the paddlefish season whether you harvested a fish or not. The information collected will help the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) evaluate the success of the season and determine what potential changes/modifications may be needed.

If you catch a jaw-tagged fish (numbered band in the lower jaw), call the phone number on the tag and report the tag number, date of capture, capture location and eye-to-fork length. The Iowa DNR and other state fisheries agencies tag paddlefish to better

understand and manage populations. Tagging provides valuable information to estimate population size, fish movement and growth.

For more information about Iowa's special paddlefish season, visit the DNR website at www.iowadnr.gov/paddlefish.

Media Contact: Chris Larson, Western Iowa & Missouri River Regional Fisheries Supervisor, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 712-769-2587.

Chickadee tax check-off declines in 2017

Last year, more than 7,500 Iowa taxpayers helped boost wildlife conservation with donations to the Fish and Wildlife Fund on their state income tax form, a decline of about 400 from 2016. Donators represent about 0.4 percent of total tax payers in Iowa.

"We are so thankful to all the people who choose to donate to wildlife conservation with their tax refunds," said Stephanie Shepherd, wildlife biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Diversity Program. "These donations go directly to habitat development and restoration programs for some of Iowa's most vulnerable animal species. The funds are so important for natural resources."

The Fish and Wildlife Fund, known popularly as the "Chickadee Check-off," is a mechanism the Iowa Legislature created in the 1980s for Iowa citizens to donate to wildlife conservation on the Iowa state tax form. Prior to the creation of the Fish and Wildlife Fund, "non-game" wildlife had no dedicated funding.

Proceeds from the check-off are one of the few means of support for the Department of Natural Resources' Wildlife Diversity Program, responsible for protecting more than 1,000 fish and wildlife species in the state. Money from the check-off helps improve wildlife habitat, restore native wildlife, provide opportunities for citizens to learn about our natural resources and much more.

Iowans donated roughly \$145,000 last spring when completing their 2017 tax forms, translating to an average gift of \$19.25 per donor. The number of donors has remained steady or decreased but thanks to more generous giving, the amount donated has also stayed level or even increased.

“The chickadee check-off is an inconspicuous line that is easy to pass over or forget, and many tax preparers may not remember to ask whether a client wants to donate,” she said. “It may be up to the taxpayer to remind their preparer, or make a point of looking for it whether they are doing their form on paper or electronically.”

According to Shepherd, donating on the tax form is easy: simply write the amount to donate next to the Fish and Wildlife Check-Off, line 57 on Form 1040, and the sum is either automatically deducted from the refund or added to the amount owed. As with all charitable contributions, the amount is deductible from next year’s taxes.

“If every Iowa taxpayer donated just \$1, it would mean \$1.5 million for wildlife and natural resource conservation,” said Shepherd.

Media Contact: Stephanie Shepherd, Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Diversity Program, 515-230-6599
or stephanie.shepherd@dnr.iowa.gov

Saturday trout stocking at Lake Petocka cancelled

BONDURANT – The trout stocking and family trout fishing event scheduled for this Saturday, Jan. 26 at Lake Petocka, has been cancelled due to current unsafe ice conditions and the forecast of inclement weather.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is planning to stock trout in Lake Petocka sometime this week depending on weather and road conditions.

The family fishing event will not be re-scheduled.

Media Contact: Ben Dodd, Fisheries Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 641-891-3795.

DNR seeking public comment for proposed rules for state parks and recreation areas

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is currently seeking public comment for the proposed rule making to implement Senate File 2389, passed by the Iowa Legislature in April 2018, allowing the DNR to establish rental fees at state parks and recreation areas.

This change eliminates the need for the DNR to go through rule making under the authority of the Natural Resource Commission to establish, change and manage fees for camping, the use of rental facilities and other special privileges in state parks and recreation areas.

As part of the legislation, the DNR is required to establish and adopt rules for the purpose of setting forth the methodology to be used in establishing fees. To obtain a copy of the rule making documents, visit the Iowa DNR's website at www.iowadnr.gov/parks

The DNR is conducting six public hearings where the public may present their views verbally or in writing. All of the public hearings will be held on Feb. 7, 2019 from noon to 2 p.m. at the following locations:

Wallace State Office Building

Fourth Floor Conference Room
502 East Ninth Street
Des Moines

Clear Lake State Park Office

2730 South Lakeview Drive
Clear Lake

Cold Springs District Office

Conference Room
57744 Lewis Road
Lewis

Lake Darling State Park

Lake Darling Lodge
111 Lake Darling
Brighton

Delaware County Conservation Board

Conference Room
2379 Jefferson Road
Manchester

Lewis & Clark State Park

Lewis & Clark Visitor Center Banquet Room

21914 Park Loop

Onawa

The public may also submit written comments no later than 4:30 p.m. on Feb. 7, 2019.

Comments should be directed to:

Sherry Arntzen

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Wallace State Office Building

502 East Ninth Street, Fourth Floor

Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034

Iowa citizens playing key role in tracking bald eagle nests and frog and toad populations

It's 10 o'clock on a summer night along a gravel road anywhere in Iowa. In the farm pond next to the road a raucous chorus of male frogs are making themselves heard as they vie for mates. A volunteer stands clipboard in hand, ear cocked, mentally sorting out each of the calling species which are using this seemingly ordinary pond.

Skip over to a Saturday morning by the river where another volunteer has binoculars and spotting scope trained on the tallest tree in the vicinity. In this tree is a huge nest, home to two bald eagles and their young. A peaceful half hour is spent watching one of the most spectacular birds in North America.

All across the state of Iowa, citizen scientists are making enormous contributions to wildlife conservation. Both of the volunteers described above were trained through the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Program.

"The Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Program provides an opportunity for adults who love the outdoors and wildlife to be directly involved with the conservation and monitoring of Iowa's resources. The work done is crucial to the well-being of these species," said Stephanie Shepherd, wildlife biologist with the Iowa DNR's Wildlife Diversity Program.

Every March and April, Shepherd travels around the state to lead training workshops that ready folks to collect data on some of Iowa's critical wildlife. So what are these critical wildlife species?

One training workshop focuses on some of Iowa's more spectacular bird species such as bald eagles, ospreys and peregrine falcons. Volunteers are taught how to collect data on specific nesting sites around the state and submit pertinent data such as how many young birds fledge.

"This data collection requires lots of patience and some good optics in order to watch the nest from a distance and not disturb the birds," Shepherd said. Last year volunteers reported on more than 150 bald eagle nests across the state.

The second survey requires a keen ear.

Volunteers are trained to listen to and recognize the 16 species of frogs and toads in Iowa based on their breeding calls. In 2018, volunteers surveyed 54 survey routes which translate into more than 400 wetland sites monitored for frog and toad activity.

"The frog and toad surveyors are particularly special because to perform the surveys volunteers have to drive back country roads at night along a specific route using only their ears to collect data," Shepherd said. "I think most feel that exploring the Iowa wilds at night is a unique experience and opportunity."

Interested volunteers must register for and attend a training workshop. The Iowa DNR is partnering with the Scott, Wapello, Mahaska and Sioux County conservation boards to host the following workshops.

Bird Nest Monitoring Workshops

March 16, 1 to 4:30 p.m.

Environmental Learning Center at Caldwell Park, Hwy 92 east side of Oskaloosa
Hosted by Mahaska County Conservation

April 13, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Oak Grove Lodge at Oak Grove Park, 4051 Cherry Ave., Hawarden

NOTE: A Frog and Toad Survey Training will be held in the afternoon on this same day. If you wish to sign up for both workshops, the total registration fee will be \$8.

Hosted by Sioux County Conservation

Frog and Toad Call Survey Workshops

April 2, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Pioneer Ridge Nature Center, 1339 Highway 63, Bloomfield
Hosted by Wapello County Conservation

April 8, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Wapsi River Environmental Center, 31555 52nd Ave., Dixon
Hosted by Scott County Conservation

April 9, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Boone Wildlife Research Station by Ledges State Park, 1436 255th St., Boone

April 13, 1 to 4 p.m.

Oak Grove Lodge at Oak Grove Park, 4051 Cherry Ave., Hawarden

NOTE: A Bald Eagle Nest Monitoring Training will be held in the morning on this same day. If you wish to sign up for both workshops, the total registration fee will be \$8.

Hosted by Sioux County Conservation

For more information visit: <http://www.iowadnr.com/vwmp/> or e-mail vwmp@dnr.iowa.gov.

Application process now open for Trees for Kids programs

DES MOINES – Applications are now being accepted for the Trees for Kids Grant and Trees for Kids Seedlings through the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Applications are due in March and are open to public organizations such as municipalities, schools, neighborhood associations, parks and recreation departments, county conservation boards, etc.

Recipients of the Trees for Kids grants have the possibility to receive up to \$5,000 to purchase trees and mulch from a nursery, but must include youth education, preferably by having youth help plant the trees. Application deadline for Trees For Kids grant is Friday, March 1, 2019.

Recipients of the Trees for Kids Seedlings have the possibility to get up to 200 free tree seedlings from the Iowa DNR's State Forest Nursery. The seedlings must be planted on public property or given away to students to take home to plant. Application deadline for Trees for Kids Seedlings is Friday, March 22, 2019.

"These programs are a great avenue to get our youth actively involved and interested in forestry," said Jeff Goerndt, state forester with the Iowa DNR. "Trees not only provide an educational opportunity, but also add to the aesthetic beauty of Iowa's landscape."

Click [here](#) for the Trees for Kids grant application – due March 1, 2019

Click [here](#) for the Trees for Kids Seedling application – due March 22, 2019

Media contact: Gabbi Edwards, DNR Urban Forestry Program, (515) 725-8456, Gabriele.Edwards@dnr.iowa.gov